Blessed are the cheesemakers: evidence based policy versus the oral tradition

Derek Law
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Blessed Are the Cheesemakers

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  What was that?

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  I don't know. I was too busy talking to Big Nose.

MAN #1:
  I think it was 'Blessed are the cheesemakers.'

MRS. GREGORY:
  Ahh, what's so special about the cheesemakers?

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  Well, obviously, this is not meant to be taken literally. It refers to any manufacturers of dairy products.
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The Blessed Cheesemaker

• No place for the folk myths of library practice
• Evidence based research
• Research based in practice
• Delphi techniques
• Practitioner based research
• Capacity building
Brian Perry

- Born in Exmouth 1936
- Studied biology at King’s College London
- Indexer with Department of Scientific and Industrial Research
- Ran its North East Office
- Joined OSTI in 1965
- Assisted in its transfer to BL as BLRDD in 1975
- Deputy Director 1975-84
- Became its Director in 1984
- Retired in 1995
- Died 2006
BLRDD Objectives

- To identify priority research areas and provide support in those areas through funding research and demonstration projects
- To disseminate the results of research
- To support the national and international exchange of research experience
- To co-ordinate research within the BL
- To encourage the development of research expertise
BLRDD Budget

- 1995/6 budget £1.6 million, a reduction of over half in real terms over ten years
- Acted as a mini Research Council
- Acted as midwife to the new digital world
- Used to leverage activity as a small element of a larger pot
- BNB Research Fund
- Other bodies such as JISC
Developing research expertise

- Mentor, friend, talent spotter, visionary
- Travel grants
- A rich haul of chairs, PhDs and honorary degrees
- Conferences as a means of developing policy and highlighting issues
- Unsolicited proposals covered over half the funding
- CPD for middle managers
Support for infrastructure

- European Association for Library and Information Education and Research

- TYGLIS (Transbinary Group on Librarianship and Information Studies) CPD for middle managers

- CRUS - Centre for Research on User Studies
- CLAIM - Centre for Library and Information Management working on performance measures
- LISU, LITU, UKOLN.... Etc

- Whitaker’s Book Bank CD-Rom

- VINE
Dissemination through meetings
to an extended community

“All academic communities define themselves partly by regular gatherings
dedicated to self examination; the community of information scientists, i.e. those
skilled in the management and exploitation of library and analogous resources in
research, is no exception. During the seventies there had been a regular series of
such gatherings known as the Cranfield Conference. These having now fallen into
desuetude, when Brian Perry, head of the British Library’s Research and
Development Department, welcomed us to this reborn version he naturally
proposed that it should be called Not the Cranfield Conference. The four day
event, jointly sponsored by the British Library, the University of Pittsburgh’s
Department of library Science, and the UK Computer Board, attracted a small but
agreeably heterogenous audience. Attendance at sessions averaged 60 from a
total registration of just under a hundred, largely composed of information
science professionals, computerate librarians, human- factors computing
theoreticians, a sprinkling of civil servants and various other varieties of
professional research support people, drawn fairly even handedly from
universities and polytechnics, with even a few token representatives of industrial
concerns such as Shell. Although the British formed the majority, followed by the
Americans and the French, several other countries were represented including
Sweden, Eire, Canada, Netherlands, Turkey and Bophutatswana. “
Research policy in the fields of librarianship and information science is being shaped by a number of forces, and for some time these have required a systematic analysis. This volume, arising from a conference sponsored by the British Library, the Library and Information Research Group and the Public Libraries Research Group, offers the distilled expertise of senior members of the information profession who have extensive experience of research and development.

Together with representatives of the major funding agencies, they present here a comprehensive review of the important issues affecting research policy, focusing on the advantages and inadequacies of the present systems, the role of government in library/information research and the coordination of research in the field, issues of quality and evaluation in this research, research performance, application and utility, manpower issues and the calibre of research workers. Contributors include Maurice Line, Brian Perry, John Martyn, Tom Wilson, John Myers, Geoff Ford, Harry East, Lynne Brindley, Peter Taylor, John Allred, Pat Coleman, Bob McKee, Michael Brittain, Philip Bryant, Nigel Gardner, Paul Ayscough and David Streatfield.
Library Technology Fair 1990

Session 1: Database design and retrieval Chair: Brian Perry, British Library Research and Development Department.

-Where is technology taking us? An overview of what the future holds in store; Chris Batt, Deputy Borough Librarian, Croydon.


-Hypermedia: changing our concept of databases; David Riddle, Kings College, University of London.

Session 2: Database access and delivery Chair: Brian Perry

-Making connections: the role of networking within and between libraries; John Smith, UK Office for Library Networking.

-Spoilt for choice? Optical discs and online databases in the next decade; Dr Elizabeth Lyon, University of Surrey.

-Broadcasting databases to your micro: a practical alternative to online? Trevor Crotch-Harvey, BSB DataVision Ltd.
Support for cross domain and cross-sectoral policy development

- Not just for HE
  - By 1981 more than 50 grants to public libraries
- Topic not library type research
  - Journals, preservation, rural access
- Information UK 2000
International adventures

- Practitioners went to Brussels meetings
- Practitioner involvement in 4th Framework Programme drafting (1994-8)
  - A total of 49 projects (including accompanying measures) were financially supported under this programme, receiving 29 Million Euro in total
  - The Libraries Programme is widely acknowledged as having contributed – and continuing to contribute - to its goal: The creation of a European Library space
  - Anglo-French, Anglo-German and Anglo-Nordic Seminars
  - Glenerin Declaration with US and Canada
  - Partnerships with Japan
BLRIC, LIC and research

- BLRDD morphed into the British Library Research and Innovation Centre responsible for research funding
- Library and Information Commission was set up responsible for research strategy
- Brought together by the Comprehensive spending Review in 1999
- Very quickly taken over by Re:source
- BNBRF disappeared
- Shepherd Review of Research Priorities
LIC Research

Prospects: a strategy for action
A three year rolling programme of strategic research projects. About ten projects per year will be selected from the three core themes, by means of open calls for proposals. These may include demonstrator projects which follow up previous research.
LIC Reports and Projects

- REVEAL: The National Database of Resources in Accessible Formats
- Full Disclosure: Releasing the value of library and archive collections
- Virtually New - Creating the Digital Collection
- 2020 Vision
- New Library: the People's Network
Lessons for the future

1) The desirability of cross-domain research
   a) Libraries, archives, museums, computing, industry, government

2) The desirability of cross-sectoral research
   a) Public, university, special, government, health etc

3) The desirability of international research

4) The desirability of evidence based practitioner research

5) The desirability of policy research and future studies

6) Shaping the agenda not responding to it

7) Dissemination, dissemination, dissemination

8) A strategic research programme for libraries
Librarians are meek

Oh, it's blessed are the MEEK! Oh, I'm glad they're getting something, they have a hell of a time.