

The Network Newsletter: tackling social exclusion in libraries, museums, archives and galleries

Number 161, September 2014

(Formerly published as *Public Libraries & Social Exclusion Action Planning Network Newsletter*, issue 1, May 1999 – issue 29, September 2001)

The Network's Website is at www.seapn.org.uk and includes information on courses, good practice, specific socially excluded groups, as well as the newsletter archive.

Contents List

Network news

- Two blogposts published – page 2

Did you see ...?

- *CILIP Update* – page 2
- *Museums Journal* – page 3
- *Feliciter* – page 3

Tackling social and digital exclusion – Other Agencies

- *Read on. Get on: how reading can help children escape poverty* – page 3
- “Criminal Justice: Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic (BAME)” – page 5

Broader issues – Libraries, Museums, Archives and Cultural and Heritage Organisations

- *Rural library services in England: exploring recent changes and possible futures* – page 6
- *Rising to the challenge ...* – page 9

Abbreviations and acronyms – page 12

Network news

Two blogposts published

John Vincent has just contributed to two blogs, one on the CILIP blog:

- “How to care for sacred texts in public libraries”¹ which was written by Siobhan Ball, Gulshan Iqbal and John

and one on “Leon’s Library Blog”:

- “What about social justice?”² which looks at the role that social justice plays in some libraries’ services – and could play in more.

Did you see ...?

CILIP Update

The September 2014 issue³ includes a brief article⁴ about the Arts Council England report⁵ on the projects to test automatic library membership. Amongst its interesting findings is the following, showing that membership is more than just joining:

“The principle of having a library card is an important first step. But the study clearly demonstrated that issuing a library card in itself does not create active library members. The accompanying outreach activities and library events were important factors in making membership real. And the initial library visit was an important catalyst to this.” [p3]

There is also a brief piece on the introduction of the new RNIB Overdrive service⁶ which will be available in 100+ UK libraries, and will allow users to borrow from the RNIB’s collection of Talking Books, as well as some Talking Magazines and podcasts [p9].

¹ See: <http://www.cilip.org.uk/cilip/blog/how-care-sacred-texts-public-libraries>.

² See:

http://leonslibraryblog.com/2014/10/?utm_source=Communicator_membership_list&utm_medium=Email&utm_content=Untitled32&utm_campaign=Weekly+News+from+CILIP%2c+16+October+2014.

³ *CILIP Update*, September 2014. Further information at:

<http://www.cilip.org.uk/cilip/membership/membership-benefits/monthly-magazine-journals-and-ebulletins/cilip-update-magazine>.

⁴ “Automatic membership pilots show cards alone do not create active members”, *CILIP Update*, September 2014, p5.

⁵ Anna Siddall. *Automatic library membership pilots: final report*. ACE, 2014. Available to download as a pdf (1570 kb) from:

http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/pdf/Automatic_Library_Membership_Pilots_Final_Report.pdf.

⁶ Further information at: <http://www.rnib.org.uk/services-we-offer-reading-services/rnib-overdrive-digital-download-library-service>.

Museums Journal

The August 2014 issue⁷ has a review by Carol Dixon of the exhibition, “Making Freedom: Riots, Rebellions and Revolutions” [pp52-53].

“Education charity the Windrush Foundation [8] developed this touring exhibition [with money from the Heritage Lottery Fund] to mark 175 years since emancipation from enslavement on 1 August 1838 for over 1 million Africans in the Anglophone Caribbean.” [p52]

As Carol notes, there are two exhibitions, one a 12-panel touring exhibition, and the other an expanded, 20-panel version. There is more information about these – and also about the project as a whole – on the “Making Freedom” website⁹. The larger exhibition will be on display at the Royal Geographical Society from 6 November-21 December 2014¹⁰.

Feliciter

OK, you may not see these! However, the following piece in the August 2014 issue¹¹ is well worth a read:

- Denise Scott “The Language of Library Services for ‘At-Risk’ Youth”, pp36-38¹², which looks at the dangers of stereotyping and limiting young people by the language used to describe them.¹³

Tackling social and digital exclusion – Other Agencies

Read on. Get on: how reading can help children escape poverty

This new report¹⁴, published by Save the Children, launches the Read on. Get on. Campaign.

⁷ *Museums Journal*, July/August 2014.

⁸ See: <http://www.windrushfoundation.org/>.

⁹ See: <http://makingfreedom.co.uk/>.

¹⁰ See: <http://www.windrushfoundation.org/news/making-freedom-exhibition/>.

