

LIBRARY

CAMPAIGN

SUPPORTING FRIENDS AND USERS OF LIBRARIES



News from the frontline

New Taskforce gets going

People don't use libraries? YES THEY DO!

National campaigner events

– October & November

AUTUMN 2015
No. 92



PRICE £2.00
ISSN 0266-6065

THE LIBRARY CAMPAIGN – AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

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



The Library Campaign

27 Old Gloucester Street, LONDON WC1N 3AX

For general enquiries: call 0845 450 5946.

Please note, calls will cost 2p per minute, plus your telephone company's access charge.

Alternatively, contact Elizabeth by emailing

thelibrarycampaign@gmail.com

or leave a message on 020 8651 9552.

www.librarycampaign.com

Twitter: @LibraryCampaign

Facebook: The Library Campaign

Registered charity (England & Wales) No. 1102634

ELECTED OFFICERS

CHAIR: Laura Swaffield

36 Crewdson Road, London SW9 0LJ. Tel: 020 7587 3517. email: lswaffield1@gmail.com

SECRETARY: Vacant

TREASURER: Martin Wright

24 Fairlands Road, Sale, Manchester M33 4AY. Tel: 0161 718 3637. email: wrightm191@hotmail.com

MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Elizabeth Ash 39 Mayfield Road, Sanderstead, South Croydon CR2 0BG.

Tel: 020 8657 3535. email: elizabethashmobile@gmail.com

Geoffrey Dron email: geoffrey.dron@gmail.com

Bob Goodrick tel: 020 7635 6041

EDITOR: Laura Swaffield

36 Crewdson Road, London SW9 0LJ. Tel: 020 7587 3517. email: lswaffield1@gmail.com

FRIENDS GROUPS LIAISON AND CO-ORDINATOR: Vacant – if interested, please contact the Secretary

The following organisations send representatives to attend steering group meetings:

Unison,

Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals (CILIP).

JOIN US!

It costs you little.
It makes library users
much stronger.

Our membership form is on
page 24. Get extra (and larger)
copies at:

[www.librarycampaign.com/
join-the-library-campaign/](http://www.librarycampaign.com/join-the-library-campaign/)

Queries: 020 8651 9552 or
thelibrarycampaign@gmail.com

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

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. 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.

2015 MEETINGS:

For dates, check our website, or contact us to be notified (thelibrarycampaign@gmail.com or 020 8651 9552).

WHO'S WHO?

Quick guide to some of the many things relevant to libraries ...

1964 Act (Public Libraries & Museums Act 1964) says all local authorities have a statutory duty to provide a public library service, which must be 'comprehensive and efficient' and available to all who wish to use it. Libraries are NOT optional. It gives the Secretary of State power to enquire – and intervene – if standards fall short. These powers have barely been used.

ACE (Arts Council England) now has 'responsibility for supporting and developing libraries'. As yet unclear what that means in practice.

CILIP (Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals): the professional body for librarians in all types of library.

CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy) collects figures on library performance and on user satisfaction.

DCLG (Department for Communities & Local Government): the central government department responsible for local government. It provides most of local councils' funding. It does not determine how much of it is spent on libraries.

DCMS (Department for Culture, Media & Sport): sets central government's policy on libraries (among other things), but does not fund them. It is headed by the Secretary of State, with one minister more directly responsible for libraries (among other things).

LGA (Local Government Association) lobbies on behalf of local government. Does some useful work on public libraries, but ultimately sides with councils, not library users.

MLA (Museums, Libraries & Archives Council): ACE's predecessor.

NLT (National Literacy Trust): charity 'dedicated to building a literate nation' – which includes promoting reading for pleasure. Huge source of information, campaigns and projects.

SCL (Society of Chief Librarians): advises LGA on library matters. Does useful work on public libraries, but sticks to 'quiet diplomacy'.

Unison: the trade union for most public library staff. Good research and promotional materials.

TRA (The Reading Agency): charity to develop reading, especially via libraries. Dozens of projects to promote books, especially to key groups like children, reluctant readers, ethnic minorities etc.

Time for action!

As always, there's far more going on than we can fit in. Report after report showing how vital libraries are – and report after report of irreparable damage...

What's new? The main thing, probably, is the new Taskforce. Years of screaming for action brought us delay in the form of yet another inquiry (Sieghart).

To its credit, it called for action! Better still, it got a Taskforce set up with the explicit task of ensuring that, this time, something actually happens.

Now that's in place. It has not – yet – said yes to our request that library users sit at its high table. It plans 'stakeholder meetings' to give us a look-in now and then. We will persist...

What this shows is a very different perspective between them and us.

Of course, it takes time to recruit staff. Chief executive Kathy Settle is clearly the go-getting type we need – but she has only just started full-time.

Of course, the Taskforce won't get co-operation from local or national government if it insults them in public. So time goes quietly by.

Meanwhile, we daily witness further crashing disasters. Just as examples, scores of branch libraries thrown to the (volunteer) wolves in Lincs and Leics, and Hereford's renewed determination to have no branch libraries at all.

Things have changed hugely since TLC was set up in 1984. A state of national emergency that nobody sane could have predicted. A minister who does less and less. A government committed to slashing the

CHAIR'S REPORT

Laura Swaffield
Campaigner Chair



public sector permanently, yet increasing the deprivation that makes libraries needed more than ever.

On the plus side – new tools like the internet and social media. So, more ways to get the message out – which means much more work. And a nationwide fund of experienced, well-informed campaigners – who can be linked together in ways undreamt of in 1984.

Frankly, the old TLC model is creaking. Laura and Elizabeth are too snowed under by the daily workload to develop new ideas or hold physical committee meetings (e-contact continues, of course). Yet so much more needs doing.

So – it's crunch time. The national situation has never been worse. The future is set for even more austerity. Yet there are new tools, and the Taskforce's remit is to pull everyone together to act on problems too long ignored...

Union members and campaigners alike need to think how to make the most of their resources. How to communicate. How to work together as a true national movement.

That's what our AGM on 24 October is about.
Be there!

LIBRARY CAMPAIGN MINI-CONFERENCE & AGM

Saturday 24 October

at Room 2A, Student Central (formerly ULU),
Malet Street, London, WC1E 7HY

1pm – tea, coffee, networking

2pm – 4.30pm, speakers, discussion, AGM

CAMPAIGNERS from Lincolnshire and Barnet will talk about their experiences, what they needed, how TLC could better help them and others.

DISCUSSION – WE NEED YOUR IDEAS!

How can TLC organise better to serve members?

How can busy members help make TLC more effective?

How can library workers and campaigners build a true national movement?

AGM: All posts – chair, secretary, treasurer, executive committee – open to election. Nominations accepted on the day, if the meeting agrees. New faces very welcome!

HOW TO GET THERE: See www.studentcentral.london/about/contact/gettinghere or phone 020 7664 2000. NOTE: if needed, TLC will fund travel costs for MEMBERS.

QUERIES? Contact Elizabeth Ash (see opposite page)



THE LIBRARY CAMPAIGNER AUTUMN 2015, No.92

EDITOR: Laura Swaffield

DESIGN & PRODUCTION: Owain Hammonds

CONTRIBUTORS: Tim Coates, Dumbshow, Tim Larden, Ned Potter, Kathy Settle, Ed Vaizey

Cover cartoon by Ian Anstice using ToonDoo

4 NEW FACES

It's all change in Parliament and the profession

5 SPEAK UP FOR LIBRARIES 2015

Campaigner conference of the year!

6 NEWS

8 LIBRARIES CHANGE LIVES!

2015's winners of this CILIP award show public libraries doing amazing things for pre-schoolers, people with sight problems and... well, everyone.

10 WHY A LIBRARY?

Theatre group Dumbshow explain why their new play – now touring the country – is set in a library.

11 & 14 STAR WORDS

Celebrities speak up for libraries.

12 NOBODY USES LIBRARIES, RIGHT? WRONG!

Ned Potter shows just how popular public libraries are.

15 QUESTIONS FOR KATHY

Introducing the new Chief Executive of the libraries Taskforce – see her at the Speak Up for Libraries conference in November.

18 MORE EVIDENCE ON VOLUNTEERS

They can do great things – but they can't run libraries, finds the Scottish Library & Information Council.

20 IT CAN BE DONE!

Tim Coates focuses on the library services that are increasing their visits and book issues. It's time to learn from them...

22 UNKNOWN RISKS?

Tim Larden points out that volunteer-run libraries run risks that aren't always appreciated.

23 READ IT AND WEEP

UNISON report on the frustrations of library staff who are trying to do much more, with much less.

24 JOIN US!

The more TLC grows, the more we can do.

As usual, we've sent you an extra copy of this magazine. Please take the time to pass it on, or place it somewhere people will see it...



New Chief Executive at CILIP

Nick Poole is the new chief executive at CILIP (Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals). We have met him, and feel optimistic – and you can see him at this year's SUFL conference on 14 November.

An old CILIP hand (trustee, treasurer), since 2005 he had been CEO of the Collections Trust (responsible for developing UK and international standards for information management, advising agencies on digital programmes and leading partnerships with digital companies).

He is a former Chair of the Europeana Network, former councillor of the Museums Association and former Chair of the UK part of the International Council of Museums. Up to 2005, Nick had various roles at MLA (Museums, Libraries & Archives Council), including regional policy development and national ICT adviser.

Nick has been a regular lecturer at several universities and adviser to HE and FE providers on eLearning systems and virtual learning environments. He has published on subjects ranging from the economics of cultural services to copyright law.



He studied languages at Cambridge and has postgraduate qualifications in Historical Linguistics and Fine Art & Illustration. He also studied the History and Philosophy of Science at Birkbeck College.

Arts Council

For completeness, here's Darren Henley, the new Chief Executive of ACE (Arts Council England), appointed last December. He's a music man – head of Classic FM for 15 years, and author of important reports on music and education.

ACE has not impressed as a body that understands that libraries' role goes far beyond 'culture'. So we hope there's some real substance to his promise to 'champion the importance of art and culture in so many aspects of our lives – personal, social and economic'.

Local government boss

The Secretary of State at DCLG (Communities & Local Government) is now Greg Clark. He, of course, ultimately holds the budget for local authorities, but DCLG chiefs are not famous for getting involved in libraries.

He studied economics at Cambridge and the London School of Economics. He was Director of



Policy for the Conservative party for four years, before being elected MP for Royal Tunbridge Wells in 2005.

