

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 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

Apologies, I have got a bit behind with these ...

The Apr/May issue includes the following items of interest:

- “Books in food banks” [news story] which reports that:

“Food banks and community groups have been supplied with 40,000 books in the first stage of a £5m book gifting scheme in Wales.

The books were provided as part of the Welsh Government’s book-gifting scheme, which is being delivered by the Books Council of Wales [...]” [p10]
- “Food for thought in the library” [news feature] which looks at Kent Libraries’ positive involvement with the Holiday Activities and Food Programme in the Thanet area of the county [p14]
- Nick Poole “CILIP, social justice and equity”, which looks at how CILIP is putting these issues at its core via the new “We Are CILIP” strategy [pp16-17]
- Yvonne Morris “New Changing Lives Action Plan and Hub” – accompanying Nick’s article is this summary by Yvonne of CILIP’s changing approach towards equality, diversity and inclusion (including a handy timeline of developments) [p17]
- Regina Everitt and Jess Crilly “Decolonising the curriculum: making space for new narratives”, which summarises some of the current work around decolonising and introduces the new book they have edited¹ [pp20-23]
- Rob Green interviews Sayf Al Ashqar (Director of the Central Library at the University of Mosul) about what happened when Mosul was taken over by ISIS [pp25-27]

¹ Jess Crilly and Regina Everitt (eds) *Narrative expansions: interpreting decolonisation in academic libraries*. Facet Publishing, 2021. Further info at: <https://www.facetpublishing.co.uk/page/detail/narrative-expansions/?K=9781783304974>.

- Rob Mackinlay “Do you need some totipotency?”, which looks at the community engagement project, “65 High Street”, in Nailsea² [pp29-32]
- Jay Sullivan “CILIP LGBTQ+ Network Committee – opportunities to get involved!” (“Insight” column), which outlines the work and achievements of the Committee and invites people to apply for a number of roles [p40]
- Hannah Ishmael “Black Cultural Archives: a ‘ruby’ in Brixton”, which outlines the history of the BCA and its current focus³ [pp41-43]
- Martyn Wade “CILIP – standing up for intellectual freedom”, which introduces the current consultation around intellectual freedom (and stresses why this is such a key issue at the moment)⁴ [pp44-46]
- Catherine McClaren and Morag Clarkson “Amplifying voices” (“Insight” column), which outlines recent developments by the CILIP Disability Network⁵ [p47]
- Nick Cavender “Celebrating equality, diversity and inclusion in the school library” (“Insight” column), which looks at the CILIP School Libraries Group and how schools can practically implement a diversity strategy, for example by recognising that “Some diversities are hidden; many students with dyslexia or ADHD are undiagnosed, and we probably do not know how many students identify as LGBTQ+ [...]” [p51]

The June issue includes:

- “Book banning battle heats up” (news article) which outlines some of the recent developments particularly in the US and particularly against LGBTQ+ books and provision [p12]
- There is a number of articles about sustainability and the launch of the Green Libraries Partnership:
 - Kate Robinson “Sustainability at the CILIP Cymru Wales Conference” (“Insight: President’s View” column) [p15]
 - Rob Green “*We are CILIP* – supporting sustainable choices”, which introduces the Green Libraries Partnership as part of the new CILIP strategy⁶ [pp16-17]
 - Rob Mackinlay interviews Emma Noyce “Are we too lazy to save ourselves?”, which looks at how libraries can help tackle the

² See, for example: <https://www.nailseatown.com/65-high-street/>.

³ See: <https://blackculturalarchives.org/>.

⁴ See: <https://www.cilip.org.uk/page/intellectualfreedom>.

⁵ See:

https://www.cilip.org.uk/members/group_content_view.asp?group=237768&id=950584.

⁶ See:

<https://www.cilip.org.uk/news/news.asp?id=593630&hhSearchTerms=%22green+and+libraries%22> and

<https://www.cilip.org.uk/page/AboutGreenLibraries?&hhsearchterms=%22green+and+libraries+and+partnership%22>.

- climate emergency (and also highlights Emma’s session at the CILIP Conference) [pp22-25]
 - Rob Green interviews Diana Edmonds “Taking steps to a sustainable model”, which looks at what GLL have been developing [pp39-41]
- Caroline Roche “Defending the rights of LGBTQ+ students” (“Insight” column), which looks at the key and important role that school libraries have in this increasingly-contested area of work [p51]

Books for Keeps

The May 2022 issue⁷ includes a couple of articles of particular interest:

- Ann Lazim “Ten of the Best books from the Commonwealth”, books by Commonwealth writers [pp10-11]
- Darren Chetty and Karen Sands-O’Connor “All about hair”, the latest in their series, “Beyond the Secret Garden”, which looks at depictions of Black people’s hair in children’s books [pp14-15]

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

Public libraries and literacy recovery

This new research report⁸ has just been published by Libraries Connected and was produced by the National Literacy Trust with funding from Arts Council England.