¹¹ *Feliciter*, vol 60, no.4. “*Feliciter* is published six times a year by the Canadian Library Association/Association canadienne des bibliothèques. The *Feliciter* is available as an ‘online only’ publication”. Taken from:

<http://www.cla.ca/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Feliciter1>.

¹² See:

http://www.cla.ca/feliciter/2014/4/?utm_source=Feliciter+Vol.+60%2C+%234+%26+%235&utm_campaign=UA-32846026-1&utm_medium=email#StudentAward.

¹³ Thanks to John Pateman for alerting me to this.

¹⁴ *Read on. Get on: how reading can help children escape poverty*. Save the Children on behalf of the Read On. Get On. Campaign, 2014. Available to download as a pdf (1460 kb) from:

http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/images/Read_On_Get_On.pdf.

“Each year we leave thousands of young children, very many of them poor, behind in their reading. They then struggle for the rest of their education and career.

This report sets out who we’re leaving behind and why. We set out a bold ambition: to get every child reading well by 11 in 2025.” [p vi]

It sets out the links between living in poverty and reading ability, especially for certain groups (and is particularly strong on the levels inequality in UK):

“Last year a quarter of all children left primary education without reading well each year, rising to **two in five poorer children**. Other disadvantaged groups are also likely to be failed:

- 45% of low-income, white British boys were not reading well by the age of 11.
- Low-income, white British boys, who have English as their first language, are even less likely to be reading well by the age of 11 than many low-income groups for whom English is not their first language.
- The reading gap between boys and girls in England is one of the widest in the developed world: boys are twice as likely to fall below even a very basic reading level.” [p vi, emphasis theirs]

This is followed by the call to campaign “to ensure all children are reading well at 11” [p vii]. There is a series of recommendations which are summarised as the following actions:

Reading: Parents, carers and anyone with a child in their life can make a huge difference by reading for just ten minutes a day.

Volunteering: People can give their time across the whole of the UK to schemes that help children with reading and language. Employers and schools can play a vital enabling role.

Innovating: The voluntary sector, schools, policy-makers and the private sector should look to develop programmes, interventions and partnerships to help all to read.

Leading the way locally: Schools, often working in partnership, across the country already make a huge difference – they can sign up to the 2025 ambition and set their own ambitious local goals.

Driving across government: All parties can embrace the 2025 goal in their manifestos, setting out how they would support its achievement.” [p ix]

There is further information about the Campaign on their website¹⁵. Partners include Network members Booktrust and the National Literacy Trust, plus

¹⁵ See: <http://www.readongeton.org.uk/about-us>.

Achievement for All¹⁶; Beanstalk¹⁷; CentreForum¹⁸; the publishers HarperCollins; I CAN¹⁹; NAHT²⁰; the Publishers Association; The Reading Agency; Save the Children; and Teach First²¹.

Recommended.

“Criminal Justice: Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic (BAME)”

Clinks²² have just pulled together a selection of their resources relating to BAME people and the criminal justice system²³.

These include:

- The *Clinks Directory of BAME Offender Services* which is a searchable directory of information on services for BAME offenders. It can be accessed via the website²⁴.
- A brief introduction to the Young Review²⁵
- A brief report on the funding received by Clinks for the development of innovative approaches to achieving improved resettlement outcomes for BAME offenders. There is a link to further information and reports from five of the funded pieces of work²⁶.

¹⁶ “... an independent, not-for-profit charity that transforms the lives of vulnerable and disadvantaged children, young people and their families by raising educational aspirations, access and achievement”, see: <http://www.afa3as.org.uk/>.

¹⁷ “...national charity that recruits, vets, trains and supports volunteers to work in primary schools with children who have fallen behind with their reading”, see: <http://www.beanstalkcharity.org.uk/>. (Formerly Volunteer Reading Help.)

¹⁸ “CentreForum is an independent, liberal think-tank seeking to develop evidence based policy solutions to the problems facing Britain”, see: <http://www.centreforum.org/>.

¹⁹ “... the children’s communication charity”, see: <http://www.ican.org.uk/>.

²⁰ “... independent trade union and professional association”, see: <http://www.naht.org.uk/>.

²¹ “Our mission is to end inequality in education by building a community of exceptional leaders who create change within classrooms, schools and across society”, see: <http://www.teachfirst.org.uk/>.

²² “Clinks supports, represents and campaigns for the voluntary sector working with offenders. Clinks aims to ensure the sector and all those with whom they work, are informed and engaged in order to transform the lives of offenders”, taken from: http://www.clinks.org/resources/about-clinks?utm_source=Home%20Page&utm_medium=Website&utm_content=AboutClinks%20Button&utm_campaign=Join%20Test. The Network is a member of Clinks.

