

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

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The Network's Website is at [www.seapn.org.uk](http://www.seapn.org.uk) and includes information on courses, good practice, specific socially excluded groups, as well as the newsletter archive.

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## Did you see ...?

### *Information Professional*

The Jan/Feb issue includes a number of important and useful articles:

- “We are CILIP – a new action plan to unlock new opportunities”, news item announcing the launch of the new CILIP plan (more below) [p5]
- “Funding for libraries to take first green steps”, news item about the launch of the ACE-funded Green Libraries Programme:

“Arts Council England has awarded £163,000 to CILIP, the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, to launch the Green Libraries programme, which aims to help libraries address their environmental impact.

CILIP will be supported in delivering the programme by the British Library, public library membership organisation Libraries Connected and environmental charity Julie’s Bicycle. Developed in response to COP26 and the long-term climate commitments made by libraries and local authorities across England, the project aims to reduce the carbon footprint of library assets including physical and digital content, buildings and vehicles, enable libraries to help their users engage with environmental issues, and position libraries at the heart of local environmental programmes.”<sup>1</sup>

- Kate Robinson “Workforce development” (“President’s View” column), which sets out the incoming CILIP President’s aims for her presidential year [pp16-17]
- Nick Poole “We are CILIP – Information, Knowledge, Libraries changing lives together”, which outlines the new five-year action plan [pp18-20] – and see below
- Catherine McClaren and Morag Clarkson “Welcome to the network”, which introduces CILIP’s Disability Network<sup>2</sup> [p21]
- Matthew Lawson interviewed by Rob Green “How the University library is becoming the hub of mental health support?”, which looks primarily at the work developing at Middlesex University<sup>3</sup> [pp22-24]

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<sup>1</sup> Taken from: <https://www.cilip.org.uk/news/593630/Arts-Council-England-and-partners-launch-Green-Libraries-programme.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> See:

[https://www.cilip.org.uk/members/group\\_content\\_view.asp?group=237768&id=950584](https://www.cilip.org.uk/members/group_content_view.asp?group=237768&id=950584).

<sup>3</sup> See: [https://www.cilip.org.uk/news/596257/How-the-University-library-is-becoming-the-hub-of-mental-health-support.htm?utm\\_campaign=180971\\_Fortnightly%20email%2023%20February%202022%20-%20MEMBER1&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=The%20Chartered%20Institute%20of%20Library%20and%20%20Information%20Professionals&dm\\_i=6WFS,3VMZ,9VBO9,FGNQ,1](https://www.cilip.org.uk/news/596257/How-the-University-library-is-becoming-the-hub-of-mental-health-support.htm?utm_campaign=180971_Fortnightly%20email%2023%20February%202022%20-%20MEMBER1&utm_medium=email&utm_source=The%20Chartered%20Institute%20of%20Library%20and%20%20Information%20Professionals&dm_i=6WFS,3VMZ,9VBO9,FGNQ,1).

- Ash Green “Equality and discrimination discussion”, which reports back on the latest (and last) uklibchat discussion involving the CILIP LGBTQ+ Network [p25]
- Ian Orton “Only the lonely”, column by the Retired Professionals Group, which looks at the role that libraries can lay in tackling loneliness [pp48-49]

### ***Museums Journal***

The Jan/Feb issue includes:

- Geraldine Kendall Adams “All eyes on number 10”, which looks at the appointment of Nadine Dorries as Culture Secretary, and also outlines the main points from the Comprehensive Spending Review [pp4-5]
- Geraldine Kendall Adams “Positive thinking”, which looks at initiatives in Northern Ireland intended to fuel recovery [pp8-9]
- Hannah Crowdy “Museums aid the social peace process by promoting understanding and respect” (“Comment” column), which outlines how National Museums NI are curating The Troubles [p12]
- Deborah Bull and Chi Onwurah “Barriers to equity and diversity in creative sector must not be rebuilt” (“Comment” column), which introduces the recently-published report, *Creative majority*<sup>4</sup> [p13]
- Alistair Brown “MA will support decolonisation efforts” (“Policy” column), which reaffirms the MA’s commitment [p15]
- Geraldine Kendall Adams “Never forget”, which looks at what museums are doing to ensure that the Holocaust is remembered [pp16-21]
- John Holt “We can be heroes”, which interviews the winners of the Museums Change Lives Awards:
  - Radical Changemaker Award: Sam Bowen – SEND In Museums<sup>5</sup> [pp22-23]
  - Best Small Museum Project Award: The Scottish Crannog Centre – Apprenticeship Scheme: They Might Be Giants<sup>6</sup> [pp24-25]
  - Digital Engagement Award: The Mixed Museum – Brown Babies<sup>7</sup> [p26]

