

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

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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.

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Did you see ...?

CILIP Update

The June issue includes an introduction by Joy Court to the new book she has just edited, *Reading by right: successful strategies to ensure every child can read to succeed*¹ [pp42-43]

Access

The Spring issue² has just been published. It includes:

- Julia Chandler “The Word, South Shields: at the heart of a regeneration programme”, a photo-essay on the new library [pp9-13]
- Kate Pitman “How Tower Hamlets have incorporated adult learning into the library offer” [pp16-19]
- Jane Bourne and Simon Hackett “Producing a story of recovery: a ‘Books Beyond Words’ Book Group” [pp20-23]
- “The Nick Poole column”, which includes a brief look at the new Public Libraries Skills Strategy [pp28-31]

Tackling social and digital exclusion – Libraries, Museums, Archives and Cultural and Heritage Organisations

Stand by me: the contribution of public libraries to the well-being of older people

ACE have just published this paper³, the latest in the series that began with *Making the most of WiFi*⁴.

The paper begins with a brief introduction as to why it is important to focus on older people; draws out some overall learning and themes; and then makes a series of conclusions and recommendations. It also includes five case studies:

“As before, we looked at five library services chosen because they were delivering services for older people which were either innovative or

¹ Joy Court (ed). *Reading by right: successful strategies to ensure every child can read to succeed*. Facet Publishing, 2017 (ISBN: 978 1 7833 0209 3). Further info at: <http://www.facetpublishing.co.uk/title.php?id=302093#.WVz4KojyvlU>.

² Access: *the Journal of the Public and Mobile Libraries Group*, 15, Spring 2017, [https://az687026.vo.msecnd.net/2834/ACCESS%20Issue%2015%20\(Final\).pdf](https://az687026.vo.msecnd.net/2834/ACCESS%20Issue%2015%20(Final).pdf).

³ Shared Intelligence. *Stand by me: the contribution of public libraries to the well-being of older people*. Arts Council England, 2017. Available to download as a pdf (4070 kb) from: <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Combined%20older%20people%20report%2017%20July.pdf>.

⁴ Shared Intelligence. *Making the most of WiFi: national learning and case studies*. Arts Council England, 2016. Available to download as a pdf (865 kb) from: <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/publication/making-most-wifi>.

unusual, or because they provided a good example of something which was happening on a wider scale. Our five case study areas are:

- **Halton** library service's reminiscence box service
- **Hertfordshire** library service's Slipper Swaps programme
- Touch a New World, a digital independence service by **Kent** libraries
- The Libraries Loneliness Project in **Norfolk**
- **Wakefield's** first fully dementia friendly library at their Sandal branch" [p2 – emphasises theirs]

The overall learning/themes include:

- Helping people in old age live in their own homes for longer
- Organising high-quality enrichment and socialising activities
- Delivering the statutory duty for local authorities to shape adult social care provider markets: "Our case studies show that library services, as part of a local authority can help the council build its market intelligence by building relationships with local care providers. But they also show how library services can themselves become part of the provider market." [p6]
- Actively expanding the reach of their services for older people.

Finally, there is a set of recommendations, including:

- Start from the headline data on the older population: "Target services on the needs of older people starting from local evidence of need. Service targeting should be informed by data on the current and projected age profile of the local community; patterns in the 65+, 75+, and 85+ populations, geographic spread, and extent of clustering in areas of socioeconomic disadvantage." [p11]
- Plan services jointly with colleagues in Adult Social Care, local NHS, and local NGOs
- Tackle local strategic priorities head-on: "The library service offer for older people should contribute to the specific needs and goals highlighted in local Joint Strategic Needs Assessments and Older People's Strategies." [p11]
- Support the statutory duty for social care market shaping
- Recruit older volunteers with digital skills
- Work with individual care home managers
- Condition-specific support should also provide support and respite for carers: "When providing condition specific services (especially for

dementia), the Wakefield example shows how valuable it is when the offer is designed to support carers as much as those with the conditions being targeted.” [p12]

- Start small but set clear expectations about future scale.

