

Annual Report: April 2024-March 2025

Introduction

Welcome to our annual review for 2024-2025; this report covers the period from April 2024 to March 2025. Copies of the accounts are available on request.

Firstly, thank you for your continued support of The Network. Please see Appendix B for a reminder about ways of making the most of your subscription.

Our work

Key successes included:

- Producing newsletters for Dec 2023-Oct 2024¹
- Producing 19 Ebulletins for the period April 2024-March 2025
- Regularly adding events, resources and new features to the website²
- Participating in some 65 meetings, courses, workshops and conferences.

Further information about these – and other – areas of work are in the report that follows.

Working towards social justice and developing approaches to community engagement are still very much live issues – it is increasingly clear that libraries, museums, archives and cultural & heritage organisations have a key role to play in this (despite the economic position), and The Network is contributing to the spread of good practice and the raising of our sector profile.

Finally, my thanks to all those who shared good practice, made enquiries, and generally contributed to The Network – please continue doing so!

My particular thanks go to Juliet Pirez and Susanna Barnes for being the counter-signatories for The Network's bank account.

John Vincent
July 2025

¹ There had been a slight delay whilst I was writing the Sanctuary book, so the Newsletters are being published still, but a bit late.

² See: <https://seapn.org.uk/>.

Membership, contacts and enquiries

Organisational members at March 2025

There are 85 organisational members.

Here are the new joiners and leavers:

Joiners

None.

Leavers

None.

Individual members

At March 2025, The Network had 8 individual members.

Partners

The Network is continuing to work in partnership with a number of key organisations and individuals, including CILIP; City of Sanctuary; Libraries Connected; and Share The Vision.

Membership of JISCMAIL lists

The following lists are open to anybody:

| List | 2024-25 | 2023-24 |
|---|---------|---------|
| Care-experienced children & YP [formerly LAC] | 170 | 179 |
| Learning Disability | 188 | 185 |
| LGBTQ [people working with LGBTs] | 323 | 323 |
| Libraries and Museums of Sanctuary | 208 | 202 |
| Network Ebulletin | 517 | 534 |
| Older people [people working with older people] | 160 | 162 |
| Travellers [people working with Travellers] | 150 | 153 |

The following are primarily for Network members only:

| List | 2024-25 | 2023-24 |
|--|---------|---------|
| Network Newsletter | 257 | 274 |
| The Network [for circulation of general information and enquiries] | 180 | 190 |

The following is primarily for Network and Prison Libraries Group members:

| List | 2024-25 | 2023-24 |
|---------|---------|---------|
| Prisons | 161 | 153 |

In addition, The Network manages the Reading Sight list (formerly Six Steps):

| List | 2024-25 | 2023-24 |
|---------------|---------|---------|
| Reading Sight | 313 | 314 |

Enquiries

These include enquiries made on the email lists The Network coordinates (eg Prisons):

April 2024-March 2025

51³

The Network website statistics

Here are our 'headline' web statistics:

- Some 4000 people visited the website in 2024-2025
- The top three countries where people visited from were the UK, US and Germany.

Making a difference

As noted above, The Network makes a difference, including:

- Drawing together, highlighting and disseminating innovation and good practice
- Being active in the sector on behalf of members: adding to and widening the debate about libraries, museums, archives, cultural heritage organisations and social justice issues
- Working with Network members and across the sector to help develop strategy
- Campaigning and lobbying on behalf of the sector
- Giving advice and information, and sharing good practice from other Network members
- Giving support to colleagues.

³ The range of enquiries was wide, including ideas for sources of archive LGBTQ+ film footage from 1970s & 1980s; safety for Home Visit Library Service volunteers; sources of supply of books in languages other than English; MA student survey on neurodivergence in the Heritage workforce; help with getting the final report from ALAG published.

