

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

**Number 288, February 2025**

(Formerly published as *Public Libraries & Social Exclusion Action Planning Network Newsletter*, issue 1, May 1999 – issue 29, September 2001)

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.

---

## Contents List

### Did you see ...?

- *Museums Journal* – page 2
- *Pen & Inc* – page 2

### 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:
  - “Book banning in the UK – will US influence succeed in removing LGBTQ+ books from our libraries?” – page 3
  - “... and in Kent” – page 4
  - “Reform UK’s ‘Children’s Book Bans’ Could Open the Floodgates for Censorship” – page 5
  - “Georgia librarian fired over LGBTQ children’s book in summer reading display” – page 6

### LGBTQ+ issues – Other Agencies

- Stonewall’s new strategy for 2025-2028 – page 6

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

- “Five Months into the Trump Presidency” – page 8

### Broader issues – Other Agencies

- *Facing the future: progressives in a changing world* – page 9

## Abbreviations and acronyms – page 10

---

## Did you see ...?

### ***Museums Journal***

The latest issue<sup>1</sup> includes:

- Simon Stephens “Being inclusive is what we do” [Editorial], which looks briefly at attacks on EDI – especially in the US – and re-states: “[...] EDI is just an everyday part of what museums do. This should be the message to those who threaten this work.”
- Simon Stephens “Under attack” [pp6-7], which looks in more detail at some of the recent developments in the US, and highlights some of the opposition to the Administration
- Geraldine Kendall Adams “Point of no return” [pp10-11], which looks again at issues around repatriation in the light of the Director of the BM’s ruling out any permanent restitution of artifacts. There has been criticism of this view, especially from Routes to Return<sup>2</sup>.

### ***Pen & Inc.***

The latest issue<sup>3</sup> includes:

- Rob Green “Safe to talk: how The Carnegies provide a platform for conversation” [pp11-13], which introduces the shortlist for this year’s awards<sup>4</sup>
- Frank Cottrell-Boyce “Reading Rights – laying the foundations for health and happiness” [pp23-25], which looks at the Children’s Laureate’s mission to encourage shared reading (and argues that there should be more outrage about the number of libraries that have closed over the last 10 years)
- Lucy Edwards (interviewed by Rob Green) “An ordinary hero in an extraordinary world” [pp26-28], which introduces her new book, *Ella*

---

<sup>1</sup> *Museums Journal*, Jul/Aug 2025.

<sup>2</sup> See: <https://routestoreturn.com/>.

<sup>3</sup> *Pen & Inc.*, Spring/Summer 2025,  
<https://content.yudu.com/web/43mce/0A43mcf/PenInc13SprSum2025/html/index.html?page=2&origin=reader>.

<sup>4</sup> The winners have since been announced – see: <https://carnegies.co.uk/>.

*Jones vs the Sun Stealer*<sup>5</sup>, and draws on her own experience of sight loss

- Darren Chetty and Karen Sands O'Connor "Taking steps to move *Beyond the Secret Garden*" [pp32-35], which sets their new book<sup>6</sup> in context
- James Catchpole and Jen Campbell (interviewed by Rob Green) "Changing the narrative for a new generation" [pp36-38], which introduces their new collection, *Owning it: our disabled childhoods in our own words*<sup>7</sup>

---

## 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

#### "Book banning in the UK – will US influence succeed in removing LGBTQ+ books from our libraries?"

This is a brief, interesting article<sup>8</sup> in *The Boar*<sup>9</sup>, which focuses on Alison Hicks's research<sup>10</sup>, and cites Stonewall as having

"[...] voiced concerns about this increased trend of homophobic and transphobic action both by students and their parents. They see it as 'vital that schools ensure that all young people have access to inclusive educational materials' and 'know that many students find great importance and reassurance in seeing themselves reflected in books and media'."

---

<sup>5</sup> Lucy Edwards. *Ella Jones vs the Sun Stealer*. Scholastic, 2025. Charged-for publication – see: [https://shop.scholastic.co.uk/cart/confirmation?product\\_id=149489](https://shop.scholastic.co.uk/cart/confirmation?product_id=149489).

