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

Number 231, May 2020

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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

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Did you see …?

Pen & Inc.

The Autumn/Winter 2019 issue[1] was published earlier this year.

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[1] *Pen & Inc.* Autumn/Winter 2019, see: https://content.yudu.com/libraryHtml/A43ror/Penampincautumnwinte/reader.html?refid=

As well as poetry and illustrations, the magazine has a number of important articles, including:

- Rob Mackinlay interview with Joseph Coelho "Normal needs a revamp" [pp7-8], which focuses on "[…] growing up in a world where the realities of many people's lives are not reflected and how there needs to be a change across society." [p7]

- Beth Cox "Inclusive Minds: the voices of lived experience" [pp9-10], which outlines how the Inclusive Minds[2] collective works and what it does, particularly looking at the creation of Inclusion Ambassadors who bring "[…] first-hand experiences to the creators of children's books." [p10]. There is also a brief outline of their partnership with the CILIP Carnegie and Kate Greenaway Medals [p11]

- Natalie Costa and Beth Cox "Finding power in emotions" [pp12-13], which introduces a new series of books for children, helping them to understand their emotions[3]

- Konnie Huq "Differences bring us together" [pp14-16], which looks at celebrating our differences: "Prejudice is learned and once ingrained it can be difficult to shift, so children need to be able to see diversity and recognise how they fit in to society." [p15]

- Farrah Serroukh "What it really means to reflect realities" [pp17-19], which introduces the research used for the second edition of the CLPE *Reflecting Realities* report[4]

- Davinia Andrew-Lynch and Abi Fellows "Agent: representative or catalyst?" [pp20-21], which looks at the role of agents in helping change the demographic of published writers and illustrators – and what they write/illustrate

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1037274&refUrl=https%25253A%25252F%25252Fexpress.yudu.com%25252Fitem%252525252Fembed%25252F3942602%25252FPen-inc.-autumn-winter-2019-.

[2] "Founded in January 2013, Inclusive Minds is a collective for people who are passionate about inclusion, diversity, equality and accessibility in children's literature, and are committed to changing the face of children's books." Taken from: https://www.inclusiveminds.com/about.

[3] Beth Cox. *Stretch your confidence* and *Find your power!*. b small publishing, https://www.bsmall.co.uk/books/series/level-headers.

[4] The research report does not appear to have been published yet – what is available is a press release (see: https://clpe.org.uk/RR) with 'headline' figures:
- "Overall increase in books featuring a BAME character – from 4% in 2017 to 7% in 2018.
- Also increase in the number of BAME main protagonists – from 1% in 2017 to 4% in 2018.
- Report shows there is still a long way to go to achieve representation that reflects the UK population"

- Ian Eagleton "Tips from a survivor of the LGBT literary world" [pp22-24], which introduces a range of books "[…] to help young readers navigate different family structures and sexuality – to see their own identities reflected or to identify with someone else's experience." [p22]

- Jake Hope "The written word is not just being seen but heard and felt" [pp25-27], which looks at greater accessibility, eg the partnership with RNIB

- Sonya McGilchrist "Diversity needed at the top to sustain change" [pp28-29], which also argues the importance of nurturing small presses and businesses

- Lisa Stephenson "Story Makers Press: reclaiming children's voices in stories" [pp30-32], which discusses the work of this project based at Leeds Beckett University, that co-creates stories with children[5]

The remainder of the magazine contains the excellent listings, "[…] a guide to hundreds of books from large and small publishers." [p33]

Black Lives Matter

"Black Lives Matter charter calls on heritage sector to turn words into action"

A recent news article on the MA website[6] introduces a new Charter:

"As Black Lives Matter protests swept across the UK last month, museum and heritage organisations expressed their solidarity with the protesters' calls to end racial injustice.

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[5] "Our books, and accompanying 'Explorers Guide', support schools in providing rich opportunities for children to critically reflect on the behaviour, actions and thoughts of others and themselves, by providing a structured approach to explore difficult issues through drama in a safe way. The guide provides a framework of capabilities, as well as links to the wider curriculum and the holistic development of children. These are mapped against the 3 themes below [...]

1. Develop an understanding of emotional literacy and positive wellbeing
2. Develop imaginative and creative thinking skills
3. Develop a shared sense of community and active citizenship."
[Taken from: https://leedsbeckett.ac.uk/carnegie-school-of-education/story-makers/story-makers-press/].

