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

Number 247, September 2021

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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 …?

Information Professional

The September issue includes:

- "Free book reflects Black British lives" [p8], which reports that every primary school in England will be receiving a free copy of *Happy here*[1]
- "Library strategy crucial to Scotland's Covid recovery" [p9], which notes the publication of the new five-year strategy[2]
- "Award for services that welcome and offer sanctuary and hope" [p13], which reports on Kirklees Libraries recognition as a Library of Sanctuary[3] [p13]
- Adam Tocock "Local action to tackle a global climate crisis" [pp20-22], which outlines how the library at St Barts Health NHS Trust has taken the lead in coordinating action across the Trust[4]

Climate emergency – Libraries, Museums, Archives and Cultural and Heritage Organisations

Heritage responds – taking positive action on climate change

This important new report[5] from the Historic Environment Forum:

> "[…] is intended to show how heritage can become part of the solution to the risks and challenges of climate change. Importantly, this isn't just about making statements and promises, but rather sharing what we are already doing, and galvanising further action. The case studies set out in this document speak for themselves and of the talent, ingenuity, and technical endeavour of so many people working across the heritage sector with partners in academia, government and industry, striving to play their part." [p5]

In order to make this happen, "[…] the heritage sector must:

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[1] Further info on the CLPE website at: https://clpe.org.uk/news/happy-here-all-primary-schools-england-be-supported-bring-inclusive-and-representative-stories.

[2] *Forward: Scotland's Public Library Strategy 2021-2025*. SLIC, 2021, https://scottishlibraries.org/media/3344/foward-scotlands-public-library-strategydigital.pdf.
This was assessed in *Network Newsletter*, 245, Jul 2021, pp8-12, https://www.seapn.org.uk/uploads/files/Newsletter-NS-245.pdf.

[3] See: http://www.kirkleeslibraries.co.uk/libraries-of-sanctuary/.

[4] See: https://bartshealth-nhs.libguides.com/GreenatBartsHealth.

[5] *Heritage responds – taking positive action on climate change*. Historic Environment Forum, 2021, https://historicenvironmentforum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/HEF-Climate-Change-doc-final.pdf.

- Commit – to decarbonise our sector: creating, revisiting and reviving organisational sustainability plans to ensure commitments to Net Zero are backed up with robust and evidence-led delivery plans, and consider sustainability, carbon and environmental impact at the start of every project
- Collaborate – Work openly and effectively to share guidance, good practice, practical experience and lessons learned within the sector and beyond
- Communicate – Make the case for why heritage matters and actively participate in the climate change debate, showing how people have coped and adapted in the past and how good heritage management can build the resilience of places and communities, reduce emissions and retain embodied carbon.
- Invest – in the research, innovation, jobs, training and skills we need to adapt and build resilience in the face of climate change." [p6]

The Forum has analysed the work going on currently in the heritage sector, and found that it includes:

- Pioneering research and innovation
- Advocacy, awareness raising, sharing best practice
- Decarbonising heritage
- Supporting and enabling sustainable communities
- Championing nature
- Improving energy efficiency
- Investing in training and skills.

The report then draws together case studies that illustrate each of these points – these are really helpful and clear examples which give a strong lead as to what we could develop elsewhere.

Recommended.[6], [7]

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Green museums: tackling the climate crisis

The National Museums Directors' Council has issued this key report[8] which:

> "[…] highlights the many ways in which members of the National Museum Directors' Council are tackling the climate and biodiversity crises. These case studies demonstrate the key contribution which

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[6] Source: *Heritage Update,* 454, 21 Oct 2021.

[7] In addition, you might find the blogpost from the Climate Museum, "COP26: what comes after the blah?", helpful too – see: https://climatemuseumuk.org/2021/11/15/cop26-what-comes-after-the-blah/?fbclid=IwAR0tzuA6e5aZVpyBMpY5tdafvSaUtqcWA-4-SCOPReHRioq9BmUFQqgGXPk.

