

PROFILE CONNIE HAWKES

Knowing that Connie Hawkes - a familiar figure in the serials world - would be starting her well-earned retirement at the end of September, we were very pleased to have the chance of talking to her about her career and views.

Currently sub-librarian in charge of periodicals at the University of London Library at Senate House, she has accumulated more than 33 years experience in serials and can claim to be a founder member of the UKSG when it was conceived and set up in the Seventies.

Connie started her career in 1946 in Holborn, in the last closed access public library in London. Her three month stay there was mainly spent on the circulation desk and was followed by her move to Senate House in November 1946 where she developed her professional career. Like every new recruit, her first position there was in postal loans - a considerable department at Senate House which had a high proportion of external students. She then progressed through cataloguing, spells in the Reading Rooms and the membership department before her first taste of journals - a 5 year stint in the periodicals department. This was followed by work on the preparation of the Library's acquisitions lists, renewed spells in the Reading Room and finally in 1960 - a return to claims, Roneodexes, invoices and all the other responsibilities of the Periodicals Department.

During her early years at the library she undertook a history degree at the nearby Birkbeck College and also qualified as an Associate of the Library Association. Her department's current responsibilities cover periodicals (and continuations) in the widest sense: selection, budgetary control, ordering, recording and processing, claiming, cataloguing, binding, union list input, depository work and reference services. Some 5,300 titles are currently received with a further 18,000 - 20,000 dead titles. The department has 5 full-time staff and 5 half-time (who also have responsibilities in other departments). The University of London has a large number of college libraries, many of which have very extensive holdings, as well as a variety of separate institutes and medical libraries. The Library at Senate House therefore tends to be



strong in general holdings - arts, humanities and literary collections.

Library cuts

Like all academic libraries in the UK, budget cuts have left their mark here in recent years. There has been an 18% loss of library staff over the last three years. Connie lost two full-time assistants but gained a share in the services of a library typist.

Connie's breadth of experience at the Library has resulted in her increasingly being drawn into University committee work - particularly because of budget cuts and the need to consider rationalisation and resource sharing within the University's libraries. She is currently heavily involved with the Library Resources Coordinating Committee's (LRCC) medical sub-committee which is considering the use of scarce resources, means of harmonisation of services and the general availability of the medical library collections. Her involvement with such necessary committee work, combined with the already reduced staffing in her own department, has however placed considerable time pressures on Connie and her periodicals colleagues. Particularly significant cutbacks in "central activities" within the University are being sought by the University Grants Committee within the next year or so. There is continuous work therefore towards rationalisation within the Bloomsbury area. Subject areas have been reduced or cut out completely; overlap of journals and journal usage are on-going exercises. Connie's own department has had its fair share of cancellation exercises over the last 4 - 5 years

taking up a considerable amount of staff time. Use of the library at Senate House often relates to the interdisciplinary coverage that it provides - readers using their own college libraries for their main subjects - making cancellation decisions extremely difficult.

BUCOP

Colleagues will know that one of Connie's hobby horses has been the demise of BUCOP (British Union Catalogue of Periodicals) which ceased in 1980. She would very much like to see a major national union list of serials and feels that advances in automation would now have made this possible. Serials in the British Library is, she feels, less valuable a tool because of its coverage now only of the collections in the British Library, whilst KIST (Keyword Index to Serial Titles) - which is used constantly - has no bibliographical information. The lack of a central union source of non-current titles therefore is a noticeable gap in the country's bibliographic coverage and Connie compares the situation with that at the start of her periodicals career, when it was necessary to collect individual library holdings - a time-consuming and inefficient approach.

UKSG

When the time comes to write the history of the UKSG, Connie, and her archives, must surely be one of the first sources of reference. Indeed whilst we spoke she handed me, to place in the Group's archives, her collection of correspondence from 1975-77 containing many of the points that were considered and decided upon when the group was being formed. She was a founder member of the Group when it emerged from the original Blackwell's Periodicals Conference. At that time, she and other interested periodicals librarians felt there was a very practical need to meet, to understand each other's problems and to learn more about the way the various parties in the information chain - publishers and suppliers - worked. She remembers the look on some of the publishers' faces at early meetings when confronted with the problem of title changes and discovering that even though it may have been printed on page 13 that a title had changed, periodicals librarians did not in fact read every issue from cover to cover.

When the UKSG was being set up the possibility was explored of affiliation with established bodies such as the L.A. and SCOUNL although the general feeling was that it should be an

independent and mixed organisation and this was the decision which won the day and one with which Connie was very happy. She feels that the involvement and contribution of the commercial members was invaluable; indeed the resources they provided helped to sustain the Group, and in particular provided continuity within the UKSG's operating committee. That they should have equal status in the Group was one of her early wishes.

She would like to see a more varied membership of the Group in terms of types of libraries joining and whilst she recognises the need to set the membership fee at its current level of £30.00. any significant increase above this might, she believes, create a barrier to future growth, particularly in the current climate of reduced budgets.

Whilst recognising that the Group would not have been so successful were it not for the continuity and experience provided by some of the longer term members of the committee, Connie would like to see new members coming forward to make their contribution, as she strongly feels the Group should be run by, and reflect the wishes of, its wider membership. One of the results of severe budget restrictions and staff reductions, is that serials librarians are now under so much pressure, that there is generally little time to devote to professional matters and rigours of committee work.

Over the last 10 years or so Connie has seen the Group develop into a successful internationally recognised body. She served on the committee of the Group for the first three years of its existence and was the Newsletter editor for the first 4 issues. She has also attended every annual conference except Leeds this year and whilst she realises that it is inevitable that the Group's success brings with it a larger annual conference, there is a hint of nostalgia for the smaller earlier meetings.

What of her plans for retirement? Hide the alarm clock and go to bed for a week was her reply. Certainly initially she would like to avoid all timetables and have the opportunity to wind down and reflect. Then she plans to "fill in gaps in her knowledge" in her areas of interest, including history, through courses and readings. We wish her a long and happy retirement.

Albert Prior