

British Caving Library Report for BCA AGM 2018

Enquiries

We continue to deal with enquiries, which have increased over the years but have now stabilised at around ±100 every year from 2013 to 2017. The proportion of enquiries requiring us to carry out research has increased; some 50% now involving several hours of research, as opposed to a request for a simple scan/copy of an item from our shelves.

Visitors

We welcome visitors coming to do their own research and the numbers have stabilised during the last two years at around 75 each year. If possible we organise the material before the visitor arrives to enable them to make best use of their time. We offer WiFi (for those bringing their own laptop), scanning, copying and use of a PC. We host meetings of BCRA Council, BCA Training Committee and Panel Meetings and QMC and can accommodate groups of up to about 10 people for meetings. The Librarian also maintains a Library Facebook page, which increases in popularity every year.

Cataloguing

The Librarian (who is paid to work 1 day per week), and I are still continuing to re-catalogue the items held in the original BCRA Library whilst at the same time having to keep up with the new acquisitions of books, surveys, journals, foreign exchange journals and an increasing amount of archive material. This is a mammoth task and we are victims of our own success in that more time is now spent in dealing with enquiries, leaving less for the basic cataloguing. Thanks go to Martin Laverly who created and maintains the Library On-line Catalogue and Bibliography, which relies on us emailing him our catalogue spreadsheets of both old and new material.

Donations and Bequests

There are on-going problems in cataloguing the Beck/Nash legacy, partly due to the sheer volume of the material (which includes hundreds of Peak District surveys), and partly due to the way that the periodicals have been bound; some bound volumes are partly duplicates, which overlap but do not coincide with our existing bound and catalogued material. We are continuing to integrate the Eldon Pothole Club Library, which has been donated to us. As always, duplicate copies of items are made available to other caving libraries wanting them, or else they go into our "Lucky Dip" at caving events in return for donations.

Problems

Our work is limited by the time the Librarian and I are able to spend and we are actively searching for volunteers to help with cataloguing, particularly with the surveys.

We are rapidly running out of space as the new acquisitions continue to pour in and have just been offered another room in the same building, which we would need to rent in addition to the main Library room - the cost of this is currently being negotiated.

We need a volunteer to take over and develop further the BCRA Archives website, created initially by John Gardner, who has now stood down after 10 years. This is an important resource, particularly with the increasing interest in the history of caving and more archive material now coming to light, so we need someone who can build on John's vision.

*Jenny Potts,
BCRA Library Co-ordinator*