The report highlights the vital role of libraries in helping to close the literacy gap which widened during the pandemic.

The report outlines the role of public libraries as “a national reading service”, highlighting, for example, how they support early language and literacy development; engage and inspire young readers; help close the gap linked to socioeconomic background; and support adult literacy.

The report also demonstrates how libraries can contribute to a fairer society:

“Literacy and libraries are inextricably linked to opportunity and empowerment. Increasing levels of literacy increases life opportunities, earnings and health outcomes. Raising literacy levels across a community will have collective economic and social benefits.

⁷ *Books for Keeps*, 254, May 2022, <https://booksforkeeps.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/BfK-254-May-2022.pdf>.

⁸ *Public libraries and literacy recovery*. Libraries Connected, 2022, <https://www.librariesconnected.org.uk/resource/public-libraries-and-literacy-recovery-report>.

For this reason literacy is a priority in the Levelling Up agenda and libraries, as a universal agent of reading, have a key role to play.” [p7]

The report then looks at the impact of the pandemic, particularly on the reading and literacy skills of children from disadvantaged communities, and argues that libraries can make a contribution in several ways, including:

- A targeted approach, eg “Libraries are expert at delivering approaches that focus on disadvantaged communities, where literacy is lowest, book ownership and reading habits are weakest, and where the educational impact of the pandemic is strongest.” [p13]
- Taking an holistic approach: “Through reading clubs, holiday activities and early years rhyme times, public libraries can support not just literacy skills but the social, emotional and cultural elements of literacy.” [p13]
- A sustained approach, eg by becoming long-term partners to schools, colleges, etc.
- Taking a focused local approach.

Recommended.⁹

Health & Wellbeing issues – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

Tackling Loneliness annual report February 2022: the third year

The tackling loneliness strategy was published in 2018¹⁰, and this assessment of progress¹¹ was published earlier this year. Given the impact of Covid, it is of even more importance that we recognise and combat loneliness.

The progress report summarises action taken over the last year, and then outlines the work for the next year, based on the three objectives established in the original 2018 report:

- Reducing stigma
- Driving a lasting shift
- Improving the evidence base on loneliness.

⁹ Source: email from Libraries Connected, 30 Jun 2022.

¹⁰ *A connected society: a strategy for tackling loneliness – laying the foundations for change*. DDCMS, 2018, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/748212/6.4882_DCMS_Loneliness_Strategy_web.pdf. This was assessed in *The Network Newsletter*, 210, Aug 2018, pp11-16.

¹¹ *Tackling Loneliness annual report February 2022: the third year*. DCMS, 2022, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/loneliness-annual-report-the-third-year/tackling-loneliness-annual-report-february-2022-the-third-year>.

Reducing stigma

In terms of this objective, there has been a growing campaign to tackle loneliness, and, as part of this, DCMS have become part of the established “Better Health: Every Mind Matters” campaign¹² which shares advice to help people look after their mental health and wellbeing.

“Over the next year, we will continue to work with partners as part of the Better Health: Every Mind Matters campaign to grow the national conversation on loneliness. We will continue to remind people that it is OK to feel lonely, and encourage everyone to take action to help themselves and others.”

Driving a lasting shift

Work has included developing the “Tackling Loneliness Network” and launching the “Tackling Loneliness Hub”¹³.

“Over the next year, we will continue to grow the Tackling Loneliness Network and support Network members to collaborate and learn from each other. The Tackling Loneliness Champions will continue to meet over the course of the coming year to share insights and evidence, and to work together to grow the national conversation on loneliness. We will continue to work with the Social Connection Funders Group to bring together funders to share information, learning and advice.

We will also continue to embed tackling loneliness in relevant work across government, including considering how the benefits of social connection can be reflected in the government’s new Mental Health Strategy.”

Expanding the evidence base

Work has included setting up an Evidence Group which, in Jan 2022, published a review of evidence gaps¹⁴.

“Findings from the 2021-2022 Community Life Survey will be published in 2022, and will include findings on loneliness levels in the UK. We will continue to build the evidence base, working in partnership with the Tackling Loneliness Evidence Group.”

The progress report includes a number of short case studies, including one on “Reading Friends” highlighting the work of The Reading Agency and:

“Rochdale Libraries started a weekly ‘Mums, Bumps and Babies’ Zoom group to offer new and expectant parents the chance to share stories and make new friends. Without the usual mum and baby groups available, many participants said this was exactly what they needed. For some

¹² See: <https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/lifes-challenges/loneliness/>.