He has been Shadow Minister for Charities, Social Enterprises & Volunteering, Shadow Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, Minister of State at DCLG, Minister for Cities and Financial Secretary to the Treasury.

Shadow Culture Secretary

The new Corbyn culture man is Michael Dugher, MP for Barnsley East. We don't see much culture in his background – he's a politics graduate (Nottingham), then was chief political spokesman for Gordon Brown and special adviser in government roles including: transport, local government; defence; for the Leader of the Commons; and for the Chief Whip. He has been Shadow Transport Secretary, Shadow Minister for the Cabinet Office, Parliamentary Private Secretary to Ed Miliband, and Shadow Minister for Defence Equipment, Support & Technology.

On the plus side, he was very supportive to a local anti-closure campaign at Darfield library – calling branch libraries 'an invaluable resource' – and runs his surgeries in two libraries. We'll see...



New faces in Parliament

The general election re-shuffle brought a new Secretary of State, John Whittingdale, Conservative MP for Maldon (Essex) and former chair of the culture select committee.

Almost always, of course, the libraries minister counts for more in practical terms than the SoS.

Here, we're unable to welcome the fact that it's still Ed Vaizey – who will go down in history as the man who cheered on the worst destruction of public libraries ever seen.

In 2012, under Whittingdale's chairmanship, the select committee produced a lucid report on public libraries – having received its largest-ever mailbag on this topic.

The 12 recommendations highlighted the potential damage from 'wholesale closures', the danger that mass transfer of libraries to a probably unsustainable volunteer-run model would just mean more 'closures by stealth', the need for proper guidance to local authorities and the fact that, in its absence, library policy was being created ad hoc from assorted court judgements.



Since 2012, the situation has become very much worse, and seems certain to become worse still under planned austerity cuts. Will he do anything about it?

The new committee chair is Jesse Norman, Conservative MP for Hereford & South Herefordshire. This puts him in an interesting position, as Hereford currently plans to close ALL its libraries but one – and that one has now closed indefinitely with asbestos problems...

The other members – some old, some new – are (pictured below, left to right): Nigel Adams (Conservative, Selby & Ainsty); Andrew Bingham (Conservative, High Peak); Damian Collins (Conservative, Folkestone & Hythe); Paul Farrelly, (Labour, Newcastle-under-Lyme); Nigel Huddleston (Conservative, Mid Worcestershire); Ian C Lucas (Conservative, Wrexham); Jason McCartney (Conservative, Colne Valley); Christian Matheson (Labour, City of Chester); John Nicolson (SNP, East Dunbartonshire); and Steve Rotheram (Labour, Liverpool, Walton).

Quite a few have big library problems on their doorstep. And it's noticeable that they are 100% white and male...





Resolution at this year's AGM of CILIP (Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals) – well done, CILIP member Andy Richardson!

Resolution 4:

Member resolution submitted for consideration by the AGM: "That CILIP actively oppose those public authorities and senior library staff over the 'amateurisation' of the Public Library service by offering library buildings and contents to be run by the local community with little or no funding for professional or paid library staff. This is resulting in public libraries being run by volunteer staff and taking away work currently done by paid professional and library assistant staff. All current public library service points managed by paid local authority library staff should be the current base-line – and where such actions are suggested by the local authority and senior library staff, CILIP should support the opposition to such proposals and say so publicly."

It was expressly supported by CILIP's Board, too. The chair, Martyn Wade, said (like everyone else): 'Volunteers should be an asset. We should recognise the valuable skills, knowledge, enthusiasm, experience and fresh perspectives that volunteers can provide.'

'But we must act when the quality and long-term sustainability of library services is at risk.'

He adds: 'CILIP's existing policy on volunteers is already overdue for review. The Board will begin this process, based on evidence and research in what is a rapidly changing environment.'

'We will present the outcome as a position statement within six months, with guidance on how it can best be used by members to support their own advocacy.'

It's a bit late, but it's all good. Just one thing: library users don't figure in the list of 'stakeholders' to be consulted. The Library Campaign plans to see they do.

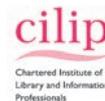
SPEAK UP
for libraries

CONFERENCE 2015

Saturday 14 November, central London

TURNING POINT?

The fifth national conference for public library users, workers and campaigners – backed by a network of national organisations alongside The Library Campaign: Campaign for the Book (Alan Gibbons), CILIP, Unison and Voices for the Library.



voices for the library

More austerity looks inevitable. The damage to public libraries is already beyond repair. But there are signs that people are starting to realise what public service cuts really mean. The political scene is getting a shake-up. Campaigners are as determined as ever. And finally, there's a national agency tasked with getting action for libraries. Here's your chance to meet the people in charge of it – and lots of other key people!

The real experts are YOU – the people who work and (if necessary) fight to protect our essential public library service. Come, discuss what libraries really need – and tell the people who can make it happen!

The key session is the first-ever national campaigners' dialogue with the top people in the LIBRARIES TASKFORCE – **PAUL BLANTERN**, Chair, and **KATHY SETTLE**, Chief Executive. The Taskforce is the new agency charged with bringing real improvement – and funds – into libraries. By November, it will have published its first report. So it's time to tell Paul and Kathy what campaigners think – and want them to do. Network, discuss what you want to say, then tell them direct ...

ALSO: talking to a national meeting of campaigners for the first time – **NICK POOLE**, new broom Chief Executive of CILIP (Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals). PLUS: **ALAN GIBBONS**, outspoken author, education consultant and Campaign for the Book. PLUS: **JOHN DOUGHERTY**, author, library advocate, poet and writer of songs (including the classic 'What's wrong with Ed Vaizey?') – complete with guitar.

Places are limited – advance booking is essential. Places allocated on a strictly first come, first served basis, on receipt of payment. Cost: £20 EARLY BIRD (unchanged since last year) including tea & coffee breaks and a pretty good sandwich lunch. £25 AFTER 9 OCTOBER.



Nick Poole



Paul Blantern



Kathy Settle



John Dougherty



Alan Gibbons

AS ALWAYS, WE PLAN THE DAY SO THAT YOU CAN MEET, NETWORK AND SHARE YOUR IDEAS, BEFORE MOVING INTO A FACE-TO-FACE DIALOGUE WITH SOME OF THE PEOPLE BEST-PLACED TO GET ACTION FOR LIBRARIES. DON'T MISS IT!

INFORMATION/BOOKING

Details & brochure (with full programme, map and directions):
www.speakupforlibraries.org

Online booking form: www.SUFLconf15.eventbrite.co.uk or link from website.

NOTE: this page also has full programme – plus booking FAQs.

Information/telephone bookings: call Elizabeth on **020 8651 9552**
or email speakup4libraries@gmail.com.



FOLLOW US:



[www.twitter.com/SpeakUp4Libs#SUFLconf15](https://twitter.com/SpeakUp4Libs#SUFLconf15)
www.facebook.com/SpeakUpForLibraries

JOIN US AFTER THE CONFERENCE!
The Library Campaign is hosting a **get-together, straight after the conference ends, for those who want to network further.**

CILIP has been busy

As well as putting up this think-chart, CILIP, the librarians' professional association, has recently:

1. issued a call to local councillors to 'consider the long-term social and economic impact of library services on their communities when balancing the books'.

It pointed out that:

- The actual net reduction in local authority expenditure between 2013–14 and 2014–15 was just over 0.7% (from £96.4bn to £95.8bn).
- 242 authorities increased their reserves during this period.
- £1bn was invested into reserves in 2014–15 (though lower than the £2.4bn invested during 2013–14).
- Education accounts for 30.7% of expenditure.
- Locally-retained income (ie. self-generated income and council tax receipts) is increasing, while centrally-distributed income is decreasing (though there remains a significant gap between the two).

Education remains a major priority for local authorities. 'Research', says CILIP, 'has proven time and again that having access to a library service delivered by qualified professionals can support

teachers by boosting learning outcomes, literacy and pupil attainment.

'Similarly, library services across the UK are delivering frontline support which helps reduce the pressure on health and social care services that make up some 20% of council spending.

'Some authorities have been able to strengthen their reserves. We applaud their financial management, but we urge councils to consider retaining a quality library service as a means of avoiding significant cost increases elsewhere in their expenditure, before building up reserves.'

CILIP CEO Nick Poole commented: '[These] figures highlight the realities [councils] are dealing with.

'With further reductions in centrally-distributed revenue planned in the coming years, it is essential that elected members understand the real financial and social value of library and information services for their communities.'

2. sent evidence for the government's anxiously-awaited Comprehensive Spending Review (due 25 November).

Knowing its audience, it centres its arguments on digital literacy and 'the UK's competitiveness in the global economy'.

But CILIP's case covers academic, school and public libraries as well as business.

For instance, it urges the need to 'underpin the core delivery of literacy, education, health and social care and universal access to high-quality knowledge and information'. And it makes a strong case for professional librarians in all areas.

WHAT MAKES A
GREAT LIBRARY SERVICE
FOR THE 21ST CENTURY?



CONVENIENT LOCATION Good transport links & close to amenities	BENEFITS A great library service: Provides a boost for the Local Economy Helps build stronger, safer, more sustainable communities Delivers positive outcomes for children, parents and older people
CONVENIENT OPENING HOURS Opening hours to suit local needs & lifestyles	ACTIVITIES Toddler & parent sessions Discover reading & literature Educational activities Information literacy Get online safely Business support
AVAILABLE BEYOND THE WALLS Online & via home delivery	
WELL DESIGNED FACILITIES Modern, up-to-date facilities & Internet access	
PROPERLY STAFFED Helpful welcoming staff supported by professional expertise	

Daringly, CILIP calls for 'urgent' investment. Just £280,000, it reckons, would fund the basics for a much-needed 'national knowledge and information skills strategy' and a 'fund to facilitate investment in the UK's knowledge infrastructure'.

