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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 ...?

Museums Journal

The latest issue¹ includes:

- Felicity Heywood “Diverse voices”, interviews with participants in the Museums Association’s Diversify scheme, looking at how it has helped their careers [pp32-33, 35]².

Reading Matters ...

The July issue³ includes a lot of valuable information, for example:

- “Summer reading for kids” – “RNIB National Library Service offers over 4000 books for young readers, including Roald Dahl and Paddington Bear for younger members, popular series like Tracy Beaker, Artemis Fowl and Harry Potter, as well as classics like The Hobbit and The Wind in the Willows.” [p1]
- “Spotlight on... newspapers and magazines”, which summarises the important role they play, and looks at what the National Talking Newspapers and Magazines and RNIB offer [pp6-8].

Library & Information Update

The August issue includes a number of interesting articles, including:

- Debbie Hicks, Lynn Hodgkins and Jaci Brumwell “Contributing to health and well-being: reading remedies”, which reports on the extent of public libraries’ work to support health and wellbeing [pp38-41]
- Silvia Anton “Contributing to health and well-being: the public library in partnership”, a report from MLA on the range of health activities taking place in English public libraries [pp42-43]
- Stephen Taylor “Contributing to health and well-being: mental health information”, a report on Suffolk Libraries’ role in delivering coordinated county-wide information on mental health [pp44-45]
- Helen Brazier “Campaigning for improved access”, a report on the latest developments from Share the Vision in improving access to informal learning and library services for blind and partially-sighted people [p49].

¹ *Museums Journal* August 2010. Further information available at: <http://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal>.

² This article is available to MA members at: <http://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal>.

³ *Reading Matters: RNIB National Library Service Newsletter*, 28, July 2010. Further information from Megan Gilks at RNIB, megan.gilks@rnib.org.uk.

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

CASE: the Culture and Sport Evidence programme

As you may have seen, the first reports from the CASE programme were published in July.

“CASE is a £1.8M, three-year joint programme of research lead by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in collaboration with:

- the Arts Council England
- English Heritage
- the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council
- Sport England

It builds on the success of Taking Part⁴ – the national survey of participation in culture and sport, by using the data in a variety of ways to inform policy across culture and sport.”⁵

There is a high-level summary report⁶ available, which is probably the best starting point. The following points are taken from the DCMS CASE website⁷:

Drivers of engagement

“A huge range of factors predict and influence decisions to take part in culture and sport. The analysis here presents key background factors that predict engagement. They include:

- watching TV for more than three hours a week is associated with reduced engagement
- being of black or minority ethnic background strongly predicts library use
- higher income is not strongly associated with more arts attendance
- having a sense of influence over local facilities strongly predicts sports engagement
- living among heritage predicts heritage engagement.”

Impact of engagement

“Strong consistent effects on learning measures were found for young people engaging in structured sports or arts activities. While there is promising evidence of learning benefits from school libraries, museums and heritage site visits, the evidence was too weak to draw strong

⁴ See: http://culture.gov.uk/what_we_do/research_and_statistics/4828.aspx.

⁵ Taken from: http://culture.gov.uk/what_we_do/research_and_statistics/5698.aspx.

⁶ *Understanding the drivers, impact and value of engagement in culture and sport: an over-arching summary of the research*. DCMS, 2010. Available to download as a pdf (575 kb) from: <http://culture.gov.uk/images/research/CASE-supersummaryFINAL-19-July2010.pdf>.

⁷ http://culture.gov.uk/what_we_do/research_and_statistics/7275.aspx.

conclusions. A key conclusion is that stronger research and evaluation designs are needed to generate more persuasive evidence of the learning impact of this kind of provision for young people.”

Value of engagement

“Culture produces a wide range of values to society – in this report two key ones are address[ed], tackling fundamental issues about how we value the core benefits of culture.