The work of The Network, 2024-2025 – Report by the Networker

I worked some 728.50 hours for The Network between April 2024 and March 2025. This is an outline of what that involved:

| Activities | Hours 2024-25 | % 2024- 25 | Hours 2023-24 | % 2023- 24 |
|--|------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------|
| <i>Externally-funded work</i> | | | | |
| Preparation, delivery and follow-up to training courses | 51.25 | 7.0% | 65.75 | 7.9% |
| Birmingham LoS application | - | - | 6.00 | 0.7% |
| Birmingham courses | 5.75 | 0.8% | 0.50 | 0.1% |
| Peninsula of Sanctuary Libraries project | 0.75 | 0.1% | 20.25 | 2.4% |
| Peninsula of Sanctuary Libraries project – drafting bid to ACE | 29.50 | 4.0% | 12.50 | 1.5% |
| | | | | |
| <i>Externally-funded work</i> | 87.25 | 11.9% | 105.00 | 12.6% |
| | | | | |
| Managing The Network: admin (membership; producing Annual Report, etc) | 14.25 | 2.0% | 14.75 | 1.8% |
| Managing The Network: managing JISCMAIL Lists | 3.75 | 0.5% | 0.50 | 0.1% |
| Managing The Network: accounts | 49.75 | 6.8% | 52.75 | 6.4% |
| Managing The Network: maintaining our website | 8.50 | 1.2% | 12.75 | 1.5% |
| Emails | 188.00 | 25.8% | 243.75 | 29.4% |
| Work on Newsletters & Ebulletins | 183.75 | 25.2% | 205.75 | 24.8% |
| Other writing | 1.00 | 0.1% | - | - |
| Other activities (eg attending meetings) | 28.75 | 3.9% | 25.00 | 3.0% |
| Jodi Mattes Trust Board meetings etc | - | - | 6.25 | 0.8% |
| STV Board meetings & other matters | 13.00 | 1.8% | 13.50 | 1.6% |
| Enquiries | 5.75 | 0.8% | 9.50 | 1.1% |
| Responding to reports etc | 5.75 | 0.8% | 4.00 | 0.5% |
| Work on 'New Arrivals' & Libraries of Sanctuary | 16.50 | 2.3% | 59.25 | 7.1% |
| Work with CILIP (eg on new strategy; CDEG Committee) | 47.75 | 6.6% | 33.25 | 4.0% |
| CILIP Benevolent Fund | 61.50 | 8.4% | 37.25 | 4.5% |
| Attending online talks, courses, conferences | 2.25 | 0.3% | 4.50 | 0.5% |
| Giving online presentations (unpaid) | 11.00 | 1.5% | 2.25 | 0.3% |
| | | | | |
| <i>Paid for from subscriptions, income from courses, etc</i> | 641.25 | 88.0% | 725.00 | 87.4% |
| | | | | |
| TOTAL | 728.5 | c100% | 830.00 | 100% |

Initiatives and Developments⁴

- During 2023, Electric Putty – who had created and maintained our website – closed their company. They recommended Digital Murph⁵, and he successfully created our new website for us and has been very supportive as I have learned how to use/update it.

⁴ John Vincent was commissioned by Facet Publishing to edit and write for a new series on libraries and social justice. The first title, *Libraries and Sanctuary: supporting refugees and other new arrivals* was published in Nov 2022. The second title, *Care-experienced young people and libraries* has been completed, and is currently in a queue at Facet! This is just for info, as the hours worked on writing the book are not included in the hours worked (above).

⁵ See: <https://digitalmurph.co.uk/>.

