

**Summer/Autumn
Issue 2001**

Circle of State Librarians

Edited by Mags Griffin

HM Customs and Excise

**Circle of
State
Librarians**

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Acknowledgements

This issue has two modified papers originally produced for this year's Circle of State conference held back in February 2001 and other papers written by Government Librarians/Officers. Copies are being distributed to members of the Circle of State Librarians.

We are grateful to all participants for their agreement to the publication of their contributions here.

Calls for Papers

State Librarian aims to cover a wide sphere of matters relating to Government Librarianship. If you wish to have a paper published please contact the editor at the address given.

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INFORMATION AGE GOVERNMENT AND YOU CONFERENCE

Rutherford Conference Centre
London

5 February 2001

Extracts from Keynote Speech -
Information Age Government

Rt Hon Ian McCartney MP, Cabinet Office Minister for E-Government

I am delighted to be here this morning to talk about the contribution that can be made by government librarians to the Modernising Government Programme, specifically within the E-government sphere. It is influencing some of the most significant changes in the way civil servants work for generations and will help run one of the key strategic drivers of the modernising government programme.

To make information and services readily available to all will involve reconfiguring massive amounts of data so it can be easily found from a single point. Citizens should not have to know which organisation to approach for the service or information they need. They should not need to know if its central or local government they would deal with. Civil servants themselves are not familiar with all of the organisations that make up the government machine or know immediately which one to go to.

Making all of this work means that information needs to be organised in such a way that it appears where it should, in a format everyone can understand. Information is your profession, you will all fully appreciate the enormity of the task ahead. For citizens to find what they need on the Internet, that information has to be put where they can find it, or tagged

so that a search engine can find it. People shouldn't be prevented from seeing what they need because they do not know the right words to use. They should be able to find the latest reports on BSE without having to be able to spell 'bovine spongiform encephalopathy'. They should be able to find the latest rules on tax allowances for landlords without having to know it is all listed under 'capital allowances'. And they should be able to find out how their local hospital is performing without having to know if it's the Department of Health or the local Health Authority or the hospital itself that can tell them.

Even within government, we don't have well developed systems for sharing Information. That is why we are working hard to correct this, implementing the Government Interoperability Framework (or e-GIF). Once everything is plugged in and switched on, the files we send to each other, and to citizens around the country; the web pages we look at and the forms we download will make sense to the machines used to read them.

We are also developing the GSI, publishing our documents on the web, and of course there's the ever-present e-mail. But this is really in its infancy. Not all departments, let alone all of the smaller organisations, are on the GSI. There is still staff without e-mail! And even when all of these wonderful facilities are available, will we be able to find what we need, or will we just have a bigger pool to drown in?

Technology can solve some of these problems for us. Our determination to stay at the leading edge means we are making the most of search engines to make it easier for citizens to navigate their way around the mass of data and documents available. It also means we are aware of the limitations of technology. You may be wondering where you come into this. One of the main strands of the whole modernising government agenda is better policy making. Accurate, up to the minute information is crucial if we are to achieve this.

Joe(McCrea, first speaker of the day) and his team at the Knowledge Network have done sterling work improving the background data that we ministers and officials use to make and share policy decisions. He has done this with the help of information scientists, who found ways to navigate through the oceans of documents it holds.

Karen Lewis (second speaker of the day) at CMPS has been contributing to the briefings for no10 and cross-cutting units, using information

management techniques and working with the Government Library Network to find the necessary subject related material for briefings that cut across many government departments. This partnership between information and research specialists within CMPS has proven highly successful. It is a fine example of how information specialists can bring their skills to play in different arenas. Information is the fuel of the knowledge economy. Government information must now be regarded as a valuable economic asset.

Earlier on I described the Government Interoperability Framework, or e-GIF. Anwar Choudhury (speaking this afternoon) and his team have developed this to cover the technical side of transferring data from one organisation to another. The team is also developing the Government Metadata Framework. I'm sure I don't need to tell librarians what metadata is, as you practically invented it, but I can tell you that the Framework lays down the policies and systems that will make sure the use of metadata, or information tagging, is more consistent across government. The development of this Framework is yet another area where information scientists are involved, drafting the document itself and providing expertise in the organisation and description of information resources.