[6] Geraldine Kendall Adams. "Black Lives Matter charter calls on heritage sector to turn words into action", Museums Association, 24 Jul 2020, https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/24072020-black-lives-matter-charter?utm_campaign=1781834_24072020%20MA%20newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Museums%20Association&dm_i=2VBX,126VE,27LU0M,422JM,1.

But a charter from the arts and education charity Culture& is calling on such institutions to do more to 'decolonise their relationship with the UK black community'".

The Charter[7] argues that statements about Black Lives Matter are not credible unless backed up by action – and the Charter lists some actions to take. This is so important that the actions are listed here in full:

- "The statements of horror about the killing of George Floyd in the US must be followed up by similar statements of support to the UK Black communities in relation to Black people who have died in similar circumstances in Britain

- Support decolonising collections and the imperial narratives around objects in museum collections that have supported or have been acquired by means of colonial aggression or with the profits of the transatlantic slave trade, must be identified as such, giving clear and explicit information to audiences on the history of the object and its acquisition, and how it came into the possession of the museum, investigating the reasons and deeper context

- Museums must make a commitment to the editing and rewording of racist artwork titles that include racially sensitive words or outdated descriptions of black people which are considered outdated in the present day

- Where collections or objects have been acquired by force or other means without consent, museums must start the process of restitution and repatriation to their rightful owners, and where museums have profited from the ownership and display of cultural property, they must make proportionate funds available to set up relationships of exchange and cooperation

- Arts and heritage organisations must be publicly accountable via their funders such as Race Equality Action Plans, Arts Council England and DCMS targets for their actions in relation to tackling institutional racism and decolonising their workforce by taking steps to deal with subconscious bias and ensure that staff at all levels are representative of the diversity of the UK population

- Arts and heritage organisations must devise programmes that appeal to Black people in our society by commissioning and supporting diverse contemporary curators and artists to make alternative interpretations to address the history and present-day issues around racism, prejudice and social exclusion

- Arts and heritage organisations must take steps to holistically protect the mental health, wellbeing, and lives of their Black workforce in relation to navigating and challenging racism, and acknowledging stress and trauma where it has occurred

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[7] Culture&. *Black Lives Matter Charter for the UK heritage sector*. Culture&, 2020, : https://www.cultureand.org/news/black-lives-matter-charter-for-the-uk-heritage-sector/.

- Arts and heritage organisations must take steps to protect the lives of their Black workforce and audiences who face disproportionate risks relating to COVID-19."

We shall no doubt be returning to this, particularly as the move to decolonise heritage organisations and collections gathers momentum.[8]

Diversity in books and other materials

Rethinking 'diversity' in publishing

This important report[9] is the UK's first academic study on diversity in trade fiction and publishing.

> "The report highlights the assumptions made about reading audiences, publishers' inexperience to reach more diverse audiences, the lack of creativity in looking for authors and promotion, the centralised nature of book-buying decisions in retail, and a general complacency when it comes to engaging with new audiences – among many other systemic challenges that can only be overcome with a less risk-averse approach."[10]

The problem was identified as follows:

> "The publishing industry concedes that it has a problem with a lack of diversity. Publishers recognise that writers of colour in particular have been historically excluded. Yet while publishers would like to publish more diversely, finding writers of colour and publishing them successfully remains a challenge." [p2]

The research then explored the obstacles that writers of colour face in trade publishing:

> "We *rethink* 'diversity' by shifting the debate from a sole focus on the *quantity* of minorities who work in publishing to the *quality* of the experience, particularly for writers of colour." [p2 – emphases theirs]

The main findings include:

> General:

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[8] Source: Museums Association email updates, 24 Jul 2020.

[9] Anamik Saha and Sandra van Lente. *Rethinking 'diversity' in publishing*. Goldsmiths Press, 2020. Available to download as a pdf from: https://www.spreadtheword.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Rethinking_diversity_in-publishing_WEB.pdf.

[10] Taken from Society of Authors news release, https://www.societyofauthors.org/News/News/2020/June/Academic-study-rethinking-diversity.

