

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

Number 93, January 2009

(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.

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Did you see ...?

Arc Magazine

The latest issue¹ has a number of interesting articles, including:

- Elisabeth Bennett “Community archives and digital inclusion in Wales: encouraging community through digital archives and the internet” [pp6-7]
- Kiara King “Web 2.0 – Yes you can!”, which cites Kiara’s own blog² with examples of what other organisations have done [pp11-12].

Public Library Journal

The Winter 2008 issue³ includes a lot of interesting articles, including:

- Jane Mathieson and Rose Ryan “Romance reaps rewards”, looking at how a romantic fiction promotion has helped build strong, sustainable partnerships [pp2-5]
- Jean Reed “Exploring the story”, an outline of the work that Staffordshire Libraries have been doing to give prisoners opportunities for personal development [pp6-8, 11]
- Karen Thornton “Make yourself at home”, North Yorkshire Libraries’ work with Polish communities [pp9-11]
- Liz Brewster “The accidental bibliotherapist”, using books to improve mental wellbeing [pp12-15]
- John Vincent and Margaret Sloan “Are we stretching ourselves?”, good practice in library provision for older people [pp29-30].

Adults Learning

The latest issue⁴ has a number of interesting articles, including:

- Chris Taylor “A right to a voice”, about the need for asylum-seekers to have access to English language training [p8]
- Ed Melia “Without English I would be lost”, a short case study about how English language-learning provided a lifeline for Kaiwan, an Iraqi refugee [p9]
- Mary Coussey “Tough, but where’s the love?”, which looks at succeeding governments’ attitudes towards asylum-seekers, and argues that, in failing to offer immediate access to English language

¹ *Arc Magazine*, the Society of Archivists monthly journal. For further information, see: <http://www.archives.org.uk/publications/arcthesocietysmonthlynewsletter.html>.

² See: <http://webwatchingforarchivists.blogspot.com>.

³ *Public Library Journal* 23 (4) Winter 2008. Further information at: <http://www.cilip.org.uk/specialinterestgroups/bysubject/public/journal>.

⁴ *Adults Learning*, 20 (4) December 2008. Further details from: <http://www.niace.org.uk/Publications/Periodicals/AdultsLearning/default.htm>.

learning, “we run the risk of missing out on significant economic and social cohesion benefits” [pp10-11]

- Bec Fearon “Our great journey”, about the work that Liverpool’s Bluecoat does with people with learning disabilities [pp18-19]
 - Kate Watters “Out of reach”, which looks at how much more needs to be done to ensure that those Adult & Community Learning students with the greatest needs get a better deal [pp28-29].
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Tackling social exclusion – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

Every child an equal child ...

This major Statement⁵ from the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland aims “to ensure that raising the performance and expectations of all children, especially those who are disadvantaged, are core elements of our education system.” [p2]

The Statement sets out its overall aims for a good education system, and then focuses on the key inequalities in education, especially for those groups which have been identified as priorities:

- Protestant boys in lower socio-economic groups
- Children and young people from the Irish Traveller community
- Gay, lesbian and bisexual young people
- Looked after children
- Black and minority ethnic children for whom English is an additional language,
- Disabled children and young people
- Young people with caring responsibilities for other people, eg elderly or disabled parents. [taken from p30]

The document then goes on to look at proposals for embedding equality and good relations in education, which are summarised as:

- a) “reviewing curriculum support materials and developing good practice guidance,
- b) setting strategic actions and outcomes to reduce inequalities through equality schemes,
- c) developing equality and good relations elements to the training programmes provided for student teachers, existing teachers, heads and governors,

⁵ *Every child an equal child: an Equality Commission Statement on key inequalities in education and a strategy for intervention.* Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, 2008 (ISBN-13: 978-1-906414-14-6). Available to download as a pdf from: <http://www.equalityni.org/archive/pdf/ECkeyinequalities.pdf>.

- d) developing equality and good relations indicators for schools to be used to monitor progress on embedding equality and good relations.” [p27]

This is a key document (and one which includes some valuable background information about young people in Northern Ireland).

