

Summer 2014

CLIS Christians *in*
Library *and*
Information
Services



CHRISTIAN LIBRARIAN

CONTENTS INCLUDE

- ***MOVING FORWARD***
- ***BETWEEN HEAVEN AND KING'S CROSS***
- ***LITERACY MATTERS – AND LIBRARIES MATTER
TOO***
- ***MY CALL INTO THE MINISTRY OF THEOLOGICAL
EDUCATION***

EVENTS AT A GLANCE

● **WEDNESDAY 17
SEPTEMBER 2014: VISIT TO
SALVATION ARMY
INTERNATIONAL HERITAGE
CENTRE**

*William Booth College, London,
SE5 8BQ. Details: pp. 6-7.*

● **SATURDAY 18 OCTOBER
2014: VISIT TO BUNYAN
MUSEUM AND LIBRARY**

*Bunyan Meeting, Mill Street,
Bedford, MK40 3EU. Details: p.
7.*

● **SATURDAY 18 OCTOBER
2014: ANNUAL PUBLIC
LECTURE**

*Bedford Central Library, Harpur
Street, Bedford. Speaker: **Tony
Collins**, Publishing Director, *Lion
Fiction* and *Monarch* on "A New
Strategy for Christian Fiction".
Details: p. 7.*

● **SATURDAY 18 APRIL 2015:
ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

*YMCA, 7 East Street, Leicester,
LE1 6EY. Speakers: **Diana
Edmonds** and **Emmanuel
Oladipo**. Details: p. 7.*

PRAYER NOTES FOR SUMMER 2014

PLEASE PRAY FOR

● Our Executive Committee as we develop the work of the Fellowship under our new name *Christians in Library and Information Services*.

● An increase in the membership of *Christians in Library and Information Services*.

● Our forthcoming activities including our October 2014 Public Lecture.

● The work of the *Evangelical Alliance* and its member organisations and individual members.

● The *International Christian College* in Glasgow as it faces closure and considers a possible future for its library.

● Librarians involved in theological education in African countries.

● The work of the *Chaima Christian Institute* in Maridi, South Sudan.

● The wider library profession in an era of closures, reduced budgets, and other difficulties.



FOUNDED IN 1976 AS THE LIBRARIANS' CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

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LOUISE MANNERS looks back on an event that significantly shaped the course of Pre-Reformation European history

EUROPE IS A GUEST

From 2014 to 2018 Constance, Germany, is celebrating six hundred years since the Council of the Constance 1414 to 1418. With the title, "*Europe is a Guest*", there is a strong focus on events and information for children and young people.

Constance is a train ride from Zurich or a boat ride from Friedrichshafen on the other side of the Lake Constance. The Council of Constance significantly shaped the course of European history and is thought to be the largest meeting of religious figures, politicians and academics during the Middle Ages.

The Council of Constance ended the period of two or more competing papacies at different locations and decided on one Pope to be in Rome. During the Council the Czech priest and reformer Jan Hus (John Hus or John Huss), who had arrived in Constance, was burned at the stake for heresy against the doctrines of the Catholic Church.

I visited Constance at the end of February this year for nearly a week of carnival (*Fasnacht*) before Lent. I found the locals apprehensive at immigration by Turks, at the discovery by police of a jihadist in a secondary school and at a large number

of burglaries making demands on police time. In addition to the local people celebrating *Fasnacht*, people who had grown up in Constance returning to be with their relatives there were many obvious visitors. These included a large contingent of German drag queens in a bar near the Cathedral.

On the Sunday I found myself in a Roman Catholic church at the *Fasnacht* service with the congregation in *Fastnacht* costumes and a costumed marching band providing the music. Urged to go up at Communion by my companions in English I requested a blessing. The priest gave me a blessing in unaccented English. Would a German visitor receive a blessing in German in a church in England?



Louise Manners, *DipLib, MA, MCLIP*, serves as Chair of the Executive Committee of *Christians in Library and Information Services*.

CLIS

Christians in
Library and
Information
Services



NEWSLETTER

From The Secretary:
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SALVATION ARMY HERITAGE CENTRE

On **Wednesday 17 September 2014** we will be organising a visit to the **Salvation Army International Heritage Centre** at the **William Booth College, Champion Park, London, SE5 8BQ**. This will begin at 2.00. p.m. but we hope to arrange lunch in a local restaurant, from about 12.00. noon, for those who can arrive in time.

The *Salvation Army International Heritage Centre* tells the story of *The Salvation Army* from its origins in the 1860s to the present, both in the UK and overseas. The Centre collects, preserves, catalogues, researches and makes available materials that tell the story of the

life and work of the movement. The collections form a library, archive and museum.

The Heritage Centre reference library collects books and pamphlets published by, or written about, *The Salvation Army*.

The archive collection includes paper records, photographs and films while the museum highlights such themes as the musical heritage of *The Salvation Army*, opposition to its work from the earliest days until the present, the Army's commitment to social justice and working with disadvantaged people, and the story of how the mission spread throughout the world and is still growing today.

William Booth College is close to Denmark Hill Station which is served by trains from Victoria, London Bridge, Blackfriars, and Elephant and Castle. The nearest tube stations are Oval (Northern Line) and Elephant and Castle (Northern and Bakerloo lines), from where the journey can be completed by bus.

Please let me know if you would like to book a place or places on the Heritage Centre visit and/or for lunch beforehand.

CHRISTIAN FICTION

This year's **Annual Lecture** will be held on **Saturday 18 October 2014** in the **Meeting Room, Central Library, Harpur Street, Bedford, MK40 1PG**. and will have the theme "*A New Strategy for Christian Fiction*".

Our speaker, **Tony Collins**, Publishing Director of *Monarch Books* and *Lion Fiction*, will point out that sales of Christian fiction in the UK have been poor for many years. The *Lion Fiction* imprint is setting out to develop a new approach to faith and fiction. Tony will explore the options and consider the response to date, both in the UK and overseas.

For those who can get to Bedford during the morning there will be another chance to visit the **Bunyan Museum and Library** at the **Bunyan Meeting** in **Mill Street, Bedford, MK40 3EU**, the church where the author of *Pilgrim's Progress* was once the minister. This will be followed by lunch in a local restaurant.

More details will follow in our next issue but please book the date now and plan to attend.

NEXT YEAR'S CONFERENCE

Next year's Annual Conference is to be held on **Saturday 18 April 2015** in the **Theatre, YMCA, 7 East Street, Leicester, LE1 6EY**.

CLIS member **Diana Edmonds**, Head of Libraries at *GLL*, who currently run the public library services in *Greenwich* and *Wandsworth*, will be speaking on the hot topic of library privatisation and outsourcing.

Emmanuel Oladipo, who has been involved in *Scripture Union*, Nigeria, and with the Rev. John Stott's *Langham Partnership*, will be our second speaker. We have suggested that he might like to speak on his own work as a Christian writer, the importance of encouraging Christians to read, the state of Christian publishing in developing countries, or a combination of these topics.

Please book the date now and plan to join us in Leicester.

HELP US PROMOTE CLIS

LCF's re-launch as *Christians in Library and Information Services* has been marked by a complete re-design of our web site which can now be found at

www.christianlis.org.uk Please visit the site yourself and encourage friends and colleagues to do the same.

In addition to revising our existing recruitment leaflet with details of the changed name and web site we have commissioned a new, full colour leaflet/poster suitable for displaying on library and church notice-boards. We have embraced technology by including a QR code that will link enquirers with our web site when scanned by a smartphone. This is now available in both A4 and A5 versions.

One of our greatest priorities is to expand our membership and we will be grateful for the help of our existing members in making our publicity materials available to library and information friends and colleagues not yet in membership. If you can make use of the new colour leaflet please let me know and I can either e-mail the artwork to you or put some copies in the post.

Thanks are due to Mary and Trevor Wood for their work on the web site and to my graphic designer niece, Megan Hedges, for her design of the new CLIS logo and leaflet and for taking photographs at the recent conference. These photographs can now be viewed on the CLIS web site at <http://christianlis.org.uk/news/>

CHAIMA CHRISTIAN INSTITUTE

Thanks are due to those members who contributed to the CLIS re-launch appeal on behalf of the *Chaima Christian Institute* library in Maridi, South Sudan.

As a result of the generosity of our members, especially those who booked for the April conference, we have been able to send a cheque for £330 to *Chaima* via the *Church Mission Society*.

It is not too late to contribute to the appeal. If you would like to make a donation please send me a cheque made payable to *Christians in Library and Information Services*.

MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY

The CLIS **Membership Directory** for 2014 was e-mailed to members and personal subscribers on our **E-Newsletter** mailing list during May. If you did not receive this, or had any difficulty with the attachment, please contact Mary Wood, our Web Site Manager, at webmaster@christianlis.org

On the other hand, if you would like to receive a printed copy of the Directory, please contact Janice Paine, our

Membership Secretary, at 22 Queensgate Gardens, 396 Upper Richmond Road, Putney, London, SW15 6JN. Tel. 020 8785 2174.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Most CLIS readers will be aware of the importance of social media sites in contemporary society. These are increasingly being used not only as a way of keeping in touch with friends and family, but for a variety of business and professional activities as well.

Social media could be a key in helping to raise an awareness of CLIS, publicise our activities and events, link up with potential new members, support each other with advice and encouragement and share prayer needs.

CLIS has a *Facebook* group through which we have been able to pass advice and information to librarians overseas, share news and information and point to information on our website.

If you are not already registered, you could get involved with the CLIS *Facebook* group, the new CLIS *LinkedIn* group, or, if you're a *Twitter* fan, volunteer to set up a CLIS *Twitter* account.

If you have any queries or suggestions please contact Mary Wood who administers the *Facebook* group webmaster@christianlis.org.uk or Louise Manners who chair@christianlis.org.uk

administers the *LinkedIn* group.

HEARTS AND HYMNS

If you were listening to *Premier Christian Radio's Hearts and Hymns* programme on Sunday 6 April 2014 you will have heard **Pam Rhodes** mention the re-launch of LCF as CLIS and the previous day's conference. She then dedicated a hymn to us, *Teach Me My God and King*, based on a poem by George Herbert.

There may well have been other radio coverage of the change from LCF into CLIS as we sent copies of our press release to other radio programmes as well as to Christian and librarianship magazines and web sites. If you heard anything on the radio, please let me know.

REMOVING THE ROAD BLOCKS

On Tuesday 13 May 2014 I was able to thank **Pam Rhodes** in person for mentioning us on the radio when she co-presented this year's *Speaking Volumes* book awards at the *Christian Resources Exhibition* in Esher, Surrey.

This was the tenth book awards ceremony organised

under the sponsorship of the *Christian Book Promotion Trust's Speaking Volumes* scheme and it formed part of the thirtieth *Christian Resources Exhibition*. For the first time the awards event was "live streamed" on the Internet.

The proceedings began with a short video on *Speaking Volumes* and some introductory remarks by the scheme's Director, Paula Renouf. Paula explained that SV exists to help churches donate good Christian books to libraries of all kinds. The scheme provides match funding so that churches only need to provide fifty per cent of the cost of a collection of books ordered from the SV catalogue.

Paula then introduced Pam Rhodes who, in addition to serving as a presenter of BBC TV's *Songs of Praise*, is also the writer of several novels of which *Casting the Net* (Lion Fiction, £7.99, ISBN 978-1782640622) is the most recent.

Pam said that writing was often an isolated and insular business, and that she was pleased to be taking part in an event with other writers, publishers, and members of the public who buy and read books.

During her twenty-seven years on *Songs of Praise* Pam has interviewed many people about their real life experiences, and many of their stories have found their way, in fictionalised form, into her novels. The current

series, based on the experiences of a young curate, began with the 2013 title *Fisher of Men* (Lion Fiction, £7.99, ISBN 978-1782640004).

Pam's co-presenter, **Bob Hartman**, is well known as a story-teller and draws his inspiration from a master storyteller: Jesus himself. In addition to telling stories to live audiences he has written many books including *The Lion Storyteller Bible* (Lion Children's, £15.99, ISBN 978-0745964331). In addition to his specifically biblical work, Bob has re-told other traditional stories, among them Aesop's fables, and written books with such intriguing titles as *The Wolf Who Cried Boy* (Lion Children's, £4.99, ISBN 978-0745948317).

It was now time for the book awards themselves and Paula Renouf explained that the winners would each receive a cheque for £1000 plus a collection of books for donation to a library of their choice. Books were nominated by publishers and others and short-lists compiled by a panel of experts which included former CLIS President Margaret Keeling. The final choice of winners had been made by the public, voting via the *Speaking Volumes* web site.

Bob Hartman then announced the winner in the children's category, **Andy Robb's Professor Bumblebrain's Bonkers Book on Parables**

(CWR, £6.99, ISBN 978-1853459474) a re-telling of the parables of Jesus in cartoon form in a style similar to the well known “*Horrible Histories*” series.

The other shortlisted children’s titles were Katherine Sully’s *The Easter Story* (QED, £8.99, ISBN 978-1781711712) and *Noah’s Ark* (QED, £8.99, ISBN 978-1848358515), Mary Joslin’s *The Story of Christmas* (Lion Children’s, £8.99, ISBN 978-0745961163), and Alexa Tewkesbury’s *One Too Many for Benny* (CWR, £5.99, ISBN 978-1853459153).

Pam Rhodes announced the winner in the adult category, Sharon Dirckx’s *Why?* (IVP, £8.99, ISBN 978-1844746194), a new book on the age-old themes of God, evil and suffering.

Accepting the award, Sharon Dirckx said that writing the book had been helped by an experience of illness within her own family. She said that the existence of pain and suffering was a major barrier to people accepting the Christian message and described the intention behind her book as “*removing the road blocks to Jesus*”.

The other short-listed adult titles were Alister McGrath’s *C.S. Lewis: a life* (Hodder and Stoughton, £9.99, ISBN 978-1444745542), Andrew Atherstone’s *Justin Welby: the Road to Canterbury* (DLT, £7.99, ISBN 978-0232529944), Peter Walker’s *The Story of the*

Holy Land (Lion, £16.99, ISBN 978-0745955827) and Peter Morden’s *John Bunyan: the People’s Pilgrim* (CWR, £9.99, ISBN 978-1853458361).

Both of the award winners were present to accept their prizes. Some of the other short-listed writers were unable to be present and it was noted that Katherine Sully was currently playing the part of Sybil in an adaptation of *Fawlty Towers*.

The *Christian Resources Exhibition* provided the usual showcase for Christian ministries and service providers of all kinds, with everything represented from book and periodical publishers to manufacturers of central heating systems for churches.

It was good to celebrate the exhibition’s thirtieth annual event. I well remember waiting for other members of the *Librarians’ Christian Fellowship* outside the entrance of the very first exhibition held in a snow-covered central London in February 1985. I also remember being off work with a very bad cold for a week afterwards!

The organisers wisely changed the timing of the exhibition to May after a couple of years. Next year, however, the exhibition is moving to the ExCel centre in London and 2014 has been the final year at Sandown Park

You can get more information about CRE from Trinity Business Centre, Stonehill

Green, Westlea, Swindon, SN5 7DG. Web site www.creonline.co.uk

You can get more information about *Speaking Volumes* from P.O. Box 1070, Whittlesford, Cambridgeshire, CB22 4WX. Web site www.speakingvolumes.org.uk

TRANSFORM WORK UK

Our friends at *Transform Work UK* are looking for a volunteer who could paraphrase reports that appear in the newsletters of various workplace and professional groups into a form that could be included on the TWUK web site.

If you are interested please get in touch with Trevor Payne at trevor.payne@transformworkuk.org

In the meantime TWUK's Ros Turner is interested in working with an individual in a library or information service to create a local Christian workplace group that then feeds back into the national group – CLIS. If you are interested please contact Ros at ros.turner@transformworkuk.org

TWUK can be contacted by post at 1 Christie Drive, Huntingdon, Cambs., PE22 6JD.

BOYCOTT AMAZON?

CLIS President **Eddie Olliffe** has placed a provocative message on our *Facebook* page suggesting that customers and publishers should boycott *Amazon*.

Eddie believes that publishers are complicit in an “*unfolding outrage*”. He says that publishers “*have treated Amazon to far better terms [than other suppliers] and now, like a drug they cannot stop using, they are hooked on the need for bigger and better sales albeit at higher and higher discounts. These are terms that stock-holding bookshops can only dream about.*”

Eddie continues: “*This situation is intolerable, unfair, and unjust and is killing the UK high street and wrecking many a local economy. Society overall is worse off as the country receives less and less in taxes.*”

Amazon UK is said to have recently paid just £4.2 million in tax out of £4.3 billion in sales.

What do you think? Place your comments on our *Facebook* page or send them to me for inclusion in ***Christian Librarian***.

INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

Do you remember the Berwick and Glasgow working parties?

We have recently heard the sad news that the *International Christian College* in Glasgow is being forced to close in its present form. This is due to falling student numbers and consequent financial problems that make the current work unsustainable.

The current grants system in Scotland is said to be a contributory factor to the College's difficulties. Scottish Bible College students receive a grant of less than a third of their tuition fees compared to the hundred per cent they would receive studying at a university.

