

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

Number 257, July 2022

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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

More apologies! I've only just realised that I included the same info twice in two previous *Newsletters*. The following are issues of *Information Professional* that I haven't included previously!

The Sept issue¹ includes:

- Bruce Leeke, interviewed by Rob Mackinlay “The experiment worked – will it work again?”, which looks at how Suffolk Libraries [Network member] have fared during 10 years of being a mutual [pp32-35]
- David Byrne “Slow librarianship”, in which David (from the Retired Professionals Group) looks at the benefits of doing “fewer things in order to do them better” [pp46-47]

The Oct/Nov issue includes:

- “Library strategy visits start to take place” [news item], which outlines the visits being undertaken by Baroness Elizabeth Sanderson² [p8]
- “Green survey shows action and desire for change” [news item], which is an update on the work of the Green Libraries Partnership³ [p11]
- “Warm spaces in libraries” [news feature], which is a short round-up of some of the current initiatives⁴ [p12]
- Olivia Marks-Woldman “Holocaust Memorial Day: take action in 2023”, which outlines how libraries can get involved. The theme for next year is “Ordinary People”⁵ [pp16-17]
- Masud Khokhar (interviewed by Rob Mackinlay) “Positive disruption culture”, which includes a strong criticism of libraries’ ‘culture’ of being risk-adverse and having a fear of failing [pp24-27]

¹ *Information Professional*, Sept 2022, see:

<https://content.yudu.com/web/43mce/0A43mcf/InfoPro39September22/html/index.html?page=4&origin=reader>.

² It also includes a link to her DCMS blogposts at:

<https://dcmslibraries.blog.gov.uk/2022/10/13/stamford-to-sutton-and-beyond-visiting-library-branches-across-england/>.

³ See: <https://www.cilip.org.uk/page/greenLibraries>.

⁴ See: <https://www.cilip.org.uk/page/warmspaces2022>.

⁵ See: <https://www.hmd.org.uk/what-is-holocaust-memorial-day/this-years-theme/>.

“Genocide is facilitated by ordinary people. Ordinary people turn a blind eye, believe propaganda, join murderous regimes. And those who are persecuted, oppressed and murdered in genocide aren’t persecuted because of crimes they’ve committed – they are persecuted simply because they are ordinary people who belong to a particular group (eg, Roma, Jewish community, Tutsi).”

- Tiina Hill (interviewed by Rob Mackinlay) “LibraryOn – building a new online space for UK public libraries”, which notes developments in the pursuit of a ‘Single Digital Presence’⁶ [pp30-32]
- Binni Brynolf “The importance of staff networks” (“Insight” column), which reports back on an event that looked at the important role of staff networks in organisations [p33]
- Sarah Mears “Transforming Leadership: Leading Libraries”, which reports on the Libraries Connected (Arts Council-funded) programme⁷ [pp34-37]
- Morag Clarkson and Catherine McLaren “Leadership and allies within the network” (“Insight” column), which is a brief update on the work of the CILIP Disability Network⁸ [p54]

Museums Journal

The Nov/Dec 2022 issue includes:

- Carol Rogers “House of Memories can aid the wellbeing of people living with dementia globally”, which summarises the work that has been developed so far, and sets out their ambition to lead a House of Memories national network⁹ [p10]
- Carlos Tortolero “Stop being accomplices to the racism that exists in society”, which argues that museums need to be engaged with social justice and part of the fight against racism, and that this needs to be embedded in the work of large museums [p11]
- Siobhán McGuirk and Nirmal Puwar “Women’s stories must be the focus if a new generation of leaders is to emerge”, which outlines the results of research that “[...] reveal pressing concerns for a sector that, despite some progress, continues to grapple with equality, diversity and inclusion.” [p13]
- Jonathan Knott “Far from home”, which looks at work with Indigenous communities [pp14-19]
- Eleanor Mills interviews Corinne Fowler “Home truths”, which looks at the background to the research into the colonial links of some National Trust

⁶ See, for example: <https://libraryon.org/>.

⁷ See: <https://www.librariesconnected.org.uk/page/leading-libraries-transforming-library-leadership>.

⁸ Further info about the Network on Twitter at: <https://twitter.com/CILIPDisability>.