One of the major components of the Metadata Framework is the proposed Pan-Government Thesaurus. This is something librarians in government departments have been pushing for, for many years. However, it is only in the current environment, with the policies of joined up government and the determination to provide the best services for citizens that the climate has been right for this type of development. This is highly specialised area, and one in which librarians are uniquely qualified.

Another way in which we are stimulating the Knowledge Economy is by making sure anyone can find out what information the government actually holds. This will greatly help those publishers and dot.com companies who want to take official information, repackage it and make it available in a form more useful to citizens and businesses.

The Information Asset Register greatly assists in this as it is a list of our unpublished information resources. This involved government departments and agencies creating metadata describing their resources and making it all available from a single web site. Librarians made a major contribution both in developing the overall strategy, designing the system, and creating the metadata.

CONCLUSIONS

Librarians are wonderful people. You know what metadata is. You know why Roget's isn't a real thesaurus. And, I hope, you know you have a real contribution to make to modernising government and thereby making life easier for all citizens. So I have a personal message to all of you. You know what the vision is, and you know what your own professional skills are. Make the most of this opportunity today to find out how you can best contribute to the vision, and help us to make the UK government a truly 21st century government

The Information Asset Register and *Inforoute*

**A central source for unpublished
government information.**

Introduction

Late in 1998 the Cabinet Office announced that the Government would be developing an Information Asset Register (IAR), to provide access to unpublished information resources or assets. Information about official publications should be recorded and made accessible via the UK Official Publications database (UK-OP), but until then unpublished resources had been effectively inaccessible to those outside government.

This was to be one of the first attempts to make government information, held in a wide variety of government departments and organisations, accessible from one single source. Solid information management, organisation and dissemination skills would be essential, government librarians were, naturally, called on to take the lead and provide the expertise.

So what exactly is it?

The Information Asset Register is a catalogue of information resources. The government's IAR contains records of information assets that anyone with web access can search in order to find out what information the government holds, how useful that information is, and importantly how to get hold of it.

Each Government organisation creates its records within its own asset register. All of these separate IARs, collectively, form the Government's

Information Asset Register. In many ways it can be thought of as a union catalogue, a collection of separate lists all searchable as though they were one.

All IAR records can be created using a template provided by HMSO, this ensures records are in a consistent format regardless of their origin and conforms with the guidelines and metadata standard set by HMSO. The current template incorporates metadata principles derived from a number of standards including:

- the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (AACR2)
- ANSI X3.30 American National Standards Institute
<http://www.ansi.org/>
- Dublin Core metadata standard
<http://purl.org/dc/>
- US Government Information Locator Service (GILS),
http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/gils/index.html

However the recently mandated Government Metadata Framework (e-GMF), from the Office of the e-Envoy, will be adopted once finalised.. The current guidelines describe, for each of the elements to be used

- the name of the element
- if the element is mandatory or not
- if the element is repeatable or not
- the type of data to be included in the element
- the format of the data to be included on each element
- examples of data included in the element
- background notes
- standards incorporated into the rules for element content

Completed IAR records are placed on departmental web servers. They can be visible to those surfing the web sites, but most organisations leave them hidden to everyone except those using **inforoute**. Smaller government organisations that do not have their own web servers can ask their parent departments or ISPs to host their IAR.

Inforoute (www.inforoute.hmso.gov.uk) is the web gateway that provides a seamless route to all of the IARs. The IAR records are indexed and searched by the inforoute search engine; users can search using a variety of access points, including title, subject, geographic coverage and department. The records direct the users to the information resources or to the person who can help them. Users need not know the department which might hold the material they are searching for as inforoute delivers details of all documents on a particular subject regardless of their source.

What information resources are we talking about?