The *International Christian College* was formed in 1998 as a result of a merger between the *Glasgow Bible College* and the former *Northumbria Bible College* at Berwick-on-Tweed. Many LCF/CLIS members will have happy memories of the fun we had and the useful job we did at library working parties at both colleges.

The resulting highly professional and professionally staffed library gave pleasure to all of us who visited it in 2002. Our work had convinced the College of the need for a proper library and trained staff, and this was the

best result of all.

The recent news may mean that the library we worked so hard to create over seven years of labour from 1995-2001 will be dispersed or reduced. However, according to a report in ***Christianity*** magazine for April 2014, discussions are taking place about how the College's 45,000 volume library can be preserved to further the cause of the Christian gospel in the future.

We are sure that you will all want to pray for the remaining staff and students as the College is wound up over the next twelve months and for the College Board as it considers the future and whether to seek to continue the work of ICC in some form.

PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL NEWS

•**Peter Berry** leads regular walking tours of Oxford several times a week during the summer and autumn until 24 October 2014.

A general literary tour takes place on Tuesdays and Thursdays and this year will include writers who served in the First World War. The Inklings (C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, and friends) are commemorated in a Wednesday morning tour. The week concludes with a Historic Oxford tour on Friday afternoons.

You can get more information from *Blackwell's Bookshop* on 01865 792792.

•Our member **Winette Field** has recently written an article about the *William Booth College Library* where she works as Librarian.

Designed by Giles Gilbert Scott and completed in 1932 the College offers training and educational opportunities to *Salvation Army* officers, employees, and those studying to become officers. The library is the only *Salvation Army* training college library in the UK but has links with overseas *Salvation Army* colleges.

The *Salvation Army International Heritage Centre* is administratively separate from the College library but is housed on the third floor of the main building in London's Denmark Hill.

Winette's *William Booth College Library: a Personal Perspective* appears in the ***Bulletin of the British Association of Theological and Philosophical Libraries***, March 2014, pp. 2-3.

•Our member **Andrew Parker** continues his involvement with the *Lantern Arts Centre* in London's Raynes Park and has a small part in a stage production of Joseph Kesselring's play *Arsenic and Old Lace* which is to be

performed between 9 – 12 July 2014.

You can find more information about the *Lantern Arts Centre*, which is housed in the *Raynes Park Methodist Church*, at <http://www.lanternarts.org> or by telephoning 020 8944 5794.

•My former *Wandsworth Libraries* colleague **Geoffrey Storey** is the author of the novel ***The White Dragon and the Coming of the Kings*** (Spiderwize, £14.99, ISBN 978-1908128447), "a sweeping saga of Sixth Century Britain during the period of early English settlement" ranging from Anglo-Saxon Lincoln to the wilds of Bernicia and Rheged and encompassing the fall of perhaps the last Romano British state, and the coming of the English kings.

COMMEMORATING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

To mark this year's centenary of the beginning of the First World War, our member **Kim Walker** has produced a listing of relevant resources from Christian and secular organisations.

Kim's complete list of resources can be found on the *Evangelical Alliance* web site at <http://www.eauk.org/church/resources/ww1-resources.cfm>

The *Official First World War Centenary Web Site* is located at <http://www.1914.org/> and the *Government First World War Centenary Anniversary Web Site* can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/first-world-war-centenary>

Churches Together in England have published an article that includes ten suggestions for ways to commemorate the anniversary. This article can be found at http://www.churches-together.net/Articles/358630/Home/Resources/Features_Reviews/Features/Remembering_World_War.aspx

More relevant material can be found on the *Churches Together in Britain and Ireland* site at www.ctbi.org/uk/673

The *Bible Society* has launched a web site describing the “*defining influence*” of the Bible during the First World War.

Noting that, when war broke out in 1914, all members of the British armed forces were given Bibles as an essential part of their kit, the site records the *Bible Society's* work in distributing the scriptures during the war years. Although the German Kaiser was often seen as the biblical Anti-Christ, many will be surprised to learn that he made a donation of £25.00 to the Society in 1910, stating that he often read the Bible with pleasure.

Information is provided about the work of wartime chaplains, the use made of the

Bible in justifying the war, but also the part played by conscientious objectors who refused to fight on religious grounds.

You can find the *Bible Society* site at <http://www.biblesociety.org.uk/about-bible-society/ourwork/world-war1/stories/bible-society/>

Books about the First World War with a Christian interest include Peter Howson's ***Muddling Through: the organisation of British Army Chaplaincy in World War I*** (Helion and Company, £25.00, ISBN 978-1909384208) and Bob Holman's ***Woodbine Willie: an unsung hero of World War One*** (Lion, £9.99, ISBN 978-0745955614, a new biography of wartime chaplain and poet the Rev. G.A. Studdert-Kennedy.

How will you be marking the centenary of World War One, in your library or your church? Send me details of your planned activities (book displays, special services, etc.) and I will mention them in a future issue.

FICTION ROUND UP

Although I have always been interested in fiction written by Christians I have to admit that very few of the books shelved in the “*fiction*” sections of Christian bookshops have much appeal for me.

Titles in the recently-launched *Lion Fiction* series, however, are an honourable exception.

Edoardo Albert's ***Edwin: High King of Britain*** (Lion Fiction, £7.99, ISBN 978-1782640332) is a historical novel based on the life and times of an early Christian king of Northumbria. The book has earned the accolade of a recommendation from one of our leading historical novelists, Bernard Cornwell, who has written his own novels of Dark Age Britain.

Jill Francis Hudson's ***The Last Queen of Sheba*** (Lion Fiction, £7.99, ISBN 978-1782640974) is another historical novel, based on the biblical story of King Solomon and Makeda, Queen of the African kingdom of Sheba.

In addition to these Lion titles, I will look forward to reading the following recent novels by writers known to be Christians, though not necessarily as "*Christian novelists*".

Catherine Fox is a name which has been missing from the fiction shelves in recent years, but she has returned with ***Wolf Tide*** (CreateSpace, £7.99, ISBN 978-1490904580). This teenage fantasy novel, which is something of a departure for the writer, is a story of "*dark secrets and ancient magic*" featuring seventeen year

old Anabara Nolio who is charged with discovering the truth about the University Library's lost books on the city isle of Laridy.

Catherine will be back in more familiar territory with a forthcoming novel of contemporary church life. ***Acts and Omissions*** (SPCK, 17 July 2014, £9.99, ISBN 978-0281072345) is set in the imaginary Diocese of Lindchester and was originally published in instalments on the author's blog.

Catherine Fox is married to our 2011 Conference speaker, Pete Wilcox, now Dean of *Liverpool Cathedral*, who also happens to be my third cousin.

Rhidian Brook's ***The Aftermath*** (Viking, £14.99, ISBN 978-0670921126) is a novel set in the British Occupied Zone of Hamburg in the post-World War II year of 1946.

As the *Church of England* continues to agonise over women bishops, many readers will enjoy Michele Guinness's ***Archbishop*** (Hodder and Stoughton, £16.99, ISBN 978-1444753363). Set five years in the future, at a time when the established Church is facing serious difficulties, this novel tells the story of Vicky Burnham-Woods, the first female Archbishop of Canterbury.

ALL ABOARD NOAH'S ARK

The blockbuster film version of **Noah** arrived in the nation's cinemas on Friday 4 April 2014. Although the film has been criticised in some circles for its departures from the Genesis storyline, I very much enjoyed the production and was glad to see the great biblical themes of Creation, Fall, Judgement and New Creation enacted on the silver screen. I hope that many members of CLIS will have visited their local cinemas to see the film and that it will be widely stocked in public and other libraries when it becomes available on DVD and Blu-Ray.

The cinematic **Noah**, and recent flooding in different parts of the country, give a recent book by the British Museum's Irving Finkel a certain topicality. In **The Ark Before Noah** (Hodder and Stoughton, £25.00, ISBN 978-14444757057), the author describes the discovery of a Babylonian clay tablet from around 1750 BC which tells the story of a coming Flood and gives instructions on the building of an Ark. The author compares this account with Genesis and other literature from ancient Mesopotamia, almost certainly written before Genesis, such as the famous **Gilgamesh Epic**, discovered during the nineteenth

century.

This is not a "*Christian book*" and some readers will struggle with the technical chapters on ancient cuneiform writing, but there is much to interest Christians, not least the sections on the location of Mount Ararat and the revelation that some early accounts describe a *round* Ark which was, in effect, a giant coracle.

CURRENT AWARENESS

•Irving Finkel's article *Which Came First, Noah or the Ark?* explains how a small clay tablet presented to the *British Museum* in 1985 proved to be the earliest surviving account of the Flood.

