

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

The Jan/Feb issue¹ includes:

- “Induction pack for public library new recruits” [News item], which is a brief intro to the new pack (more on that in a later issue of the *Newsletter*) [p8]
- Rob Mackinlay “Green Libraries Conference: agenda gaining momentum”, which introduces this major conference (which has, of course, since taken place²) [pp14-16]
- Morag Clarkson and Catherine McLaren “Sharing examples of good practice”, which outlines work being developed at Barts Health NHS Trust and invites examples of good practice around disability from libraries in all sectors [p17]
- Ash Green “Network committee”, which reintroduces the CILIP LGBTQ+ Network Committee – and calls for some more volunteers [pp26-27]
- Jeff Payne “Bringing banking back to the community for High Street boost”, which outlines the work that Community Junction³ are doing to bring access to banking – and other services – back to local communities⁴ [pp33-35]
- Julia Randell-Khan “Longevity and the Library, Information and Knowledge sector”, which, basically, puts forward a good case for considering having longevity in your work/career! [pp38-40]

The Mar 2023 issue includes:

- “Equal futures? An imbalance of opportunities” [News item], which reports on the drop in the number of school libraries over the last four years (and also links to the Great School Libraries 2023 report⁵) [p12]

¹ *Information Professional*, Jan/Feb 2023.

² There is a brief summary at: <https://www.cilip.org.uk/news/635911/Action-Inspiration-and-Insight-at-Inaugural-Green-Libraries-Conference.htm>.

Case studies are available to download from:

https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.cilip.org.uk/resource/resmgr/cilip/advocacy/green_libraries/frontpage/glp_case_studies_2022_ra.pdf.

Links to downloads, presentations, etc are at: <https://www.cilip.org.uk/page/green-lib-conference2023>.

³ I couldn't find any further info about Community Junction.

⁴ On a personal note, I felt that this article could have done with some thorough editing – it was extremely difficult to grasp exactly what it was about and, therefore, what the impact for other libraries and communities might be.

⁵ See: <https://www.greatschoolibraries.org.uk/2023research>.

- Louise Cooke interviewed by Rob Green “Controversial materials in libraries and what to do about them”, which trails her session at CILIP Conference [pp16-18]
- Amina Shah interviewed by Rob Green “Leadership, community and the power of storytelling” [pp20-23], which looks particularly at how libraries should become more open; interestingly Amina says:

“We used to talk about hard-to-reach people and communities, but now we are realising that we have hard-to-reach institutions.” [p21]
- Kirsten MacQuarrie “WINspiration: feminism for libraries and librarians”, which outlines CILIP Scotland’s programme of activities, events, resources and more⁶ [pp24-26]
- Paul Howarth “Social capital – demonstrating the value”, which looks at the real value that libraries provide (and is based on work in Suffolk⁷) [pp34-35]

ARC Magazine

The Mar/Apr 2023 issue⁸ includes:

- Philip Milnes-Smith and Iida Saarinen “Opening lines” [pp5-6], in which they explore the need for an Accessibility Working Group:

“The Accessibility Working Group of the Diversity and Inclusion Allies is necessary because the profession operates in a contemporary ableist culture (not necessarily conscious or calculated) which marginalises disabled people as less than nondisabled people. We exist, in part, to promote the accessibility of our premises and outreach events, and of our catalogues, collections and records. Our intention is to ‘usualise’ the idea that there are disabled people in our communities, whose contributions, needs and lives are important. We also want to remind our profession of the fact that past disabled people are present and absent in our collections, and that both deserve careful handling in our description and outreach work.” [p6]
- Makiya Davis-Bramble “Decolonising the Archive: a Caribbean approach” [pp16-17], in which the author “[...] explores how her mixed-Caribbean cultural background gave her the insight needed to explore how historical narratives were collected, researched, and catalogued.” [p16]
- “Scaling Up ‘Change Minds’”, a short update on the project⁹:

⁶ The terrific web resources are at: <https://www.cilips.org.uk/feminism>.

⁷ See: <https://www.suffolklibraries.co.uk/about/initiatives-and-impact/measuring-our-impact-independent-research-into-our-social-value>.

⁸ *ARC Magazine*, 391, Mar/Apr 2023.

⁹ See also: <https://changeminds.org.uk/>.

“Change Minds began in 2015 as a collaboration between the Norfolk Record Office and the mental health charity The Restoration Trust. It utilises the records of the former Norfolk County Asylum in a wellbeing project.

