

The LIBRARY *Campaigner*

Supporting friends and users of libraries



Power to the people!

2007 could be the year that users get a real say in how services are run – so make sure you take advantage!



WINTER 2007
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THE LIBRARY CAMPAIGN – AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

To advance the lifelong education of the public by the promotion, support, assistance and improvement of libraries through the activities of friends and users groups.

Executive Committee Meetings 2007 dates

14 March at West Bromwich
(NOTE: this is a Wednesday)

12 May AGM in London,
venue to be arranged

14 July venue to be arranged

8 September venue to be arranged

11 November venue to be arranged

The Officers and the Executive Committee meet regularly every two months, 1–4pm usually on a Saturday, usually in central London. Campaign members are always very welcome to attend. If you want to come to a meeting contact the Secretary to receive an agenda.

We would like to hold more of these meetings in the regions, both to encourage members to come and to help those committee members who have a long journey to London. We have recently met in Lewes, Birmingham and Rotherham.

If a local group would like to invite us to meet in their area, we would be delighted to come.

Thanks to ...

- **Unison**, for its continued and valued support.
- **CILIP (Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals)** for permission to adapt certain material for this issue from its journal, **Update**.



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Good news?

2007 will be tough but not hopeless, says Laura Swaffield

By now, all TLC members have had two pieces of good news. The TLC Handbook is your free gift for 2007. And you have a chance to be consulted at national level on at least some aspects of the library service (this should not be a stunning breakthrough, but it is).

I suspect the Handbook will be very useful in 2007. Most public libraries will either be badly in need of your support, or will be coming up with drastic plans for savings that should be challenged.

This began in 2006, in many local councils. Some did their best to play fair. But we saw some familiar scenarios. Too often, unpopular plans were announced without the slightest attempt to consult library users. The result was uproar – much to the amazement of library managers and councillors.

Any attempt by library users to examine the thinking behind planned cuts was met with a stone wall. And as for considering alternative ideas for savings – perish the thought!

Result – bad publicity for the service, and an enormous waste of everyone's energy fighting battles that should not have to happen.

More heart-breaking, in many ways, are services that think they do 'consult'. They send elaborate plans for Friends to add their comments at the very last minute – giving them no true input at all.

Bad news?

Andrew Coburn says things can only get better – can't they?

Local authorities across the country are preparing their budgets for 2007-8. They are unlikely to make good reading for library supporters. The current year has seen threats to services – meaning possible closures, reductions in staff and/ or spending on books etc – in dozens of authorities.

The headline-makers have been Buckinghamshire, Devon and Dorset all suggesting or actually making up to ten branch closures. But elsewhere spending has been clawed back, and in authorities like Essex and Hampshire qualified librarians' jobs are being chopped.

The Pollyanna view is that in 2006 we

They make a hash of refurbishing local branches because they don't involve the long-term users, who know the building far better than they do. They ask marketing experts to serve the tea at events that are ill-attended because they were badly marketed. Etc.

All this is to change – in theory. Read about the basics in this issue. Government agencies are launching a host of initiatives to change the no-consult culture that – they are honest enough to admit – prevails in most local councils.

Meanwhile, TLC's dogged networking at national level is bearing fruit. Andrew Coburn raised TLC's profile by getting a letter published in the Bookseller. Every little helps.

And the government's advisory body MLA (Museums, Libraries & Archives Council) moved from informing TLC to really consulting us. There were discussions with Love Libraries, and MLA will use us to channel library users' views on the Public Library Service Standards.

(Ironically, the process began with an online questionnaire of 'stakeholders' – which did not include library users! A swift email from TLC's Brian Hall led – within hours – to an extra radio button...)

Cynicism about all this is understandable. But the opportunities are there. If Friends/users don't work to take advantage any way they can, they will have only themselves to blame – for a change.

had the Love Libraries campaign which refurbished three libraries (as a way of showing what can be done), and created library champions, criteria for a 'great library' and otherwise promoted the value of libraries. There has also been a report on book procurement which, if carried through, would free millions to spend.

I cannot share this optimism. From my own authority (the aforementioned Essex) I know what the external pressures are. Issues like adult social care and landfill/waste are becoming more serious for many of the shire counties. Elsewhere the need to protect education and the vulnerable members of our

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POWER TO THE PEOPLE?

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communities are putting on more pressure.

So what can be done by those who do Love Libraries? The recipe has not really changed. Protest – write to councillors and MPs when proposals are made which will worsen your service. Use the Love Libraries checklist in the Handbook – backed by all England's chief librarians – to show what your own service should offer. Join or set up a local group using the Handbook. And tell TLC – we can add to the groundswell. But don't give up, and don't lose faith that public libraries can remain the great public service they have been for decades.

Despair – or hope?

by Brian Hall, TLC chairman

Idespair when I hear some of the comments I have heard over the last few months.

A senior librarian, challenged on the ethics of making swingeing cuts in services, replied: ‘Stuff the ethics!’ Is this the best intellectual argument that can be advanced?

A county librarian said: ‘We don’t need professional librarians any more.’ She has made a large number of her Chartered Librarians redundant to make way for redundant officers from other local authority departments. They have to be found jobs so they are brought in to ‘manage’ libraries, without any knowledge or understanding of the culture and ethos of public libraries.

I despair when professional staff are instructed not to put their post-nominal letters on their name badges because ‘it makes other staff feel inferior’, and when chief officers deny the concept of professionalism and the value of professional qualifications – especially when many owe their own current positions to those very qualifications!

As a user, I demand access to professional librarians – that is my right! It is not just the closure of public libraries to which I object, but also this de-professionalisation.

I know that many library chiefs do not like what they are being forced to do. It goes against their professional judgment and instincts. Most have cuts imposed upon them but cannot speak out. They are employed by local authorities, they want to keep their jobs, they may want promotion, so they have to be careful what they say. I don’t! As one librarian has said to me: ‘We’ll give you the bullets if you’ll fire the gun!’

As for elected council members, again I sometimes despair at what I hear. One cabinet member for libraries told me: ‘If we didn’t have to provide libraries, we wouldn’t bother!’ Others tell me there are ‘no votes in libraries’. Wrong! These tend to be the same councillors who tell me months later: ‘We didn’t realise libraries were so popular!’ There may be no votes in promoting better libraries but you can certainly lose votes by closing a much valued community resource.