Tackling social exclusion – Other Agencies

Silver Surfers' Day 2009

Silver Surfers' Day is on Friday, May 15 2009 – how can you get involved?

Silver Surfers' Day is all about having a relaxed time, in good company, with somebody (who can be, but need not be, very experienced with computers) to guide others (over-50s) through their beginner-steps on Internet/email. Taster Events can be held absolutely anywhere where there's an internet-connected computer - even in someone's own sitting room! Over the years, events have been held in pubs, supermarkets, rugby clubs, bingo halls, internet cafes, libraries, museums, village halls - anywhere you can think of, provided someone is willing to host.

Digital Unite manages and runs Silver Surfers' Day annually, UK-wide, and it's always on the Friday of Adult Learners' Week. Whether you'd like to go to an Event or hold an Event, you can get involved right now.

For would-be Event Holders, just go to www.digitalunite.net and put your email address into the slot for receiving e-zines – that way you'll get timely information. You'll be told about resources to help you plan your event, do publicity, find premises, find helpers and download and use the 60 or so learning guides that help you to become 'IT Tutor for a Day' as these are newly 'minted' for 2009. (All this is completely free of charge!)

For someone who wants to attend an Event, you can snip out this piece and take it to your local: School (Primary or Secondary - teachers are increasingly receptive to the idea of helping older people in their communities to get online); Age Concern; library; museum; internet café; supermarket, bingo hall, etc. For more information by phone, call 0870 241 5091.

Digital Unite/Silver Surfers' Day
January 2009

Young adult carers in the UK

This is a major new report⁶.

⁶ Fiona Becker and Saul Becker. *Young adult carers in the UK: experiences, needs and services for carers aged 16-24*. The Princess Royal Trust for Carers, 2008

It “investigates the experiences, needs and service responses to the 290,000 young adult carers aged 16-24 in the UK today.” [p1]

“The data presented in this report provides new insights into the diverse experiences and needs of what is a ‘hidden’ and neglected group of carers. The report provides data on the number of young adult carers; the changing nature of their caring tasks and responsibilities; their experiences of education at school, college and university; their friendships, relationships, leisure and lifestyles; income, jobs, careers and aspirations; issues to do with leaving home and independence; the role of young carers projects; emerging service responses; and how their needs can best be met. The report also includes a series of recommendations for service development for those working with carers aged 16-17, carers aged 18-24 and adult carers.” [p1]

As well as having specific needs, young carers aged 16-24 (and the researchers) have identified the following, all of which are areas in which MLAs could offer support:

- “Advice, information and guidance about issues such as housing, education (including grants, loans, funding for education/training), training opportunities, debt, social security benefits, and the health of the person they care for;
- Job-seeker skills training, CV preparation and identifying suitable jobs;
- Signposting to other agencies who can assist them and their families ...” [p69]

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

The Jodi Awards 2008

Marcus Weisen, Manager of the Jodi Awards, has written a piece about this year’s award-giving and the preceding seminar – see page 10.

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

The reader-friendly library service

This important new book⁷ from Opening the Book has just been published.

(ISBN-13: 978-0-85358-251-9). Available to download as a pdf (1210 kb) from: <http://static.carers.org/files/yac20report-final-241008-3787.pdf>.

⁷ Rachel Van Riel, Olive Fowler and Anne Downes. *The reader-friendly library service*. The Society of Chief Librarians, 2008 £25.00 (ISBN-13: 978-0-9559028-0-2).

Opening the Book [OTB] is a key library design and development agency, with a particular focus on reader development. Via “Branching Out”, a private-public sector partnership between Opening the Book Ltd and the Society of Chief Librarians (and funded by Arts Council England and contributions from OTB), a major reader development initiative took place in England (and as Estyn Allan in Wales) from 1998-2006.

Based on the learning from “Branching Out”, the book runs through the critical stages in developing a reader development programme, including:

- Starting with the reader, eg basic reader psychology, audience development, the status of reading
- Finding out what readers want
- Reader-friendly environments
- Reader-centred stock management
- Reader-centred promotions
- Staff training
- Reading groups
- Readers online
- Evaluating reader-centred work
- Reader-centred strategy.

