

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 Oct/Nov issue¹ includes:

- “Librarians ‘should be prosecuted’” [News], which reports briefly on an US survey (by EveryLibrary Institute and Book Riot)² of parents’

¹ *Information Professional*, Oct/Nov 2023.

² See: <https://bookriot.com/parental-perceptions-of-the-public-library/>.

perceptions of libraries. The majority felt their children were safe in public libraries – but 25% thought that librarians should be prosecuted for “giving children access to certain books”. [p8]

- “Senedd calls for immediate support for libraries” [News], which outlines the Welsh Government’s response³ to a report⁴ on Local Authority Leisure and Library Services [p10]
- “Can libraries keep prisons out of the headlines?” [News Feature], which focuses on the work of the Prison Libraries Group and its *Excellence framework* ...⁵ [p12]
- Alice Leggatt “Censorship concerns: the vulnerability of UK school libraries to book restriction” [“Insight” column], which looks at the growing pressure on school libraries to remove particular books (referencing the issues around the author Simon James Green⁶) [p28]
- “Partnerships and collaboration to support Ukraine’s libraries”, interview by Rob Green with Lyusyena Shum (Executive Director of the Library Country Charitable Foundation⁷) [pp29-31]
- David McMenemy “Ethics and advocacy – why we need to talk about our values”, which reports on the REVEAL: Reinforcing Ethics and Values for Effective Advocacy for Libraries project⁸ [pp34-36]
- “The P* word (*poverty)” [“Insight” column], an important piece from the CILIP Disability Network, which looks at some of the barriers – in terms of poverty – facing disabled people [p37]
- “Festival of Pride and Knowledge” [“Insight” column], an update on the activities of the CILIP LGBTQ+ Network [pp38-39]
- Sheila Corral “Making sense of the social turn in academic libraries”, a longer article which looks at socially-engaged practice in academic libraries [pp40-43]

³ The response, *Welsh Government response to the Senedd Local Government and Housing report on local authority library and leisure services*, is at:

<https://senedd.wales/media/jrknylnq/gen-ld16029-e.pdf>.

⁴ *Local authority leisure and library services*. Welsh Parliament, 2023, <https://senedd.wales/media/3fdmwwiv/cr-ld15967-e.pdf>.

⁵ *Making the difference – an Excellence Framework for prison libraries*. CILIP Prison Libraries Group, 2023, <https://www.cilip.org.uk/news/news.asp?id=652342>.

⁶ See, for example: Libby Broks “Children’s author Simon James Green: ‘I just wanted to show LGBT+ kids that it’s not all doom and gloom’”, *The Guardian*, 29 Apr 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2022/apr/29/simon-james-green-author-children-lgbt>.

⁷ See: <https://livelibrary.com.ua/en/>.

⁸ See, for example, David McMenemy. *Ethics and values-driven advocacy and libraries: exploring key concepts*. CILIPS, 2023,

<https://www.cilips.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2023/09/REVEAL-final-v2.pdf>.

There was also coverage of this project in *The Network Newsletter*, 267, May 2023, <https://seapn.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Newsletter-NS-267.pdf>, pp4-6.

Museums Journal

The Nov/Dec issue⁹ includes:

- A series of articles about civic museums and the funding crises they are facing:
 - Geraldine Kendall Adams “Existential crisis”, which looks at issues in England [pp4-5]
 - Jonathan Knott “Tipping point”, which looks at the struggle to finance education and outreach programmes in Scotland [pp6-7]
 - Simon Stephens “Eyes on the prize”, which looks at expanding the Artes Mundi exhibition beyond Cardiff¹⁰ [pp8-9]
- In the “Working Life” column, Harvinder Kaur Bahra talks about the “Black Chiswick Through History” project¹¹ [p10]
- Maggie Gray “Too much pressure”, which looks at wellbeing issues in the sector (including bullying) [pp24-27]
- These issues are continued in a section on wellbeing:
 - Holly Black “Care in the community”, which looks at the work of the Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance and other museums initiatives [pp54, 57]
 - “The Museum of Homelessness is somewhere to feel safe”¹² [p55]
 - Holly Black “All’s well that ends well”, which “[...] shares advice from experts on how heritage organisations can build successful wellbeing programmes” [p59]
 - Meg Barclay “Delivering benefits in spades”, which looks at a project using archaeology to boost mental health¹³ [pp61-63]

⁹ *Museums Journal*, Nov/Dec 2023.

¹⁰ See: <https://artesmundi.org/>.