I know from my own experiences how much the retention of power means to local councillors. I don’t blame them for that, but it can lead to short-termism – looking no further than the next election. Anyone can keep council taxes down by doing nothing, but most of us have the sense to realise that quality services cost money.

The other excuse is the either/ or syndrome – ‘If it’s a case of closing libraries or old people’s homes, then it’s the libraries that have to go’. We are the fourth richest nation on earth – surely we can afford both!

While newspapers (and users!) are emphasising the educational, social and economic values of libraries to society, councils are busy trying to close many. I know that for many councillors this goes very much against their own instincts and beliefs but economic pressures have forced them into taking such unpopular and anti-democratic decisions.

Libraries are a political issue. Free and equal access to information is an essential component of a democratic society. Public libraries are also a statutory service. The law still requires a comprehensive and efficient service for anyone desiring to make use thereof.

I have been accused of being an idealist. Well, so I am – for I will never acknowledge that the second-rate, the mundane, the mediocre, is acceptable. Users deserve the best!

It is said that one measure of a civilised a society is the degree to which it supports its public library service. If we unite, we can demonstrate that Britain is among the most civilised countries in the world. After all, service providers and users should all be on the same side!

Bookstart Book Crawl

After Bookstart (see page 5), many libraries are now taking part in the Bookstart Book Crawl. This is specifically a library joining incentive for children from 0-4 years old.



The Bookstart Book Crawl is another part of the Bookstart programme. It is designed to build on the contact – and love of books – built up by the free Bookstart packs.

Rosemary Clarke, Head of Bookstart, comments: ‘Our aim is to encourage families with babies and young children to use their local library much more. If they make five visits they earn a certificate, and there are five to collect. All the materials are provided free to library services across the UK. If every Bookstart child completed just one ‘crawl’ we would have 10 million more visits to libraries each year.’

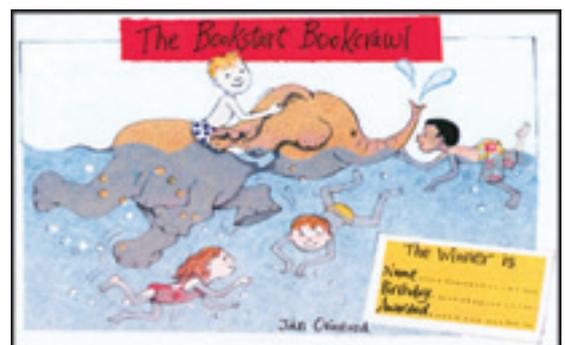


They are illustrated by Claire Mackie, Jan Ormerod, Jane Ray, Tony Ross and Nick Sharratt. These very popular artists are keen fans of Bookstart and have donated their artwork.

The Children’s Laureate, Jacqueline Wilson, says: ‘The new certificates are beautifully illustrated and will be lovely keepsakes of children’s earliest years as library members. The Book Crawl is a fantastic way to encourage more children to enjoy books from the library.’

‘I read to my daughter when she was a baby. It is fantastic that now every parent is given beautiful, amusing and stimulating books to read to their baby.’

‘Bookstart is wonderful. It is the best way I know of making a child a keen reader for life.’



Bookstart for babies

Every library authority is now signed up to Bookstart, which gives away 4.2 million free books every year to pre-school children. How and why do they do it? A conversation with Rosemary Clarke, Head of the national Bookstart programme.

What is the national Bookstart programme?

Bookstart is administered by the educational charity Booktrust, whose aim is to encourage people of all ages and cultures to discover and enjoy reading. We work with every library in the UK to give free books and guidance materials to babies and young children. By starting them off with Bookstart we can give every child a love of books right from the start.

There are different Bookstart packs for babies, toddlers and three-year-olds and we aim to reach 2 million children a year. Each pack contains lots of gift items, including leaflets that encourage parents to read to their children and give them ideas for rhyming games and activities. Most important, each pack has two beautiful books. This means we need 4.2 million books a year.

Booktrust is a charity. How can you fund such an enormous programme?

Bookstart is unique. It is a public/ private partnership. We enjoy central funding support from the government's Sure Start Unit and we are very generously supported by around 26 children's book publishers. The programme is delivered in each local authority by a partnership between libraries, health visitors and early years teams.

That still sounds like lot of taxpayers' money?

Not at all. Thanks to our sponsorship support, it is very good value for taxpayers. All the research shows that an early introduction to books helps children socially, emotionally and culturally as well as educationally. So we feel this is a wonderful investment in every child – and also a wonderful bargain.

How are libraries supporting Bookstart?

Libraries are co-ordinating Bookstart in most local authorities. You should be able

to get information about Bookstart at any library. Every Bookstart pack promotes the library and includes a joining form. Our message is that you are never too young to join, and even tiny babies are welcome.

Many libraries also hold special Bookstart Rhymetime events to encourage families to share stories, songs and rhymes together. This helps to build a lifelong love of books. Libraries, especially those linked to a local Sure Start centre, often back up the programme with launch parties, family events – and maybe a visit from the Bookstart bear (the costume is on loan to any participating library). Related activities may often include basic skills courses for parents and carers with poor literacy.

Addressing basic skills sounds fine, but why give Bookstart to everyone? Surely there are many people who don't need it?

Just because families have adequate incomes it does not always follow that they are switched on to books. In many

Much that local libraries do is under-publicised. Yet there is some amazing work being done – and some Friends/User groups might even choose to give extra support. Here's one example – Bookstart and Book Crawl.

homes there are lots of videos, DVDs and computer games but no books at all. This is what we want to change. We feel that every child has a right to a creative life so that they can go beyond functional literacy and develop into creative readers.

So Bookstart is about giving books a special place in every home?

That is it exactly! We want everyone to discover and enjoy books. Parents, grandparents and carers have an important role to play in ensuring that their children have stories, songs and rhymes every day. Just reading aloud and sharing books together will make such a difference to their communication and listening skills, their attention span and to school readiness. But most important of all, it is fun and gives you such delightful memories of their childhood and sharing books together.



If you want to know more visit www.bookstart.org.uk or www.booktrust.org.uk

The Reading Agency (TRA)

TRA is a huge resource for book promotions. Is your library service making the most of it? Are you? Check what's on offer...

