Rmo(u)rs from Paddington

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The summer has been sports-crazy here in the United Kingdom. First the World Cup where the whole of England came to a standstill whilst, for a few weeks, we all believed that we really could win it (what optimism!); then Wimbledon (where we transferred our golden Jubilee hopes onto our golden boy: Tim Henman); followed by the Golf Open in Muirhead, Scotland and finally the Commonwealth Games up in Manchester. I was wondering if librarians were experiencing lower footfalls as a result of all the sport being shown on television or were there simply more enquirers for David Beckham’s autobiography. After a particularly nail-biting England World Cup football (soccer) match I asked Louise Edwards of Cranfield University if she had watched the game. She told me that they had had the TV on in the library at Cranfield, but with the sound turned off!! It is hard to imagine experiencing all that tension in silence!

Back to the real world. The British Library have opened their online bookshop (http://www.bl.uk/services/publications/onlineshop.html). Here you will find a selection of books, CDs and CD-ROMs published by the British Library. These include the Library’s catalogues, a wide range of illustrated books and books about books, and audio CDs produced by the National Sound Archive.

The 68th IFLA General Conference and Council is being held in Glasgow, Scotland this year. Its key theme is “Libraries for life: democracy, diversity, delivery.” The sub-theme is “Building on the past-investing in the future.” It will no doubt, be a lively and informative conference.

Also in Scotland during August is the Edinburgh Book Festival, where, I am informed, Harold Pinter, Alan Bennett and Seamus Heaney are among the literary stars who will be attending.

In early summer Excel in Docklands, London hosted for the first time the Library and Information Show. It was a well visited event with school, academic, corporate and public librarians all attending. The programme had something for everyone. Speakers included the knowledgeable Professor Charles Oppenheim from the Department of Information Science at Loughborough University on recent developments in Copyright Law, David Murray from the London Libraries Development Agency (LLDA) on the key issues impacting libraries in the near future and the ever-energetic David Brown, Strategy Director at the Ingenta Institute speaking about “User behaviour in sourcing scholarly information.”

The ever-enthusiastic Peter Bolger of Gateshead Central Library has launched the first UK public library live help service (http://www.gateshead.gov.uk/libraries/index.html). We wish him luck!

Gabriel, the Gateway to Europe’s National Libraries has been relaunched and is now available in a totally revised form at http://portico.bl.uk/gabriel/. Gabriel covers 41 European national libraries from the 39 countries that are represented in the Conference of European National Librarians (CENL) (http://portico.bl.uk/gabriel/about_cenl/general/about_frame_en.html). It is a multilingual Internet service offering access to consistently structured information about European national libraries, with details about their printed and electronic collections as well as instructions on how to gain access to their online catalogues and services. Information is offered in the most commonly-used European languages: English, French and German.

The National Reading Campaign in the UK is running its second Swap-a-Book promotion on Friday, September 6th. Ideas for this simple-to-run event have been posted on the Literacy Trust website at http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/campaign/swapabook.html. I’m told that at last year’s event, London Taxi Drivers were one of the groups involved in highest levels of book swapping!

BioMed Central, the maverick Vitek Trakz’s publishing enterprise, has issued a pledge to “allay fears that open access publishing will be crushed by the financial muscle of conventional publishers who might try and buy open access publishers like BioMedCentral and “nip the development of open access journals in the bud.” Jan Velterop, publisher at BioMed Central, has set up an independent board of trustees — including Sir Richard Peto of Oxford University and Sir Paul Nurse of Cancer Research UK — to judge whether the right guarantees are in place, should there ever be a change in ownership.