



Barry Marsden

## Chairman's statement

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# ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS

**When a great national institution has lasted for as long as the British Library, it might seem a little odd to ask 'what is it for?'. Yet this is a valid question. Of course the role of the Library is to sustain and enhance its great collections – the memory of the nation and the DNA of civilisation. But the collections are the input – what is our output? How are we to ensure that the collections are best used for the advancement of knowledge?**

The strength of the British Library's contribution to national life, and its great international reputation, have been secured because of the scale, richness and range of our printed and manuscript collections. These have been built up over more than 250 years, and access to them and their interpretation depends on the skills and expertise of the Library's staff.

New technologies are now transforming the ways in which information is created, disseminated, stored and accessed. The challenge is to ensure that the national library can maintain its same vitality, relevance and contribution to what some have termed the 'post-Google generation', as electronic resources increasingly become the traditional tools for research.

During the first half of my Chairmanship, the Board's concern was to oversee the Executive Team's fundamental programme of change to modernise the Library in order to deliver better and more responsive services. In the more recent period under review, the Board has been engaged in strategy development. I am confident that the successful pursuit of the emerging strategic priorities will ensure that in the digital age the British Library will continue to make a major

contribution to economic and social development and the cultural life of the UK.

Economic and social progress is today critically dependent on the advance of knowledge. As the national library of the UK, and one of the world's great libraries, the British Library has a central role to play in harnessing knowledge to the demands of progress. Indeed, the Library's main function is as an integral component of the national research infrastructure. It serves the world's research community, but, most importantly, makes an indispensable contribution to enhancing UK excellence in all areas of research.

In the past year I have been delighted to see further recognition within Government of the contribution the Library makes to the nation. In July 2004, the Government published *Science & Innovation: Investment*

*Framework 2004-2014*. This recognised that the Library has an 'important role in supporting scientific research and potential, including providing benefits to smaller businesses in the UK through access to science, engineering and technology information sources'. The document also acknowledged the necessity of British Library engagement in the current deliberations on the national e-infrastructure needed to meet the demands of the growing UK research base – a programme led by the Office of Science and Technology.

Also in July 2004, the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee report, *Scientific Publications: Free for all?*, acknowledged the value of the British Library's Document Supply service as an efficient and cost-effective national resource, providing researchers with

remote access to articles in scientific journals. It further recognised that the British Library has a crucial role to play in the preservation of digital publications. And in February 2005, the House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee report, *Public Libraries*, commended the British Library in its efforts to support and advise the public library sector.

In the context of a difficult general fiscal outlook, the Library's Grant in Aid settlement in Spending Review 2004 was welcomed by the Board for its additional capital allocation. This will enable us to progress our long-term physical storage programme and make an initial investment in digital storage. And at the time of writing, we have just received the excellent news that the London Development Agency, the Mayor of London's agency for business

and jobs, has awarded the British Library £1 million to pump-prime the transformation of its Business and Intellectual Property Centre from a successful pilot project into a permanent resource.

This investment by the LDA is but one element of the significant improvement in fundraising for the Library, resulting in a four-fold increase in fundraising income over the last three years. This year has seen a successful campaign for the capital development of the British Library Centre for Conservation, including £1 million pledges from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Exilarch's Foundation, as well as many other contributions from trusts and foundations. There has also been a successful launch of the Endangered Archives programme, a £10 million joint initiative with the Lisbet Rausing Charitable Fund. I should like to take this opportunity to

express my sincere thanks to all the Library's donors and gratefully to acknowledge the contribution of the Library's Development Committee.

I am enormously grateful for the support I receive from a very committed Board and from a strong, creative, and hard-working Executive Team. They have confronted the difficult issues facing the Library in the first decade of the 21st century and are carrying out a programme of reform that will, I believe, serve the nation well.

Lord Eatwell  
Chairman