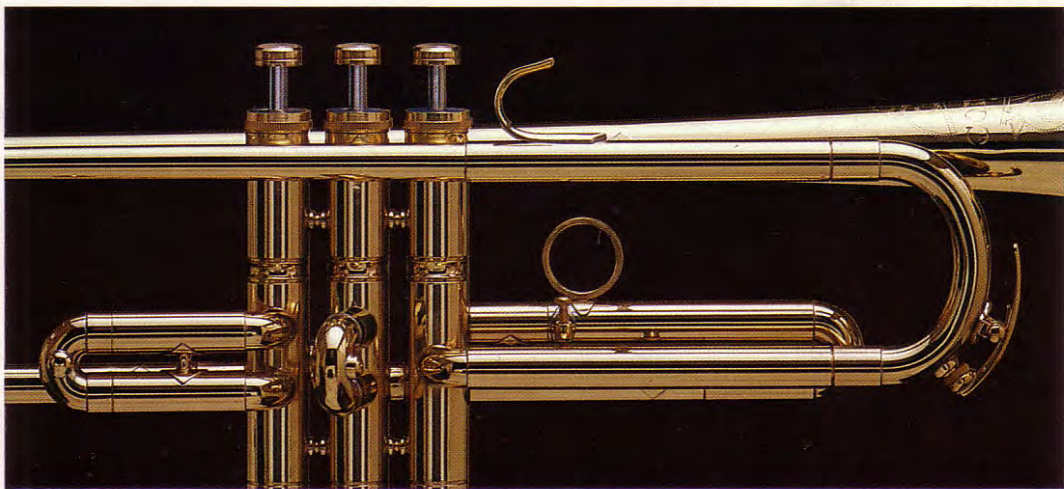
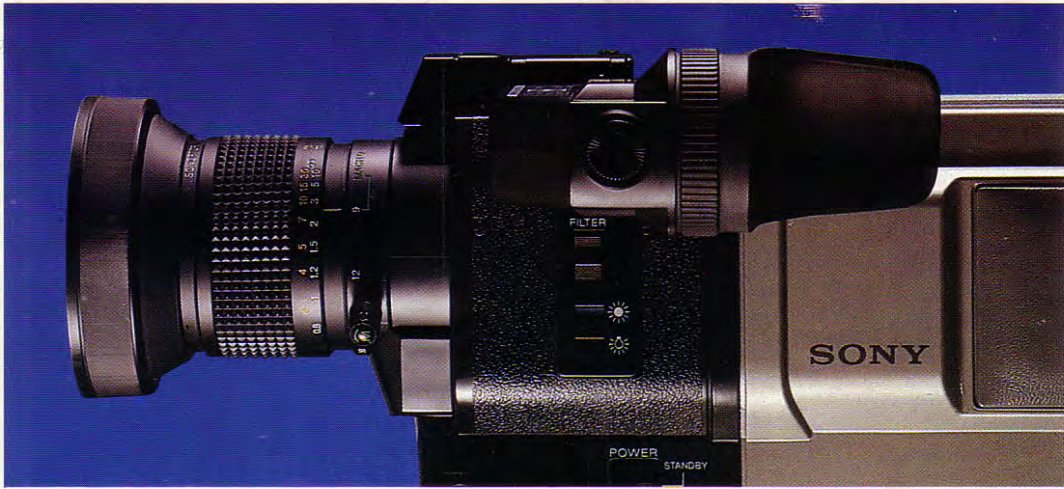


# ALTERED IMAGES

Towards a Strategy for London's Cultural Industries



Greater London Enterprise Board

# ALTERED IMAGES

Towards a Strategy for London's Cultural Industries

No. 3 in the Sector Strategy Series  
RESHAPING LONDON'S INDUSTRIES

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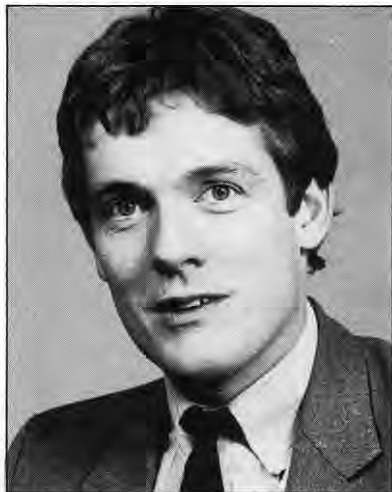
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# INTRODUCTION

## SECTOR STRATEGY



London now has the largest single concentration of unemployed people in the advanced, western, industrial world. The figures have trebled since 1979 and 400,000 people are now officially unemployed in the GLC area. The real figure is over 500,000 and in some boroughs 1 in 5 of the working population cannot find work.

Over the past two decades London's industry has declined faster than in other parts of the country. Since 1970 over three quarters of a million jobs have gone. The process of job loss has differed from industry to industry but there are common themes. Firms have reinvested in new labour-saving technology outside London, indeed often outside the country, leaving London plants to run down and eventually close. For a period new jobs in the service sector, particularly in the public and financial services sectors, masked this catastrophic collapse and unemployment remained well below the national average.

But now much of the service sector itself is undergoing the same rationalisation. Financial institutions, for example, are relocating many of their routine, increasingly computerised

operations outside London. Public services – a key job creator in the 70s – are simply being cut back. The result is that industrial decay and unemployment are now rapidly spreading across London. For some, there is no alternative to these changes. The free play of the market is the only road to progress, whatever the costs.

The GLEB was set up by the GLC to show that there is an alternative. Industrial decline and unemployment are not the inevitable costs of change. London's assets – the skills and knowledge of its workers, the industrial infrastructure of its factories, its concentration of research and design resources need to be developed and modernised rather than thrown on to the scrap heap.

The GLEB is demonstrating in practice how this can be done, with its innovative approaches in the fields of technology, area and industrial property, industrial democracy, equal opportunities, cooperative development and finance. In summary, the GLEB's approach is to demonstrate by example how industries can be reorganised with and for the benefit of their workers and of London, rather than being run down and abandoned.

To do this, the GLEB has adopted a 'sector' approach. Key London industries have been identified and their problems and opportunities extensively analysed with the help of both workforces and managements in the industries. From these analyses have emerged proposals for development strategies for industries which benefit both the workers within the industries and Londoners as a whole.

The GLEB's limited resources mean that it can necessarily play only an exemplary role in this 'restructuring' strategy. We have therefore identified a limited number of firms in each industry which have potential for development within the framework of the wider industry strategy. With the support of the GLEB's wide range of support services, such firms can serve as a model

for the rest of the industry. This does not mean that the effects of a successful reorganisation will simply radiate outwards to other firms. Instead we look for ways in which the investment can be linked in direct and indirect ways to other GLEB investments and to other firms.

The sectors in which the GLEB is working span London's traditional manufacturing industries such as furniture and printing, and its 'new technology' industries such as computers and instrument engineering. It also includes a service industry undergoing great change, the so-called 'cultural industries' of film, video, music and publishing. In this way we are demonstrating how the approach can be applied in a very diverse economy such as London's. All these industries could have a future in London if they build on the capital's strengths, especially its innovation and design capability and its flexible skills. We have rejected the idea that there are 'sunset' industries which are destined for inevitable destruction. The goods and services they produce are still in demand and what is needed, as for the 'modern' industries, are strategies for their development.

A sector strategy approach is necessarily long-term and to carry it through successfully requires resources and powers available only to central government. The GLEB, however, is showing by example how in practical terms we can go about tackling the central challenge of our times – the organisation of production and the meeting of social needs. In miniature, we are helping to demonstrate, with the sector strategies and with the GLEB's work as a whole, that there is an alternative to unemployment and the tragic destruction of our industrial resources.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Nick Sharman". The signature is fluid and cursive.

**Nick Sharman**  
*Director, Sector Strategy Division*

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## CULTURAL SECTOR STRATEGY

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The phrase 'cultural industries' has all the clumsiness of the unfamiliar. Culture and industry have rarely been seen as going together. Indeed they have often been perceived as opposites, inhabiting entirely different and separate worlds.

Yet, most of the cultural products and services we consume or use – paperback novels, records, television programmes, newspapers and feature films – are produced by industries not unlike the industries of furniture, printing or computers.

These industries are large employers. It has been estimated that over 250,000 people work in London's cultural industries. More strikingly, they are also industries that have a strong potential for growth. According to the Institute of Employment Research at Warwick University jobs in the 'leisure, artistic and sports' category are set to increase by 30% during the 1980's.

At the same time, despite its economic strength, there have been major job losses in parts of the cultural sector, such as record pressing and the BBC. As an organisation responsible for job creation through strategic intervention in industry, the Greater London Enterprise Board (GLEB) has a clear role to play in an area which has previously been the domain of bodies like the Arts Council.

There is also a more purely cultural reason why the GLEB made the decision to invest in the cultural industries. In the past, bodies like the Arts Council have concentrated their funding on the older art forms – such as theatre and opera, rather than recorded music or video. Partly because of this they have tended to ignore the diverse and rich currents of popular culture which use the new forms – the record, sound system or pirate radio station rather than the concert hall; the poster, record sleeve

or cartoon rather than the painting; the dance floor rather than the ballet. The assumption has been that because these forms of popular culture are commercial there is no place for state intervention of any kind.