Read it at: <http://tinyurl.com/o3mh8jc>

Lincolnshire and the law

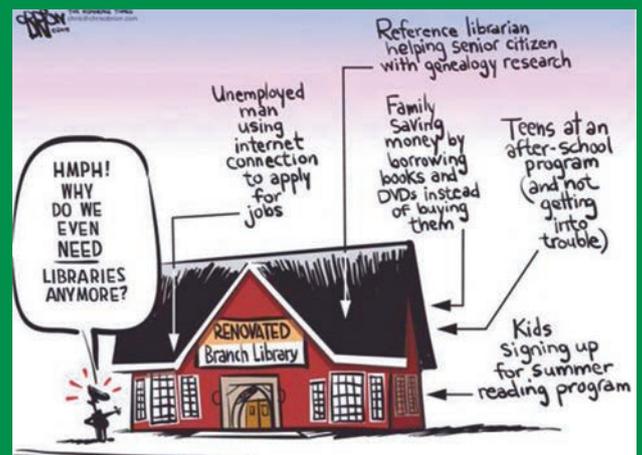
Bitter cartoon by Chris Brion for Save Lincs Libraries (SLL). It reflects the remark by a Lincs councillor: 'I don't know what the fuss is about. I haven't used a library for 30 years.'

SLL mounted a brilliant campaign – and they'll be at our AGM/summit on 24 October to share their experience. They suffered a surprise defeat in July, in their second judicial review against the council.

The council showed itself determined to dump 30 of its 45 libraries on to volunteers – despite 100% opposition in its consultation, despite a bid from GLL to keep all the libraries and staff while still making all required cuts, and despite last year's JR instructing them to give this bid thorough consideration.

The detailed 2015 judgement has yet to be released. It will be scrutinised with care...

Meanwhile, those 30 libraries are being disposed of – many with very uncertain futures.



Barnstorming Barnet

This issue's cover picture (by Mike Coles) is of Barnet's campaign march in May. They have since held an even bigger one, in September, with even more star supporters. And they'll be at our AGM/summit on 24 October.

Campaigner Keith Martin comments: 'Rebecca Front (Barnet Press, 17 September 2015) proclaimed to rapturous applause that libraries are essential to civilisation.

'Barnet Council's refusal to invest in libraries, the foundation of education for its increasing population, is a short cut to encouraging a future for tomorrow's children of crime, violence and unemployment.

'The policy of the council to increase the population is clear from the massive creation of new homes, although the emphasis sadly is on making large profits for developers rather than housing the homeless.

'An increasing population requires the building of schools, hospitals, leisure facilities and libraries.

'Councillors know this. The same edition of The Press quotes Cllr Sachin Rajput: "Barnet's population is rapidly increasing and we need to make sure that our facilities meet the needs of our residents," and Cllr Daniel Thomas: "The funding will come from reserves... as the population continues to grow."

'Yet the clearly discredited plans to axe the library services budget have for three years been persisted with by the policymakers, who have run down what was once an admired service. They have the opportunity to restore a proper investment in libraries at a committee meeting on 12 October.'



■ Rebecca Front

Invitation from Ed!

We don't hear from libraries minister Ed Vaizey very often – but here's an invitation we think you won't be able to resist. He wants to know what we think about culture, and how the government could... er... support it! He wants 'your ideas for a new cultural programme'. In his own words...

It's 50 years since Jennie Lee, the first Minister for the Arts, published the first White Paper on the arts. In it, she talked about the 'drabness and joylessness of the social furniture' and the important role of the 'living artist' in addressing that.

We've come a long way since then. Government's role in supporting the arts and culture has grown and changed; responsibility for the arts, museums, libraries and heritage has been brought together in one Department; the National Lottery has transformed funding opportunities for the cultural sectors; and free access has helped open up our national museums to new audiences.

But the government hasn't taken an overview of the cultural sectors and the government's role in supporting them, and published an overall vision and agenda for the future, since Jennie Lee's White Paper. It's time we did.

We're seeking innovative proposals to drive discussion and I'm looking forward to seeing lots of lively debate that underlines our passion for the cultural sectors, and how we need to ensure they continue to adapt and thrive for future generations.

FOUR BROAD THEMES

Our White Paper, that's due to launch in the coming months, will explore four key themes:

1. The first of these is the role that culture plays in creating places that people want to live, work and visit. How can our culture and heritage contribute to vibrant, healthy communities across the country, and how can we in government support them to do that?
2. The second theme is about people and how they engage with culture. How do we ensure that everyone can learn about and through culture, and get the right encouragement and opportunities to experience and participate in cultural activities throughout their lives?
3. Our third theme will focus on building financial resilience in cultural organisations and institutions through new funding models, to enable them to survive and prosper in a tough economic and financial climate.
4. And finally, theme four explores working with our cultural institutions to promote Britain abroad, in our relations with other countries and international organisations, and to support trade, exports, inward investment, inbound tourism and presentation of cultural artefacts.

TO TAKE PART:

<http://dcmsblog.uk/2015/09/share-your-ideas-for-a-new-cultural-programme>

#OurCulture discussion platform, begun in September, looking at each theme in turn. Social media: use #OurCulture hashtag.

The public interest

Is there any way to get libraries minister Ed Vaizey to exercise his legal duty to intervene when councils announce drastic library cuts? So far, the answer has been 'no'.

Public Interest Lawyers (PIL) is exploring the case for a judicial review against DCMS (culture department) itself.

PIL says: 'At this stage it would appear that the DCMS is either: not considering requests for inquiries properly or at all, or has a 'blanket policy' which has led it to refuse to conduct inquiries, or it is not fulfilling the duty to superintend library provision.

'We would like to hear from individuals or campaign groups who have contacted the DCMS, asking them to consider an inquiry into local library services.

'Did you request an inquiry but receive no response? If you received a response, what did it say?

'This information will assist in building up the bigger picture of the DCMS and its apparent refusal to engage in any inquiries into local library provision changes.'

Contact: Maya.Lal@publicinterestlawyers.co.uk

Libraries change lives!



Every year, the CILIP **Libraries Change Lives Award** shows the amazing things public libraries can do. These projects demonstrate real results, with a very wide range of people whom councils most need to support.

Proper libraries, run by professionals, can make a dramatic difference to life in their communities – and help hard-pressed local councils to deliver better social, health and economic wellbeing.

For example, here's the three finalists for this year's Libraries Change Lives award from CILIP (Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals).

Watch them on video at:
<http://bit.ly/1MZYPec>

John Vincent, chair of the judging panel, says: 'These are the stories we need to be sharing about public libraries. These initiatives are examples of the innovative services you will

find in good library services up and down the country, where the professional expertise of library staff actively drives improvement and wellbeing in communities.

'It's easy to forget how many people in the UK are disadvantaged or worse off. Supporting equal opportunities and social justice for everyone and tackling disadvantage – this is what public libraries are really about.'

THE WINNER

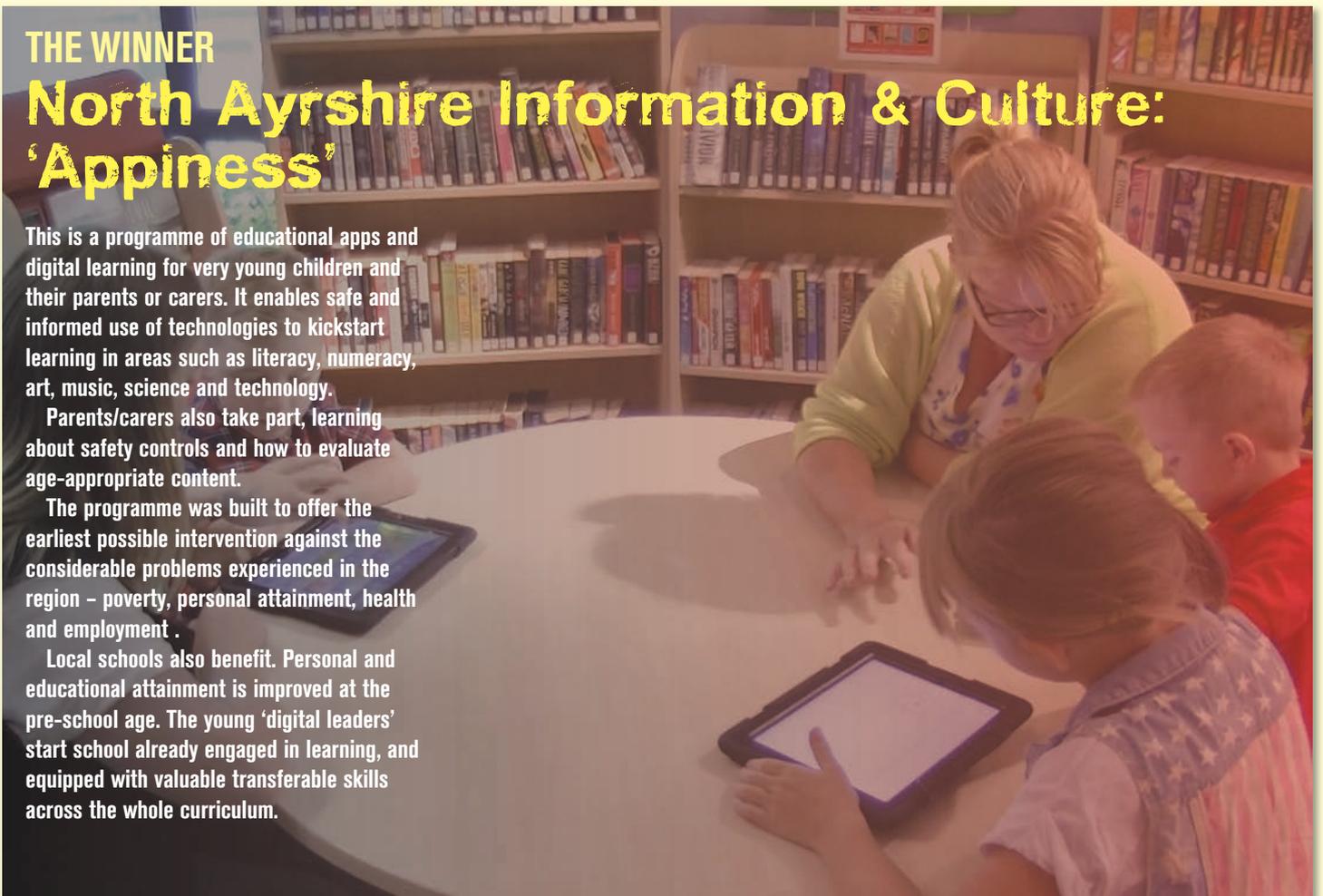
North Ayrshire Information & Culture: 'Appiness'

This is a programme of educational apps and digital learning for very young children and their parents or carers. It enables safe and informed use of technologies to kickstart learning in areas such as literacy, numeracy, art, music, science and technology.