⁹ Created by National Museums Liverpool, “House of Memories is a museum-led dementia awareness programme which offers training, access to resources, and museum-based activities to enable carers to provide person-centred care for people living with dementia.” For further info, see: <https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/house-of-memories>.

properties – and the reactions to this, which ranged from “massive support” to death threats and hate mail¹⁰ [pp24-27]

- “In Practice: Anti-Racism Special”, which ties in with the MA’s new campaign [see below] and which includes:
 - Rebecca Atkinson “Developing strategies to tackle racism”, which starts by saying that, despite commitments made, some museums haven’t carried this through into practical action. The article then gives some positive examples of work being developed [pp54-55, 57]
 - Yasmin Khan “Support network”, in which she talks to those involved in anti-racism about what they need to be able to be effective [pp58-59, 61]
 - Triona White Hamilton “Embracing all”, which looks at key decolonisation work being developed by National Museums NI [pp62-63]

Pen & Inc.

A quick catch-up with the magazines from 2022.

The Spring/Summer issue¹¹ includes, for example:

- Manjeet Mann “Running towards hope”, which looks at her novel which was the YA winner for 2021 of the Diverse Book Awards [pp4-7]
- Steve Antony “Seeing colour in a new light”, which looks at the illustrator’s work, especially on *You can!* [pp12-15]
- Alexandra Strick “Authentic voices, real experiences”, which also looks at *You can!* (Alexandra was the author) and some of her work at Inclusive Minds¹² [pp16-19]
- Jo Bowers “Tir na n-Og Award 2022 – reflecting Wales in children’s literature”, which outlines the background to the Awards, and announces the 2022 shortlist¹³ [pp24-27]
- Miriam Foley “ALCS – 45 years of making a positive impact on writers’ lives”, which looks at the role that the Authors’ Licensing and Collecting Society has played in championing writers’ rights [pp28-29]

¹⁰ There is a summary of Corinne Fowler’s work – and links to the reports mentioned in the article – at: <https://le.ac.uk/people/corinne-fowler>.

¹¹ See:

<https://content.yudu.com/web/43mce/0A43mcf/PenInc07SprSum22/html/index.html?refUrl=https%253A%252F%252Fpublisher.yudu.com%252F>.

¹² See: <https://www.inclusiveminds.com/>.

¹³ For more info on the Awards, see: <https://llyfrau.cymru/en/gwobrau/tir-na-nog/#:~:text=The%20Tir%20na%20n%2DOg,for%20children%20and%20young%20people..>

The Autumn/Winter issue¹⁴ includes, for example:

- Catherine Barter “Little Rebels Award: celebrating 10 years of radical books”, which looks at the history of the Award and the 2022 shortlist – and winner¹⁵ [pp4-7]
- Oliver Sykes “Stories of care – opportunities to shine”, which looks at how this writing and outreach project (aiming to engage with young people) has developed [pp8-11]. It is followed by short pieces by six of the young writers involved in the latest in the series, in which they “[...] share their experience of the project and how it has helped them take their first step on the road as children’s authors” [pp12-14]
- Jasbinder Bilan “Incredible adventures, incredible journeys – India and beyond”, which looks at the writer’s fiction, and why she feels it “[...] so important to bring the story of the country to life for children and young people” [pp18-21]
- Jasmine Richards “We imagine differently”, which looks at why she established Storymix¹⁶, and the importance of “[...] creating books that put kids of colour in the centre of stories full of joy and adventure” [pp22-25]
- Jake Hope “Graphic intent”, which looks at the power of graphic novels [pp28-32]

Black Lives Matter

Anti-Racism

The MA is “[...] convening a sector-wide campaign for museums to tackle racism.”¹⁷

The webpage has links to a number of resources, and also includes sections on:

¹⁴ See:

<https://content.yudu.com/web/43mce/0A43mcf/PenInc08AutWin2022/html/index.html?refUrl=https%253A%252F%252Fwww.cilip.org.uk%252Fpage%252Fpenandinc>.

¹⁵ “The Little Rebels Children’s Book Award is a prize for radical fiction aimed at children aged 0-12. The award is given by the Alliance of Radical Booksellers and was established in conjunction with Letterbox Library. The award is now administered by Letterbox Library and Housmans Bookshop.” Further info about the Award at:

<https://littlerebels.org/>.

¹⁶ “STORYMIX is a fiction studio. This means we work like a movie producer but for books! We find the right talent and pair them up with an idea we have developed in-house. We are experts in creating children’s stories that put kids of colour in the centre of narratives filled with joy and adventure. Representation matters to us.” See:

<https://www.storymix.co.uk/>.