- The annual Summer Reading Challenge: keeps school-age kids reading through the holidays with an exciting overall theme, posters, a website, ideas for activities, certificate/medals for readers and attractive collectables (stickers etc)
- Chatterbooks: a pack to use with a children's reading group. Training, posters, stickers, bookmarks, ideas – all part of an established support network that has been running for years.
- Boox: a whole network to support work with super-cool teenagers, with a website, magazine, bright ideas and support.
- Poetry posters: full colour posters with work by six poets (from Jean Binta Breeze to Benjamin Zephaniah) and support notes, websites etc.
- The Reading Partners Rolling Calendar on TRA's website, that lists current book-related prizes, events, promotions, TV programmes, authors available for appearances... that a book-loving Friends group might like to latch on to.

New 2006-7 promotions:

- (1) *Branching out* (illustrated above): posters, postcards, book lists, case studies and ideas for activities to go with the BBC nature series on TV and radio.
- (2) *It takes five minutes...* posters, postcards, headers and stickers to encourage dads to tell their kids a story.
- (3) *First Choice* and *Got kids? Get reading*: two established promotions to encourage adults with low literacy skills to read for the sheer pleasure of it and/or pluck up courage to read along as their kids start reading.

Both fit nicely with the slim Quick Reads books that will be promoted from World Book Day in March, with the continuing RaW (reading and writing) promotion on



BBC TV and radio and with local adult education services.

Both include reading lists, posters, postcards, stickers, reading diaries, lots of ideas and case studies and even online training for staff.

- (4) *Love Libraries*: publicity material.
- (5) *Made in Britain*: established (now updated) promotion to celebrate the UK's African, Caribbean and Asian writers, from George Alagiah to Zadie Smith. Booklist plus posters and postcards. Ideal for Black History Month.
- (6) *Banipal – discover Arab literature*: badly-needed new promotion to introduce Arab best-sellers, classics, poetry and women writers. Joint project with the Arts Council and the British Council. Banners, posters, leaflets, stickers, booklist with extra notes, and a whole resource pack with an introduction to Arab literature, case studies, ideas for activities and marketing, weblinks and more...
- (7) *Manga Mania*: promotion using the ultra-cool Japanese graphic books that are now a major area in publishing – and attract young people that other books don't reach! Posters, postcards, badges, updated booklist, and a resource list explaining what Manga is, with activity ideas, stock ordering information etc.

IT'S HERE!

TLC's long-awaited Handbook is now fully updated and ready to use.

The contents will save you time and frustration! This is the essential information – whether you aim to support your local library or conduct an informed debate about its future, whether you need to run a campaign or just come up with fresh ideas, whether you want to check you've covered the basics or be inspired by a whole new field of possibilities!



The Library Campaign

Supporting friends and users of libraries

The Handbook for Library Friends and User Groups

22 Upper Woburn Place, London

LIBRARYCAM@ac

www.librarycamp

THE LIBRARY CAMPAIGN HANDBOOK

Whether you need to start up a campaign, or just want to help support your local library, this Handbook gives you all the information you need:

1. GETTING STARTED

- i. A Message from The Library Campaign Chairperson
What can Friends/Users do for libraries?
- ii. How to start a Friends/User group:
What kind of group? / How TLC can help / Action checklist

2. FIRST STEPS

- i. How to organise a meeting / Guide to good relationships
- ii. As you get started:
Basic principles / Day-to-day running /
Organisation tasks checklist / Communication tasks checklist
- iii. Things to do:
Build support / Events / Lobbying / Fund-raising

3. CAMPAIGNING INFORMATION

- i. Who runs public libraries?
Four bodies that influence policy & funding
- ii. How good is your library service?
Four ways library performance is judged
How to explain the value of libraries to local councils
The Shared Priorities/Watch this space

4. CAMPAIGNING TACTICS

- i. Dealing with your local council: how it works, who to contact, how to protest or query decisions, making a complaint, taking it further – the Ombudsman, judicial review
- ii. Peaceful protest: the law on marches/ the law on static demonstrations
- iii. Lobbying & collecting funds: the law on collecting money, handing out leaflets, putting up posters, selling newsletters
- iv. Using the Freedom of Information Act

5. PUBLICITY & PROMOTION

- i. Working with the media
What journalists need / Talking to a journalist / Radio & TV
- ii. How to write a press release
Using photographs/ Press release format
- iii. Articles for the press/ Letters to the Editor

6. MORE INFORMATION

- i. Find out about current library policy / Find out how your service matches up
Find out more about library affairs / Have your say online
- ii. Friends/User groups / Volunteering/Community engagement
Ideas for libraries: design/book promotion/etc.
- iii. Draft constitution, to adapt as you wish
- iv. The Love Libraries guide to great libraries:
What England's chief librarians think your service should offer
- v. Secrets of success/ What The Library Campaign can do for you

For copies of the Library Campaign Handbook, contact the address overleaf.

The Library Campaign

DECEMBER 2006

All TLC members get a free copy.

So if you know an individual or group who might want to join TLC – now is the time.

Extra copies are on sale at £5.

CHECK THIS!

In the handbook you'll find this checklist. It's one sign of new joint working between TLC and some of the movers and shakers in the library world. The checklist was part of the 2006 Love Libraries campaign.

Run by the Reading Agency (TRA), Love Libraries was a valiant attempt to use minimal funding to update the image of libraries – and, above all, to promote them as places for books and reading.

A lot more work needs to be done, as all will agree. The checklist was developed with the Society of Chief Librarians (SCL) as a basic statement of what every local library should be able to provide, in the opinion of the leaders in the library world. That makes it a weapon with some power.

Use it. Add your own basic requirements. Add your own estimates of quality of provision. But use it – and thus link in to a continuing network where library users will have a voice, a source of support, and common ground for debate with the library professionals, too!



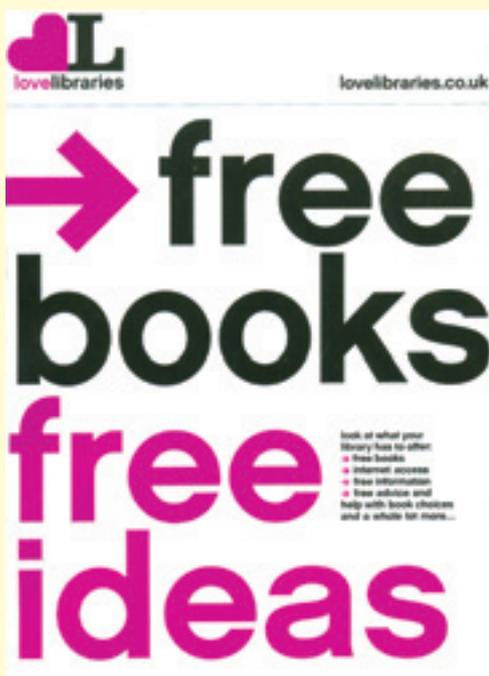
The Love Libraries guide to great libraries

WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT FROM YOUR LOCAL LIBRARY SERVICE?