<sup>6</sup> Darren Chetty and Karen Sands O'Connor. *Beyond the Secret Garden: children's literature and representations of Black and Racially minoritised People*. English and Media Centre, 2025. Charged-for publication – see: <https://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/publications-magazines/20807/beyond-the-secret-garden-childrens-literature-and-representations-of-black-and-r/>.

<sup>7</sup> Jen Campbell, James Catchpole and Lucy Catchpole (eds). *Owning it: our disabled childhoods in our own words*. Faber, 2025. Charged-for publication – see: <https://www.faber.co.uk/product/9780571380022-owning-it/>.

<sup>8</sup> Beth Meachem "Book banning in the UK – will US influence succeed in removing LGBTQ+ books from our libraries?", *The Boar*, 2 Jul 2025, <https://theboar.org/2025/07/book-banning-in-the-uk-will-us-influence-succeed-in-removing-lgbtq-books-from-our-libraries/>.

<sup>9</sup> "Founded in 1973, *The Boar* is the University of Warwick's award-winning student newspaper and the only student-run print newspaper on campus." Taken from: <https://theboar.org/about/>.

<sup>10</sup> This was reported in *Network Newsletter* 286 (Dec 2024) p2, with a link to a Google Docs version of her article for *The School Librarian*, [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1AqmWn7k\\_5ONihVEB\\_KO0pcYRkrWFdyVoTGttQzkJk-Q/edit?pli=1&tab=t.0](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1AqmWn7k_5ONihVEB_KO0pcYRkrWFdyVoTGttQzkJk-Q/edit?pli=1&tab=t.0).

The article concludes:

“While it is not occurring on the same scale, the efforts of organisations in the US are undeniably affecting attitudes towards censorship in the UK, with more and more parents requesting the removal of books from school libraries due to the representation of LGBTQ people and stories. Though a common excuse for this is to ‘protect’ young people from being ‘exposed’ to the LGBTQ community, this censorship could be extremely harmful to the very people it claims to shelter. If this removal of content from school libraries continues, thousands of young people, many of whom find themselves at a crucial time in their life in understanding their identity, could be deprived of books and resources that could be instrumental in helping them discover and accept who they are.”<sup>11</sup>

### ... and in Kent

You may well have seen quite a lot of media coverage<sup>12</sup> of Kent County Council’s supposed book-ban.

However, the story<sup>13</sup> in *The Guardian* throws more light on what really happened:

“A boast by a Reform UK councillor that he ensured the removal of ‘trans-ideological material and books’ from the children’s section of his county’s libraries has fallen flat after it emerged that no such material ever existed there [...]

When asked about this by the Guardian, Kent council said it could confirm that no books aimed at adults about transgender issues had been held in the children’s sections of Kent libraries.

It confirmed that the complaint was about a book on show near a library entrance which had since been ‘relocated to a section that is unlikely to be visited by children’.”

This is backed up by a story<sup>14</sup> in *Independent*:

---

<sup>11</sup> Source: *Public Libraries News*, 6 Jul 2025.

<sup>12</sup> For example:

Simon Finlay “Angry backlash at Kent County Council’s ruling on trans literature”, *Kent Online*, 4 Jul 2025, <https://www.kentonline.co.uk/kent/news/angry-backlash-at-kent-council-ruling-on-trans-literature-326739/>.

<sup>13</sup> Peter Walker and Ella Creamer “Reform councillor’s boast about removing ‘trans-ideological’ books from children’s library sections falls flat”, *The Guardian*, 4 Jul 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/jul/04/reform-councillors-boast-about-removing-trans-ideological-books-from-childrens-library-sections-falls-flat>.

<sup>14</sup> Stanley Murphy-Johns “Reform backtrack on claim ‘trans-related’ library book was in children’s section”, *Independent*, 5 Jul 2025, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/reform-trans-library-book-row-backtrack-b2783129.html>.