It is packed with valuable and important information and tips (although I’d describe it as more of a “how we did it” rather than a “how to do it”).

The chapters on evaluation and developing a strategy are particularly important. The evaluation chapter looks at some of the common pitfalls in evaluation (eg encouraging responses about the venue and food, rather than the course content!), and gives some strong guidelines about evaluating against goals. It could have been more encouraging about the use of the Generic Social Outcomes (and it wasn’t clear why it did not suggest using “Inspiring Learning for All”).

I can see why the strategy chapter is last, but, in fact, it is probably the most important – and certainly needs to be read before embarking on any of this work. It is very clear and practical, and the outline of how to use the arts marketing model (of attenders/intenders/indifferent/hostile) is fascinating – if worrying! Whilst the book is strong on developing a needs-based approach (as opposed to always being demand-led), it is not particularly strong on social exclusion, and, looking at the ‘problems’ in reaching and working with “indifferent” and “hostile” people, it is clear that library staff might decide not to pursue these groups – which would be a great shame. I think this area is its one weakness – more attention needs to be paid to reaching irregular/non-users.

For further information, see: <http://branching-out.net/publications/reader-friendly-library-service/default.aspx>. Copies have been sent to every public library service in England – thanks to Colin Bray (Devon Libraries) for lending me one of theirs!

Overall, however, highly recommended.

Broader issues – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

The Council on Social Action

“The Council on Social Action brings together innovators from every sector to generate ideas and initiatives through which Government and other key stakeholders can catalyse, celebrate and develop social action.

We consider ‘social action’ to include the wide range of ways in which individuals, communities, organisations and businesses can seek through their choices, actions and commitments to address the social issues they care about.

The Council on Social Action makes recommendations to government and to others in its capacity as an advisory body, independent of government.”⁸

Since its first meeting a year ago, the Council’s work has included⁹:

- One-to-one – see below.
- Social technology – the use of technology to support and stimulate social action. They launched the Catalyst Awards, which celebrate simple and effective web-based solutions for social issues¹⁰.
- Social leadership – the role of collaborative, value-driven leadership in driving social change. “Chain Reaction” (held in November 2008) was a two-day event bringing together 500 social leaders from government, business and local communities¹¹
- New models for financing social action
- Collaborative Commitments – a new way of developing powerful collaborations between private, public and voluntary sectors¹².

The Council's work on one-to-one has just been summarised in the report, *Side by side*¹³.

⁸ Taken from: http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_action.aspx.

⁹ Also taken from: http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_action.aspx.

¹⁰ See: <http://www.ukcatalystawards.com/>.

¹¹ See: <http://www.chain-reaction.org/>.

¹² See: David Grayson. ‘Collaborative commitments’: a think-piece. Community Links (CoSA Paper 3), 2008 (ISBN-13: 978-0-9561012-4-2). Available to download as a pdf (226 kb) from:

http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/63704/collaborative_commitments.pdf.

¹³ *Side by side: a report setting out the Council on Social Action’s work on one-to-one*. Community Links (CoSA Paper 2), 2008 (ISBN-13: 978-0-9561012-2-8).

“The Council on Social Action began this project with a simple objective: To increase numbers involved in successful, high quality, voluntary one-to-one activity.

One-to-one includes mentoring and befriending and all kinds of transformative relationships where knowledge and experience are shared with another person who is not a family member or close friend. Such relationships can unlock potential in us all, tackle need, build social capital and erode inequality.” [p5]

CoSA identified three constraints:

- Money – one-to-one is good value but not cost free.
- Understanding – potential partners often don’t understand mentoring and befriending or appreciate its value
- Volunteers – not a problem everywhere but often a limitation.

Having identified these barriers, CoSA then worked around six steps which take a positive approach to those barriers:

- Start young
- Exploit technology
- Develop momentum and build mass
- Incentivise and sustain engagement
- Invest in growth
- Learn and share.

