

The Network Newsletter – Ebulletin 409, 8 Dec 2024

Events

Events have been added to the Courses & Events pages on The Network website – see: <https://seapn.org.uk/events/>.

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

“Closures loom as funding crisis worsens for local museums”

<https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/2024/12/closures-loom-as-funding-crisis-worsens-for-local-museums/#msdyntrid=1979bbEzBz6nEoFc32fUgGUnbUQAiJIZXU8Z7y4HLh8>

(Source: Museums Association email updates, 6 Dec 2024)

“Several local authority-reliant museums are earmarked for closure while others are cutting staff and opening hours amid a worsening funding situation for councils and funding bodies across the UK.

The Museums Association (MA) says the civic museum sector is facing an ‘existential crisis’ and has called for a strategic funding approach from government and funders to resolve the issue.”

Tackling social and digital exclusion – Other Agencies

2024 Consumer Digital Index

https://www.lloydsbank.com/assets/media/pdfs/banking_with_us/whats-happening/lb-consumer-digital-index-2024-report.pdf

(Source: *Good News from Good Things Foundation*, Nov 2024)

The latest Index has just been published:

“Improvements in digital skills have been made over the last three years for those with an impairment vs. those without, yet the Essential Digital Skills data shows there is still a gap. Exploring this group further, it's those with a physical impairment that are least likely to be able to complete the fundamental tasks to engage with a digital world.

Accessible services, connectivity and complexity remain challenges for those who are not engaging digitally, e.g. 13% of consumers report connectivity issues, which affects their Internet usage, and 16% think the Internet is too complicated.” [p4]

As Good Things Foundation’s Helen Milner writes in a blogpost

(<https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/discover/digital-inclusion-insights/digital-inclusion-insights-2024/power-up-2-index-employment-link>):

“There are still nearly 8 million adults who lack the digital basics (foundation level). Most (but not all) are older, living alone, have no formal qualifications, and/or live with a long-term health condition or disability.

Looking only at the working-age population, around 18% (c7.3m) lack the digital basics most needed in the workplace, with 6% (2.3m) able to do

none of the tasks. In a digital economy, just under half of working-age adults can do all 20 tasks.

If this sounds depressing - it is. But there is also a strong and positive call to collective action in this year's UK Consumer Digital Index. Over 22 million people would like to improve their digital skills. We can and must respond to this, and do so in ways that work for diverse communities, and especially for those who lack the confidence to learn - often shaped by poor past experiences of learning - and for whom this is a barrier to finding pathways into economic participation."

Digital Unite have also written a summary of the report (with their key "2024 take outs"), https://www.digitalunite.com/digital-inequality-facts-stats?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=digital_inclusion_2024_stats_and_the_best_present_idea_ever&utm_term=2024-11-29.

Equality, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion – Other Agencies

"Walmart Rolls Back DEI Policies Amid Conservative Backlash"

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/siladityaray/2024/11/26/walmart-is-the-latest-major-company-to-roll-back-dei-policies-amid-conservative-backlash/?ref=wearequeer.af.com>

(Source: email from Queer AF, 30 Nov 2024)

The latest US company to "[...] pull back on inclusivity efforts amid pressure from conservative activists [...] including no longer giving priority treatment to suppliers based on race and gender, ending racial equity training for staffers and exiting from the LGBTQ rights group Human Rights Campaign's Corporate Equality Index."

Human Rights – Other Agencies

"The West buries a genocide – by making victims of Israel's football thugs"

https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/west-buries-genocide-making-victims-israel-football-thugs?fbclid=IwY2xjawGgbOBleHRuA2FibQIxMAABHZJJq6MLM4SCPvHt77CPcqlm9oPoCTD6ePLAKTuzfzh9JSiwTgSQMmvBvg_aem_o-i7bUgLK5bVBh2HGBdcCQ

Thoughtful "Opinion" piece in *Middle East Eye*, which argues:

"If the West was really worried about Europe's Nazi past, it would be better advised to stop stoking an all-too-real new antisemitism: incitement against Arab and Muslim minorities"

Health & Wellbeing issues – Other Agencies

"COVID lockdowns affected adolescents' brain structures, says research"

https://theconversation.com/covid-lockdowns-affected-adolescents-brain-structures-says-research-244714?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20December%202024%20-%203183632471&utm_content=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20December%202024%20-%203183632471+CID_7b32bb4caf57780bb21cd59ee98cf4b4&utm_source=campaign_monitor_uk&utm_term=COVID%20lockdowns%20affected%20adolescents%20brain%20structures%20says%20research

(Source: *The Conversation*, 3 Dec 2024)

Important short article which concludes:

“The socially restrictive lockdown measures appear to have had a substantial negative effect on the mental health of teenagers, especially girls, and the new study provides a potential underlying cause.