It is important, however, to recognise that popular culture is not always mass culture. Its newest and most dynamic forms exist precariously at the edge of the commercial world and the powerful established structures of the industry often work to exclude new voices and cultural forms.

The abysmal treatment of British black music by the mainstream industry at the same time as it was making vast profits from American black soul musicians or Jamaican reggae is notorious. In the same way, women's writing was largely ignored by the major publishers until, belatedly, they realised just how profitable it could be. There are, in short, compelling cultural – as well as economic – reasons for intervening in the industries of culture.

The Cultural Industries Unit was

set up within the GLEB's Sector Strategy Division in the summer of 1984 to show that the instruments of the enterprise board – loan and equity investment – could be used for job creation in the cultural sector. Given the GLEB's limited resources, the Unit decided to concentrate on three major areas of cultural activity – publishing, music and video.

A scheme was negotiated with the GLC Arts and Recreation Department so that small sums of grant money could be used to back up the loans and equity investments made by the GLEB.

Work began by contacting small independent companies and groups involved in the various activities of the sector. Joint meetings were then held at GLEB to discuss common problems and possible solutions, and these clearly pointed to several priority areas:

- the weakness of existing distribution services for the independent sectors in books, records and videos. Because producers were finding it difficult to reach their audiences, this was holding back the whole develop-



*Sheba Feminist Publishers, a co-op funded by the GLEB, has played a major role in advancing women's literature.*

ment of the sectors;

- the lack of shared information about the work of individual groups or about available services, leading to duplication, competition, inefficiency and incoherence;

- the need to coordinate resources and work in the sector so as to generate new joint projects and shared decisions about how the independent sectors should develop;

- the importance of strengthening the efforts of new companies and cooperatives set up by women and ethnic minority groups, whose interests have been effectively ignored by the large corporations.

- the considerable advantages of computerisation and new technologies, introduced through joint agreement between management and unions, to relatively small-scale production, making it both efficient and economical.

Despite the constraints on the GLEB's own resources, and the difficulties that have arisen out of the imminent abolition of the GLC, these problems are beginning to be addressed.

Two new book distributors have been set up, and a third has been supported. In each case they are meeting a clear market gap. A major investment has been proposed in the most important independent record and tape distributor, based around computerising its distribution system and making its service more efficient. A package of investments involving the formation of an association of the main independent video distributors to share resources has also been agreed. In addition, a wide range of investments has been made to support individual publishers, video producers, newspapers, magazines and recording studios where it was felt that they could make an important cultural contribution, as well as achieve economic self-sufficiency.

In cooperation with other organisations and the trades unions, the Unit has also worked on other areas – notably broadcasting, where massive

changes are on the horizon. The Peacock Committee is currently looking at alternative ways of funding the BBC – such as advertising and sponsorship. Satellite television is developing apace. Without adequate safeguards and some form of regulation, moves of this kind could severely cut employment in London, not only in broadcasting but also in other media such as the press, which would have to face a new competitor for advertising revenue.

Even before the Peacock Committee has reported, the BBC has announced the loss of up to 4,000 jobs, most of them in London. Unless the arguments that are being made for deregulation and privatisation are resisted, any alternative strategies for a controlled expansion and development of public sector broadcasting will be impossible.

Although there is little that the GLEB can do directly in broadcasting, it is probably the most important of all the cultural industries. On average, people in Britain watch over 20 hours of TV a week. It is one of the main sources of information or access to other forms of culture – providing news about books or records, or opportunities to enjoy forms which are relatively unfamiliar like opera, drama or films from the third world. Preserving and expanding the diversity and quality of broadcasting under some form of public control is a high priority.

Franchises are now being regularly awarded for cable TV and satellite reception in the GLC area. So far five have been awarded – in Ealing, Croydon, Westminster, Tower Hamlets and Wandsworth, with a sixth in Camden expected at the beginning of 1986.

Workers associated with the Cultural Industries Unit have carried out detailed research into cable policy for the GLC, which has had an impact at a national level. At present the cable industry is developing at a snail's pace. The predictions made by the GLC that cable would produce

very little original material and that many more jobs would be threatened in existing broadcasting than would be created by cable have been entirely borne out by events.

Alternative strategies have been developed showing how cable could be used instead to expand employment and increase choice for everyone, rather than only for those able to pay. The GLC research into cable has helped in formulating a strategy of support for independent 'television' production and has pointed to support for video distribution – rather than cable production – as the priority for the GLEB's strategy.

While the GLEB's interventions have already achieved considerable success, its strategies for the cultural sector have been constrained by its very limited resources and powers. New approaches and resources are needed to extend the scope of intervention to other areas where the GLC's strategic role is about to disappear. The new budgets that have been released by the Government for the arts institutions make little allowance for the work of the GLC. Many grant-aided projects which have made a great contribution to London's cultural life will be forced to close down.

Local borough councils, facing massive pressures from abolition, rate capping and the steady collapse of the inner cities are simply unable to fill the gap. Yet the only hope for the kind of work that the GLC and the GLEB have done in the independent cultural sectors in London lies in a joint mobilisation of resources and work between the GLEB and the local boroughs, and on joint demands on government for the release of funds.

The GLEB's work of strategic intervention in the independent cultural sector has only just begun. It now needs more resources so that it can achieve a wider impact. Most crucially, it needs to be reinforced and broadened through complementary strategies, both locally and nationally.

# SOME TOP MEDIA CONGLOMERATES: SELECTED INTERESTS

PRESS	BOOKS AND MAGAZINES	FILMS RADIO AND TELEVISION	MUSIC AND LEISURE	OTHER
<b>PEARSON</b> Financial Times The Westminster Press Group	Longman Group The Economist Penguin Hamish Hamilton Sphere Books Ladybird Books Viking (US) Pitman	Goldcrest Films Yorkshire TV Holdings	Madame Tussauds Chessington Zoo Warwick Castle Wookey Hole Caves	Midhurst Corporation (US) Camco Incorporated (US) Whitehall Mining (Can) Lazard Brothers Royal Doulton Fairley Holdings
<b>PERGAMON (MAXWELL)</b> Daily Mirror Sunday Mirror Scottish Daily Record and Sunday Mail Reuters Holdings Fleet Deliveries	BPCC Caxton Publishing Odhams Printers Futura Purnell Publishers Waterlow Security Printers International Learning Systems	Central Independent TV Redifusion Ltd Selec TV British Cable Services Mirrorvision		E.J. Arnold (Furniture) Hollis Plastics Jet Ferry International Milthorp Ltd.
<b>NEWS INTERNATIONAL* (MURDOCH)</b> Sun News of the World The Times Sunday Times Times Supplements Reuters Holdings New York Post†	William Collins Fontana Granada Publishing Angus & Robertson (UK)†	R & R Films† 20th Century Fox (US)† Warner Film Library† Satellite TV Metromedia (US)† European Sky Channel† Festival Records (Aus)†		Eric Bemrose Snodland Fibres Convoys Ltd Hale Paper Co. Whitefriars Insurance† Avon Transport† Ansett Airlines (Aus)†
<b>ASSOCIATED NEWSPAPERS</b> Daily Mail Mail on Sunday Northcliffe Newspapers West Country Pubns. Swansea Press National Opinion Polls Evening Standard	About Town Magazines Euromoney Publications Weekend Publications Esquire Publications (US)	Limehouse Productions Southern T.V. London Broadcasting Thames Valley Broadcasting Greenwich Cable Communications Swansea Sound	Wyndhams Theatres Piccadilly Theatre Donmar Productions	Blackfriars Oil Bouverie Investments London Cab Co. Jetlink Ferries Transport Group
<b>REED INTERNATIONAL</b> IPC Business Press Northern Counties Newspapers South West Counties Newspapers Business Press International Birmingham Daily News	IPC Magazines Hamlyn Books Butterworth New World Publishers Reed Telepublishing Update Hospital Publications			Polycell Crown Paints Reed Paper Group Reed Finance (S. Af.) Reed Building Products Reed Decorative Products
<b>INTERNATIONAL THOMSON**</b> Thomson Regional Newspapers Northwood Publications Illustrated Newspapers Thomson Telephone Directories	Thomas Nelson Bertelsmann-Thomson (W. Ger) Burlington Magazines Thomson Data	Radio Forth	Portland Holidays Thomson Holidays Burlington Fine Art and Antique Dealers Fair	Thomson North Sea Britannia Airways
<b>THORN-EMI</b>	Keith Prowse Music Publishing EMI Music Publishing Elstree Music	ABC Cinemas TE Screen Entertainments TE Cable TV Columbia-EMI-Warner Distributors TE Elstree Studios Pathé-Marconi (Fr) Thames Cable and Satellite Thames TV	EMI Records HMV Music for Pleasure Capitol Records (US) World Records Columbia Gramophone Abbey Rd. Studios Radio Rentals	INMOS TE Domestic Appliances (Kenwood) TE Gas Appliances (Moffat, Cowan) TE Lighting TE Info Technology TE Industrial Electronics Thorn EMI Retail
<b>BRITISH ELECTRIC TRACTION</b> Industrial Newspapers London and Essex Guardian Newspapers Surrey and South London Newspapers Electrical Press	Argus Books Argus Press Slimming Magazines Tridant Group Printers Retail Journals Ltd.	Argus Video Thames Cable and Satellite Services Thames TV Redifusion Plc Wembley Studios	BET Leisure Holdings	Advance Laundries BET Building Services BET Plant Services United Transport International United Freight Holdings

\*Subsidiary of News Corporation (Australia) \*\*Subsidiary of International Thomson Organisation (Canada) †Some of News Corporations global interests

Source: Who Owns Whom 1985

# THE IMPORTANCE OF INDEPENDENCE

Since the use of the phrase 'the independent sector' occurs frequently in this pamphlet, some clarification of the term is needed. Independent production can be found most clearly, for example, in the music industry. The last decade has seen the rise (and often fall) of many hundreds of small labels producing records of many different kinds of popular music, unlikely to be heard on Radio 1 (outside of the John Peel show or Ranking Miss P) or to be found for sale in Woolworths or W.H. Smiths.