- **Free books to browse and borrow**
At least 6 free books per person
- **A wide range of reading resources**
From bestsellers to new and older titles, books you won't find in your bookshop, talking and large print books, magazines, newspapers and text books
- **Any book from anywhere**
Order any book through your library (even out of print books)
- **A community of readers**
Connect to other readers through reading groups and recommendations
- **Modernised, customer friendly services, right for the community**
Convenient opening hours to suit local people Easy to join, get answers to questions and borrow books, CDs and DVDs
- **Internet for all**
Every library has computers and staff trained to help you use them
- **24 hour access**
Through your library's online catalogue, online reference and other services
- **Expert, helpful staff**
To answer your questions and offer advice on reading and information
- **Free, independent information**
From a trustworthy source
- **Events programme**
Regular events, including activities for readers and author visits
- **Family activities**
Family reading and learning activities – baby rhyme time, homework clubs, holiday reading challenges...
- **A place for young people**
A safe local space with things to do
- **Help with learning**
Resources and advice for learning, including improving reading and writing skills
- **A well maintained and equipped building**
A safe, accessible, local community space that's a pleasure to visit
- **Have your say and get involved**
The best libraries have a lot to offer you. To find your local library go to www.peoplesnetwork.gov.uk
- **What do you want?**
Fill in any extra ideas that you or your group think would work well in your particular locality.

The Library Campaign

DECEMBER 2006



MORE LOVE LIBRARIES

The Love Libraries campaign continues in 2007, now under the wing of the Museums, Libraries & Archives Council. TLC thinks it is vital to keep up the momentum achieved in 2006. We also think its resources are of potential use to both library services and clued-up library users – whether they are working together or not! See the website for more details (www.lovelibraries.co.uk).

And check out the cheekily bright promotional materials used in the prototype libraries. Apparently TRA is swamped with orders from other library services. The word is that young staff love what's on offer – but not every library chief does...



READY-MADE RESOURCES

The TLC Handbook (especially pages 6i to 6v) is also an invaluable source of information and ideas on what the better public library services are doing. For users of some services, it could be a revelation.

For instance – do you know that high-quality promotional material for books and reading is now routinely available? Instead of having to create publicity from scratch, libraries can get clever ideas and really high-quality designs.

In some cases, it's free. In all cases, the quality makes the price a pretty good bargain. Young people in particular are highly design-conscious. And any library building is brightened by really slick presentation – posters, shelf labels and so on.

Most of these promotions come as a full package, offering any or all of the following: display units, posters, list of recommended books, the books themselves, posters, activity ideas, shelf labels, bookmarks and novelties such as stickers, post-cards or even a dedicated website.

Themes on offer so far have included youth titles, football, food and drink, Manga, crime, quick reads, books to read with your children, Black writers, Chinese (including translations), British Asian writing, poetry, and tie-ins with various BBC campaigns (currently the Branching Out nature theme and the RaW basic literacy campaign). And that's a very small selection. How many of these have you seen in your own libraries?

Many libraries don't take full advantage. A display (perhaps ordered in by managers) may be plonked in a corner and that's that. Many libraries don't take any advantage at all! High quality promotional material just isn't used.

Friends/User groups might do well to find out what's available, and nudge their services into using them more. They might even fund the use of a ready-made campaign as a one-off, to show library staff what can be done.

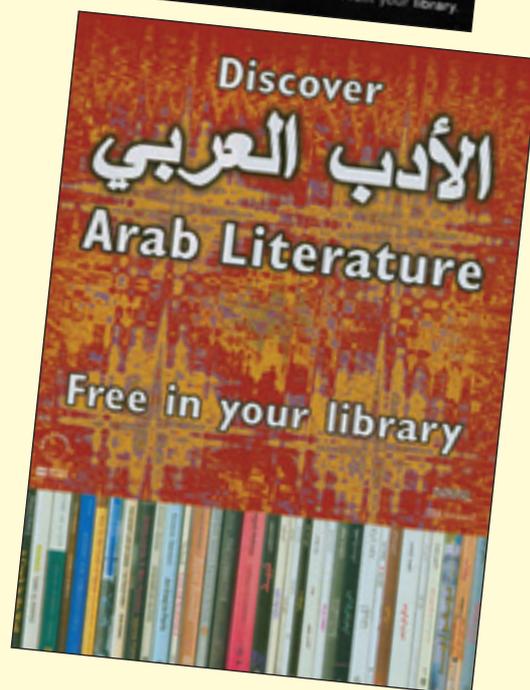
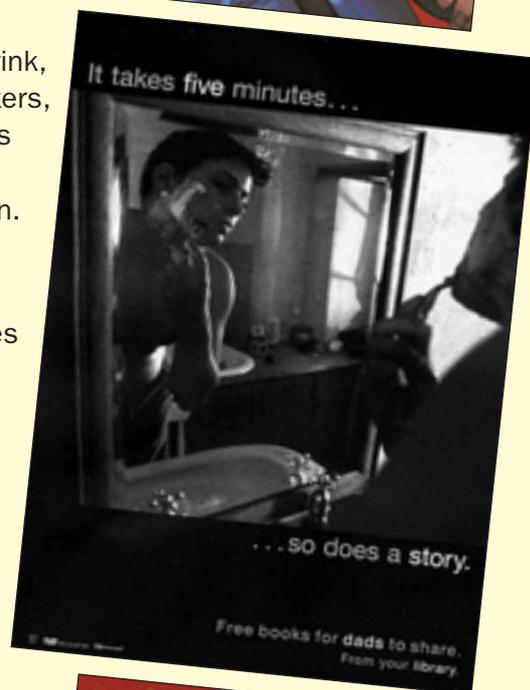
Even services that take up the material often don't think of giving Friends/User groups advance notice of what they will be using, when. But why not? Users are ideally placed to organise extra events and projects around chosen themes, spread the publicity and generally deepen the effect. And user groups may well find the activity ideas and materials useful for their own independent events.