[8] *Green museums: tackling the climate crisis.* NMDC, 2021, https://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/media/documents/nmdc_green_museums_tackling_the_climate_crisis_2021.pdf.

museums and their partners are making to advancing science, changing human behaviour and working alongside governments to help safeguard the future of our planet." [p2]

The report also includes case studies, grouped under the headings Research; Public engagement; Estates and operations.

Also recommended.[9]

Tackling social and digital exclusion – Libraries, Museums, Archives and Cultural and Heritage Organisations

Libraries Connected Awards

The winners of the inaugural Awards have been announced:

> "Libraries Connected is delighted to announce the winners of its first ever awards to recognise and celebrate the achievements of library staff over the past year.
>
> Library workers across the country have gone beyond expectations during the pandemic to provide essential services and continue to develop their offer to engage with their communities. Libraries Connected has been inspired by the creativity and determination of library staff throughout the past 18 months."[10]

The winners are:

- "**Health & Wellbeing Award**: The Death Positive Library Project Team, Vision Redbridge, Kirklees and Newcastle [[11], [12]]

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[9] Source: *Heritage Update*, 19 Nov 2021.
[10] Taken from: https://www.librariesconnected.org.uk/news/libraries-connected-awards-winners-announced.
[11] See, for example: https://www.librariesconnected.org.uk/news/death-positive-libraries-national-framework.
[12] In addition:

"An important part of the Death Positive Library Project by Redbridge, Kirklees and Newcastle Libraries and Northumbria University has been the creation and curation of a booklist.
The booklist was started during Redbridge Libraries Final Party Project in 2017 and was added to and improved during the current project.
Books were suggested by the libraries project team, our expert researchers at Northumbria University, our various project partners, our reading group authors, attendees at our events and selected from relevant websites (Huunuu, etc.,)."

[Taken from: https://www.librariesconnected.org.uk/page/death-positive-libraries-book-list - the booklist is available on the website and to download as a pdf. There is further info about Huunuu at: https://huunuu.com/.]

For their work promoting the role of libraries as powerful and compassionate spaces to support conversations around death, dying and bereavement.

- **Reading Award**: Laura Smith, Library Apprentice, City of London Libraries
  For her work developing the 'What Next? Book Recommendation Quiz' that enables users to get recommendations for eBooks which resulted in a significant increase in eBook loans.

- **Culture and Creativity Award**: Sam Whitehouse, Customer Service Assistant, Wakefield Libraries
  For his work on the 'Cinema in the Library,' a Libraries Connected Yorkshire and Humber funded project that provides free cultural experiences to local people.

- **Information & Digital Award**: Basia Godel, Library Assistant, North Yorkshire Libraries [13]
  For her work on community cohesion and racial justice during Black History Month by curating an event on the contribution of black people to North Yorkshire and diversifying the library stock.

- **Children's Promise Award**: Shaun Doyle, Library Assistant, North Yorkshire Libraries [14]
  For his work in establishing the Young Adult Library Team made up of younger members of library staff who help the service to reach out more effectively to young people and young LGBTQ people.

- **Vision and Print Impaired People's Promise Award**: Helen Cunningham, Access and Inclusion Librarian, Derbyshire Libraries
  For her work in transforming Buxton Library Listening Group for people with sight loss to an online listening group accessible to people anywhere in the county."

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Socio-economic diversity and inclusion toolkit: creative industries

The Social Mobility Commission has recently produced this toolkit[15].

It begins by summarising the current position, including:

"[…] the workforce of the creative industries is heavily skewed towards those who are from more privileged backgrounds, with 52% of those

13 See, for example: https://www.librariesconnected.org.uk/content/BHM-north-yorkshire-young-adult-library-team.

14 See, for example: https://twitter.com/libsconnected/status/1450748776554156032.

15 *Socio-economic diversity and inclusion toolkit: creative industries.* Social Mobility Commission, 2021, https://socialmobilityworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/SMC-Creative_Industries-Toolkit_Sept2021.pdf.

employed coming from high socioeconomic or professional family backgrounds despite that group only making up 37% of the general working population.