The first approach involves estimating the economic value of subjective well-being gains associated with engagement. In a ground-breaking analysis, the research establishes a statistically significant relationship between sports and arts engagement and increased subjective well-being. The analysis allows for comparisons with other domains, such as health and employment to understand the scale of these associated gains. Then the latest economic approaches for valuing these gains are applied and explored.

The second approach involves the valuing of health gains associated with sport by using agreed statistical analysis for estimating the health costs saved by doing sport. The approach is a model for applying this kind of analysis to other domains where culture and sport have impacts such as mental health and education.”

In addition, there is some ongoing work which is yet to report⁸, looking, for example, at evidence of what works:

“CASE commissioned Europe Economics to summarise a range of evaluation studies drawn from the CASE database that looked at projects aimed at raising engagement. The outputs from this will be a simple database of studies allowing policy makers to draw inspiration from interventions around the world and easily identify the best evidence of what works for whom in what circumstances.”⁹

MLA have also included a summary of the CASE programme key findings on their website¹⁰:

- “Robust, peer-reviewed evidence of what the drivers of engagement are. To increase engagement, the key challenge is to shift people from being ‘aware’ of an opportunity to engage in culture and sport, to being ‘interested’ – the most effective approaches are based on education and promotion, and giving people a sense of ownership.

⁸ For further information, see:

http://culture.gov.uk/what_we_do/research_and_statistics/7290.aspx.

⁹ Taken from:

http://culture.gov.uk/what_we_do/research_and_statistics/7290.aspx#evidence.

¹⁰ <http://www.mla.gov.uk/what/research/case>.

- Those who feel they have an influence over local cultural facilities are more likely to engage;
- Confirmation of the importance of age, childhood experience, education and socio-economic status for engagement;
- New insight into ethnicity: young people from BME and non-BME groups have a similar probability of engaging in culture, but this changes for older people, where those from a BME group are less likely to engage in culture.
- Evidence that improving the quality of school libraries improves academic attainment and attitudes to learning;
- Evidence that museum attendance is linked to perceived improved learning, and that learning support provided by museums improves student attitudes towards school;
- Evidence of sport and arts impact on numeracy and attainment.
- A reduction in affordability would have a disproportionately negative impact on participation in libraries and museums (i.e. more so than other sectors);
- Changes in the age of the population by 2012 will increase the numbers of people visiting museums and using libraries by about 3%.”

This is a very important set of research (particularly emphasised on the MLA website – above). However, its starting point is “Since the work is targeted at ensuring interventions in culture and sport deliver the best value for money ...” [p5]: value for money is clearly vital, especially at the moment, but may well lead to a focus on some kinds of work rather than others – for example, would vital work with very small numbers (which lead to very little, if any, increase in usage) be included in this? I’d argue that it should be ...

This is obviously work-in-progress, and these reports show early stages only. It will be important to see how this work develops, particularly, how far it embraces social justice issues – so far, there are passing references to social capital and social cohesion, but not much more – and how it is actually applied in practice by our sector.

Disability issues – Other Agencies

“Living Paintings”

Angela Crittenden at “Living Paintings” has contributed a short article with information about the scheme and the free library service it offers to blind and partially sighted people of all ages, which can also be accessed by librarians, teachers, carers etc and anyone supporting a person with a visual impairment – see appendix.

Abbreviations and acronyms

BME = Black and minority ethnic

MLA = Museums, Libraries and Archives Council

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Living Paintings is national charity that asks: Can someone be moved by a Van Gogh without seeing it? Can a child get to know the Very Hungry Caterpillar without catching sight of him? Can a person be inspired by great sculpture and architecture without looking at it? They believe the answer is 'Yes'.

Over the past twenty years they have developed a system that makes experiencing the visual world possible for blind and partially sighted adults and children. Liz Davies, Production Manager says "We make special versions of pictures with raised surfaces that come to life when fingers feel them. Sound recordings direct the fingers, telling the stories of the pictures and describing their features. Famous voices such as Joanna Lumley OBE, Sir Terry Wogan, and even HRH Prince Charles have loaned their voices to the inspiring commentaries."