²³ See: <http://www.clinks.org/criminal-justice/black-asian-minority-ethnic-bame>.

²⁴ See: <http://www.clinks.org/criminal-justice/black-asian-minority-ethnic-bame>.

²⁵ “The Young Review, chaired by Baroness Young of Hornsey, with the support of the [Black Training and Enterprise Group \(BTEG\)](#) and [Clinks](#), has been set up to explore how to improve outcomes for young black and Muslim men in the criminal justice system in England and Wales”, see: <http://www.youngreview.org/>.

²⁶ See: <http://www.clinks.org/criminal-justice-black-asian-minority-ethnic-bame/innovation-grants-%E2%80%93-bame-offender-services>.

- A link to crime and ethnicity statistics²⁷ [also please see below]
- Links to information about three Clinks publications:
 - *How can the commissioning process improve outcomes for BAME offenders?*²⁸
 - *'Double trouble?'*²⁹
 - *Less equal than others: ethnic minorities and the criminal justice system*³⁰

The statistics referred to above include:

- “On 30 June 2013, 26% of the prison population, 21,543 prisoners, was from a minority ethnic group. This compares to around 14% of the general population.
- Of 26 % of prisoners who self identify as Black, Asian or minority ethnic (BAME), black persons account for 13.1%, compared with approximately 2.9% of the over 18 population recorded in the 2011 Census.
- Muslim prisoners account for 13.4% of the prison population compared with 4.2 % in the 2011 Census.
- There are proportionately many more young BAME male prisoners than older ones, with BAME representation in the 15-17 age group the highest at 43.7%.
- People from BAME backgrounds are more likely to plead not guilty and to be tried.
- In prison, Black or mixed origin service users are subject to higher rates of adjudication, spend more days than average in segregation and are more frequently subject to the use of force.”

Broader issues – Libraries, Museums, Archives and Cultural and Heritage Organisations

Rural library services in England: exploring recent changes and possible futures

This report³¹ by OPM³² and Locality to Defra and Arts Council England was published in May 2014 (but seems only recently to have become available).

²⁷ See: <http://www.clinks.org/evidence-base#BAME>.

²⁸ *How can the commissioning process improve outcomes for BAME offenders?* Clinks/BTEG, 2013. Available to download as a pdf (186.7 kb) from: http://www.clinks.org/sites/default/files/CLINKS_BTEG%20BAME%20report%20final.pdf.

²⁹ Jessica Jacobson, Coretta Phillips and Kimmitt Edgar. *'Double trouble?' Black, Asian and minority ethnic offenders' experiences of resettlement*. Clinks/Prison Reform Trust, 2010. Available to download as a pdf (343.7 kb) from: <http://www.clinks.org/sites/default/files/%27Double%20Trouble%27.pdf>.

³⁰ *Less equal than others: ethnic minorities and the criminal justice system*. Clinks, 2008. Available to download as a pdf (363.3 kb) from: <http://www.clinks.org/sites/default/files/Race%20for%20Justice%20-%20Less%20Equal%20Then%20Others%202008.pdf>.

It has been fairly thoroughly reviewed elsewhere³³, so this assessment focuses primarily on social justice issues.

“Commissioned by Defra and Arts Council England following the 2013 reports *Envisioning the Library of the Future* [34] and *Community libraries: Learning from Experience* [35], this research explores what the experience has been – and could be in future – for rural libraries specifically. In particular, this work aims to help understand, add to existing knowledge, and provide learning points on the following:

- the issues, challenges and opportunities for rural areas arising from changes to library services;
- good practice and shared learning on how to shape library services in rural areas to meet local need;
- the possible future role of statutory and non-statutory libraries in rural areas in the light of the *Envisioning the library of the future research* project undertaken by the Arts Council in 2012/13” [p7]

The research consisted of:

- A rapid evidence assessment (REA), which reviewed 30 of the most recent documents relevant to rural libraries in England.
- Initial scoping interviews with library service officers and other local stakeholders
- Case studies of eight public library authorities (Buckinghamshire, Cumbria, Devon, North Yorkshire, Suffolk, Surrey, Wakefield and Warwickshire).

It identified the major changes taking place in rural communities and in public libraries, and also the themes which were of particular importance in managing change in rural library services:

- “Public consultation, engagement and communication
- Developing volunteering

³¹ *Rural library services in England: exploring recent changes and possible futures*. OPM, 2014. Available to download as a pdf (1560 kb) from: http://www.opm.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Rural_library_services_in_England.pdf.