The tablet's portrayal of a *round* Ark makes perfect sense as such a vessel would never have sunk and would have safeguarded its cargo until the flood waters subsided. Coracles are known to have plied the Euphrates and Tigris rivers from ancient times until the mid-twentieth century.

The article speculates that the Israelites would have encountered early versions of the Flood story during their Babylonian exile. Daniel 1:4 records that a group of bright young exiles were selected for "*training in the literature and language of the Chaldeans*"

which would have included cuneiform writing.

The article appears in the **Church Times** for 4 April 2014, pp. 22-23.

•Simon Jones's *Learning the Language of Calling* describes the life and work of writer and broadcaster Rhidian Brook.

Although raised in a Welsh Baptist chapel, Brook did not experience personal conversion to the Christian faith until reading the Bible after being taken ill during a visit to Trinidad. After his conversion he began a new career as a novelist whose works include the prize-winning ***Testimony of Taliesin Jones*** (Flamingo, 1995, ISBN 978-0002253727).

Brook has since written scripts for the TV series ***Silent Witness*** and for the feature film ***Africa United*** and is a regular contributor to BBC Radio's ***Thought for the Day***. A visit to Africa to report on the work of the Salvation Army with AIDS patients led to a 2006 book ***More Than Eyes Can See*** (Marion Boyars, £8.99, ISBN 978-0714531427).

Rhidian Brook's latest novel ***The Aftermath*** (Penguin, 28 August 2014, £7.99, ISBN 978-0241957479), set in post-war Germany, is the least overtly faith-driven of his books but deals with the major themes of sin, redemption and forgiveness in difficult circumstances.

The article appears in the **Church Times** for 25 April 2014, pp. 18-19.

•Michael Arditti quotes Goethe who believed that "*the conflict of faith and scepticism remains the proper, the only, the deepest theme of the history of the world*".

Arditti questions the apparent reluctance of contemporary novelists to tackle questions of faith in anything other than a superficial way. Some novels do little more than offer cursory portraits of fanatical Islamists while the conflict between liberalism and fundamentalism is rarely considered at a serious level.

In earlier generations writers took religion more seriously and well rounded portrayals of clerical characters can be found in the novels of Sterne, Fielding, Goldsmith, Trollope and others.

Michael Arditti's *Why I Write Fiction About Faith: novels must engage with religion* appears in **The Guardian** for 27 July 2013.

•John Lewis's *Shelf Belief* provides some interesting statistics on sales of religious books during 2013.

Following two successive years of sales in excess of £16 million, overall sales of religious titles dropped to £15.9 million in 2013. These figures, however, align with drops in sales in the non-fiction market generally.

Sales of books on non-Christian religions and comparative religion fell while there was an increase in the sales of books on Christian History and Denominations. With the four hundredth anniversary of the **King James Bible** behind us, Bibles and Liturgy sales fell by 7% to just under £5 million.

Richard Dawkins's **The God Delusion** (Black Swan, £8.99, ISBN 978-0552773317) remained the best-selling 'religious' title in the first two months of 2014. However there is some evidence of a declining interest in anti-religious works which may indicate that the taken-for-granted religious scepticism of popular culture is on the wane.

This article appears in **The Bookseller** for 7 March 2014, pp. 24-30.

•John Davies's *Fishing With Question Marks* pays tribute to the singer, songwriter and poet Sydney Carter who died ten years ago on 13 March 2004.

Carter has been described as Britain's greatest hymn-writer of the twentieth century and his most popular songs *Lord of the Dance* and *One More Step Along the World* top the popularity charts for school assemblies, weddings and even funerals.

Some of Carter's songs, however, are rarely sung in church, especially those that marry theology to contemporary

political concerns.

Poet and broadcaster (and past LCF speaker) Stewart Henderson describes Carter as "*an earth-bound visionary with a metaphysics for the ordinary person*".

Sydney Carter was a man of faith rather than of doctrine. Some of his songs, such as *Friday Morning*, which tells the story of the Crucifixion from the viewpoint of one of the thieves crucified with Jesus, take listeners into controversial areas.

The article appears in the **Church Times** for 14 March 2014, pp. 21-22.

EBSCO PUBLISHING

Christians in Library and Information Services (formerly LCF) has an electronic licensing relationship with **EBSCO Publishing**, "the world's most prolific aggregator of full text journals, magazines and other sources". The full texts of our two main publications - the **E-Newsletter** and **Christian Librarian** - are available on *EBSCO Publishing's* databases. Subscribers are able to retrieve articles from our publications and CLIS will receive a small commission for each article.

MOVING FORWARD

DIANA GUTHRIE reports on the launch of *Christians in Library and Information Services* at the Conference held on Saturday 5 April 2014 in the Chancellor's Room, *Hughes Parry Hall*, London

After coffee and a formal welcome to the Annual Conference, Louise Manners, Chair of CLIS, led us in a time of worship, which was followed by the Annual General Meeting, which reviewed the past year's developments and elected a new President and some of the officers. We said goodbye to Margaret Keeling, LCF President for the last few years, and welcomed Eddie Olliffe as the new CLIS President (our first non-librarian President).

We then settled down to listen to the first speaker of the day, **Neil Hudson**, Director of the *Imagine* project at the *London Institute for Contemporary Christianity*, whose theme was '*Losing the plot but trusting the author*'.

Librarians have long been '*the guardians of stories*', and

stories give us the chance to experience other lives, offering new perspectives; people who don't read can only live one life. Neil had found that half-way through reading a book (a John le Carré novel, for instance) he might feel completely disorientated by the plot, but he had to continue reading as he trusted the author. In a similar way, we need to keep the faith, even if we don't have a clue what God is doing with our lives.

Our Christian story begins in the Garden of Eden with the arrival of sin. God invites us to work with him in re-creation, and this story works itself out through many mini-stories, such as that of Ruth and Naomi, whose lives seemed to be forgotten by God; it is only at the end of that story that we find out how God uses these two women to push his story forward. He often begins a mini-story with people who wouldn't have counted for much in their own society – for example, there are notable examples in both Testaments of barren women used by God.

God wants to enrol us to his cause, whatever the circumstances we find ourselves in. Every time these circumstances change, we need to learn to be a slightly different sort of disciple. Most of us find it difficult to have a true perspective on our lives as we go along – that

usually only comes much later; we have to trust God as he moulds our mini-stories into his big one. He trusts us to trust him.

Neil concluded his talk with the list of the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5, to show how we could use them to influence the world outside the church:

- Modelling godly character
- Making a good work
- Ministering grace and love
- Moulding culture
- A mouthpiece for truth and justice
- The message of the gospel

In the comments and questions that followed, Neil said that a major change in our circumstances can disorientate us badly, but if we can allow God to lead us to the next phase in our lives, that will probably enable us to trust him more fully afterwards. We may not understand why our plans are overturned, but we still have to trust.

We broke for lunch at this point, re-grouping later for our afternoon speaker, **Peter Brierley**, formerly director of *Christian Research* and *MARC Europe*. His theme was '*Resources for making better decisions*', and as befits a longstanding researcher into trends in Christianity in the UK, his talk was illustrated with slides illustrating key trends in church

and society:

- There is a decline in the church-going population, both numerically and in terms of influence on society as a whole (and this decline will become more pronounced as the church-going population becomes older and dies off).

- Christian values are being replaced by secular ones - and as church-run projects affect nearly 400,000 people, their decline will mean society as a whole will have to find the resources to make up the shortfall.

- The sexualisation of society is taking place - the wide-reaching impact of the Internet has dramatically increased what was already a growing trend.

- Young people are mastered by technology – today's young people have never known anything else. New technologies have had an enormous effect on the way we communicate with each other.

- Huge generational variations in values and experience are evident in every part of life. In Christian terms this means that the young of today very rarely have a tradition of church-going and Bible knowledge, so that evangelisation has to start from scratch.

- The crumbling of the Christian heritage is taking place, resulting in the lack of firm moral and social standards, and the loss of the sense of the common good.

- There is an ageing population (a worldwide problem), resulting in increasing expenditure on health and welfare, paid for by a reduced proportion of younger people.

All these factors make the Christian message even more vital – it is eternally relevant and applicable.

Peter’s talk elicited a lively discussion:

South-East England produces statistics very different from the rest of the UK – one quarter of UK churchgoers live in London and the South-East.

Some lapsed Christians do return to their faith, but their numbers are small, particularly now that the younger returners will have had no Biblical teaching in childhood as a point of reference. The Black Majority Churches have a better record in holding on to their members, but they have not been entirely successful. What is not known for certain is the number of non-church-going Christians.

