



ISSN 1475-8202

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

Number 134, June 2012

(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

Did you see ...?

- *Runnymede Bulletin* – page 1
- *CILIP Update* – page 2
- *Prison Libraries Journal* – page 2

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

- *A new chapter: public library services in the 21st century* – page 2
- *Local solutions for future local library services* – page 6

Broader issues – Other Agencies

- *ImagineNation: the case for cultural learning* – page 8
-

Did you see ...?

Runnymede Bulletin

The latest issue¹ looks at sport, and includes some interesting articles, eg:

- Hitesh Patel “Racism in football” [pp6-7]

¹ *Runnymede Bulletin*, 369, Spring 2012. Available to download as a pdf (1690 kb) from: <http://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/bulletin/pdfs/369-BulletinSpring.pdf>.

- Hana Riazuddin “On the sporting margins”, a look at the lack of South Asian women in sport [p9]
- Salim Al-Hassani “A 1000 years amnesia: sports in Muslim Heritage” [p10].

CILIP Update

The June issue² has an interesting article celebrating 10 years of the Tower Hamlets Idea Stores, Kate Pitman “A roaring trade in ideas”, pp32-34.

Prison Libraries Journal

The latest issue³ has some very useful articles, including:

- Amanda Hazlewood “A quiet revolution at HMP Hewell”, about using ‘Talking Pens’ (now known as RecorderPENS) with foreign national prisoners who have basic levels of English [pp6-8].

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

A new chapter: public library services in the 21st century

This important new report⁴ from the Carnegie UK Trust:

“... sets out the findings of research carried out by the Carnegie UK Trust over the last six months, which provides clear evidence about the current use of public libraries and public attitudes to libraries in all five jurisdictions covered by the Trust (England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland) ...

The report describes the policy context and the changing social, economic and technological context within which the discussion about the future of libraries is taking place, both in general terms and in relation to each jurisdiction covered by the research. It presents the current challenges faced by the public library service, as well as the opportunities which exist. Within this context, the report draws some conclusions about the role of public libraries in the 21st century.” [p3]

it is partly based on research carried out by IPSOS Mori on behalf of the Trust.

² CILIP Update, June 2012. Further information about Update at:

<http://www.cilip.org.uk/publications/update-magazine/Pages/default.aspx>.

³ Prison Libraries Journal, 3, 2011. Further information about the CILIP Prison Libraries Group at: <http://www.cilip.org.uk/get-involved/special-interest-groups/prison/pages/about.aspx>.

⁴ Liz Macdonald. *A new chapter: public library services in the 21st century*. Carnegie UK Trust, 2012. Available to download as a pdf (3950 kb) from:

<http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/getattachment/b04629b2-aa09-4bd0-bc3a-9b9b04b7aba1/A-New-Chapter.aspx>.

The report begins by setting out, briefly, the changing context for public libraries (including the historic legacy):

“Much of the Trust’s work involved the creation and support of new institutions and structures during the 20th century, and the challenge of the 21st century may be to question the relevance of those assets and the way they are now used, and to advocate for a new and changed role for some of these institutions.” [p6]

The environment in which public libraries operate has clearly changed, including:

- “the knowledge economy and the UK, Ireland and devolved governments’ visions for the digital future
- the public service reform agenda with its emphasis on more effective cross-sectoral working
- the aspiration to put citizens and communities at the heart of public services
- the changing needs of citizens and communities
- the importance of strong communities supported by and building on community assets.” [p7]

It then goes on to outline Government policy across the five “jurisdictions” (and this in itself is a very useful brief summary of the policy position in each country). This also includes analyses of expenditure and of the differing approaches to standards and regulation (Northern Ireland and England have least regulation), and identifies some concerns:

“One of the general concerns about the use of standards is the range of stakeholders in library service provision, for example those whose primary interest is in education, social inclusion, regeneration, digital inclusion, or information and advice services ... Some people have also questioned the appropriateness of quantitative measures being used in a service which is predominantly providing ‘social value’ ...” [p13]

Chapter 4 looks at “Current challenges and opportunities” which are grouped under the following:

- The implications of cuts in public spending
- The public sector reform agenda
- The impact of new technology and digital services.

Chapter 5 looks at “Public views on and use of public libraries” and draws heavily on the IPSOS Mori research. This is an interesting overview, and, in some areas, contradicts – or cannot support – other research. For example:

“There have been those who have argued that the public library has primarily served the needs of the white middle classes, and that the service has been passive and not really attempted to assess and meet the needs of those who do not use the service [cites *Public libraries and social justice*] ... Our research suggests that in some jurisdictions, the service is more valued by those in higher socio-economic groups,

particularly in Northern Ireland and England. In Northern Ireland, those in semi or unskilled occupations were most likely to feel that libraries were not important to them personally. In Scotland, those in the most deprived communities were more likely than those in the least deprived communities to feel that libraries were important to them personally (40% compared with 28%).