The more users know, the more they can contribute. One library that has made good use of ready-made resources is award-winning Sighthill Library in Edinburgh (Spring 2006 Campaigner, page 13). Many more could do so.

WHAT'S AVAILABLE?

There are three basic widely-available sources, all listed in the TLC Handbook (page 6ii), THE READING AGENCY (pilot projects and complete reading promotion campaigns), THE NATIONAL LITERACY TRUST (eg, complete campaigns on reading with/for families, babies, football fans, schoolchildren, adults with low reading skills...) and OPENING THE BOOK (innovative furniture and signage, reading promotion for children, staff training).

This is just a flavour of the amazing resources available. Get to know these websites and see what else you find!



Illustrations taken from TRA's current promotions.

THE ESSENTIAL RESOURCE for LIBRARY FRIENDS and USER GROUPS

The Library Campaign is the umbrella body for all UK Friends/User groups. It provides essential advice on forming a group, information, advice, contacts with other groups, campaign material, news, a magazine, a website, meetings – and a voice for library users with the national press and the policy-makers.

The Library Campaign, 22 Upper Woburn Place, London WC1H 0TB
email: LIBRARYCAM@aol.com
www.librarycampaign.com

MEMBERSHIP FORM

I wish to join The Library Campaign and enclose a Cheque/PO for £for one year's membership.

Name

Address

Post code Tel:..... Email

GIFT AID

I confirm that I am a UK tax payer and pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax at least equal to the tax to be reclaimed in the tax year. I would like my/ our subscription (plus any donation) to be treated as Gift Aid.

Signed Date

MEMBERSHIP RATES

Individual £15.00	Concessionary Rate £10.00
Local Organisation £20.00	Trade Union Branches £30.00
Local Authorities £200.00	Company/National Trade Unions £100.00

Others please write for details

Please make cheques payable to: The Library Campaign.

It saves a lot of time and money if you pay by Bankers Order.
If you are able to do this please fill in the form and return it to us.

BANKERS ORDER FORM

To The Manager.....(Name and address of your bank)

Please pay The Library Campaign
(HSBC, Salford University Branch, The Crescent, Salford M5 4PB. 40-40-39, a/c 61277405) the sum of
£every year starting on(date) until further notice

Signed Account No.....

Name Address

..... Post code.....

(BLOCK CAPITALS PLEASE)

Please return to: The Library Campaign, 22 Upper Woburn Place, London WC1H 0TB.

Registered Charity (England & Wales) No. 1102634

Don't discount DIY libraries

Community-managed libraries can work well, argues David Allanach, the librarian responsible for Cambridgeshire's 'Library Access Points', and a life member of the Library Campaign.

I was interested to read in the winter 2005 issue of *The Campaigner* Andrew Coburn's rather negative slant (Parish or Perish? page 7) on developments in Cambridgeshire.

Anyone interested in reading the full history of the Library Access Points should read the account by Lesley Noblett in *Public Library Journal* Winter 2004 pp.20-24. For background I would merely add my personal comment that faced with insufficient funding for the library service there are very few options.

Experience has shown that cutting library opening hours or the bookstock do more damage to the library service as a whole – and lead to more borrowers losing the reading habit – than closing a number of small libraries. This in no way implies that closing libraries is an easy option. It is a very painful process for everyone concerned.

At least something good came out of this situation when most of the local communities in Cambridgeshire negotiated to continue to operate a library service so that they could retain a physical presence locally.

The main elements of the deal were that the library service would provide a changing core collection of 1,000 books – adult and junior paperback fiction and large print, plus the computer issuing system and two People's Network terminals. Each Library Access Point (LAP) would provide the premises and the volunteers to work it.

LAPs thus provide access to the full library service and most importantly join new members and plug into the request system. I don't want to oversell the idea, as there are plenty of challenges ahead, but there are many positive elements to the story.

Nine LAPs were set up over two years ago and they are all still operating. Six of the nine have increased their issues in the last year, so it was not a flash in the pan. All of them have added stock – both donations and stock they have bought – to an extent that, in some cases, the remaining small libraries can only envy. The better ones are also quite meticulous

2006 has been a year of threatened cuts and closures – and we can expect worse next year. One solution explored this year is simply to hand over small libraries to their communities. The new local government white paper (page 14) is pushing the idea for local services in general. For libraries, Buckinghamshire and Dorset are close to adopting it – and Cambridgeshire got there years ago...

in getting rid of stock that hasn't issued within six months – again something the library service can't yet match.

LAPs have energised their local communities in support of their library – some more so than others. They have also tapped into a resource of people power unavailable to us in the library service. The largest LAP is open 22.5 hours per week and always has two volunteers present. In addition there are duties outside opening hours, such as cataloguing or sorting books, plus committee meetings etc. So the total number of voluntary hours contributed by the community is very impressive. They have 49 active volunteers.

Another plus is that LAPs have often excelled at getting grants or gifts of books that are not open to us. At least one of them is now a registered charity.

All the LAPs have developed differently. One is open only six hours a week, in a day centre for the elderly, but it offers scrumptious tea and cakes whilst you choose. One is a joint-use library within a secondary school. Several run storytimes and offer visits from schools and playgroups. One hosts a local history group, another an art group and several support reading groups.

All in all, there is plenty of activity and optimism. But this model, whilst certainly saving money, is not cheap. The challenge for the library service is – what happens next time there is a financial crisis?

Challenges for the LAPs are more individual. They can include the need for better premises, maintaining sufficient income and enough volunteers and/or

enthusiastic organisers. These are early days for LAPs but the fore-runner to the LAPs has been going for six years and achieved a smooth transition when changing both their organiser and chairman. So the portents are good.

The other negative story in that Campaigner article concerned a parish council that was supporting extending the opening hours of a library – something I should have thought the Campaign would be enthusiastic about! (It is legal, by the way, although there is a limit to the amounts that can be given.)

There has been an honourable tradition in Cambridgeshire parish and town councils towards supporting this activity, which started when library opening hours were severely reduced. Two of these parishes later lost their libraries, so you could argue that there was no point. On the other hand those communities knew a lot about libraries and were better placed to support the formation of a LAP than others.

One of the town councils later gave up support for extended opening hours but used some of the money to support extra staffing for the summer reading scheme for children. This started a trend. Now most of the Cambridgeshire towns and villages support this 'extra value' activity.

So it all depends on whether your cup is half full or half empty.