The IARs focus on unpublished items and is ideal for those which it might not be practical to publish or put on a web site, but which the public may be entitled to access. The information resources to be listed include:

- databases, which for technical reasons cannot be held on a web site, or which contain more information than the public may be allowed to access, for example a database which also contains personal data.
- sets of paper files which are so substantial or delicate it would be impractical to convert them to electronic format and put them on the web
- background research and statistics. Departments tend to collect masses of information, but only publish a small proportion of it; this is especially the case with statistics and research. The IAR will list the unpublished portions.

Why are we doing this now? HMSO and the Crown Copyright White Paper

Most of you are probably aware that the trading operations of HMSO were privatised in 1996, and transferred to The Stationery Office Ltd as the successful bidder. Not so many realise that the core, policy making HMSO survived within the Cabinet Office. This new, slimmed down organisation is responsible for various aspects of official publishing and information policy, including:

- **Crown copyright.** Management and regulation of the use and licensing of the re-use of all information produced by government which is protected by Crown copyright. As part of the

Government's commitment to widening access to government information, HMSO leads on providing a range of publishing and information services and in delivery of a class licensing system for the re-use of government information.

- **Statutory Publishing: the functions of the 'Queen's Printer'.** Ensuring the proper publishing of various legal documents, including Acts of Parliament and Statutory Instruments; giving advice to Government departments on official publishing; co-ordinating the arrangements for the publication of Command Papers and other departmental papers published within the House of Commons Numbered Series
- **Library Subsidy.** Administration of the discount on official publications to local authority funded libraries.
- **Gateway to official information holdings.** Ensuring the development of departmental Information Asset Registers, and maintenance and development of '*inforoute*', the information gateway to the Government's IAR
- Overseeing the production of the official bibliography of UK official publications (**UKOP**).

The commitment to create a Government Information Asset Register was made in 'The Future Management of Crown Copyright' White Paper (Cm 4300), in response to views aired during the preceding consultation process.

Among the concerns frequently voiced during this consultation exercise were:

- the frustration with locating information
- the lack of any official listing of central government material, feeding the perception that there is untapped potential for the exploitation of such material
- the pressing demand to identify and help locate unpublished data holdings

This exercise highlighted the need for a single point of access capable of directing information users through the wide range of official information and materials. It was decided that each Government department would create its own Information Asset Register (IAR), and these would be

accessed via ***inforoute***, a single point on the HMSO web site from which all of the IARs could be searched simultaneously.

The IAR Working Group

This Group was originally convened, following discussions with the Library and Information Commission and the Committee of Departmental Librarians, to consider ground rules and best practice for the IAR and ***inforoute***. It continues to meet regularly to consider the development of the IAR and coordinate that development with other information management initiatives such as the e-Envoy's government metadata standard. A newsletter is also regularly published to help maintain contact with officers designated to take forward IAR development in their organisations and to pass on news of IAR developments to a wider audience.

The way forward

An initial pilot project was set up late in 1999 to test the ***inforoute*** search mechanism, the record format, and the look and feel of the site. The Department of Health, DfEE and Cabinet Office created initial records. The searching mechanism was tested, the appearance of the site discussed and debated, comments from visitors to the web site were taken on board.

Since the Pilot stage was completed in June 2000 considerably more organisations have joined, 37 to date. To support this continuing growth HMSO continues to work on *inforoute*, ensuring that what goes on 'under the bonnet' runs smoothly and has the power to cope with the demands of a rapidly growing distributed metadata repository. Similarly the web site is subject to ongoing review and modification to ensure it closely matches users' expectations.

The site continues to grow as the many existing departments populate their IARs and as new organisations come on board. By the end of the year all Crown bodies are required to have an IAR searchable from *inforoute*. In most organisations it is the Library & Information Service which has been tasked with carrying the project forward, as they have the necessary skills for this information management task.

HMSO continues to co-ordinate the IAR with related initiatives such as Freedom of Information, where it is mentioned in the current consultation exercise on publication schemes as an aspect that the Commissioner would

wish to see within the publication scheme proposals put forward for her approval. Work with UKonline and other portals ensure that our considerable audience to date continues to grow.