For adults these raised images are placed in **Albums** and include paintings, sculpture, tapestry, architecture, interiors, furniture, birds, gardening, city tours, weather and animals. New Albums in production include The History of the Teddy Bear, British Wild Flowers and Britain's Nature which is kindly supported by Alan Titchmarsh.

"As I listened to your description of the paintings, I really did "live" in the painting and it was a wonderful experience - brightness in an ever-darkening world sightwise - so thank you for bringing such joy into my life."
Adult Library Member

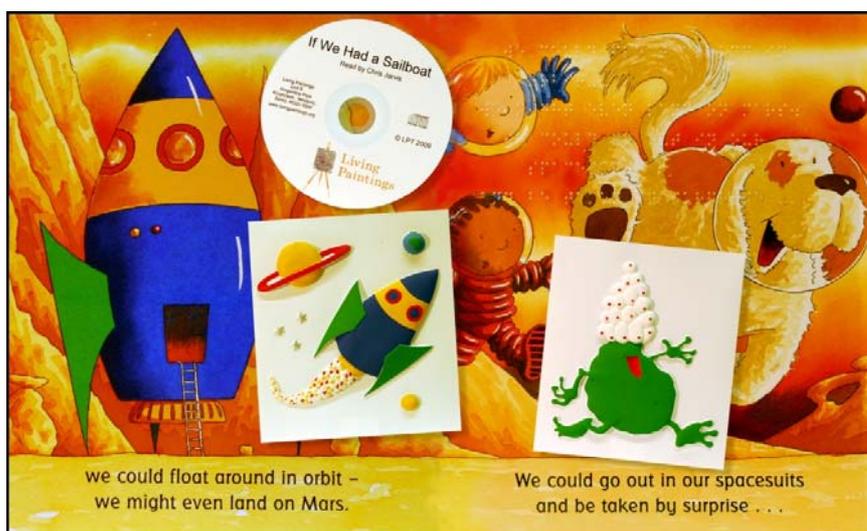


For children there are a range of **Topical Packs** and **Teacher Resource Packs** on topics such as The Egyptians, World War II, The Olympics and British Wildlife. **Living Picture Packs** contain adapted illustrations from books for older children such as; James and the Giant Peach, Charlottes Web, and Alice in Wonderland. **Art History Packs** introduce children to the world of Art through well known artists such as Van Gogh, Degas and Monet.



I was delighted to receive the Leonardo pack this morning - it really made my day! I must congratulate everyone involved for the extremely high level of production - it's beautifully done and I feel very privileged to be involved. -
Author, Laurence Anholt

Living Picture Books are adaptations of standard published titles such as The Gruffalo or The Very Hungry Caterpillar, with added raised images of the main characters and scenes, clear Braille sheets between each page make it possible to share the book with sighted friends and family, whilst the audio guide that not only directs the fingers over the raised images, but tells the child about the wonderful pictures on each of the pages. The scripts are often read by well known voices such as Su Pollard, Matt Lucas, Lauren Laverne and Gail Porter.



*“Emily took the pack home and read the story to her younger siblings who also felt the pictures. She enjoyed being the one to read the story as opposed to being the listener.”
(Teacher)*

“Matthew read it on his own & sometimes he read it to his sister of 3½ years old. They didn’t want to let the book leave the house; they wanted to keep it forever.” (Parent)

For people with little or no sight, libraries, museums and galleries can be challenging places to visit and gain a meaningful experience of the collections. Living Paintings can assist by loaning Albums, Books and Packs from their catalogue, free of charge so they are available for Touch Tours and workshops or individual visitors. They are also happy to provide leaflets about the free lending library for people to take away.

Camilla Oldland, Director says “People receive these special tactile books and packs from our **FREE**, postal library service. Our Library Catalogue is extensive and covers fun, exciting and informative topics designed for all ages”

If your Library, Gallery or Museum would like further information about this free service please call 01635 299771, email: info@livingpaintings.org or visit www.livingpaintings.org.

