

British Caving Library

Business Plan 2009-10

Approved by BCRA Library Steering Group, 12 June 2009

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Executive summary

1 The Operation of the Library at the present time

The British Caving Library is the National Caving Reference Library, for use by all members of the British Caving Association and other cavers in Britain and abroad. It is a unique resource, having a large collection of British and foreign books and journals, an on line catalogue and website (www.caving-library.org.uk) and is run by a professional librarian.

Individuals can contact the librarian by phone, letter or email and she will retrieve articles as requested, photocopy them and send them out to the library user. The two sites where the library material is housed also allow reference access to the books and journals. The Matlock branch is open normal library hours and one Saturday a month, whilst Glutton Bridge access must be arranged with the librarian. Information on the two sites is available on the website.

The librarian now works ten hours per week and will shortly be supported by an assistant for five hours per week.

2 Charges for the use of the library

No charge is currently made for members of BCA, but non-members pay for postage. Library use has increased dramatically since publishing the catalogue on the website. We now get at least one request per day, most requesting more than one item and many requiring an in-depth search of a range of sources from both sites. This is in marked contrast to one request per week a few months ago.

3 Management of the library

BCRA manages the library through the Library Steering Group. This group is responsible to BCRA Council and regularly updates them on developments. Expenditure on the library is currently determined by BCRA Council at the request of the Steering Group.

4 Present running costs for the British Caving Library

The main areas of expenditure are wages, rental of Glutton Bridge office and store and acquisition of library material by exchanging journals with British and foreign groups. The wages, rental and overheads come to approximately £13k per year, whilst exchanges cost a further £1k. These costs are currently all met by BCRA using money coming mainly from past bequests to the charity. The membership income for BCRA falls far short of this expenditure and does not currently cover the running costs for the organisation. (All capital expenditure in establishing and setting up the Library has been covered by BCRA.) Details of this aspect are covered in appendix A.

5 Financial forecasts

BCRA is committed to the continued funding of the library, but cannot fund it alone for the indefinite future, as its reserves will run out. The cost is likely to remain at approximately £14k per year for the next five years and a variety of options are being considered to help cover the costs:

- a. To seek financial support from BCA.
- b. To seek other sources of funding such as the National Parks.
- c. To increase the sale of BCRA publications, particularly the Cave Studies Series.
- d. To introduce some charging for library use.
- e. To encourage bequests to BCRA

6. Recent developments

- a. It has been found to be cost effective to integrate the administrative task of dealing with publications sales into the library function and this is proving to be efficient. This now provides the caving community with a simpler way of ordering publications. There may be scope for extending this to BCA publications.
- b. The Library will now be used to promote BCA and British caving through displays of promotional materials in the Library.

Background

The British Caving Library is the national caving reference library based in the Peak District. It is managed by the British Cave Research Association, a registered charity, on behalf of the caving community.

The British Caving Library aims to provide a professional library and information service to all members of the British Caving Association and others with an interest in the subject, whether based in the UK or abroad. It intends to become a key centre of knowledge and the national information centre for speleological research. The library has at present four main areas of work:

- Running a research, enquiry and information service
- Archiving original, historic material prior to the establishment of the British Caving Archive
- Running the journal exchange scheme to continue long established collections of foreign journals
- Organising the sales of back issues of publications

No other caving library offers a national and international service of this kind in the UK and the materials held by BCL are quite unique. Some caving clubs have good collections, as do other organisations such as the Pengelly Trust. The BCL intends to work in partnership with these organisations to provide a first class service for library customers. One of the greatest strengths of the BCL is the enthusiasm and hard work of the volunteers who have brought so much time, passion and knowledge both to the initial establishment of the BCL and to its ongoing success.

History

BCRA has supported a library for many years and until recently this was housed at the Derbyshire County Council Local Studies Library in Matlock, at the Librarian's house and, since mid-2005, at a storage facility at Ednaston in Derbyshire. However, following the death of the honorary librarian Roy Paulson and a workshop at Hidden Earth in 2007, it was decided to bring these materials together and establish a more formalised service operating from two sites. In 2008 much was accomplished, including the following:

- Establishment of steering group which meets quarterly (4 regularly attending members chaired by Dave Checkley) to direct the work of the librarian and working parties
- Appointment of a qualified librarian (external contractor not employee – initially 20, now 10 hours per week)
- Establishment of a library office – initially at Cromford and then at permanent premises at Glutton Bridge
- All materials moved from Ednaston storage facility to Glutton Bridge, sorted and organised by working parties who have to date spent thousands of hours on the library.
- Materials held at Matlock remain there and stock is regularly updated. We are grateful to Derbyshire County Council and the local studies librarian for the free use of their facilities.
- Online library catalogue established for the first time.
- Library website established at: <http://caving-library.org.uk/>. This gives access to the catalogue and the newly established audio archive.
- Formal contract agreed with British Geological Survey (BGS) for indefinite loan of archive materials to ensure safe-keeping and good access for researchers.
- Many archive materials are now catalogued and prepared for removal to the BGS
- Complete review of journal exchange scheme resulting in a more complete collection of library materials as well as building up partnerships with related bodies abroad

