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

## Number 159, July 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 …?

## *Books for Keeps*

The July issue[1] includes an editorial by Ferelith Hordon, celebrating the CILIP Carnegie and Kate Greenaway Medals-winners, and which raises a major concern:

> "The Carnegie and Greenaway are frequently the focus of comment and criticism, as our oldest and arguably most prestigious award for children's books, celebrating writing and illustration. They can draw attention to areas of concern that might be otherwise submerged in the flood of shiny new books being published over the year. Shortlists can only reflect what is available. Criticisms have been made against the Awards for being too girl oriented, too issue-led, too bland, too old – all of which may say something about the books being published.
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> Attendance at the Carnegie Kate Greenaway celebration - indeed attendance at almost any children's book event, whether prize giving or book launch - throws up a very pressing concern. Why was Malorie Blackman, our Children's Laureate, the only [Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic] representative there? This was something she herself commented on. It is clear is that the publishing world is still very unrepresentative of British society in general. As Fen Coles of Letterbox Library, an organisation that works hard to provide access to a wide range of inclusive material, comments: 'There is no question that the children's publishing industry is resoundingly white and middle-class. This is reflected by the people who make up the industry - from authors to marketing teams – and by the industry's output.' What is particularly dispiriting is to reflect that this is a situation that was a concern thirty years ago. Indeed it was in response to such lack of diversity that Verna Wilkins set up Tamarind, still publishing today, as a voice in the wilderness.
>
> Why is this so? Our schools are full of bright, lively, intelligent, imaginative young people from all backgrounds; not all want to become footballers or Alan Sugar's apprentice. Some do want to work in the world of books. What happens? As Fen points out, 'Many people entering the industry work on a voluntary basis or require financial backing which itself tends to lead to a white, middle class bias'. The general under-representation of BAME role models across the industry, with a few shining exceptions such as Malorie Blackman and Bali Rai, means there is little to aspire to.
>
> What can be done? It is not a 'problem' exclusive to the publishing world. Lenny Henry recently had some forceful comments to make about BAME representation at the BBC. It may be that what he proposes for the BBC – quotas and ring-fenced funding – should be considered here. Drastic? Prescriptive? Perhaps. But in Fen Cole's words, 'Efforts to recruit a more

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[1] *Books for Keeps*, 207, July 2014, http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/207.

diverse workforce have often been restricted to a one-off internship rather than a long term strategic planning to address the issue.'" [p2][2]

Ferelith is absolutely right, there is a huge amount of work to do. She is also right to look back at just how long this struggle has been going on; for example, the "Other Award", which ran from 1974, was established to:

"'… draw attention to progressive books of literary merit, and to give recognition to writers and illustrators who are taking positive steps to widen the literary experience of young people today.'

The award and those associated with it have had a considerable impact on children's publishing – something which must compensate for the ridicule and even abuse which sometimes comes their way. Long may they continue for there can be few involved with children and books who would disagree with this statement which accompanied the announcement of this year's commended books.

'More and more parents, teachers, librarians and illustrators are becoming dissatisfied with the narrow range of experience, attitudes, and information offered to children and young people in their literature overall. Too many of today's children's books continue to offer harmful stereotypes, or omit large areas of experience in their treatment of sex roles, race, class and culture, age and disability. Such, stereotypes are socially divisive and psychologically damaging.

The concern of the Other Award is thus that there should be available to children in their literature overall, a wider and more accurate representation of human experience and situation, and above all that groups of people usually ignored, patronised or misrepresented in children's literature should have their rightful place in the books that children and young people read.'"[3]

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

## "Speak Out London – Diversity City"

"*Speak Out London – Diversity City* is a new LGBTQ Oral History project based at London Metropolitan Archives (LMA), which has received a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund through the *Our Heritage* funding stream. The project will run from late September 2014 to August 2016.

The project will establish a community LGBTQ oral-history / memorabilia archive at LMA, which will record histories (1945-present). This new and significant contemporary archive will provide a powerful community collection to complement and challenge more formal historical records. The existing

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[2] John Vincent was a judge for the "Other Award".
[3] Taken from: http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/29/childrens-books/articles/awards/the-other-award-%E2%80%93-10-years-old.

collections held at LMA do not fully represent LGBTQ London history. The opportunity for individuals and groups to participate will do much to contribute to greater knowledge and understanding and ensure that people, currently invisible and silent in the records, will be seen and heard and their histories secured for future generations.