The programme recruits participants with lived experience of mental ill-health, who engage with case records of patients and research their lives and experiences. The participants then attend creative workshops and develop artistic responses to their research [...]

Norfolk Record Office is working with HMP Norwich to deliver Change Minds with prisoners. This naturally involved a lot of restrictions to the usual format - no internet access, site visits or original records - meaning the team had to run the workshops flexibly. However, feedback has been positive, with participants interested in asylum histories and keen to talk more about their mental health.” [p31]

Books for Keeps

The Mar 2023 issue¹⁰ includes:

- Mary-Rose Grieve “Great School Libraries Campaign – Unequal Futures: An Imbalance of Opportunities”, a guest editorial by the co-chair of the Great School Libraries campaign¹¹, which “[...] the glaring inequality of school library provision across the UK, both in terms of quantity and quality” [p2]
- Darren Chetty and Karen Sands-O’Connor “Beyond the Secret Garden: Magic” [pp12-13], in which the writers continue their analysis of representation of Black, Asian and minority ethnic voices in British children’s literature, focusing here on “magic and who gets to wield it.” [p12]

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

“Inclusion”

As part of a pool of information about “running your organisation”, The National Archives have created this “Inclusion”¹² hub.

It includes:

¹⁰ *Books for Keeps*, 259, Mar 2023, <https://booksforkeeps.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/BfK-259-March-2023-hi-ires-single-pages.pdf>.

¹¹ Further info at: <https://www.greatschoolibraries.org.uk/>.

¹² See: <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/advice-and-guidance/running-your-organisation/inclusion/>.

- Introduction to inclusion, looking at the importance of inclusive practice and how to adhere to inclusive principles
- Resources, including:
 - Risk assessment: “This risk assessment is designed to support archive professionals and staff in their work to communicate potentially upsetting histories.”
 - Wellbeing and inclusive language
 - Inclusive illustrations: “The National Archives has worked with the illustrator Erin Aniker to commission four artworks that feature users and volunteers within both physical and digital archival spaces.”
- Research: “Mapping inclusive practice across English regions” (and links to some other resources)
- Case studies: “Read our series of three case studies and find out what archives around the country have been doing to make their services more inclusive. Aside from our own case study on the creation and planning of our With Love exhibition, Bristol Archives and Kresen Kernow have also written about their experiences.”¹³

Disability issues – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan: right support, right place, right time

The Government has just published this improvement plan¹⁴ (following consultations last year).

There is widespread criticism of the current level and spread of SEND and AP provision, and this plan aims to change this, particularly by developing clearer National Standards:

“The National Standards will set out what provision system leaders, such as multi-academy trust leaders, governing bodies, headteachers, college principals and chief executive officers (CEOs), directors of children’s services and Integrated Care Boards, need to make available for all

¹³ Source: email from Karishma Wadhvani to archives-nra@jiscmail.ac.uk, 23 Feb 2023.

¹⁴ *Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan: right support, right place, right time*. [CP800]. Department for Education, 2023, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1139561/SEND_and_alternative_provision_improvement_plan.pdf.

children with SEND in every local area, nursery, school and college. We intend to underpin the standards with legislation for education at the earliest opportunity to facilitate intervention in education settings if standards are not met.” [p27]

and a coordinated SEND/AP system.

This will include an emphasis on improving transition into, for example, further and higher education and employment. There will also be a focus on developing the skills of the workforce and enhancing leadership.

There is also an urgent need for sustainable funding – as part of this, the Government will “[...] increase core school funding by £3.5 billion in 2023-24 compared to the year before, of which almost £1 billion of that increase will go towards high needs. This means high needs funding will be £10.1 billion in 2023-24.” [p13].

However, responses from local government and the charity sector suggest that the reforms may not go far enough¹⁵.

For example, the LGA argues that:

“However, while the measures announced will help to fix some of the problems with the current system, they do not go far enough in addressing the fundamental cost and demand issues that result in councils struggling to meet the needs of children with SEND.”

and that:

“Powers to intervene in schools not supporting children with SEND should be brought forward at the earliest opportunity, but should sit with councils, not the DfE.”¹⁶

The National Deaf Children’s Society described the plan as being “a positive step in the right direction” but also argues that urgent action is needed immediately to train more teachers of deaf students.

We need to look at how these recommendations are developed and what sorts of impact they may have on our provision.¹⁷

¹⁵ There is a round-up of some of these comments at:

<https://www.cypnow.co.uk/news/article/send-and-ap-green-paper-response-measures-do-not-go-far-enough-council-leaders-warn>.

