



A Profile of Lynne Brindley

*Lynne Brindley
and the BL's
portrait of Lord
Dainton*

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Lynne Brindley will be known to all readers of *Serials* as the first professional librarian to become the Chief Executive of the British Library since it was established by the British Library Act 1972, and your editors were delighted when she agreed to be interviewed for a *Serials* Profile. On her appointment to the British Library Lynne said: "I feel enormously privileged to be taking on the job of Chief Executive at such a critical time. I am looking forward to....developing programmes to enhance traditional library activities, to reach out to new publics and to put digital library developments centre stage". After just over two years in post, we can all see clear evidence that Lynne is actively pursuing these objectives. Co-operation and partnerships are high on the agenda – which is good news for all those involved in the information industry.

So, what was Lynne's background and who were her mentors on the way to this top position in one of the world's leading research libraries?

Lynne was brought up and educated in Cornwall – where her parents still live – and she regards this as her "spiritual home". She attended boarding school and then went to Reading University where she obtained a First Class Honours Degree in Music, with subsidiary German and Philosophy. After a short spell at the Bodleian Library she went on to study for a Master's Degree in Library and Information Studies at University College London – where she is now a Fellow.

Interestingly, the first ten years of Lynne's professional career were spent at the British

Library and some of this time was even spent doing cataloguing and classification at the British National Bibliography (BNB)! But by 1979 she had worked her way up to become Head of Customer Support and then Head of the Chief Executive's Office where she worked with Sir Fred Dainton who had a significant influence on her subsequent career and who became a life-long mentor. It was in the Chief Executive's Office that Lynne had her first introduction to corporate marketing and strategic issues and she was involved in the creation of the British Library's first Five Year Strategic (or Corporate) Plan. She even found time during this period to hone her management skills at Henley Management College. However, it is Maurice Line whom she credits with pushing her towards the job of Director of Library & Information Services at Aston University, which she took up in 1985.

Lynne stayed at Aston for five years rising to the senior position of Pro-Vice Chancellor for Information Technology, the first such post in a UK University. She credits the then Vice-Chancellor of Aston – Sir Frederick Crawford – with giving her "tremendous scope for innovation and culture change". Aston became the first UK 'wired' campus and Lynne spent time at Stanford University in the US learning about quality and excellence. Then 1990 saw her take a perhaps surprising career change into the private sector when she was appointed as Principal Consultant at KPMG. She worked on information systems and information strategy in government. The two years at KPMG were

hugely important in shaping her strategic thinking and fine tuning her project management skills. It involved "lots of learning" ... "you *have* to deliver".

In 1992 Lord Dainton came back into her life when she moved to the London School of Economics. Lynne loved LSE and looks back on this period as a very rewarding time working closely with John Ashworth, who was Director. But the library was a "jewel in a slum" and one of her tasks was fund raising for a new building. At the same time she also took over the running of the Computer Centre (as at Aston). She reflects that one of the consistent themes for her career has been the integration of library and information services with the power of computing technology. The other theme has been change management both in her local institution but also in the wider community.

Virtually every reader will remember the Follett Report published in 1993 and the enormous impact it has had on electronic library developments in the UK. Lynne was heavily involved in the subsequent E-Lib Programme, including some of the early JSTOR work, and chaired FIGIT (the Follett Implementation Group on IT), and she describes E-Lib as "immensely effective.... and envied around the world". It certainly meant a lot of international travelling on behalf of JISC for her at this time, and LSE opened doors to organisations like UNESCO. International travelling aside, Lynne's next career move in 1997 was to Leeds University as Librarian and Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Communications and IT – responsible for Communications, IT, Media Services, Careers and two major academic faculties. Being a large civic university, Leeds was a different type of challenge as it covered all subject areas and had a larger agenda than LSE. She claims that she loved Leeds and its surrounding area, particularly the Yorkshire Dales, and that it was only the one top job at the British Library which would have (and did) persuade her to leave. Here she worked out the work/life balance that includes plenty of walking and physical exercise, now at her Rutland home base, and of course her music. She keeps her Cornish roots with frequent visits to

the artistic centres in Newlyn and St Ives, where she especially supports the work of living artists.

Lynne does acknowledge that in the past she has been a high profile critic of the British Library and that she might be described as 'poacher come gamekeeper'. She also recognises that prior to her appointment, the flagship St. Pancras building had consumed a great amount of the time and energy of senior managers, but states "now is the time to move on and reposition the library in the whole world wide network of libraries – making it much more e-focused and externally facing". She sees the British Library as "the world's library". Nevertheless, the 'wow factor' of the building is important and that, alongside new strategic direction and innovative new services should mean that Lynne is well on her way to fulfilling her ambitions of sustaining the BL as a "world library" and a "boost to all libraries". Her change management skills are being tested to the full in the organisational restructuring programme that is under way, the rigorous review of the existing range of services, and the development and implementation of new products and services. The British Library is responsible to a wide range of stakeholder sectors – corporate, research and individual – and it is now developing a range of services to support UK plc as well as developing and expanding its support for research and its long-term archiving role. Complex issues such as legal deposit for e-resources and digital preservation are being addressed.

A recent article in the *Financial Times* weekend magazine contains the following comments from Brian Lang – the former BL Chief Executive: "Lang predicts that the next two years will be crucial for Brindley. She has got to sort out legal deposit on electronic publishing, rebuild the organisation's reputation, and prove that she has the political and PR nous to get additional resources from government. Will she? "She deserves it" says Lang, "but I am not sure she will get it"."

However, it is clear already that major change and repositioning of the BL are well under way, and that the BL will, with or without additional resources, be a more responsive and engaged leader in the international library world.