The case studies are also really valuable – recommended.

“Why Social Justice in the Library? | Outreach + Inreach”

This interesting article⁵ raises a number of key issues.

It is sub-titled “The case for shifting library policy, practice, and culture toward radical inclusivity”, and the authors describe this shift as follows:

“While the American Library Association (ALA) Code of Ethics positions libraries to elevate purposefully the voices and aspirations of all people in their service area, whatever the individual’s social, economic, legal, or citizenship status, many libraries have found that work to be impractical. Historically, libraries have shown a low tolerance for risk and a strong tendency to allocate limited resources of time, money, and energy in areas that yield the greatest results (or, at least, the highest numbers in areas that are easy to measure) and perhaps the least potential for problems.

Some libraries of all types, however, are reevaluating the role they play in their community, questioning whether it is still good enough to provide equal access, or if it is time to pursue an active equitable access that focuses on empowering the less powerful and amplifying the voices of the unheard.”

There is a brief discussion of what ‘radical inclusivity’ might involve:

“The concept of radical inclusivity starts with the idea that in any given community there exists more privileged and less privileged populations, keeping in mind that privilege comes in many forms. An individual’s privilege or lack thereof can directly impact their ability to access the services a library provides if the library doesn’t take purposeful action to design services (facilities, technology, programming, and policies) that overcome those barriers [...]

Extensions into library service are clear. A radically inclusive library goes beyond inclusion. It seeks out and works to diminish and, ultimately, eradicate systemic barriers. It asks difficult questions, amplifies voices, and magnifies talents.

⁵ Margo Gustina and Eli Guinnee, “Why Social Justice in the Library? | Outreach + Inreach”, posted on *Library Journal* online, 8 Jun 2017, <http://lj.libraryjournal.com/2017/06/library-services/why-social-justice-in-the-library-outreach-inreach/#>.

A radically inclusive library facilitates community conversations and development of community-based solutions. The library does not bring the solutions but rather its leadership listens to ideas, finds commonality in aspirations, and brings the community to a table where every member has voice and influence. It follows that a radically inclusive library will be in a position to fight oppression, not necessarily through pickets and petitions but through the tools and resources of the library and by the coordination of community resources.”

The article then outlines a handful of examples (eg support by the librarian at Simmons College, Boston, for ‘Ten Demands’ made by students for equitable treatment of students of colour; the Free Library of Philadelphia’s use of art installations to highlight human rights issues such as the exhibition, ‘Juveniles in Justice: End Solitary’; a Gay Straight Alliance as part of the regular programme for young people at Chili Public Library)

It concludes with both a reassuring statement:

“Librarians acting in defense of their professional ethics can easily find themselves on one side of a partisan debate. It may be worthwhile, given the quickly changing political tides, not to worry about what might be perceived as partisan but instead to anchor our ethics in basic human rights and democratic principles that do not require policy changes every time there is a new administration.”

... and a challenge:

“ALA has embraced community engagement through Libraries Transform [6], a big step toward the convergence of practice and principle. What remains to be seen is whether our profession as a whole, from library science programs to conference proceedings and collegial expectations, will itself transform, informed by the anti-oppression and social justice actions of our peers. In actively including communities previously barred from the conversation, libraries may finally make good on the promise of equitable access.”

This view of what librarianship could be is not new, but it’s exciting to see some of these ideas get a new lease of life – a movement to follow with interest.⁷

⁶ “The Libraries Transform Campaign, an initiative of the American Library Association (ALA), is designed to increase public awareness of the value, impact and services provided by libraries and library professionals. The campaign will ensure there is one clear, energetic voice for our profession, showcasing the transformative nature of today’s libraries and elevating the critical role libraries play in the digital age.” Taken from: <http://www.ilovelibraries.org/librariestransform/about>.

⁷ Source: *LJXpress – Library Journal*, 13 Jun 2017.

Tackling social and digital exclusion – Other Agencies

Right to home? Rethinking homelessness in rural communities

This important new report⁸ has just been published by IPPR; it has had some media coverage too, for example featuring on BBC's *Countryfile* on 9 Jul⁹.

