



## *A profile of Fred Friend*

*Interviewed by John Merriman, Editor, Serials*

There are probably not many librarians who can honestly say that from their schooldays their greatest ambition was to be a librarian, but that was the case with Fred Friend, until recently Librarian, and now Director, Scholarly Communications, University College, London.

The young Fred first developed his taste for books when he was a pupil at Dover Grammar School. He was an avid reader in the Public Library, beginning with Biggles books and progressing through fiction to non-fiction.

His interest was increased when he became a Saturday worker which gave him a good insight into the routines of library work and for the first time brought him into contact with the great British public, including the lady who wanted a book on mermaids because she was sure she had seen one in Dover Harbour.

Leaving Grammar School to read history at King's College, London, he discovered the delights of mediaeval history. Armed with a good degree, he felt the need to do something in the realms of public service, and what better choice could there be than to play a part in the dissemination of knowledge and culture.

His first job was as a graduate trainee in Manchester University Library, which was presided over by one of the old school of librarians, Moses Tyson. It was here that he

learnt of the importance to academic users of rare books and manuscripts, and saw his way ahead as serving the academic community, a tenet that has remained with him throughout his career in university libraries.

After the groundwork at Manchester he embarked on the one year graduate course at University College, London - the only route for graduates at that time. There he came under the influence of the University Librarian, Joe Scott, to whom he feels greatly indebted for his sound advice which has always stood him in good stead.

He then returned as an assistant librarian at the University of Manchester, soon to be working under another great figure in academic librarianship, Fred Ratcliffe, whom he regarded as his mentor. The wind of change was blowing in the library corridors and Fred eagerly grasped the new opportunities. He was soon in charge of the Social Science and Education Libraries, as well as responsibilities in the main library. In the Education Library he was fortunate enough to get to know a young assistant called Margaret, who subsequently became his wife.

After six years at Manchester it was time for a career change and he moved to the Brotherton Library, University of Leeds, where he was

appointed Reader Services Librarian. Here he was able to bring to bear his innovative techniques and introduced the automated library systems (ALS) which at the time was at the sharp edge of technology. He was also involved in the new library building, and was fortunate to be able to spend a large sum of money on undergraduate textbooks.

The next progression was to Nottingham University as Deputy Librarian. In 1978 he had an opportunity to become a 'boss' and moved to the University of Essex as the University Librarian. This was a challenging job, because the University had acquired a bad image as a result of student unrest. However it was a centre for good quality research, and Fred was now free to put his theories into practice. Colchester is out on a limb and his first task was to raise the profile of the library in the outside world.

One of his triumphs was the introduction of OCLC - the first site in a UK University. He formed a good working relationship with Fred Kilgour, founder of OCLC, and the library became the test site. Problems such as not being able to use the system until 3pm because of trans-Atlantic time differences were overcome. Special provision was also made to incorporate the old sheaf catalogue - a very special favour!!

In 1982 the opportunity arose to return to University College London, as the Librarian. The thought of leaving the pleasant surroundings of Frinton-on-Sea to live in London did not appeal. Fortunately, High Wycombe in the Chilterns was seen as a compromise and Fred took up the new challenge with his usual enthusiasm. He saw it as a great opportunity to work in an excellent library in a very prestigious research institution.

He succeeded Joe Scott, who many years ago had been one of his mentors. He found a library crying out for change, and immediately set about the task, introducing an automated borrowing system and establishing a separate science library.

It was at this point that the importance of serials began to impact upon him, particularly as they represented 25% of the library budget. However, the automation of serials still alludes him. With a collection of 7000 current titles he

does not envisage any drastic cuts, a certain amount of pruning having been carried out already.

It has been one of his missions to enhance the position of UCL for many years overshadowed by big brother, the University of London.

As part of the outward looking policy, UCL became a member of CURL (Consortium of University Research Libraries) and is also now a member of the RLG (Research Libraries Group) and has close contacts with the Association of Research Libraries (ARL).

Fred has never been one for keeping his head below the parapet and through conference papers and journal articles has fearlessly identified problems and offered solutions. This has not made him over-popular with some members of the serials information chain, but he believes great progress towards a better understanding has been made.

A particular issue that concerns him is resource sharing - no library can be self-sufficient. He instigated the document delivery project within SuperJANET, and is much involved in LAMDA (London and Manchester Document Access) which scans journal articles to be sent from one library to another - an ELib funded project. He also set up the M25 Consortium concerned with access, purchasing, resource sharing, etc for academic libraries within the M25 orbital.

It is not surprising that he has been connected with HEFCE and is deeply involved in the Pilot Site Licence Initiative.

His new post as Director in Scholarly Communication has given him new opportunities to capitalise on his previous experience and to work closely with all those concerned with the electronic future, pricing issues, scholarly communication, copyright, resource sharing, document delivery, etc. He sees e-journals bringing great benefits, but favours a cautious approach. He is glad that publishers are setting up electronic versions of the paper journals. UCL have not cancelled any paper journals in order to pay for e-journals. They are purchased from a different fund. It is essential for the library to position itself ready for the new generation of academics who will demand e-journals.

He looks forward to talking to publishers about the nature of scholarly communication and finding solutions. A valuable contribution has been his involvement in the JISC/PA project 'Guidelines for Fair Dealing in Electronic Publications'.

For a person who has had such a great impact in the world of information, Fred is surprisingly modest. The fact that he has been ordained into the Church of England and strongly believes that the committed Christian has an influence in the workplace, and not just Church on Sunday, should give us a clue to his management style. When asked this question he replied that you

should see life as a whole. He is a listener and everyone in the organisation is important. You ignore the opinion of the college porters at your peril. The boss should be both visible and accessible. Formal meetings should be kept to a minimum. He does not have much time for workaholics, believing that everyone needs their own time in the evenings and at weekends to recharge their batteries.

With a wife, two children and two grandchildren, plus three dogs to walk in the Chiltern countryside, Fred leads a very full and rewarding life and long may it continue.