¹⁶ “SEND measures ‘do not address cost and demand issues’ – LGA on Government’s Improvement Plan” [News release], LGA, 2 Mar 2023, <https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/send-measures-do-not-address-cost-and-demand-issues-lga-governments-improvement-plan>.

¹⁷ Source: Children & Young People Now *Early Years and Education Bulletin*, 7 Mar 2023.

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

Banning of LGBTQ+ books and other library materials [continued] and Protests against Drag Queen Storytimes

“Directors under attack”

Library Journal recently published an article¹⁸ showing some of the effects on library staff – as the article’s subtitle says:

“Library directors often bear the brunt of intellectual freedom challenges from community members – even from their own boards – and some have chosen to leave”¹⁹

“LGBTQ+ book bans are ‘actively harming children’, authors warn: ‘Echoes of Nazi book burnings’”

In this article²⁰, authors Fox Fisher and Ugla Stefanía Kristjónudóttir Jónsdóttir highlight the dangers of book bans:

“Right-wing hysteria about LGBTQ+ books for young people is beginning to spread from the US, where Republicans have long sought to have queer titles banned from bookshelves.

In Ireland [²¹], libraries are currently facing intimidation and abuse over LGBTQ+ books for teens.

Staff were even given instructions on how to secure buildings in the face of protests seeking to remove “offensive” books, including *This Book is Gay* by Juno Dawson, *Yay! You’re Gay! Now What?* by Riyadh Khalaf and *Trans Teen Survival Guide* by Fox and Owl Fisher.

Each book is different, but they all have something in common: they all strive to provide knowledge and a sense of belonging to the next generation of queer kids. For some parents, lawmakers and far-right provocateurs, that’s a step too far.”

¹⁸ April Witteveen “Directors under attack”, *Library Journal*, 1 Mar 2023, https://www.libraryjournal.com/story/Directors-Under-Attack?utm_campaign=LJXpress&utm_medium=email&_hsmt=249199378&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-_A8q64OIsJTsVByjFsUF07UpO3A2ijox3DI9JdAADU27zhL_C0uiw3FF8gebvg2GcFADvXoUYxtp21HQ2juTqtW923jQ&utm_content=249199378&utm_source=hs_email. [You need to register on the *LJ* website to access the article.]

¹⁹ Source: *LJXpress* – *Library Journal*, 7 Mar 2023.

²⁰ Patrick Kelleher “LGBTQ+ book bans are ‘actively harming children’, authors warn: ‘Echoes of Nazi book burnings’” *PinkNews*, 21 Apr 2023, https://www.thepinknews.com/2023/04/21/lgbtq-books-ban-fox-fisher-owl/?utm_source=piano&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=mypinknews&pnespid=tKdjCiQeKPhKgOvf.ya_SYmLp0v0XZ8pfLGwmbQ5vgFmAVzVBicPF6AVzWA6vw5D3vLclAtYIQ.

²¹ There will be more on the situation in Ireland in the next Newsletter.

“Judge rules against LGBTQ+ book ban, orders titles to be returned to library shelves in ‘ringing victory for democracy’”

Cheering article²²:

“As reported by CNN, in April 2022, seven residents sued Llano County officials for removing 12 books from public libraries which were deemed ‘inappropriate’ as they focused on topics of gender, race or sexuality.

The plaintiffs claimed their First and 14th Amendment rights were violated by the removal of the texts [...]

Issuing an order in the case, Judge Robert Pitman said the physical books must be returned to shelves and the library is required to show the texts as available in its catalogue.

‘Although libraries are afforded great discretion for their selection and acquisition decisions, the First Amendment prohibits the removal of books from libraries based on either viewpoint or content discrimination,’ CNN quoted Pitman as saying.”

“Author Judy Blume claps back at book bans: ‘What are you protecting your children from?’”

The renowned author²³ opposes bans:

“‘What are you protecting your children from?’ the author said.

‘Protecting your children means educating them and arming them with knowledge, and reading and supporting what they want to read.

No child is going to become transgender or gay or lesbian because they read a book. It’s not going to happen. They may say, “Oh, this is just like me. This is what I’m feeling and thinking about.”

Or, “I’m interested in this because I have friends who may be gay, bi, lesbian.” They want to know!”