Parents/carers also take part, learning about safety controls and how to evaluate age-appropriate content.

The programme was built to offer the earliest possible intervention against the considerable problems experienced in the region – poverty, personal attainment, health and employment.

Local schools also benefit. Personal and educational attainment is improved at the pre-school age. The young 'digital leaders' start school already engaged in learning, and equipped with valuable transferable skills across the whole curriculum.



FINALIST

Portsmouth City Council libraries: services for people with visual impairments (VIPs)

VIPs suffer disproportionately from national austerity, with reductions in equalities roles and support services within authorities. The libraries provide a comprehensive programme of resources, helping VIPs in the community increase their independence and wellbeing.

They have also formed strong links in the community, to ensure the needs of VIPs are taken into account in the planning and delivery of local services. The libraries are working to extend inclusion and accessibility for VIPs within the region via partnerships with schools, community groups and other agencies.

The library facilities include a helpline, a dedicated information service, translation into alternative formats, a Braille service, assistive technologies and group events, including a book club and regular events. Thousands have already engaged with the service in the past year.

FINALIST

St Helens library services: cultural hubs

Creative use of the arts across libraries is helping St Helens Council deliver its objectives of improving the skills and learning of local people, engaging with the needs of local young people, supporting neighbourhood development and community cohesion and promoting an environment that supports health and wellbeing.

The borough is one of the most deprived in the UK. Users of the service are typically those accessing adult social care and health services, or at risk of needing them.

The library service has formed several partnerships, to run performances and 'transformative arts projects' in the library spaces.

This is actively driving major improvements in mental and physical health, and tackling social care problems.

DCMS-speak!

The new Sec of State, John Whittingdale, was recently quizzed about his priorities by the DCMS select committee. TLC - and other campaigners - emailed its members asking them to ask about libraries. Well, they did.*

The SoS's answers look like a complete circle, with a big hole in the middle...

Quote: 'Libraries are absolutely critical, but I understand that local authorities are already under pressure and I fear may be under greater pressure as a result of the spending review.'

'But nevertheless, the importance of libraries to local communities I think is significant.'

'What are we doing? There are specific areas where we have been able to give support, particularly, for instance, in wifi in public libraries, which we have financed and it is being rolled out.'

'But the number of visitors to libraries is still substantial - they still play a very important part - but nevertheless there needs to be innovative thinking in order that they should continue in what are difficult financial times.'

Got that?

He did add: 'Obviously provision of libraries is the responsibility of local authorities, although there is the reserve power of the Secretary of State to ensure that there is a comprehensive library service made available...'

'I would continue to stress to local authorities the value and importance of libraries.'

* <http://tinyurl.com/opbrt xl>

DCMS non-speak?

Here's a sad story... TLC's battle to get libraries minister Ed Vaizey to hold his promised public debate with author-campaigner Alan Gibbons.

It started back in June. Ed said (in answer to a Parliamentary question) that just 100 static libraries have closed since 2010, mostly under Labour councils.

Nonsense, said Alan - and challenged Ed to a public debate. Ed agreed! TLC offered to host it.

Cue for months of to-ing and fro-ing trying to fix a date. TLC said that only on a Saturday could people attend. Ed said he doesn't do Saturdays - ever.

So - please tell us... (1) should we finally give in, and have an online debate or something? (2) has anyone ever spotted Ed at a public event on a Saturday?



Dumbshow Theatre's new play is inspired by a book. But, they explain, there are many reasons beyond that for their decision to set it in a public library ...

The stimulus for our play, *Electric Dreams*, was a book by Naomi Klein called *The Shock Doctrine* [about the imposition of austerity policies worldwide].

Our director, Michael Bryher, read the book, passed it on to us, and asked: 'Could we make a play about this?' We decided that we could.

We were all interested in the core of Klein's argument, and we wanted to present it theatrically. We needed characters, a story and a frame.

Assembling these components was a mind-puzzle and took a long time.

One of the questions that we often ask in Dumbshow is 'Who is telling this story?' The answer for *Electric Dreams* has become: a group of redundant library staff in a recently-closed library.

A library struck us as the perfect repository for this story. For a start, *The Shock Doctrine* is a non-fiction book making a polemical argument which spans history, geography, psychiatry, politics, economics, culture, ethics and more. We'd need the resources of a whole library to tell it, and the telling could bring the library to life.

The library roots us in the here-and-now. Klein's book was published in 2007, but our play needed to respond to life post-2008 and the austerity agenda.

Libraries have been one of the many victims of public spending cuts. Hundreds of libraries have

closed in the UK since 2010, with thousands of library staff losing their jobs. We spoke to a number of library staff and campaigners and did lots of reading.

We were also attracted to the atmosphere of a library. It enables us to domesticate a huge global story, providing a friendly and safe space to access big arguments and ideas.

The characters of the library staff quickly sprang to life, drawn from observation. One of our parents worked in a library for years, one of us worked in one and we've all used them. It was easy and natural to write familiar characters and capture their tone. They represent us, and to a degree the audience, going on their own journey of discovery and political awakening.

Most crucially, libraries are subversive. They operate outside market logic. They're precious public spaces. They're free. Visitors can stay as long as they like without feeling pressured to leave or buy things. All can borrow free books. Libraries stand for values that money can't buy.

This is precisely the terrain that a new politics needs to occupy and articulate - representing equality of opportunity, access to knowledge and possibility, and a shared public life.

Public libraries are our inheritance, free playgrounds for thought and imagination - the perfect setting for our story!

Electric Dreams is touring from October, starting in Oxford, Leeds and Manchester. Tour details will be updated on: <http://www.dumbshow.org/shows/electric-dreams>. For extra discussion about the show and the issues it raises: <http://electricdreamsdumbshow.tumblr.com>

EXTRACT: A library is a place where anyone can go, where anyone can read any book, and they can formulate their own ideas. You have access to different stories, different ideas, and not the same one over and over again. That's the idea that we wanted to push forward: go find your own answers! We're not necessarily going to prescribe one. But access to different narratives is important.

Star words

Famous people constantly speak up about the value of libraries.
Here's a selection of recent examples.

Joanne Harris, best-selling author of *Chocolat*

If I were Prime Minister: I would stop library closures...

Libraries are an extension of education. They are the cheapest and most effective way to bring culture to people, and it's shameful that we are getting rid of them.

Libraries are not just symbols of civilisation, they are a civic space that binds communities. Take them away and society becomes fragmented.

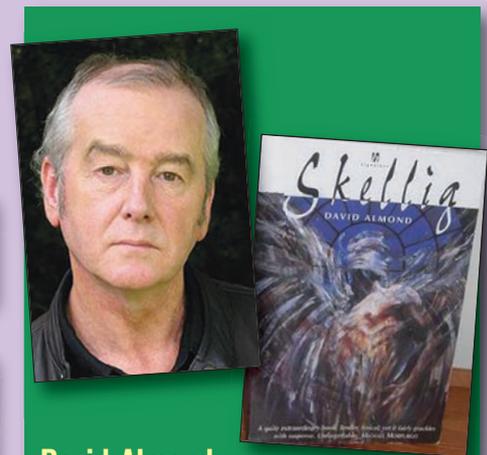
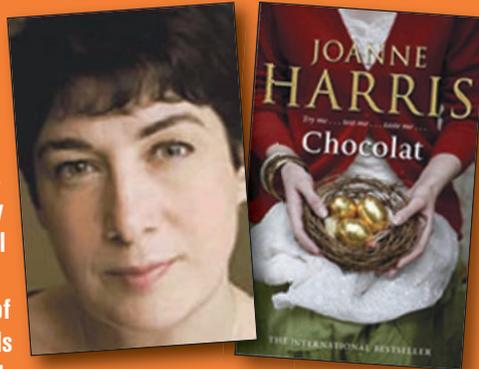
Compare a community that has a library with one that does not, and you will see the difference.

And it's always the poorer areas that lose their libraries first.

There's this idea that poorer people have TVs and the internet, so why would they need libraries?

Libraries are reduced to a middle-class luxury, and thus more and more members of society feel disenfranchised, that they do not belong.

The Independent, 5 February 2015



David Almond, author of *Skellig*, 1998 Whitbread Children's Book of the Year and CILIP Carnegie Medal

[At the launch of World Book Night] he defended libraries, to applause from the audience.

He said: 'The library is one of humankind's greatest inventions, a great democratic force.

'People are saying they don't matter any more. But they do matter. They are central to our culture, and we lose them at great peril.'

The Bookseller,
24 April 2015

Chris Riddell, new (2015-2017) UK Children's Laureate, artist, political cartoonist, multiple award-winner, including the 2001 and 2004 CILIP Kate Greenaway Medals



Tanya Landman, winner of the 2015 CILIP Carnegie Medal for *Buffalo Soldier*

A reader will look at – say – a woman huddled in a doorway, or a man sleeping on a park bench, or a child on a boat full of refugees – and a reader will think: 'What if that person was me...?'

Someone who reads fiction for pleasure is far less likely to be a bully or a bigot. They are far less likely to cause harm to others because they can imagine how it would feel. They are far less likely to collude with any kind of persecution. They are far more likely to DO something about it. (Maybe that's why dictators are so fond of burning books.)

There's so much research about the social and individual benefits of reading for pleasure. In a healthy, affluent society everyone should have free access to books.

So why on earth are our libraries under threat?

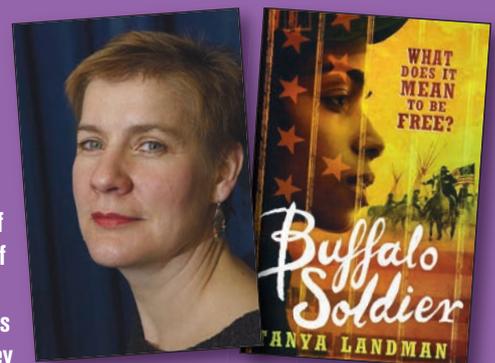
It seems our politicians, locally and nationally, won't listen to all that expert advice.

Why? I really don't get it. Is it because they're arrogant? Stupid?

Maybe.

Or is it a little more sinister?

What if a population that is disengaged, uninterested, apathetic, is easier to manage and control?



Carnegie Medal acceptance speech, 22 June 2015





Nobody uses libraries ... right?

WRONG!