¹⁷ See: https://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/anti-racism/#msdynttrid=aYpAmN2RGUvr47flpaptzyysFV8_urjicC1FywcMslq.

Museums and anti-racism

This includes a brief summary of recent developments, plus a list of actions that “[...] are needed in order for museums to become anti-racist organisations.

- Being honest that racism is embedded in the collections and structures of museums and acknowledging institutional racism.
- Starting on anti-racism work with a critique of collections, operations, structures and workforce.
- Gathering data and evidence and setting clear targets, KPIs and evaluation and ensuring accountability.
- Giving authority, agency and capacity to communities to develop anti-racism work.
- Ensuring board and leadership engagement.
- Providing and prioritising budget, capacity and resources for anti-racism work.”¹⁸

What we are doing to tackle racism [at the MA]

There is a brief summary of actions taken so far, including:

- Inclusive events places and memberships
- Inclusive recruitment and internships
- Anti-racism training
- Speakers at our staff meetings
- Measuring our practice
- Budgeting for action¹⁹

This is followed by a list of resources, further reading, etc.

Equality, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion – Libraries, Museums, Archives and Cultural and Heritage Organisations

***“It’s about handing over power”*: the impact of ethnic diversity initiatives on curatorial roles in the UK arts & heritage sector 1998-2021**

This important new report²⁰:

¹⁸ Taken from: <https://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/anti-racism/museums-and-anti-racism/>.

¹⁹ See: <https://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/anti-racism/what-we-are-doing-to-tackle-racism/>.

²⁰ Sandra Shakespeare and Errol Francis. *“It’s about handing over power”*: the impact of ethnic diversity initiatives on curatorial roles in the UK arts & heritage sector 1998-2021. Museum X/Culture&/Art Fund, 2022,

“[...] aims to set out what should be the priorities for funders, museums and arts organisations to encourage greater cultural diversity in the curatorial workforce.” [p6]

It argues that:

- “Few ethnic diversity workforce initiatives in the UK arts and heritage sector have aimed specifically at diversifying curatorial roles; most have instead been aimed at generic entry-level roles.
- Where these entry-level roles have led to curatorial positions, this has been largely due to individual personal drive and ambition rather than the programmes themselves.
- The Arts Council England (ACE) Inspire Fellowship programme, International Curators Forum and programmes developed and delivered by ICF/Art360 Foundation stand out as initiatives that have had a sustained focus on curatorial diversity” [p7]

It contrasts this with the experience in the US where there has been greater focus on and investment in diversifying the curatorial workforce.

The research identifies key issues, for example the short-term nature of many of the posts created; the fact that there seems to be a lot of talk but little action; and the need for ‘structures’ eg mentorships; and structural change – and that this required transferring power.

The report’s recommendations include:

- “To fund, increase and share high-quality research on career pathways of participants in arts and heritage diversity schemes with appropriately funded longitudinal studies and the creation of a dataset that tracks demographics of the curatorial workforce, including freelancers.
- Museums and galleries to encourage school-age children to think of their organisations as good places to work, and collaborate with the higher education sector to increase diverse students at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, widen participation and create stronger pipelines and training schemes.
- To support a focus on specific initiatives leading to permanent curatorial employment, rather than generic entry-level or temporary roles.
- To take an evidence-based approach to actively influence leadership on diversity policy and antiracism at a central and local government level, and by arm’s-length bodies.
- For funders to actively work with institutions, ensuring accountability, recognising the burdens of people of colour, and provide appropriate modes of support to retain staff, helping them gain experience and, importantly, seniority.
- Greater investment in anti-racism and ethical curatorial practice, and to tackle individual cases of institutional racism by working collaboratively with diverse workers and their trade union representatives.

<https://bibli.artfund.org/m/53e933cf196387c3/original/Art-Fund-Curatorial-Diversity-report.pdf>.

- To address structural and institutional racism in funding criteria to ensure a more equitable allocation of funding.
- Increased funding for and support to culturally diverse and Black-led spaces, collectives, organisations and initiatives.
- To put in place funding and structures to better support and enable independent curators and practitioners, both inside and outside of institutions, investing in new and alternative models.
- Increased dialogue, knowledge-sharing and collaboration between funders, cultural organisations, and academic bodies.” [p60]

Recommended.²¹

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

Libraries and sanctuary ...