³² “Founded in 1989, OPM is an independent, employee-owned research organisation and consultancy”, taken from: <http://www.opm.co.uk/about/>. Although their website does not appear to mention this, OPM was originally called the Office for Public Management, and produced an early report on social exclusion – which we used to inform *Open to all?*. This was: Clive Miller and Ewan King. *Managing for social cohesion*. Office for Public Management, 1999.

³³ See, for example: “Response to the Rural Libraries Report”, Voices for the Library, Sep 2014, <http://www.voicesforthelibrary.org.uk/2014/09/response-to-the-rural-libraries-report/>.

³⁴ See: <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/supporting-libraries/library-of-the-future/>.

³⁵ See: <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/supporting-libraries/community-libraries-research/>.

- Partnerships
- Income generation
- Provision in remote areas” [p24]

Following this, the report analyses the results of the case studies and consultations, and suggests that the priorities for rural services are:

- “Tackling rural isolation
- Serving remote and sparsely populated areas
- Supporting rural economies and enterprise
- Engaging a wide range of local populations, notably young people
- Striking the right balance between locally-driven variation and consistency of library services across a whole local authority area
- Recognising and investing in the wider socio-economic impacts of library services”. [p29]

The report concludes, amongst other things, that:

- “In rural communities, we believe it will be more prudent to co-design library services with other services to secure *economies of scope*, rather than looking to *economies of scale* ... [36] This would help to generate incentives rather than disincentives towards seeing library service changes as part of service transformation in the round.” [p5]
- “Where communities have become more directly involved in supporting or managing their rural libraries, they *can* evolve into more effective, positive and well-used venues than their predecessors. This can involve the nurturing of a library’s role in supporting social interaction, strengthening community ties, hosting events and activities to appeal to a wider range of people and creating space for clubs and societies to flourish.

In other cases, however, library friends groups might save a branch but bring with them very limited perceptions about what that facility will offer. As such, library service managers are sometimes concerned about the inability of some of their community libraries to live up to what should be expected of a local library from the point of view of standards / consistency of service and inclusivity.” [pp5-6]

- “Digital technology is helping to overcome some of the challenges of physical access to library services experienced by rural dwellers, and may demand investment to facilitate innovation. We will need more creative ways to either get individuals to library services or vice versa in future – and creative ways to sustain those approaches. Where people living in rural communities are isolated (through income, infirmity or geographical remoteness), the provision of good quality library services

³⁶ “... where reductions in the unit cost result from *diversification of production / provision*. In the context of public services, providing a greater range of services from an existing pool of resources (e.g. a set of existing skills and knowledge, or an existing physical asset) will be more cost effective, per head of population, than using those fixed resources to deliver just one service.” [p41]

will sometimes require more than a digital response. More innovative use of mobile services – in conjunction with static libraries or other venues (schools, village halls etc.) is an area that needs to be explored.” [p6]

- “The level and nature of support provided to rural libraries in future will depend on the outcomes those services and venues are able to contribute to. These may be far-removed from the traditional function of a library, yet hugely valuable to a community (and to public agencies seeking to reduce demand on their services). Local authorities need to think strategically about how rural library assets (buildings, people, volunteers, trust capital) can support delivery of other services, and seek to establish more robust outcome measures that reflect that.” [p6]

This is an important report which deserves wide readership and study – as well as a serious attempt to start moving in the directions recommended.

Rising to the challenge ...

This new report³⁷ from The Aspen Institute³⁸ is part of their Dialogue on Public Libraries:

“The Aspen Institute Dialogue on Public Libraries is a multi-stakeholder forum to explore and champion new thinking on U.S. public libraries, with the goal of fostering concrete actions to support and transform public libraries for a more diverse, mobile and connected society. It focuses on the impact of the digital revolution on access to information, knowledge and the conduct of daily life. Supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and managed by the Aspen Institute Communications and Society Program, the Dialogue seeks to shape and advance a renewed national vision for public libraries in the 21st century.” [p65]

“The Dialogue and, ultimately, this report explore the essential role of public libraries in a networked world and begin to re-envision the 21st century library in a hyper-connected environment and dramatically changing world. The report is intended to raise the profile of public libraries to the center of the knowledge society, highlight the opportunities and possibilities, increase support for an expanded library role in a networked world and spark a national conversation and action to re-envision the 21st century library as a center of learning, innovation and creativity. While the report’s focus is on public libraries, we acknowledge the importance of school and research libraries in the

³⁷ Amy K Garmer. *Rising to the challenge – re-envisioning public libraries: a report of the Aspen Institute Dialogue on Public Libraries*. The Aspen Institute, 2014. Available to download as a pdf (1150 kb) from:

<http://csreports.aspeninstitute.org/documents//AspenLibrariesReport.pdf>.

