

The complaints about standards in reading, the concern about teacher education and the lack of literary merit in some children's books – all these have helped the Centre to flourish. Frequent exposure on television and radio and in the press has given the Centre national and international status. Centre staff undertake many lectures in other universities and LEAs; invitations to lecture abroad are numerous but few can be accepted because the number of staff is small (two). However, consultancies and lectures have recently been given in Hong Kong, Mauritius, Seychelles and Italy. This year the Centre has received

requests for advice from thirty-nine countries.

The Centre has faced many difficulties, not least the perpetual concern about funding once the DES grant ceased. Income is raised by donations (mainly from publishers and LEAs); wide ranging and numerous courses recruiting nationally; publications; subscription to a membership scheme. Publications are written mainly by Centre staff and other members of the Faculty of Education. Authors have made generous contributions and the Centre greatly values this practical demonstration of support.

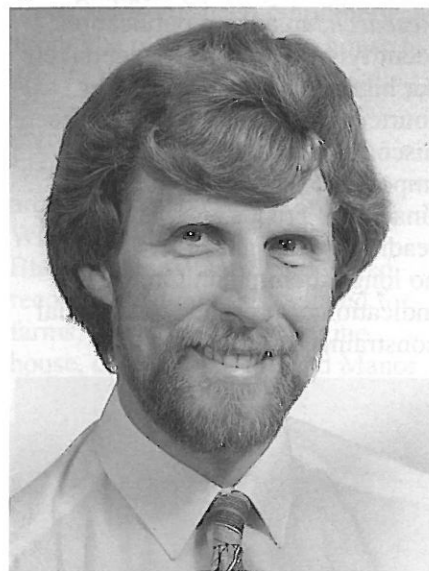
The University of Reading deserves much credit for allowing the unique Reading and Language Information Centre to be part of its activities. In the ensuing years I sincerely hope this will continue, for:

'If we teach a child to read yet develop not a taste for reading, all our teaching is for nought. We shall have produced a nation of illiterate literates who know how to read but do not read. The major purpose for teaching children how to read is to help them become readers who readily turn to books for information and enjoyment.'

(source of quote unknown)

Locating Literary Manuscripts

by David Sutton



David Sutton has been director of the Location Register, based in the University Library, since its inception. He previously worked in the libraries of Trinity College Dublin, the Polytechnic of Central London, the University of Warwick and at the British Library.

His interest in the arts is complemented by his 'other job' as a councillor on Reading Borough Council, where he is Vice-Chair of the Leisure Committee.

This article has been adapted from one which appeared in British Book News, December 1988.

If you have been engaged in the study of British literary figures, you will, until recently, have found difficulties in locating their manuscripts and personal papers. You may have been lucky enough to find that your chosen authors are considered of sufficient historical significance to have been covered, at least in part, by the National Register of Archives or the Scottish Record Office. Or you may have been interested in the sort of major,

long-dead authors whose manuscripts and, to some extent correspondence, are being exhaustively covered in the *Index of English Literary Manuscripts*. For the majority of literary authors, however, there has been no such coverage, and students, critics and biographers have had to do all the spade-work themselves - writing dozens and dozens of letters to the most likely repositories they could think of. This huge gap in research

and reference tools for the humanities is progressively being filled by a project launched in 1982 and known by the rather cumbersome title of the *Location Register of English Literary Manuscripts and Letters*.

The origins of this project date back to 1972 and the formation of the Strachey Trust by the biographer Michael Holroyd, writer and journalist Paul Levy and historian Lucy Norton to rectify the state of neglect that in their view prevailed particularly in the case of the papers of twentieth-century writers. Philip Larkin, the celebrated poet who was also for thirty years Librarian of the University of Hull, wrote and spoke eloquently on the subject and, with his backing, and the support of the Arts Council, in 1980 the Trust launched the pilot project (conducted by Dr James Edwards, then Archivist of the University of Reading) that in 1982 became the *Location Register*. This was initially a five-year project covering British literary authors who wrote in English in the

twentieth century and confined to those of their papers available for public consultation in the British Isles.