Challenges

These key successes have also produced challenges from which lessons have been learned as the library service consolidates and moves through its second year. These have included:

Lack of funding for professional library catalogue system. This has in part been overcome by use of open-source (free) software. However its implementation has demanded skills and much time from voluntary technical experts and the librarian to provide a less than perfect solution. We will work during the current year to improve this and ensure that more and more materials are catalogued and available online to users.

Staffing. Librarian hours have been reduced from 20 to 10 per week, with effect from 1.1. 09. However the volume of enquiries and more recently, the publications for sale has meant that these hours have generally been exceeded. A library assistant post (5 hrs a week) has been approved and has now been appointed. We intend that this person will assist with the sales work as well as other admin tasks, freeing the librarian to carry out more professional responsibilities, such as cataloguing, marketing and enquiry work.

Space. The lease of premises at Glutton Bridge has solved problems of storage of materials, and has resulted in considerable financial saving for BCRA. Thanks to the goodwill of the landlords, BCRA publications for sale are able to be stored at the Glutton Bridge site, mainly outwith the Library, so that the administrative task of posting these out can be dealt with by the library assistant. This sales material will be rationalised and reduced in volume and it is intended that much of the earlier material and duplicated library items will be offered free of charge to established caving club libraries who may wish to complete their own collections. We are looking at options for reorganising the existing storage space while still ensuring a comfortable working environment for library staff, visitors and meetings.

Sites. While we are very grateful to Derbyshire County Council and the local studies librarian for space in their premises, working across two sites has brought its own problems. Materials at Matlock are on open access, unsupervised shelves, with a walkway to public toilets and the outside. A stock check of books has found that a large number are missing, although none are available for loan. In addition, the area is very dusty, dirty and hot, and the desk space small and uncomfortable with no computer access. However, the opening hours (weekdays and one Saturday morning per month) mean that customers have better access than at Glutton Bridge (when visiting is only possible if the librarian or other steering group member is present).

Despite this, the visitors book shows only a handful of people a year go to Matlock. The BCL librarian visits Matlock several times a month to update and tidy shelves. Working across two sites could potentially delay responding to enquiries when journals needed are at both Glutton and Matlock, or customers wish to visit the library but need to synchronise opening times of both sites, especially if travelling long distances. It is difficult to see how this can be resolved without considerable funding to establish premises where everything can be housed on one site.

Funding. In order to maintain and increase its position as a centre of excellence for caving knowledge, the library needs funding to both service the work currently being undertaken and to develop services. Both capital and operating expenditure are likely to be required in the coming year. For example the current printer/photocopier, which a year ago was adequate, is now barely able to cope with the volume of requests for journal articles and scans. A book fund is also needed, no new books or other materials have been purchased for several years. The librarian has researched funding opportunities from other agencies, but so far none has been found where the library fulfils the acceptance criteria. The librarian will continue to seek other external funding. However, in the interim we hope that the national body will join with BCRA to fund this the national library..

Future aims and plans

The library steering group intends to build on the great work done in the first year and to continue to develop the catalogue, website and other aspects in order to achieve these aims. During 2009/10 the library will prioritise the following:

Marketing. Promotion of the library service and the materials held has so far been relatively low key and ad hoc. The steering group has therefore agreed that marketing should be a crucial activity for 2009/10. A marketing plan will be developed and will include open days, wider dissemination of publicity to a greater range of potential customers and better use of the press and other media.

Customers' information needs. This year the librarian intends to focus on customers' information needs and how well the library can fulfil these and what benefits customers will find. There has been little research on this so far although an information needs audit is usually one of the first activities when establishing a new library; if customers needs are not to be met there is no point in having a library! Among other things, research will discover what sort of information is needed, format, facilities, other useful resources. This information needs audit will help to inform the marketing plan outlined above as well as the librarian's regular work plan.

Procedures. Now that the library is becoming more organised and professional it has become apparent that procedures and plans should be developed and implemented in a more structured fashion. There has always been an action plan for the librarian, but it is hoped that this business plan will focus the work of the steering group and ensure that members and other interested volunteers will work together as a team rather than follow individual interests. It will also demonstrate the value of the work of the library to themselves, to Council and to others. The librarian is drawing up operational procedures for day to day tasks and work is progressing on others, for example the sales publications. Additionally a job description has been produced for the new library assistant post.