David Allanach is Service Manager (Districts), responsible for Library Access Points, and a life member of the Campaign. The views expressed are his own and not necessarily those of Cambridgeshire Libraries.

POWER TO THE PEOPLE?

Are you ready? A big culture change is promised – empowering local people to get the services they want. Many Friends/User groups may view the new jargon with some cynicism. But you need to know what is promised.

Community what?

Community engagement is the new must-have for public libraries. But they probably need a lot of help getting it right...

The MLA (Museums, Libraries & Archives Council) has published a report* and toolkit to show what community engagement means. It is based on the Lending Time project co-run with CSV (Community Service Volunteers) on volunteer work in libraries. This was previewed in The Campaigner, autumn 2002 no.65.

The 12-strong steering group included three MLA staffers and two library chiefs (Olivia Spencer of Staffs and Pam Usher, then of Barnet). Many services sent information.

The central argument of the report is that community engagement is a step beyond mere consultation.

The latter 'is a tool for gaining ideas from the wider community'. But the former 'is concerned with the active participation and involvement of the community in activities including decision-making'. The report argues that in-depth engagement is essential to proper service development. The emphasis is on 'hard-to-reach' groups.

But, it admits, 'community engagement is not commonplace in libraries in any region'. And staff may be fearful.

Confusingly, the eight case studies cited mostly feature projects that select and train volunteers to deliver services chosen and designed by professionals. The report here betrays its origins in the CSV project. But two case studies do give a better idea – see page 13.

And there are odd omissions. There is no mention of CILIP's very useful guidelines on library volunteers, or of Unison, or even of library user groups or The Library Campaign (TLC)!

1ST BIRTHDAY FACTS AND FIGURES

These figures show just how successful the Warwickshire Direct – Kenilworth service has been in its first year

- Over 171,000 books, CDs & DVDs were borrowed
- Over 2,500 bus passes were applied for
- More than 1,200 new members joined the library
- More than 800 people applied for Housing and Council Tax benefits
- There were more than 400 refuse and recycling enquiries
- There were 400 requests to view planning applications
- Over 200 people applied to go on the Housing Register

The concept has now been mentioned in the white paper: Gateshead developed libraries as innovative 'one-stop shops' for information on council services. The idea has since been extended to other councils. Seen here is a poster celebrating one year of 'Warwickshire Direct' at Kenilworth's new library.

TLC's comment: 'The report says good things, but needs to face the fact that many services do not even consult their users – let alone engage fully with them, let alone engage the wider community. It won't be easy.

'Many need a top-to-bottom culture change, which will demand time and sensitivity.'

* www.mla.gov.uk/website/programmes/framework/framework_programmes/community_engagement

At last! The Big Lottery Fund (BLF) has launched its much-delayed Community Libraries programme. It has £80m for 'strengthening the place of libraries in community life... capital funding to improve library buildings so that they can offer a broader range of activities to their visitors'.

But hurry – closing date for applications is the end of March. The scheme has been developed with MLA (Museums, Libraries & Archives Council) and SCL (Society of Chief Librarians). It is open to councils in England – only one bid per council, although bids may cover more than one site.

However, these bids must be made jointly with 'the community'. This is compulsory. Each bid must 'clearly demonstrate that

'Change and transformation' describes the motive behind the BLF (Big Lottery Fund) new Community Libraries programme. So Steve Dunmore, BLF Chief Executive, told the Public Library Authorities conference in October. As a parallel he cited the changes to the whole service effected by the People's Network (also lottery-funded). The much-coveted new £80m capital fund, he stressed, is for 'libraries that are more than traditional library services'. What they might do is not prescribed. The 'compulsory' part is the demand that from the start they 'work with the community in creating, delivering and managing library services'.

Libraries in genuine partnerships can access several other BLF funds, he pointed out.

£80m for community work

£80m is on offer for sprucing up public libraries. But hurry – closing date for applications is the end of March.

communities are actively engaged in the development, delivery and management of the projects'. Grants range from £250,000 to £2m. Deadline is 30 March 2007.

But this is not a soft option for councils that have neglected their building stock. BLF Chair Sir Clive Booth says: 'Our local libraries are at their best when they act as focal points for community life, providing a range of reading, learning and information activities. Many libraries are already operating in this way; more want to, but lack the capital funds needed to transform or modify their buildings.'

'BLF is determined to ensure that our funding is additional to other funding and supports activities which wouldn't otherwise be supported.'

John Dolan, MLA Head of Library Policy, adds: 'It will help libraries work more closely with local people to ensure they get what they really want from their library service.'

MLA and SCL have been meeting BLF since April to make sure libraries are fit to benefit from the fund.

BLF has always stressed that the fund is 'primarily about community engagement rather than physical space – buildings are a means to an end: creating a space in response to what the community needs, as identified through engagement'.

A 'community engagement plan' is an absolute requirement for applicants.

Mercifully, perhaps, BLF also told MLA and SCL that this plan 'will need to convince assessors that engagement will happen, not necessarily that it currently is in place'.

For few services will fit the bill without a comprehensive culture change.

This was flagged up in MLA's report* this spring (page 12) on community engagement, which admitted that it 'is not commonplace in libraries' and hinted that many

Two projects in Bury, cited in MLA's Community Engagement report, closely reflect the new philosophy.

On the neglected Topping Fold estate, the starting point was a management committee with one member from the library, one from housing – and eight local people.

This attracted regeneration grants to convert three run-down shops into the community's chosen project, a library-cum-community-centre. The premises have expanded continuously, and are the base for schemes that range from a youth club (which the youth service said could never survive) to a community garden.

At Southcross Street, a mixed Asian-white area experiencing tension, library staff identified a concern that united everyone – rubbish. With the tenants association, local children and Environment Department staff, they organised campaigns on waste, fly-tipping etc, cleaned the streets, created art from litter and held a family fun day to celebrate the results.

staff fear it. The report contains a toolkit of examples and ideas – including outline staff training.

MLA is appointing a support officer to help libraries apply. But BLF will choose the winners.

Meanwhile, the general BLF site is producing a mass of new guidance on

concepts that every public library needs to swallow whether it is seeking a grant or not – such as researching need or describing outcomes.

FIND OUT MORE
www.biglotteryfund.org.uk

OTHER LIBRARY-FRIENDLY GRANTS FROM BLF

Community Libraries is one part of BLF's two-part £120m Community Learning programme. The other part will also interest progressive library services: the £40m Family Learning programme was launched 'to fund practical and enjoyable activities for adults and children, bringing generations of families together through learning' – especially informal learning, and/or families who face barriers or lack confidence.