Fed up with the 'libraries are irrelevant' brigade? Tell them the facts – people visit libraries almost twice as often as the cinema and far, far more than theatre or even football. That's 772,000 people a day, or 536 per minute! Super-librarian **Ned Potter** has come up with some great statistics, and some great ways to present them. What's more, they are meticulously documented – and free to everyone to use and adapt. Very much in the spirit of public libraries... See it all at: www.ned-potter.com/blog

NED SAYS...

I'm always struck by just how many people use libraries in the UK. It's a mind-bogglingly huge amount.

When we hear about the figures, they're always couched in terms of reduction. CIPFA statistics tell us about continuing decline, noting that UK visits to public libraries in 2013-14 fell to 282 million, from 288 million the previous year. I'm not surprised it fell – we lost 49 branches and 1,000 full-time-equivalent staff in the same period.

But why do we never take the figures in isolation? 282 million visits! That's **MASSIVE**.

And then I started wondering how that compared with other things we visit in the UK. I came up with a list of as many as I could think of, and guess what? We visit libraries more than we visit **ANYTHING** else.

In fact, we visit libraries twice as often as we visit football matches, theatres, A&E and the Church combined. I mean – come on!

So, I've come up with some different ways of expressing the comparisons between how often we visit libraries versus other things we visit.

Everything has no licence attached to it, so please use it however you wish – tweet it, blog it, embed it, remix it, change it, and no need to attribute anything (except the original data sources).

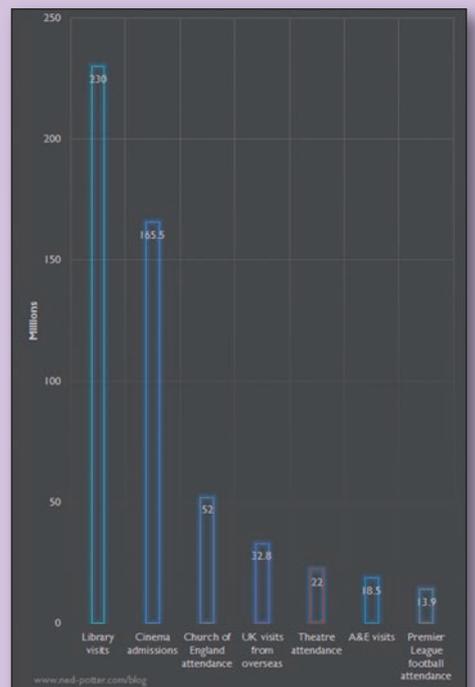
I just want this message to go as far and wide as possible.



■ Ned Potter



■ Tate South Lambeth Library - group Playstation session crammed in among the busy tables.



■ Tall thin comparison chart by librarian tweeter Steph @AVWoman



■ Carnegie Library, Lambeth – visits up 70%, July 2014–July 2015

WHAT IS THE MOST POPULAR ACTIVITY IN THE UK? The answer may surprise you...

ATTENDING FOOTBALL MATCHES? In 2013–14, there were **13.9 million** visits to Premier League games. That's a lot – especially when you add in the other three leagues and the conference, plus the Scottish Premier and Division 1, when it rises to nearly 35 million. But it's not the most popular thing we do.

GOING TO A&E? We do injure ourselves quite a lot in the UK – in 2013–14 we went to the A&E departments of our hospitals **18.5 million** times. That's still not number 1, though.

GOING TO THE THEATRE? In 2013 we visited the theatre a whopping **22 million** times. But that's still 250 million visits less than our winner.

WHAT ABOUT PEOPLE VISITING THE UK ITSELF? There were **32.8 million** visits to the UK from overseas in 2013. Not bad at all!

GOING TO CHURCH? The Church of England got **52 million** visits in 2013. Close, but no cigar.

GOING TO THE CINEMA? We LOVE to visit the cinema in the UK, and did so **165.5 million** times in 2013. Do we finally have a winner?

This is NEARLY the most popular activity we have – but in fact we visited the cinema 116.5 million fewer times than we...

VISIT THE LIBRARY! We visited public libraries in the UK an eye-wateringly huge **282 million** times in 2013–14. 282,000,000 times!

That's more than 772,000 visits per day.

That's more than twice as many visits to public libraries in a week (5.4 million) than a theme park like Alton Towers gets in a year. That's a whole football stadium's worth of people (32,191) visiting public libraries every single HOUR of the year.

So next time someone says libraries are no longer relevant, consider those statistics for a minute. AND DURING THAT MINUTE, 536 PEOPLE WILL VISIT A PUBLIC LIBRARY IN THE UK.

HOW OFTEN?

282 million
library visits per year

23.5 million
library visits each month

5.423 million
library visits per week

772,602
library visits per day

32,191
library visits per hour

536
library visits per minute

8.9
library visits per second...
Every second! Of the entire year!

Seriously, how can people claim we don't need libraries any more?

THE DATA

230 million library visits in England (282 million in UK): <http://www.cipfa.org/about-cipfa/press-office/archived-press-releases/2014-press-releases/cipfa-library-survey>

Cinemas: 165.5 million admissions: <http://www.cinemauk.org.uk/facts-and-figures/admissions/uk-cinema-admissions-2013-by-region/>

Church of England: 52 million visits: <https://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/facts-stats/research-statistics/parish-attendance-affiliation.aspx>

The UK itself: 32.8 million visits from overseas in 2013: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/rel/ott/travel-trends/2013/rpt-travel-trends-2013.html>

Theatre: 22 million attendees in 2013: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/11001177/Almost-twice-as-many-people-visit-the-theatre-than-attend-Premier-League-games.html>

Hospital A&E departments: 18.5 million visits: <http://www.hscic.gov.uk/catalogue/PUB16728>

Premier League football: 13.9 million total attendance: <http://www.espnfc.com/barclays-premier-league/23/statistics/performance?season=2013>

Samuel West, actor and director



I've always loved libraries, since I was an avid child reader. Now we have a daughter and consequently space is at a premium, I value my local for two new reasons:

- (1) When I'm preparing for a role or a production I can work there in complete silence, among others doing the same (ours has a reference section with a quiet room).
- (2) Our daughter is getting through picture books at an incredible rate. We couldn't possibly afford to buy, or have room to shelve new ones, as fast as she wants them. Borrowing them lets us try lots out (and then perhaps buy a few favourites to keep).

Plus the libraries' range of picture books is chosen by people who know their stuff, so we know we're starting with a great selection.

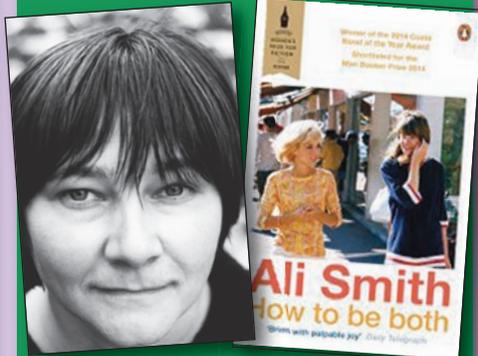
I wrote this in protest against plans to close the the York Gardens Public Library in Wandsworth: 'I can't quite believe we are here today. I mean, what kind of arse wants to close a library? It beggars belief.

'Councillors with books and internet connections of their own can't imagine being someone who can't afford a book, or how valuable those things can be to those who haven't got them...

'But we can oppose these cuts. And we will. All over the country, all over the world, and not just today, protests like this are giving voice and volume to a very deep-seated feeling: that the price of a library and the value of a library are not the same thing.'

Blog, July 2015

Ali Smith, winner of the 2014 Costa Prize and the 2015 Baileys Women's Prize for Fiction for How To Be Both. Due to publish a short story collection, Public Library and Other Stories, in November



In the three or four weeks I was editing [the collection], I asked everybody I met to tell me something about their public library experiences and what they think about the closures. In the space of me doing that asking, 28 libraries closed. In the space of me writing those stories over seven years, 1,000 public libraries closed.

Something is happening under the radar, and it is very important that we all think about it.

Local authorities... do not like to say that libraries are merely closing. They like to say they are becoming 'community libraries' - that means nobody gets paid to look after them, volunteers look after them, and it does mean in the end that they will fall apart.

There is something about a furiously important tradition that we have, of the democracy of reading, the democracy of space. Everybody I asked said: 'The library made me.'

Herald Scotland, 16 August 2015

Shami Chakrabarti, director of Liberty



We cannot let citizens' rights to equality, dignity and fairness be given away by governments.

Many people have not even seen the Human Rights Act, so they don't know what we've got to lose.

Librarians and information professionals can play a special role in helping people to understand their human rights; and libraries offer a safe civic space for people to hear about and take part in much-needed political discourse.

Keynote speech, CILIP conference, 3 July 2015

Julia Donaldson, multiple award-winner, author of The Gruffalo, Children's Laureate 2011-2013



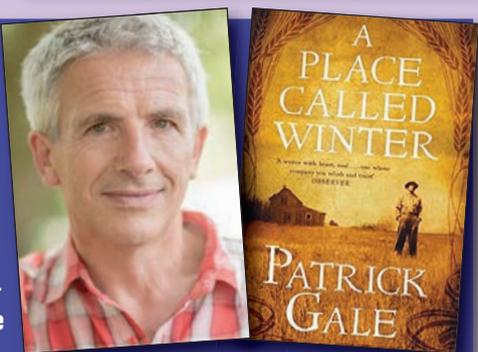
Julia Donaldson, the bestselling children's author, has accused the government of letting down a generation of children by allowing councils to close school libraries, lay off staff and replace trained librarians with part-time volunteers.

She says that while countries such as Australia and the USA are expanding library services, which help to improve standards of literacy, cutbacks in Britain have led to primary and secondary schools dispensing with libraries, or handing them over to untrained staff.

'Librarians - why, didn't you know? The councils said they all had to go... It's simply awful the way that school librarians are losing their jobs,' she said yesterday [at the Edinburgh Festival].

The Times, 8 August 2015

Patrick Gale, author of best-seller Notes from an Exhibition, and (2015) A Place Called Winter



I know I'm not the only novelist for whom the local library was like a calm, patient, endlessly nurturing extra parent. I spent hours of every school holiday in mine, mooching, browsing - discovering low literature as well as the highbrow stuff.

Google is no substitute and cannot feed the growing imagination in the same way; it would be like substituting a few bags of fast food for a carefully ordered, full larder.