In some jurisdictions, there appears to be less use by lower socio-economic groups (Ireland, Wales and Northern Ireland) while there is little difference between these groups in Scotland. In England this general pattern is counteracted by a slightly greater use by lowest social group.” [p27]

It also suggests that usage of libraries by younger people is far less negative than has been suggested by some research.

Chapter 6 begins to work “Towards a shared vision of the library service of the future”. This starts with a critical question, “What is the public library service for?” It suggests:

“Many people and organisations have attempted to define what the core aims of the library service should be. These can be described in very general terms, for example, promoting well-being, or supporting the information, educational, cultural and recreational needs of local communities ... , but it is probably more helpful to describe them more specifically.” [p41]

It summarises these as:

- “to provide support for reading and learning
- to provide information and advice about a wide range of services and issues
- to support lifelong learning
- to provide access to IT
- to promote information and digital literacy by supporting and facilitating access to IT
- to provide space for community activities.

In addition, some commentators have suggested additional more specific aims such as:

- to provide employment and self-employment by providing working spaces ...
- to provide cultural space for arts activities
- to provide access to local heritage materials
- to provide learning grids, learning cafes and information commons (though this is more relevant to academic libraries) ...” [p41]

The report then goes on to raise a number of other critical issues, eg:

- Should libraries continue to be a universal service?
- What is a “core” service?

- Core or entitlements?
- Funding and management arrangements
- Physical delivery of public library services
- The role of “librarians”
- Designing services around the needs of users (drawing on the outcomes of the Big Lottery Fund investment).

Chapter 7 draws together conclusions and outlines some next steps. One of the key issues this starts to highlight is around the future role for public libraries, eg:

“One of the most valued aspects of libraries is the neutral community space they provide, which people can use without having to buy anything or even speak to anyone if they don’t want to. However, they are currently one among many similar services which are valued as community assets, and which have the potential to be used more widely ...” [p55]

and this is followed by a SWOT analysis of the current position.

The ‘headlines’ from the specific conclusions are as follows:

1. There is a continuing and important link between the services provided by public libraries and individual wellbeing.
2. There is at least a potential link between libraries and community wellbeing.
3. The enduring link between public libraries and individual and community wellbeing means that the public library should continue to be a core public service, provided on a universal basis to all citizens.
4. This core needs to be redefined for the 21st century, but all citizens in the UK and Ireland are entitled to a core library service to be provided free of charge.
5. Encouraging reading through the provision of books and other information should remain a core part of the library service.
6. There is a need for national policy and leadership in the area of library provision in each jurisdiction.
7. Local authorities need to consider how to communicate more effectively and more creatively about the services they provide, particularly to those who do not currently use the service, but might benefit most from it.
8. Library buildings, and their place in their communities, must be considered separately from the public library service itself. [Taken from pp56-58]

Of key importance is the urgent need for more sharing of good practice across the five “jurisdictions”, and, in order to assist in this, the Trust has also published a discussion paper⁵ which summarises the key findings, recommendations and next steps from the full report; and a series of factsheets with data on attitudes

⁵ Liz Macdonald. *A new chapter: public library services in the 21st century – discussion paper*. Carnegie UK Trust, 2012. Available to download as a pdf (498 kb) from: <http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/getattachment/c00fe2ce-cde3-4ea4-9dfd-bc28cd183437/A-New-Chapter---Discussion-Paper.aspx>.

to and use of public library services in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and Ireland.

This report certainly does raise the key issues – and, pleasingly, also includes social justice issues. So far, it has not had a huge amount of media coverage – let’s hope that it is allowed to make its significant contribution to this vital current debate.

Local solutions for future local library services

Drawing on the learning from the Future Libraries Programme, this new document⁶:

“... sets out the context and issues around library services re-design and provision, followed by good practice case studies and a checklist of things you might want to consider when deciding how to best provide your local library services. These checklists are not exhaustive and are aimed to be a helpful resource to start your local planning process.” [p4]

It explores the decision-making process, and then looks at “the six most popular models of library service re-design:

- alternative funding models
- empowering communities to do it their way
- a digital age
- shared services
- delivering wider community outcomes and co-location of services
- building on existing provision.” [p4]

The brief section on the decision-making process includes “Listening to your community” and staff involvement (which takes Worcestershire’s “The Hive” – the joint public/academic library – as an example).

In “alternative funding models”, the document looks at, for example, the social enterprise model in Lewisham and Hounslow’s private partnership model (it takes an uncritical stance), and Warwickshire’s income generation from strategic commissioning.