In consultation with historians and community representatives, five over-arching themes have been identified as focused starting points for the project: *What Does London Mean to Me? Home Life, Sex and Relationships; Making Our Way; Campaigning and Beliefs* and *Out and About*

The project team will work closely with participants and volunteers, providing a rich programme of activities and events over the next two years. There will also be training and education opportunities which will support groups wanting to run their own oral / memorabilia history sessions into the future.

The **Speak Out London – Diversity City Archive** will be made available through a website and on site at LMA through our Mediatheque facility.

The project provides opportunities for LGBTQ individuals and groups to work more closely with LMA, establishing community ownership in a place where people of all ages and backgrounds can contribute, explore, share and study collective histories. This strong foundation will establish **Speak Out London – Diversity City Archive** as a central part of LMA's service, ensuring its ongoing development in the years ahead." [emphases theirs][4]

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## Disability issues – Other Agencies

### *Disability: a research study on unconscious bias*

This new report[5] from the Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion "suggests that levels of unconscious bias against disabled people are almost 8% higher today than before the Paralympic Games of 2012."[6]

The research set out to find:

- "If unconscious attitudes towards people with disabilities has changed since the London 2012 Paralympic Games.
- If the strength of unconscious bias against disabled people is stronger than for the characteristics of gender and race." [p2]

The key findings include:

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[4] Source: email from Jan Pimblett, LMA, 25 Jul 2014.
[5] *Disability: a research study on unconscious bias*. ENEI, 2014. Available to download as a pdf (478.68 kb) from: http://www.enei.org.uk/data/files/publications/734/Disability-A-Research-Study-on-Unconscious-Bias.pdf.
[6] Taken from: http://www.enei.org.uk/news.php/691/unconscious-bias-against-disabled-people-is-higher-now-than-before-the-paralympics?utm_campaign=enei+News+15+July&utm_source=ENEI&utm_medium=email.

"Counter to media speculation and popular belief, the period after the 2012 Paralympics was not a time when we saw a reduction in unconscious bias towards people with disabilities and test scores actually rose slightly in the post Paralympics period (2013-14). This supports the latest research from Scope … which shows that 22% of disabled people are of the opinion that people's attitudes towards them as a disabled person have worsened following the 2012 Paralympian Games.

This suggests that whilst peoples' perceptions and attitudes towards disabled people may be changing at the conscious level, individuals continue to hold ingrained and deep-rooted negative assumptions about disabled people." [p15]

In terms of the impact of this at work:

"The impact of these unconscious biases against disabled people is wide-ranging in the workplace. Where a disabled person has an individual with unconscious biases against them in a decision-making role, they will be put at a disadvantage in the following areas:

- Recruitment and selection – by recruiters who may believe disabled people are not competent or too difficult or expensive to recruit.
- Training and development – by line managers who do not feel comfortable talking to disabled people or have negative attitudes about their abilities and therefore do not allocate stretching work, put them forward for projects or promotions and work to develop them in the same way as their peers.
- Communication and engagement - by line managers and leaders who do not feel confident talking to disabled people.

The effect may be subtle or may be significant, but if it is not addressed people with disabilities will not be given the same opportunities as their peers and employers will lose talented people to their more inclusive competitors." [pp15-16]

The report recommends that employers take the following actions to reduce the impact of unconscious bias against disabled people in the workplace:

- "Measure the unconscious bias of recruiters and key decision makers to raise awareness of bias, as understanding your own biases, learning how to overcome them whilst having the right tools and support in place, is key to removing barriers for disabled people.
- Encourage recruiters to put forward more candidates with disabilities to break down stereotypes and build more role models.
- Review positive action programmes and the process for agreeing reasonable adjustments for the risks of triggering stereotypes amongst decision makers, the staff (including staff with disabilities) and the public.
- Consider confining work on reasonable adjustments to a small group of staff to minimise the exposure to staff that don't understand the

process and could make negative assumptions about the cost and impact.

