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

Number 157, May 2014

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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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Contents List

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Did you see …?

CILIP *Update*

The June issue[1] includes a very useful, practical article about the development and implementation of an evaluation toolkit for Newcastle Libraries: Becky Cole "Rich, emotive evidence of impact" [pp42-44].

Access

The second issue[2] of *Access* includes a couple of interesting articles:

- Holly Case "Domestic abuse – how Surrey Libraries can help", background to and an update of Surrey Libraries' Libraries Change Lives Award-winner [pp8-14]
- Paul Tovell "Fifty Shades of Green: Public Libraries and Environmental Education" [pp14-21]

Miami Herald

You probably won't have seen this (!), but an interesting article which shows that social inclusion is still uppermost in some nations' thinking – José Miguel Insulza[3] "Growth can't come at the expense of social exclusion":

> "The decision of the government of Paraguay to dedicate the 2014 OAS General Assembly to issues of development and social inclusion comes at an opportune moment. Recent economic growth has been important to our region and, in that context, the delay in the full inclusion of all citizens in the benefits of development takes on fundamental importance.
>
> We have maintained for years that, in addition to the weaknesses that still exist in our institutions and political practices, the full exercise of democracy in the Americas suffers from a serious problem of inequality, which not only affects democratic coexistence, but also is an obstacle to healthy growth.
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> Though the number of people living in poverty has dropped substantially in the past decade, many of those who have emerged from poverty still face extremely precarious conditions. About a third of Latin America's population lives in households with an income of between $4 and $10 dollars a day ...

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[1] *CILIP Update*, June 2014. Further information at: http://www.cilip.org.uk/cilip/membership/membership-benefits/monthly-magazine-journals-and-ebulletins/cilip-update-magazine.

[2] *Access* (2), Apr/May/Jun 2014. Available to download as a pdf (1550 kb) from: http://info.cilip.org.uk/FS/2834/Documents/PMLG%20Access%20Issue%202.pdf.

[3] José Miguel Insulza is the secretary general for the Organization of American States. The OAS "brings together all 35 independent states of the Americas and constitutes the main political, juridical, and social governmental forum in the Hemisphere." (Taken from: http://www.oas.org/en/about/who_we_are.asp).

Despite the fact that much of the recent alarm over inequality has focused on its economic aspects, especially on the distribution of income, it is worth noting that it also affects other areas of social life in ways that do not emerge from the presence of greater or lesser poverty.

Inequality is not expressed only in the enormous diversity of people's buying power or income. It also comes from discrimination because of class, race, gender, geographic origin, differing physical capacities and other sources, which turn it into a multidimensional phenomenon and make it incompatible with our democratic ideals.

To be female, poor, indigenous, Afro-American, migrant, disabled or an informal worker means to start from a disadvantageous position in society compared to other groups.

Generally these categories entail different economic conditions, different levels of access to services, public protection, education or employment. Their origins as social categories may differ, but the main effect is to make the people in these groups more vulnerable to abuse, exclusion and/or discrimination.

The times in which we believed that the interaction between democracy and the market economy would reduce inequality are long gone. On the contrary, the massive injustice that exists in our countries in terms of the distribution of wealth and access to social goods seriously damages the social fabric. That is why the debate has ceased to be purely economic and has become one about public policies.

The political decisions that states make to improve distribution are what make the market economy compatible with democracy, and it is up to them to find a balance, within the rule of law, between growth and the reduction of inequality."[4]

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

"Libraries Matter: Impact Research"

The American Library Association has gathered together "a listing of studies that are useful in making the case about the value of libraries to community members and other stakeholders. The annotated list includes studies that show the economic, educational and social value of libraries."[5]

The listing is divided into three categories:

- Economic impact of libraries

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[4] Taken from: http://www.miamiherald.com/2014/05/31/4149353/growth-cant-come-at-the-expense.html.
[5] Taken from: http://www.ala.org/research/librariesmatter/.

- Impact on community development
- Impact on literacy and education.

There is a wealth of information, and you may like to browse through the evidence on economic value (particularly on SROI) and on literacy and education (which collates a lot of evidence on the impact of school libraries), but, to make things easier, the following relate particularly to our areas of interest.