This report takes each of these steps, gives advice and summarises actions underway. At the same time, CoSA also published a document¹⁴ setting out implications of *Side by side* for public services.

“Our work so far on one-to-one has observed how the process of one person supporting another is immensely powerful. The features that make these relationships so transformative are:

- The human interaction; someone to talk to, someone to listen to;
- The sense of feeling special and valued when people give their time to one another;
- The opportunity to establish a relationship over the long term; where the relationship is a good one, being able to keep seeing the same person week after week, enjoying the continuity this offers and the opportunity to build trust and confidence.

Available to download as a pdf (734.10 kb) from:

http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/63713/web_side_by_side.pdf.

¹⁴ *Side by side and implications for public services*. Community Links (CoSA Paper 3), 2008 (ISBN-13: 978-09561012-3-5). Available to download as a pdf (227 kb) from: http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/63707/cosa_side_by_side.pdf.

- The opportunity to consider with someone what resources you have and how best to use them; resources may be very widely defined and include experience (taught and shared), the power to make decisions, energy, compassion, talent, ambition, aspiration and in some cases money;
- The way that each person gets something of value from the relationship that helps them to move on in substantive terms; a new feeling of self-worth, new experience, new skills, new networks;
- The opportunities that this approach generates to push and to challenge people to change or progress.” [p4]

They also identified that, across many different types of one-to-one work, there are some common features in the way that the relationship is organised that contribute to making this work effective. These include:

- The role of early intervention and prevention
- The role of goal setting and a time frame
- Keeping records of achievement and performance can also reinforce success
- The role of administration – although record-keeping is important, successful one-to-one work appears to keep administration to a minimum.
- The potential role of technology
- The small scale, diversity and individuality of these projects – this is a great strength, but also a weakness. It means wheels are reinvented and the low profile means public sector commissioners and independent funders can overlook the value of working one-to-one. [taken from p5]

These approaches therefore have implications for the way that public services are designed and delivered; and the report suggests that “focusing on the quality of relationships between deliverer and user [could] become the new organising logic for public services ...” [p9]

In addition, these approaches also have implications for staff training and the ways in which we work with volunteers. These are key documents, and are well worth reading for ideas about personalising public services.

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:

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January 2009

Appendix

Inspirational Jodi Awards 2008 for accessible cultural websites and digital media

The Jodi Awards exist to promote the cultural equality of disabled people through technology used in the service of access. Given on 5 December 2008 at the British Museum, they once again celebrated highly innovative and inspiring work.

Whilst in 2007, Award Winner Doncaster Library and Information Services left a deep and lasting impression with their Audio-Read Navigator Project, this year's inspiration all came from the museums sector. The Winners are:

Outside In Pathways, London. People with learning difficulties used digital cameras to film and edit their thoughts and reactions to visits to the Victoria and Albert Museum. The participants formed a highly culturally diverse group, and this was reflected in the choice of objects explored during the workshops. "This was a successful example of a project that really used digital media as a vital catalyst, which can inspire other museums, libraries and archives to think about technology not just as a platform for dissemination, but as the context for another kind of interaction and event," said Ross Parry, Chair of the Jodi judging panel. The project gave participants greater confidence in going out on their own. This Award was given jointly with the Rix Centre, the leading centre for multi-media and people with learning difficulties.

The National Trust's 'Virtual Tour' impressed by its sheer scale and ambition. Twelve virtual tours for all visitors have been installed and tested in National Trust venues. Significant emphasis has been given to consulting disabled people. The high quality visual displays with audio information are accessible to wheelchair users and have been designed for maximum ease of use by several groups of disabled people. Two of the tours have been fitted with British Sign Language – in regional dialect. The standardised layout of the interactive Virtual Tours provides a consistent and reliable experience for disabled people anywhere. The project has outstanding potential for national rollout, is very cost-effective and could be an inspiration for improvements of scale elsewhere.

