

The SCONUL Newsletter is the journal of SCONUL, the Society of College, National and University Libraries.

The Newsletter aims to bring together articles, reports and news stories from practitioners in order to generate debate and promote good practice in the national libraries and the university and college sector. As well as the paper copy, the current issue of the SCONUL Newsletter is also available electronically via the SCONUL website (<http://www.sconul.ac.uk/publications/newsletter>). Contributions are welcomed from colleagues in all fields and at all levels: we merely request that the items contributed are concise, informative, practical and (above all!) worth reading.

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## Last night a DJ (Foskett) saved my life

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I was recently asked to review D.J. Foskett's 1962 pamphlet *The creed of a librarian: no politics, no religion, no morals*<sup>1</sup>. As someone who was not around in 1962, I think I was chosen to see if Foskett still had relevance for today's Young(ish) Turks.

Once I had got past the now jarring gender-specific language (all librarians and readers were male apparently in 1962!) I was struck by just how relevant Foskett's arguments seemed for librarianship today. If we are a bona fide profession we need a philosophy, but –for Foskett– all too often philosophical guidance is lacking.

As we put this issue of the *SCONUL Newsletter* together, Foskett's words kept coming back to me. More than ever we seem to be in need of direction. In her article on the building of a new library, Margaret Robb outlines some depressing trends in library use (or should that read 'disuse?'). In her piece on virtual and real access, Mary Delaney comes right to the point and asks 'what is a successful library?'. The opportunities are out there (take a close look at Margaret's concluding statistic) but we need to re-think, re-group and re-focus if we are to be successful in the future.

To quote a recent introduction to philosophy:

'For the last two thousand years the philosophical tradition has been the enemy of ...cosy complacency. It has insisted that the unexamined life is not worth living. It has insisted on the power of rational reflection to winnow out bad elements in our practices, and to replace them with better ones. It has identified critical self-reflection with freedom,

the idea being that only when we can see ourselves properly can we obtain control over the direction in which we would wish to move. It is only when we can see our situation steadily and see it whole that we can start to think about what to do about it.'<sup>2</sup>

I'm sure Foskett would agree. What do you think?

Antony Brewerton  
*SCONUL Newsletter* Editorial Board

<sup>1</sup> Foskett, D.J. *The creed of a librarian: no politics, no religion, no morals*. London: Library Association, 1962

<sup>2</sup> Blackburn, S. *Think: a compelling introduction to philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, p.12