- *Minnesota Public Libraries Return on Investment*[6] – which includes, for example, evidence of the value of library partnerships: "Because community engagement has value, involvement of library volunteers from the communities includes benefits for volunteers in terms of enhancing their confidence, skills and levels of employability."[7]

- *Writing, technology and teens*[8] – which, for example, looks at the public libraries' important role in providing internet access.

There is a number of other items (primarily journal articles) but they are quite old, and the circumstances that they have drawn evidence from are likely to have changed. Nevertheless, this resource is well worth a scan.[9]

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Connecting the dots …

This valuable new practical guide[10] takes you through all the key steps in developing community-led work.

It begins by looking briefly at community engagement and community-led work:

> "Community-led work is a particular kind of community engagement, where the library works collaboratively with community members so that we can understand the needs of the community, and use this understanding to inform the direction of library work and policies." [p5]

It also stresses the importance of working with communities and includes lots of brief examples and case studies.

This is followed by the guidance which covers:

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[6] *Minnesota Public Libraries Return on Investment*. Bureau of Business and Economic Research, Labovitz School of Business and Economics, University of Minnesota Duluth, 2011. Available to download as a pdf (2400 kb) from: http://melsa.org/melsa/assets/File/Library_final.pdf.

[7] Taken from: http://www.ala.org/research/librariesmatter/node/603.

[8] Amanda Lenhart *et al. Writing, technology and teens.* Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2008. Available to download as a pdf (483.80 kb) from: http://www.pewinternet.org/files/old-media//Files/Reports/2008/PIP_Writing_Report_FINAL3.pdf.pdf.

[9] Source: email from Ken Chad to lis-pub-libs, Mar 2014.

[10] Els Kushner. *Connecting the dots: a guidebook for working with community*. Vancouver Public library, 2014. Available to download as a pdf (4770 kb) from: http://www.vpl.ca/images/uploads/file/pdf/CTD.pdf.

- How do we find community groups and connect with community members?

- How do I get my foot in the door?

- How do I build community relations?

- How do we make time for this work?

> "It can be difficult to carve out time from the pressing demands of in-library services to spend on community work where there may be no immediate, quantifiable result. The effects might feel abstract compared to the rewards of helping a line of patrons with circulation or reference questions, or leading a busy branch storytime. It's tempting—and normal—to wonder whether it's really worth the time.
>
> But community work is a process, not a quick fix; it takes time to build relationships and establish trust. And once that trust is established, you stand a good chance of connecting with people who might have had no access at all to the library or its resources if you hadn't persisted." [p24]

- How do I contribute? (eg everyone has a role; teamwork is crucial)

- What skills do I need?

> "Some of the skills that library staff working in community have identified include:
>
> > • Active listening
> > • Flexibility
> > • Open-mindedness
> > • Empathy
> > • Knowledge of and respect for diverse backgrounds, opinions, and beliefs
> > • Knowledge of VPL resources, people, connections, and community resources
> > • Ability to communicate in clear and accessible language, avoiding jargon
> > • Clarity about limits and expectations, without appearing rigid
> > • Social awareness/intelligence
> > • Self-knowledge and self-awareness
> > • Facilitation
> > • Time management
> > • Project management and organizational skills
> > • Comfort with ambiguity
> > • Willingness to experiment, to try new things, and learn from failure
> > • Self-care." [p31]

- How do I evaluate my work?

Clearly this guidance is applicable to work with the community by all sorts of organisations, and is an important practical starting-point.