Attendance at conferences, seminars, formal and other meetings, visits, etc

- Meeting with Tabitha Witherick and Lucy Brown (ASCEL) re: working together [in person], Exeter (Mar 2025)
- Online meeting with Jayne Finlay (Sheffield University) and Victoria Barnett (CILIP Prison Libraries Group) re: web resources (Mar 2025)
- Online meeting with JISC to discuss Network JISCMAIL problems (Jan 2025)
- GiveOut webinar on fundraising (Dec 2024)
- SWRLS AGM [in person], Bristol (Nov 2024)
- LGBTQ+ History Month 2025 – online launch event (Nov 2024)
- CILIP LGBTQ+ Network webinar (Nov 2024)
- CILIP AGM [online] (Oct 2024)
- Attended Anarchist Bookfair with Daniel Li and Hatty Liu (Sinoist Books⁶) [in person], Rich Mix, Bethnal Green (Oct 2024)
- Attended SWRLS Members' Day & co-led a roundtable discussion [in person], Plymouth (Jul 2024)
- "Olly Pike's Pride Webinar" (Pop'n'Oilly⁷ webinar) (May 2024)
- UNHCR webinar, "Beyond the Headlines: Yemen's Hidden Crisis" (May 2024)
- Free Movement webinar "Immigration options for Ukrainian nationals and their family members" (Apr 2024)

CILIP Benevolent Fund

John Vincent became Chair in Jan 2022.

- Online meeting with Better With Money (Jan 2025)
- Online Board meetings with other Trustees (Jun 2024, Feb 2025)
- Online meetings for admin etc (Jun x2, Jul, Aug, Sep 2024, Feb 2025 (x3))
- Online meeting with Neil Mackay (Museums Association) to compare Benevolent Funds (Sep 2024)

CILIP Community, Equality & Diversity Group

- Attended CDEG webinar, "Archives – Fighting Erasure", led by Ghada Dimashk (Feb 2025)⁸
- Attended CDEG webinar as part of CILIP's Members Fest (Oct 2024)
- Attended Committee meetings online (Apr, May, Jun, Aug, Sep, Nov, Dec 2024, Jan 2025)

Share The Vision Board

John Vincent is a Board Member.

- Attended meetings online (May, Sep, Dec 2024, Feb 2025)

⁶ See: <https://sinoistbooks.com/>.

⁷ See: <https://www.popnolly.com/>.

⁸ This also involved my dealing with bookings and notifying people when the webinar was confirmed, etc.

- Attended/contributed to webinars (May, Sep 2024, Feb 2025)

Libraries of Sanctuary [LoS]/City of Sanctuary [CoS]

- Attended LoS London Network meeting and gave brief talk on LoS (Jun 2024)

Also commented on 4 LoS applications (May, June 2024, Jan 2025)

Peninsula of Sanctuary – work on bid to ACE for follow-up

- Meetings with ACE and SWRLS (Apr, May (x2), Jul, Oct, Dec (x2) 2024, Jan, Mar 2025)
- Meeting with Libraries Unlimited contacts (Jun 2024)

Support for students, researchers, etc

- Online meeting (and follow-up) with Loli Kim re: her project looking at East Asian representation in children's books (Aug 2024)
- Online meeting (and follow-up) with Chris Nugent re: his dissertation, "Optimising public library services to meet the intersectional needs of LGBTQIA+ Asylum Seekers" (Aug 2024)
- Sending out surveys, emails etc for students, eg request for information on digital literacy in prisons (Jul 2024)
- Online meeting (and follow-up) with Alina Congreve re: her project, "New Jerusalems"⁹ (Jun 2024)

Formal responses made by the Network

- Completed Archives & Records Association consultation on Strategy 2025-2030 (Dec 2024)
- Commented on draft Terms of Reference etc for CILIP's Intellectual Freedom Committee (Oct 2024)

Other responses, etc

- Commented on book proposals for Facet Publishing (May, July, Nov 2024; Feb, Mar 2025)

Publications – The Network's own

- *The Network Newsletter*, issues 273-284
- *The Network Ebulletin*, numbers 396-415.

Publications – articles, blogs, books, reports etc

- Asked to write the Foreword for *The other side of hope*¹⁰ (Aug 2024)

⁹ See: <https://www.newjerusalems.info/>.

¹⁰ See: <https://othersideofhope.com/foreword-by-john-vincent.html>.