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<sup>4</sup> Natalie Wreyford, Dave O’Brien and Tamsyn Dent. *Creative majority: an APPG for Creative Diversity report on ‘What Works’ to support, encourage and improve diversity, equity and inclusion in the creative sector*. King’s College London, 2021, <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/cultural/resources/reports/creative-majority-report-v2.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example: <https://southeastmuseums.org/special-schools-and-museum-toolkit/>.

<sup>6</sup> See: <https://www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/pilot-apprenticeship-scheme-the-scottish-crannog-centre/>.

- Best Museums Change Lives Project: National Justice Museum – Make It Yours: Workshops in an Envelope<sup>8</sup> [p27]
- Sarah Briggs “Money talks” (“In Practice” column), which looks at the ethics and practice of reimbursing project participants [p59].

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## Tackling social and digital exclusion – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

### ***Levelling up the United Kingdom [continued]***

IPPR North has just published its annual “State of the North” report<sup>9</sup>. ‘Headlines’ include:

- “The UK is more regionally divided than ever, and we see patterns of centralisation intensifying. This benefits no region and perpetuates a highly extractive economic model.” [p3]
- “New funds such as the Levelling Up Fund, are welcome – but they don’t go far enough.” [p3]
- “On jobs, we find significant gaps between productivity, earnings and access to good jobs when we compare the North to other parts of England. For every job created in the North, just under three were created in London and the ‘Greater South East’.” [p3]
- “We need to further empower those across the North who are already levelling up for themselves, and make sure no place or community is left behind [...]” [p4]
- “To underpin this objective we provide three missions for a prosperous North that offer a clear roadmap for central government, mayors, combined authorities, local government and communities to ensure levelling up succeeds, and the North can thrive:
  1. building a new economy that promotes widespread prosperity
  2. making the North the engine of the net zero transition
  3. providing everyone with access to high-quality, life-long education.” [p4]

In a blogpost<sup>10</sup>, Good Things Foundation’s Helen Milner writes:

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<sup>7</sup> See: <https://mixedmuseum.org.uk/brown-babies/>.

<sup>8</sup> See: <https://www.nationaljusticemuseum.org.uk/museum/events/free-family-friday-creative-workshops>.

<sup>9</sup> Jonathan Webb *et al.* *State of the North 2022: powering northern excellence*. IPPR, 2022, [https://www.ippr.org/files/2022-01/1642509678\\_sotn-2021-22-jan-22.pdf](https://www.ippr.org/files/2022-01/1642509678_sotn-2021-22-jan-22.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> Helen Milner “To Level Up we need to Fix The Digital Divide”, Good Things Foundation, 2 Feb 2022, [https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/what-we-do/news/to-level-up-we-need-to-fix-the-digital-divide/?utm\\_source=Good+Things+Foundation+Newsletter&utm\\_campaign=624461d9ee-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2019\\_04\\_05\\_08\\_12\\_COPY\\_01&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_874c1dbcc0-624461d9ee-110066901](https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/what-we-do/news/to-level-up-we-need-to-fix-the-digital-divide/?utm_source=Good+Things+Foundation+Newsletter&utm_campaign=624461d9ee-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_04_05_08_12_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_874c1dbcc0-624461d9ee-110066901).

“At Good Things Foundation, since the start of the pandemic we’ve been calling on the Government to put digital inclusion at the heart of Covid-19 recovery, harness the appetite for change, and take decisive action to fix the digital divide. In this context, it’s disappointing that the Levelling Up White Paper doesn’t go further in committing to closing the digital divide [...]