“Earlier this week, Kent County Council (KCC) leader Linden Kemkaran said the books were to be removed with immediate effect after a fellow Reform Councillor said he had been informed of ‘transgender ideologies’ in the children’s section of a library.

But KCC has since said that the book which triggered the ban was in fact on display at the front of a library in Herne Bay, rather than the children’s section.”

### **“Reform UK’s ‘Children’s Book Bans’ Could Open the Floodgates for Censorship”**

This article<sup>15</sup> also picks up on the Kent story:

“Up until this week, I could confidently say that library censorship in the UK was happening behind closed doors (not that that’s any better), and that incidents, whilst concerning, were not necessarily widespread. I can no longer say that. When a councillor publicly seeks to ban children’s books from a children’s section, something has shifted, there is a certain audacity to it. And now, I worry that the UK floodgates have opened. Others will feel emboldened to take similar actions.

Book banners would argue that publications with trans themes should not be in the children’s sections of libraries, even when they are written for children. I disagree. Children’s books have been through a thorough vetting process, and library collections are curated for the communities they serve. When young people want to understand their own identities or those of their peers, a book is a safe place for them to find that information. The next likely destination – the internet – is a very different situation. And arguing about an adult book being on display outside the children’s section feels like quite the red herring.

A diversity of characters in stories, too, can surely only strengthen community cohesion and empathy, and develop young people’s imaginations. Banning books representing particular identities sends the message that there is something wrong with these identities. LGBTQ+ people will continue to exist, as they always have, and banning books about them will not change that. But it will cause serious harm along the way.

Something has changed when councillors are proudly proclaiming that they have banned particular books. It’s never been more important for us to ensure that libraries have the resources and support to create and defend diverse collections, and when a minority of voices are loud, we must not let them silence others. Otherwise, there may be more and more stories like the one in Kent.”

---

<sup>15</sup> Katie Dancey-Downs “Reform UK’s ‘Children’s Book Bans’ Could Open the Floodgates for Censorship”, *Byline Times*, 8 Jul 2025, <https://bylinetimes.com/2025/07/08/reform-uks-childrens-book-bans-could-open-the-floodgates-for-censorship/>.

## **“Georgia librarian fired over LGBTQ children’s book in summer reading display”**

... and, in the US, a librarian has lost her job because of the inclusion of a LGBTQ+ title in a book display.<sup>16</sup>

The librarian, Lavonna Moore:

“[...] said the beginning of the end came near the start of June, when she allowed parents and kids to create a display to match the theme of the Georgia Public Library Service's summer reading program, ‘color our world.’ [...]”

Moore said one of the children brought the book ‘When Aidan Became a Brother.’<sup>[17]</sup> Moore said she didn't know it at the time, but the book is about a young transgender boy whose family is expecting a new baby [...]

The book is written for young children and discusses Aidan's gender identity not matching his sex at birth. It doesn't contain anything graphic or explicit. The cover shows Aidan with his family wearing a shirt with a rainbow on it.

‘All I saw was Aidan becoming a big brother,’ Moore said. ‘I saw a family with a kid wearing a rainbow sweater and the mom pregnant. It was a mixed family. I was like, “OK, sure, put it on the table.”’

But the book's placement didn't sit well with a group called Alliance for Faith and Freedom, which made posts on social media calling on followers to write in to library staff and Pierce County commissioners.”

---

## **LGBTQ+ issues – Other Agencies**

### **Stonewall’s new strategy for 2025-2028**

Stonewall have just launched their strategy<sup>18</sup> for 2025-2028; their headline strategic objectives are:

---

<sup>16</sup> Ross Williams “Georgia librarian fired over LGBTQ children’s book in summer reading display”, *Chattanooga Times Free Press*, 4 Jul 2025, <https://www.timesfreepress.com/news/2025/jul/04/georgia-librarian-fired-over-lgbtq-childrens-book/>.

<sup>17</sup> Kyle Lukoff. *When Aidan became a brother*. Lee & Low, 2019. Charged-for publication.  
Further info at: <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/when-aidan-became-a-brother/>.  
From the publisher’s description:

“This sweet and groundbreaking picture book, winner of the 2020 Stonewall Book Award, celebrates the changes in a transgender boy’s life, from his initial coming-out to becoming a big brother.”