The *Universities’ and Colleges Christian Fellowship* claim that student conversions are going up; the organisation is switching from concentrating on

teaching and fellowship to being more mission-orientated. In spite of this, the largest university societies are Islamic.

Scripturally, Christians have always been a minority group, but one hundred years ago, they would have been in positions of influence, which is rarely the case now.

Amidst all these negative trends, there are some encouraging ones: cathedral congregations are growing, with mid-week activities and a greater focus on work with children; there are increasing opportunities in schools, with Christian organisations set up specifically to work with schoolchildren.

Systematic Biblical teaching is the key to a growing church, and it’s especially vital for new Christians.

All in all, CLIS has got off to an excellent start with its inaugural conference, with lively speakers and debate.

Eddie Olliffe, the new President, gave the vote of thanks.

Diana Guthrie, MA, serves on the Executive Committee of *Christians in Library and Information Services* as Minutes Secretary.

BETWEEN HEAVEN AND KING'S CROSS

GRAHAM HEDGES reports on a recent CLIS visit to the London headquarters of the Evangelical Alliance

For the past two and a half years I have been working as a volunteer in the London offices of the *Evangelical Alliance* where I have helped to catalogue the archives and book collections and indexed many of the back issues of *Idea* and its predecessor magazines.

On Thursday 22 May 2014 I was joined by six other members of *Christians in Library and Information Services* who came to spend an afternoon at the Alliance's attractive headquarters at 176 Copenhagen Street, London, N1 QST, not far from King's Cross station.

Our host for the afternoon was CLIS member Kim Walker who works as a full time member of the Alliance staff.

Welcoming the CLIS group, Kim said that she was pleased to be able to talk about her work as the EA's Senior Information and Research Officer.

Kim's background is in public libraries and, in her previous job, she was responsible for reference and information services in West Sussex. She joined the Alliance staff at a time when there was a pressing need for a Chartered Librarian who could organise and take responsibility for the significant collection of archives. There was much valuable material telling the story of evangelicalism from before and after 1846 but much of this material was inaccessible, and stored in cardboard boxes in a loft.

The job has developed since Kim first joined the staff in the Alliance's previous offices in Kennington, South London. She now works as part of the Media team alongside colleagues who have responsibility for the EA's printed and on-line publications.

Kim's duties include answering enquiries (forty or fifty a month) from the Alliance's personal members, churches, and members of the public. Some of these are straightforward and can be answered from a simple Internet search while others are more complicated and may need to be passed on to other specialist

members of the Alliance staff.

There are also requests for statistical information, requests for permission to reprint material, and requests for information about the Alliance's views on particular issues.

Kim has compiled information sheets on various issues and these are available on the EA web site. Popular topics include Christmas, Easter, Family Life and Church Statistics. A recent addition has been a resource page on the centenary of the First World War which includes links to relevant web sites.

In addition to her librarianship qualification Kim has a degree in media studies and enjoys carrying out wider responsibilities within the media team. These include proofreading *Idea* magazine and research reports, reading press releases from member organisations, and working with writers to produce news stories, for example on church growth, for *Idea* or the web site.

Other members of the media team include a Head of Media, full time and part time writers, a volunteer writer, and staff responsible for on-line publications.

In dealing with the

Alliance's archives, Kim says that she has had to make it up as she has gone along. However, much of the material representing the hundred and sixty eight year history of the Alliance is now organised and easy to find and available to answer information and research enquiries.

Steve Clifford, the Alliance's current General Director, has been an enthusiastic supporter of the archive cataloguing project and has often made use of archive material in talks and articles.

Information about the archive and book collections, and index entries for past issues of *Idea* magazine, are available on the library management system *Liberty*, produced by *Softlink*.

Having described much of her own work at the Alliance, Kim went on to tell us something of the history of the organisation.

The *Evangelical Alliance* began in 1846 at a time when there had been little contact and co-operation among the various denominations. There was a growing interest in Christian unity, however, and influential writers such as Thomas Chalmers had written books on this subject. A speculative announcement about a conference on unity had resulted in enquiries from 11,000 potential applicants!

Following a preparatory conference in Liverpool in 1845, the Alliance had been formally launched in 1846 in the unlikely setting of the *Freemasons' Hall* in London, at a conference attended by nine hundred delegates. Although there had been some negative aspects to this first conference, such as a desire to provide a counterweight to the growth of Anglo-Catholicism, there had also been a positive emphasis on fostering love between Christians of different traditions and providing an antidote to sectarianism.

The Alliance had originally been conceived as an international movement but a disagreement at the first conference about whether slave-owners should be allowed to become members led to the establishment of national organisations with their own criteria for membership.

The inaugural conference was followed by national and international conferences and the beginnings of a *Universal Week of Prayer* (now administered by the *European Evangelical Alliance*). There was considerable emphasis on religious liberty issues in the 1850s and 1860s and delegations were sent to Persia and Turkey.

During the First World War there were large scale prayer

meetings which attracted two and a half thousand people to London venues.

In 1924 the Alliance sponsored a display at the *British Empire Exhibition*. During the Second World War there were further prayer meetings, high profile advertisements on the London Underground, and work was carried out with refugees.

In 1946 there was an early visit to the UK by Dr. Billy Graham for a mission to young people and this led to the famous evangelistic crusades of 1954 and 1955 at London's *Harringay Arena*. These were sponsored by the Alliance but the high costs and over-spending on the budgets nearly bankrupted the organisation.

Despite this, other initiatives during the nineteen fifties included the Filey holiday week, the launch of ***Crusade*** magazine, and the start of the *Evangelical Missionary Alliance* in 1958 (now *Global Connections*).

Division reared its head in 1966 when Martyn Lloyd-Jones and John Stott disagreed at an Alliance assembly on whether evangelicals should withdraw from the doctrinally mixed denominations. This led to a loss of members.

Features of evangelical life during the later 1960s included

the effects of the charismatic renewal movement, a high profile for the Alliance in the media, and the beginnings of *Tearfund* (The Evangelical Alliance Relief Fund), now a separate organisation, in 1967.

The 1983 appointment of the Rev. Clive Calver, a regular speaker at such events as *Spring Harvest*, as General Director led to an upsurge in personal membership.

New initiatives during the General Directorship of the Rev. Joel Edwards included the *Micah Challenge* which campaigns for governments to implement the Millennium Development Goals.

Following the appointment of Steve Clifford as General Director in 2009 initiatives have included the *Biblefresh* campaign in 2011, the **21st Century Evangelicals** series of research reports, the *Confidence in the Gospel* training programme, and a Public Leadership project intended to nurture voices for God in our communities.

Kim's account of the history of the Alliance was followed by a not-quite-completed promotional video which included a number of images drawn from the archives.

After the conclusion of the video there was an opportunity to ask questions, look at various

items from the archives, including the minutes books from the 1950s Billy Graham campaigns, and tour the building. We paused to look at the book library (consisting mainly of donations from publishers), the archive room, and to admire the unique wall mural consisting of the complete text of the NIV Bible in a miniature type face. CLIS members were also introduced to many of the members of the EA staff.

Thanks were expressed to Kim Walker for an informative and thorough account of the Alliance past and present.

You can obtain more information from the *Evangelical Alliance*, 176 Copenhagen Street, London, N1 QST. Web site www.eauk.org

Graham Hedges, *Hon. FCLIP, MCLIP*, is Secretary of *Christians in Library and Information Services*.

LCF/CLIS ANNUAL REPORT 2013-2014



Major events of the year

The Annual Conference was held on Saturday 20th April 2013 at the *Methodist Central Hall*, Coventry. The theme was “*Beyond Librarianship*” with speakers Heather Lewis on “*Am I Just a Librarian?*” and Prof. Donald G. Davis, Jr., on “*Retirement: What Good Is It?*”

In 2013 there was a special emphasis on C.S. Lewis to mark the fiftieth anniversary of his death in 1963. The Annual Public Lecture, held in Oxford, on 19 October 2013 with Dr. Michael Ward, author of *Planet Narnia*, speaking on “*Imagination, Reason, Will: a Perspective on the Legacy of C.S. Lewis*” was quite probably LCF’s best ever attendance with up to one hundred people present in the *New Road Baptist Church*, Oxford.

This afternoon lecture was preceded by a morning visit to the *Bodleian Library*’s summer 2013 exhibition “*Magical Books: from the Middle Ages to Middle Earth*” based on the children’s fantasy literature of C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, Susan Cooper, Alan Garner and Philip Pullman.

On Friday 22 November 2013 a LCF group attended the memorial service at *Westminster Abbey* at which a memorial stone to Lewis was unveiled in Poets’ Corner. Dr. Rowan Williams was the preacher and other service participants included Dr. Michael Ward. The service was followed by lunch at *Westminster Central Hall* and a visit to the *Epworth Archive* where books from the former *Methodist Publishing House* have been organised and catalogued by LCF volunteers.