- Assumptions about audiences: "The core audience for publishers is white and middle-class. The whole industry is essentially set up to cater for this one audience. This affects how writers of colour and their books are treated, which are either *whitewashed* or *exoticised* in order to appeal to this segment." [p2 – emphases theirs]

- Inability to reach diverse audiences

- "We find that 'BAME' (black, Asian and minority ethnic)/working-class audiences are undervalued by publishers, both economically and culturally […]" [p2]

Acquisition:

- Lack of creativity in looking for authors

- Concepts of 'quality': "Publishers would like to publish more writers of colour but expressed concerns about their lack of 'quality'. Arguments around quality, however, often seemed disingenuous and showed how little reflection there was about how notions of 'quality' are shaped by an individual's particular class and education. Sometimes a writer of colour's supposed lack of 'quality' speaks more to a publisher's lack of confidence in how to reach non-white, non-middle-class audiences." [p2]

- Fear of 'niche': "[…] publishers fear that books by writers of colour are too niche and will not appeal to their core audience." [p2]

- "Comping practices: ie the practice of comparing books to others that are deemed similar in order to predict audiences and sales, are another obstacle because, although they can be used creatively, they privilege books that repeat certain patterns and established authors, making it harder for 'new voices'" [p3]

Promotion:

- Lack of creativity in promotion

- Lack of awareness: "While there is some awareness of the growing number of media – especially digital media – that target communities that have been neglected by mainstream media, these outlets are perceived as niche. Publishers see engaging with these media as a supplement to, rather than the core of, marketing campaigns." [p3]

- Limited resources: "A narrow conception of their audience makes it harder for books by 'BAME' writers to break out as resources are distributed according to how well a book is expected to 'perform'." [p3]

- Complacency

Sales and retail:

- "Few people in retail in decision-making positions: The centralised nature of most book buying poses a challenge for books by writers of colour, especially when assumptions about book buyers are so narrow." [p3]

- "Narrow audience: Brick-and-mortar booksellers, whether chains or independents, still tend to centre the white, middle-class audience, which is reflected in the aesthetic of these spaces." [p3]

- Supermarkets can do more

- "Opacity of online retail: Online retailers provide another route to wider audiences though publishers find this an opaque process, not least because the retailers can and do change parameters without making transparent how this affects the algorithms." [p3]

After "rethinking" diversity, the report then calls for action, to include:

- Rethinking how diversity is measured: "[…] it is important that publishers stop thinking about diversity as purely a numbers game. Instead, diversity entails recognising structural inequalities and that people of colour are not afforded the same opportunities or freedoms as their white peers. The publishers who are most committed to fixing inequalities in the industry will be the ones bold enough to address this in an assertive, *affirmative* manner. The sooner publishers realise that the industry is not currently a meritocracy the sooner they will fix the problem of 'diversity'." [p38 – emphasis theirs]

- Rethinking your audience: "People involved in the making and selling of books need to ask themselves whether their bookshop/writing course/festival are truly open to all, as minorities can find certain spaces exclusionary. But in rethinking their readership, publishers need to be careful not to think of 'BAME' audiences as homogenous. They contain as much diversity as white audiences, intersected by class, gender, sexuality, age, and so on. While particular communities have their own particular needs, their interests overlap with other communities. The sooner publishers start realising the value of these audiences, the range of books published will become richer and more reflective of the nation." [p38]

- Rethinking what is meant by "quality": "While editors need to maintain faith in their own judgements, they also need to understand that notions of 'quality' are not as universal as they may think. In fact, supposedly universal notions of quality correlate strongly with a particular education and class position." [pp38-39]

- Hire more diversely: "[…], but do not expect 'BAME' staff to be responsible for all 'BAME' books or readers. Booksellers need to educate themselves on more diverse books." [p33]

- "Develop strategic alliances: There is already a network of writing agencies and audience engagement practitioners that publishers can use to reach new audiences. Publishers need to invest in establishing long-term partnerships with these organisations to find and develop talented writers of colour, bringing them to publication and to audiences." [p3]

The report concludes:

> While there have been some big inroads made in recent times – publishing houses and the books they are publishing do feel more diverse – as all of our respondents mentioned, so much more work needs to be done. Unfortunately, this is not a quick fix and will take significant transformation. But, as a starting point, diversity needs to stop being seen as an additional extra. If publishers are serious about diversity, they need to invest more resources in reaching new audiences. If they are unwilling to do this, they need to be honest about how they value minority audiences as a consequence. To reiterate: a lack of faith in new audiences is the biggest reason why the publishing industry still struggles to publish more diversely. Indeed, it raises the question, if publishing is a profit-based industry, then why the lack of interest in reaching new audiences?" [p37]

