

BACKGROUND ON THE BRITISH LIBRARY

The British Library's role

The British Library Act 1972 established a national library for the United Kingdom "consisting of a comprehensive collection of books, manuscripts, periodicals, films and other recorded matter, whether printed or otherwise". It brought together the Library of the British Museum (including the collections of books and manuscripts, the Newspaper Library, the Patent Office Library and the National Reference Library for Science and Invention), the National Central Library, the National Lending Library for Science and Technology, the British National Bibliography and the Office for Scientific and Technical Information. To these were later added the India Office Library and Records and what is now the National Sound Archive. In addition, copyright law provides for a copy of every United Kingdom printed publication to be deposited with the Library.

Under the 1972 Act, the Library's duty is to act as a "national centre for reference, study and bibliographical and other information services, in relation both to scientific and technological matters and to the humanities". It is bound to make its services available in particular to institutions of education and learning and to other libraries and industry. The Act also allows the Library to "lend any item, and make any part of their collections, or of their premises, available in connection with events of an educational, literary or cultural nature".

British Library's objectives

Currently, the British Library's overall **aim** is:

"To foster the pursuit of knowledge for the benefit of scholarship, research and innovation and to encourage the broadest possible awareness and accessibility of the Library's collection of printed works, works on microform, manuscripts, sound recordings, digital items and works recorded in other formats".

To achieve this, the Library's **objectives** are:

- to ensure the comprehensive coverage, recording and preservation of the national published archive, working in partnership with others;
- to ensure broad UK coverage of research material from other countries, and its recording and preservation, working in partnership with others;
- to provide ready access to the Library's collection and to the world's knowledge base to all who need it;
- to promote wider understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the Library's collection by way of public programmes;
- to underpin the effectiveness and efficiency of the national network of libraries in the UK by providing appropriate library services and by working in partnership with others;
- to take a leading role in the international library community;
- to satisfy our users' needs by drawing upon the expertise of our staff and exploiting the latest information technology;
- to obtain sufficient resources to achieve our mission.

Functions

The British Library fulfills its role by building, preserving and providing access to its collections. It provides access through its reading rooms, through its exhibition galleries and loans to other institutions, through

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the services of the Document Supply Centre and Patent Express, and through provision of information and bibliographic services. Until April 1999, the Library also sponsored research, which has now transferred to the Library and Information Commission and subsequently to Resource: the council for Museums, Archives and Libraries.

The British Library's services are used by institutions of education and learning, other libraries, industry and the general public. Its services support scholarship and research, the wider library network and wider educational goals.

Funding

The British Library receives grant-in-aid from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, and also earns a substantial amount of revenue from its income-generating activities. The Library has received the following level of income over the last five years:

	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00
grant-in-aid	£80.4m	£85.3m	£86.9m	£80.45m	£83.2m ¹
self-generated income	£33.565m	£33.159m	£35.025m	£40.009m	£33.867m
TOTAL	£113.965	£118.459	£121.925	£120.459	£117.067

¹The period 1996-97 to 1998-99 included the costs of the move to St Pancras. Figures until 1999-2000 also include the salary and programme costs of the Research and Innovation Centre, which was transferred to the Library and Information commission in April 1999, the sum of grant-in-aid associated with the transfer amounted to £2.44 million in 1999-2000.

REVIEW OF THE BRITISH LIBRARY

Purpose, aims and objectives

- To what extent do you think the British Library meets its stated aims, objectives and quality standards?
- How responsive do you think the British Library is to developments in Government policy and to change more generally?
- To what extent do you think the current sponsorship arrangements for the British Library, under the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, are appropriate?
- How do you think the British Library's role should develop over the next few years?

Organisation, efficiency and effectiveness

- How effective do you think the British Library is in carrying out its current services and functions?
- What improvements has the Library made over the last year?
- What changes might be made to increase the Library's effectiveness?
- To what extent are there any areas in which the British Library's level of provision exceeds your requirements?
- Do you have any view on whether organisational structure facilitates or hampers efficiency and effectiveness?
- To what extent do you think the British Library provides value for money?

Customer relations and responsiveness

- Which of the British Library's services do you use and why?
- To what extent does the British Library meet your needs?
- How does the British Library consult you to identify your service needs?
- To what extent do you think your views are taken into account?
- How effectively do you think the British Library promote its services?
- How could the Library improve its delivery of services to meet your needs?
- What other groups are there whose needs you think the British Library should be addressing but is not?
- How easy does the British Library make it for you to complain and how effective is the British Library at putting things right?

Links with other organisations

- If you currently work in partnership with the Library, what is the nature of that partnership and how effective is it?
- To what extent do you think that the British Library works with other organisations in an open and facilitative manner?
- To what extent do you think there are areas in which the British Library duplicates the work of other bodies?
- Where do you think the Library should develop its joint working arrangements with other bodies?

New Technology

- How do you think the British Library could make better use of new technology?

Any other comments or additional information you might wish to provide (please continue on a separate sheet if necessary)

Your name:

Organisation:

Your comments will be treated confidentially by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and will be used only to inform this review.

Please return your comments to me, Stephen Bristow, at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2-4 Cockspur Street, London, SW1Y 5DH. If you have any questions or comments I should be happy to answer them. An electronic version of this consultation paper is available on the DCMS website www.culture.gov.uk or by e-mail from Tania Jacobs on tania.jacobs@culture.gov.uk.