These small labels have mostly been started by enthusiasts for a particular kind of music, the founders often being musicians themselves. They have started their own labels because they have felt that the large record companies – the majors – have ignored the large majority of music in favour of safe investments in mainstream, commercial pop.

The tradition of specialist record labels in popular music goes back to the 1940's where, in jazz for example, the name of the label Blue Note quickly came to denote a certain kind of high quality be-bop modern jazz. Tamla Motown was another distinctive record label in which the label became synonymous with the music. Both Blue Note and Tamla Motown, though, eventually became part of other major corporations.

The smaller independents often have a fierce dislike of both state-subsidised culture and commercial popular culture, and see the running of financially autonomous labels as an expression of aesthetic integrity. It remains the case that both the well known independent record labels such as Factory Records, Cherry Red, Kitchenware and Rough Trade, and many of the less well known labels, continue to produce much of the most interesting new music on the contemporary scene.

Many of the newer feminist and ethnic publishers have been started for the same reasons as the independent record labels – to fill the very

large gaps in what the large publishing houses produce. It isn't difficult to see how successfully mainstream publishers have ignored new writing by women and black writers.

These small publishing initiatives too have espoused the cause of cultural independence, despite the many severe financial problems of small scale production and distribution. Many film and video groups also describe themselves as independent producers, and in fact the names of the two main (and overlapping) producer associations – the Independent Film and Video Association and the Independent Programme Producers Association – reflect this commitment to the notion of artistic independence.

Not all independent producers are as autonomous as they claim to be, either by design or by default. Many in fact have been set up by the major companies as a conscious decision to exploit the now fashionable aura which surrounds the notion of the independent label or house style (in the same way that exclusive designer clothes are manufactured in millions of units). Others which started off intending to retain their financial autonomy have been drawn into financial dependence on a major company simply in order to survive.

It is hardly surprising that so many small independent production companies fail. Starting usually from a position of under-capitalisation, they are never able to spend enough on marketing and promotion campaigns to get their products known to anywhere near their potential audiences. They also frequently encounter severe difficulties with distribution. While mainstream distributors are reluctant to take on products that have not been extensively promoted, mainstream retail chains in their turn cannot be bothered with the administrative problems of handling too diverse a range of titles.

Lacking the economies of scale which are provided by effective

distribution and high sales figures, they cannot achieve competitive prices, and so find themselves trapped in a vicious circle of high production costs, small production runs, and under-realised sales.

On the other hand, they are often responsible for bringing to light many new talents, and inadvertently find themselves being used by the majors as free research and development or product-testing companies. This has also been called the greenhouse syndrome, in which the small independent producers encourage and nurture new talent, whether rock bands, poets or film-makers. Once they have begun to demonstrate their wider appeal, they are quickly signed up with large contracts by the major companies.

The small independents simply cannot offer the same kind of lucrative contracts, or even the superior technical and marketing services which the major companies have at their disposal.

Excluded and ignored by the large corporations of culture, the growth and encouragement of new forms of writing, music or film-making depend crucially on the existence of a strong independent sector.

GLEB's strategy for the cultural industries is directed at the particular problems of independent producers so that their position in the market might be strengthened. This has included direct investment in distribution and promotion strategies as well as initiatives to overcome the isolation of small companies in a highly fragmented sector.

# THE POPULAR MUSIC INDUSTRY

The British record industry is changing rapidly. After serious setbacks in the early 1980's – caused by the recession, the falling numbers of 15-24 year-olds, the rising level of unemployment – the market is now booming again.

But the ways in which people consume music are changing too: alongside a long term shift towards cassettes – boosted by the advent of systems like the Walkman – new technologies like the compact disc and new media like the pop video are beginning to alter the shape of the industry. In 1985, for the first time, more prerecorded cassette tapes were sold than records while compact discs far exceeded expectations, selling over 3 million copies.

A spate of closures and mergers since 1979 has left four transnational giants with 65% of the market shares in the pop music industry – CBS and WEA which are US-based, Polygram which is a Dutch-German transnational, and Thorn-EMI, a UK based multinational. If the sales of the companies who depend on the big four for record pressing or distribution facilities are added, the transnationals can be described as controlling almost 95% of the market. The independents, which made such an enormous cultural contribution to the industry in the 1970's, have been badly hit.

Restructuring the record industry has had a heavy impact on jobs in London where over 90% of the industry's workers are located. Forty two percent of the jobs in the manufacture, distribution and administration of record and tape sales in 1979 had been lost by 1981. For those outside the major distribution channels it has been a difficult period, particularly since much of the work in the industry, from session musicians to promotion, is highly casualised.

Behind the job losses has been the multinationals' relocation of manufacturing in Europe – in the vast pressing plants like Sonopress in Germany. Yet, musically, the British

**'The music industry has a gross value of £1,000 million per annum, and the copyright industries as a whole – in which music plays a considerable role – represents 2.6% of the Gross Domestic Product. That's larger than either the motor car or the food manufacturing sector.'**  
(Musicians Union Journal)

record industry has probably never been stronger. Although the British market has declined (from 10% of the world market in the early 1970's to around 6% today), British musicians are producing up to 25% of the world's recorded music.

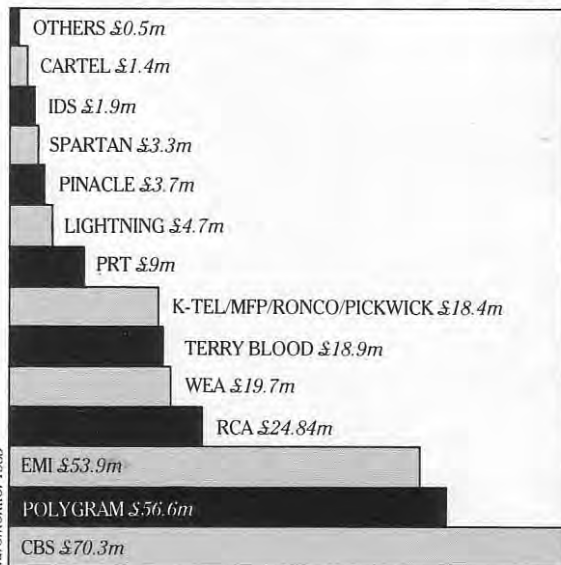
In the early 1980's a second invasion of the US market was launched on the back of pop videos shown on the MTV cable channel with groups like Simple Minds, Wham and Big Country. The proliferation of

styles in Britain in recent years – from electro to gospel, African music, reggae and heavy metal – has helped the UK to retain its position as the source of many of the world's most successful groups.

At the same time, a combination of factors is combining to threaten the economic base for diversity in the music industry. For example, the increasing promotional use of video by the major companies at an average cost of £20,000-30,000 for a three-minute video, is beyond the means of the independents.

The labour processes involved in the cultural industries – the actual recording of music or pressing records – are becoming increasingly separated from each other, both technologically and geographically. Control of the industries is becoming more concentrated at an international level, away from the musicians who create the industry's raw materials. The consequence has been a growing indifference to those involved in minority music or music that cannot be marketed to an international audience.

## THE LEADING DISTRIBUTORS AND WHOLESALE'S MARKET SHARES ON TOTAL TRADE DELIVERIES 1983



Euromonitor 1983



## THE INDEPENDENTS

The explosion of punk rock and the 'new wave' in Britain in 1976/77 led to the establishment of hundreds of small, independent DIY record labels. These, along with their counterparts in reggae and other black music, played a vital role in opening the music industry to a range of new styles, ideas, and working practices.

Many of the independents were driven by deep opposition to the explicit commercialism of the majors. In practice, however, they contributed an enormous amount to them, nurturing the new acts and sounds (like the Police, Elvis Costello, Dire Straits and many others) which the majors were then able to buy up and market throughout the world.

As a result, during the early 1980's, the independents lost much of their cultural identity. The combined impact of this, the recession and the

price-cutting war launched by the major retailers bit sharply into the independents' share of the market. While many have gone under, and others like Stiff have been incorporated by the majors, a significant independent sector survives today.

The independent and informal distribution system that grew in response to the limited choice available from the High Street multiples, which stocked little beyond the Top 40, played an important role in sustaining the economic viability of the independent record companies. Whereas CBS or EMI needed around 30,000 sales to break even, the small independents could often start counting profits on sales of less than 2000 copies.

