

**35th CONFERENCE OF DIRECTORS OF NATIONAL LIBRARIES
(CDNL), QUEBEC CITY, CANADA, 13 AUGUST 2008**

TEMPLATE FOR COUNTRY REPORT

(Country reports will be made available on the CDNL website <http://www.cdnl.info>)

Please provide reports in English

Name of Country: United Kingdom

Name of Library: The British Library

Name of Chief Executive: Dame Lynne Brindley

ANNUAL REPORT TO CDNL 2008

The past year has been one of challenge and achievement for the British Library and, as always, we have focused our energies on meeting, and where possible exceeding, the high standards rightly expected of this world-class institution.

We appreciated the very vocal public support we received as we awaited a decision by Government on our funding levels for the next three years, 2008/09 – 2010/11. The outcome of a 2.7% per annum increase in our revenue budget was welcome news, particularly set against genuine fears of cuts, and we will also receive a sustained level of capital funding, totaling £36 million over the next three-year period.

The capital allocation is needed to enable the Library to take forward its plans for a new storage facility at its Boston Spa (Yorkshire) site to hold our newspaper collection in the best of archival environmental conditions. This is just one element of our newspaper strategy – our ambition is to digitise the best of our historical collections, to open up the collections and make them much more widely accessible on the web.

Work to upgrade the storage conditions of millions of the Library's collection items made significant progress as construction of the Additional Storage Programme – a 262 linear km, high density, fully automated, low oxygen storage facility at Boston Spa - passed a series of crucial milestones.

Good progress was made with the Library's mass digitization projects. By the end of 2007/08, some 40,000 out-of-copyright 19th century printed books had been digitized through the Library's partnership with Microsoft. The 19th century British Newspapers website launched in October 2007 now makes over 2 million searchable pages of historic newspapers available online within the Library and UK Higher Education institutions. Funding has been secured to digitize a further 2 million pages. Further funding has also been secured to digitise an additional 4,200 hours of sound content which will be added to the existing 3,900 hours of material currently available.

The Library's most successful ever public exhibition and programme, *Sacred: Discover what we share*, was an undoubted highlight of the past year, displaying some of the world's earliest-surviving, most important and beautiful religious texts from the Jewish, Christian and Muslim faiths. Over 200,000 people visited the exhibition and it has left a legacy of resources on the Library's website (www.bl.uk/sacred), and a continuing regional and international programme.

We maintained our focus on building our great research collections. We acquired the archive of the leading British playwright and writer Harold Pinter, comprising over 150 boxes of manuscripts, scrapbooks, letters, photographs, programmes and emails. Amongst many other acquisitions were the *Wardington Hours*, a lavishly illuminated medieval manuscript, and the archive of the celebrated British photographer Fay Godwin, which includes some 11,000 photographic prints.

An International Engagement Strategy has been adopted by the Library, and a corporate focus for international activity has been established. We have recently engaged with five other major national UK cultural institutions (including the British Museum) in a Government-initiated World Collections Programme, to make connections between cultures and to share the best of British cultural excellence and expertise with other memory institutions in Africa and Asia.

October 2007 saw the official opening of the British Library Centre for Conservation, which offers purpose-built facilities for state of the art and traditional conservation work. A programme of behind-the scene tours, enabling the public to see conservation work being undertaken, has proved to be immensely popular. In 2008 we mark the tenth anniversary of the opening of the British Library's London building. It will be an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of its architect, Sir Colin St John Wilson, who died last year.

Once again, the British Library has a dedicated online version of its formal Annual Report, which can be found at: www.bl.uk/knowledge

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