Important report, with a lot for us to consider. Recommended.[11]

Migration issues – Other Agencies

Communities up close: neighbourhood change and migration in Yorkshire and Humber

This important new report[12] from Migration Yorkshire and IPPR is the culmination of a two-year research project and:

> "[…] aims to understand how people living in cities and towns across the region experience change and migration in their local areas." [p5]

The report begins by looking at how neighbourhoods have changed and how residents perceive and understand these changes – which may be economic, social, physical, demographic and/or political. It also focuses on three particular aspects of change currently: migration, austerity, and the coronavirus pandemic.

It then goes on to create a number of typologies of neighbourhoods, drawing on work by Kitty Lymperopoulou[13], which looks at the different ways that

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[11] Source: CILIP Public and Mobile Libraries Group *Newsletter*, 23 Jul 2020.

[12] Lucy Mort <u>and</u> Marley Morris. *Communities up close: neighbourhood change and migration in Yorkshire and Humber*. IPPR, 2020. Available to download as a pdf from: https://www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/userfiles/attachments/pages/844/cuc-final-report-july2020.pdf.

[13] Kitty Lymperopoulou. "Immigration and ethnic diversity in England and Wales examined through an area classification framework", *Journal of International Migration*

immigration can have an impact on social cohesion at a local level. The report reduces the typologies to five – these are:

- Cosmopolitan Centres: "Cosmopolitan Centres tend to be in the centre of large, highly diverse cities. They can be characterised as economically dynamic areas with large young populations. They tend to be hubs for professional activity and often have large private rental sectors. For these areas, migration is long-established, and they often attract large numbers of migrants coming to work and study at local universities. People tend to 'keep themselves to themselves' and are often unaware of their neighbours." [31]

- Super-Diverse Districts: "Super-Diverse Districts tend to be in inner-city areas with high levels of ethnic diversity and considerable migration and churn. They have long histories of migration and are characterised by a range of different ethnicities, languages, and faiths. Patterns of migration are complex – with people moving to the neighbourhood for a variety of reasons, including work, study, asylum and to join family. The local economies are often vibrant and dynamic, yet there are also high levels of poverty and deprivation, poor quality housing and overcrowding." [p32]

- Diverse Suburbs: "Diverse Suburbs tend to be in the suburbs of highly diverse cities. They tend to be areas with long histories of migration, attracting newcomers for both work and family reasons. While very diverse, Diverse Suburbs tend to be characterised by a smaller number of different ethnic groups than Super-Diverse Districts." [p33]

- Dynamic Districts: "Dynamic Districts tend to be neighbourhoods in cities or large towns, often in or nearby the centre. They are areas characterised by their experience of recent economic and demographic change, against a backdrop of relatively high levels of poverty and insecure labour markets. While their high streets are often struggling, they tend to also operate as hubs of economic activity. Migration into these areas has increased in recent years largely due to the availability of cheap housing and nearby job opportunities and travel connections. They are relatively diverse, and over time as migration increases may, in some cases, become superdiverse." [p34]

- Tight-Knit Towns: "Tight-Knit Towns are neighbourhoods in smaller towns and rural communities. They tend to have low levels of ethnic diversity and only very limited histories of migration. Often Tight-Knit Towns have long industrial histories but have experienced decline in recent decades. Residents living in these neighbourhoods tend to form strong communities, grounded in family and neighbourhood ties which can stretch back generations. In recent years, Central and Eastern European migrants have begun to settle in these towns due to work opportunities at nearby factories.

and Integration, 2019, pp829-846, https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12134-019-00678-9.

While some residents are comfortable with this change and see it as an opportunity to boost their town's economic prospects, others have struggled to adapt to higher levels of migration. Some residents associate migration with rising crime or anti-social behaviour. In some instances, residents express hostility towards those newcomers who have found employment, in the belief that they are displacing others in the local labour market. While tensions do not often bubble to the surface, there tends to be little mixing between settled and newer communities." [p36]

The report then details the findings from the research, and draws these together under twelve themes:

- Identity and community in neighbourhoods

- Economic conditions (highlighting the frequent misunderstandings about why new arrivals had come to the UK and what they were allowed to do once here)