- Avoid 'talking up' the impact of interventions which were thought to make disability bias less likely until the hard evidence is to hand as there is a risk of 'back-lash' effects.
- Review the impact of disability initiatives such as 'two ticks' and the 'Disability Confident Campaign' to ensure they are producing long term and lasting effects on the experiences of disabled people.
- Use positive disabled role models to show the positive effect disabled people can have at work. Focus on their achievements at work and not on their disability.
- Encourage honest discussions about disability in the workplace. Train line managers about different types of disabilities and how to talk to someone about their disability, giving them the confidence to have effective communication with different types of people.
- Review approach to reasonable adjustments to allow provision for extra help, reduced or different hours, reduced workload or different duties.
- Make sure key people in the organisation are aware of Access to Work, the support offered and the funding that may be available.
- Monitor disability within the workforce to gain management information to help inform future decision-making. At a minimum monitor disability:
  o At recruitment stage
  o Of staff with different performance ratings
  o Of Leavers" [p3]

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

### "Museums Association Submission to the Young People and the Arts Consultation"

The MA has just responded[7] to the Labour Party's policy review consultation on young people and the arts[8].

In particular, they have called for "more synergy between education policy and cultural policy, especially in areas such as the curriculum" [p2] and have urged the Labour Party to

> "… look to other areas of the UK for best practice in cultural policy. For example in Wales, Baroness Kay Andrews' Culture and Poverty report

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[7] See: Patrick Steel "MA calls for closer links between education and culture policy", http://www.museumsassociation.org/news/21072014-ma-calls-for-more-synergy-between-education-and-culture-policy?utm_source=ma&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=25072014.

[8] *Young people and the arts: a consultation*. Labour Party, 2014. Available to download as a pdf (252.31 kb) from: http://www.yourbritain.org.uk/uploads/editor/files/Young_People_and_the_Arts_-_call_for_evidence_PDF.pdf.

examines how cultural and heritage bodies can work more closely together to broaden access to, appreciation of and participation in culture in ways that contribute to reducing poverty.

In Scotland the curriculum is dependent on outside classroom learning, which can help encourage visits to cultural institutions." [p2]

The response asks – and then suggests answers to – a number of key questions, including:

"How can after-school clubs use arts and culture activities that offer quality, choice and affordability?

Museums and galleries often have dedicated learning spaces that could be used outside of school hours to provide before and after school learning opportunities or space for after-school clubs." [p3]

"How can local authorities use their leadership role to support young people and the arts? Should every local authority lead on developing a strategy for local arts and culture with a particular focus on the inclusion of young people?

A local strategy for inclusion would be useful as would a commitment to maintaining levels of funding and support for museums and galleries, which have been particularly hard hit by budget cuts." [pp3-4]

How can local authorities widen access for young people to the arts and cultural activity that they support through their cultural, and local development roles, including making best use of libraries and cultural spaces, and empty premises?

Museums and galleries could be encouraged by local authorities to provide dedicated space for young people with safe opportunities to do homework, learn new skills and socialize." [p4]

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## Broader issues – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

### *Public libraries in Wales*

"The Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee is undertaking a short inquiry into public libraries in Wales. To assist with its inquiry, the Committee would welcome your views on the following:

- Progress made by the Welsh Government towards achieving its Programme for Government commitments relating to libraries, and how sustainable any progress is in the current climate;
- Extent to which the current legislative and policy frameworks are suitable to meet the challenges facing local authorities delivering library services in Wales;

- How well-prepared the Welsh Government and local authorities are to mitigate the impact of public sector cuts on library services;
- Options for improving the financial sustainability of library services, including alternative models of provision;
- The contemporary and community role of public libraries in Wales."[9]

Between 21 November 2013 and 17 January 2014, the Committee conducted a public consultation to inform its inquiry, based on the agreed terms of reference. This included receiving 33 written responses (which have been published on the Assembly's website[10]).

In addition, the Committee held oral evidence sessions with a number of Stakeholders; in late 2013 and early 2014, the Assembly's Outreach Service organised a number of focus groups with library users. In addition, a survey about the inquiry was promoted through the Assembly's social media streams and with the help of relevant external organisations.