Performance indicators. Records and statistics are kept for a range of activities, and quality standards, particularly for enquiry work, mean that customers receive the service they deserve and that improvements are quantified. Monitoring and feedback systems will be improved to discover more about customers activities, in particular online; donations to the library and the archive, and especially marketing to identify any increase in enquiries or uptake of library publicity literature.

Funding. The steering group will continue to seek funding for the library, bearing in mind that the digitisation of the archive is the priority.

Publications for sale. Library staff will support the BCRA Publications Sales officer (not yet appointed) by maintaining stock control, posting publications on request and any other admin work connected with sales. (The financial side of publications sales will continue to be handled via the Great Hucklow office.)

Stock

All library resources are reference only, none may be borrowed. However photocopies and scans may be made (within copyright rules). Requests are received by phone, email, letter or in person to the librarian.

Archive materials. This collection of heritage material consists of early maps, paintings, surveys, hand written notes, glass slides and photographs, much of it concerned with the exploration of many of the major systems in Britain in the early 20th century.

Books. Around 700 books and reports are held between both library sites, both UK and foreign. The library has been grateful to receive donations of some more recent materials, however nothing new has been purchased.

BCA/BCRA and their predecessors. Journals, reports and other papers from the earliest caving organisations, mostly complete runs. Copies of articles from these are particularly popular.

UK journals. Club journals and newsletters are held for the main caving clubs, as well as national journals such as Descent, British Caver (no longer published) and Pengelly Trust publications.

Foreign journals. Probably the biggest strength of the BCL is its collection of foreign journals acquired through the journal exchange scheme. There has recently been a complete review of this scheme and decisions made will ensure the widest possible coverage of journals from key international speleological organisations and countries. In return those organisations and countries will regularly receive Cave and Karst Science and/or Speleology.

Research papers. As a result mainly of donations to the library, a number of travellers and researchers have made available the papers they used for their work. Most are photocopies of articles, but also include surveys, leaflets, tourist guides and other ephemera. They have been categorised by country and most are filed at Glutton Bridge.

Audio/visual collections. The audio archive is available online through the BCL website. The large collection of early films copied to DVD by Maurice Hewins with a grant from BCRA is also available and may be viewed at Glutton Bridge.

Services.

Both library sites welcome visitors. The caving library at Matlock is unstaffed but open between 9 and 5 on weekdays and 9 – 12.30 on the 2nd Saturday of the month. Local studies library staff will give assistance whenever possible and a photocopier is available. There are also limited computer facilities. Glutton Bridge is open whenever the librarian or other steering group member is present (there are currently 2 key-holders). Visitors are advised to make an appointment. However as the librarian lives only 4 miles away it is usually possible to accommodate requests for visits at relatively short notice. Toilets, coffee, photocopier and computer facilities are available.

Library services for BCA members are free and included in membership. Non-members receive one hour of librarian time for free, with copying, postage etc at cost.

Literature searches. The librarian will undertake literature searches and will follow up lists of references with copies or scans of papers etc as required. Although the librarian will always endeavour to find free/open access sources of information, there is at present no funding for British Library document supply service so customers will need to pay for this themselves.

The library also aims to provide the following:

- **Linking/signposting to other organisations**
- **Access to the web**
- **Facilities for courses and meetings**
- **Access to some scientific databases**
- **Document supply/photocopies/scans**
- **As Glutton Bridge is in an area of speleological interest it is ideally situated for use as a field study centre.**

Customers

The library aims to provide a service for BCA members as well as others who have an interest in the subject. So far, analysis of enquiries shows an even split between members and non-members, with the majority coming from the UK, although some enquiries have come from abroad (Germany, Italy, South Africa). Some have heard of the library or BCRA through word of mouth or publications, but it is pleasing to note that an increasing number are making requests as a result of the online catalogue.

The steering group has identified the following as potential customers of the BCL:

- Members of BCA
- Other cave scientists
- Caving clubs and groups
- Universities
- Other education, schools, adult and community education, Workers Educational Association, University of the 3rd. Age
- Local community (including local authorities, utility companies, planners)
- Geologists
- Archaeologists
- Environment Agency
- Natural England
- Public health offices
- Members of public with general interest
- International enquirers, not just UK, especially European

Management and organisation

The librarian manages the library service on a day to day basis, well supported by the steering group and a range of other interested people with varying skills and experience. The librarian is a self-employed external contractor. The new library assistant will be an employee. There is no contingency plan for sickness or resignation of the paid staff.

Appendix A - Business Case as presented to BCA AGM on 28 March 2009:

12 Feb. 09

BUSINESS CASE FOR SUPPORT TO THE BRITISH CAVING LIBRARY (GLUTTON BRIDGE)

ISSUE

1. Having expended in the order of £25k since 2007 on the British Caving Library (BCL), BCRA Council have authorised financial support at the current level until Dec 09 when, with the current level of membership, it would find it impossible to support at this level.