¹¹ “Launched in 2021, Black Chiswick through History is an ongoing community project researching the black presence at Chiswick House & Gardens. Working with three groups of community partners from Chiswick School, Hogarth Youth and Community Centre and Hounslow Action for Youth, we are drawing out stories of people, places and experiences, connecting to themes of empire and global and local connections.” <https://chiswickhouseandgardens.org.uk/black-chiswick-through-history-project/#:~:text=Re%2Dinterpreting%20our%20history%20and,presence%20at%20Chiswick%20House%20%26%20Gardens>. See also: https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/people/2023/11/working-life-it-takes-courage-to-move-community-engagement-to-the-heart-of-what-youre-doing/#msdynttrid=ruY2zk3PEGNbk0LXbdebtR_TikdFimclIRKNEhTK7xQ.

¹² See: <https://museumofhomelessness.org/>.

¹³ “Launched in the shadow of York’s city walls at Willow House a former care home on Long Lane, Archaeology on Prescription is an innovative project. It sees participants work with archaeologists to improve their health and well-being, as well as learn new skills in archaeology. Encouraging local residents who live or have lived in Walmgate to help create a detailed picture of this neighbourhood. Through our finds we are learning more about life in the area from the medieval period to the present.” <https://community.yorkarchaeology.co.uk/index.php/archaeology-on-prescription/>.

ARC Magazine

Apologies – I'm just catching up a bit!

The Sep/Oct issue¹⁴ has a couple of very interesting articles:

- Sarah Trim-West “A dog in the archive”, which looks at some of the adaptations made to working practices to allow a hearing dog on-site [pp28-29]
- Victoria Stevens “Communicating, collections – and conservation!”, which looks at how The Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading is introducing Makaton into the online descriptions of their work [p31]

Scottish Archives & Records: year in review 2022-3

The latest review from the Scottish Council on Archives has just been published¹⁵. As well as the useful general overview, it includes some very interesting specific items:

- Audrey Wilson “Voices: The Community Story”:
“To mark Scotland’s Year of Stories: 2022, the Scottish Council on Archives (SCA) created a nationwide project, Voices: The Community Story, collecting stories from across Scotland that record the experience of migration. The project captured oral histories from ‘New Scots’, from second or third generations of earlier migrants, and from people already living in the UK who have decided to relocate to Scotland.” [p6]

There are case studies from:

- Edinburgh City Archives (Ashleigh Thompson) (primarily about how they started out on a new programme of collecting oral histories) [pp6,8]
- The National Library of Scotland (Charlie McCann) (developing their sound collection, and reaching new communities) [p9]
- Scottish Refugee Council (Chris Afuakwah):

“Groups such as the Yemeni Scottish Foundation and Forth Valley Welcome, who had no prior knowledge of how or why to engage with their local archives, were suddenly engaged and excited with the prospect of contributing their

¹⁴ *ARC Magazine*, 394, Sep/Oct 2023.

¹⁵ *Scottish Archives & Records: year in review 2022-3*. Scottish Council on Archives, 2023, <https://www.scottisharchives.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Scottish-Archives-Year-in-Review.pdf>.

stories to Scotland's archives. I hope that this project was just the start of their archiving and storytelling journey.

At the final event in November, Syrian participants from the Highlands expressed their gratitude and excitement at being able to contribute to Scotland's history. This was a big deal for participants; to be asked by their new home to feed into its national story. And for a long time to come, these recordings will be available for people studying this eventful period of global movement, or interested in discovering who lived in their local area." [p11]

- Glasgow Caledonian University Archive Centre "Scotland's Anti-Apartheid Movement" (Carole McCallum):

"The university's collection holds the minutes, papers and correspondence of the Anti-Apartheid Movement in Scotland from 1975 to 1994. It also holds some Glasgow and Edinburgh branch meeting material and other documentation that pre-dates the establishment of the Scottish Committee. There is also a large collection of national and international material which helps create a full picture of the Movement's activities and gives an indication of other organisations that gave their support. The Archive is also rich in ephemera including, posters, stickers, and postcards." [p15]

- Lothian Health Services Archive: Lothian Gay and Lesbian Switchboard (Louise Neilson):

"In April 2022, Lothian Health Services Archive (LHSA) launched their Wellcome Trust funded project, Speaking Out. The project involved cataloguing and promoting the Lothian Gay and Lesbian Switchboard (LGLS) collection and concluded in June 2023." [p35]

Books for Keeps

The latest issue¹⁶ includes:

- Darren Chetty and Karen Sands-O'Connor "Witness literature" in their excellent "Beyond the Secret Garden" series. This is a thoughtful piece about writers who write about events they have experienced/observed and some of the issues around the care needed to put them across appropriately [pp18-19]

¹⁶ *Books for Keeps*, 263, Nov 2023, <https://booksforkeeps.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/BfK-263-Nov-2023.pdf>.