The key findings include:

- “In 2015/16, 6,270 households were accepted as homeless in England’s 91 mainly and largely rural local authorities (assessed to be unintentionally homeless and in priority need – ‘statutorily homeless’), amounting to an average of 1.3 in every 1,000 households.
- In 16 of these predominantly rural LAs, at least two in every 1,000 households was accepted as homeless – more than in urban areas in 2010/11.
- In 2015/16, mainly and largely rural areas in England reported making 12,977 decisions on homelessness approaches – 11 per cent of local authority decisions, nationally – reflecting a not insignificant challenge in which many households are experiencing housing difficulties.
- From 2010 to 2016, mainly rural local authorities recorded a rise from 191 to 252 rough sleepers – an increase of 32 per cent. In largely rural areas there has been a leap of 52 per cent, and an almost doubling in ‘urban areas with significant rural’ (97 per cent). Many cases of homelessness in rural areas go undetected, with individuals more likely to bed down in alternative countryside locations, such as outhouses, barns, tents and parked cars. The stigma of being visibly homeless in rural areas can be much stronger than in urban areas and difficulties accessing local authority services can mean households remain uncounted in official records.
- The causes of homelessness are often similar across urban and rural contexts and most frequently relate to the ending of an assured shorthold tenancy or family breakdown. Rural areas can experience additional challenges in their housing markets which exacerbate these struggles: lower levels of housing affordability; shortages in affordable homes and appropriate tenure options; high prevalence of second and holiday homes; and decline in local authority-owned housing stock.
- The peculiarities of rural areas can make delivering services to prevent and relieve homelessness particularly difficult. These relate to: balancing economies of scale; providing specialist services; overcoming travel distances and accessing public transport; reaching isolated groups; commissioning in two-tier structures; ensuring accurate monitoring and reporting; finding alternative accommodation; and managing falling local authority budgets.” [pp3-4]

⁸ Charlotte Snelling. *Right to home? Rethinking homelessness in rural communities*. IPPR, 2017. Full report available to download as a pdf (536.77 kb) from: https://www.ippr.org/files/2017-06/1498563647_right-to-home-a4-report-170627.pdf; executive summary (113.72kb) from: <https://www.ippr.org/files/2017-07/right-to-home-summary-170706.pdf>.

⁹ See: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08y72pv>.

The recommendations are – inevitably and correctly – all about improving housing provision, but there is also a recommendation around setting up forums, which could provide opportunities for us to engage with this issue:

“All rural areas should explore setting up rural homelessness forums as a place for relevant local bodies and agencies – and neighbouring authorities – to share intelligence and best practice and to provide a network through which to develop partnership models for service delivery.” [p4]¹⁰

Looked-after children & young people issues – Other Agencies

Reading in foster families

This new research¹¹:

“[...] summarises the results of a UK-wide survey with almost 600 foster carers and interviews with a small number of foster carers and children. The purpose of the research was to find out more about carers’ reading habits and attitudes, how they engage with reading with their children (particularly reading for pleasure), any barriers they face and any support that they need.” [Summary report, p3]

The results are generally very positive – and also give strong indicators as to where we can offer more support:

“Foster carers generally have positive views on reading and read frequently, both alone and with their child. Children also reported generally positive views about reading

- Foster carers recognise the benefits and importance of reading with their child
- Foster carers’ educational attainment is linked to their reading habits and confidence
- Foster carers are important reading role models for children
- Placement stability is related to children’s reading abilities (as reported by carers)
- There are several barriers to shared reading in foster families
- Some carers receive support to help their children with reading from a variety of sources
- Carers would benefit from further support to help their child with reading” [p3]

¹⁰ Source: *IPPR Weekly*, 14 Jul 2017.