Fixing the digital divide is essential to realise the ambition of levelling up. It is not a sideshow, but a fundamental part of the economic and social fabric required to build opportunity, pride and growth.”

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## LGBTQ+ issues – Libraries, Museums, Archives and Cultural and Heritage Organisations

### Banning of LGBTQ+ books and other library materials

As we know, this has been going on for a long time, but, in the words of Matt Imrie<sup>11</sup>:

“Challenges to books in school & public libraries are nothing new, these have been going on for decades. The American Library Association runs annual lists of the most challenged books in US Libraries.

What is happening now goes beyond such standard challenges. I believe that Texas currently leads the nation in the sheer industrial scale of attempted and actual book bans. Matt Krause a Texas lawmaker compiled a list of over 800 books that he feels could make (white) readers feel uncomfortable. The majority of these books focus on sexuality, racism and US history.”

Matt also highlights that it is not just LGBTQ+ material that is being challenged:

“To date the largest splash has been made by the banning of the teaching of the Pulitzer-Prize winning graphic novel *Maus*, created by Art Spiegelman the son of two Holocaust survivors, it details the experiences of his parents before and during WW2. According to the McMinn County School Board, who voted 7-0 to deny teachers the opportunity of teaching the book due to a single panel of nudity and some bad language that (allegedly) made them feel uncomfortable. This has made the 40-year-old graphic novel a *cause célèbre* in the current discourse around book banning and also the number one selling item on Amazon. While many commentators have celebrated the Streisand Effect that has made this book more well-known than ever before, the fact that students are being denied the opportunity to critically engage with the text while studying the Holocaust is nothing to be happy about.”

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<sup>11</sup> Matt Imrie “The canary in the coalmine”, *Teen Librarian*, 5 Feb 2022, <http://teenlibrarian.co.uk/2022/02/05/the-canary-in-the-coalmine/>.

The article goes on to outline some of the recent challenges, eg:

“In Mississippi, the mayor of Ridgeland, Gene McGee is withholding \$110,000 of funding from the Madison County Library System, demanded that the system initiate a purge of LGBTQ+ books before his office releases the money. The mayor is alleged to have said that the library can serve whoever they wanted, but that he only serves the great Lord above. Which, if accurate seems to be a fundamental misunderstanding on his part of what the role of civil servants in society actually entails [...]

Library workers in the Campbell County Public Library of Wyoming have faced legal charges for having books on sexuality, gender identity and LGBTQ+ issues in their teen section although the sheriff’s office declined to investigate them and the Library Board backed the Library and did not direct them to remove the items facing the challenge.”

Matt’s article also includes a list of links to key websites and articles.

This news-story is echoed in a first-person account of being the Librarian in the middle of such a battle: Martha Hickson (a New Jersey high school Librarian and a 2020 recipient of the American Association of School Librarians’ Intellectual Freedom Award) wrote a piece<sup>12</sup> for *School Library Journal* which illustrated the impact on the school, the library, the students and her own health.

“Spurred by a coordinated, conservative censorship campaign that has spread nationwide, news outlets have repeated lurid accusations against libraries and librarians as purveyors of child pornography.

The campaign came for me on September 28, when parents launched an attack on *Gender Queer* by Maia Kobabe [<sup>13</sup>] and *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison [<sup>14</sup>] at our high school district’s board of education meeting. Ironically – or perhaps intentionally – during Banned Books Week (BBW), the protesters called for the removal of both books from district libraries; accused BBW of promoting racism and homosexuality; and described me and the board as sex offenders who push pornography on students.”

Martha Hickson’s article also includes a list of “opportunities for improvement”:

1. Pay attention: keep up-to-date with news and information about challenges and the political background

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<sup>12</sup> Martha Hickson “What’s It Like to Be the Target of A Book Banning Effort? School Librarian Martha Hickson Tells Her Story”, *School Library Journal*, 3 Feb 2022, <https://www.slj.com/story/from-the-breaking-point-to-fighting-anew-school-librarian-martha-hickson-shares-her-story-of-battling-book-banning-censorship>.