- The changing face of housing

- Experiences of services and support (which includes: "Conversations with stakeholders highlighted the role of public and voluntary sector services in shaping migrant experiences." [p45])

- Community spaces and civic action ("Participants spoke about a lack of community spaces or affordable activities that could serve local residents and bring people from diverse backgrounds together." [p46])

- Changing high streets and town centres

- Neighbourhood appearance

- Crime and feeling unsafe

- Hostility, racism and discrimination ("Perceptions of safety among migrant participants were further shaped by experiences of prejudice and racism, as participants spoke of facing racist abuse and a generalised sense of hostility in their local area." [p53])

- Perceptions of migration and ethnic diversity

- Perceptions of integration and cohesion ("The ability to speak English was one of the biggest concerns for participants discussing barriers to integration. This was discussed in most of our focus groups. Participants proposed different solutions, ranging from changing immigration rules so that only people that speak English can move to the UK to making English language lessons free and accessible for people wanting to learn. Participants that emphasised integration as a two-way process, rather than as an assimilationist project, spoke also of language exchanges and conversation café style ideas that could facilitate English speakers learning the language of new migrants too." [pp59-59])

- The effects of immigration policies on neighbourhood experiences ("For some of the migrant groups that we spoke to their experiences of the neighbourhood were shaped by the restricted rights and entitlements of their immigration status. Asylum seekers unable to work and without a choice about where they lived faced particular challenges, as they explained difficulties related to meeting new people and of facing economic insecurity." [p61])

These are followed by a set of recommendations for policy and practice, which include:

- Investing in English language support, including: "We therefore recommend that local authorities assess the English language provision available locally and prioritise increasing provision and widening access for English language support for recent migrants. There is no 'one-size fits-all' approach to English language provision and local areas should decide the appropriate mix of providers, including FE colleges, charities, and community groups. Local policymakers should play a central role in coordinating provision, in order to facilitate partnership working, share best practice between providers, and detect and resolve any gaps in provision." [pp63-64]

- Actively engaging employers on integration

- Facilitating social contact, including: "Supporting social contact can take place in a number of ways – through local community centres, regular meet-ups, street festivals, or (particularly relevant in the context of the ongoing pandemic) online forums. Of particular importance is the need to promote sustained social contact – one-off events are not sufficient for the type of contact that can help to bring down barriers. We recommend that local policymakers actively support initiatives to promote meaningful contact between communities – through, for instance, providing financial support to local voluntary and community sector organisations and co-delivering services with community groups." [p65]

- Inclusive decision-making

- Addressing tensions and tackling discrimination, including "The findings from our research indicate a number of important lessons for local policymakers and practitioners. First, it is important that a robust approach is taken against any instances of xenophobia and hate crime. In some areas, we were concerned that incidents were taking place below the radar and were under-reported. This highlights the importance of strong relationships between the council, the police, and recent arrivals, in order to build trust with communities and allow for issues to be raised early. Second, where there is the risk of any emerging tensions between communities, local policymakers should take a partnership approach – coordinating between police, schools, councillors, voluntary organisations, and local services – in order to detect issues quickly and develop comprehensive approaches to settling differences." [pp66-67]

The report also makes a number of national policy recommendations:

- "Strengthening local economies and investing in social infrastructure through the 'levelling up' agenda

- Introducing reforms to the labour market to ensure decent work

- Extending investment in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

- Designing an immigration system that aids integration through:
  - Easier routes to settlement
  - Encouraging employers and educational institutions to support social cohesion in their local areas through the work and study visa systems
  - Removing the bar on working for asylum seekers." [p11]

The report concludes:

"A vital aspect of the research with communities was to understand how they thought their local areas could be improved, and where the responsibility for integration lies. As participants discussed, there is a role for everyone in creating communities that get along and that can prosper - for individuals, for local authorities and voluntary and community sector partners, for employers, and for national government. One of the resounding messages of this research is that the wellbeing of a community comes from greater economic and social security, for all and regardless of background. This is the foundation for ensuring that communities can weather change and thrive." [p70]

As we develop our approaches to becoming places of sanctuary, so we can become more involved in some areas of this, particularly supporting our local communities and new arrivals to it. Recommended.[14]

Abbreviations and acronyms

CILIP = Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals
CLPE = Centre for Literacy in Primary Education
DCMS = Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
MA = Museums Association

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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[14] Source: The Campaign Company *Weekly*, 24 Jul 2020.