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Bibliographic Data Services Limited
Annandale House, The Crichton,
Bankend Road, Dumfries DG1 4TA
T: 01387 702251 E: 01387 702259
info@bibds.co.uk
www.bibliographicdata.com

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Mr James Boyle
Cultural Commission
Broughton High School
Carrington Road
Edinburgh
EH4 1EG

Dear Mr Boyle

Cultural Commission Interim Report

I read the above report earlier this week, and as both a citizen and a business person I welcome the approach that is being undertaken by the Cultural Commission to formulate a strategy for Scotland. I regret the fact that I was not aware of your work earlier in the process, for I feel that my business may have a role to play in defining the service offered by Scotland's libraries, both now and in future years.

I have two particular areas of interest: firstly in improving awareness and access to Scottish publications, books about Scotland and Scottish authors, and secondly, working with libraries to improve access to their collections, both for staff and members of the public. Scotland has an illustrious tradition in relation to bookselling and libraries, but in recent years a number of developments have led to less awareness in libraries of Scottish publishing.

My second area of concern relates to the quality of public library service going forward to 2030. As a qualified librarian I would like to see libraries in Scotland play the same vibrant role that I have observed in the United States. I feel a national strategy that places emphasis on developing collections, improving access to these collections and encouraging users of the library service to access this information effectively is vital.

My company, Bibliographic Data Services Limited (BDS), founded in 1994, specialises in the supply of bibliographic information to libraries, both in the United Kingdom and worldwide. Since 2002 we have also provided an information service relating to film and television. Our customer base includes the British Library, all of the major library booksellers and most of the public libraries in the United Kingdom. Despite this degree of market penetration I do not believe that our service is being used to greatest effect in Scotland, and I am confident that working with an informed group of people could result in a much better strategy for the supply and exploitation of bibliographic information in the 21st century. We are already working with both the Scottish Libraries and Information Council and the Scottish Publishers Association, but differing agendas and difficulties with funding have made it difficult to make major progress.

It is my belief that Scotland's libraries should be enabled to access the information they require to improve the service that they can deliver, and make sharing of resource and cost viable on a scale that is not currently possible. I also believe that greater dissemination of the published output of Scotland, or resources about Scotland will result in other nations being more aware of our unique heritage and culture.

I appreciate that these issues are very focused in comparison to the scope of the review you are undertaking, but I also believe that they are quite central to the services offered by libraries, which in turn can lead to a better-informed and more culturally aware nation. Scottish libraries can benefit from the fact that there is a business with an international profile providing information from Dumfries, and in turn, my colleagues and I would like to play a part in helping to revitalise a service that we all value.

If there is any role we can play in your evaluation I would be pleased to hear from you. If you or any colleagues would like to visit our premises to learn more about what services we can offer, or our vision of the future for libraries, I would be delighted to host a visit.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lesley Whyte". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'L'.

Lesley Whyte
Managing Director