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# A 'Day in the Life': behind the scenes of Cardiff University's Libraries

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A new website has been launched which reveals the 'behind the scenes' activities of the library service during Cardiff University's 125th anniversary year; it is called 'Day in the Life'.

The site contains a series of ten 'snapshots', written by a cross-section of Cardiff University library staff, which graphically illustrate the variety of activities that fall under the definition of 'library work'.

Janet Peters, Director of University Libraries and University Librarian said:

*'The range and complexity of work today in a large, modern university library is phenomenal. The 'Day in the Life' series really captures the blend of innovative and traditional, digital and documentary, educational and inspirational work which goes on behind the scenes here in Cardiff University.'*

*'University library services staff work hard to develop and deliver new services to enable study and research for the entire university community.'*

'The "Day in the Life" articles truly illustrate this, providing an insight into the operation of our 18 library sites across Cardiff University', added Janet:

*'Overall, our strategy is to move towards electronic delivery of our information resources (access rather than holdings), to implement technologies which improve services and save staff time which can then be used to undertake new roles in supporting the information and IT needs of our users, and to equip all of our students with the information literacy skills they need for their academic studies and in their future careers.'*

*We are also seeking to develop our special collections and our research support as unique features of the university.'*



Janet Peters,  
University Librarian and  
Senior Assistant Director,  
Information Services (INSRV),  
Cardiff University

Three 'Days' are detailed below. To read all of the 'Days in the Life', please go to: [www.cardiff.ac.uk/insrv/aboutus/dayinthelife](http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/insrv/aboutus/dayinthelife).

## **A DAY IN THE LIFE OF... A SENIOR MANAGER: HEAD OF LIBRARY TECHNICAL AND OPERATIONAL SERVICES – ANNE BELL**

My role is to assist the deputy university librarian in overseeing the operational management of the 18 library sites and sections in Cardiff University.

In addition I drive forward the strategic development of the library collections, particularly electronic information provision across the university, and I manage a number of our many externally grant funded projects. These are part of the process of implementing the recommendations of the strategic review of the library service that began in 2004/5.

*Monday 18 February 2008*

### **8.50am: a chance meeting**

My day starts before I reach the office, as walking up the lane from Park Place to the arts and social studies library I meet one of the IT staff in information services involved in research support. We exchange news and I give a quick update on progress with the university's pilot institutional repository, ORCA (Online Research @ Cardiff), which holds electronic journal articles by the university's academic staff.

### **9.10am: a regular visit**

A quick e-mail check before I visit the Aberconway library. Between us, the deputy librarian and I make regular visits to all of our 18 libraries in order to meet the staff regularly, exchange information and discuss and resolve issues affecting each library.

### **9.30am: Aberconway update**

Arrive at the Aberconway library to meet the site librarian and library operations manager (this is a para-professional role tasked with the day-to-day management of each library).

Today the discussion is dominated by issues arising from the comprehensive refurbishment of the Aberconway library that was completed in September 2008: in particular, the effect on staff working patterns of the introduction of the self-issue system known as RFID (radio frequency identification), enabling library users to issue books to themselves. In addition to local matters, we discuss the ways in which library-assistant roles are likely to evolve as self-issue is introduced into more of our libraries.

Among the other matters that are raised are: developments concerning the European documentation centre (EDC) based in the Aberconway library; the need for standardization across all the libraries in the procedures for handling very overdue loans; and some problems experienced by several libraries involving a new process for ordering stationery and other consumable items. I now have a number of issues on my 'follow-up' list!

#### **10.30am: feedback from staff**

On alternate visits to Aberconway I have a short meeting with all the other staff who are available. Today I ask them to tell me how their roles have changed since the refurbishment and introduction of RFID. They no longer spend the majority of their time issuing and returning books at the library issue desk – this has been replaced by the self-issue units.

Staff now spend more of their time helping students with IT queries and general library enquiries; and they say that comments from students and staff about the changes in the library have been very favourable. This is welcome evidence that RFID self-issue will help us to deliver on one of the library review aspirations – the upskilling of library assistants by reducing their time spent on routine, repetitive tasks and enabling them to play a greater role in enhanced research, learning and teaching support.

#### **11.15am: evaluating EndNote?**

To the arts and social studies library for a short meeting about bibliographic software (i.e. software for recording and managing references to the books and journals that students and researchers use in their work).