“Teaching union calls for more drag events and LGBTQ+ spaces in UK schools”

In another positive development²⁴:

²² Sophie Perry “Judge rules against LGBTQ+ book ban, orders titles to be returned to library shelves in ‘ringing victory for democracy’”, *PinkNews*, 2 Apr 2023, https://www.thepinknews.com/2023/04/02/texas-lgbtq-race-book-ban/?utm_source=piano&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=mypinknews&pnespid=7Lt2DC1GOPIFh_jJ.jroFJGHshOtRlcuc7CkmPBxrBFm5LPB5odyGIQ94VXqRbfGzCM eJTWkug.

²³ Sophie Perry “Author Judy Blume claps back at book bans: ‘What are you protecting your children from?’”, *PinkNews*, 3 Apr 2023, <https://www.thepinknews.com/2023/04/03/judy-blume-lgbtq-book-bans/>.

“A teaching union has come out in support of a [sic] holding drag queen story in schools, to help foster a more inclusive atmosphere.

At the National Education Union’s (NEU) annual conference in Harrogate, delegates were told that schools should be encouraged to set up LGBTQ+ inclusive spaces for pupils, as well as organise events such as drag queen story hours and queer authors holding talks.

A motion calling on the NEU’s executive to publicly support such initiatives, said these steps are important for helping to challenge the ‘heteronormative culture and curriculum’.

The call for action comes as drag queen story hour events, LGBTQ+ content in schools, and youth books containing queer story lines, themes and characters, have come under increasing scrutiny from right-wing groups.”

“Attacks on asylum housing: fighting the weaponisation of gender-based violence”

Although this article²⁵ is not directly related to the cultural sector, it is heartening to see this exploration of the need to take an intersectional approach to understand the links between different targeted groups.

The piece begins:

“The eruption of violence in Knowsley, Merseyside – where supporters of the far Right orchestrated a riot, hurling lit fireworks at a hotel where asylum seekers are accommodated – is not an isolated incident, but part of a relentless far-right campaign targeting accommodation for asylum seekers. Over the weekend, further protests against asylum-seekers took place in Skegness, Newquay and Long Eaton.”

It then places all this in context:

“By tapping into fears and anxieties concerning the housing crisis, an over-burdened healthcare system and an economic crisis, the far Right are seizing the opportunity to direct blame towards a vulnerable minority, enabling anti-immigration protests to rapidly gain ground. It is no

²⁴ Sophie Perry “Teaching union calls for more drag events and LGBTQ+ spaces in UK schools”, *PinkNews*, 6 Apr 2023, https://www.thepinknews.com/2023/04/06/national-education-union-drag-queen-story-hour-lgbtq/?utm_source=piano&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=mypinknews&pnespid=qOE6ECscb6kK1fvKuGiyD8mPuAO.Tst7l_tz7tnvxRmTh6KQztbLEk33z3EliJOdyAoHPJ8RQ.

²⁵ Sophia Siddiqui. “Attacks on asylum housing: fighting the weaponisation of gender-based violence”, *IRR*, 2 Mar 2023, https://irr.org.uk/article/from-ireland-to-knowsley-attacks-on-asylum-housing-and-the-weaponisation-of-gender-based-violence/?ml_subscriber=2171967718645831059&ml_subscriber_hash=u3h5&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=governance_through_spectacle&utm_term=2023-03-27.

coincidence that the areas targeted are facing acute housing shortages with some of the highest levels of deprivation.”

and draws the parallels:

“In Ashtown, near Dublin, an attack on homeless migrants was driven by false claims that a refugee had been involved in a sexual assault – since denied by the gardaí who are investigating a white Irish man. In a separate incident, a man was brutally attacked after a video posted on TikTok falsely accused him of sexually assaulting patients at Dublin’s children’s hospital. And prior to the protests in Knowsley, rumours spread on social media following reports of a man, linked without proof to the hotel housing asylum seekers, making inappropriate advances towards a teenage girl, whilst far-right actors linked the protest to ‘grooming gangs’, a narrative that has harmed abuse victims and demonised whole communities.

We have also seen similar tactics in the far-right targeting of drag queen story hour events, with unfounded accusations of ‘grooming’ and ‘paedophilia’ used to demonise performers and events organisers for ‘sexualising their children’. Most recently, members of Turning Point UK were vastly outnumbered by counter-protesters at a drag queen story hour event at the Honor Oak pub in Lewisham, south-east London. ‘It’s got everything to do with dividing us’, said one counter-protester addressing the crowd, ‘it’s got everything to do with just making your neighbours seem like an enemy’.”²⁶

Abbreviations and acronyms

AP = Alternative Provision

DfE = Department for Education

IRR = Institute of Race Relations

LGA = Local Government Association

SEND = Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

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²⁶ Source: *IRR News*, 16 Mar 2023.