³⁸ “The Aspen Institute is an educational and policy studies organization based in Washington, DC. Its mission is to foster leadership based on enduring values and to provide a nonpartisan venue for dealing with critical issues”,

<http://www.aspeninstitute.org/about/mission>.

broader conversations around the future of libraries and communities.” [p v]

The report begins by setting the role of the public library within contemporary society – and the changes that are taking place:

“This is a time of great opportunity for communities, institutions and individuals who are willing to champion new thinking and nurture new relationships. It is a time of particular opportunity for public libraries with their unique stature as trusted community hubs and repositories of knowledge and information.” [p viii]

It goes on to argue that public libraries are “essential to success and progress in the digital age” [p ix], and that:

“The process of re-envisioning public libraries to maximize their impact reflects:

- Principles that have always been at the center of the public library’s mission – equity, access, opportunity, openness and participation
- The library’s capacity to drive opportunity and success in today’s knowledge-based society
- An emerging model of networked libraries that promotes economies of scale and broadens the library’s resource reach while preserving its local presence
- The library’s fundamental people, place and platform assets” [p ix]

Its reiteration of the “people, place and platform” role of the public library is timely and important:

“PEOPLE. The public library is a hub of civic engagement, fostering new relationships and strengthening the human capital of the community. Librarians are actively engaged in the community. They connect individuals to a vast array of local and national resources and serve as neutral conveners to foster civic health. They facilitate learning and creation for children and adults alike.

PLACE. The public library is a welcoming space for a wide range of purposes—reading, communicating, learning, playing, meeting and getting business done. Its design recognizes that people are not merely consumers of content but creators and citizens as well. Its physical presence provides an anchor for economic development and neighborhood revitalization, and helps to strengthen social bonds and community identity. The library is also a virtual space where individuals can gain access to information, resources and all the rich experiences the library offers. In the creative design of its physical and virtual spaces the public library defines what makes a great public space.

PLATFORM. The public library is user-centered. It provides opportunities for individuals and the community to gain access to a variety of tools and resources with which to discover and create new knowledge. The

platform enables the curation and sharing of the community’s knowledge and innovation. A great library platform is a “third place” —an interactive entity that can facilitate many people operating individually and in groups—and supports the learning and civic needs of the community.” [p x – emphasizes theirs]

It draws together four strategies for success:

1. “Aligning library services in support of community goals

Public libraries that align their people, place and platform assets and create services that prioritize and support local community goals will find the greatest opportunities for success in the years ahead ... “ [p xi]

2. Providing access to content in all formats

3. Ensuring the long-term sustainability of public libraries

“Perhaps the greatest challenge facing public libraries today is to transform their service model to meet the demands of the knowledge society while securing a sustainable funding base for the future. With limited and sometimes volatile funding, however, such transformations will be uneven and incomplete. In addition, the highly local nature of public library funding and governance structures may interfere with both rapid and broad-scale progress—the kind of scale needed to compete and thrive in a world of global networks. Challenges that shape the discussion about long-term public library sustainability given their vital role in the digital era include:

- Identifying reliable sources of revenue for daily operations as well as long-term planning and investment
- Exploring alternative governance structures and business models that maximize efficient and sustainable library operations and customer service
- Becoming more skilled at measuring outcomes rather than counting activities
- Balancing the local and national library value proposition to consider economies of scale in a networked world without compromising local control” [p xi]

4. Cultivating leadership.

Finally, the report has a “Getting Started” section which contains “15 steps for library leaders, policymakers and the community” – these are valuable, practical ideas for engaging the community and re-orientating the public library’s services.

This is a heartening and vital read. At a time when there is a lot of negative coverage of libraries, and of public libraries in particular, it’s terrific to find something that sees our value, our potential (and which also includes a handful of case studies to help sow ideas).

Highly recommended.

Abbreviations and acronyms

ACE = Arts Council England

BAME = Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic

CILIP = Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals

Defra = Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

RNIB = Royal National Institute of Blind People

This Newsletter was compiled by John Vincent, and all items are written by him, unless otherwise stated. Please send any comments or items for the next issue to:

John Vincent
Wisteria Cottage
Nadderwater
Exeter EX4 2JQ

Tel/fax: 01392 256045
E-mail: john@nadder.org.uk

September 2014