Broader issues – Other Agencies

This must be the place: a new vision for community wealth and power

This new paper¹⁷ from CLES (supported by the Local Government Information Unit and the National Institute for Health and Care Research) looks at some of the roles of local government:

“Weighing up the options when it comes to the stewardship and development of our local economies is extremely challenging for local government. With a growing number of councils now facing bankruptcy, local government continues to be hampered by inadequate funding settlements which in turn affects its capacity and ability to long term plan.

Nevertheless, progressive frontiers continue to advance and in this paper we further develop the argument for local action through the lens of community wealth building: where the wealth that exists, and is created, flows to the people and communities who need this the most, rather than trickling out to those who can best help themselves.” [p5]

The paper concludes with recommendations for local partners and for central government. In terms of the recommendations for local partners, these include some important pointers for us:

1. Formalise networks around a shared vision for place:

“In our research for this paper, and our wider work across the UK and Ireland, it is clear that many anchor organisations are now coming together to explore how they can pool resources, raise standards, co-ordinate their work and deliver a more people-centred approach to economic change. Shared approaches to key community wealth building measures such as procurement, land and property and ownership are beginning to emerge with tangible outcomes for communities [...]

What is required to deliver on this promise is a clear, shared vision for place. It is imperative that local authorities and their partners in place come together [...]” [p22]

2. Treat assets as more than a commodity:

“Despite the pressure to sell off surplus land and assets to maximise financial return, councils must recognise the opportunity they present to resist the complications of relying on the market and to take a more interventionist approach to regeneration. An approach which treats land and property assets as more than just

¹⁷ Tom Lloyd Goodwin *et al.* *This must be the place: a new vision for community wealth and power*. CLES, 2023, <https://cles.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Building-community-wealth-and-power-FINAL.pdf>.

commodities could form the backbone of renewed local plans which see these assets harnessed to serve inclusive economy goals, such as the building of green, affordable housing and affordable workspace for local enterprises.” [pp22-23]

3. Use structure to deliver organisational priorities:

“Functions such as human resources, procurement and estates management may not relate to higher level priorities and thus miss vital opportunities to directly influence the livelihoods and wellbeing of citizens.

To remedy this, the authors of corporate strategies should be more explicit about how individual functions contribute to strategic priorities, and leaders must consider how best practice in inclusive economy approaches in one function could be applied across departments.” [p23]

4. Scale up the social economy:

“Combined authorities have the networks and opportunity to provide much needed scale to supporting the development of more progressive ownership models [...]

For local authorities who wish to go further, targeting the demand for goods and services towards local enterprise and diversifying local business support offers are established mechanisms to help pluralise ownership of the economy.” [p23]

5. Flex funding to meet your own goals:

“Despite the many inadequacies surrounding the various funding allocations given and awarded to local authorities by the government, there are opportunities to use these sources of funding to further community wealth building aims and objectives.

CLES have developed a toolkit, in partnership with APSE, to support local authorities to maximise the impact of the Levelling Up Fund, based on six case studies from places across the UK [18] Scottish City Region Deals also present an opportunity and CLES have worked with the Capital City Partnership in Edinburgh and South East Scotland to develop a framework [19] to guide and influence the region’s current deal, focussed on strategic intent, impact, growing local SMEs, supporting alternative models of

¹⁸ See: Getting the most from levelling up: a toolkit for maximising impact in local Economies. APSE, 2023, <https://cles.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Getting-the-most-from-levelling-up-1-3.pdf>.

¹⁹ See: *Embedding community wealth building into ESES City Deal projects and programmes: a framework for action*. CLES, 2022, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/55c87967e4b05aa55020f656/t/646f33d5cc68736cb488a18d/1685009366076/ESES%2BCRD%2BCWB%2B-%2BFramework%2Bfor%2Baction.pdf>.

ownership and maximising skills and employment opportunities for all.” [p24]

6. Measure and value impact more broadly:

“Using community wealth building approaches to build inclusive local economies requires understanding how effectively wealth is flowing in your place. This means digging into the data and using a broader set of metrics than GVA [20] to measure economic performance.” [p24]

The paper recommends a framework “based on measures we know are accessible to local authorities and are already being developed in some areas.” [p24] including:

- Economic measures, eg GVA, social economy
- Health measures, eg life expectancy, mental health
- Skills and employment measures, eg unemployment rate, accessibility of childcare
- Land, transport and environment measures, eg housing availability and affordability, transport connectivity, biodiversity.

Important background paper.²¹

Abbreviations and acronyms

APSE = Association for Public Service Excellence

CILIPS = Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals Scotland

CLES = Centre for Local Economic Strategies

GVA = gross value added [see below]

NPC = New Philanthropy Capital

SMEs = small and medium-sized enterprises

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²⁰ “[...] gross value added (GVA) is the measure of the value of goods and services produced in an area, industry or sector of an economy.” Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gross_value_added.

²¹ Source: email from the Centre for Local Economic Strategies, 23 Nov 2023.