Highly recommended.[11]

Tackling social and digital exclusion – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

Monitoring poverty and social exclusion in Northern Ireland 2014

This summary report[12]:

> "… brings together the latest data to show the extent and nature of poverty in Northern Ireland. It focuses on the links between poverty, work, disability and age." [p1]

The 'headlines' are that:

> "Northern Ireland's labour market and poverty rates have deteriorated in the last five years, in addition to longstanding issues of mental health and community divisions – and welfare reforms are likely to exacerbate these problems.
>
> This new research by the New Policy Institute for JRF finds that:
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> - between 2006/07 and 2011/12 the average (median) income in Northern Ireland (NI) fell by almost 10 per cent compared with 7 per cent for the UK as a whole;
> - the proportion of unemployed working-age people in NI almost doubled between 2007/08 and 2012/13 to reach 5.8 per cent;
> - in the same period, the proportion working part-time and wanting full-time work has gone up from 1.7 per cent, the same as in Great Britain (GB), to 4.4 per cent (compared with 3.5 per cent in GB)."[13]

This summary is a further update of the reports published in 2012[14] and 2009[15].

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[11] Source: email from Ken Williment.

[12] New Policy Institute. *Monitoring poverty and social exclusion in Northern Ireland 2014.* JRF, 2014. Available to download as a pdf (211.5 kb) from: http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/northern-ireland-poverty-summary.pdf.

[13] Taken from: http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/monitoring-poverty-and-social-exclusion-northern-ireland-2014?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Weekly%20publications%20and%20blogs%20wb%2024th%20March%202014&utm_content=Weekly%20publications%20and%20blogs%20wb%2024th%20March%202014+CID_024a083a3b3727b552be0f0a1c07be09&utm_source=Email%20marketing%20software&utm_term=Publication%20Monitoring%20poverty%20and%20social%20exclusion%20in%20Northern%20Ireland%202014.

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

Libraries making a difference: the fifth quality framework of Welsh Public Library Standards 2014-2017

This new framework[16] of Welsh Public Library Standards was launched at the beginning of May. It is the fifth in the series of frameworks:

"The primary aims and objectives are to:

- include outcome measures to show the benefits of using libraries
- act as a driver for improvements to library services and local communities
- be relevant and useful to all local authority library services in Wales
- be transparent, easily understood and accepted by all stakeholders
- provide a robust assessment of the performance of library services."[17]

The framework begins by setting out the importance of using libraries (and their importance to Wales), and then highlights some of the areas where libraries are making a difference:

"Library services contribute to a range of Welsh Government outcomes such as literacy, skills and learning, digital inclusion, poverty, health and well-being. Library provision spans these outcomes, offering a range of services which often support two or more of the outcomes simultaneously." [p9]

The framework has "therefore been themed around four core service aspects:

- customers and communities;
- access for all;
- learning for life; and
- leadership and development.

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[14] Tom MacInnes, Hannah Aldridge, Anushree Parekh and Peter Kenway *Monitoring poverty and social exclusion in Northern Ireland 2012*. JRF, 2012. Available to download as a pdf (4578.8 kb) from: http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/poverty-northern-ireland-social-exclusion-2012-full.pdf. There is a summary available to download as a pdf (3200.8 kb) from: http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/poverty-northern-ireland-social-exclusion-2012-summary%20.pdf.

[15] *Monitoring poverty and social exclusion in Northern Ireland 2009*. JRF ("Findings"), 2009. Available to download as a pdf (186.22 kb) from: http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/monitoring-poverty-northern-ireland-2009-summary.pdf.

[16] *Libraries making a difference: the fifth quality framework of Welsh Public Library Standards 2014-2017*. CyMAL/Welsh Government, 2014. Available to download as a pdf (1940 kb) from: http://wales.gov.uk/docs/drah/publications/140425wpls5en.pdf.

[17] Taken from: http://wales.gov.uk/topics/cultureandsport/museumsarchiveslibraries/cymal/libraries/wpls/libraries-making-a-difference/?lang=en.