GRANT RANGE: £10,000–£50,000
CLOSING DATE: 29 AUGUST 2008

Open to: Voluntary, private sector or statutory services, but the last must 'involve a voluntary or community sector partner in planning and running the project'.

White paper – blueprint?

The new white paper on local government says its aim is to make local councils work much more closely with service users, and give them more power.

WHAT DOES THE WHITE PAPER SAY?

The white paper on local government promises much. Secretary of State Ruth Kelly’s foreword is clear: ‘The aim of this white paper is to give local people and local communities more influence and power to improve their lives.’

Elsewhere the paper argues: ‘Local authorities know that involving local citizens and communities results in better decisions about how to provide services to meet the needs of different localities.’

However, the devil will be in the detail – and much of the detail is missing. The white paper is in fact a framework (or a philosophy?) that wraps up a large number of reviews, some finished and some yet to report, on many of its details. It is essentially work in progress.

In particular, there are many friendly references to joint work (past and future) with the Local Government Association. In turn, the LGA welcomes the white paper – at least, as a step in the right direction.

There are few mentions of specific services. But it’s fair to say that social services, police and education feature most. Cultural aspects score almost zero.

The ‘economic, commercial and social benefits’ of culture and sport are (briefly) rehearsed only in the section on economic development. Public services can’t provide it all, it seems, but they can be handy as ‘promoter and catalyst’. Bodies like the Arts Council and the MLA (Museums, Libraries & Archives Council) can help create cultural quarters to attract workers and give people ‘civic pride’.

Libraries are specifically mentioned just twice. Once it’s a throwaway mention in a chapter (ominously?) on efficiency: ‘Everyone wants to see improvements to their local schools, hospitals, libraries and parks... But they do not expect to have to finance that change through excessive tax increases’.

PLSSs

One big question is – what will happen to the Public Library Service Standards (PLSSs)?

This list of 10 basic requirements has been a useful lobbying tool for some groups. Their detail inhibits innovative, flexible practice by good library services. But for the not-so-good, they have been invaluable in laying down what a basic ‘comprehensive and efficient’ service should provide.

However, this became less so as it emerged that the PLSSs have no real teeth. The promised provisions to enforce them just never happened.

Now, detailed standards of this kind are on the way out. Meanwhile, the current PLSSs are being reviewed by MLA (Museums, Libraries & Archives Council) – with input from TLC.

Elsewhere, though, Gateshead and Warwickshire are praised as a twin example of good practice – for developing ‘one-stop shops’ with other services. See box.

LESS CONTROL BY CENTRAL GOVERNMENT?

Of much interest to all services, including libraries, is the pledge to ‘radically reduce national targets’. This has been long sought by the Local Government Association and by better-performing library services. Central government involvement was needed to push up standards, the paper argues, but now that has been done, ‘we must have the courage at the centre to let go’. More ‘complex’ and local needs must now be met.

So – instead of up to 1,200 detailed government ‘indicators’ there will be ‘a single set’ of about 200 – about outcomes, not input. They will include indicators of ‘citizen satisfaction and perception’. (Warning: the white paper has a few ideas about yet more extras – special statutory requirements, and ‘specific delivery programmes’ from on high. So the eventual number may slide upwards from 200...)

WHAT NEXT?

Legislation on local government was mentioned in the Queen’s Speech in November. So it’s on the timetable – but little else is known as yet.

So who will decide the 200-odd ‘priorities’ that will replace the 1,200 CPA & other detailed government requirements? And when, and how?

The White Paper says only that: the new framework will be available ‘in the next three years’ (p.118); the 200 new priorities will ‘reflect decisions in the Comprehensive Spending Review’ (p.121); and the new annual light-touch inspection will be implemented in 2009.

The Audit Commission (which does most of the inspecting) and all the other little inspectors will work on this. It will include versions of two measures that are currently part of CPA: use of resources and direction of travel.

Instead of the unloved detailed CPA (Comprehensive Performance Assessment) there will be the CAA (Comprehensive Area Assessment). This will look at whole areas rather than individual services, but with a far lighter touch, designed only to highlight performance areas that are ‘at risk’ – and then to get fast, targeted intervention, with help from peers in that sector.

LAAs – Local Area Agreements (already in use in some areas) – will become compulsory. They will fix about 35 priorities for all ‘local partners’. These will be based on the

200 national priorities, plus local extras if people want them. There will be a clear duty on councils to work where appropriate with other public services (eg, the NHS). And those targets will be binding for all.

The LAA grant will become the focus for funding from government. Current LAAs are funded rather rigidly in four 'blocks' – youth, health, community safety, economic development. This will be loosened, though only a bit – and 'culture and sport' are specifically mentioned as the kind of services that 'cut across all four themes'. So, maybe some good news there for canny library managers.

MORE CONTROL FOR LOCAL PEOPLE

Most challenging is the insistence that services 'make a fundamental change in attitude and culture, engaging with citizens and working with their partners in new ways'. The old best value duty to consult will be 'revised', so that councils are 'required to take steps, where appropriate, to ensure the participation of local citizens'. (Question: who decides what's appropriate?)

They will also be 'required' to 'ensure participation by other key bodies, such as voluntary and community groups and local businesses'. But they will only 'need to give consideration to' consulting hard to reach groups – very vague.

The white paper promises (vaguely, again) to 'work with local authorities and others to make it simpler to collect and report information, and to make it easier to use this information. The aim is to "report once – use many times".'

NEW PRIORITIES?

The current 'seven shared priorities' for local councils, agreed with central government, have been useful tools for arguing that library services help councils do their job. They are: (1) standards in schools; (2) quality of life for (i) children, young people, families at risk and (ii) older people; (3) healthier communities; (4) safer & stronger communities; (5) transforming the environment/ public space; (6) transport; (7) economic vitality.

In the white paper, instead, we have the eight 'biggest challenges for local services', now defined as: (1) community safety; (2) health and wellbeing; (3) vulnerable people; (4) children, young people and families; (5) economic development; (6) housing and planning; (7) climate change; (8) the 'third sector', ie the voluntary sector.