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Further details are also available on the **inforoute** web site www.inforoute.hmso.gov.uk, especially in the 'about **inforoute**' section.

H.M. Customs & Excise

Report on results of August 2000 Surveys

Mags Griffin

In August 2000 the Library Services Unit commissioned two detailed surveys with both users and non-users from across the department. 2000 potential non-users were emailed (one name in ten across the global address list). There were 402 responses. Twenty-seven current users of the service also filled out questionnaires during the three weeks allocated for running the surveys, (completed as they entered/left the library).

The over all response was less than a 22% return rate, which might be considered poor as it only represents 1.6% of the department's 25,000 staff. However the department does not have a good record for replying to surveys so management consider the 403 returns received as a good response. What is also encouraging is that the majority of those returns were detailed, specific and supportive. Two unmistakable messages came out of both very loudly and very clearly. The first was the level of recognition by staff of departmental need to retain a library and information service; its function to support operational and policy work through reference, research and long-term project work. Followed closely by the second of staff respect and value of information specialist skills. Current non-users stated very articulately their opinions/beliefs of this.

The surveys were also able to itemise the wide range of information sources and services being provided by the unit. There were some negative comments but these were small in numbers. The staff recognised that there still remained areas where the unit needed to work to improve its

relationship with its customers. This issue is to be addressed through the new departmental Service Level Agreement.

Several factors had come together in the early summer of 2000, which made it possible for the Library Services surveys to be carried out. Senior management had for a long time recognised the need for running a detailed survey on the unit. Committee of Departmental Librarian statistics have always been kept but the collection and interpretation of accurate and meaningful data for HM Custom & Excise management/stakeholders had not yet been attempted.

The department's reorganisational plans were to change that recognised need into a high priority to be immediately financed. The unit's role post reorganisation had to be clearly identified and resourced appropriately. Senior management were therefore prepared to fund the extra staffing costs of running this detailed survey. Outside influences also helped shape this decision, specifically the Government's much-cited modernising programme. This includes the developing cohesive, electronically driven information management strategy, and the Government's recognition of commercial business value of Government information. All these elements once combined had real impetus, helping to create the "why?" behind the surveys.

The surveys would had to answer several questions, which included providing evidence for the development/creation of any new services and /or staff posts and the marketing for it all. They also had to justify any closure or cut back. This I think was accomplished (remembering the percentage returns).

Question Break Down

There were eight questions in the non-user survey and five in the user survey. What I propose now to do is briefly compare and contrast results between the user and non-user surveys. Offer some explanations for some of the results and unit business plan action objectives, which have become part of the surveys outputs.

Every non-user was asked if they knew of the existence of the library service and 75.6% of all replies gave positive answers. Which if representative of the whole department means that potentially 25% of all staff do not know that the unit exists.

Should we be worried about this? I don't know, but it was a question we had to ask ourselves. As was the question over what, if any more business would the current non-users usage generate and would we be able to cope with it? The unit hasn't been able to offer a constructive or definitive answer yet and I do not think we will be able to for some time. However if we are able to repeat the survey process in two years then a much better comparison measurement will be possible and hopefully the answers to all the questions I have raised in this paragraph!

These surveys have greatly assisted in providing a more definitive measurement on the number of potential unaware staff and the very wide varying levels of awareness of the majority. They have also strongly backed the argument for funding a comprehensive marketing strategy for the unit. An outside consultant was employed April/May 2000 to produce a paper with a flexible three-year marketing schedule. (Now complete and is the process of being part implemented, in year).

Factors that possibly contributed to the lack of awareness of non-users include the lack of need at the operational end of outside commercially generated information, or information specialists' skills. The lack of direct access and/or desk sharing will also inhibit access to the department's Intranet. Finally the impact of the geographical /personal effect must be noted. How much/little the unit's services are recognised as part of all staffs introductory program, could be in direct relation to physical closeness to an office/site library and/or line management's experience of the unit's staff/services.

