

Editorial

First of all apologies for the late appearance of LIRN 65, which unfortunately had 64 on its cover. This was due to various production problems, but we now have a new and more streamlined method of producing LIRN, so we hope to iron out these bugs for forthcoming issues.

Various changes to the LIS research scene, featured in the last issue, are now gathering momentum, such as the new look for BLRDD (now British Library Research and Innovation Centre - I wonder how long it will take people to get used to that name, BLISS still being the Library Association Library for some people). Besides the seven Research Analysts being responsible for the Digital Library, management of libraries, preservation and cataloguing, information retrieval, cooperation and libraries, providers and users of information services, and the value and impact of information, RIC will now be responsible for coordinating research across the British Library, including the BL's Digital Library programme. As well as appointing an eighth Research Analyst to cover public library research, including the Department of National Heritage (DNH) development funding scheme for public libraries, Nigel Macartney is appointing two further Research Analysts, who, it is hoped, will come from outside the BL as part of the "new blood" policy. So the RIC certainly has a lot of challenges on its plate, one of which is how it will disseminate its results after the winding up of its in-house publishing unit. This is being addressed partly by the appointment of an external editor for its Bulletin, which will have a new look as a result - interestingly, the advert netted over 40 applications.

For more information about RIC see the home page at <http://portico.bl.uk/ric/>

Equally challenging is the Research Sub-Committee of the Library and Information Commission, which has now met twice- stimulating sessions in both cases. The Committee has a tight timetable to keep to in developing the UK LIS research strategy, and has set up various working groups to develop priority areas for action. Key areas to take forward include research "mapping" (identifying what has already been done), competitiveness (based on the Competitiveness White Paper 3), lifelong learning (following on from the recent DfEE consultation exercise), National Information Policy, and of course, the research strategy itself. There is also work to be done dispelling the misunderstanding that the Commission is simply a conduit for DNH money. The Commission's approach is that research and development funding will be carefully targeted and work will be commissioned, probably by tender, according to agreed priorities. This means the end of the unsolicited bids approach, and RIC in its new guise and reduced funding situation will also be greatly reducing the amount of funding available for such bids. This new way of working will have serious implications for applicants. Committee Chair Mel Collier will be producing a guest editorial for a future issue of LIRN, so keep watching this space.

It is now old news that Virginia Bottomley has, for the present, ruled out CCT in the public library service, so now her policy statement is eagerly awaited. It is expected to focus partly on

mechanisms for cooperation, and rather than create yet more bodies, the DNH is keen to see an enhanced role for the regional library systems. The need for a conduit between local public libraries and Government and other bodies will be even more acute when the new local authorities start taking off. Although the Statement was expected prior to the summer recess, we now hear that it is unlikely to appear before October or November, almost a year after the last Statement. We also hear that DNH is going to out to tender for its replacement PLDIS scheme, so, all round, a number of interesting decisions are to be made.

Roslyn Cotton
Editor