¹³ See: <https://tacklinglonelinesshub.org/>.

¹⁴ See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-loneliness-evidence-review>.

experiencing anxiety during pregnancy, the group offered much needed support, enabling them to talk to others and know they were not alone.”

This is followed by a more detailed update on the 2018 strategy.

This is a useful place to find information about the current state of the loneliness strategy, plus some examples of work being developed and links to further information.¹⁵

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

Banning of LGBTQ+ books and other library materials [continued]

As you will no doubt have seen, this has become a major issue – and not just in the US.

There is evidence of coordinated approaches, for example:

“A Catholic organization is encouraging its members to steal LGBTQ books from libraries as part of its ‘Hide the Pride’ campaign.

A teen librarian who goes by Alex on social media shared a picture of the Pride Month display that they created, but with all the books missing [...]

‘My middle grade Pride Month display was stolen tonight and this threatening letter was left by the thief,’ they wrote. ‘I’m so upset.’

‘To protect our children and the community, we have checked out the books in the pride display,’ the form letter said. ‘We plan to keep these books checked out until the library agrees to remove inappropriate content from the shelves.’¹⁶

It is also becoming increasingly violent and dangerous: for example:

“Two branch libraries at Prince George’s County Memorial Library System (PGCMLS) were targeted with anti-LGBTQIA+ graffiti during the Washington, DC, area’s Capital Pride Week. The Greenbelt Branch Library was vandalized on the night of Saturday, June 4, and the New Carrollton Branch Library on the night of Thursday, June 9.

¹⁵ Source: *Equally Ours Newsletter*, 24 Feb 2022.

¹⁶ Alex Bollinger “Christians are checking out all LGBTQ books at libraries as part of a ‘Hide the Pride’ campaign”, *LGBTQ Nation*, 17 Jun 2022, https://www.lgbtqnation.com/2022/06/christians-checking-lgbtq-books-libraries-part-hide-pride-campaign/?fbclid=IwAR11nv-yG5AhgrWgiTUKQY3_1iZKKLJgQgVDVccA-Q0PFMo5nyirm7NxGXE.

In both incidents, the word ‘Groomer’ was spray-painted on exterior library walls—over the main entrance doors at the Greenbelt Branch, and near a loading dock at New Carrollton. As noted in the recent harassment incident during Drag Queen Story Hour at San Lorenzo Library, CA, ‘groomer’ and other unfounded accusations that LGBTQIA+ people pose threats to children have become common rhetoric used by the anti-LGBTQIA+ right.”¹⁷

And:

“Police investigations are underway after a gang of alleged Proud Boys members stormed a Drag Queen Story Hour at the San Lorenzo Library, California.”¹⁸

However, it is worth noting that, at another event, there was some opposition:

“A Pride Month Family Storytime event in a Texas library was beset by anti-LGBTQ+ protesters, many wearing Trump merch and religious insignias, on Saturday (25 June).

Suspected members of the far-right groups Proud Boys and Three Percenters – some wearing body armour and reportedly armed – also showed up at the Roy and Helen Hall Library in McKinney, Texas, *BuzzFeed News* reported.

But the far-right mob was met with a veritable wall of counter-protesters wearing kaleidoscopic colours, waving Pride flags and holding up signs in support of the LGBTQ+ community.”^{19,20}

¹⁷ Lisa Peet “Prince George’s County Memorial Library System Targeted by Anti-LGBTQIA+ Vandalism”, *Library Journal*, 17 Jun 2022, https://www.libraryjournal.com/story/news/prince-georges-county-memorial-library-system-targeted-by-anti-lgbtqia-vandalism?utm_medium=email&_hsmt=217204148&_hsenc=p2ANqtz--ymCyfjtqYc_t2a_XqUgerFowxzBdS-Dh1Q_7cljQfmHhOAdE1IF-gpcsb8vaXOTUzGu8sB27dglPwiyCqrBdACsYkiA&utm_content=217204148&utm_source=hs_email.

¹⁸ Rachel Badham “Proud Boys’ storm Drag Queen Story Hour with ‘violent threats’ as children look on in fear”, *PinkNews*, 13 Jun 2022, https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2022/06/13/proud-boys-storm-drag-queen-story-hour-hate-crime-california/?utm_source=piano&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=mypinknews&pnespid=6rN.EjtJN68R2P7YrSzrSJJuQtQigSsFpNuenwPpxtB9mEak8eGL2aGbRADzhuglhLs5mW5KPVg.