The Zero Option Question

The most important question was whether the user/non-user thought there was a need for a departmental library service, the zero question. Results from the non-user paper came back with some extremely positive answers, 72.63% of all replies in support, with 24.3% abstaining from directly answering. The overriding view is a collective perception of the library being essential for departmental work. The context could be policy; project or research related, as even with Intranet/Internet access a centralised cost effective information service was recognised as essential for the department.

Further feedback comments included recommending the increased use of electronic media to improve accessibility to library information and avoid

duplication of effort for staff and resources. All users concurred with these views, the consensus recognition of the need for a central source of information for the department specifically for policy, development and research.

Negative comments centred on geographical locations such as those from users/ non-users at Southend and Belfast where greater dependence fell on Intranet/Internet access and other local alternate resources. The distance was blamed, as an inhibitor, to usage. Other comments included the perceived declining need for a departmental library with the expansion of the Internet/Intranet. All of these comments highlighted strongly the need for a powerful marketing strategy to combat such erroneous beliefs.

The majority of non-users surveyed had not used the library within the last six months. This dramatically contrasting response to their replies for the zero question revealed a very healthy and encouraging fact. That although currently non-users, staff still recognised/foresaw the need for using the library sometime in the future, or for their colleagues to do so and were aware of the department's corporate need for the unit's services.

Other Service Needs

Further questions asked for details of what other services had been used and why. Response comments start to decline here with only a 20.6% write up from all emails returned. Non-users stated reference books came tops for them, followed by newspapers and the lending service. Services used and noted by users in the user survey include Reference, European Community material, Press information, Maps and loans.

Which suggests a balanced use of paper based services; references of specific electronic information resources used were particularly low in both surveys. This was in spite of the business led information profiling service then in operation, (weekly/monthly Reuters briefings prepared by information specialists) which had 300 committed users who then cascaded the information to colleagues ranging in numbers from 5 to 50, (total possible audience anything from 1,500 to 7,000). The non-users responses were particularly revealing; the huge gap between themselves and the 300 direct of the info profiling service, signalling loudly yet again the need for product targeted marketing to customers.

Customer satisfaction produced a similar response in both user and non-user surveys. An overall high level of satisfaction with a few instances of

less than satisfactory customer care indicating where the staff had not provided consistently good service. The overall impression is therefore of appreciation of the service the unit provides, but there is also a pointer to all staff on the importance of the fragile currency of good customer relationships.

There were three time periods when staff visited the libraries most. 12:00 till 1:00, 10:00 to 11:00 and 14:00 to 15:00. Knowing this has helped with staff timetables for allocating tasks and duties that include levels of cover for enquiry desk duties.

Both users and non-user were asked about problems they faced when gathering information. I found their responses rather reassuring especially in light of the some earlier comments about why would the department still need a library service with the availability of electronically information. Some issues fortunately never change:

- Knowing from where or from whom information can be obtained.
- Obtaining correct/specific and up-to-date information.
- Time pressures and getting information quickly.
- Many sources and large range of information/services available.

Some non-users also still expressed concern over the closure of the Southend library, which had happened three years earlier.

What this evidence identified is the need for a service that could find and organise individual/collective information needs across the department. Locate information (in and outside the department) and rigorously publicise, provide/create easy access. Including provide training one on one, or to small groups, to encourage and help develop a higher level of individual/collective technical IT skill.

These are all services, to which the unit is already committed. What the results shout out yet again is the high priority need for greater publicity of them all.

The wide up question of suggestions and additional comments did not bring out any startling new concepts. They were all quite conventional.

- Provision of desk space for quiet study.
- Faster computers for Internet connection for downloading and printing.

- More information about overseas Customs services.
- Provision of publications about customs investigations.

Requests for more and regular publicity about the services, how to access information correctly and contact details for professional staff were also asked for.

Conclusions

Some very positive changes have taken place within the unit over the year since the survey. The detail and over all positive nature of all responses have helped to make that possible.