¹¹ Katie Rix, Jo Lea and Amy Edwards. *Reading in foster families*. Booktrust, 2017. Full report available to download as a pdf (2600kb) from: <http://booktrustadmin.web-booktrust-g1.artlogic.net/usr/resources/1587/reading-in-foster-families-full-report.pdf>; summary report (9700kb): <https://fileservers.booktrust.org.uk/usr/resources/1586/reading-in-foster-families-summary-report-.pdf>.

This is emphasised later in the report:

“Of more formal types of support, library support was reported to be the most useful (87%), followed by school support (84%) and local authority support (82%).” [p14]

The report identifies the main support that foster carers would value (improved access to books; advice; additional support from schools; and extra reading support for children), and then makes a series of recommendations, primarily for Booktrust.

This is an important piece of research. My only quibble is that its sources for the literature review seem quite limited, so it omits, for example, material published by the PHF or The Network.¹² However, highly recommended.

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

Re-writing the story ...

Published by ACE in the same series as *Stand by me ...* [see above], this paper¹³ explores the role of public libraries in place-shaping¹⁴.

¹² Source: email from Jenna Darby, Booktrust, 6 Jul 2017.

¹³ Shared Intelligence. *Re-writing the story: the contribution of public libraries to place-shaping*. Arts Council England, 2017. Available to download as a pdf (4730 kb) from: <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Combined%20placeshaping%20report%202017%20July.pdf>.

¹⁴ ‘Place-shaping’ was defined in the Lyons Report as:

“[...] the creative use of powers and influence to promote the general well-being of a community and its citizens. It includes the following components:

- building and shaping local identity;
- representing the community;
- regulating harmful and disruptive behaviours;
- maintaining the cohesiveness of the community and supporting debate within it, ensuring smaller voices are heard;
- helping to resolve disagreements;
- working to make the local economy more successful while being sensitive to pressures on the environment;
- understanding local needs and preferences and making sure that the right services are provided to local people; and
- working with other bodies to response to complex challenges such as natural disasters and other emergencies.” [p3]

Michael Lyons. *Lyons Inquiry into Local Government – place-shaping: a shared ambition for the future of local government: executive summary*. The Stationery Office, 2007. Available to download as a pdf (314.13 kb) from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/229035/780119898552.pdf.

The five case studies it explores are:

- Cambridgeshire's community hub in Ramsey Library
- Libraries Unlimited's FabLab Devon and the Exeter Business and IP Centre
- Leicester's Imaginative Neighbourhoods programme
- Vivacity Peterborough's Our Story programme
- St Helens' Cultural Hubs and Arts in Libraries.

The key impacts that public libraries are having include:

- Libraries as a tool for achieving inclusive growth¹⁵
- Culture as a route to opportunity, and libraries as a route to culture
- Lifelong learning for all – without formal enrolment, or even having to sign in.

It particularly argues for the role of libraries in culture – it describes them as “a route to culture” [p6]. Recommended.

Evidencing libraries audience reach: research findings and analysis

Also published in the same suite of reports is this one¹⁶ which investigates “[...] the reach of public libraries, and the way in which audience research and data are accessed and used by library practitioners.” [p4]

“[...] ACE commissioned The Audience Agency (TAA) to conduct primary research with heads of service and undertake a literature review of existing information to inform an understanding of how libraries might use the insight they have about their service users more effectively; to support and develop their role as community hubs.” [p4]

The research found that:

- Libraries reach a significant cross-section of England's population
- Library audiences are extremely diverse
- (Re)Engagement potential exists for lapsed users and arts & cultural sector audiences
- Libraries underutilise data.

The recommendations focus primarily on ways in which libraries could develop their use of data, plus “Taking a curated approach to service development

¹⁵ Defined in the paper as “[...] economic growth in which the positive outcomes are shared fairly among all demographics and all communities.” [p5].

¹⁶ Katie Cudworth and Jacqui Fortnum. *Evidencing libraries audience reach: research findings and analysis*. Arts Council England, 2017. Available to download as a pdf (2270 kb) from: http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/ACE%20Evidencing%20Libraries%20Audience%20Reach%20-%20research%20results%20and%20analysis%20%28final%29_0.pdf.

