

## Removing barriers to create national catalogue

The letter from Frances Hendrix about the struggle for a national union catalogue (June Mailbox, p. 26) gave an interesting insight into the history behind building participation in a national inter-library lending resource. After five years, the Jisc report on a UK national union catalogue lies unacted upon by its sponsors.

Why does the domain seem unable to realise its ambitions? At Talis, we believe that one of the reasons is that it's often too difficult and too costly to contribute and then access the data. That's why we have made it easy and free to contribute data in a variety of formats to Talis Source. It's also why we invited all the major UK library management system vendors to a Talis Research Day to explore how we could make it even

easier for libraries to liberate their data from their library systems. It's also the reason we have made access to Talis Source resource discovery service free. We hope that this will stimulate community efforts to create a national union catalogue.

Such a resource deserves to be open and available for re-use by end-users and the library community. Through the Talis Developer Network (TDN) ([www.talis.com/tdn/](http://www.talis.com/tdn/)) we have made available both the data and the functional components as web services. This means national and regional bodies can create their own local solutions.

This is happening in Wales where a CyMAL-sponsored project is developing a Welsh (bilingual) portal that will eventually include access to library holdings in Wales.

They are using the same open Talis Platform services that power Talis Source to provide bibliographic search and access the holdings. It's time for a radical rethink in how we approach resource discovery and sharing.

**Ken Chad**

*Executive Director*  
Talis

## Strathclyde stories

Did you study Librarianship, Information Science or Information & Library Studies at Strathclyde University or its predecessor, the Scottish School of Librarianship? We have two projects you might be able to help us with. The first is a history of the department to mark its diamond jubilee – we are keen to include stories about student life.

The second is a study of graduate destinations since the introduction of the MSc/PG Diploma in Information & Library Studies in 1985. If you studied at Strathclyde after this date, we would like to know where you have been working since.

If you are in contact with any fellow students please let them know about the projects.

**Paul F. Burton**

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## Extensive job and hours cuts

Your report in June (p. 11) shows the Department for Culture, Media & Sport's complacent attitude to library closures. In Northamptonshire two mobile libraries (from six) have been withdrawn, resulting in remaining stops now being served only once every three weeks or not at all. Library opening hours have been reduced by 500 hours per week. All libraries in the county have had their hours cut, some by half. The full adult fine rate is now charged to everyone, including children under five. These cuts result in the loss of the equivalent of 24 full-time posts.

These changes disregard standards set by both the DCMS and CILIP but, since there has been no visible reaction from either body, our councillors are able to continue with their dismantling of the library service in Northamptonshire without fear of opposition.

**Alan Jones**  
Northampton

## Letter of the month

### Do we still need to argue for flexible working?

Alison Forrest's article on job-sharing, 'Half a job, anyone?', (May *Update*) made me wonder, yet again, why it takes decades to implement what are surely sensible suggestions.

It was in 1981 that Women in Libraries first put the issue of job-sharing in libraries on to the agenda, and put a great deal of effort into trying to persuade employers of the benefits of this way of working. Some of them succeeded, too, so why is it that 25 years later such an article as Alison's still needs to be written? There are probably very few jobs which cannot be shared, as long as the organisation has correctly identified what is needed in the post, and have satisfied themselves that the sharers can deliver.

Although job-sharing and other flexible working arrangements suit women with young children or, as Alison suggests, people (usually women) with other caring responsibilities, the benefits are certainly

not limited to these groups. I've been either job-sharing or working flexible hours (no more than three days a week) for most of the past 10 years, since taking early retirement. I would certainly not want to work full-time again, but believe I've brought a great deal of skill and experience to the various posts I've held in this time. Fortunately, I've encountered employers who apparently agree.

I would like to see the value of job-sharing and flexible working taken seriously by ALL employers (not just different kinds of libraries) and for all kinds of people. Once the idea becomes commonplace (finally!), it should become much easier for workers to choose this option. People can then work flexibly in different ways at different times in their career – and the results will surely benefit everyone.

**Avril Rolph**  
Swansea

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