They include

- New IT hardware in the libraries with ISDN lines despite the departmental freeze.
- The creation of a new information specialist team specifically to work in the office environment with the customer or on corporately dynastic projects.
- A Cyber-café in the New Kings Beam House site library.
- The funding of a consultant to produce a three-year marketing plan. Implementation to start immediately.

Further projects to be carried out in this year include the redesign of the New Kings Beam House site library and a new department wide Service Level Agreement.

The lack of numbers who made direct user visits to Ralli Quays site library led to its closure earlier this year. Unlike New Kings Beam House the majority of its users preferred to communicate/request via email despite being co-located. So its closure did not cause great customer distress. However to compensate for the closure a comprehensive reference collection has been retained there for those users who did physically visit. (As noted in users survey).

I have to thank everyone who helped to make these surveys possible. The results have led to what I am sure is the most comprehensive feedback the unit has to date ever received in its history. We now have customer confirmation on so many issues. Yes there is lots of room for improvement in customer care and publicity of services and staff skills. Nevertheless

most of what has been outlined above has been officially recognised, accepted and implemented as I write. This is good news for the department staff (our customers) and rather good news for us too.

I have attached a collection of feedback comments from both surveys at the appendix. If you are interested in a complete break down of all questions and blank copies of both surveys please apply to me direct at the address below.

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APPENDIX

COMMENTS FROM NONE USER QUESTIONNAIRES...

“In my opinion it is an integral part of the business of C&E to maintain an effective library service. More and more of our outputs rely on making the best use of intelligence material. The library service must play a pivotal role in gathering information and making certain it can be accessed by both the outfield and headquarters”

“I think that the future of how library services are provided should be considered in its widest context. The work currently being undertaken in IABU to set up single access to a wealth of Departmental services should fit quite well with information services”

“All professional organisations have one [a library service]. We have been cast as World Class and surely we can not be without the necessary backup services”

“A useful point of reference”

“Information can now be obtained from the Internet, but there is so much out there that you need a Library/Information service with expertise to provide the necessary information otherwise there is danger that non-specialists get bogged down in trying to access the information they need”

“The problem is knowing where to look - the library service proves very helpful here”

“Would be useful if there is quick and easy access to all staff”

“A vital part of moving staff skills forward to new technologies”

“Not everything that is required to do our jobs is on the intranet. I have used the library for information of software versions, this was very helpful indeed”

“It is an essential source of information for policy work...”

COMMENTS FROM USER QUESTIONNAIRES

“ Very good work done by staff”

“Essential for my work”

“ An invaluable resource... the Internet is only good up to a point...no substitute for knowledgeable staff”.

“This (need for the library) should not be in any doubt for a major Department of the State with such widespread involvement with Commerce and Industry”

When is a Resource Centre not a Resource Centre

**Better evidence resources for policy
making**

Karen Lewis

My talk is in two parts, firstly a brief (hopefully) description of CMPS followed by what I see as the role for us as information specialists in providing better evidence resources...

Who are we?

By now many of you will already know something about CMPS, full name, the Centre for Management and Policy Studies, but for those to whom it is new a little background information.

It was set up in 1999, as a direct response to meeting requirements identified in the "Modernising Government" White Paper. CMPS was created to:

"ensure that the Civil Service is cultivating the right skills, culture and approaches to perform its task;

... that policy makers across government have access to the best research, evidence and international experience;

and help government to learn better from existing policies."

There are three directorates, four actually, but the fourth doesn't have a "public" face, so we'll forget about them (for a while the Knowledge Network team were also part of CMPS, but they've already moved on to the E-Envoy's Office though we are still working together). The first you'll all know; the Civil Service College, the second, called Corporate

Development and Training (CDT) and third, my own directorate, Policy Studies (PSD). The College and CDT are both primarily concerned with training, the College for the Civil Service at large and CDT for the Senior Civil Service and Ministers. PSD is the newest Directorate and only came into existence in March last year, so we are not quite a year old. PSD takes its role based on the following quotes from "Professional Policy Making for the 21st Century" (The French Report).

"Ensuring policymaking becomes more soundly based on evidence means tackling...