- John Vincent regularly updates the PoS Basecamp site to share info and details of events across Devon and Cornwall libraries.

Courses and other events (April 2020-March 2021)

1. Our own open courses

- None.

2. Other organisations' open courses/Lectures

- National Literacy Trust Conference, London (Sep 2024)
- National Literacy Trust Conference, Leeds (Sep 2024)
- Online course, "Working with new arrivals and becoming a Library of Sanctuary – update" [short course for "Improving Me"] (Sep 2024)

3. In-house courses and talks

- Online course, "Working with new arrivals and becoming a Library of Sanctuary", for Barnet Libraries (Oct 2024)
- Online course, "How can we develop our provision for people who identify as LGBTQ+? What do we need to know?" for SWRLS (Oct 2024)
- Online course, "Working with new arrivals and becoming a Library of Sanctuary", for Islington Libraries (May 2024)
- Seminar, "Public and School Libraries", for University of Sheffield (Apr 2024)

Appendix A: Meetings with key contacts

These included:

Duncan Anthony (CILIP), Karen Archer (UWE), Kelly Saini Badwal (Sutton), Pete Baker (Facet Publishing), Victoria Barnett (CILIP Prison Libraries Group), Dawn Beaumont (Birmingham), Ashley Beckett (City of Sanctuary), Karen Berry (CDEG), Briony Birdi (Sheffield University), Lucy Starbuck Braidley (National Literacy Trust), Luke Burton (ACE), Louis Coiffait-Gunn (CILIP), Tom Epps (Birmingham), Jayne Finlay (Sheffield University), Andrew James (Facet Publishing), Oliver Jenkins (CDEG), Krisztina Lackoi (British Library), Lara Marshall (RNIB), Mark McCree (Share the Vision), Anish Noble-Harrison (Swindon), Corin Peacock (Arts University Bournemouth), Shelley Trower (SWRLS), Keri Yearwood (Birmingham)

In addition, as noted above, John Vincent was commissioned by Facet Publishing to edit and write for a new series on libraries and social justice. The first title, *Libraries and Sanctuary: supporting refugees and other new arrivals* was published in 2022, the second title, *Libraries and care-experienced children and young people* is due to be published later in 2025. John does not charge this work to The Network, but thought it would be interesting to add here the people he met in the course of writing:

Clare Bracey (Become), Catherine Dugdale (Norfolk), Gillian Fewings (Marjon University), Cara Lambert & Jane Blackwell (West Sussex), Jackie McCartney (care advocate), Jane

Appendix B: Making the most of your subscription

Member organisations and individuals use The Network to:

- Ensure that their services are well placed to meet national, regional and local objectives
- Draw on and share expertise and good practice
- Work with other Network members to benchmark services
- Keep up-to-date effectively with new developments across the social justice field, without having to read every new document themselves as the information has already been distilled for them
- Ensure that colleagues across their service are also able to keep up-to-date via targeted emails to their desk-tops
- Ensure value for money by being able to book places on Network courses and receive in-house training at reduced cost.

When a library (or museum or archive) service from a local authority joins The Network, this automatically confers membership on the **whole local authority**.

The benefits are that:

- Council departments can share knowledge about issues that matter to them, and your service is placed at the centre of this authority-wide information-sharing
- It's a cost-effective way of stretching limited resources (and, in addition, other Council departments could contribute towards the cost of the subscription)
- Related organisations within the local authority area, such as independent and District Council museums, archive collections, schools, and others, can also share this targeted information in an extremely effective way.

Some public library services forward the Newsletter and Ebulletin (as well as other emails from our elists) to targeted contacts across the Council (thereby ensuring that the library service is contributing to corporate targets and agendas), and have also subscribed key local authority staff to some of the email lists. Information is also forwarded to contacts in the community.

They also regularly share updates on service developments with other Network contacts, and ask for advice and suggestions on service plans.