Other major visit of the year

Wednesday 22 May 2013 saw an evening visit to *Dr. Williams's Library*, the major theological subscription library in Bloomsbury, London, which is described as "*the pre-eminent research library of Protestant non-conformity.*"

Members in Scotland

The Scottish Regional Representative, Anne MacRitchie, has continued to produce and distribute a Scottish newsletter to members in Scotland.

Umbrella Conference

LCF was unable to organise the usual *Service of Thanksgiving* as part of CILIP's *Umbrella* conference at the *University of Manchester* in July 2013, due to a change in the format of the conference. However, LCF donated a Bible and book of prayers to the conference's multi-faith prayer room, and LCF leaflets were also provided. The Christian faith was represented in the conference exhibition by the Christian Book Promotion Trust's *Speaking Volumes* stand staffed by *Speaking Volume's* director Paula Renouf and supported by LCF Secretary Graham Hedges.

Publications

Four issues of ***Christian Librarian*** were produced containing articles covering such topics as: *Torch Trust* (ministry to people with sight loss including library services); the use of libraries in missionary work in Cambodia; the Christian Book Promotion Trust's *Speaking Volumes* library scheme; Malcolm Walker on his post-library career teaching English to university students in one of China's largest cities; the *Keston Center for Religion, Politics and Society Library and Archives* at *Baylor University*, Texas, and Richard Waller on his post-library career at *Flame Christian Radio*. Preparation for the launch of CLIS included "*fond memories*" of favourite LCF events from the past as nominated by officers of the Fellowship. As always there were the transcripts of the talks from the LCF annual conference and lecture.

Four issues of the ***E-Newsletter*** were produced. Topics covered in these issues included: Channel 5's dramatic production of ***The Bible***, the Big

Summer Read (Christian alternative to the Summer Reading Challenge), the official opening of the *Evangelical Alliance's* new offices in King's Cross, London, CILIP's proposed "re-branding" exercise, *Christians in Parliament's* "Faith in the Community" report, Christian fiction, the offer of free Bibles from the *Gideons* to public libraries, Arts and Entertainment Sunday, National Libraries Day, Easter reading and the *Christian Resources Exhibition*.

Outside publicity for the LCF

LCF continued to attract attention in outside publications. Relevant items (including articles, news items, diary entries and letters) appeared in ***CILIP Update***, ***Post-Lib***, ***Together***, ***Arts Centre Group e-news***, ***Premier Radio*** (web site "Billboard" feature). Paid advertisements (at discounted rates) appeared in the *Evangelical Alliance's* ***Easily Found*** and in ***The Door***, the magazine of Oxford's Anglican diocese, and helped to boost attendance at the October annual lecture.

Launch of CLIS

Following LCF's postal ballot of members, and the votes taken at last year's annual general meeting, the *Librarians' Christian Fellowship* officially became *Christians in Library and Information Services* in January 2014. A new logo was designed and adopted and the web-site has been re-designed.

Letters and press releases have been circulated to various organisations, publications and radio programmes informing them of this change and of our "Moving Forward" conference. To date there has been coverage in ***CILIP Update***, the ***Health Libraries' Group Newsletter***, CILIP North-East Group newsletter, ***Evangelical Times***, ***English Churchman***, ***British Church Newspaper***, ***Arts Centre Group e-news***, ***Together***, ***Christian Writer***, ***The Magnet***, ***Methodist Recorder***, ***Third Way***, ***Church Times*** (web site), *Transform Work UK* (web site), *Premier Radio* (web site "Billboard" feature), *Association of Christian Teachers* (web site), *Christians at Work* (web site and newsletter), ***Inspire*** (web site), ***Easily Found*** and ***Headlines*** (*Evangelical Alliance* information sheets).

The CLIS *Linked-In* and *Facebook* groups are in place. An appeal for books and equipment for the library of the *Chaima Christian Institute*, South Sudan has been made as part of the launch and has raised £330.

Membership

Membership is one hundred and sixty personal members, three Subscribers (three personal and seven institutional). Thirty-six gratis copies of ***Christian Librarian*** are distributed.

Elizabeth Watthews, a long-standing member of the Fellowship, died in March 2013. Her obituary was included in ***CILIP Update*** for August 2013. She lived in Ipswich in retirement but had held various library positions in different parts of the country.

Dr. **Donald Drew**, who died in early 2014, gave LCF's annual lecture "*Some thoughts on literary criticism and the purpose of literature*" in October 1981. He worked with Dr. Francis Schaeffer at *L'Abri Fellowship*, Switzerland for some years.

Committee/Officers of the Fellowship

We bid farewell to Margaret Keeling as President and give a welcome to Margaret as a Life Vice-President. We welcome Richard Waller as a Life Vice-President (after several years as a "regular" V.P.). We bid welcome to Eddie Olliffe as our new President and to Karen Hans as our first Prayer Secretary.

Four meetings of the executive committee have been held since the last annual general meeting.



When public spending cuts forced the closure of a branch library in Great Sankey, Christians from the local *King's Church* stepped in to fill the gap. CHRIS LITTLER tells the story

BELIEVING IN COMMUNITY

King's Community Centre came into being in September 2011 after *Warrington Borough Council* closed the building in the April of the same year, which had been *Great Sankey Library and Community Hall*. We approached the Council showing an interest in continuing initially to hold our *King's Tots* group, as we had used the building for the previous eight years, and there weren't any other suitable venues in the Great Sankey area.

Because other groups had shown an interest in taking over the building, it was put out to tender, as a Community Asset Transfer. *King's Church Warrington*, along with seven other community groups put together a Business Plan, and thankfully we won the bid.

It is run by volunteers from *King's Church Warrington*, and exists to reach out to the local community by providing a coffee shop, book lending service, lounge area used as a meeting place, and play area for toddlers. The centre is open Monday to Friday between 10.00 am and 2.00 pm.

We also hire out the hall area, at very reasonable rates, for children's parties and to local community groups, for example,

Slimming World all day Mondays, *Great Sankey Art Group* meets weekly on Tuesdays from 10.00 am to 12.00 noon. We have a *Needles and Natter* group also on Tuesdays from 11.00 am to 12.00 noon. This is for anyone who either knits, sews, or crochets, to get together. *King's Tots* meets on Friday mornings for pre-school children and their parents/grandparents/carers from 10.00 am to 11.30 am. The local police have a "*bobby in the lobby*" session on a bi-monthly basis, where neighbours can call in and discuss any concerns/suggestions. We work with the Council's Community Connector in providing a meeting place for local residents.

Our tagline is "*Believing in Community*" and *King's Church Warrington* works in a number of areas of Warrington, reaching out to people who have various interests, e.g. *King's Community Choir*, *Trekkings Walking Group*, *King's Tots* has three venues in Warrington. *King's Community Centre* is encouraging the local community of Great Sankey to use the building as a Central Hub, from where relationships can be made and a sense of community and belonging exists.

For more information contact *King's Community Centre* at Marina Avenue, Great Sankey, Warrington, Cheshire, WA5 1JH, Telephone 01925 451514, Web site www.kingscommunitycentre.co.uk or email us at bookings@kingscommunitycentre.co.uk We also have a group on Facebook.

Chris Littler is a member of the Management Team at the *King's Community Centre*, Great Sankey.

Following his election as President of *Christians in Library and information Services*, EDDIE OLLIFFE argues that books are vital for the health of society and declares a passionate belief in the future of libraries

LITERACY MATTERS – AND LIBRARIES MATTER TOO

Libraries are once again in the news, and not for the most encouraging of reasons. Closures, cuts and low staff morale seem to be the order of the day. Austerity has taken its toll. In that sense, libraries and bookshops have much in common. Both are fighting for the attention of the reading public, both are under pressure, feeling under-appreciated and threatened in a fast-paced and increasingly digital reading environment

Closure statistics are salutary. One hundred libraries are slated for closure this year, plus two-three hundred others to be taken over by volunteers, with the inevitable loss of a professional service. One library campaigner was reported in *The Bookseller* in February as saying, '*We are in a state of emergency*'. Local authorities will see cuts to their budget this year of 2.9%. One library assistant from British Columbia posted, '*Cutting libraries during a recession is like cutting hospitals during a plague*'. That quote obviously resonated as it's now all over the Internet.

The authoritative ***Public Library News*** web site states that, since April 2013, four hundred and eighty-nine libraries (including eighty one mobile libraries) have been closed, or are likely to be closed or have already been passed over to volunteers. This disturbing figure is almost 12% of the total library estate of approximately four thousand, one hundred and thirty four libraries around the country. It is just possible that local campaigning may halt a small number of these closures.