For a number of years the university's preferred software for managing bibliographic references has been EndNote. Following a gathering of requirements, the meeting concludes with a

recommendation to continue to use the same software until the next review.

#### **12.00pm: lunch**

Lunch with colleagues from another part of INSRV (Information SeRVices). We are not meeting specifically to talk about work, but we do catch up on staff news and rumour!

#### **1.00pm: promoting the Cardiff repository (ORCA)**

The first two hours of the afternoon I have kept clear in my diary to work on a report about promotional work for ORCA (<http://orca.cf.ac.uk/>). Services like ORCA are being developed by academic and research institutions worldwide, in order to make the university's research publications freely and more widely available to all via the internet.

Over the last 12 months we have engaged in talks and presentations to promote ORCA to the academic schools in the university and to learn about their potential needs from the repository. We have also produced a promotional postcard for distribution across campus to help raise the profile of the repository.

The report will summarise the outcomes and make recommendations for future development to the university as part of a paper to the research committee.

#### **1.45pm: take a call**

I receive a telephone call from a supplier about equipment and furniture for library refurbishments. This is a contact made last year when preparing for the Aberconway project. I refer her to the Trevithick librarian, who is currently spending much time planning for an even more far-reaching refurbishment to take place this year.

#### **2.00pm: ... and another one!**

Another phone call. It isn't particularly surprising that I get a lot of phone calls when I do reserve myself some office time – I am out and about a lot visiting libraries and taking part in meetings about projects.

This call is from a publisher's representative, and it is very relevant to the work I am trying to progress this afternoon. He wants to tell me about the repository system that his company has sold to another Welsh university.

A useful piece of news is that the university in question will be giving a presentation at the Wales higher education libraries and IT colloquium at

Gregynog in June. At last year's colloquium I gave a presentation about the development of the Cardiff repository and I am planning to go to this year's event to hear how other institutions are doing.

### **3.00pm: off to Trevithick**

Set off for another meeting at the Trevithick library. This also involves the institutional repository.

A member of staff in one of the schools has responded to our promotional postcard and we are going to discuss potentially adding his publications to ORCA. I arrive early in order to be briefed by the Trevithick subject librarians and the repository administrator. The meeting is a very positive one and our academic colleague agrees that the library staff can start adding his publications to the repository; he also offers to seek further eager volunteers in his school.

The potential benefits for the university and for academic staff from this information services project are greater visibility and increased citation rates for published work placed in the repository. Research has shown that papers made available in open access (OA) repositories are more likely to be cited than non-OA publications. In addition, university staff will be able to comply with the requirements of research funding bodies which are increasingly stipulating that published papers arising from the work they have funded be placed in OA repositories.

### **4.30pm: catching up on those e-mails...**

Back to the office to check e-mails and deal with as many as possible that just need a quick response.

There is an urgent e-mail about one of the libraries being short-staffed tomorrow afternoon owing to staff sickness. I phone to ask whether anyone has been found to fill the gap, and find that thankfully someone from another library has agreed to work an extra shift. This is an important issue because some of the smaller libraries at times operate with only one or two members of staff, so sickness absence can have an extreme impact on services, and ultimately sometimes on whether the library can remain open. Finding an alternative member of staff at short notice can be hugely time-consuming, and I am grateful that this particular crisis has been averted before I even knew about it!

I also have a message about a meeting I am attending in London tomorrow in connection

with the UK research reserve (UKRR), a UK-wide initiative led by Imperial College London and the British Library (BL), to protect long-term access to little-used print journal collections. This kind of material is increasingly at risk as all university libraries move increasingly to electronic journals and we need to make more creative use of the space traditionally occupied by long runs of (now under-used) print journals. The project will ensure that a minimum number of copies is retained and that the BL's collections are enhanced where possible. We are taking part as one of six early adopters in the pilot phase of the project.

Among other items in my inbox are e-mails about staff recruitment (routine follow-up for appointments arising from interviews held at the beginning of February); staff training (finalising the programme for a development day for our library operations managers and assistant LOMs); and a request for a reference for a former member of staff.

### **5.00pm: some reading matter**

Collect together my reading matter for tomorrow's train journey – it includes an early draft of a report of our experience with another UK-wide project: LOCKSS ('Lots Of Copies Keeps Stuff Safe').