Tinder Press website, 20 August 2015

Questions for Kathy

As we go to press, the libraries Taskforce is due to publish its first-ever six-monthly report. It's almost a year since the Sieghart report called for urgent action. For sure, if anything gets done it will be via the Taskforce set up to implement Sieghart (full name: Leadership for Libraries Taskforce). Chief Executive Kathy Settle will be at the Speak Up for Libraries conference. Meanwhile, Laura Swaffield asked her some questions...

Q1 **What decided you to take on this job?** I became aware of last year's [Sieghart] Independent Panel Review into public libraries in England when William Sieghart came to talk to me about digital inclusion, and how libraries help to get people online. This was one of the areas I led on at the Government Digital Service.

We had long recognised libraries as a key delivery partner on the digital inclusion agenda, in light of their digital access points and their reputation as a safe, non-judgemental space where people trust the advice and information they find, or are given.

William also described the increasing variety of agendas which public libraries had become involved in supporting over the years, building on their strong book-lending heritage.

I have personally benefited from, and enjoyed, my involvement with libraries and continue to do so. I was strongly supportive of public libraries and their ability to transform lives, and I was keen to support his report.

I provided advice to William about how to ensure his recommendations got implemented – which ultimately led to the formation of the Leadership for Libraries Taskforce being created. I ended up volunteering to take on the Chief Executive role. This was a topic close to my heart, and one in which I felt – based on my past experience – I could make a difference.

Q2 **What elements from your background do you think are most useful to the task in hand?** I have deep experience of how government works and how to get things done in that environment, working in collaboration with public, private and voluntary and community sectors to improve and develop services.

My recent work has been as Director for Digital Policy & Departmental Engagement at the Government Digital Service (GDS). I led on the development of the government's digital strategy and policies to support people to get online (digital inclusion) and to help them interact with government's digital services (assisted digital). These areas are particularly supported by public libraries.

My time at GDS was focused on putting users at the heart of any service transformation, and basing decisions on data. This yields the best results. I want

LIBRARIES TASKFORCE

to ensure we are taking the same approach in the work of the Taskforce.

Q3 **Where do you work? What staff do you have?** The Taskforce team is based in the Department for Culture, Media & Sport, housed in 100 Parliament Street in London.

From the start of September, the team has expanded. [Civil servant] Anna Wadsworth has worked on this agenda for longest (she supported William in producing his report). Joining her are Julia Chandler to work on communications, and Charlotte Lane as programme and project manager.

We have also recruited two secondees from the library sector for six-month placements. This was one of my priorities, as I wanted to ensure the Taskforce work was informed by direct front-line experience.

I know that their time spent working in Whitehall will provide a valuable development experience for the secondees.

Q4 **As a person with a non-library background, what have you found most surprising about the library world?** How poor the data is, both at a local and national level. For example, one of the 'definitive' data sets is produced by CIPFA. But this is only collected annually, and the data is often published 6+ months after its collation. This is not adequate to support timely decision making.

So we need to conduct a more robust analysis of the existing data that is out there. SCL (Society of Chief Librarians) is leading on some of this right now.

But there is a clear need to look again at what data is needed to improve the service and support decision making, identify what is already in place, and agree how to plug the gaps.

We need to work towards real time public dashboards such as those created by GDS [see <https://www.gov.uk/performance>].

Q5 **You are visiting a lot of public libraries. What are you picking up from this?** Since taking on the role, I've averaged at least one visit a fortnight, usually covering three or four libraries. To date I have visited libraries which span the length and breadth of England.

My main reaction has been the wide diversity of activities taking place in libraries, and confirmation that there is no single model.

Services should be designed around the needs of their local community. Libraries range from tiny spaces, on high streets or in villages, to large bustling town centre hubs. Buildings range from Victorian architecture in all states of repair, through to modern glass and steel structures – including one with a football pitch on the roof...

I'm impressed by the range of co-location and partnerships already in place – from what might seem the obvious council services contact points, adult education and registrars, to museums, galleries, theatres, job centres, post offices and schools. But this needs to build on a strong library offering.

Kathy has visited...

Birmingham, British Library, Canada Water library, Chester library, Deptford Lounge, Edda – Ainsdale library, Sefton, Edgware library, Essex libraries, Exeter library, Forest Gate library – The Gate, Harbury library, Leeds libraries, Leicester library, Liskeard library, Manchester libraries, Market Harborough library, Merton libraries, Newcastle library, Northampton library, Nunhead library, Rugby library, Saltash library, Shrewsbury library, Stockton library, Stoke on Trent library, Sydenham Community Library, Towcester library: The Forum, Warwick library, Winchester Discovery Centre, Wirral libraries.

Q6 **You will soon have been in post for around six months. What are you most pleased to have achieved?** Having been doing two jobs for the last six months (my GDS post as well as the libraries role), it still feels like I'm just getting started. I gave up my GDS role in mid-September.



■ Kathy with Taskforce chair Paul Blatern, Chief Executive, Northamptonshire County Council

This will finally enable me to devote all my energy to delivering the libraries agenda. I'm pleased with the progress we have made to date.

Our six-monthly progress report will be coming out soon with all the details, but of particular note has been the discussions with some central government ministers and local government chief executives and library portfolio holders.

It's not always possible to put the full details of these discussions into the public domain at the time. But the level of willingness I've seen to date to deliver a positive future for public libraries has reassured me. However, I recognise that 'the proof of the pudding is in the eating'!

My main regret has been that we haven't talked enough publicly about what we have been doing. Now that my communications lead is in place to focus on that, we should improve.

Q7 The move to instal wifi in public libraries, and other digital projects such as BT/Barclays, is welcome. But some are saying there is too much emphasis on digital at the expense of other aspects. I've heard this issue raised, but I don't think the reality bears it out. We do need to put in place some of the most obvious foundation stones on which future change can build. One of these is universal wifi access in public libraries in England.

This is a very basic necessity to meet the changing needs in society. It will ensure that, with the increasing move of government and private sector services to a 'digital by default' model, everyone is able to freely access the internet – with or without support, as necessary.

However, alongside this, we are taking forward significant programmes of work on our other priorities:

- **Libraries adding value** – making stronger, strategic links between libraries and other

policies such as health and wellbeing and business and economic growth

- **Best practice** – helping local authorities and library services through sharing and linking to existing/new best practice. Building sustainable long-term models for libraries/community hubs
- **Workforce development** – building the skills needed to help the library workforce deliver these priorities, and to take on new roles as part of wider service provision
- **Communications** – promoting the value of libraries and the work of the taskforce

Q8 Given the urgent financial pressure on local councils to find out how to make cuts without damaging services, what progress is there on a knowledge-sharing resource? This is a project that one of our library secondees is working on. She is focusing on collating the content that needs to be provided for the different audiences (local authority chief executives, library portfolio holders, heads of library services, etc).

She is also doing some user research to identify how best to present the information (eg hard copy, digitally, face to face, etc) to maximise its impact.

The development of these guidance packages is, of course, being done alongside one-to-one conversations that Paul Blatern (Chair) and I are having with individual authorities.

Q9 Getting the library message out to government departments was seen as a Taskforce priority. How is it going? Any sign of more funding? We have a full programme of meetings underway with ministers and senior officials in a range of government departments.

We are starting to see progress. We have had positive feedback from SCL members that they are starting to see the impact of these discussions on the

ground – for example, through recent positive discussions between regional Jobcentre Plus managers and SCL representatives on areas for joint working.

As we are in the middle of the Spending Review process, which will set departmental budgets for this Parliamentary period, it is unlikely we will see any significant new funding until those processes are concluded.

Q10 Getting the library message out to local authorities also was seen as a Taskforce priority.

How is it going? Four local authorities are represented on the Taskforce, and we have had numerous conversations with chief executives and portfolio holders about the challenges faced.

For example, I spoke at a conference for portfolio holders that the LGA (Local Government Association) hosted in September.

Q11 Developing the workforce was also seen as a priority. Any news on that? Taskforce

members are already delivering a number of workforce development projects, such as: the SCL Digital Leadership Programme, the internship programme, the CILIP workforce mapping survey, and our own recruitment of secondees to the Taskforce.

The Taskforce is hosting a workshop in October with a range of partner organisations to review the current programmes and to identify where further action can best be targeted.

Q12 The Taskforce has also discussed the need for a 'sector led national framework'.

Any news on that? In the six month progress report, we will be recommending to ministers and the Local Government Association that a National Framework for Public Libraries in England should be put in place. We're looking forward to getting feedback from them on this.

Q13 What is your view of volunteer-run libraries? The picture is complex, as there are numerous different models which see volunteers involved to some extent in libraries.

Based on current experience, volunteer involvement appears to be most successful when there has been full consultation and engagement with the community in developing the delivery model, and the volunteers work alongside (paid) library staff – where it is not possible for (paid) library staff to always be present in the library, the community team still receives full support from the library authority.

We need to gather more evidence before reaching a formal view. We'll do this after discussion with members of the Taskforce and engagement with volunteers and library staff who work with volunteers.

Q14 Campaigners see an urgent need for research on volunteer-run libraries, as they have proliferated in England without any attempt at evaluation. What do you think? There has been some research we can build on, most notably done by the Arts Council. Now we can build on that work, so we agree it would be timely to conduct an evaluation looking at both the pros and cons of different models.

Q15 There is some frustration that neither library workers nor library user/campaigners have places on the Taskforce steering group. They are dealing with the crisis in local libraries day by day, and their immediate agenda is not the same as that of national library bodies. Can you comment? SCL is represented on the Taskforce. We also have two library secondees on the Taskforce who have considerable experience of the day to day management of libraries and working with local communities to do that successfully.

It is absolutely vital that any evolution of library services is carried out with the needs of users foremost in mind. This is something I feel strongly about and another example of how my work with GDS links closely to my current role.

The Taskforce aims to make sure both decision makers AND those who are working in libraries, AND those who want to ensure libraries have a vibrant and sustainable future, can access the advice, guidance and support they need to achieve their goals.

We intend to explore lots of ways of enabling everyone to have their say on the most important issues. We'd be very grateful for ideas on how best to include everyone who has a view.

Q16 For instance, people are crying out for publicity on the value of public libraries. I believe some work is in hand on this. Can you tell us more? As outlined in Q7, the Taskforce priorities include both 'libraries adding value' and communications.

On the 'libraries adding value' strand, we want to better promote the services libraries currently provide – backing that up with evidence of impact – and then look to strengthen and build on these.