TIMING

2. In order to maintain the British Caving Library in Glutton Bridge beyond Dec 2009 funding must be found prior to Hidden Earth 09.

RECOMMENDATION

3. Members present at the BCA AGM are requested to endorse the Option to joint fund and develop the BCL as a national resource. We ask that they authorise an annual expenditure of £8.5k¹, to be matched by the same expenditure by BCRA for an initial period of five years, in order to continue to develop this truly unique resource².

BACKGROUND

4. Until early 2008 the wealth of knowledge of the British Caving Library was largely untapped. Some of the library was held in Matlock as part of a public library and much more remained in storage largely unavailable to the caving public. In late 2007 the BCRA undertook a project to:

- a. Rationalise the holdings in Matlock and preserve the valuable stock.
- b. Take the majority of the material out of storage, properly catalogue the contents, find a permanent accessible home and ensure that the collection could be both preserved for the future and made available to the majority.
- c. Establish a library steering committee.
- d. Develop a library website and make the catalogue available on line at:
<http://www.caving-library.org.uk/>

5. Throughout late 2007 and 2008 significant progress was made. A professional librarian was employed to properly catalogue the collection, premises were found within the Peak District National Park at Glutton Bridge and some of the older more historic parts of the collection are being found a home with the British Geological Survey (BGS).

6. The bulk of the library from storage has been professionally catalogued at a cost of £10.6k and established at a site close to sites of speleological interest (cost of annual lease £4.1k)³.

¹ Detailed running costs are at para 9 and 10.

² Funding beyond Dec 2014 would be subject to a formal review at the 2014 BCA AGM. The steering committee would be responsible for delivering a report to both the BCRA and BCA executives annually, justifying the level of expenditure.

³ The site at Glutton Bridge is ideally placed to act as a caving resource centre. Equally it is capable of hosting both BCRA and BCA Council / Committee Meetings.

7. The material earmarked for the BGS will be professionally stored and ultimately digitised using funding from a number of sources⁴.

OPTIONS

8. Three options exist for the continued financial support of the BCL:

a. **Do nothing.** Should the BCA be unable to provide funding in order to support the BCL, BCRA would be unable to continue funding the project at its current level beyond Dec 09. The BCRA would be forced to give up the lease on Glutton Bridge and attempt to find alternative premises at no charge⁵ or put the BCL back into storage, rendering the bulk of the collection unavailable. This option should be considered a retrograde step and therefore discounted.

b. **Gain alternative funding from other charitable sources.**

The Heritage Lottery administration will only consider funding for the older archive/original material and will not directly support the library. To gain Lottery support for the archive we have to meet the specific conditions described in British Standard 5454. We are fortunate in having been offered temperature and humidity controlled storage facilities (as required by BS5454) by the British Geological Survey and can now apply for funding for the establishment of the British Caving Archive. Several other sources of funding for the library, as distinct from the archive, have and are being investigated, but none has as yet provided support.

c. **Gain funding from the BCA and develop the BCL as a national resource.** Having discounted or so far failed with both options a & b above, BCRA considers it appropriate to approach the BCA to share the funding for the medium term⁶, acknowledging that it would be appropriate to work collaboratively to secure long term funding and to develop a long term strategy for the BCL.

COSTS

9. Total running costs for 2008 were as follows⁷:

Librarian	£ 11k
Rent (3 separate sites)	£ 4.7k ⁸
Running Costs	£ 1.9k
Total	£ 17.6k

⁴ BCRA are investigating Lottery funding on the basis of the BGS' exceptional facilities.

⁵ Prior to securing the current premises BCRA were looking for suitable accommodation for 2 years.

⁶ An initial 5 year period with a review at the 2014 BCA AGM

⁷ Detailed accounts are available from the BCRA Treasurer.

⁸ Storage facility and office on 2 separate sites replaced by one site at Glutton Bridge in July 2008.

10. Having completed the majority of the cataloguing activity the nature of work in 2009 will change significantly, allowing the use of less skilled personnel and allowing running cost to be reduced. The projected costs for 2009 are therefore as follows:

Librarian & Clerk	£ 6.9 k
Rent (Glutton Bridge)	£ 4.1k
Running Costs	£ 1.5k
Total	£ 12.5k

11. The balance (£4.5k) of the combined £17k raised from both the BCRA and BCA sources would therefore be available to further develop the BCL under the direction of an empowered and jointly supported Library Steering Committee.

BRANDING

12. One of the first tasks of an empowered steering committee should be to examine the BCL as a brand and to develop a detailed long term plan.

CONCLUSION

11. Having made exceptional progress in delivering a viable caving library the BCA and BCRA must now work together in order to secure its future.

S J WHITLOCK

Chairman BCRA

Action:

BCA Secretary