

# INCREASING OUR VALUE TO SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZE ENTERPRISES (SMEs)

*"The British Library's expert staff are a great help for the new inventor. They run patent clinics to help people get started. I keep an eye on the trade press to make sure that mine are not pirated, and I know that other inventors have used the collections when taking action to protect their intellectual property. The Library's resources empower the lone inventor."*

**Mark Sheahan**

CompGen Ltd

Innovator of the Year 2003

## FACT FILE

- **SMEs account for over 99% of the UK's 3.7 million businesses**
  - Some 12% of people have considered starting a business in the last two years
  - Some 33% of small firms engage in research and development activity
  - Some 37% of SMEs reported some form of innovation over the previous two years
- **Government is committed to capitalise on UK's inventiveness**
  - *DTI Innovation Report 2004* set out direct measures to raise rate of innovation across UK
  - Greater cooperation is required between business, government and HE
  - The nation needs to increase record of knowledge transfer and exploitation by business
- **The British Library fully embraces the critical role it plays in making available unrivalled resources and expertise to SMEs and individual entrepreneurs**
  - Over 10,000 SMEs are registered customers of the Library's priced information services
  - Nearly half of all SMEs are within two hours' travel from the British Library Reading Rooms at St Pancras
  - The Library has a proven track record supporting design-led entrepreneurs, including Trevor Baylis, James Dyson, Mandy Haberman and Mark Sheahan.

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## SERVICES

- **Reading Rooms**
  - Staffed by information experts to guide users to relevant information and materials
  - Free access to unique collection – books, newspapers, journals, images, maps, music manuscripts, market research, voice and sound recordings
  - Largest patent collection in the world
  - Most comprehensive collection of business information in UK
  - A recent Reader Survey (Q3/03) showed that over 60% of business users are entrepreneurs and SMEs, and over 40% are self-employed or in start-up companies
  - Over 93% of all users completely/very satisfied on a wide range of criteria, including comprehensiveness of collection, working environment and staff expertise
- **Research Support**
  - Customised research service covering intellectual property, biology, chemistry, medicine, technology, legislation and market information
- **Information Supply**
  - Largest and one of fastest remote information supply services in the world including 24 hour electronic delivery and 2 hour turnaround
  - Systematic access to materials to which SMEs cannot afford to subscribe
- **www.bl.uk**
  - Directs business users to a wide range of services and resources
- **Patent and Intellectual Property**
  - Regular patent searching workshops including trademarks, registered designs and copyright information
  - Currently, 50% of participants are inventors/entrepreneurs and 30% are from SMEs.

## INITIATIVES

- **Innovation Centre (05/06)**
  - Being developed to support entrepreneurs and SMEs particularly those in the creative and scientific industries
  - Initial market research from SME focus groups has been very positive
  - British Library perceived as a credible, trustworthy and impartial resource
- **SME Web Portal (Q3/04)**
  - Being developed to enable easy searching and access to Library materials including electronic delivery, on a pay-per-view basis
  - Phase One will focus on scientific, technical and medical documents
  - Phase Two (05) will focus on additional content for the creative industries, including images and sound
- **Supporting London (04)**
  - Launched series of Asian business events in conjunction with the Library's major *Silk Road* exhibition (Q2/04)
  - Continuing to support London Design Festival and World Creative Forum
  - Developed close working relationship with Greater London Authority to support London as a world-class cultural centre
- **Resource Sharing and Collaboration**
  - In discussion with regional cultural and library networks to incorporate the SME Web Portal into the People's Network
  - Initiated highly constructive discussions with the LDA, DTI, HEIs, business advisors (eg. Business Links), business and trade associations to refine and promote the Library's Innovation Centre proposition.