

EDITORIAL

This issue of *African Research and Documentation* looks to the past, the present and the future. It provides a retrospective through Tony Kirk-Greene's overview of fifty years of African Studies and ASAUUK in the UK, and looks forwards and outwards in its reports of developments in African Studies and Africana librarianship, not only in the UK but across much of Europe.

ARD has always prided itself on its appeal not only to librarians, archivists and information scientists but also to the wider constituency of scholars and researchers working in, on and for Africa. It is vital that all these groups continue to talk to each other and to keep each other informed about their established and evolving interests, resources and technologies; SCOLMA and the editorial team are looking to further develop *ARD* as a forum in which they can do so.

As reported in *ARD* 103, 2007 (pp. 117-118), librarians and others from ten European countries met last year in the congenial surroundings of the Afrika Studiecentrum, Leiden, to exchange ideas and experience.

This issue of *ARD* publishes the papers and presentations from that conference. It also reproduces the reflections and perspectives of two distinguished European Africanists, Stephen Ellis and Holgar Bernt Hansen. Both are supremely qualified to comment on the European scene as a whole, and to give us librarians and archivists insights into how our users/readers/customers/colleagues/friends see us.

The country presentations highlight the very different legacies and institutions with which Africana librarians work (and sometimes struggle) across Europe, and disseminate information about resources and networks of which many of us (especially those who usually confine themselves to Anglophone circles) were hitherto unaware.

The Leiden meeting was the birthplace for a new network, ELIAS (European Librarians in African Studies), and I write this, having just returned from its second annual meeting and birthday celebrations held in Paris on 10-11th July, 2008, this time with thirty-one participants from eight countries. A full report will appear in the next issue.

This issue also contains a tribute to Tom French who played an active part at the Leiden meeting and who was much missed in Paris. The last few years have seen the passing of some giants of Africana librarianship and scholarship: Rob Collins, Gretchen Walsh (remembered in the last issue), Tom French and Miriam Alman (in this issue); and as this issue goes to press we mourn the death of Christopher Fyfe who knew more about the history of Sierra Leone than anyone else, and was a great lover of (old-fashioned) libraries and archives. This editorial thus has an inevitably elegiac tone, but all of these 'giants' were as interested in the present and the future as the past,

and were generous in outlook as well to their successors and students. They have set standards and signposts for those of the next generation of both Africanists and Africana librarians and archivists. *ARD* welcomes contributions from all sides of the spectrum to continue the dialogue.