The project has been run from an office in the University Library and from the start has had the benefit of computer technology in all its operations, using the services of the British Library to store, maintain and update its database. A two-volume printed catalogue, containing some 45,000 entries produced directly from the database, was published in spring 1988. It has been purchased by libraries throughout the world.

The terms of reference for the twentieth-century register are splendidly broad. It includes all poets, novelists and dramatists and many essayists, critics and men and women of letters – provided that some of their papers survive in British or Irish institutions. No attempt has been made to confine the register to any canon of recognized or 'serious' writers: Marie Corelli, Ethel M Dell and Agatha Christie are treated in exactly the same way as 'heavyweights' like Virginia Woolf, Dorothy M Richardson and Doris Lessing. Science fiction writers co-exist with major poets: the W B Yeats collection in the National Library of Ireland is fully covered, and so is the collection in the Bodleian Library of the papers of James Blish (creator of *Star Trek*).

The expression 'twentieth-century' has also been generously interpreted. It includes all living authors, from a group of notable nonagenarians to writers like Andrew Motion and Oliver Reynolds who were born in the 1950s; twentieth-century authors who are now dead; authors like Thomas Hardy, Lady Anne Ritchie, Lady Jane Strachey and Rudyard Kipling whose careers spanned both the nineteenth and twentieth

centuries; and also such quintessentially Victorian figures as George Meredith, Algernon Charles Swinburne, 'Ouida' and Aubrey de Vere, who lived on into the Edwardian period.

There have been occasional challenges to the use of the term 'English' in the register's title, but in choosing it the project's founders intended no narrow chauvinism. 'English literary manuscripts' are manuscripts pertaining to 'English literature', and the latter is interpreted to include all English, Irish, Scottish and Welsh authors who wrote in English, together with other authors who from time to time lived in the British Isles as visitors or refugees or temporary residents. Ezra Pound and Rabindranath Tagore are included, and the Location Register is enriched by the presence of more recent writers like Wole Soyinka, C L R James and Dennis Brutus. Henry James and T S Eliot, who adopted British nationality, are present; so is J P Donleavy, now an Irish citizen; but writers like Leslie Charteris, Denise Levertov and W H Auden, who gave up their British citizenship, are not excluded.

As the allotted five years of research on twentieth-century documents drew towards a close the Location Register's management committee, appointed by the Standing Conference of National and University Libraries, considered whether to close down the project or to try to extend it in some way. They looked at the possibility of extending the survey-area beyond the British Isles, but this was not found to be feasible (however attractive the idea of lengthy research tours of North America and Europe may have seemed to the team at Reading). They also considered extending the survey-period backwards in time to cover literary papers of earlier centuries. In consultation with Professor John Horden, founding editor of the *Index of English Literary Manuscripts* (who has now joined the committee), they decided that a second five-year project, covering the period 1700–1900 and following the same inclusive principles as the twentieth-century register, was a worthwhile and viable proposition. It would also have the advantage of enabling the team at Reading to maintain and update the twentieth-century database.

Harwich, 7 Oct. 1834
 Dear Sir
 You will have learnt from your son the distressing circumstances which prevented me from showing to him & Dr Carter the other - from the great distresses he has received. On the following morning I found it necessary to set off with my poor wife for York. & then I have left her in the Quaker's 'Retreat'. I have received during the last six or eight days that religious examples can supply, - & that I might have more fully been comforted in.

Many years ago when at Pleasance you were born the day - then only. Now, you wrote to me on the occasion. And the sympathy which you then expressed makes me believe you will be pleased at learning from my own hand that I am supported under my present affliction; & that I have put

myself up for the business of the world; which propriety in health & cannot hope for the next. Most to this great preparation. The best remedial course to be pursued consists in regular & temperate exercise both of body & mind.

See of the work to which I shall now apply myself. & that of making the history of Portugal ready for the press. As the business is unprofitable to every thing but deep reflection, that it would be worth to venture upon a quarto edition of 500, & send into the world of Portugal?

Believe me Dear Sir
 Yours very truly,
 Robert Southey.

Robert Southey letter from the Longman Archive held in the University Library