While UKRR is concerned with preserving a safe number of print copies of journals, LOCKSS aims to preserve electronic journals and ensure long-term access to them. We are one of 25 universities testing LOCKSS in practice as part of a project funded by the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC). This project, like the institutional repository, involves both library and IT teams in information services.

### **5.05pm: the end of the day**

Finish promptly for the day, as I will be on the 06.55 train to London in the morning.

Reflecting on my day I feel encouraged that there has been a good balance between the operational role (managing day-to-day issues in the libraries) and the strategic one (progressing library review objectives via project work). Most of my days are a balancing act, because daily 'events' always have the potential to divert me from the (strategic) work I have planned.

Two things today have given me particular satisfaction: the visit to the Aberconway library, where self-issue has brought the enhancement of library assistants' roles a stage nearer, and the discussion

with our academic colleague whose publications are to be added to the institutional repository – this also is moving an important concept closer to reality.

**A DAY IN THE LIFE... OF A SITE LIBRARIAN: THE BUTE LIBRARIAN**  
– ALISON CHARLES

The Bute library is the home library for six schools of the university. Alison is the overall manager of the site and subject librarian for the school of journalism, media and cultural studies.

**8.45am: starting the day**

Talk to library operations manager re: staffing matters. We have vacancies and staff sickness and I need to ensure that we have enough staff available to enable the library to open and that we can provide the services our users expect, for example support with computer problems and information enquiries.

Discuss the forthcoming installation of the new e-mail system and how it will affect us in Bute library. Look at the specific training sessions on offer and how we can allocate staff to them.

Phone a colleague to discuss a staffing matter.

Check e-mails.

Talk to IT support assistant about the provision of A3 printing provision in the computer rooms in Bute library and the (adjacent) Glamorgan building. Liaise by e-mail with senior colleague over purchase of an appropriate printer.

**9.30am: the Cudlipp Trust**

Meet with Amanda Hopkinson, visiting from University of East Anglia. She is a former senior research fellow in the Cardiff school of journalism, media and cultural studies (JOMEC) and daughter of Sir Tom Hopkinson, who founded the centre for journalism studies in Cardiff, now part of JOMEC.

Discussed developments regarding the Cudlipp Trust. INSRV has the personal papers (<http://www.cudlipp.cardiff.ac.uk/>) of Lord Hugh Cudlipp, a major figure in the development of popular journalism and editorial director of the *Daily Mirror*, who was born in Cardiff. The trust, founded by his widow, Lady Jodi Cudlipp, aims to encourage young journalists. Amanda and I are both on the trust's committee. She is in touch with Jodi Cudlipp and brought some letters for the Cudlipp collection.

Put some thought into how to move forward with archive developments in JOMEC... agreed to liaise with appropriate staff in JOMEC. A two-pronged attack – me in Cardiff and Amanda in UEA!

**11.30am: time for a quick catch-up**

Back in the office. Catch up on e-mail, which includes an invitation to a meeting of the university's disability representatives. It is good to keep in touch with what's going on in the schools regarding disability provision and also to disseminate information services developments.

**12.00pm: eBooks**

Trawl through JOMEC reading lists for suitable texts for electronic full-text book purchase.

About £10,000 of learning and teaching funding (from the higher education funding council for Wales, HEFCW) has been successfully bid for by information services, and today is the deadline for submissions to the subject librarian who is co-ordinating the project.

eBooks are essential in providing 24x7 access to course texts both for students working outside the library and for disabled students. Those with, for example, dyslexia, visual impairments or mobility problems can read recommended texts using appropriate assistive software or can access them at home if they have difficulty coming into the library. Information services is committed to providing as many eBooks as possible, funding permitting.

**1.15pm: recharging the batteries**

Lunch and a walk to recharge the batteries.

**1.45pm: new book reviews**

Check THE (the weekly *Times Higher Education*) for any useful new book reviews for JOMEC.

Cross-check with the library catalogue and send the information to the academic library representative in JOMEC and other relevant staff for their views on possible purchases.

**2.15pm: back to the eBooks**

Back to checking eBooks selected from reading lists against the NetLibrary and MyiLibrary lists. These are two of the major multidisciplinary suppliers of eBooks.

Complete the checking. Pleased to find 23 items. Prioritise these and mail the list to the co-ordinator. She tells me that she may have to prune my selections if she receives too many suggestions

from other subject librarians in INSRV. The funding is not enough to purchase all the required teaching and research texts that we need and I have to be very selective in my choices.