This simplification will enable rapid reporting, so that residents can check performance in 'real time'. And they will have new ways to get things changed, including a formal 'community call to action' procedure, stronger scrutiny committees, more powers (and even a budget) for ordinary ward councillors and a duty to deal with petitions properly.

A whole load of activity is currently in hand to flesh this out. There will be 'one piece of best value statutory guidance... [which] will place citizens and users at the heart

of service commissioning and will emphasise the need to involve the public in the design of local services, especially those who might otherwise be marginalised'. There will be unspecified work to 'test' ways of doing this, starting this year, and to share best practice. Similar work will be done on getting information to and from local people.

But – ironically perhaps – it will ultimately be for councils (and their assorted partners) to decide how best to do all this involving, with 'cost-effectiveness' one criterion for deciding. So we have yet to see if any of this means anything much...

However, a bit of clarity – and a reduction in 'consultation fatigue' – might come from a suggestion that councils (and their partners) draw up a single 'much more comprehensive engagement strategy' that they all share and is 'more meaningful'. But it doesn't look, at this stage, as if it's going to be compulsory.

COULD LOCAL PEOPLE RUN LIBRARIES?

The new 'power to the people structure means more management at neighbourhood level. It also includes 'challenging traditional methods of delivery'. It may go as far as helping 'local communities to take on the management or ownership of local facilities and assets'. For more details of possible types of participation, see pp. 31-2, 38-45, 110.

'New best value statutory guidance' will make it inescapably clear that local councils may be not just provider but 'broker, facilitator, procurer, market regulator'. It will cover 'key commissioning principles, community participation and competition'.

The Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 will look at 'asset management'. And that will include looking at 'the benefits and disadvantages of encouraging more transfer of assets to community management or ownership'.

There is a whole (though short) chapter on 'community cohesion', which shows it's going to be a priority. Shared

TEETH AT LAST?

Memories of past frustration over trying to use the Public Libraries & Museums Act 1964 will be revived by a section on possible 'referral to the appropriate Secretary of State, [who] may decide to formally intervene...'

Such interventions could include an 'improvement notice' or even acting to 'direct the organisation to take specific action to secure recovery'. (p.130)

When? How? The information or advice will come from regional government offices, the new lighter-touch inspectors and 'other relevant bodies', whatever they are. A Local Services Intervention Panel (of people with 'senior experience' in the relevant area) will give practical advice.

Could this possibly mean a Secretary of State for Culture with real power to intervene – and the will to use it? Really??????

values, and countering extremism, figure largely. But there is no specific mention of cultural services.

However, the white paper promises to ‘work with local government and other partners to improve take-up of community empowerment’. And there will be a lollipop for those that truly buy in to its vision of a new balance of powers – a capital fund to help councils refurbish buildings for transfer into community control.

LIBRARIES’ ROLE

Lobbying by TLC’s friend CILIP (the librarians’ professional body) has had some effect. The civil servant drafting the white paper met Martin Molloy (CILIP President) and Lyn Brown MP (Chair of the CILIP-backed Parliamentary Group on Libraries). Martin then prepared a list of public library good practice. All will be used in briefing papers as the detail is rolled out. One made it into the white paper itself.

MORE ABOUT LIBRARIES...

Volume Two, a summary-cum-appendix, gives a bit more detail on how the new systems should work in the eight ‘biggest challenges for local services’, now defined as: community safety; health and wellbeing; vulnerable people; children, young people and families; economic development; housing and planning; climate change; the third sector.

But there is zero mention of exactly how councils are to deliver (1) the clear information, (2) the progress on e-government, or (3) seamless, accessible one-stop services enabled through technology, that will be demanded of them, or how to get to grips with (4) the ‘knowledge economy’ and (5) the skills development that the white paper urges them to latch on to.

What does get stressed is using the new framework to tackle complex cross-cutting issues like social exclusion and anti-social behaviour.

The relevance of libraries is obvious throughout, but they will have to work to get a look-in. They get no mention as such. Nor do any of the practicalities of informing people, reaching the vulnerable, getting people’s views.

NEW JARGON

Local councils are now seen as ‘strategic leaders and place-shapers’. They are expected to deliver mostly via ‘partners’.

Much of the focus is outside the preventive role where libraries could lead. ‘Community safety’, for instance, is all about policing, justice and fire, with nothing about keeping potential offenders occupied. Health is mostly about the NHS. All the same, each section makes a few references to ‘other partners’, prevention, skills training, information, engaging people, the third sector etc.

Libraries need to step in quick in all these areas, to make sure they play their full part. So – another job for library advocates, both at national and at local level.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IN THE REAL WORLD?

How much effect will the white paper really have? Critics say there is little point re-jigging local authorities before the expected ‘Lyons’ report on their financing comes out, or that devolving more flexibility to councils is absurd without devolving money-raising powers to match.

Many also say that the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review will far eclipse the white paper in impact. And indeed the white paper makes it clear that ‘ambitious efficiency gains will be required’. Service users will fear the worst.

But there’s a more creative side, such as the white paper’s suggestion of much more sharing with other bodies – data, back-office functions, skills, assets such as buildings, best practice ideas and work on specific targets/projects. This could all be natural territory for libraries.

WHAT THE MINISTER SAID...

The new white paper marks a fundamental change, culture minister David Lammy made clear when he addressed the Public Library Authorities conference in October: ‘The community, the neighbourhood and the individual... must be informed, engaged and empowered. In the past, government has not done enough to make sure that public services are truly responsive to the demands of citizens.

‘This has to change... We want to give people more powers to participate in the design, delivery and assessment of their services.’ It is ‘an incredible opportunity’ for libraries. But while some staff ‘relish these new challenges, some find it hard’.

Government’s role is to ‘ensure equity across the country and a national minimum standard’. The minister’s role is to ‘set a clear framework for delivery and reporting. It is not to interfere and micro-manage at local level’. The Public Library Service Standards were ‘right for their time’. But no longer.

‘Taken to its extreme, I can even imagine community groups being commissioned by the council to take on and run their library themselves. We should not be afraid of that.

‘[We must] find the route appropriate for each area/service, which gives flexibility to respond to local needs and demands, while still giving a core quality of provision.’

David paid tribute to good work already being done. And he criticised those (unnamed) who have a ‘highly selective, rose-tinted vision’ of the libraries of their childhood. He agrees with them on just one point: the focus of the service is reading.

SEE FOR YOURSELF

The white paper is called Strong & Prosperous Communities: the local government white paper. It’s at: www.communities.gov.uk