

# Profile — Lyndsay Rees-Jones



*Lyndsay Rees-Jones*

**Why Librarianship?** My excuse is that I was a school librarian. All that power and badge too! Seriously though (and Librarians are supposed to be serious aren't they), it seemed sensible to study for a degree that effectively trained me at the same time. A Library Studies course at Manchester Polytechnic seemed to fit the bill. I was wrong. I didn't appreciate that without a first degree in a specialist subject the doors to academic libraries would be effectively closed. Neither did I realise that Library School would not prepare me for the particular problems associated with small libraries.

I was an uninspired student, and after my graduation did not go directly to the Library world (I didn't pass go or collect £200 either). I actually began my working life with J&J Cash's (the 'name-tape' people) in Coventry as a management trainee, but Libraries beckoned in the shape of GEC Electrical Projects Ltd (in Rugby). I was appointed the Company Librarian. There was much to be done to bring the Library into the 1980's. What existed were the embers of a large library going back to the days of BTH and AEI (you'll have to look in the history books to find these nostalgic names), I inherited collections of Dickens

and Shakespeare (and a full-time assistant). No-one tells you at Library School that you need to wear overalls and a hard-hat when moving old Science Abstracts from dusty, damp vaults.

After a couple of years I left to have a family and there followed a six year break!!!! In actual fact I worked free-lance during this time. I set up a library for a firm of Contract Interior Designers called Trioka Contacts which was good experience, as the field was very different from GEC, I also undertook several market research surveys for an independent consultant.

In the summer of 1986 (just in time for the start of the school summer holidays, and the headache that brings on!) I re-joined GEC Electrical Projects Ltd as their Librarian. Things had changed in my absence, and I was now a 'One-Man Band', a 'One-Person Library'. The company name also changed during 1991 to CEGELEC Projects Ltd, a direct result of the sale of the business to CGE Alsthom of France (although this metamorphosis took a little longer than I have indicated).

Library school does not (or did not) sufficiently prepare you for the experience of working on your own. Suddenly you are responsible for acquisitions, serials management, inter-library loans, general library administration as well as answering those pesky people who will keep, asking questions! Unfortunately the term Librarian no longer accurately describes a job that involves all aspects of library management and information provision. The title Librarian/Information Officer more accurately reflects the scope of the job, and this is what I became. Does anyone know why "Information Officer" seems to conjure up a go-ahead individual, whereas "Librarian" conjures up an entirely different image - one of twin-sets and pearls plus the eponymous 'Silence Signs'. I know that this is a sweeping generalisation, but unfortunately it has more than a grain of truth.

In October 1992 I moved to a position as

Librarian/Information Officer for the National Grid Company PLC, who moved their Corporate Headquarters to Coventry in September 1992. The National Grid Library had to be re-started virtually from scratch after the division of resources amongst the industry, when the CEGB was split up in 1990. Since the move to Coventry the Library has experienced further change — physical shrinkage and a 50% cut in staff. I'm familiar with cuts, but for me this has actually meant a change to a 'One-professional Library' as I now have a full-time assistant. The move is quite a challenge and, as I have no preconceptions, also quite exciting. I have a lot of support from within the company to progress the Library Service, and to make the best use of internal and external sources in order to provide a service to the National Grid Company. Since my start National Grid has joined UKSG, NAG, CADIG (Coventry and District Liaison Group), WMRLS (West Midlands Regional Library System) and ASLIB.

It is important to stay aware of changes in the library world and to keep in touch with other professionals. In larger libraries this happens automatically, but a "one-man band" has to work at it. No-one works well in isolation (journal literature informs but is a bit short on conversation!). Meeting fellow professionals and people working in other aspects of the same business is, I believe, essential if you are to have a true picture of the way things are out there in the 'real world'. If, by chatting over lunch, or talking to exhibitors, you can resolve a long-term problem or even a short-term niggle, this has to be worth the cost of attendance at a conference.

As a student at Manchester I was elected Student Representative to the local branch of the Library Association. I have been a member ever since, and even got round to getting my Charter after my return to full-time work! I am currently serving on the Library Association Industrial Group (LAIG) committee. The Library Association is going through a period of change, and with a Librarian now acting as Chief Executive the future looks more optimistic for a body which represents the diverse

people which Librarians are.

I first came across UKSG at the special Conference on CD-ROMs held in York during October 1989. It was a fascinating introduction to the progress with CD-ROM's with the "revolutionary" CD-I being demonstrated. It was also an illuminating introduction to the UKSG and the way the group conducted itself (and particularly how its members relaxed)!

Following a conversation at this Conference I ran one of the workshop sessions at the 13th Annual UKSG Conference and AGM held in April 1990 in Southampton. The exciting title was "Do It Yourself The Problems of the Small Library". I feel quite strongly about the whole issue of the Librarian who works alone and their particular difficulties (is it possible to feel evangelical about small libraries?). I have since attended the 14th and 15th Annual Conferences and benefited both from what I have learnt from the range of presentations, and from the contacts and friends that I have made. One of the most important strengths of UKSG is that it represents all facets of the serials industry. I was flattered to be co-opted onto UKSG Committee after the 1992 AGM. Both myself and Maggie Charlton from ZENECA Pharmaceuticals in Macclesfield hope to increase the committees awareness of issues effecting Special Libraries.

National Grid are very supportive of my involvement with UKSG and LAIG (as were CEGELEC), and I hope to improve on my tentative start with the UKSG Committee. I am sure that there is a lot of scope for the group to extend a helpful arm to the beleaguered army of 'small' libraries (an interesting picture is conjured up!). The phenomenon of the 'one-person library' is going to grow, especially in the present economic climate. If libraries are to continue in many institutions they will have to restructure, Groups such as ASLIB's "One-Person Library" Group only cater for institutional membership, and although it is important, and valuable, to have contact with people in similar situations, I feel that there is a lot of scope for groups like UKSG to represent the particular issues effecting small units.