Yet this is not the whole story. There is another aspect to this particular soundtrack. The fight back has started. Central government is being forced to listen to a growing chorus of concern. The many thousands of employed librarians and their libraries are an irreplaceable national treasure. Most agree that libraries are vital centres for literature and reading. Libraries – along with most well run bookshops – emphatically have a future, albeit one that may be somewhat different from that which has gone before.

In September 2013, against these current trends, *Birmingham City Council* opened their flagship thirty-one thousand square feet, ten-floor '*Library of Birmingham*'; one of the largest libraries in the world, and built at a cost of £189 million. This library houses over one million books, the Quaker Cadbury family's *Bournville Village Trust Archive*, and one of the two most important Shakespeare collections in the world. Manchester and Liverpool have also opened revamped libraries very recently, both projects costing many millions of pounds.

What are the actual facts about libraries in the UK today?

- There are 4,134 public libraries in the UK (including mobiles)
- Forty new libraries opened in 2012 and 2013
- There are 288 million visits to public libraries each year

- This represents 4,522 visits per thousand of the population
- There are 42,914 computer terminals in libraries, all with library catalogue and public Internet access
- Public libraries lend 262.7 million books a year
- This breaks down into:
 - 91.6 million children's books;
 - 116 million adult fiction;
 - 54.6 million adult non-fiction
- There are 10.3 million active borrowers

(Source: *The Reading Agency* – accessed 20 March 2014)

The Bookseller noted in a recent editorial, ‘*there were ten times as many library visits last year as there were votes cast at the last General Election!*’ These statistics are impressive. Closures are obviously a real concern but these numbers are evidence of very considerable traffic flow in and out of the public library service every day.

The reinvention of the public library – as with the local bookshop - is underway. The Coalition government has just reconvened the *Sieghart Commission* (chaired by a Publisher) to report independently on the English library service, and report back to Parliament later this year. Its remit is to investigate how our public libraries should adapt for twenty-first century use. The importance of this commission is that its members are widely respected across all parts of our industry. This same group published a report on E-lending via libraries last year; the conclusions of which have been broadly supported, although the *Booksellers Association* has since expressed well-argued concerns and is requesting certain safeguards for bookshops. One of the newer members of the commission, Luke Johnson, suggests that future library services may well include computer training, childcare and career advice. However, the core activity

of promoting literacy and reading must surely continue.

Anyway, why am I writing about libraries in an article originally written for an esteemed journal dedicated to retailing and publishing? Well, for one thing, we each share a common vocation and the deep conviction that books are vital to the health of society, and need to be made available as widely as possible. Speak to anyone, and most will be able to recall their own childhood library. I visited my own local library in the Cotswolds on a weekly basis, taking out a pile of books every time. I came to know exactly what was on each of the shelves, and I was given special dispensation to take out more books than was normally allowed! There is no way that my parents could have supported my reading habit financially were it not for this library. As I write, in my mind's eye, the whereabouts of those books and layout of the shelves remain a clear memory. My two-year-old grandson has taken up the mantle, delighting in a large pile of children's picture books on a regular basis. I too have discovered the capers of ***Elmer the Elephant***.

We should all care about the future fate of our local libraries. The library continues to form part of that vital chain in introducing books and learning to future readers. In other words, the future customers of all good bookshops! We have tended to take our libraries for granted. I realise that there are those who see them as an anachronism in an age of the god, *Amazon*. Governments dislike the expense. The one hundred and fifty two separate local authorities responsible for the UK's library estate are caught between '*a rock and a hard place*' in trying to balance their books, so the easiest option is their closure. This is short-termism at its very worse.

Thankfully, councils have a statutory duty under a 1964 Act of Parliament to provide a '*comprehensive and efficient library service*' for their local communities. Anyone living in the UK is legally entitled to borrow a book free-of-charge from the public

library. Oddly, whilst prisons have the same duty to provide a prison library, this is not the case for schools.

We sometimes fail to realise that for some people, books remain expensive, particularly for the vociferous reader. Affordability of books remains a real issue, especially for young families and other sections of society. Not everyone has sufficient disposable income to spend on books. Why then are we closing so many libraries in the UK and removing this hard won social resource? Like bookshops, once they are gone, it's next to impossible to bring them back again. Does anyone actually care? Well, yes – many people do, and the Internet is full of campaigning web sites indicating significant grass-roots support around the country.

Among these websites are:

www.publiclibrariesnews.com

www.readingagency.org.uk/news *Click on 'library facts'*

www.voicesforthelibrary.org.uk

One of the more concerning aspects of this unfolding story is the sheer loss of library staff from the profession. Figures collated by the *Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy* show that employed staff numbers dropped 6.8% in the year 2012-13 to twenty thousand, three hundred and two professionals. Yet library volunteers in the same period shot up 45% to thirty three thousand, eight hundred and eight. For a vital public service this represents a double whammy: the closure of library buildings, and the loss of books and professional staff. The six million dollar question within the profession is whether volunteers are really in any position to run an efficient library service? That particular jury will remain out for some while yet.

Readers of this magazine will keep these closures and redundancies in their prayers, especially as many Christians work within the library world. Their profession is hurting in much the same way as in the publishing and retailing world, with the attendant impact of uncertainty and unsettledness on so many families.

I remain as passionate about the future of libraries as I do the future of bookshops. I fully expect both to remain part of our literary landscape. This is one reason why I am involved with *Speaking Volumes* (www.speakingvolumes.org.uk), a growing charity that exists '*to help libraries stock good-quality Christian books for all readers to enjoy*'. We work with public libraries, and also libraries in schools, prisons, hospices, playgroups and churches - anywhere, in fact, that books are lent or made available to a wide readership, and we assist by providing 50% of the full price of the books and DVDs.

In April, the *Librarians' Christian Fellowship*, recently re-branded as *Christians in Library and Information Services* (CLIS), appointed me as their next President. I am the first non-Librarian to hold this post, so feel something of a fraud! No matter, I'm a bookman at heart and anyway, I'd always harboured an ambition (unfulfilled) to train as a librarian.

This appointment signals CLIS's desire to bring those of us involved in books – whether authors, booksellers, librarians or publishers – closer together. To quote ***Christian Librarian***, this change of name '*signals to the wider professional world that CLIS is responding to changing times; to the way jobs and work places may be nothing like the work patterns and careers of the past. We have come to this point out of a deep conviction about our calling as a Christian voice in an increasingly secular world*'.

This is absolutely a platform upon which I am proud to stand.



Eddie Olliffe has contributed to the Christian resources trade for over thirty years. Founder of *Charity and Retail Portfolio Management* (www.crpm.org.uk), he blogs at <http://eddieolliffe.wordpress.com> and is on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/eddieolliffe> In April, Eddie was appointed President of *Christians in Library and Information Services* (CLIS).

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DAVID MATSVERU provides a personal testimony and evaluation of theological education and librarianship in Africa

MY CALL INTO THE 'MINISTRY OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION'

“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent?” (Romans 10: 13-15, KJV.)

Theological librarianship as a calling

As a theological librarian, I am in the Lord’s ministry. Hence I am a minister, serving the Lord as one sent by him.

Information is important to every human daily living. Without it, people cannot make informed decisions. Romans 10:13-15 formed the basis of my call into the ministry of information provision. I have served in this capacity for the past twenty-three years without regret. Working in a theological institution offers me great opportunity to serve the Lord in a unique way. As a librarian serving at a tertiary and evangelical college, I am helping students not only to appreciate information, but also to be able to write and use their writing as a vehicle for spreading the gospel.

Although I studied theology for three years, I do not consider myself a theologian. I consider myself a partner in the ministry of theological training. Theological educators, even

though they are not pastoring a local church, are ministers in their own right. They have studied theology and they teach theology. I studied Library and Information Science and am serving in a special way in a theological resource centre. As a theological librarian, I am involved in theological education. Therefore, I am a theological educator.

Here is how it works:

Education does not only take place in the classroom setting. The work of education that begins in the classroom is brought to completion in the library. As the librarian, I identify the information needs, acquire the needed information sources, and organise them for quick access by the students and the lecturers.

Pastoral work is ministry because it is relational. It focuses on changing human lives. Similarly, theological librarianship is ministry and is relational. Pastoral work is about dealing with people and shaping their character. As a theological librarian, I deal not just with books but also with people in a very special and dynamic way. My task involves using information sources to shape students' understanding, viewpoints and philosophies. The result is that by the end of the training, you have a student with improved spiritual, ethical and moral perceptions compared to the time the student entered college. Therefore, as a theological librarian, I am involved in shaping the character and destiny of men and women in theological institutions, directly or indirectly.