On communications, our first priority is to establish some primary sources for communication from and with the Taskforce. We now have a communications officer in place, and a home page on gov.uk.

A blog platform will appear very soon [we'll share links to these as soon as they are available], to sit alongside the existing Twitter account.

The Taskforce will work in close partnership with the communications people in member organisations, and create a communications grid. This will identify some key moments in the year when everyone can get behind clear messages about libraries, ensuring that, collectively, we make a greater noise than individuals can achieve alone.

It's funny how careers evolve. When I was plying my civil engineering trade on motorway construction sites many years ago, I never imagined that I'd be looking forward to meeting all the amazing people who are really the heart of our public library network.

I guess my early life and career reflects that of many other people. Firstly learning to read and write, including many trips to the library (Miffy and Topsy and Tim were my first favourites!). Then school, university, first job – though ending up in civil engineering maybe broke the mould somewhat.

At the time, it was almost a totally male-dominated profession. I really only found out about it because my Dad was a civil engineer and would take me to work with him in the school holidays. Certainly few careers advisers at that time were telling girls to go into engineering – and I'm not sure it's much better now!

So I had the advantage of a family member who could help me see the career options available to me, and then support me in applying for university and my first job.

I fully recognise that I was lucky, and that not everyone has this support available to them at home. That's where libraries come in, as one of the few places people can go for impartial help and advice (alongside their school, of course).



To support that, our next actions will be to build on the work that ACE (Arts Council England) started, and create a set of 'communication assets' which can be used by all partners.

This is not starting from scratch, as there is already a lot of material. The value of a Taskforce co-ordinated approach should be to save time, fill gaps and make the best use of what is around.

Q17 Word has it that you are stunned by the number of reports on libraries that have not been acted on. So you will understand those who fear the Taskforce is not yet producing many obvious actions. What would you say to them? Yes, there appear to be dozens of reports produced over the last decade or so, which have set out a range of recommendations that appear sensible but then do not seem to have been acted on.

The sheer fact that, this time, there has been a Taskforce set up specifically to deliver on the recommendations of the Sieghart Report is a good start. I hope you will see from the six-monthly progress report when it comes out that good progress is being made on the Taskforce priorities.

But there is still a long way to go, and people will rightly judge us on our performance over the next few years.

Q18 Any hints you can give about what's coming next? To sum up: evidence gathering, continuing to influence senior decisions makers in central and local government, creating packages of guidance, maximising collective resources (including raising awareness of who is working on what), and bringing people together to work on issues of concern (eg collection, dissemination, analysis and use of data, taking forward e-lending, improving library digital systems).

Q19 What do you hope to achieve by attending the SUFL conference in November? An opportunity for a public exchange of views. This should result in a better understanding by attendees about what has been achieved and what is planned, and confidence that the Taskforce has heard attendee concerns and knows how they will be acted on.

Q20 What is the best thing that has happened in your time so far? I have most enjoyed travelling around a wide range of libraries, hearing from people running them and discovering the innovative things that are happening.

Q21 What is the worst thing? The most difficult challenge has been carrying out two jobs at the same time. I didn't formally leave Government Digital Service until late in September, and it was sometimes a challenge knowing which of my three mobiles to answer first!

How can people contact the Taskforce or find out the latest Taskforce news?

Librariestaskforce@culture.gov.uk is a direct route to the team.

Twitter is both a way of finding out quick updates and engaging with us.

I envisage the new blog platform will be a more measured way of keeping up to date. Once <https://librariestaskforce.blog.gov.uk> is live, you will be able to sign up for email updates.

We will also publish regularly via the main communications channels of our partners.

More evidence on volunteers

No surprises here! The Scottish Library & Information Council (SLIC) has published a 'short literature review of the evidence' on volunteers in libraries. Its conclusions underline what we all know already ... Here are some extracts (lightly edited for clarity)

THE AUTHORS NOTE...

The evidence relates mainly to the UK, in particular to England and Wales, where there has been a steady growth in volunteer-run libraries in recent years.

It includes government reports, articles from newspapers, journals, blogs and websites, and reports from particular interest groups...

The vagueness of the terms under which libraries are to be provided – 'comprehensive and efficient' in England and Wales, 'adequate' in Scotland – leaves scope for varying interpretations.

This is reflected in some of the materials reviewed, where either the local community is challenging or (as in Sheffield) even central government is asking questions about cutbacks and closures.

VOLUNTEERS HELPING LIBRARY STAFF

The report gives examples of innovative schemes in England, Scotland and the USA.

For example...

National charity The Reading Agency runs a Youth Innovation Network with SCL (Society of Chief



Librarians) and ASCEL (Association of Senior Children's & Education Librarians), with funding from the Social Action Fund.

The scheme works with library services to develop volunteering opportunities for young people aged 11–25 years, to improve their skills and experience.

It also provides librarians with resources and



training to engage young people and deliver successful volunteer programmes. Young people support staff in various activities, which include designing new services and engaging the community through social media.

For example...

Southwark, London, has joined this initiative, building on its experience of volunteer programmes. Canada Water Library provides training for young people to help run the national Summer Reading Challenge. They gain a Duke of Edinburgh Volunteering award on completion.

For example...

In Merton, London, the library service has a formal partnership with Volunteer Centre Merton, which recruits and supports volunteers to assist library staff.

Volunteer roles include Heritage Research & Display Volunteer, Marketing Assistant, IT Trainer, Library Ambassador and Schools Library Service Volunteer.

➤ ... only certain communities have the resources to effectively set up and run a library. We are concerned that the proliferation of these models could effectively lead to... a two tiered system that undermines the benefits of skilled and trained library staff, and underestimates the role they play in both delivering an effective public service and supporting communities.

If the needs of a community are not being adequately evaluated, access to the library could be significantly restricted for a large proportion of the population...

The NFWI does not believe volunteers are an acceptable alternative to paid library staff, yet [they] can and do make a tremendous contribution to the network... it is critical that they are afforded an appropriate level of support and guidance.

On permanent loan? Community managed libraries: the volunteer perspective. National Federation of Women's Institutes, 2013

➤ Co-operative working between and within authorities, co-location with other services and appropriate engagement with volunteers all seem to be more sustainable options than wholesale divesting of service points to their local communities.

Expert review of public libraries in Wales, 2014

➤ Councils which have transferred the running of libraries to community volunteers must, however, continue to give them the necessary support, otherwise they may well wither on the vine and therefore be viewed as closures by stealth.

Library closures: 3rd report of session 2012–2013, Culture, Media & Sport Committee, The Stationery Office, 2013

➤ Volunteers and community-managed or supported libraries can 'present a creative way to manage resources in appropriate individual cases. They are a way of growing the library service, not replacing it.'

Government response to Culture, Media & Sport Committee report

➤ Local authorities should think about the outcomes they want to achieve, and should assess needs and ensure equalities.

Community libraries – Learning from experience, report by Locality for Arts Council England and Local Government Association, January 2013

➤ While the role of volunteers is crucial and deserves respect, it also requires a clear understanding of what volunteers do and, just as importantly, what they cannot do.

Herb White, Opinion Piece, Library Journal, 1993

➤ It is important to differentiate between paid staff and volunteers – volunteers should only be doing tasks that would otherwise not be undertaken, or would not be completed for a very long time.

Handle with care: benefits and drawbacks of volunteers in the library, J. Bartlett, University of Kentucky, May 2013

➤ A recent blog, The harsh truth about volunteers, by Dawn Finch, Vice-President of CILIP (Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals) highlights some of the challenges of working with volunteers such as timetabling, commitment, sustainability and training.

She ends by saying that of course there are exceptions to the rule, and she has worked with a few 'wonderful and supportive volunteers' but that it is a 'genuine nightmare keeping reliable and effective volunteers'.

➤ UNISON believes that public library services should be sufficiently resourced and professionally staffed. Volunteers may have a role to play, but they should not be used as replacements for employed, paid, trained staff... volunteers should only be used in a limited number of circumstances to complement the work of paid staff.

UNISON position on library volunteers, 2013

This allows paid staff to focus on customer service and core professional duties.

The model has been identified by Volunteering England as a good practice model, which has increased volunteering opportunities but has remained sensitive towards the roles of paid staff.

The Mayor of London is providing £100,000 to develop a pan-London approach to increase the numbers of library volunteers based on the Merton model. This is being developed with ALCL (Association of London Chief Librarians), CLOA (Chief Leisure Officers Association) and Merton.

For example...

Chattanooga Public Library, Tennessee, has created a range of meaningful opportunities for young people aged 12–18 to gain experience and improve their skills, including running programmes for peers, programming assistant, and more informal opportunities such as craft creator or entertainer.

The programmes involve full training, and mentoring teens to lead their own library projects with the assistance of staff. Volunteers are supported to translate their experience into meaningful job-related terms, so they can effectively explain the impact their service has had on the library and the wider community.

For example...

In Dundee Central Library, the 'Opportunities Hub' was created for people needing IT access, skills and support to cope with welfare reform. Library staff, who were already working closely with local agencies and groups in raising digital awareness, are now part of a team. A volunteer co-ordinator works with staff and partner organisations to ensure libraries are

recognised as the heart of digital inclusion in Dundee, and a main point of advice/support for other agencies to direct clients to.

For example...

In Glasgow the charity Macmillan, in partnership with the libraries, has a volunteer-based service for people affected by cancer, to provide information and advice. A volunteer co-ordinator trains the volunteers and manages their work.

CONCLUSION

There can be challenges in using volunteers, but there can be benefits for the volunteer, the library and the wider community in having volunteers undertake tasks that are additional to those of professional staff.

VOLUNTEERS RUNNING LIBRARIES

The materials reviewed suggest there is a lot of concern about the number of libraries that are solely volunteer-run, with no paid staff. A number of issues are identified:

Equality

1. Within an area which has a volunteer-run library, will it be the more middle class members of the community who dominate what happens in the library?

2. Across a local authority, will it only be more affluent areas that can manage to take on a library? Will poorer areas face more library closures?

3. Is it fair that when everyone has paid taxes, some areas end up with volunteer-run libraries while others have publicly- and professionally-managed ones?

Sustainability

It is still a relatively short time since many of the volunteer-run libraries were established, so it may be too early to say how sustainable they will be.

However, the materials reviewed suggest there may be concerns in terms of financial viability, the turnover of people willing to be volunteers, and the maintenance of buildings once repairs are required.