The sector has an inflated concentration of those who were privately educated – for example 44% of newspaper columnists, influential editors and broadcasters attended an independent school, over seven times the national benchmark […] In turn, this creates a 'sense of fit', ensuring that those from privileged backgrounds 'appear intrinsically more suitable' and creating a hiring and progression cycle that favours dominant behavioural codes (around dress, accent, taste and etiquette) […]

Unfortunately, a number of practices that are commonplace throughout the industry do not support socio-economic inclusion […] Its high reliance on freelancers with a third of the creative industries workforce self-employed (including freelancers), double that of the UK workforce […] presents a lack of financial security and stability which is not conducive to attracting individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds." [p7]

The toolkit then outlines its research methods; and puts the case for focusing on socio-economic background.

It then outlines the importance of benchmarking in order to understand an organisation's starting-point and its 'journey'. This is summed up well with a quote from Sharon Heal (Director of the MA):

"Inequality in society and in our museums and galleries is a pressing challenge. We welcome the publication of this toolkit and would encourage museums and galleries to use it to engage, recruit and develop people from non-privileged backgrounds. We want museums to reach the broadest possible audiences and to work with diverse and underrepresented communities, and to do that we need to grow a workforce that is representative of all sections of society." [p15]

It notes that "More than half of all creative organisations in England are in London and the south-east of England" [p16] and looks at 'who gets in' and 'who gets on'. It also briefly looks at intersectionality.

It then goes on to set out a strategic approach which should include:

- Analysis of data
- 'The employee journey'
- Attention to culture
- Advocacy and collaboration.

It begins by setting out the sorts of questions to ask to measure socio-economic background; demonstrates how to use this data to begin to assess your progression; and also sets out a starter strategy for driving up response rates:

"Be clear in your communication as to what you will be using the data for – research shows that people are happier to provide this information as long as they understand why the organisation wants to know and what

they will do with the information. Applicants, apprentices, staff members, freelancers, volunteers and artists are more likely to engage positively with these questions if they see them as an integrated part of your strategy for promoting diversity and inclusion." [p33]

After this introduction, the toolkit begins:

"This toolkit provides two levels of guidance: one for organisations looking to build the foundations for increasing socio-economic diversity, alongside how an organisation can start optimising their approach. In many cases the activities recommended at each level are related but distinguished by scale, detail or commitment […]

But for those just starting out on their socioeconomic inclusion journey or a microbusiness or SME, these are the first steps. All of these are 'must have' interventions, so if you can only do a few things to start, ensure you are doing these." [p35]

In the following sections, the toolkit is laid out with its two levels, developing and optimising.

After a section on data, it looks at leadership and culture, making a key point:

"For you to take social inclusion seriously, this must be more than an individual or HR led. It has to be high on your agenda and an issue that occupies the minds of your whole organisation, from board members to the newest junior, changing mindsets and behaviours across your culture." [p44]

In terms of the 'employee journey', it looks at outreach (working to find and attract more diverse employees); hiring (including, for example, entry routes); and progression.

Finally, it looks at the importance of advocacy, with some key ideas, eg how to communicate publicly the commitment to social mobility; how to lead on inclusion.

There is a list of useful references and links (stronger on museums and heritage than libraries).

This is a really helpful and practical toolkit, recommended.[16]

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[16] Source: Museums Association email updates, 5 Oct 2021.