#### **4.15pm: student survey**

The information services project consultant devising the forthcoming INSRV student survey (on a secondment from her normal role of subject librarian) mails me the draft questionnaire for appropriate questions concerning disability. I consult with a colleague and we come up with two questions which we hope will give us some useful data. Mail to the project consultant.

#### **5pm: handing over to the evening staff**

Talk to evening staff when they come on shift and update them with any relevant information, for example on forthcoming staffing changes.

#### **5.30pm: finish for the day**

Finish for the day, having achieved progress in key areas of my role: liaison with JOMEC on development of their archives; the provision of further useful eBooks for disabled students and taught-course students in JOMEC; and essential input into the key information services student survey regarding disability.

Finally, in my role as Bute librarian I was able to make progress on Bute staffing and improved IT provision.

A day with some positive outcomes!

### **A DAY IN THE LIFE OF... THE 'SCOLAR' TEAM: HEAD OF SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AND ARCHIVES – PETER KEELAN**

'SCOLAR' is the 'special collections and archives' section of Cardiff University library: it functions to assist staff's original research, enhance student learning, promote the university's academic reputation and attract external grants and scholars to Cardiff.

#### **9am: opening up**

Open SCOLAR's research room, seminar and microfilm rooms, start PCs, online catalogue, photocopier and microfilm-reader machines.

Deal with e-mails, including booking a meeting with subject librarians and European studies academics to discuss further use of our UN (United Nations) collections for international politics modules; we are one of the few UK university depository libraries for UN source documents.

Start work on my notes for a lecture in a couple of weeks to the students of the school of English, about our historical collections of texts, including prints and illustrations. One member of staff short today in SCOLAR, so down from three to two.

#### **9.30am: biographical searches**

History professor is looking for biographical details on a 19th-century lord from south Wales for a journal article he is writing. Nothing on online catalogues of university or Glamorgan record office. Check some 19th-century Welsh books and get background details. Find an obituary in *The Times Digital Archive*. He will check for more sources tomorrow.

#### **10am: digital scanning**

Social science student arrives to use a loan microfilm from the British Library on our microfilm digital scanner. Spend five minutes showing her how to take digital scans of pages on the microfilm, and save them on her USB memory stick; we believe this is the only publicly accessible microfilm scanner in south Wales. (SCOLAR successfully bid for library capital funds 18 months ago to purchase this equipment, following many requests from users.)

#### **10.30am: diaries and diseases!**

Two history students arrive looking for 'original' (i.e. 'contemporaneous') 19th-century source materials for their independent study module dissertations. One is looking at women and sport in the Victorian period, and the other is looking at the context of diseases in the 19th century.

We scan the SCOLAR library research collections chart and see listed a couple of microfilm collections that include 19th-century women's diaries, and set up our second (non-digital) microfilm reader for her to scan and print these documents. (SCOLAR successfully bid for university learning support funds last year in order to disseminate copies of the research collections chart to all libraries and academic school noticeboards on campus.) Along with some books traced from the library catalogue which have further potential for research, this seems okay. Also mention a database with possible selected digitised source documents on this topic.

The next step is to recommend that she visits the Glamorgan record office, which holds the 19th-century archives of the university's women's hall of residence.

For the other student we need 19th-century medical diseases sources; we turn to SCOLAR's medical rare books collection – which is not yet catalogued. (SCOLAR organised its transfer here this year, to integrate it with our other historical medical-related sources. We are working with the school of history to obtain grant funds for its cataloguing.) My assistant spends 20 minutes with the student, looking at likely sections of the collection, and locates half a dozen 19th-century items of interest.

#### **11am: university records**

A project worker, researching the history of the lifelong learning department (LEARN) for next year's 125th anniversary of the university, visits to use some of the 19th- and 20th-century archival minute books of the university for this department. SCOLAR liaises regularly with the university records manager to allow access to the university's archives, under supervision, in SCOLAR's research room.

#### **11.30am: back to work!**

Back to the lecture notes, before a half-hour lunch break at noon.