<sup>18</sup> “In courage and unity, is hope”, Stonewall, <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/about-us/strategy>.

- “Provide leadership to navigate turbulence for LGBTQ+ issues and; work in coalition to protect and improve LGBTQ+ rights across the four UK nations and beyond.
- Shape a policy and legislative agenda, through working in partnerships, that is focused on improving LGBTQ+ lives day in, day out using data and evidence.
- Support the development of safe and inclusive places where everyone can play and succeed throughout their lives.”

Each of these is developed further on their website.

Provide leadership to navigate turbulence for LGBTQ+ issues and; work in coalition to protect and improve LGBTQ+ rights across the four UK nations and beyond

“We will:

- Forge and strengthen coalitions: actively engage in building dynamic coalitions within the global LGBTQ+ movement and with partners in the public and private sector, civil society and parliamentarians to stand firm in the face of regressive policies and actions that impact LGBTQ+ people and other marginalised communities.
- Empower through education and support: Convene, develop and support impactful programmes that educate, empower and inspire individuals, organisations and leaders to advocate for equal LGBTQ+ rights.
- Use data, evidence and real-life stories as the foundation for advocacy: creating compelling narratives to highlight the urgent need for equality and justice for our diverse LGBTQ+ communities.”

Shape a policy and legislative agenda, through working in partnerships, that is focused on improving LGBTQ+ lives day in, day out using data and evidence

“We will:

- Improve the laws and policies which impact on LGBTQ+ people by using data and evidence to support parliamentarians and lawmakers to introduce, champion and drive effective legislation which enhance the lives of LGBTQ+ people.
- Undertake research with partners to inform our priorities and elevate the voices and needs of all members of our vibrant communities.
- Convene and mobilise, working with others across civil society, the public sector and business communities to effectively advocate for equality and LGBTQ+ rights with policymakers and legislators.”

Support the development of safe and inclusive places where everyone can play and succeed throughout their lives

“We will:

- Design data and evidence led programs that help create inclusive environments for LGBTQ+ people and support workplaces who want to create high performing and inclusive cultures that attract, retain and develop LGBTQ+ people.
- Implement creative campaigns designed to create safer and more equitable environments for LGBTQ+ people through enhancing public awareness and support.
- Forge strategic collaborations with organisations, institutions and partners to design and advocate inclusive policy change using data, evidence and research.”

As Stonewall said in their email *Newsletter*:

“There’s no denying we’re in turbulent times for the LGBTQ+ community – global rights and the principles of inclusion are under threat.

The UK is falling behind on LGBTQ+ rights and anti-LGBTQ+ hate crime has risen in recent years. The recent Supreme Court ruling has left trans people feeling worried and the wider LGBTQ+ community concerned that hard won rights are not always secure.

That’s why Stonewall is adapting its approach to meet the challenges facing LGBTQ+ people today.”<sup>19</sup>

---

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

### **“Five Months into the Trump Presidency”**

This important article<sup>20</sup> in *American Libraries* charts “the latest offensives against libraries and how advocates are pushing back”.

It includes brief updates on the firing of Librarian of Congress, Carla Hayden, and of Shira Perlmutter, Register of Copyrights at the US Copyright Office; and legal battles over the defunding of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and subsequent plans to close IMLS altogether.

In terms of the firing of Carla Hayden, the article says:

“On June 8, in Hayden’s first interview since her dismissal, she told *CBS News Sunday Morning* that she had not received any further explanation from anyone in the Trump administration before or after the email.

---

<sup>19</sup> Source: Stonewall *Newsletter*, 5 Jul 2025.

