

FOREWORD

Rt Hon Chris Smith of Finsbury



Manuscripts Matter is the first international conference to focus on the collecting of modern literary archives.

From those writers who create the manuscripts and archives, to the dealers, collecting institutions and scholars, we are here to celebrate archives and their enrichment of the cultural and intellectual heritage, and to address pertinent issues.

The ever-present challenge of available funds is common to those trying to acquire both historic and modern manuscripts, whereas other concerns are distinct to collecting the works of contemporary writers. As the export ban on cultural materials cannot be applied to works less than 50 years old, UK institutions must strive to compete in a thriving international market, and the tax incentives which are currently available to writers' estates and benefit public institutions cannot be taken up by living authors.

Organised under the auspices of the Working Group on UK Literary Heritage, which I chair, by the Institute of English Studies and the British Library, the conference has attracted academic and funding support from a range of stakeholders. Participants across the ten sessions offer an impressively broad range of relevant expertise and experience, in a spirit of national and transatlantic cooperation. Many are members of the Working Group or have provided advice and guidance.

The Working Group is pursuing the submission it made to HM Treasury in November 2005, which proposed the extension of the *douceur* arrangement to apply to income tax for living authors, and the extension of the Acceptance in Lieu of tax scheme to living writers. The activities of the Working Group have been referred to in debates in the House of Lords on 13 December 2005, when Lord Evans of Temple Guiting said that "... Treasury needs convincing that this is an important area ..." and again on 24 July 2006. We are also active in raising awareness amongst authors and institutions about existing incentives and funding sources, working closely with the Group for Literary Archives and Manuscripts.

All speakers gathered together for this conference share the belief that manuscripts matter.