There is little doubt that the pandemic lockdowns resulted in devastating health consequences for many people. To the litany of evidence, we may now add a particularly grim finding – that the developmental brain biology of our precious teenage population has been damaged by these measures.

But perhaps the main message is that the wider effects of single-issue health policies should be considered more carefully. In the case of the known damaging effects of social isolation and loneliness on brain health, it’s not as if the evidence wasn’t there.”

“Understanding young onset dementia”

<https://www.openaccessgovernment.org/understanding-young-onset-dementia/184410/>

(Source: *Later Life AGEnda*, 31 Oct 2024)

Very useful briefing on young onset dementia.

Migration issues – Other Agencies

“UK migration data revised upwards yet again, but show downward trend in net migration following visa restrictions”

https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/press/uk-migration-data-revised-upwards-yet-again-but-show-downward-trend-in-net-migration-following-visa-restrictions/?mc_cid=13aac8d883&mc_eid=7d8713d645

(Source: *Free Movement Weekly Newsletter*, 2 Dec 2024)

Useful commentary on the latest figures.

The “Notes for editors” that follow the post are very useful for clarifying what’s going on:

- “Revisions to the migration statistics have substantially changed the official picture on net migration over the past two years. For example, net migration for calendar year 2022 was originally estimated at 606,000 in the ONS May 2023 publication. It was revised up to 745,000 in November 2023, and up to 764,000 in May 2024. Today’s release makes a third revision that the figure for 2022 at 873,000.
- Revisions have taken place for several reasons. Early estimates make assumptions about which migrants will remain in the UK long term, and these are later replaced with complete travel data. In 2022 and 2023, migration patterns changed with a higher share of visa holders staying in the UK long term, compared to what ONS had expected based on previous data.
- ONS has also made various methodological changes. For example, ONS now has access to more detailed data on people who switch visas in-country (e.g. from a student to work visa). Today’s release also includes

a larger number of Ukrainians in 2022 and 2023, who had been missed in earlier releases.”

In addition, this ‘explainer’ from Madeleine Sumption (Migration Observatory) is very helpful:

“Why do the UK’s net migration numbers keep being revised – and can we trust the data?”

https://theconversation.com/why-do-the-uks-net-migration-numbers-keep-being-revised-and-can-we-trust-the-data-244963?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20December%202%202024%20-%203183632471&utm_content=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20December%202%202024%20-%203183632471+CID_7b32bb4caf57780bb21cd59ee98cf4b4&utm_source=campaign_monitor_uk&utm_term=Why%20do%20the%20UKs%20net%20migration%20numbers%20keep%20being%20revised%20%20and%20can%20we%20trust%20the%20data

(Source: *The Conversation*, 3 Dec 2024)

This concludes:

“We can only speculate about whether the government would have made different policy decisions (or made the same ones sooner) if it had had access to accurate figures earlier.

Even if revisions are planned, they may still have a cost: lower public trust in the data.

Of course, ONS could have decided not to publish the data at all, given that the methods were still in development. That is what they have done in other cases, such as the now discontinued estimates of the number of foreign-born people living in the UK. This too has a cost. We can still learn a lot from imperfect data.

Indeed, while the magnitude of the net migration figures has changed, the basic picture has not changed — that unusually high migration has been driven by work and study migration, with more international students remaining long-term in the UK than in the past.

Perhaps ONS should have spotted some of the issues that have led to the biggest revisions sooner. Perhaps they could have advertised more prominently that the data are uncertain and may be revised substantially. Nonetheless, we are still in a much better place than we were before the new methods were developed, even if it has taken some time to get there.”

“Starmer’s counter-terror plan for migration woefully misses the mark”

https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/beyond-trafficking-and-slavery/starmer-s-counter-terror-plan-for-migration-woefully-misses-the-mark-labour-small-boats/?utm_source=oD%20Daily%20SEGMENT&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=The%20Gen%20Zers%20battling%20against%20misinformation&_kx=1_8D1xQSf81SrwgQ7oVGBK2bIbK82FazIk5OMY7463I.YjCYwm

(Source: email from OpenDemocracy, 5 Dec 2024)

Important article which argues that there are key reasons why human smuggling continues and suggest two other areas which should be explored instead:

“It's peculiar how difficult it is for mainstream politicians, who are otherwise so keen on market economics, to learn that human smuggling is a market driven by demand. It responds to incentives, and its strongest incentive by far is the disappearance of legal routes. The market is further buoyed by crackdowns of the kind seen around the Channel Tunnel in recent years. The displacement of routes has predictably increased danger and desperation – and thus reliance on professional smugglers. The border security system perversely feeds on the very problem it ostensibly combats.”

