1. Committee

The Group committee for the year 1 January-31 December 2012 was as follows:

Chair: Amanda Saville (Queen’s College, University of Oxford)
Vice-Chair: Sheila Hingley (University of Durham)
Honorary Secretary: Stewart Tiley (St John’s College, Oxford)
Honorary Treasurer: Alison Cullingford (University of Bradford)
CILIP Branch & Group Forum Rep.: Mary Nixon (Goldsmiths, University of London)
Chair of BSC: Hugh Cahill (Lambeth Palace Library)
Elected committee members: Karen Brayshaw (Canterbury Cathedral Library)
Fiona Courage (University of Sussex)
Adrian Edwards (British Library)
Lucy Evans (Harris Manchester College, Oxford)
Sarah Griffin (University of York)
Anette Hagan (National Library of Scotland)
Tanya Kirk (British Library)
Emma Laws (V&A)
Sarah Mahurter (University of the Arts, London)

2. Membership

[Membership chart showing data from 2005 to 2013]
Membership at for 2012 stood at 949 (compared with 971 in 2011), continuing a trend of slight reduction which has persisted for the past 4 years (from 991 in 2009). It might be worth taking stock of this continuing decline in numbers (ca. 4% over 4 years) and seeking out ways of attracting new members, although the scale of this dip might reflect little more than the reduction in jobs in the sector during difficult economic circumstances.

A breakdown of membership by region compared with similar last year shows that this reduction was spread geographically, although particularly in London (down 18), Wales (down 8) and the West and East Midlands (down 7 and 5 respectively). Other falls took place in the South East (down 2), and the North East (down 2). Some areas showed an increase, however, notably the East of England (up 8), but also Scotland (up 4), Overseas (up 4), and Ireland, the South West, the North West and Yorkshire (all up 1). Even so the geographical focus remains firmly on London and the South East, with 41.7% of the membership hailing from these areas (down 1% on 2011), and those areas containing traditional centres for special collections, such as the East of England and Scotland.

Figures for membership overlap with other CILIP SIGs showed little change on last year. The Group’s particular affinities remain with the Academic & Research Libraries Group and the Library & Information History Group, both sharing over 200 members with the RBSCG. Other SIGs with strong affinities to the RBSCG were Cataloguing & Indexing, Local Studies and Career Development (all sharing over 100 members with the RBSCG).
3. The work of the Group

General
The Group continues its work advocating for special collections and the professional skills of those who look after them and promote them. The Committee met four times in the year to discuss issues and plan events and strategy. Following the 100% cut in capitation from CILIP in 2011, with a partial restoration in 2012, the Group sought to continue its investigation into securing funds for its work, without the need to rely on capitation. Fortunately its conferences and events have delivered a healthy financial state for the Group to the current time, but Fiona Courage was appointed Fund-Raising Officer to ensure the continuation of this state of affairs. In summer 2012 she conducted an on-line survey of membership to gain insight into their thoughts on the matter and the types of events they might consider attending. She will use the detailed and generous responses so obtained to construct a business plan and strategy, now required by CILIP, during 2013. Liaison with a range of professional Groups was undertaken to strengthen links, promote understanding and co-ordinate practice. These included a renewal of communications with the Historic Libraries Forum, with an agreement to promote each others’ events, as well as a continuing dialogue with the Antiquarian Booksellers’ Association, leading to the Group organizing a behind the scenes tour at the V&A acquisitions department for the booksellers, with the promise of a reciprocal event from the ABA in 2013. The Bibliographic Standards Committee continued its liaison with the bibliographic section of the ALA regarding the development of DCRMB subsequent to the implementation of RDA, with the BSC’s secretary, Iris O’Brien, submitting responses to proposals and undertaking testing on behalf of the Group. On a more sombre note, the Group’s chair became involved in proceedings surrounding two instances of collections under threat, formally expressing the Group’s concerns: the proposed closure to the Women’s Library by London Metropolitan University, and the sale of the Mendham Collection (housed at Canterbury Cathedral Library) by the Law Society.