Radio plays a crucial role in promoting new sounds and records. Yet public service broadcasting, in the form of the BBC and ILR, remains trapped in the role of marketing the products of the majors through the

use of limited playlists and an orientation towards middle of the road music. This is one reason why the pirates – like Invicta, DBC and many others – have played a role paralleling that of the independents in generating new audiences for new music.

There are still about 300 significant independent labels today which press their records independently and distribute them through the four main independent distribution companies – IDS, Pinnacle, Spartan and, most importantly, Rough Trade/The Cartel.

By 1982/3 it was becoming clear that there were too many independent distributors chasing too few profitable records. Following a major collapse in the autumn of 1984, Pinnacle went into receivership, shortly followed by IDS. The Cartel was shaken by the storm but came out of it, largely because of its clear cultural and musical identity outside

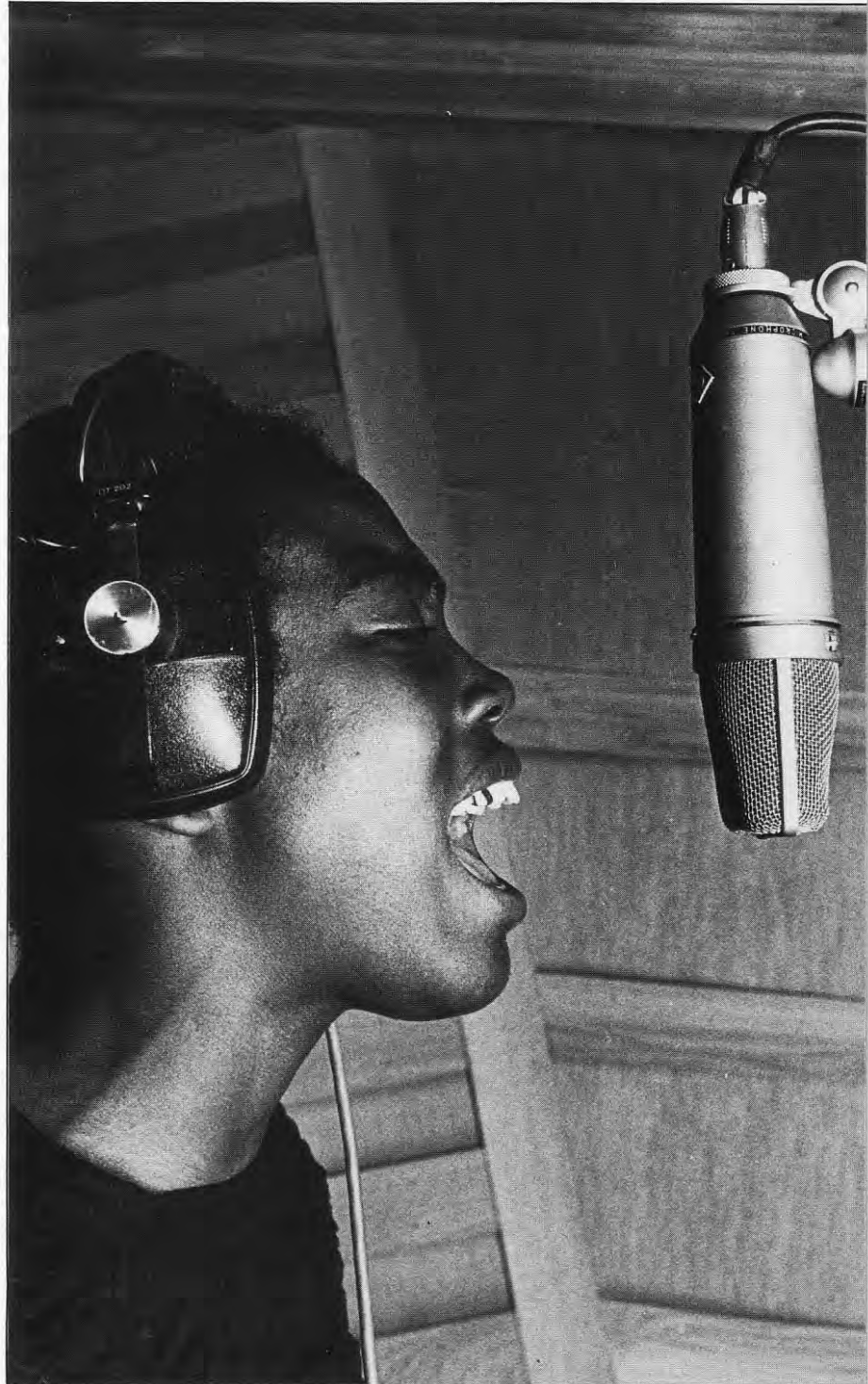


the pop charts, which gave it considerable autonomy and strength.

The original marketing strategies used by the independents against the chart hyping policies of the majors centred on using word of mouth and informal channels to give access to a greater variety of bands and music. It is this openness to new currents that makes them so important for an alternative popular music culture, and therefore a key area for strategic intervention by the GLEB.

As one of the largest independent distributors in the UK and one which has successfully defended the space for new forms of music, Rough Trade's long-term growth is crucial to the health of the sector. The GLEB's proposed investment in the company will help to ensure this.

*Beatrice Harrison making records in the '20s; 60 years on, Firehouse uses its 24 track studio to launch a newcomer to stardom.*



## A CASE STUDY

# ROUGH TRADE AND THE CARTEL

The GLEB's equity investment of £70,000 in Rough Trade has been proposed in order to secure the future existence of the company. Fourteen jobs will be directly created and a further 40 will be safeguarded by the intervention, as well as many others in the industries serviced by Rough Trade, which might not otherwise survive.

The Cartel was born in the late '70s when seven small independent distributors from all over the country, including Rough Trade Distribution (RTD) in London, clubbed together to form the Cartel, and to achieve national distribution of their products. Cartel Ltd, in which Rough Trade has a majority shareholding, was set up as a company in 1982 and moved into GLEB premises in King's Cross with Rough Trade.

The core of the business involves wholesaling and distribution both for the other Cartel members and for the 80 labels distributed by Rough Trade. Rough Trade also runs its own label with artists such as Robert Wyatt, Thomas Mapfumo, The Smiths, Microdisney and many others. The company organises publishing in the UK, while the Cartel negotiates with the high street chains and provides a comprehensive, centralised information service to the regional members. Rough Trade now owns two overseas subsidiaries in West Germany and the USA.

During 1982/83 both Rough Trade and the Cartel made considerable losses which were subsequently checked, but the company initiated a major reappraisal of its operations. The results showed that the business needed greater organisational control, more working capital, improved information systems and steady targeting of the independent markets rather than the charts.

The investment by the GLEB will be used to expand Rough Trade's use of computers to provide full stock control and accounting systems as well as a more efficient information service for itself and its clients.

Suitable hardware and software systems have been developed in close consultation with the London New Technology Network as well as other distributors in the sector.

The new system will clearly improve sales but the first priority for the company has been to increase its efficiency. In the past, new records receiving radio airplay couldn't be readily found in local shops, with adverse effects both on the Cartel as well as on the record companies, the musicians and the music.

The Catalogue is the information and marketing arm of the Cartel, directed towards retailers in the UK and abroad and responsible for increasing awareness of currently distributed labels in the independent sector. The magazine provides release information, special features, a US column and advertising, and its print run of 3000 in 1983 has increased to 5000 today, making it a recognised information resource for the sector.

The GLEB's sector strategy for the cultural industries has emphasised support for projects like the Catalogue, which can provide infrastructural services for the independent sector and which play an important part in defining the alternative identity of the sector.

In addition to the proposed equity investment in Rough Trade's computerisation project, a grant of £6000 has also been made available through the Industry and Employment Committee of the GLC for further expansion of the Catalogue.

The GLEB's encouragement of more democratic forms of company ownership and management have borne fruit with plans to pass the distribution arm of the company to a workers' trust. A majority of the workforce are now unionised in the T&GWU (ACTT) and internal management structures are being reorganised. The aim is to increase the workers' involvement in decision making and to improve overall efficiency.



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Stargreen, Keith Prowse, Rock On Records.



# THE VIDEO INDUSTRY

The lack of reliable information about this very new sector makes it difficult to estimate the exact size of the market for pre-recorded tapes. The proportion of time spent on pre-recorded software is generally agreed to be increasing, although VCRs are still used predominantly in order to 'time-shift' or reschedule broadcast TV programmes for personal convenience. The structures of 'software' publishing, tape duplication, wholesale and retail distribution have grown up rapidly and chaotically around demand for the most easily transferable material available – feature films.

Total revenues paid for film exhibition in cinemas in 1984 amounted to just over £99 million, while in 1985 total sales of pre-recorded videos to wholesalers and retailers reached £80 million. It is no surprise then to find that the top three US companies with over 50% of the video publishing market should also head the list of the six largest film distribution companies.

Furthermore, the absence of legal controls and the easy profits that could be made from cassette duplication and video publishing quickly produced an illegal shadow industry. This in turn led the Government to set up a special Anti-Piracy Unit.

The first impact of the video industry was on the distribution of existing cultural products. Commercially successful films were mass reproduced for sale or rental within months of release, seemingly accelerating the long-term decline of cinemas – though some observers would now argue that video has in fact revived an interest in film. Video has also begun to have a profound effect on the music industry.

