

So long and thanks for all the.....

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There are some moments in your life that are incredibly important but at the time feel like they are going to be incredibly trivial. Naturally as this is the David issue of Northern Lights I'm going to share one that involves him and probably one which he has absolutely no memory of. It surrounds my need for coffee and a vacation during my time at library school at UCL (around 1990 to save you having to cut my leg off to count the rings). I happened to be near Headington (an unlikely event granted, but it involved a shark falling through a roof, a new camera and for those that know me that sounds like a likely combination). Needing coffee I repaired unto The Cairns Library at the John Radcliffe where I'd, the year previously, completed my pre-professional room, knowing it would shortly be the library team's coffee break (the desk manual included a procedure on preparing for coffee/tea breaks if you were the library assistant assigned to such things that week). Once there I was warmly greeted by old colleagues and this bloke in a 'tache introduced himself as David Stewart, explained he'd replaced John Van Loo and asked me a few questions about what I was up to. He then in a sentence outlined the career I should have, how long I should stay in posts etc. I've not necessarily followed the timeline but by 'eck it was advice I've followed! It was also generous, giving and a measure of the man we all know. Interested in you as an individual and always there to help, advise and ready to laugh along with you.

Now fast forward a bit to 1998. Linda Ferguson was my boss and working up at the Regional Office of the NHS Executive in Birchwood in Warrington and was involved in the SECTA Report aka the ['North West Health Library and Information Services Review'](#) which recommended that 'a regional coordination and advisory service' be established. It led to an interview process at the Thistle Hotel at Haydock and the appointment of David who was coming up North from The Royal Society of Medicine (RSM) and little did I know it had been living relatively near my folks in Didcot (as a good Wallingford boy I have to point out Didcot is a one horse town and the horse left years ago!). It was an interesting time because at that moment in history similar units that had been hosted by Regional Health Authorities in the rest of the country had by and large disappeared when they'd been abolished in 1995. Well history shows that the RSM's loss was our gain. David created a cohesive North West identity with his team and later the North identity that we have today, encouraging the member's networks to work together and in the case of the North West merge to create the LIHNN group that exists today. Quite simply, I don't know where we'd be now without him.

In the Hitchikers Guide to the Galaxy the message left to the earth by the Dolphins as they left was 'So long, and thanks for all the fish', I guess our message to you David as you leave is 'So long and thanks for all the laughs, support, PCs, library refurbes, training opportunities, quiet

study rooms, books, culture of co-operation, networking.....' And I could go on and on and if you catch me for a beer I probably will.

David Stewart M.B.E. it's been a privilege and a honour.

Kieran Lamb

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