

## **Libraries really do change lives!**

**An edited version of the talk by John Vincent at the CLIP Conference, 12 July 2016**

This presentation aims to cover:

- A little history, background, what the Awards have done
- Why it's important to recognise this work

Firstly, I should like to thank all those people who have supported the Awards from the start, particularly CILIP (especially Mark Taylor & Cat Cooper), previous judges, CDEG, and, of course, all the library & information services that have done such brilliant work – and applied!

### **Brief history**

This is the CILIP Libraries Change Lives Award's 25<sup>th</sup> year!

The LCLA was originally called the Community Initiative Award (until 1998), supported by library suppliers Holt-Jackson, and was part of the Library + Information Show. However, it was then taken on by CILIP fully, and they have supported it ever since.

### **Some firsts**

Sadly, some of the finalists' work has disappeared, but LCLA also recognised some pieces of work that have grown from strength to strength. Examples include:

1995 – Bookstart

2002 – Big Book Share

2007 – Welcome To Your Library

2009 – Across the Board, Leeds

2009 – Six Book Challenge

2010 – Macmillan (with Manchester Library Service)

2011 – NEALIS

2012 – Digital Bazaar (Lambeth)

2012 – Reminiscence (Norfolk Libraries & Museums)

2013 – Dementia Friendly Libraries, Kent

2013 – Domestic Abuse, Surrey

2014 – Northamptonshire Library and Information Service and the Northampton Enterprise Partnership support for employment skills

2015 – Appiness, North Ayrshire<sup>1</sup>

## **The 2016 picture**

This year we had 25 excellent applications – and from all sorts of library & information sectors including:

- Information providers
- Schools
- Health
- Public
- College.

## **So, why is it important?**

I had lunch with a friend recently, who, when I said I was about to shortlist for this year's LCLA, expressed surprise that libraries are still doing this kind of work. So – we need to keep reminding people that we do.

As we heard from Scott Bonner at the opening session, libraries provide a core role as a hub for their communities, yet, often, this role goes unnoticed or un-sung.

Although Scott was talking about the events in Ferguson, the UK isn't exactly short of issues to grapple with either, eg

- The increasing polarisation of rich and poor, and increasing inequality in the UK
- The increasing health gap between rich and poor
- The increase in poverty, for example as manifested by the growth of food-banks
- The removal of public services and the effects this has on people dependant on them
- The growth in racism and Islamophobia, as well as hostility to migration – flames fanned since Brexit

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<sup>1</sup> There is further information about the past finalists at:

<http://www.cilip.org.uk/cilip/advocacy-awards-and-projects/awards-and-medals/libraries-change-lives-award/past-libraries>, and  
<http://www.webarchive.org.uk/wayback/archive/20121117202245/http://www.cilip.org.uk/about-us/medalsandawards/libraries-change-lives/pages/lclawins.aspx>.

- The growing evidence of corruption at the heart of society, for example in the police (Hillsborough, undercover policing), in politics (expenses scandals).

The best library services are tackling some of these issues, yet people still have a very reductive view of all types of library – and, for public libraries, this is a huge issue at the moment. The Public Library Task Force is about to report: there has, until now, been a lack of recognition of the social justice role that libraries play, but I hope that the final version of *Libraries Deliver* will stress the importance of this.

## **Conclusion**

Given all this, what do we need to do?

We need to:

- Ensure that we gather evidence of our impact
- Use this evidence to shift the debates about what all kinds of libraries do
- Continue to work with our communities, of whatever type, to demonstrate our value and worth
- Shout about the life-changing work we do!

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