<sup>20</sup> Hannah Weinberg “Five Months into the Trump Presidency”, *American Libraries*, 18 Jun 2025, [https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/2025/06/18/five-months-into-the-trump-presidency/?utm\\_campaign=4201762\\_Fortnightly%203%20July%202025%20-%20MEMBER&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=The%20Chartered%20Institute%20of%20Library%20and%20Information%20Professionals&dm\\_i=6WFS,2I23M,9VBO9,6WH4J,1](https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/2025/06/18/five-months-into-the-trump-presidency/?utm_campaign=4201762_Fortnightly%203%20July%202025%20-%20MEMBER&utm_medium=email&utm_source=The%20Chartered%20Institute%20of%20Library%20and%20Information%20Professionals&dm_i=6WFS,2I23M,9VBO9,6WH4J,1).



White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt publicly cited a reason for Hayden's firing: 'We felt she did not fit the needs of the American people. There were quite concerning things that she had done at the Library of Congress in the pursuit of DEI and putting inappropriate books in the library for children.'

The Library of Congress remains a research library and national repository of information about the US, not a lending library. Hayden said in the CBS interview, 'When I heard those comments, I was concerned that there might not have been as much of an awareness of what the Library of Congress does.'"<sup>21</sup>

---

## Broader issues – Other Agencies

### ***Facing the future: progressives in a changing world***

Given the current state of politics across the world, this new book<sup>22</sup> from IPPR aims to stimulate discussion and get people focusing on what needs to happen next:

"This report digs into the impact of global changes in the economic and political balance of power; the changes in the process of identity-building and of politics that have been ushered in by the digital age; and the need for a new balance of state and market in driving shared prosperity." [p5 – from the Foreword by David Miliband]

Their analysis suggests that:

"The revolutionary spirit has been captured by populist parties. They now claim a larger share of the vote across western Europe and North America than the mainstream parties of the left, moving into pole position as champions of transformation. This has been driven largely by the populist radical right, who have grown six times more quickly than the populist left since the start of the century.

The populist radical right is not just gaining in the battle of votes but is also dominating the battle of ideas: about who the state is for, how it should be governed, its relationship to markets and the world, where the threats are coming from. They have moved political contest from policy debates which take place within the bounds of consensus, to ideological debates which reject them." [p7]

I'm not intending to go through this in detail; rather, I want to flag up the main areas of discussion in case any of you would like to read more:

---

<sup>21</sup> Source: *News from CILIP*, 2 Jul 2025.

<sup>22</sup> Parth Patel, Jane Gingrich, Will Davies and Nick Garland. *Facing the future: progressives in a changing world*. IPPR, 2025, <https://ippr-org.files.svdcdn.com/production/Downloads/Facing-the-future-May-25.pdf?dm=1747910069>.

“This report is about recovering faith in our capacity to shape what lies ahead. It describes how the world, politics and the economy have changed since the last time Labour was in government, and maps assets available to progressives in a new era. We set out three ways in which the world has changed, and the questions that need answering if progressives want to change with it.

1. A world between orders: national borders have been reasserted over global integration.
2. The common good without common ground: politics and the public sphere have fragmented and polarised.
3. Economics after neoliberalism: faith in free markets as the best way of organising economies has declined.” [p7]

Finally, the book suggests three questions that require an answer:

1. What should the state provide for citizens, and what responsibilities do people have for themselves, their families and communities? This should include thinking about what intergenerational commitments progressives should defend (e.g. care, education, pensions), what we owe to each other in the face of climate breakdown, and who should and should not have access to social security.
2. What political identities can compete with ethno-nationalism? This should include thinking about how to make and mobilise new collective identities, how to build solidarity in times of scarcity, how smartphones have changed our sense of self and community, and developing education policy towards the common good.
3. How can democratic reform deliver more representative and responsive government? This should include thinking about reconnecting political parties and the public, reforming the media system, attenuating the relationship between privilege and power, and developing a more active and engaged citizenry.” [p9]

A thoughtful and important read.

---

## Abbreviations and acronyms

BM = British Museum

DEI = Diversity, Equality/Equity and Inclusion

EDI = Equality/Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

---

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:

John Vincent  
Wisteria Cottage  
Nadderwater  
Exeter EX4 2JQ

Tel/fax: 01392 256045  
E-mail: [john@nadder.org.uk](mailto:john@nadder.org.uk)

February 2025 (published July 2025)