Health & Wellbeing issues – Libraries, Museums, Archives and Cultural and Heritage Organisations

Creatively minded and heritage: creativity & mental health activity in heritage settings

This report[17] by The Restoration Trust[18] has just been published. As it says in its introduction by Laura Drysdale:

> "Sometimes it is best to begin with what something is not. This report is not about museums or nature – they are well addressed elsewhere, so we are focussing on archives, archaeology and historic landscapes. It's not about wellbeing – mental health is wellbeing's subset. It's not about art – except where it is inspired by heritage. Things are messy in multi-layered cross-sectoral collaborations, so wellbeing is also about mental health, heritage is also about museums and nature, and creativity won't be told what it is about [...]
>
> These case studies are inspiring examples of best practice, as people form new communities in real and virtual places, connected by meaningful shared experiences." [p4]

The introduction also sets out the strategic context across the UK; stresses the potential role of heritage ("It makes sense to marry a mental health system where demand is overwhelming supply, with heritage assets where there is plentiful supply but unrealised demand. There is no good reason for any heritage or mental health provider not to be doing their part." [p6]); places this work in a social justice and activism context; looks at funding and partnerships; calls for more publication in academic journals to highlight the research elements of the work; argues for the need to build trusted allies to create a 'body of practice'; recognises the need for mental health support for heritage staff working in these areas; acknowledges that there may be constraints on using heritage materials ("The balance between access and preservation is an intriguing topic to discuss and rules should be clearly explained so that no one is shamed through ignorance." [p7]); and calls for more work to empower participants.

There are then in-depth (and very interesting) case studies from:

- Archaeology & historic sites

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[17] *Creatively minded and heritage: creativity & mental health activity in heritage settings.* Baring Foundation, 2021, https://cdn.baringfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/BF_Creatively-minded-Heritage_WEB-lr.pdf.

[18] "The Restoration Trust works in partnership with heritage/arts and health/social care bodies to provide 'culture therapy' for people with mental health problems.

'Culture therapy' helps people with mental health problems enjoy heritage, art and culture in a safe and effective way. We deliver projects in partnership with heritage/arts and health/social care bodies using resources and expertise from archives, archaeology, the historic environment, museums, visual art, music, creative writing and digital arts." [Taken from: https://restorationtrust.org.uk/what-we-do/].

- Archives
- Local history
- Nature & historic environments.

These are followed by two "Viewpoints" by:

William Rathouse (Senior Community Archaeologist at the Museum of London Archaeology) who sets out a 'manifesto' around developing approaches to using archaeology to support mental health; and Desi Gradinarova (Senior Policy Advisor (Wellbeing and Inclusion) at Historic England) who looks at:

> "There is a growing evidence for the wellbeing benefits of connecting with our historic environment – from increasing self-awareness and feelings of purpose and belonging, to improving brain health through learning and reminiscence and helping overcome social isolation, loneliness and depression." [p69]

There is then an important "Call to action" (which states that "Everyone can do things differently"):

> "**People living with mental health challenges**
>
> Assert your right to use heritage and creative assets as an integral part of your mental health care plan. Call out discrimination, and own your story.
>
> **Heritage organisations**
>
> If you have not already done so, review your assets of places, people, collections and information and ask yourself, how could you use them to deliver a brilliant mental health and creativity project? Upskill staff and volunteers with mental health training and supervision.
>
> **Mental health and social prescribers**
>
> Ask people if they are interested in heritage and creativity and follow their lead. Put heritage and creativity on your radar and employ Heritage and Creativity Link Workers. Pay providers.
>
> **Universities**
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> Continue the progress in collaboration and research that meets cross-sectoral needs. Consider supporting a new open access Heritage and Health journal.
>
> **Funders and national organisations**
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> Continue to reflect on options to fund flexibly, including long term and core support. Leverage best practice and stimulate it sector-wide. Urge government and your peers to see heritage as a mental health asset, and call out bad practice and exclusion.

Heritage, creativity and mental health providers

Keep on keeping on. Protect your value, publish research, share experiences, befriend your colleagues, and look after yourself." [p71]

This is an important, useful and thought-provoking report. Recommended.[19]

Abbreviations and acronyms

CLPE = Centre for Literacy in Primary Education
MA = Museums Association
NMDC = National Museum Directors' Council
SLIC = Scottish Library and Information Council
SME = Small and medium-sized enterprise

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[19] Source: *Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance Bulletin*, Nov 2021.