At the same time, video is gradually transforming the ways in which images are produced. Today, with domestic video cameras available for under £1000, video production is no longer the preserve of large television or film companies with studio facilities and access to expensive proces-

sing facilities. People can make videos of family weddings or children's birthday parties, schoolchildren can make their own feature films and campaigning and educational groups can illustrate their arguments more vividly.

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## THE INDEPENDENTS

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In the last four years independent video production, particularly in London, has grown extraordinarily, stimulated by three major factors. The establishment of Channel Four as a commissioning broadcasting channel with no production facilities of its own, and a specific brief to address minority audiences, provided an invaluable source of funding for video programme makers.

This coincided with the progressive policies of the GLC and other local authorities which encouraged the grant-aided establishment of video production groups, particularly those serving minority interests. Lastly, the ACTT Workshop Agreement gave trade union recognition to independent groups fulfilling certain criteria, thus enabling their products to be broadcast while retaining their flexibility.

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In December 1980, only 2.5% of British households possessed a video cassette recorder (VCR). By 1985 this figure had soared to over 35%.

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In London alone there are now at least 50 independent, non-commercial video production and access facilities, including at least one in every borough. On top of these there are the several hundred independent commercial producers organised in IPPA.

The chronic problem for all these groups, as for their counterparts in book publishing and the music industry, remains one of distribution.



*A programme featuring Stephen Spender, the poet, being edited for a new video tape in the ICA's In Conversation series.*

Even for the fairly mainstream film and TV production companies, the buying and selling of distribution rights remains a major problem after their programmes have been broadcast.

For smaller production groups the



difficulties are more complex. Many began making programmes that were never intended for broadcast but rather provided video access for local commissioning groups who then used the material as they wished. At the same time they have tried to

organise their own distribution, while lacking either the experience or the resources to do it adequately.

The independent sector defies easy definition. The diversity of work reflects the wide potential of the medium. The sector consists of a

range of workshops and groups with varying styles, aims and practices, working in local communities, in ethnic or women's groups, educational institutions, trades unions and art schools. Their work has ranged from documentaries like the Albany's

'Framed Youth', to politicised pop video such as the Duvet Brothers 'Blue Monday', and to experiments with narrative forms and with the medium itself.

When Videoactive conducted a survey of the sector they confirmed that distribution was a major difficulty. The problem was not that of reaching a mass audience but rather one of improving the quality of distribution. This meant both encouraging active viewing and ensuring that the needs of audiences for well-crafted and accessible material were taken into account at the stage of production.

The low distribution figures for the products of community video workshops are depressing and demoralising. The survey revealed that on average 14 copies of a tape were sold each year with 80% of titles achieving sales of 5 copies or less, while average screenings per title were 30.5 a year.

The most successful groups, such as Leeds Animation Workshop, Albany Video (in London), the Birmingham Trade Union Resource Centre (BTURC), Riverfront Pictures (now 'Team Video' in London), Television History Workshop (London), Sheffield Film Coop, are those which have recognised distribution as an essential part of the production process from the outset and have developed imaginative strategies for maximising their audiences. Yet even for these groups, revenue from sales can do no more than cover their distribution costs. Production activities are invariably dependent on subsidy or commission.

The independent community sector in London has about 50 groups and about 100 full-time workers actively producing video material, but as yet there is no clear regional identity for their work as a whole, and no forum for cooperation over the common problems they all face in promotion, pricing, packaging and distribution.

For all of them, the future looks

increasingly grim, as Channel Four faces reduced resources and the abolition of the GLC and other Metropolitan County Councils proceeds apace. Cuts in spending on public education and on the public services more generally are forcing cutbacks in 'non-essential' areas like public libraries, the arts and 'extra-curricular' activities.

At the same time the new Video Recordings Act, which was passed in September 1985, requires all films and TV programmes released on video – old and new – to be recertified for home-viewing by the British Board of Film Censors. The cost of a certificate, at £4 per viewing minute, and the more stringent censorship applied to home-viewing generally, could sound the death-knell for numerous independent producers and distributors, although material defined as educational or informational has been excluded.

The GLEB's strategy for the sector has been developed through a number of joint meetings with video producers and distributors. The principal aim has been to intervene in ways that will lead to the better integration of the production and distribution functions of the industry.

Three major areas of work have been given high priority: to expand and extend existing distribution outlets such as book shops, record stores and public libraries; to develop marketing and promotion skills; and to establish a network of common services to help coordinate and expand the various existing video projects into a coherent sector with its own distinctive collective practice.

GLC funding of up to £120,000 has now been approved in principle for a package of support for the independent video sector. The Cultural Industries Unit at the GLEB has recommended that the money should be used to create a 'Forum', committed to an agreed strategy for the sector. The Independent Film and Video-Makers Association (IFVA) will

play a key role by holding events and providing information to help develop close links between producers and distributors.

Five existing distributors are currently involved in the proposal: Team Video/Video at Work which distributes videos to the trade union and educational sector; Albany Video which plays a leading role in the community video movement; ICVA Video which is responsible for distribution to the public library network; Cinema of Women which is a national distributor of women's film and video production, feature and documentary; and Circles, a distributor of feminist art and cultural material on film and video.

Rough Trade/Cartel, described in the previous section, have also launched a new initiative for video distribution to record shops, based initially on music video but, hopefully, branching out in the future to cover a much wider range of material.

As part of its strategy for supporting common services for the sector as a whole, GLEB has recommended a GLC grant of £40,000 for Video Engineering and Training (VET), a co-op of five workers set up to provide a technical and repair service, and to run in-house training courses as well as sector-wide training courses. VET will also help groups with editorial questions – how to get the best from material in terms of structure and technical quality. The formation of the co-op has been welcomed by everyone in the sector and Channel Four has offered support with a grant of £12,000.

# A CASE STUDY VIDEO INTO LIBRARIES

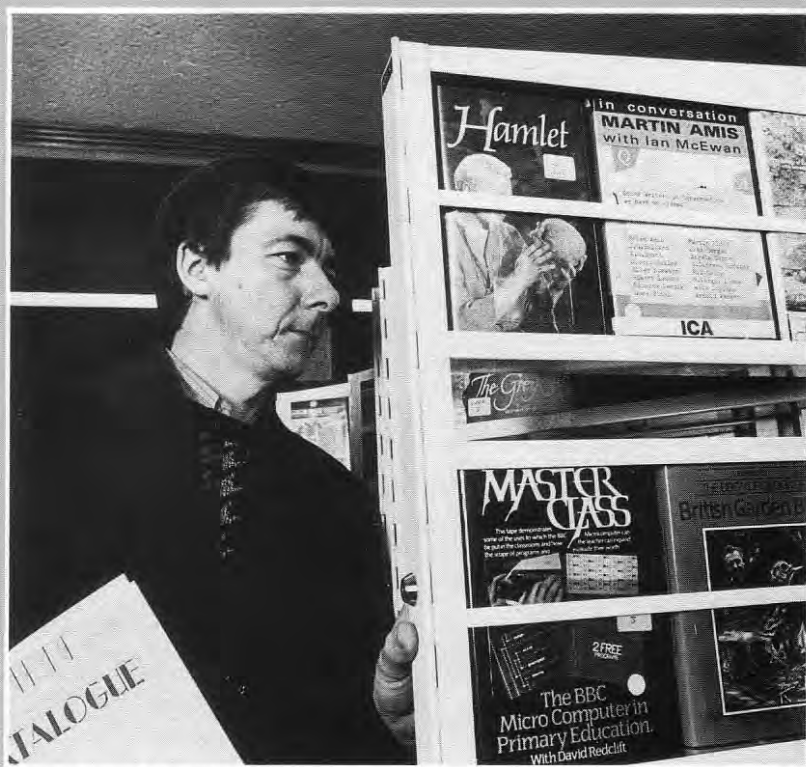
The huge potential of the public library service for increasing the availability of video is only just being explored. It is a tragic irony that these efforts are now taking place in and against a background of devastating public spending cuts.

A survey conducted by Sheffield Public Library in 1982 found that in most cases where video services had been introduced into libraries, they were required to be self-financing in order not to divert resources from diminishing book budgets. Clearly such policies put enormous pressures on the kind of tapes that were held, and produced a service little different from that provided by the high street hire-shops. Eighty percent of library video collections tended to consist of popular feature films.

Since 1982 the policies have begun to change as libraries found themselves unable to cope with competition from commercial video hire or with the costs of updating their collections. While some libraries closed down their collections or froze their services, others introduced changes in aims and direction which saw video as a complement to existing library services rather than as an alternative.

In some instances like Sheffield Public Library and the London Boroughs of Islington and Lambeth, for example, this led to the beginnings of a radical rethinking of the role of the public library away from the passive provision of cultural goods to their active production and distribution. The public library was envisaged as a media resource centre, and as a venue for meetings, exhibitions and screenings.

It is this development that needs to be massively expanded throughout the library network. As a small start to this, and on the GLEB's recommendation, the GLC provided a grant of £35,000 to a project based at London's Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA). ICA Video was started to establish a video distribution service for the public library system and to



*Sutton Video Library.*

provide a service for independent video production of all kinds.