[which] could engage more users & ensure long term relevance of library services” [p11]. By this, the report means:

“It is clear from the research findings that libraries already take a somewhat curatorial approach to managing their stock; using information about borrowing levels for particular types of material, often at individual sites within a service, to inform effective stock management based on user needs and preferences.

To build and deepen engagement with potential and current audiences, this approach could be extended to other activities in the library, including public engagement events and activities, stock displays, marketing, and online content. This could, for example, include drawing on local or national events and histories, themes developed to meet the needs of specific groups, or using creative partnerships with relevant organisations or individuals to inform the approach.

With careful consideration of the content and potential partnerships, this approach could be used to support place-making and wider community engagement in the neighbourhoods served by libraries; offering positive messages and opportunities to participate in meaningful, community-wide activities.” [p11]

The ten participating library authorities have been anonymised – which is understandable, but also makes it impossible to assess whether, for example, none of them really is undertaking any of the recommended “curatorial” activity.

The research combines data from, for example, the DCMS *Taking Part* surveys, Mosaic profiles, and Audience Finder¹⁷. This does help give useful insights but may also need to be supplemented by ‘real’ local community engagement. It may also run the risk of repeating findings about which there are already questions – for example:

“The Taking Part 2014/15 survey shows that a significantly higher proportion of adults from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds had visited a library in the last 12 months, compared to those from the white ethnic groups (49.3%, compared to 31.8%). A significantly higher proportion of BAME adults, who used the library in the last 12 months, had used it for academic study than adults from the white ethnic groups (20.2% compared with 7.5%).” [p21]

These statistics are heartening – but have also been queried, as they do not tend to reflect what library staff have observed.

The key conclusion from the research is one that would be worth pursuing to see just how strong an evidence-base could be built by libraries about their users, lapsed users and non-users:

¹⁷ “Audience Finder is a free national audience data and development tool, enabling cultural organisations to understand, compare and apply audience insight.” See: <https://audiencefinder.org/>.

“While a number of published studies look at the extent of UK public libraries’ value to society, there is limited research on how libraries capture data on their audiences, how this data is shared, and the commonly used approaches for demonstrating their value. Using primary research, this report identifies these practices and builds a body of case study evidence to inform and support libraries in creating and applying a stronger evidence base in relation to their audiences.” [p5]

Libraries as community hubs ...

This¹⁸ is the fourth of the suite of reports published by ACE. It:

“[...] presents findings from six case study areas of libraries in England that are co-located in community hubs. The aim was to explore different approaches and configurations; some of the opportunities and challenges that can occur for libraries through co-location with other services; and identify learning that might apply to other areas.” [p2]

The key findings from the research were:

- “The idea of a library being part of a community hub alongside other services is not a new one, but has gained increased traction in recent years
- Libraries are well placed to play a role in community hubs because of their existing position of trust within local communities, the contribution they make across a range of agendas, and their ethos of partnership working
- The arrangement of libraries and other services within community hubs varies considerably from place to place and is driven by local circumstances – success rests on reflecting and responding to local need
- Where libraries are co-located in community hubs, there are visible benefits for the library itself, other partners and services in the building and local residents
- Changing to a community hub model can generate natural concerns about the process, but these were outweighed in the case studies by the benefits, including the longer term sustainability of the library for the local community” [p2]

The report begins by outlining what ‘community hubs’ are; it then looks at the two main models that are relevant when involving libraries:

- “Community hubs with a public sector focus – run by a local authority, housing association or other public sector organisation, bringing together different services under one roof [...]
- Community hubs run by community organisations [...]

¹⁸ Louisa Thomson and Arran Murray-Sanderson. *Libraries as community hubs: case studies and learning*. Arts Council England, 2017. Available to download as a pdf (4120 kb) from: <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Libraries-CommunityHubs-Renaisi.pdf>.

This is followed by a useful mapping of the co-location options for libraries.