<sup>13</sup> More info at, for example: <https://adventuresincensorship.com/blog/2021/11/2/gender-queer-and-the-war-on-books>.

<sup>14</sup> There is brief background info at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lawn\\_Boy\\_\(Evison\\_novel\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lawn_Boy_(Evison_novel)).

2. Strengthen criteria for challenge initiation, for example by introducing “A form that requires the complainant to read the entirety of the work and consult professional reviews”
3. Revise the policy: ensure that any policies for reconsidering library stock are kept under review.

The article also suggests other “hazards” which we need to look out for, including:

- Demoralised library staff: “Some may be hesitant to talk to students about books, create displays, and offer recommendations for fear of further backlash.”
- Pre-emptive censorship
- Censorship beyond the library: “The attacks on the library and librarian have generated fear among classroom teachers. Concerned that they may be next to be targeted, teachers may avoid controversial topics, limit discussion, or drop the use of certain texts. If the district demonstrates strong and consistent support of librarians, confidence may rise among classroom teachers.”
- Division within the school: “Some staff believed parents’ false claims, supported banning of the books, and shunned me. Maintaining my professional demeanor and continuing to provide helpful services may repair some of those relationships.”

There is a very powerful article<sup>15</sup> in *USA Today*, which looks at the effects of these book-bannings:

“The American Library Association has documented a ‘dramatic uptick’ in challenges to books in libraries’ collections. In some states, titles are being pulled from libraries at an unprecedented rate. The association received 330 reports of such challenges last fall alone. Almost all of the most frequently targeted books deal with race, gender or sexuality, and recent challenges have tended to focus on newer titles that explore the intersection between all three – George M. Johnson’s “All Boys Aren’t Blue,” [16] for example, and Maia Kobabe’s “Gender Queer.” [17]

The largely conservative politicians and parents who have pushed to remove certain titles from schools or libraries say the books are inappropriate for students. The books often contain sexually explicit scenes and vulgar language and explore uncomfortable themes such as death and rape. Some book challengers worry the literature in question fosters biases or guilt. Exposure to that content, they conclude, does more harm than good.

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<sup>15</sup> Alia Wong “Books are being banned from school libraries. Here's what that does to students.” *USA Today*, 5 Feb 2022, <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/news/education/2022/02/05/maus-beloved-banned-book-student/6668059001/>.

<sup>16</sup> George M Johnson. *All boys aren't blue*. Penguin, 2021.

<sup>17</sup> Maia Kobabe. *Gender queer: a memoir*. Lion Forge, 2019.



But many students – who according to a recent ALA analysis initiate fewer than 1% of book challenges – believe the reverse is true. Banning books can have academic, social and mental-health consequences, they say, and research seems to support their claims.”

There is also a very positive rebuttal from writer Jason A. Michael:

“Books by and for LGBTQ+ people, and in particular LGBTQ+ youth, are under attack across the country. In states such as Texas, a single parent need only complain before a book can be banned from a school library. And in Florida, the state legislature is considering a ban on the word “gay” in public elementary schools — a measure Gov. Ron DeSantis has signaled his support for. These homophobic governors are on a mission designed to stunt the emotional and intellectual growth of students, who will, no matter what books are banned or what legislation is passed, find their own ways of learning about who they are.

Growing up in the '80s, I knew no one who was gay. Not a soul. It was a painfully innocent time long before “Ellen” and “Will & Grace” and the world we live in today, where virtually every TV show is now proudly committed to including an LGBTQ+ character. I lived through a gay cultural wasteland where LGBTQ+ characters were largely invisible and, when shown, were reduced to overly stereotypical comic relief.

Books have always been an outlet for me, an only child until age 13. My mom used to read romance novels by Danielle Steel and I would pick them up after she'd finished. In 1988, when I was 16, I read Steel's “Family Album.” The story of actress-turned-director Faye Price Thayer, the main character had a son named Lionel who, throughout the course of the story, met an older man and came out to him as gay. It was the first time I had ever stumbled upon gay characters in a book. And I, who had no such older gay man in my life to take me under his wing and show me the gay ropes, came out of the closet alongside Lionel.