Since 1947, when paintings by Francis Bacon, Max Ernst, Chagall, Picasso, Salvador Dali, Henry Moore and Matisse were brought together by the ICA in their first major exhibition in this country, the ICA has become synonymous with the 'avant-garde' in all the arts. The films of Godard, the music of John Cage and Stockhausen, the plays of Genet and Beckett and the architectural ideas of Le Corbusier were all first screened, performed and exhibited by the ICA. The risks they took were backed by sound judgement.

In 1984, the ICA approached the GLEB for help in launching a pilot scheme to introduce a series of videos into libraries. The objective was to explore ways in which the ICA's work could be exported out of London to other parts of the country and to create the widest possible forum for artists and their work.

A lunchtime series – In Conversation – that had been running at the ICA for four years, in which an author was brought together with another author, critic or writer for an hour's intensive discussion on the author's work, was chosen for the first videos. A book-based series seemed an appropriate subject with which to

launch the project and it was proposed to produce a total of 24 tapes lasting about 40 minutes each.

A wide range of authors from around the world has already been covered – including Joseph Heller, A S Byatt, Harold Pinter, Wole Soyinka, Ellen Kuzwayo, J G Ballard, Angela Carter and Gore Vidal – with future tapes promised on children's writers and other forms of popular writing. The tapes are available at an annual subscription charge of £650, with two despatched every month.

Thirty-two library authorities (out of about 167 nationwide) of which 70 have video collections have now subscribed to the full package. Two workers have been employed to establish a publication, *The Good Video Guide*, which will include work from such independent producers and distributors as the TV History Workshop, Cinema of Women and Albany Video, Team Video and Circles. The range of subjects will be extensive, offering poetry, trade union studies, self-health, jazz, and tapes on civil liberties. It contains a central order form through which libraries may purchase tapes reviewed. All orders will be processed through ICA Video, making this a simple method of purchasing a range of titles from over 35 producers.



# THE PUBLISHING INDUSTRY

In Victorian England the circulating libraries provided virtually the sole source of distribution and consumption of mainstream fiction. Popular fiction was largely available in penny magazine, serialised format. The power of the circulating libraries lay in a cartel formed between publishers and libraries which kept shop prices prohibitively high.

A subscription to Mudie's Select Circulating Library in New Oxford Street was a precondition for any middle-class reader. In turn, the making or breaking of aspiring authors depended on getting onto Mudie's forthcoming titles lists. And, to complete the circle, this meant that writers had to meet the formal requirements of the three-decker novel.

The biggest challenge to this select process came from W H Smith's railway novels – sneeringly referred to as 'cockney literature' for the 'unknown public' – and subsequently the powerful chain of railway libraries that were set up. More than a century later, W. H. Smith has grown to dominate 47% of the book market, including 19% of sales through the million strong membership of the Book Club Association which it jointly owns with the US publisher Doubleday.

While over 50,000 titles are now published annually in the UK, their success is largely determined by their acceptance for distribution in the big chain stationery shops. In this context a distribution company like Bookwise exerts enormous power by the way it selects only 100 books each month for mass popular distribution.

Further pressure on what is published comes from a publishing industry that has changed beyond recognition. While there are over 400 publishing firms, 62% of the total market is concentrated with the top 11 firms and 95% of the paperback market with the top nine firms, themselves only a small part of the large communications conglomerates with interests in newspapers,

video, television, films, bingo, package holidays and the leisure industry.

The powerful tradition of book borrowing which formerly structured the book industry survives today. Unlike West Germany or the US, where more books are bought than borrowed, ten books are borrowed to every book sold in the UK, giving considerable power to the public libraries and their purchasers within the publishing industry.

With libraries by far the largest area of local authority and national spending on culture, 'charter' booksellers obtain between 20-30% of their turnover from institutional sales and it has been estimated that nearly a quarter of charter booksellers would close down if this market were removed.

Despite predictions that books would become redundant through competition with the new information technologies, reading continues to be one of the most popular leisure activities. The book industry in the UK, however, is in decline. The new technologies have enabled various parts of the industry to be detached from the whole process. There have been high job losses, particularly in London, as typesetting and printing have been farmed out to low-waged third world countries. Book exports have slumped and with falling profits more publishers are concentrating their investments on sure 'winners', and on maximum 'exposure' through advertising and promotion.

The extraordinary finding that over 50% of book buying takes place 'on impulse' has reinforced the strategy of marketing books not only as part of the leisure industry but as part of a total consumer package. Superman and Snowman now have the same mythical status as the Royal Family, stamped on mugs, sheets and wallpaper.

Cultural appetite is catered for like any other in foodstores, department stores, newsagents and petrol stations. The biggest profits are being made by Mills & Boon, Ladybird and

Butterworths and their bestsellers are steadily establishing new literary guidelines and formulae as did the earlier three-deckers.

In the specialised book retailing sector, there are also major changes taking place. The new large commercial chains being set up by Waterstones, Penguins, Websters and Hatchards outside the city centres are a real threat to the radical and community bookshops that sprang up in the '60s and '70s. These new bookmarkets don't see themselves as competing with old-style bookshops but rather with 'stately homes, restaurants and even museums', offering late opening hours, modern design in layout and display space and a pleasant up-market atmosphere; that is to say, they see themselves as part of the broader leisure industry.

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## THE INDEPENDENTS

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The new technologies that helped the major corporations to restructure their operations also allowed a number of small independent publishing initiatives to enter the field. At the same time community and independent bookshops were set up outside city centres and in regions where there were no comprehensive bookshops at all. These played an important role in providing literature for local interest groups in trades unions, the CND, tenants' organisations, the feminist and black movements, citizen's rights and working-class history and writing.

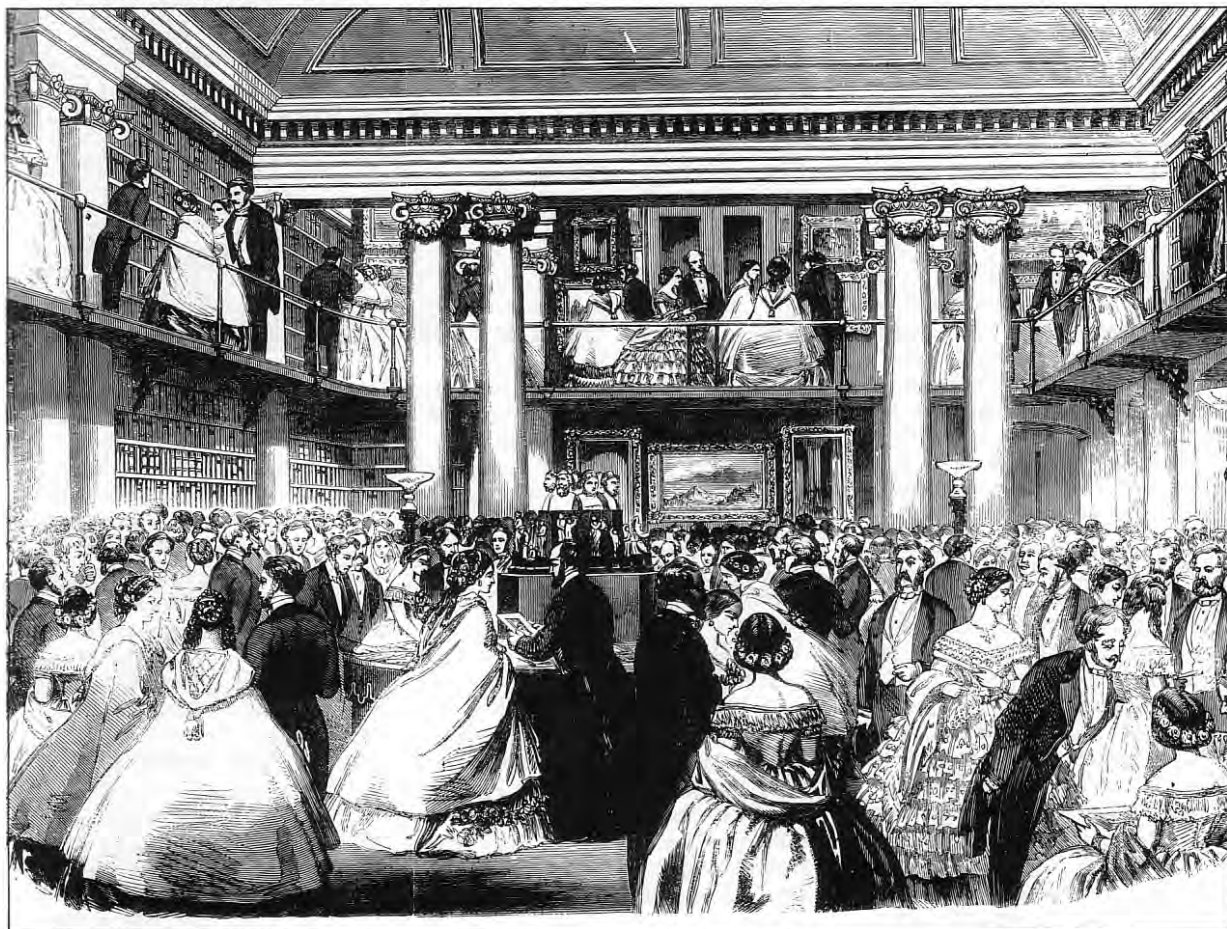
The problem has always been one of bringing these two activities together. Lack of sufficient information about new books or where to obtain them has been a major obstacle for bookshops trying to stock or be able to offer the widest range of books. Once traced, books have to move rapidly because shelf space is valuable and cannot be used like a library, a factor that few producers take into account when they plan and design their books.