... the need to improve departments' capacity to make best use of evidence... and

... the need to improve the accessibility of the evidence available to policymakers"

The recommendations in the French Report, supported by subsequent analysis in two PIU (Performance & Innovation Unit) reports, "Adding it up" and "Wiring it Up" led to CMPS commissioning CDL to look at ways of strengthening and making better use of existing information resources in government. This was a positive step in a number of ways, CMPS were acknowledging CDL's role and expertise in this area and it ensured the library community were fully involved in any follow up initiatives.

Sue Westcott, whom many of you will know, prepared "Linking the Knowledge". She only had a couple of months in which to carry out the study and write the report, which was duly presented to CMPS in March 2000. CMPS clearly liked what they saw because in an amazingly short space of time (for Whitehall) a fledgling Centre was established within PSD in May 2000! Building on the recommendations of the report the centre was intended to draw on the skills and expertise of a range of specialists across government. In practice two disciplines were represented in the initial staffing of the unit, Researchers and Librarians.

As is ever the way in the Civil Service the Resource Centre, as originally named, has transformed into the Policy Resources division, of which the Resource Centre is now part.

What are we actually doing?

For those of you who have had direct contact with CMPS, other than attending a course at the College, Policy Resources (PR) is usually who

you've been dealing with, so a little more about us. Within PSD Policy Resources, in particular, sees its task to identify, co-ordinate, encourage and enable the best ways of making research and other resources **accessible** in order to support better policymaking. PR consists of three branches: Briefing and Research, Knowledge Management and my own Branch, Resources and Networks. The following is a brief outline of what we each do.

Briefing & Research

Headed up by Brian O'Callaghan and supported by Rebecca Stanley (both Researchers by background)

Identifying, sourcing and collating information for briefings to No10 & CO crosscutting units

- Data sharing and privacy
- Impact of equalisation initiatives
- Risk and innovation in policy making

The above is only a brief indication of the briefings we've undertaken, as many of you have been helping us in this area will realise, but it does give some idea of the range of cross-cutting areas we've been working on and getting support from departmental libraries and information services. I should also say here we've had a very encouraging and positive response to the input departmental colleagues make.

Knowledge Management

Headed up by Helen Morrell and supported by Peter Banks (Helen is a Researcher but, as many of you will know, Peter is a Librarian by background though his most recent post before joining CMPS was in a policy making team).

- Developing Knowledge Pools for crosscutting policy areas.
- Currently working with colleagues across government to establish some of the conceptual framework
- A Knowledge Pool community of Interest Site is to be launched in March

Helen and Peter are working with a number of work groups, for example the Social Exclusion Unit, in scoping out how a Knowledge Pool can

contribute to their work. The SEU Knowledge Pool is one of a series of four pilots, which will be appearing during the course of the year. I already mentioned that we were still working with the Knowledge Network team; they are collaborating with us on getting another of the Knowledge Pools, on Strategic Futures, up before the end of the year.

Resources and Networks

Headed up by me, Karen Lewis and supported by Nigel Owens, both of who are Librarians. I'm sure most of you know Nigel; you certainly will if you are one of our CMPS/Departmental Liaison Group ...

- Developing the Resource Centre: to provide advice and access to information services for PSD & as a central point of access to resources to support better policy-making
- The virtual resource centre will be launched in March,

R&N have co-ordinated much of the work needed to identify and source information for the briefings, working with the CMPS/Departmental Liaison Group.

The information role

Key issues

So, finally, what's all this got to do with us? I've already mentioned the report that Sue did for CMPS; if you haven't already read it I recommend that you do. It highlights a key area of concern for us as a group; that the policy makers' perception of what we can do doesn't match what we know we can and are doing for them. It was partly to address this that Resource Centre, now Policy Resources, was created.

There are a number of issues we need to think about in our provision of services to policy makers and analysts (Researchers, Economists and Statisticians) and helping them find and make better use of evidence. They are all areas with which we are already familiar and are constantly dealing with, but their importance is highlighted in the bid to improve the use of evidence in the policy making process. The following list is by no means complete but does provide a starting point for us to think about.

