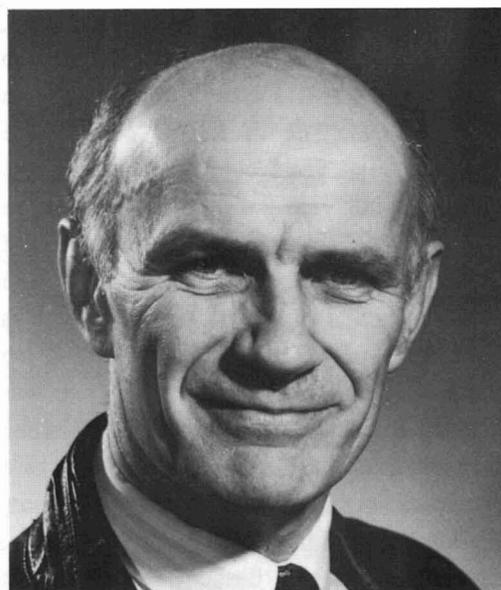


## Profile: Peter W. Lea

Peter Lea was born in Morecambe, a more attractive but less famous seaside resort than its Lancashire neighbour, Blackpool, and grew up in Dalton-in-Furness, near Barrow. He thus had easy access to an attractive coastline and the unrivalled beauty of the Lake District. Unfortunately, this meant that work opportunities were quite few and after leaving Ulverston Grammar School at the age of sixteen he entered employment in a local tannery. Six months of this hard life convinced him that there must be something better to look forward to and he was fortunate enough to gain his first librarian assistant post at Barrow Public Library in 1957. There he took the First Professional examination having studied part-time by correspondence course. He enjoyed his work, as one of the few males on the staff, but regretted the loss of time to play his favourite sports. Brian Read, the Technical Librarian, newly arrived from Manchester, proved to be a great influence introducing Peter to rock climbing, folk music and a new level of career awareness.

There followed a move to Manchester to join the staff of the then College of Science and Technology (now UMIST) where he met L.L. Arden, another influential figure. Encouraged to do so, he went for one year to study for his Associateship at the local College of Commerce (1962-63) but, on returning to his college job, found the atmosphere changed and not to his liking. So he engineered a move to the great Manchester Public Library, but remained only nine weeks as an AP3 post became available at Oldham Public Library just down the road. The post was that of Technical Librarian, charged with the task of setting up the town's first technical library service, and offering the princely sum of £1000 a year salary.

The move to Oldham proved to be significant in more than one sense, in that it introduced him to his first teaching commitment at the local Technical College involving part-time Liberal Studies, with a literature, library sources bias. He greatly enjoyed



the experience and made a mental note to keep an eye on full-time teaching openings. Next came, in 1964, a move to ICI Dyestuffs Division, working under Don Mason, where he operated as Accessions Librarian until 1967.

Then followed a major career move to the School of Librarianship, Manchester, in September 1967, at the modest level of Assistant Lecturer. As many of our readers will know Peter is still there in the Polytechnic and has no desire to move out of teaching as his enthusiasm for work with students remains undimmed, despite changes and pressures over the years. He has progressed to the post of Senior Lecturer and is happy to remain at that point, particularly if it enables him to avoid the worst of academic politics and committee responsibilities. But he greatly enjoys his role as Deputy Course Leader for the BA.

His teaching career has enabled him to specialize and travel. Conferences and papers have taken him to the USA, Netherlands, Belgium, Israel, Denmark and Qatar. He benefited from BL sponsorship for seven weeks in 1976 when he carried out a study of alternative methods of periodical publishing in the USA. This came out of a fascinating year spent in the first intake of the MLS course at Loughborough University. As a result of scope for self-directed study, Peter was able to explore his interest in serials, particularly alternative publishing and was greatly helped in this by Stella Keenan, newly

arrived from the USA. It was during his 1976 study in the States that he met information consultant, John Strawhorn, who was later to invite him to work at the IMF/World Bank Joint Library in Washington, DC. The invitation could have extended to several years but Peter and his wife decided that one year was all that could be managed. An initial agreement to accept the post of Assistant Reference Librarian led to a 1985-86 leave of absence. On arrival however he was appointed Head of References Services. The job was challenging and taxing and the one year was not long enough to assimilate the working ethos and introduce many changes, but Peter values it as a major professional and cultural experience. His son, David, whose birthday falls on the 4th July, experienced his best ever birthday in Washington where the Americans seemingly put on a terrific fireworks display especially for the occasion.

Despite the stimulation of the American scene, Peter was pleased to return to his teaching and continued to encourage his students to look at serials in greater depth than is and was customary. He also expended part of his American energy in organising his Department's 40th Anniversary celebrations, but much of his enthusiasm was used to persuade others of the importance of serials in the curriculum. At one time he was able to carve two and a half hours per week for a whole term out of a seriously congested timetable but pressures have since eroded this. But he spoke warmly of the success of the recent UKSG workshop which had been well received by students. Peter has supplemented his teaching with the publication of several significant pieces of work, perhaps the best known being the LA's "Printed Reference Material", now in its third edition.

It would be difficult to find anyone who speaks more enthusiastically than Peter on the value of UKSG. He considers the Annual Conference to be quite exceptional in terms of organisation and content. He attended the inaugural session in Oxford, served on the Committee for two years, before moving to the States, and particularly welcomed the move some years ago to allow open membership to serials personnel around the world. He sees the mix of all those involved in the information chain coming together under the UKSG banner as having a high degree of

significance and value.

These days he is a fascinated observer of the impact on the journal of new technology and the social and economic pressures which continue to support the present system. He understands the desires of academics to see their research published in prestigious journals but equally sees the real need for more effective access to new knowledge and ideas, by electronic means if necessary. His interest in information technology is demonstrated by his involvement from the beginning with the LAIT Group. He acted as its first Chairman from 1982-85 and has since represented the Group on the LA Council.

The slim build and lean looks of our subject are explained by his love of rugby union, first as a player from 1960-87, which suggests a certain durability, and latterly as a referee. He is out on the pitch every weekend, sometimes twice a week, and gets a "real buzz" from his extramural activity. He has attained rapid promotion up the many scales of the refereeing ladder and can now expect to be called to referee second-team games of famous clubs and to travel outside his own region.

He looks back with pride and pleasure at his two other favourite sporting achievements, finishing a painful marathon about 10 years ago. . . "I wish that I had trained for it", and flying a twin engined aircraft for 30 minutes as a surprise birthday present.

He also enjoys County and Test cricket and expends the final dregs of physical strength on his large garden, which can be a chore but which he enjoys quite a lot. Recovery periods are spent brewing beer, enjoying wine, eating out, reading, listening to jazz and watching TV. Peter's wife, Barbara, has her own impressive career in administration, although she too was a librarian at one time, and David, the 13-year old son, who celebrated his birthday by the Potomac River, supports Manchester Utd. in contrast to Dad's Liverpool.

I came away with the impression of a contented person who enjoys his teaching but someone with a strong spring of physical energy substantially expended on his beloved rugby. A nice person to be with and one who has been quick to see what he really wants out of life. Perhaps we should persuade him back on to the UKSG Committee. □

*John Cowley*