The Committee has now produced its report[11]. It begins by assessing progress against the Programme for Government commitments[12], which brought a mixed response, with some evidence providing "a positive view of the Welsh Government's work" [p7], whilst:

"… some respondents [thought] that libraries do not feature prominently in the Programme for Government. The SCL, as well as Swansea and Conwy Councils, commented that there were few mentions of public libraries in the Programme documentation, despite libraries playing 'a key role in relation to Health, Supporting People, Poverty, Education, Learning, Digital Inclusion, Welsh Language and Rural Communities – all key chapters in the Programme for Government Report' … On this point, the SCL told us:

'We strongly believe the role public libraries have to play in relation to key national policy areas should be more widely recognised and acknowledged.'" [p8]

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[9] Taken from:
http://www.senedd.assemblywales.org/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=8295.
[10] See: http://www.senedd.assemblywales.org/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=8295.
[11] The National Assembly for Wales. Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee. *Public libraries in Wales.* National Assembly for Wales, 2014. Available to download as a pdf (1020 kb) from: http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-business-fourth-assembly-laid-docs/cr-ld9868-e.pdf?langoption=3&ttl=CR-LD9868%20-%20Report%20by%20the%20Communities%2C%20Equality%20and%20Local%20Government%20Committee%20on%20public%20libraries%20in%20Wales.
[12] These are: "To widen access to our museums, libraries and heritage sites, particularly by targeting low income families and children to access our services; To strengthen regional collaboration in the delivery of library, museum and archive services and ensure that local authorities meet national standards of public library provision." [p7]

In terms of responding to the Welsh Public Library Standards[13] and Assessment Framework, there was evidence that more emphasis on outcomes was required, and that:

> "… there should be consequences for failure to meet the Standards. On this point, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council said:
>
> > 'There seems to be little sanction against poor performance to the WPLS … If these standards are to be the interpretation of the Act, there should be further commitment by the Welsh Government to actively support authorities to deliver against them as there is a danger they will become an onerous paper exercise, with little real value to the people of Wales.'" [pp10-11]

The report then looks at "Financial sustainability and the future delivery of library services", which includes a look at collaboration, co-location, community-managed libraries, the role of volunteers, possible reductions in library services and closures, grant funding, and raising revenue.

The social role of libraries was emphasised:

> "… we heard evidence that emphasised the need for local authorities to consider the broad social value of libraries when considering cuts to services, and the extent to which spending on libraries can reduce further costs to the public sector, in areas such as the health service. On this point, Disability Wales said:
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> > 'Whilst recognising that any proposal to close … libraries has been driven by the need to meet budget requirements, the closure of a library is the loss of a major community asset which has a disproportionate effect on the most disadvantaged members of society.'" [p24]

This is followed by a strong chapter on "The contemporary and community role of public libraries in Wales". For example:

> "We received a considerable amount of evidence about the contemporary and community role of public libraries. Many respondents emphasised the significant contribution made by libraries to the communities which they serve. On this point, NFWI Wales described libraries as 'the hub of community life' and Pembrokeshire County Council told us that a library is a 'safe, neutral, cost-free and welcoming space that brings the community together' …
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> This view emerged strongly from our focus group participants, one of whom said:

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[13] The latest version is: *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. This was assessed in *The Network Newsletter*, 157, May 2014, pp7-10.

> 'The local library isn't just a repository of books; it's a safe place I can go where I'm always greeted by friendly, helpful, professional staff.'

… Further to this, a number of respondents, including the SCL, CILIP Cymru Wales, Macmillan Wales and Newport City Council highlighted the contribution made by modern libraries to a broad range of Welsh Government policy areas, including regeneration, growth and jobs, education, health and well-being, tackling poverty, digital inclusion, safe communities, promoting culture and equality and inclusiveness. The SCL stated:

> 'to significantly reduce the number of public libraries would critically undermine the comprehensive infrastructure and the community links that can help to deliver key national agenda strands.'" [p32]

In addition:

> "We also received evidence about the delivery of modern library services, including digital resources such as e-magazines and click-and-collect services, and other community initiatives including the Summer Reading Challenge and National Libraries Day …
>
> We received much evidence about the important contribution made by libraries towards to digital inclusion. CILIP Cymru Wales stated that 'libraries should have a crucial role in connecting people in a digital world and ensuring universal access to literacy, learning and information'. They went on to argue that this 'role is needed more than ever today as part of ensuring that the divide between rich and poor in society does not increase and we build strong communities.'
>
> … Digital services were also considered particularly important to older and disabled people, who would otherwise be unable to access library services …
>
> Disability Wales said that libraries acted as a 'gateway', enabling people without internet access at home to access a range of public services online, thereby enabling the public sector to save money by delivering services online. However, they felt that local authorities needed to be clearer about their aims to maintain and improve library services for disabled people and be more aspirational in this regard." [pp33-34]

There was also evidence of the role that libraries play in delivering UK Government digital-by-default welfare reforms; and strong evidence of the support that libraries give to vulnerable people:

> "We heard that public libraries are a particularly valuable service to vulnerable members of society, such as disabled people, young and older people, and those seeking employment, and particularly to those living in rural areas. A number of respondents, including the Isle of Anglesey Library Service, described the specific help provided by

libraries for disabled and disadvantaged individuals, including a book delivery service for housebound people, provision of talking books and other accessible versions, and the Books on Prescription Service …

Age Cymru told us that public spaces such as libraries where people can meet and take part in community activities are vitally important:

> 'Such opportunities are greatly valued by many older people and can help to prevent isolation, loneliness and health decline' …

We heard from RNIB Cymru that, when they are accessible to blind or partially sighted people, libraries can help to reduce isolation and social exclusion …

Disability Wales highlighted the negative consequence of public library closures for disabled people, which could lead to isolation; disengagement from their communities; and reduced involvement in social and cultural activities …

We also heard about the importance of libraries for vulnerable low-income families who may not have the resources to buy many books for their children, and for whom their local library also provides a valuable opportunity for social interactions." [p35]

This is followed by the detailed evidence, and the user groups' activities is of particular interest (it gives a great snapshot of the kinds of use that people make of libraries).

Finally, the report makes 10 recommendations:

- **Recommendation 1.** We recommend that the Minister produces and publishes an annual report on the state of public libraries in Wales.
- **Recommendation 2.** We recommend that the Minister makes arrangements for the central publication of disaggregated data showing the use of public libraries by demographic groups.
- **Recommendation 3.** We recommend that the Minister works with partners to develop a contemporary definition of —comprehensive and efficientǁ library services for local authorities to deliver under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. Such a definition should include the provision of internet access which, we believe, should remain free of charge.
- **Recommendation 4.** We recommend that the Minister considers developing a voluntary accreditation scheme for individual libraries in Wales.
- **Recommendation 5.** We recommend that the Minister continues to work with local authorities and their partners to identify and promote further opportunities for collaboration and co-location arrangements in the delivery of library services.
- **Recommendation 6.** We recommend that the Minister ensures that the necessary ongoing support and guidance is available in order to increase the long-term sustainability of community managed libraries.

- **Recommendation 7.** We recommend that the Minister ensures adequate support and guidance continues to be available to local authorities to identify and pursue all available funding opportunities.
- **Recommendation 8.** We recommend that, whilst core library services should remain free of charge, the Minister should explore with local authorities all other available options for libraries to raise revenue.
- **Recommendation 9.** We recommend that the Minister works with local authorities and partners to promote better the wide range of services provided by public libraries.
- **Recommendation 10.** We recommend that the Minister continues to pursue the case for additional funding from the UK Government in recognition of the increasing responsibilities for library staff in Wales in supporting the delivery of digital-by-default welfare reforms." [pp5-6]

This is a very positive input. At the next stage, the Minister's expert review panel will be considering this report in their findings – the review:

"… will look at local authorities' current and future plans to deliver public library services in Wales. The aim is to identify sustainable future models which maximise the benefits of collaboration and innovation."[14], [15]

## Abbreviations and acronyms

CILIP = Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals
LGBTQ = lesbian, bisexual, gay, trans, questioning/queer
MA = Museums Association
NFWI Wales = National Federation of Women's Institutes Wales
SCL = Society of Chief Librarians
WPLS = Welsh Public Library Standards

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[14] See:
http://wales.gov.uk/topics/cultureandsport/museumsarchiveslibraries/cymal/libraries/public-libraries-review/?lang=en.
[15] Source: email from Alyson Tyler, CyMAL.