Conferences & Events
The Group’s annual conference, Speaking Truth to Power, was held at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford in September, and addressed the theme of advocacy for special collections during a time of recession and change. Amongst the speakers were senior librarians from several sectors with experience of successfully demonstrating the value of special collections to their stakeholders, including Richard Ovenden (Deputy Librarian of the Bodleian Library), Neil McInnes (Head of Libraries, Information and Archives for Manchester City Library), Mark Nicholls (Fellow Librarian of St John’s College, Cambridge), Oliver Urquhart-Irvine (Head of the British Library-Qatar Foundation Partnership), and Alison Cullingford (in her role as RLUK’s Unique and Distinctive Collections Project Manager), but perhaps the strength of the programme lay in its inclusion of those from outside the profession, including an archivist (Judy Faraday, Partnership Archivist at John Lewis), a museums professional (Christopher Parkin, Lead Education Officer at the Oxford’s Museum of the History of Science), an academic (Anne Welsh, Lecturer in LIS at UCL) and a development
officer (Sean Rainey of Magdalen College, Oxford). Our after dinner speaker was Nicholas Poole-Wilson, an antiquarian bookseller with many years of experience at Bernard Quaritch from which to draw suitable anecdotes. There were visits on the Thursday afternoon to several Oxford libraries and archives. 100% of delegates rated the conference as good to excellent in the delegate feedback. Comments included: “The whole conference was highly relevant with all speakers giving excellent presentations”, “I feel as though my employer got good value for money in paying for me to attend”, “The atmosphere was friendly and relaxed”, “and “Very well organised, great speakers and visits. Came away with lots of ideas and renewed enthusiasm to tackle some of our special collection challenges.” Preliminary explorations were also made on developing the 2013 Conference in Canterbury, and the offer of a venue for the 2014 conference by Keith O’Sullivan, Senior Rare Books Librarian at Aberdeen University, was taken up.

The Group’s programme of day events for 2012 kicked off with the latest incarnation of its perennially popular rare books cataloguing training, this being held in Lambeth Palace: “excellent speakers, they really understood what they were talking about and made a point of going round the room to chat to the participants.” The summer saw a repeat session of the British Library's massively successful session on Developing a major special collections exhibition, which went "behind the scenes" to look at how special collections staff planned a major exhibition, including writing the exhibition proposal, storyline creation, exhibit selection, writing labels and gallery design. A smaller event in Oxford allowed participants the chance to view and operate hand-presses under the expert tuition of Paul Nash of the Bodleian Hand-Printing Museum.

In 2012 the Group was chosen by CERL (Consortium of European Research Libraries) to be its partner organization for their annual seminar, held at the British Library in October, and taking as its subject mass digitisation. This was a highly successful event which proceeded with the participation of Committee members in the organizing, chairing and round up of sessions, and helped raise the Group’s profile at an international level.

On-line & Publications
The Group actively maintains its web-pages and the Web Editor attended training sessions for the forthcoming update of the CILIP website during 2012. Three editions (91-93) of the Group’s newsletter were published on-line during the year, and a monthly email bulletin about events and activities was produced. The Twitter account instituted in 2011 has been enthusiastically tweeted upon and the level of followers at the end of 2012 stood at 940. The exploratory work on the feasibility of a new edition or format for the Directory of Rare Books and Special Collections continued throughout the year and progress led to the creation of a new post of Publications Officer on the Committee (see below), initially dedicated to the Directory's active development.
Committee members
The Committee started 2012 with one new member, Hugh Cahill, of Lambeth Palace Library, who took over as Chair of the Bibliographic Standards Committee from Julianne Simpson, who resigned to devote herself more fully to her new post at John Rylands. Alison Cullingford, the Group’s Treasurer, continued her extra-curricular work in considering the development of the Special Collections sector by gaining a secondment as RLUK’s Unique and Distinctive Collections Project Manager. The Committee was also delighted by the news that Emma Laws (Web Editor) was expecting a second child, although in the event this turned out to be twins. Unfortunately for the Committee both these developments meant that two long-standing and dedicated members decided to resign at the end of 2012, as did two other stalwarts: our Deputy Chair, Sheila Hingley; and our previous chair and B&G Liaison Officer, Mary Nixon; as well as Anette Hagan, one of our Day Events Co-ordinators, and our Scottish contact, who’d served for a rather shorter period. Alison agreed to stay on the Committee to support her successor as a co-opted member for 2013, but the Committee is very grateful for all the work, advice and time given to us by Sheila, Mary, Emma and Anette, and we wish them well for the future. This turnover of members meant that a call for volunteers was issued at the 2012 AGM and reiterated through mailings and Twitter during the autumn. Several excellent candidates put themselves forward and the Committee engaged in a selection procedure, finalized at its November meeting. The resulting decision means that four new members have started on the Committee in 2013: Hannah Thomas (Courtauld Institute) as Honorary Treasurer; Melanie Wood (Newcastle University) as Fund-Raising Officer, a position vacated by Fiona Courage who moved to Deputy Chair; Helen Vincent (National Library of Scotland) as our liaison with Rare Books Scotland, and also to help organize the 2014 conference; and Karen Attar (Senate House Library, University of London), who returns to the Committee in the new position of Publications Officer. Internal movements see Hugh Cahill take on the additional role of Web Editor, Lucy Evans add Day Events to her portfolio of roles, and Amanda Saville functioning as liaison with other Branches, Groups and CILIP in her capacity as Chair. One final addition saw Keith O’Sullivan (Aberdeen University) co-opted onto the Committee for 2013/14 after his very generous offer to host the 2014 conference for us.