As someone who acquires, manages and provides information sources that contribute to the spiritual, social and educational growth of students and staff, my work has a spiritual impact in the institution. It should be known that being a librarian in a theological institution is a calling. Theological librarianship is full time ministry. I encourage those studying theology to consider theological librarianship as a way of serving the Lord - *'discipling the disciples'*. It is easier serving as a librarian in a theological institution when one has theological training.

My personal ministry story

In 1988, I went for theological training, intending to come back and pastor my local church, *Epworth Evangelical Church*. When I graduated in 1991, I served my church as a member. I was happy to serve them because I was at that time working as an assistant librarian at *Harare Theological College*. At the same time, I was studying in the evenings for a Certificate in Library and Information Science. It had never crossed my mind that one day I would become a librarian, but thank God for Ann Liddle (now late) who introduced me to the profession in 1988 while I was a first year Bible college student. I have since worked on my qualifications up to masters' level.

When I got married in 1994, my wife and I made a decision to move to a church where we could not only teach but could also learn from other mature believers. So we moved to *Cranborne Community Church*. After a year serving in this church, we were called to *Harare Evangelical Church* (a bigger congregation within our denomination) to teach Sunday School.

After a year of serving as Sunday School teacher at *Harare Evangelical Church*, we received a part-time pastoral call and moved to *Tafara Evangelical Church* in January 1996. This time our task, as we understood it, was to teach the church and grow it by God's grace to autonomy. By the end of our time there, the church was supposed to be able to call and support a full time pastor financially. We accepted the challenge and pastored this church on a part-time basis, without a salary. We enjoyed it. Of course, I should admit that when we took the challenge we were very young and always felt it was too big a challenge for us. By God's grace, we pastored this church until 2002 when the church had grown and was able to support a full time pastor financially.

In the same year that we left *Tafara Evangelical Church*, we planted a church in Hatfield (*Green Valley Evangelical Church*) with a friend, the late Edward Chidzanga. Chidzanga allowed the young church to erect a temporal structure in his yard. This church was a real joy; it was growing fast, both spiritually and

numerically, until the temporal structure was destroyed in 2005 during Operation Clean-Up (where the Government ordered destruction of all informal settlements). This was a very painful event. The demolition greatly affected my friend (Edward Chidzanga) and his family, as their house was also destroyed, and a year later (2006) Chidzanga died after a very short illness.

The church had started after I was given an opportunity to preach at a funeral in Chidzanga's community - a child had drowned in a dam. When I preached that night, the father of the child (Mr Kasere) gave his life to the Lord and from this day, a church was born in the community.

Those who saw me during those years expected me to resign from my job as a librarian and become a full time pastor. Even now, some people ask me the question: '*Why have you left the ministry?*' My simple answer is: I have not left the ministry at all. I am still in the ministry. I am a minister. To be specific, I am in the theological education ministry. I know very well that I may not be regarded as a minister in the same way as pastors, reverends and missionaries, but I am a minister in my own right. I perceive myself as being in ministry because there is a theological and spiritual focus to my work that adds to my satisfaction and contentment. I am taking part in the equipping of men and women for ministry in Namibia and beyond. Taking a pastoral position in a local church is not the only way to serve God full time. Being a librarian in a theological library offers one an opportunity to serve the Lord.

Challenges of theological librarianship

There are challenges in serving as a librarian in theological colleges in Africa.

Theological colleges do not emerge overnight. Their establishment is a long process. The creation of theological libraries is dependent on the historical background of the institution. Missionaries started most theological colleges in

Africa. As they planted churches, they also saw the need to develop national leadership. Those missionaries who left the mission countries for home assignments donated their books to the colleges to start libraries. Many times the wives of the remaining missionaries would offer to set up libraries and be the librarians.

Although this has helped to start libraries in theological colleges, it has also brought with it some challenges. The missionaries who started libraries did not have the necessary qualifications, which gave the wrong impression that anyone can be a librarian or that it is not necessary to have a trained person. While many in theological education may subscribe to the fact that the library is the central nerve of any academic institution, in practice this is not the case in theological colleges in Africa. This is confirmed by the fact that colleges recruit lecturers with masters' degrees to teach theology but not a qualified librarian to run the library. I have seen this in Zimbabwe and in Namibia where I have served as a librarian. There are times when I have felt very lonely as the only trained librarian serving in a theological institution.

A personal evaluation of theological institutions in Africa

The trend in missionary-led institutions has always been that overseas donors give to '*their own*' – someone they know or from their country. This makes life in theological institutions very difficult and unpredictable for nationals. There is a lack of mutual trust. Serving in a theological college in Africa is a real sacrifice for nationals. Even though the colleges are in Africa, very few churches have a sense of owning the colleges, despite attempts by missionaries to forge marriages of convenience. My personal interpretation of this scenario is that there is a material gap between those who run the colleges and those who run the churches. Nationals run churches while theological colleges are in most cases run by expatriates who do not seem to struggle materially. In addition, the vision of the church and the vision of

colleges are not the same. What missionaries may view as important may be different to what locals view as important. There is, in my view, a perception from the church that theological colleges have money because they are run by missionaries, and there is therefore no need to give towards theological education. Instead, some pastors believe that the colleges must give to the struggling churches.

One other important issue is that of doctrine. Many theological colleges have become inter-denominational. However, the problem is: who then should influence the doctrine of these institutions? Many times the staff does it alone. The national church has very little input into what is taught in theological colleges. They do not have a say in the theology, therefore they offer no support, financially or spiritually. Some denominations have reacted by simply starting their own Bible colleges. Unfortunately, some missionaries strongly believe that the reason why churches do not support theological institutions is that the church in Africa is poor, and hence the need to solicit for funds from elsewhere. Personally, I do not think that money is the issue. It seems that willpower and desire play a major role. The interest of the church is not in inter-denominational colleges. Those nationals who decide to work in inter-denominational theological colleges do so at their own risk, as there is no support from within or without. While missionaries are supported financially by their home churches, nationals are not supported by their churches to serve in theological colleges. Foreign churches are also not ready to support them. This probably explains why nationals with theological training at higher levels from elsewhere find it difficult to come back home and serve in theological institutions.

Churches are too denominational in their approach to theological education. Very few students come for theological training with the blessings of their churches. They also come with no significant funding. Those who come on their own find it difficult to go back and serve as pastors. The numbers of students are diminishing, making it difficult for theological colleges to make any significant development from tuition fees

or even to pay staff well. Serving in theological colleges is therefore a big sacrifice for nationals and their families. Those who make it to Europe never come back to teach in theological colleges. Instead, they join universities. If the situation is not addressed, I personally do not see theological education doing well in the future in Africa.

Recommendations on addressing the challenges

- Colleges (missionaries) need to empower and strengthen the church's (nationals) sense of responsibility and ownership of theological institutions.
- There is a need for open and genuine dialogue between colleges (missionaries) and the church (nationals).
- There is a need for the church on a regular basis to support theological colleges financially and spiritually.
- Each denomination needs to second at least one student every year and support a lecturer who will serve the college for five years.
- There is a need for the church to respect a certain degree of autonomy, which theological colleges as academic institutions deserve for their proper functioning.
- Churches need to learn to support inter-denominational colleges instead of each denomination creating its own separate college.
- Churches need to learn to put their resources together and do away with the begging syndrome that has affected African countries, colleges and churches. We do not have sufficient resources for each church to have its own college and it unnecessarily promotes division.

- Theological colleges need to initiate programmes of contextualization of theological education, while also being aware of the universality of the church. Some colleges are inter-denominational only in name, but are teaching their leaders' church doctrines. Others are just teaching their leaders' cultures. Personally, I strongly believe that an inter-denominational college should expose the students to the various views and let the choice be up to the student.
- Those who are leading theological colleges in Africa need to strengthen inter-denominational colleges with ecumenical commitment and to find ways to allow participation of minority churches in programmes of theological education. The one-size-fits all approach to theological education does not work, and the attitude that says we know what you want will never build the African church. Instead, it destroys. There is great need for theological colleges to engage in inter-contextual exchange and networking with institutions of theological education from other parts of the world. We need to get in touch with other theological institutions in Africa and outside of Africa, but not only importing. The majority of theological colleges in Africa are Western institutions in Africa.

Conclusion

To Africans desiring to serve God full time, theological librarianship offers that opportunity. You do not have to be a pastor to be in full time ministry. However, if your desire is to make money, do not consider working in a theological college. Personally, I have worked in theological colleges for more than

twenty three years and have never slept on an empty tummy. The Lord has always provided.



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