On the other side, producers find themselves overworked and under-resourced. Unable to afford the 50-60% discounts demanded by commercial distributors or unwilling to trust the distributor's ability or commitment to the books to provide a useful service, many end up distributing the books themselves, perhaps with the help of an old addressograph.

For some publishing groups this arduous regime has been an article of political faith, signifying complete control of the labour process. For others there appear to have been lingering traces of an older idealist faith that good literature will triumph



*Below: the opening of Mudie's Circulating Library in 1860. Above: WH Smith railway bookstall in 1924.*



in the face of all odds, which has ironically proved to be an actual disservice to the books themselves.

Some, like Virago, Pluto Press, Zed Press and Verso have been so successful that mainstream publishers are confidently introducing and expanding their feminist and 'alternative' lists.

Other publishing groups, less fortunate or less adaptive to the rules of the marketplace, failed to achieve sufficient sales and expand their lists. Like so many small firms in every sector it was only a matter of time before they had to close down. The cultural history of the 1970's is littered with the myriad productions of the 'little presses', the majority of which only managed to produce one or two small pamphlets before sinking into oblivion.

The absence of specialist distribution agencies with a knowledge of the independent publishing sector and a commitment to it has produced a disjointed structure. As a result, the distance between publishers and booksellers and between books and readers is widening.

The GLEB's strategic investments in this sector have concentrated on developing or strengthening specialised distribution services for distinct market segments like Afro-Caribbean and West Indian publications and Asian literatures.

An early investment by the GLEB's Structural Investment Division helped to set up Turnaround Distribution, a new and desperately needed book distribution co-op specialising in radical, feminist, health and educational material produced largely through independent publishing initiatives. All of the workers had a deep and active commitment to the sector from their previous experiences at Scottish & Northern Distribution, Merlin Press, Academic Press, Collets, Intervention Bookshop, The East-West Group and Task Force. It is no surprise then that Turnaround Distribution has outperformed its own projections in its first



year of operation and has actively participated in sector discussions held by the GLEB's Cultural Industries Unit on areas such as bookshops and video distribution.

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## INDEPENDENT PUBLISHING HOLDINGS LTD

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The intervention into Independent Publishing Holdings Ltd took place when the company approached the GLEB and the GLC for urgent help. The company, linked to Soma Bookshop at the Commonwealth Institute, had been set up by two people in 1963, to import Asian books for

library and trade distribution.

Recognising that books couldn't sell themselves, their activities extended to giving talks in schools and colleges and helping to set up exhibitions like the first International Black Book Fair in London. Their wider purpose was to create a greater awareness of the need to have a thriving Asian literary culture within multi-racial Britain. In the past five years they have expanded to employ seven full-time workers all based in offices in Lambeth.

In 1982, Independent Publishing made a heavy investment towards participating in the Festival of India exhibition, importing some £30,000 worth of stocks from India for the event. The decision proved to be a serious mistake, through no fault of



Ivor Osborne and Charline Mertens checking through the Bladestock inventory.

Right: Soma Bookshop – a shop window for ‘commonwealth’ cultures.

their own, as the Festival turned out to be very poorly organised and the company was left with large numbers of unsold books and an enormous debt.

It was clear to the GLEB and the GLC that if Independent Publishing were to close down it would be a severe blow to the bookshops serving the growing Asian population in London and beyond, as well as to the libraries and schools that had only just woken up to the scope and range of available cultural material. Independent Publishing had been trading



successfully for 15 years and would still have been were it not for the particular failure of the Festival of India. A grant of £28,000 was approved and the company's future is now secure.

## BLADESTOCK PUBLICATIONS

The growing black readership in the UK has been almost completely ignored by the commercial publishing world. Little effort has been made to reach it directly or to encourage its creativity, even in areas like children's reading material, where with the adoption of more progressive educational policies, there has been an increasingly urgent demand.

The number of small black publishers in London has grown from three to over 15 in just under a decade. Six of these are only two years old, but judging from the success of publishers like Alison & Busby, Pluto Press and Zed Press who have just entered this field, the 90 titles they have to their credit will expand significantly during the '80s.

Bladestock Publications was set up with a GLEB loan of £47,000 and a two year rent and rates grant on office and warehousing premises in Brixton and it already employs six people. The early months were spent contacting the independent black publishing groups in Britain some of whom had been struggling to cope with their own distribution, as well as black

publishers in the West Indies, the US and Canada.

A number of distribution agreements have been made including Acer, Akira, Arawidi, Black Star, Kingston Publishers, Rex Collins, Three Trees, Thunder's Mouth, Crystal Clear Publications, Karnak House, Seed Publications, Baku Publications and Williams-Wallace. Bladestock also wholesales relevant titles for virtually all the major UK publishers.

Since Bladestock is a new company it will initially focus over half its efforts on the 'institutional' market – schools and libraries – which is less volatile than the bookshop trade, and which has a lot of catching up to do in building up a black books inventory. However, libraries tend to do their purchasing in single big trawls and it will take time to establish regular purchases.

The company has already produced three very impressive specialised catalogues covering poetry and fiction from the Third World and Metropolitan Minorities, and children's literature. Future catalogues will include histories of the third world, art and culture, politics and current affairs, and technology and there are plans to include video cassettes of poetry and the spoken word.

The cohesive role that Bladestock Publications will play in a sector that is largely uncoordinated will strengthen it enormously, improve communications and links between publishers, booksellers and bookbuyers and enable each publisher to operate more efficiently.

# COMMON SERVICES AND SUPPORTING INVESTMENTS

The GLEB's strategy for providing efficient centralised distribution services in the independent cultural industries is part of a broader commitment to the encouragement and growth of alternatives to the dominance of mass culture. Underlying this has been the belief that the cultural industries should properly reflect the huge diversity of experiences and perceptions, heritages and histories, interests and tastes which coexist in our society. This has meant that the work of the Cultural Industries Unit has ranged widely over many different areas, in new and existing companies in the publishing, video and music industries, as well as a feasibility study into launching a new national Sunday paper.

Two common service projects in particular have been funded. One is Arts Admin, a group based in Clerkenwell that helps performing arts and other cultural groups with administration, finance and promotion. By specialising in these areas they make it easier for groups to concentrate on their own areas of expertise.

The second is a company called Comedia, which links a broad publishing programme of books on the media with consultancy services. Comedia has advised and assisted dozens of voluntary and campaigning organisations and radical media projects, helping groups as diverse as the Countryside Commission, Spare Rib and New Socialist to clarify their plans and to organise promotion and marketing campaigns.

Firehouse Ltd, a new workers' co-operative, has received a GLEB loan of £24,000 to set up recording studio facilities which are being shared with a Channel Four production company, Bandung Productions. The 24 track studio, which opened at the beginning of 1986, operates on commercial terms as well as providing cheap access for musicians from

*Working on a new edition of Pluto's New Books List.*



the local community. Firehouse also runs training workshops covering everything from singing and musicianship to sound engineering.

Three ethnic newspapers and magazines – Jagaran, Third World Book Review and Sportscene – have been given small sums, and one of them, producing book reviews on third world issues, has now diversified its activities to include a bookshop, a café and a third world library and information centre.

A new publishing co-op has been launched with the help of a GLC grant of £39,000 to produce a new literary and arts monthly – Women's Review. The magazine, with three issues published, has already attracted 1000 subscriptions and is beginning to attract national and international attention. So far sales – at about 25,000 – are running well ahead of expectations.

Sheba Feminist Publishers and Zed Press were funded by the Structural Investment Division at the GLEB before the Cultural Industries Unit was set up. With lists largely dedicated to black feminist writing and literature from the third world, both the co-operatives play an important role in strengthening the independent publishing sector.

## PLUTO PRESS

Pluto Press is a 16 year old independent radical publishing company. It began as a small group of committed people working voluntarily on an ambitious project to introduce new authors and complex social and economic issues to a wider public.

The story of Pluto Press has been one of growth and expansion, in both the range and the quantity of titles. More than 1,100 bookshops now carry stocks from its 300 titles.

But Pluto's success was not easily achieved. The severe economic recession, which claimed numerous small independent publishers,

affected Pluto's operations too. The difference was that Pluto did not go under, but it was a time of struggle and financial stringency.

In 1985, Pluto added to its considerable current affairs list. Nine new titles appeared in the area of popular culture, including Beats of the Heart, about popular music around the world, eight new titles in a series of popular crime fiction and three new titles in black studies. In addition, informational projects continued to be developed and packaged for other publishers as international co-editions. These included the new *State of the World Atlas* and the *State of the Nation*, which have been highly successful.

But in publishing, successful titles do not immediately translate into healthy balance sheets and Pluto's financial difficulties persisted. When Pluto approached the GLEB for assistance, it was recognised that the disappearance of Pluto Press would be a disaster for independent publishing in London.

The GLEB's equity investment of £100,000 has been made jointly with £100,000 from the Joseph Rowntree Social Service Trust and a £40,000 loan from the London Borough of

Camden. The full-time equivalent of 28 jobs will be preserved at Pluto and the intervention will guarantee the survival of one of London's boldest and most imaginative publishers.