It was a life-changing moment. And even though Lionel was just a character in a book, I knew then that there must be others in the world like me.”<sup>18</sup>

Now there has been a similar high-profile event here in the UK, according to *PinkNews*<sup>19</sup>:

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<sup>18</sup> Taken from: Jason A. Michael “LGBTQ+ books helped me come out and banning them won't stop today's youth from being who they are”, *Pride Source*, 28 Feb 2022, <https://pridesource.com/article/lgbtq-books-helped-me-come-out-and-banning-them-wont-stop-todays-youth-from-being-who-they-are/?fbclid=IwAR275tJs1eotDqMKq5navUqyz-86ulDbHjim2ueXBGhNUhtoy7Ndaa3TEk8>.

<sup>19</sup> Lily Wakefield “Gay author's school visit cancelled by Catholic diocese after anti-LGBT+ smear campaign”, *PinkNews*, 9 Mar 2022, [https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2022/03/09/gay-catholic-school-southwark-diocese-simon-james-green-john-fisher/?utm\\_source=piano&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=mypinknews&pnespid](https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2022/03/09/gay-catholic-school-southwark-diocese-simon-james-green-john-fisher/?utm_source=piano&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=mypinknews&pnespid)



“Gay author Simon James Green has been blocked from visiting a Catholic state school by the local diocese after an anti-LGBT+ campaign.

Award-winning children’s and young adult author Green was scheduled to do a World Book Week talk and book-signing at The John Fisher School in Croydon, London on Monday (7 March). It was cancelled just days before by the Catholic Diocese of Southwark, which insisted the visit fell ‘outside the scope of what is permissible in a Catholic school’.

In the days before the event was set to go ahead, the anti-LGBT+ website Catholic Truth encouraged its readers to contact the school and diocese to protest the ‘scandalous’ and ‘outrageous’ book-signing.”

The article reports that the School Library Association has issued a statement<sup>20</sup> – it says:

“This event was due to happen at the end of a week-long celebration of reading and that was the purpose – to encourage children to read for pleasure.

It is a central tenet of a school librarian’s role to provide a range and variety of resources to support all pupils; to present many voices, multiple stories and various points of view. This teaches nothing other than the importance of celebrating who we are and to be accepting of difference; which is so vital for mental health and wellbeing.

This is enforced in part through the CILIP Ethical Framework, which provides guidance on ethical professional practice for librarians. It includes an active responsibility to ‘uphold, promote and defend Human Rights, equality and diversity and the equitable treatment of library users’. This active responsibility extends to all aspects of library provision, including the selection and development of diverse and representative book collections as well as activities, resources and access to electronic materials in the library. It is only by being exposed to a broad, balanced and diverse range of information and stories that users can not only learn more about themselves, but to empathise and engage productively with the people around them.”

We stand with the school’s senior leaders, governing body and staff in believing the visit should go ahead, and send our support and sympathy to those impacted by this decision.”

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[=76Z.VH9DZLgTy\\_vLvTvvD82M5Ay2Dod5NPTnwuk4rwRmU4Hc49D6bShVrgCrvF0qFGJM0kljWA.](https://www.sla.org.uk/article/hannah-groves/statement-in-response-to-the-education-commission-of-southwark-archdiocese-decision-regarding-an-author-visit/2470)

<sup>20</sup> “Statement in response to the Education Commission of Southwark Archdiocese decision regarding an author visit”, School Library Association, 9 Mar 2022, <https://www.sla.org.uk/article/hannah-groves/statement-in-response-to-the-education-commission-of-southwark-archdiocese-decision-regarding-an-author-visit/2470>.

## Broader issues – Libraries, Museums, Archives and Cultural and Heritage Organisations

### “We are CILIP: Information, Knowledge, Libraries changing lives together”

As noted above, CILIP has launched its new five-year action plan<sup>21</sup>.