“Mental health resources for refugees and asylum seekers”

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/our-work/programmes/refugees/resources>

(Source: update from City of Sanctuary, 30 Oct 2024)

Valuable new resource: the Mental Health Foundation has developed resources to support new arrivals with their mental health, including advice translated into other languages.

LGBTQ+ issues – Other Agencies

“Sexual identity is more fluid than previously thought, says twelve-year study”

https://theconversation.com/sexual-identity-is-more-fluid-than-previously-thought-says-twelve-year-study-243892?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20December%204%202024%20-%203187232507&utm_content=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20December%204%202024%20-%203187232507+CID_b9fc72dac1957a39657f781997577531&utm_source=campaign_monitor_uk&utm_term=Sexual%20identity%20is%20more%20fluid%20than%20previously%20thought%20says%20twelve-year%20study

(Source: *The Conversation*, 5 Dec 2024)

Interesting article, introducing new research:

“Nearly 16% of people changed their sexual identity over a 12-year period, according to a new study I conducted with my colleagues, involving around 35,000 residents of Stockholm County. This challenges long-held beliefs about sexual identity being largely fixed.”

Broader issues – Other Agencies

“Children aren't reading for pleasure according to new research – here's how you can help them love books”

https://theconversation.com/children-arent-reading-for-pleasure-according-to-new-research-heres-how-you-can-help-them-love-books-243108?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20November%2012%202024%20-%203162732250&utm_content=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20November%2012%202024%20-%203162732250+CID_ff1817e3197bb1eb8aa697217ff98896&utm_source=campaign_monitor

[uk&utm_term=Children%20parent%20reading%20for%20pleasure%20according%20to%20new%20research%20%20heres%20how%20you%20can%20help%20them%20love%20books](https://theconversation.com/your-personality-changes-when-you-speak-another-language-but-thats-not-always-a-bad-thing-245079?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=The%20Conversation%20Europe%2005122024&utm_content=The%20Conversation%20Europe%2005122024+CID_a7909faae87414a8d81a4bd81a4bdc6a27320f&utm_source=campaign_monitor_europe&utm_term=Your%20personality%20changes%20when%20you%20speak%20another%20language%20but%20thats%20not%20always%20a%20bad%20thing)
(Source: *The Conversation*, 12 Nov 2024)

Following on from the publication of the NLT annual literacy survey:

“Many literacy researchers like me are just not surprised by this data. Given the lack of funding and closure of our local libraries. Not to mention the narrow approach to the curriculum for reading in schools, which is targeted specifically at struggling readers. This includes the systematic synthetic phonics (SSP) scheme, which teach children to read by breaking words down into their individual sounds and is pushed too early. As well as the dreaded phonics screening check, which tests your child’s phonics knowledge, standardising testing [...]

The joy of reading, alongside the awe and wonder from engaging in meaningful reading activities is slowly being taken away from our children in schools with overcrowded timetables and an overreliance on reading books matched to systematic synthetic phonics schemes. In addition, it now appears that reading at home seems to have become a luxury we can’t afford.”

The article then goes on to suggest ways of interesting children in reading, eg:

“At home, parents, carers and families can support their children with reading through a range of tactics. Again, diversifying what you read with your children could help. Try reading online or branch out into magazines, comics, leaflets and information books.

If you want to make reading more active why not try taking photographs and making your own photograph books together. You could also play rhyming games. Or, you could simply spend time sharing stories with each other and telling stories as well as reading stories (in print and online).”

“Your personality changes when you speak another language, but that’s not always a bad thing”

https://theconversation.com/your-personality-changes-when-you-speak-another-language-but-thats-not-always-a-bad-thing-245079?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=The%20Conversation%20Europe%2005122024&utm_content=The%20Conversation%20Europe%2005122024+CID_a7909faae87414a8d81a4bd81a4bdc6a27320f&utm_source=campaign_monitor_europe&utm_term=Your%20personality%20changes%20when%20you%20speak%20another%20language%20but%20thats%20not%20always%20a%20bad%20thing

(Source: *The Conversation*, 5 Dec 2024)

Interesting article about being bi/multilingual:

“Have you ever wondered whether the language you speak influences the way you see the world? Well, according to a number of studies in psycholinguistics, cognitive psychology and linguistic anthropology, it does. Languages don’t just allow us to communicate – they also shape our perception of what surrounds us, and ourselves.”