## NEWS ON SUNDAY

Few would pretend that Fleet Street plays a very healthy role in British society today. The growing concentration of ownership (three groups control 74% of daily readership) has coincided with a shift away from traditions of popular investigative journalism and independence. In its place the popular press now has less and less to do with newspapers – it fills its pages instead with bingo or gossip about television stars.

Traditions of radical journalism that have their roots in the 18th and 19th centuries have been swept away. Over the last 30 years numerous papers like the News Chronicle or the London Evening News have gone down, while the only new ones – like the Mail on Sunday – have come from already powerful newspaper groups.

When GLEB was approached for help to carry out a feasibility study into a new national Sunday paper –



News on Sunday – it was seen as an opportunity to intervene in a powerful cultural sector where increasing concentration of ownership has seriously reduced choice and debate.

The idea for the project developed in the wake of the 1982 McCarthy report commissioned by the TUC on the feasibility of setting up a new Labour daily. While a Sunday paper might appear less ambitious, there are several reasons why it would have a stronger chance of success.

The rightward shift of the two Sunday 'qualities', the Sunday Times and the Observer, and the immediate success of the new Mail on Sunday which found 500,000 new buyers, have further identified market, social and cultural gaps. Furthermore, a larger proportion of the population reads Sundays than dailies, with readers often buying more than one paper.

The intention is to produce a popular 56 page, 35p tabloid which will take a radical and independent position. The objective will be to address a wide readership among women and men in terms of geography, race and class, largely using 'human interest' to tell stories and discuss political issues. It will be open to popular culture and will seek to deal with all issues in a lively and imaginative way. News on Sunday will also seek to revive the dying traditions of investigative journalism.

In order to ensure the involvement of the workforce in all decision making, the workers will appoint three directors to the paper's board. The question of printing and production methods will be crucial to the success of the project and members of the project are currently engaged in discussions with the NGA, NUJ and SOGAT 82 over the conditions under which new technologies can be used to produce the paper.

The paper's income is expected to come from sales (67%), advertising (25%) and from an innovative approach to merchandising (8%). Its fixed costs will be kept low as it is

unlikely to own printing presses, typesetting equipment or large buildings.

Key trades unions, including the T&GWU, NUPE, and NCU, and local authorities in Manchester, Sheffield, and Newcastle have already given considerable support. The GLEB has made available a grant of £39,000 for the feasibility study (which will be converted into equity when the project goes ahead), as well as providing advice on financial structures, market research, enterprise planning equal opportunities policies and public relations.

A 64-page dummy has already been produced – as if it were a 'live' paper with up-to-date news stories and a couple of notable scoops. The results of the study so far are highly encouraging and suggest a circulation of around 900,000.

The News on Sunday project probably represents the most serious attempt to set up a new independent newspaper in Britain for many years. If successful it will lead to the creation of nearly 200 new jobs of which more than a quarter will be in London. It will also be a significant alternative to the narrow range offered by existing national newspapers.

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Apart from its investment work, the Cultural Industries Unit has been actively involved in discussions with various bodies over policies for strategic intervention in the sector. It has established links with other units engaged in similar work, like Sheffield Communications Committee, Tyne and Wear's Media Enterprise Board and West Midlands County Council, all of which are planning wide-ranging programmes of training, investment and library development.

While broadcasting does not fall within the scope of the GLEB's operations, recent developments, particularly in relation to the BBC, have led to the threat of sweeping job losses in London. The unit has initiated a major research and

campaigning project funded by the GLC, to investigate options for the economic future of broadcasting along with an analysis of the implications of deregulation for jobs.

Broadcasting is set to change radically in the next few years. Satellites are already beaming programmes across Europe. Cable, however faltering, is beginning to have an impact, and franchises have been awarded in Croydon, Westminster, Ealing, Tower Hamlets and Wandsworth.

As in many other areas of the cultural industries the problem is that the free market predominantly favours large existing companies with ample resources at their command – the multi-media empires of Rupert Murdoch or Robert Maxwell. There are few openings for new voices or for a fuller and more reciprocal relationship between broadcasters and the public.

The research project is geared to finding out how the future can properly reflect the promise of the new possibilities in broadcasting. The work has been largely funded by the GLC and involves the Polytechnic of Central London, the Broadcasting Research Unit and the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom. It will culminate in a series of programmes for Channel Four.

A number of the projects have involved joint work with the economic development units and the leisure and recreation departments of London's borough councils. As the boroughs assume control and responsibility for the GLEB following the abolition of the GLC, joint projects – linking local initiatives with London-wide strategic projects in areas like distribution that have been backed by the GLEB – will become increasingly important.

Examples of such work already exist in Camden, Lambeth, Hackney, Haringey, Islington and Newham, while discussions have begun with Hackney on future joint cultural strategies.

# CONCLUSIONS

Since mid-1984 over 20 projects have been funded in the cultural industries, using both GLC and GLEB funding. Over £600,000 has been committed and more than 130 jobs *have been saved or preserved* through direct intervention in the cultural sectors that have been targeted.

All these jobs are in unionised firms or where unionisation is under way, with substantial progress being made on introducing enterprise planning and equal opportunities policies. It is a basic condition of GLEB funding that steps be taken as soon as possible to achieve new organisational and decision making structures that actively involve all workers in the running of their firms. The GLEB also places great importance on ensuring that there are real opportunities for women and black people in companies that are supported.

In addition to direct and very economical job creation (at a maximum cost of £4000 per job), jobs have also been indirectly safeguarded in associated firms and industries like record-pressing and printing.

Some of the most useful work has been achieved by bringing together existing projects to discuss common problems, possible solutions and new ideas arising from the agreed use of new technological developments. This has often involved little or no direct financial investment by the GLEB at all.

The strategy that has been developed for the cultural industries is rooted in a radical view of the part culture plays in people's lives by helping them to make sense of and shape their own lives and experiences, as well as to share these with others. It is also one of the most important ways in which people express themselves individually and in association with others.

Through many different periods in history, the development of 'national' cultural forms has often served to

render the larger part of the population invisible, whether on stage, in verse, in paintings, operas and elsewhere. People have contested this 'invisibility', either by developing *their own autonomous folk cultures*, or by looking to commercial forms of entertainment and pleasure which, in turn, they have adapted and transformed to suit their own needs and interests. This is clearly the case with street ballads, serialised popular fiction, the music hall, the cinema, the television soap opera and popular music.

The GLEB is a small organisation with very limited resources and the cultural industries strategy is only a small part of its work. There are no illusions that its achievements are going to transform the consciousness of Londoners! The GLEB's strategic purpose has been to make the alternative ideas and images that are being produced by independent groups in the film, video and publishing industries better known and more widely available.

The independent cultural sectors are gradually establishing themselves more soundly and beginning to translate their creative energies into economic strength. Precariously placed between the subsidised arts and the purely commercial sectors, they have been shrugged off by both and left to reconcile their often competing cultural and commercial goals as best they might.

The importance of the cultural and social role of cultural independence needs to be actively recognised and realised through the development of new approaches to the use of public sector finance. On its own the GLEB has only been able to demonstrate some of the ways in which cultural diversity can be stimulated and strengthened.

The GLEB's work needs far greater resources and powers that could only come from new national cultural policies. Above all, the GLEB needs the shared commitment and cooperation of all those involved in the

various cultural industries, in existing institutions for the arts, local authorities, trades unions, schools, further educational institutions and the various departments of national government.



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## **PUBLICATIONS & VIDEOS**

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### **Enterprising London**

A FREE quarterly tabloid outlining the aims of GLEB and giving the latest news on GLEB's activities.

### **Enterprising London – the video**

Saving jobs... shaping the future

A revised edition, containing practical examples, of a handbook explaining Enterprise Planning, the Board's innovative approach to industrial relations and worker participation.

There are shorter FREE versions for trades unionists and employers. A video version is also available.

### **Technology Networks**

A revised edition of a handbook outlining the Board's exemplary scheme to ensure that new technologies are applied to create socially useful jobs, products and services. A fascinating video version is also available.

### **A strategy for co-operation**

A handbook tracing the development of the worker co-op movement in Britain and Europe, and explaining the Board's investment approach to meeting the needs of London's co-ops.

The video concentrates on four projects and CO-OP 84, the first international Worker Co-op Trade Fair.

### **Survival or liquidation**

A practical handbook for worker co-ops facing financial difficulties.

### **More than bricks and mortar**

A handbook outlining the Board's novel approach to property development, and its programme for the regeneration of neglected inner-city areas.

### **Redressing the balance**

A handbook dealing with the problems faced by ethnic minority enterprises and the Board's initiatives to improve the level of resources available to them. The video illustrates how these policies operate.

### **Organising for Equality**

A practical guide to employers and employees about how to identify discrimination and implement policies to ensure equal opportunities.

### **Reshaping London's Industries series**

Sectoral and investment strategies for London.

**No. 1 Printing Matters** – London's print trade

**No. 2 Turning the Tables** – the furniture trade

All publications cost £1, unless otherwise stated.

Videos are available on all systems. £9.50 to hire. £20 for sale.

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## **CREDITS**

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