The report then introduces the six case study libraries chosen for this research. These are:

- The For All Healthy Living Centre, Weston-Super-Mare
- The Curve, Slough, South East
- West End library and Blakelaw library, Newcastle
- South Woodford Library and Gym, London Borough of Redbridge
- Gosforth Library Link and Dalton-in-Furness Library, Cumbria
- Chelmsley Wood library, Solihull.

Drawing on these, the report summarises the findings and learning from the research. These include:

- Local authority contexts: “The challenges that the six local authority areas face – and the way they articulated these challenges – were very similar across all places” [p11]
- Library service reviews: “Unsurprisingly, each of the six local authority areas had undertaken substantial reviews of their library services, and for some, these were either ongoing or entering a different phase. The development of community hubs featured in all of these reviews – either explicitly, or as part of an approach that emphasised area based working.” [p11]

There were also some key themes:

- The difference in building arrangements: “There is no single way of approaching the organisation of a community hub [...]” [p12]
- Designated library space: “Concerns have been expressed that co-locating a library with other services can lead to a loss of designated library space, put pressure on quiet study space, and undermine what is distinctive about a library’s identity [...] However, the case studies all demonstrated that it was possible to still have a space for a library within a multipurpose building.” [p12]
- Developing co-location approaches (eg planning for co-location from the start; taking up an opportunity as it arises, etc)
- Services and activities being offered: “In practice, the case studies were multi-purpose, and their offer cut across areas such as employment support and advice, adult learning and skills, culture, digital access, and providing community space.” [p13]
- Reinvigorating library offers: “Interviewees in all the libraries were enthusiastic about the opportunities that co-location presented for the library offer within a community hub building.” [p13]
- Partnership working through co-location

- Attracting new users: “it is hard to draw firm conclusions about whether co-location leads to an increased number of library users. Most of the case studies reported in the interviews that there was no impact on book issues through co-location. However, the detailed case studies include some statistics where a comparison with the previous library site is available, and there were some positive trends in visit numbers. Interviewees in the case studies stressed that there were new users coming into the library as a result of being in a multipurpose building [...] It was generally felt that community hubs encouraged people to ‘do the rounds’ as building users rather than just visiting one service.” [p14]
- Changes to staff roles
- Responsiveness to local community: “All of the case study sites emphasised that they were shaped by, and respond to community need, with one centre describing itself as a ‘people’s hub’. Where there had been changes or alterations in library provision, more formal local consultation had taken place to gather views on proposals and ensure that residents were aware of the options being considered. There were also ongoing conversations with the local community in the case studies.” [p14]
- The impact on users: “It is not possible from this small selection of case studies to conclusively draw connections between the fact that a library is in a community hub and the likelihood of increased impact on people using the library and other services in the same building. However, the anecdotal evidence from the different people engaged as part of this research certainly suggests that there are many benefits for individuals. The aspects of libraries that are particularly valued – such as being open, inclusive, safe spaces, and providing much needed free IT for access to benefits, and job applications – were given a lot of prominence in the case study discussions, with co-location having a particular impact in the following ways:
 - Through a wider range of services and activities, attracting a cross section of the community, ranging from children and families coming in for particular activities in the children’s library, young people using studying space, and older people reading newspapers
 - Helping more vulnerable users to discreetly access other services, avoiding the need to for people to be sent elsewhere, and supporting self-help through the range of advice on offer
 - A variety of different professionals being on hand to support those using IT – from customer service advisers, to more specialist employment provision” [p15]

This section was then followed by one on challenges, which included:

- Working out how to co-locate
- Workforce adaptation
- Maximising benefits: “Despite the benefits of increased footfall and movement between different services in community hubs, some

interviewees felt that there was always more to be done to encourage promotion of each other's services." [p16]

- Outreach and new partners (and constraints in terms of time/resources)
- Volunteer roles

Finally, the report identified some learning from participants to pass on to others who may be considering co-location.

The report then presents its six case studies, with an outline of what's involved, main benefits, challenges, and future plans.

This is an interesting report which makes a very strong case for the benefits of well thought-through co-locations. Recommended.

Abbreviations and acronyms

ACE = Arts Council England

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