- Accessibility of information
- Reliability

- Quality
- The “right” type of information
- The role of departmental libraries as a resource

Some of the issues relate to the nature of the information itself: is what we need actually available, are we confident as to its reliability and provenance. Then there is our intermediary role to consider: have we understood correctly what is required, are we able to get it on time and, increasingly important, are we delivering it in an appropriate format. Finally, our place within our departments and across government, we need to prove our “value added” role in the delivery of information, to ensure we hold our own among all our “competitors”.

Key strengths

Our “**value addedness**” (I know there is no such word!) is indicated in the following list, again not comprehensive, of the skills and Knowledge we bring to our organisations.

- The capability to access all types of information
- The ability to process and organise information
- Providing the human face to ICT
 - understanding our user’s needs
 - helping them find their way

We are already playing an active part, in most departments, in all sorts of areas that fall outside the “traditional” role (whatever that is!); internet and intranet content management and training, working within divisions, information audits and Knowledge Management initiatives. We now need to ensure that our ability to contribute to the evidence-based policy making process is clearly recognised by policy makers across government. We also need to identify those areas we need to work on to make sure we do meet those needs.

The collaboration between CMPS and departmental libraries and information services is a practical exercise to help in both these areas, to both change perception and to identify and share best practice. Its still early days but I think we are off to a good start and I am looking forward to what we might do in the future.

NOTE:

The test version of the Virtual Resource Centre, PR-Online is currently available and we would welcome your feedback. We are in the process of developing a new site, with greater functionality, and hope to make use of your comments and suggestions to enhance the site.

GSI: **http://www.cabinet-office.gsi.gov.uk/cmeps/proline_2/welcome.htm**

Web only: **<http://www.cmeps.gov.uk/pronline/>**

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BOOK REVIEW

**Success at the Enquiry Desk.
Successful enquiry answering -
Every time**

Tim Owen

Library Association, Aug 2000

This is the third edition of this title published as part of the Successful LIS Professional series, (editor Sheila Pantry). It is a flexible practical teaching guide for info newcomers and could be considered a refreshing reviser for byte bitten elbow-patched practitioners.

The subject is presented in an unfussy and clear manner from identifying appropriate resources and people/user types. Through to the ribbon tying added value and detailed bibliography of key reference sources.

It begins with identifying the sharpest tools available to an enquiry librarian. Asking the right questions. Identifying accurately which part of the process is being discussed and where it fits into the whole. Teaching the reader to identify when to ask what type of question, and how to successfully answer within any stated deadline. Along the way offering useful tips of how to manage:

- Scoping the user's requirements
 - Information overload – sifting relevant from useful
 - Planning effective searching strategies
 - Recognising problems/difficulties early
- And
- Effectively communicating with the user

Written for readers who will be applying the guidance at the sharp end. Using exercises to illustrate chapter messages, this guide offers much. Still predominantly paper based, it will give anyone who works as an information professional a unambiguous map with which to effectively do the job.

Notices / Updates

British Library Press Information

- The Gutenberg Bible (the oldest surviving printed book in the western World) is now available for study on the web at **www.bl.uk**.
- The British Library Public Catalogue offering over 10 million books, journals, reports, and conferences is now available to the public via the web site **www.bl.uk**.
- The British Library National Sound Archive (NSA) catalogue is available on the web at **http://cadensa.bl.uk**. One of the largest oral history collections in the world, it acts as the national centre for oral history in Britain. Offering advice and training in oral history methods and maintaining close contact with groups across Britain and abroad.
- The British Library have made available at **www.bl.uk/concord** details of the co-operation and partnership fund created to help fund closer ties with the Public Library sector.
- Clover Publications have changed their address. It is now
4 The Green,
Ickwell,
Biggleswade
Beds. SG18 8EF

The telephone number, 01767 627363 and the fax number, 01767 627004 both remain the same, as does the e-mail address, **clover@cloverweb.co.uk**.