The British Museum's BSL Schools Web Project. Young deaf people produced signed curriculum resources for young deaf people, working with Frank Barnes School and media company Remark run by deaf people. The judges were impressed by the way this site centred attention on participating children and how confidently they sit at the heart of this resource. The BM have also in the project produced classroom resources that can now be used by pupils. Deaf pupils remain starved of curriculum resources in BSL and this is one of the first examples of a museum contributing to building them. This

outstanding project brings together an effective and creative mix of users, artists and designers with expertise in the area of BSL.

In his **key-note talk**, Kevin Carey, Vice Chair of the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB), called for renewed effort to make UK digital culture accessible for all. He outlined a new reality for culture creators, publishers and producers and called for the setting up of a national Centre for Excellence for Accessible Media funded by the public, commercial and third sectors.

Earlier in the day, some eighty delegates attended the **'Designing for disability' seminar**, jointly organised by the Jodi Mattes Trust and the Museums Association.

The seminar gave voice to marginalised communities, scheduling talks about museums working with deaf audiences and with people with learning difficulties. Although British Sign Language (BSL) is recognised by Parliament as an indigenous language, it is barely present on cultural websites, digital media and in libraries and archives.

Mark Nelson, Director of Remark, held his audience captive. 'I was born deaf, my parents are deaf, it's always been part of me and I want to see BSL in every museum'. He was full of praise for Greenwich Observatory which has BSL screens in every room. He even found interactive games with BSL there. To the surprise of many in the audience, most born-deaf people do not read and require BSL.

Andy Minnion, Director, The Rix Centre, showed how new media can open whole new ways of communication for people with learning disabilities. In his description of the 'Hadrian Project' jointly developed with the British Museum, he mentioned how a large crowd of tourists enthusiastically followed a tour for people with learning disabilities, obviously not feeling that they had received 'a lower quality of service'.

Winners of 2007 Jodi Awards gave in-depth presentations of their winning projects. Linda Ellis, Wolverhampton Arts and Museum Service, explained how employing a deaf person part-time to promote their BSL services has increased the audience. Andrew Payne from the National Archives marvelled at the creativity and skills of the young visually impaired co-creators of the 'Prisoner 4099' web site. He encouraged every cultural organisation not to take any knowledge of web accessibility for granted from web designers and to involve users in formative evaluation. .

In his important conceptual talk, Brian Kelly from UKOLN called for a holistic approach to web accessibility. All too often, and this can be true of local authorities, there is a mechanical box-ticking approach to meeting Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG1). He emphasised how important it is to involve users in the development of websites, that WCAG have not themselves been tested, and that the cultural and educational sectors needs to focus much more on making information and learning content accessible.

Exhibition designer and access consultant Cassie Herschel-Shorland widened the discussion on accessible and inclusive design out to exhibitions and museum spaces within which digital media are located and used – beginning to piece together a vision of a holistic approach to accessibility in which every aspect of design connives to produce a seamless accessible experience.

In his **key-note talk**, Marcus Weisen, Manager of the Jodi Awards, looked at how access to museums for disabled people has developed over twenty years and warned of a very real danger of stagnation. He cited existing national legislation and international policies which call for a concerted national approach to the cultural equality of deaf and disabled people. He showed that this is not yet in place.

The Jodi Mattes Trust is eagerly looking for more nominations from libraries and archives in 2009 and will be refreshing the Award categories. The Jodi Awards are not about glitzy projects. They are first and foremost for projects which demonstrably widen access for deaf and disabled people and involve users. What matters is not their scale or the amount invested, but the quality of engagement with users.

If you have ideas about re-framing the Award categories so nominating a project would be more attractive for you, do please contact: marcus.weisen@gmail.com (0033-4-26 53 30 60). The 2009 Call for Nominations will be made in June.

The Jodi Awards web-pages have more information on previous Winners, resources and this year's key-note talks: www.jodiawards.org.uk

The Jodi Awards are supported by MLA, CYMAL, Museums Galleries Scotland, Scottish Archive Network, the Scottish Libraries and Information Council; Culture24, the British Museum, the Museums Computer Group and the University of Leicester. RNIB sponsored this year's Awards event.

Marcus Weisen
Manager of the Jodi Awards
January 2009