Just in case you haven't seen this, my book²² was published on 3 Nov – there are further details attached as an appendix.

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

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

The struggles, especially in the US, continue.

Recently, for example, “Two volumes from the beloved *Heartstopper* graphic novel series are at the centre of a battle to get a Michigan library defunded over LGBTQ+ books.”²³

And, rather unbelievably:

“An Alabama dog shelter has been receiving death threats after holding a drag queen story time for their resident pups.

On 24 September, Hard Knocks Rescue and Training, which cares for ‘unadoptable’ dogs, broadcast a Facebook Live showing drag performer

²¹ Source: Museums Association email updates, 11 Nov 2022.

²² John Vincent. *Libraries and sanctuary: supporting refugees and new arrivals*. Facet Publishing, 2022. [NB charged-for publication].

²³ Maggie Baska “Heartstopper books pulled into absurd anti-LGBTQ+ library battle”, *PinkNews*, 10 Oct 2022, https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2022/10/10/heartstopper-books-graphic-novels-lgbtq-library-michigan/?utm_source=piano&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=mypinknews&pnespid=67luDi9VObhCh.vN_yqxGoORuAmtU8V5PPqg3el1.hxm8_suWshHOoZBPAuB4C_RNH3wDLNYbxA.

Miss Majesty Divine reading the book *Walter the Farting Dog: Banned from the Beach* to a group of dogs.”²⁴

Abbreviations and acronyms

DCMS = Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

MA = Museums Association

YA = young adult

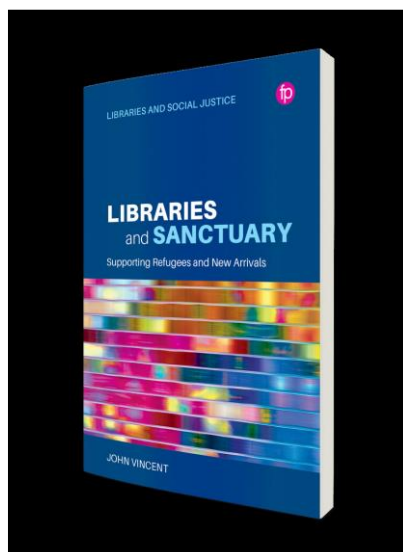
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²⁴ Lily Wakefield “Homophobic trolls threaten dog shelter over drag queens reading to pups. Yes, really”, *PinkNews*, 14 Oct 2022, https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2022/10/14/drag-queen-story-time-dog-shelter-alabama-libs-of-tiktok-homophobia/?utm_source=piano&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=mypinknews&pnespid=7qQ2EHQaPqFKhvCQ.yS2CouD5E.zS5stM.Why_h3pQZmKg6bFAYrhQWPWY9GUH273AC7LJuF4A.

Libraries and Sanctuary

Supporting Refugees and New Arrivals

John Vincent

Around the world, more people than ever are being forced to flee conflict, changing climates, environmental degradation, and persecution to find safety and sanctuary elsewhere. New arrivals – those who have crossed borders to reach a country – face numerous challenges acclimatising to their new home, from cultural and social barriers to literacy, health and wellbeing.

Libraries and Sanctuary is a practical guide to how libraries and their staff can support new arrivals. The book looks at the different drivers behind an individual's move, their need for signposting, and at the sorts of barriers that they face. Readers will discover the background reasons for migration, the global political context of migration, and the likely impacts of both of these. They will also gain an understanding of just how much work libraries have done so far; learn from practical initiatives, 'what works' examples and longer case studies; identify gaps in library provision; and find inspiration to start similar initiatives in their own institution. Drawing on the author's decades of work in libraries and social exclusion, this is a book for anyone seeking to create an inclusive and welcoming library community.

About the Author

John Vincent has worked in the public sector since the 1960s, primarily for Hertfordshire, Lambeth and Enfield public library services. In 1997, he was invited to become part of the team that produced the UK's first review of public libraries and social exclusion, from which The Network, which he now coordinates, originated. John runs courses and lectures, writes, produces regular newsletters and lobbies for greater awareness of the role that libraries, archives, museums, and the cultural and heritage sector play in contributing to social justice. He is particularly interested in supporting the work that libraries do with young people in care, with LGBTQ+ people, and with people seeking sanctuary and other 'new arrivals' to the UK.

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