

LYN STEYN
Head Librarian,
Fish Hoek Library



Getting to know me ...

*'Getting to know you, getting to know all about you;
Getting to like you, getting to hope you like me'*
from the film **The King and I**.

Conference in East London – I had to be there. I had not been 'home' for thirty years; good enough reason to make the journey. I found the trip both longer and shorter than I remembered: longer because nothing looked familiar; shorter because of light-hearted congenial company.

Four in the car and seven in the B&B house: for a week we shared problems and solved them; brooded over impossible colleagues and management and fired them; redesigned services and created ideal environments. In between, we even managed to attend some conference sessions, but little that happened at the official venue was better than our home-based think tank. We ditched the evening events to entertain colleagues around our supper table – I believe that the International Michelin Guide will soon be announcing a special star category so that they can honour our culinary and hospitality skills.

The synergy of the team was inspiring: two and a half magnificent cooks, five well-fed acolytes and various guests; three computer boffins, four admiring students; five papers, seven nit-picking reviewers. No housemates or guests were irreparably damaged in making these presentations.

You may read the conference papers and reports of attendees, and LIASA members will encourage you to join or renew your membership to continue to benefit from belonging to the organisation. But benefits are difficult to define and explain – you pay a membership fee, attend meetings, workshops and a variety of training courses. Mostly it sounds like either hard work or a series of tea parties. You can also become a committee member and do a lot more voluntary hard work in your own time – where's the benefit? What's in it for me?

I don't know what you will get from LIASA membership. What do you want?

For me, it is the opportunity to mix with people who share my library world. They do not necessarily share my opinions but that's what makes discussions interesting and stimulating. Debate helps shape one's views and ideals, polishing and refining the rough mineral to reveal a perfectly faceted jewel. It is the opportunity to grow and contribute to a profession without which this country would be infinitely poorer. So in fact, the benefit lies in you bringing your special gifts into the organisation; the benefit eventually ripples through you, your colleagues, your community, to society at large. That must be worth something.

This year I shared a week with some delightful friends who gently taught me about sharing and caring. We laughed hysterically at epic nonsense. We navigated a tiny kitchen with fancy footwork. I learned to accept (almost) that I am no longer young, and that back-seat driving is an art form.