Each aspect has a number of core entitlements and quality indicators associated with it, and has been related to wider government agendas. The desired outcome of the fifth framework is that libraries offer all the services and facilities listed as core entitlements." [p9]

The core entitlements were set out in *Libraries inspire*[18], the strategic development framework for Welsh libraries for 2012-16, and include:

- "Be open to all members of their communities
- Be free to join
- Lend books for free
- Deliver free access to information
- Provide free use of the Internet and computers
- Deliver free use of online information resources 24 hours a day
- Provide access to high quality resources in a range of formats, including those in the Welsh language, reflecting changing forms of publication
- Ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff are on hand to help
- Provide a safe, attractive and accessible physical space with suitable opening hours
- Stage a range of activities to support learning, enjoyment and enable users to obtain the maximum benefit from the available resources
- Work in partnership to open up access to the resources of all Welsh libraries
- Maintain a searchable catalogue of Welsh library resources
- Co-operate to create new bilingual digital content about Wales and its people
- Promote libraries to attract more people to benefit from their services
- Regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs." [p9]

These are developed here with their quality indicators. The core entitlements are listed as:

WPLSCE 1: Libraries in Wales will ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff are on hand to help.

WPLSCE 2: Libraries in Wales will stage a range of activities to support learning, enjoyment and enable users to obtain the maximum benefit from the available resources.

WPLSCE 3: Libraries in Wales will provide access to a range of services and resources to support lifelong learning, personal well being and development, and community participation.

WPLSCE 4: Libraries in Wales will be open to all members of their communities.

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[18] CyMAL. *Libraries inspire: the strategic development framework for Welsh libraries 2012*-16. Welsh Government, 2011. Available to download as a pdf (2350 kb) from: http://wales.gov.uk/docs/drah/publications/111104librariesinspireen.pdf. This was briefly assessed in *The Network Newsletter*, 129, Jan 2012, pp10-11.

WPLSCE 5: Libraries in Wales will be free to join.

WPLSCE 6: Libraries in Wales will provide a safe, attractive and accessible physical space with suitable opening hours.

WPLSCE 7: Libraries in Wales will provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special needs. Special needs can be caused by physical and health impairment, economic disadvantage (e.g. long term unemployment), cultural difference (e.g. language, new arrivals), educational background, or other circumstances that require special library services.

WPLSCE 8: Libraries in Wales will lend books for free.

WPLSCE 9: Libraries in Wales will deliver free access to information.

WPLSCE 10: Libraries in Wales will provide free use of the Internet and computers, including Wi-Fi.

WPLSCE 11: Libraries in Wales will deliver free use of online information resources 24 hours a day.

WPLSCE 12: Libraries in Wales will provide access to high quality resources in a range of formats, including those in the Welsh language, reflecting changing forms of publication.

WPLSCE 13: Libraries in Wales will share their catalogues, to enable a single search of all Welsh library resources.

WPLSCE 14: Libraries in Wales will promote libraries to attract more people to benefit from their services.

WPLSCE 15: Libraries in Wales will regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.

WPLSCE 16: Libraries in Wales will work in partnership to open up access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.

WPLSCE 17: Libraries in Wales will provide access to the library service's strategy, policies, objectives and vision, in print and online, in a range of languages appropriate for the community.

WPLSCE 18: Libraries in Wales will provide a clear, timely and transparent complaints process if things go wrong.

[Taken from pp13, 17, 19, 21]

The quality indicators then relate to these (although there are not many that tie in specifically to social justice issues). However, the following is of note:

"WPLSQI 1 Making a difference

This selection of indicators assesses the impact of library use on people's lives in a variety of ways. Although some are relevant to other areas of this framework, they are grouped together here as being key to the overall customer experience.

Authorities will report, at least once in the three year period:

a) the percentage of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills;
b) the percentage of children who think that the library helps them learn and find things out;
c) the percentage of adults who have found helpful information for health and well-being at the library;
d) the percentage of adults who experience the library as an enjoyable, safe and inclusive place;
e) the percentage of adults and the percentage of children who think that the library has made a difference to their lives." [p13]

Some people think that having Standards and Indicators is too limiting and rigid, but, on the other hand, without them there is no way of assessing public libraries (or other services) against any sort of target. (I firmly believe that English public libraries thrived during the short-lived Annual Library Plans and Standards!) In Wales, the renewal of the Standards sends out a strong message about the sorts and level of provision there should be – a message that could well be replicated across the UK.[19]

Abbreviations and acronyms

JRF = Joseph Rowntree Foundation
OAS = Organization of American States
SROI = Social Return On Investment

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   May 2014

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[19] Source: email from Alison Tyler, CyMAL.