In the section, “Empowering communities to do things their way”, the paper looks at community-run libraries, but, interestingly, has Merton’s partnership with the Volunteer Centre as its case study – it avoids some of the controversy over different community-led approaches; it stresses that:

“Librarians are trained in specific skills and work to a unique professional code of practice. They bring expertise in reading, knowledge and learning, acting as guides to the mass of data and online information that is increasingly used for decision making in daily life. Community libraries can complement and work with professional staff.” [p11]

⁶ *Local solutions for future local library services*. LGA, 2012.

In “A digital age”, the paper looks at, for example, the provision of e-books and WiFi, as well as “Sutton Bookshare [which] involves people listing the publications they own online so they can be borrowed by fellow readers.” [p

The “Shared services” section rounds up some examples of shared provision (eg LibrariesWest).

In “Delivering wider community outcomes and co-location of services”, the learning pulls together good practice, as follows (although it’s a pity it is related to “growing financial pressures” and not set out as good practice in its own right):

“With growing financial pressures, libraries could play an even stronger role in delivering the council’s wider community outcomes such as combating isolation, promoting health and wellbeing, integration, supporting employment, local democracy and improving residents’ life chances. One of the key lessons from the FLP pilots was the need to position modernising libraries within and alongside wider transformation programmes taking place in the council which with it brings opportunities such as new funding streams.” [p19]

Some of the case studies are almost entirely about making financial savings, although there are good examples of the work by Rutland to co-locate a library with a GP surgery (with strong partnership-building involved); Northamptonshire’s Enterprise Hubs (which support the authority’s plans for economic growth); and Brighton and Hove’s “Money Matters Online” website. In addition, this section stresses that “Library services can also deliver fun and social events which help build community cohesion as well as giving people the opportunity to enjoy themselves”, with the new Cardiff Central Library as the example.

Finally, in the section on “Building on existing provision”:

“A key finding of the FLP was that the places which have demonstrated the largest investment in re-designing public libraries, with new buildings and large scale renovations, appear to be those where the role of libraries has been very closely linked to the council’s business plan and an integrated approach to delivering the council’s key objectives such as employment, health and education.” [p27]

Examples include the refurbishment or rebuilding of Portsmouth’s Southsea Library and Customer Service Centre; Manchester’s new Avenue Library and Learning Centre.

The document also very briefly mentions some examples of work outside the UK, eg the US “One City, One Book” community reading scheme.

This is a useful quick summary of some of the key points from the Future Libraries Programme, although it seems weak on the very real impacts that libraries of all kinds can have – where, for example, is the range of social justice initiatives that UK public libraries have developed?

Broader issues – Other Agencies

ImagineNation: the case for cultural learning

In November, the Cultural Learning Alliance published its research into the impact that the cultural sector can have on learning.

These are published as *Key research findings*⁷ and a summary document, *ImagineNation*⁸, which includes:

“... key statistics, facts, quotes and evidence which you can use to make your own arguments to colleagues and policy makers across the learning and cultural worlds.”⁹

Key findings include:

- “Learning through arts and culture improves attainment in all subjects
- Participation in structured arts activities increases cognitive abilities
- Students from low-income families who take part in arts activities at school are three times more likely to get a degree
- The employability of students who study arts subjects is higher and they are more likely to stay in employment
- Students who engage in the arts at school are twice as likely to volunteer and are 20% more likely to vote as young adults.”¹⁰

These documents provide valuable ammunition for arguments about the value of culture.

Incidentally, *Imagination* includes a reference to the “Right to Read” report¹¹.

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

June 2012

⁷ *Key research findings: the case for cultural learning*. Cultural Learning Alliance, 2011. Available to download as a pdf (137.90 kb) from:

http://www.culturallearningalliance.org.uk/userfiles/files/Key_Research_Findings.pdf.

⁸ *ImagineNation: the case for cultural learning*. Cultural Learning Alliance, 2011.

Available to download as a pdf (348.47 kb) from:

http://www.culturallearningalliance.org.uk/userfiles/files/FINAL_ImagineNation_The_Case_for_Cultural_Learning.pdf.

⁹ Taken from: <http://www.culturallearningalliance.org.uk/page.aspx?p=100>.

¹⁰ Taken from: <http://www.culturallearningalliance.org.uk/news.aspx?id=67>.

¹¹ Viv Griffiths, Susan Blishen and John Vincent. *Paul Hamlyn Foundation Reading and Libraries Challenge Fund: Right to Read 2001-2005: summary of the current outcomes*. PHF, 2007. Available to download as a Word doc (79 kb) from:

http://www.seapn.org.uk/content_files/files/right_to_read_2001_2005_summary_of_outcomes_1.doc.