#### **12pm: lunch**

My assistant in SCOLAR takes over during lunch. She has been processing a set of donations of 100 volumes of 19th-century Eisteddfod publications. We will use some of these in an exhibition next year, when the National Eisteddfod ([www.eisteddfod.org.uk](http://www.eisteddfod.org.uk)) visits Cardiff, to promote our Welsh research collections to potential future students visiting the city for the Eisteddfod. Brief chat over lunch with a library colleague, about possible external grant bids for funds to catalogue some of our recent historical donations online.

#### **12.30pm: historical images**

A lecturer from the University at Newport visits to check for some historical illustrations, for the University of Wales Press's multi-volume official Gwent county history. SCOLAR will provide about 20 digital images to appear in the volume, with acknowledgement to Cardiff University library as their source; good PR! (SCOLAR has particularly good collections of historical images, ranging from the 17th to the 20th century.)

#### **12.45pm: digital copies**

A mature student from Lampeter arrives; she has booked to use an early 19th-century book on agriculture for her thesis. Spends the afternoon reading that, and requests a digital copy of a map from the book; we take her e-mail details and will

invoice her and send the digital image within the week. The library's graphic services section is next to SCOLAR, and has a digital studio, funded from a joint digitisation project we did with them several years ago; they will do the work for us.

#### **1pm: illustrated newspapers**

A student from the school of English pops in, to browse through an 1840s newspaper volume of the *Illustrated London News* for her course work; she stays until we close at about 5pm. (She will be one of the students I will lecture to in a couple of weeks, on our other illustrated sources!)

#### **1.30pm: rare almanacks**

Academic from the university's school of Welsh visits to continue her research on our 'almanacks' collections (these date mainly from the 1700s to the early 1900s). She is about half way through the collection by now, and has discovered some probable 'forged' publication details, which printers used to avoid taxes in earlier centuries! She has also identified a few rare 'anonymous' works in some recent donations.

#### **2pm: ballads**

External visitor pops in to check a couple of literary sources and discovers that one of our ballads, dated 'early 1800s' on the Voyager catalogue, is wrong, since a place name appears in the ballad's verse which did not exist as such before 1862; we need to discuss this with our cataloguers, and get the Voyager record updated.

#### **2.30pm: Wikipedia 0 – SCOLAR 1**

Student request for help using Voyager to find something in SCOLAR. Also an enquiry about the date of the first 'Aldermaston protests' – a quick check on Wikipedia gives the date of the first march from London in 1958, but an older printed source in SCOLAR has a photograph of an earlier 'protest' in 1952.

#### **3pm: government documents**

Another student request, for source materials on British–Malaysian links and history in the early to mid 20th century. Various government and legal historical sources checked, both print and online, with little success. Very 'esoteric' subject, so he needed to choose between either altering his chosen dissertation topic or visiting other libraries for source materials.

#### **3.30pm: exhibitions in SCOLAR and on the web**

Time for a coffee, but too busy to get away!

Another researcher wants an 18th-century religious tract; a straightforward Voyager search locates the item, and it is easily retrieved from the rare books stack. A couple of students pop in to look at the latest SCOLAR exhibition, based on a fairly complete run of Cardiff student newspapers from 1885 to 2007 – this to coincide with a visit of 60 Cardiff alumni who were students here in the 1940s and 1950s. Some of the alumni visitors saw themselves in photographs from 1950s editions of the papers in the exhibition!

A digital version of this exhibition is now available on our web site. We believe this will be the first such UK university exhibition online of its student historical newspapers.

#### **4pm: troubleshooting**

Resolve a couple of problems with the digital microfilm scanner, and help with some Voyager and reference collection enquiries.

#### **4.30pm: back to work again!**

Get back to my notes for the lecture in a couple of weeks – less one day now.

#### **5pm: close down**

Retrieve all the archives, rare books and microfilm sources still in use. Start to close down SCOLAR at the end of the day. One student studies on in the microfilm room.

#### **5.30pm: reflections on the day**

Do the statistics for the day: 15 staff and student visitors from academic schools (history, English, Welsh, social sciences, lifelong learning) plus external researchers. Receive five enquiries in Welsh and ten in English; 41 items from the archives, rare books and microfilm collections used, plus five database sources to answer enquiries.

Overall we saved 5 hours and 15 minutes of staff and student time with our enquiries service, helping them find more speedily or more accurately information sources for their work and some they did not know about at all. In the background our SCOLAR web site gets nearly 1,000 web page hits per day, by internal and external users looking for information.