It starts with a celebration of purpose:

“Our purpose will be to unite, support and empower information professionals in all sectors.” [p2]

This includes the Vision:

“A professional community, dedicated to changing lives through quality information, services and expertise” [p2]

Mission:

“To be the leading professional membership association for people working in information, knowledge, libraries and related disciplines.” [p2]

and Values:

“We will stand for and actively champion the values that unite our profession:

- Social justice
- Intellectual freedom
- Evidence-based practice” [p2]

It then sets out “Four contexts for our professional future”:

- Sustainability: “Our members will help their users, communities and organisations create a more sustainable world by making informed decisions and being accountable for their use of resources.” [p4]
- Digital transformation: “Our members will help their users, communities and organisations to harness the positive potential of new and disruptive technologies including AI, machine learning, automation and robotics while minimising the risks.” [p5]
- Equity and social justice – see below.

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<sup>21</sup> See:

[https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.cilip.org.uk/resource/resmgr/cilip/campaigns/we\\_are\\_cilip/we\\_are\\_cilip\\_strategy\\_report.pdf](https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.cilip.org.uk/resource/resmgr/cilip/campaigns/we_are_cilip/we_are_cilip_strategy_report.pdf). All quotations are taken from this version. There is also a Welsh version:

[https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.cilip.org.uk/resource/resmgr/cilip/campaigns/we\\_are\\_cilip/wearecilip\\_strategy\\_welsh.pdf](https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.cilip.org.uk/resource/resmgr/cilip/campaigns/we_are_cilip/wearecilip_strategy_welsh.pdf).

- Leadership: “Our members will move from ‘Information Managers to Information Leaders’ – enabling their users, communities and organisations to harness the power of information, knowledge and data to fulfil their potential.” [p7]

It sets out the four “Value Propositions” (what it offers the profession) as:

- Recognition
- Expertise
- Representation
- Community.

It outlines who “Our wider audience” can include, and then “On a page” summarises the plan and offer.

Finally, there is a page setting out how we can all help to promote the plan – and become part of CILIP.

For us, one of the key issues is equity and social justice. The plan says:

“As a community, we will hold ourselves to account for our personal, professional and ethical commitment to Equity and Social Justice. Our members will work with their users, communities, organisations and their own institutions to achieve a more just, inclusive and representative society which ensures intellectual freedom and access to opportunity for all.” [p6]

As Abibat Olulode (Committee member, Prisons Libraries Group, and Development Librarian Literacy, Skills, Employment and Business, London Borough of Lambeth) says:

“As librarians and information professionals, we have a central role to play in achieving a more just, inclusive and representative society. There is a great deal of work to do, but as a professional community we are committed to challenging inequality and building a more equitable future for everyone by being mindful of this is everything we do, from our partnerships with the community, other professionals and organisations, to upholding our professional standards and making sure that they are still relevant and address the new diverse and inclusive landscape.” [p6]

The plan is accompanied by:

- A poster, “10 reasons to join CILIP”<sup>22</sup>
- A film outlining the key points<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> English version:

[https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.cilip.org.uk/resource/resmgr/cilip/campaigns/we\\_are\\_cilip/we\\_are\\_cilip\\_a4\\_poster\\_final.pdf](https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.cilip.org.uk/resource/resmgr/cilip/campaigns/we_are_cilip/we_are_cilip_a4_poster_final.pdf).

Welsh version:

[https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.cilip.org.uk/resource/resmgr/cilip/campaigns/we\\_are\\_cilip/reasonstojoincilip\\_welsh.pdf](https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.cilip.org.uk/resource/resmgr/cilip/campaigns/we_are_cilip/reasonstojoincilip_welsh.pdf).

- An “Ideas Platform” that “[...] allows anyone to upload and share their ideas and suggestions for the future of the sector and CILIP’s role within it.”<sup>24</sup>
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## Abbreviations and acronyms

ACE = Arts Council England

ALA = American Library Association

APPG = All Party Parliamentary Group

COP26 = 26<sup>th</sup> United Nations Climate Change Conference

MA = Museums Association

SEND = special educational needs and disability

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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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<sup>23</sup> <https://www.cilip.org.uk/page/wearecilip>.

<sup>24</sup> See: <https://cilipideas.org.uk/>.