¹⁹ Maggie Baska “Proud Boys who targeted LGBTQ+ story time met with ‘human shield’ of LGBTQ+ love”, *PinkNews*, 29 Jun 2022, https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2022/06/29/proud-boys-lgbtq-protest-texas-library-pride/?utm_source=piano&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=mypinknews&pnespid=ur07Di0ZM6IFw6PH.iW7FpCLukL3U8R6KbKmnPdzpBBmehfKAkyIXUwrVIsAQIjWeUmoavTqoA.

²⁰ John Russell “‘Human shield’ bravely blocks violent hate group from harassing kids at library Pride event”, *LGBTQ Nation*, 28 Jun 2022, <https://www.lgbtqnation.com/2022/06/human-shield-bravely-blocks-violent-hate-group-harassing-kids-library-pride-event/>.

There is a particularly heartening article²¹ in *SLJ*, which looks at some examples where school librarians have supported – and become advocates for – students who identify as LGBTQ+. For example, describing Tyler Sainato, the school librarian at Cane Ridge High School in Antioch, TN, a suburb of Nashville, student Bradley Savella said:

“She was just a breath of fresh air, and she would always make me feel so safe,’ says Savella, who came out as gay during his high school years. ‘She also was an advocate for the LGBT community, and she directed me to the GSA [Gay-Straight Alliance]. Being in Tennessee is a little scary for LGBT students and children.”

Just in case people think this is all limited to the US:

“A right-wing mob threatened to bring ‘every weapon in their arsenal’ to celebrated drag queen Aida H Dee’s home after her address was leaked on a hateful chat group.

Aida, who is the founder of Drag Queen Story Hour UK, tells *PinkNews* that she’s been sent vile hate ‘day after day’, feeling like she’s been ‘stabbed from all directions’. But she says things escalated after someone shared her home address with a messaging group composed of thousands of right-wingers.”²²

Following on from the items in the previous Newsletters, a joint statement²³:

“[...] has been produced jointly by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP), the CILIP School Libraries Group (CILIP SLG) and the School Library Association (SLA). It is intended to provide clear guidance for school librarians, school leadership and Governors when considering issues relating to intellectual freedom and censorship.”

²¹ Marva Hinton “Librarians Support Students Amid Anti-LGBTQIA+ Legislation, Challenges”, *School Library Journal*, 7 Jun 2022, https://www.slj.com/story/librarians-support-students-amid-anti-lgbtqia-legislation-challenges?utm_medium=email&hsmi=215837605&hsenc=p2ANqtz-96vTtfMIWA2cAdDDy0DzJkjdLzo4UywW6mdrhuEPaFZBN4QqE2ENjgePx9CNzozHfed678623zSB4Dc3lhjoeBitqSq&utm_content=215837605&utm_source=hs_email.

²² Maggie Baska “Drag queen storyteller for kids Aida H Dee receives violent threats after home address leaks”, *PinkNews*, 9 Jul 2022, https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2022/07/09/aida-h-dee-drag-queen-story-hour-uk-doxxed-threats/?utm_source=piano&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=mypinknews&pnespid=7rVkdZMMLxKhqHfuiisAcyW5kKvDZ90cuHln.pq.hxma1ZSG0BnUpQI4JJTuMLZsUM7yliS_g.

²³ *Interim Joint Position Statement: Censorship and intellectual freedom in school libraries*. CILIP/School Libraries Group/School Library Association, 2022, https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.cilip.org.uk/resource/resmgr/cilip/policy/intellectual_freedom/joint_statement_school_libra.pdf.

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

“Contested heritage” and “Culture wars”

The MA reported²⁴:

“Glasgow Life has defended the Burrell Collection’s approach to labelling after criticism that the museum had ‘politicised’ exhibits by linking them to the contemporary discourse on transgender rights.

The museum, which reopened in March after a £68.25m refurbishment, made the news this week after the feminist campaign group For Women Scotland accused it of appropriating Buddhist art to ‘prop up an ideology’.

The group criticised a number of labels accompanying two 17th-century porcelain figures of the Buddhist goddess Guanyin, which describe the deity as a ‘transgender icon’. One of the labels reads ‘trans people have always existed and are rooted in history. Figures like Guanyin reflect this, showing that gender and identity are not always fixed’, while another says ‘trans rights are human rights. Be more Guanyin’.

Abbreviations and acronyms

CILIP = Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals

DCMS = Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

MA = Museums Association

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²⁴ Geraldine Kendall Adams “Glasgow Life defends trans label in Burrell Collection after ‘politicisation’ row”, MA News, 22 Apr 2022, https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/2022/04/glasgow-life-defends-trans-label-in-burrell-collection-after-politicisation-row/?utm_campaign=2133519_22042022&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Museums%20Association&dm_i=2VBX,19Q8F,27LU0M,4Y1XF,1.