CONCLUSION

While there is recognition that volunteer-run libraries can reduce overall costs, there are concerns about whether this will adversely affect low-income communities which may not have the same capacity to run their local library. The main theme appears to be that volunteers can be useful but should not be left without support from the local authority/a paid member of staff.

OVERALL CONCLUSION

Using volunteers to help extend and supplement library services is seen as generally helpful, but the evidence tends to suggest that volunteer-run libraries with no professional inputs or links to the public library service are not the preferred option.

However, it is also recognised that in communities which face losing their library, the recourse to offering to run a service voluntarily seems preferable – even though some evidence suggests that this will only encourage local authorities to make further cuts.

► We recognise that, especially in deprived areas, one or more of the following are usually necessary to ensure financial viability: an endowment fund, a transfer of assets capable of generating income, a continuing financial relationship with the library authority in the form of grants or contracts, access to professional staff and resources from the library authority, help and investment for the community group to develop associated income-generating enterprises.

Steve Wyler, *Locality*

► CILIP acknowledges the contribution that volunteers make to libraries, enriching the services they provide and helping to sustain their viability. In order to optimise the value of that contribution it should form part of a professionally managed public library service that has at its core sufficient paid staff to ensure the direction, development and quality of the service provided.

Volunteers are not 'free' and need proper management, training and development. In many cases a volunteers' co-ordinator should be appointed to ensure appropriate management and recognition of the value of volunteers.

Use of volunteers in public libraries, CILIP, October 2010

► Benefits for the volunteer:

1. Being active and involved in the community;
2. Sharing your skills and learning something new;
3. Meeting people and making new friends;
4. Creating a more engaged and inclusive society;
5. Contributing to the wellbeing of local community.

National Library for Australia website

► Benefits of volunteer-run libraries:

1. Reduced running costs
2. Increased community involvement in, and control over, local services
3. Increased take-up of library services
4. Innovation and diversification
5. Improved access to a range of public services.

Locality Community Knowledge Hub

NB: However, while there is reasonable evidence for all these benefits from existing volunteer-run libraries, all of them could be achieved by the local authority through other routes.

► Main disadvantages of volunteer-run libraries:

1. Potential impact on professional staff (loss of skills/jobs)
2. Variability (may be more likely to recruit volunteers in wealthier areas/higher turnover);
3. Issues for the local authority (is it legal to lend books from a volunteer-run library – queried by the Public Lending Rights registrar; reputational risk if a community library fails);
4. A volunteer-run library, especially if it takes funds from other public sources, could be seen as double taxation, as libraries are paid for by taxpayers. It could also be seen as discriminatory – why should some areas face cuts and a volunteer-run service, when everyone has paid taxes to have a library service?
5. Issues of financing, and whether the use of volunteers in one library encourages cuts elsewhere.

www.publiclibrariesnews.com/campaigning/volunteer-run-libraries

NOTE:

The single most comprehensive run-down of the pros, cons and practicalities of volunteers remains Ian Anstice's section on Public Libraries News: www.publiclibrariesnews.com/campaigning/volunteer-run-libraries

It CAN be done!

The library figures from CIPFA are wasted effort in so many ways. For example: we have long complained that their annual release is always accompanied by the dismal news that libraries are in decline nationwide. And so they are, for reasons we can all list.

But some services DO buck the trend. Their visits and book issues DO go up – sometimes dramatically.

It's high time these services were identified. And publicised. And – above all – analysed to see what they are doing RIGHT. Then others could

learn how. (It may well be factors that are not even collected by CIPFA...)

Tim Coates has crunched the numbers to produce some initial results.* Look for the green boxes!

WARNING: the figures are way out of date, as always with CIPFA. They go up only to 31 March 2014.

Much has happened since then (again, not all bad, everywhere. All the more worth analysing when the 2014–15 figures finally appear).

* The Society of Chief Librarians is now working on a similar project.

	2003/04–2013/14		1998/99–2003/04	
	Visits	Loans	Visits	Loans
ENGLAND Total	-24.1%	-33.0%	4.1%	-25.6%
LONDON				
Corporation of London	-18.1%	-21.4%	-30.4%	-25.8%
INNER LONDON				
Camden	-19.3%	-41.3%	54.6%	-19.6%
Greenwich	75.3%	-24.1%	14.8%	-34.1%
Hackney	25.9%	-28.7%	-4.6%	-11.7%
Hammersmith & Fulham	-12.3%	-53.3%	22.6%	6.6%
Islington	-34.0%	-17.8%	0.9%	-22.1%
Kensington & Chelsea	-21.4%	-19.0%	0.9%	-25.7%
Lambeth	-28.0%	-34.8%	67.6%	20.1%
Lewisham	12.6%	-30.4%	8.3%	-31.1%
Southwark	0.8%	39.1%	-4.9%	-31.5%
Tower Hamlets	48.8%	-18.9%	69.5%	-20.1%
Wandsworth	-47.5%	-32.9%	-10.1%	-20.6%
Westminster	-28.0%	-18.2%	8.4%	2.9%
OUTER LONDON				
Barking & Dagenham	34.4%	-52.7%	23.6%	-18.7%
Barnet	-37.6%	-48.2%	-11.4%	-33.7%
Bexley	-33.7%	-35.4%	-4.1%	-34.5%
Brent	-26.4%	-30.1%	0.3%	-10.7%
Bromley	-14.3%	-42.3%	-13.4%	-33.0%
Croydon	-34.6%	-51.6%	-6.1%	-34.1%
Ealing	4.4%	-21.8%	15.0%	-24.9%
Enfield	-9.1%	-20.0%	-16.7%	-30.1%
Haringey			82.1%	11.5%
Harrow	-36.1%	-44.4%	-1.1%	-23.1%
Havering	-0.9%	-23.7%	-5.1%	-24.0%
Hillingdon	4.8%	-4.3%	4.5%	-28.8%
Hounslow	-35.0%	-40.1%	-1.7%	-24.7%
Kingston-upon-Thames	-31.8%	-11.0%	2.4%	-39.8%
Merton	-6.4%	-5.6%	-31.5%	-47.7%
Newham	-47.3%	-55.3%	14.0%	-30.0%
Redbridge	-26.4%	-12.5%	-23.6%	-38.5%
Richmond upon Thames	-22.8%	-12.9%	1.2%	-18.4%
Sutton	1.9%	-44.1%	-13.6%	-30.9%
Waltham Forest	-11.6%	-39.7%	-47.8%	-42.7%

	2003/04–2013/14		1998/99–2003/04	
	Visits	Loans	Visits	Loans
GREATER MANCHESTER				
Bolton	-18.0%	-57.1%	-5.5%	-26.7%
Bury	-10.7%	-38.0%	-6.0%	-12.6%
Manchester	-51.9%	-45.6%	9.6%	-30.8%
Oldham	24.0%	-44.8%		-29.2%
Rochdale	31.2%	-54.1%	-26.6%	-22.7%
Salford		-28.2%	-22.9%	-35.3%
Stockport	-7.3%	-46.2%	-1.2%	-30.9%
Tameside	-35.9%	-34.8%	15.7%	-24.2%
Trafford	-57.2%	-41.2%	78.4%	-31.2%
Wigan	-10.8%	-49.5%	-3.0%	-23.8%
MERSEYSIDE				
Knowsley			18.5%	-21.4%
Liverpool			82.9%	40.9%
St Helens	-1.2%	-43.8%	-4.9%	-20.2%
Sefton	-29.3%	-42.2%	-0.7%	-22.8%
Wirral	-16.4%	-28.2%	3.5%	-27.6%
SOUTH YORKSHIRE				
Barnsley	-17.1%	-36.9%	3.3%	-38.3%
Doncaster	-47.8%	-59.6%	-5.4%	-30.1%
Rotherham			11.3%	-33.3%
Sheffield	-17.1%	-40.1%	34.9%	-9.5%
TYNE & WEAR				
Gateshead	-24.3%	-41.2%	7.1%	-25.4%
Newcastle upon Tyne	-16.6%	-45.1%	2.6%	-21.0%
North Tyneside	14.3%	-32.7%	-23.8%	-33.2%
South Tyneside		-38.3%		-33.6%
Sunderland	-40.5%	-51.4%	1.3%	-23.9%
WEST MIDLANDS				
Birmingham			-2.1%	-26.4%
Coventry	-18.9%	-26.8%	9.0%	-30.0%
Dudley	-16.1%	-24.8%	-29.2%	-33.9%
Sandwell	19.0%	-20.9%	26.2%	-25.8%
Solihull	-25.1%	-39.0%	-3.3%	-25.6%
Walsall	-29.9%	-38.9%	16.6%	-29.1%
Wolverhampton	-18.9%	-37.0%	-21.0%	-7.0%

WEST YORKSHIRE

Bradford			-25.5%	-35.8%
Calderdale	-32.9%	-50.1%	-16.3%	-28.4%
Kirklees			4.5%	-27.5%
Leeds	-14.0%	-21.4%	13.3%	-38.2%
Wakefield	-34.6%	-37.6%	-10.9%	-32.3%

Bath & NE Somerset	-18.6%	-1.9%	-27.6%	-37.5%
Bedfordshire	-13.8%	-23.4%	-25.7%	-27.2%
Blackburn with Darwen	-67.5%	-60.7%	-13.0%	-16.7%
Blackpool	-9.8%	-29.0%	7.3%	-29.2%
Bournemouth	-24.0%	-30.9%		-27.6%
Bracknell Forest	-27.4%	-24.2%	16.2%	-25.7%
Brighton & Hove	29.8%	-13.9%	-30.4%	-26.3%
Bristol	-8.3%	0.8%	-0.8%	-26.2%
Cheshire	-35.4%	-31.4%	-18.8%	-23.2%
Cornwall	-30.2%	-42.2%	-1.6%	-33.6%
Darlington	-21.3%	-35.1%	-18.1%	-13.0%
Derby	-29.6%	-33.3%	-15.7%	-22.5%
Durham	-45.9%	-26.8%	15.4%	-13.9%
East Riding of Yorkshire				-27.2%
Halton	27.8%	-33.5%	-14.1%	-26.2%
Hartlepool	-48.5%	-43.6%	-2.5%	-30.2%
Herefordshire	-27.5%	-40.5%		-28.5%
Isle of Wight	-30.9%	-48.3%	-23.8%	-30.0%
Kingston-upon-Hull	25.0%	-24.6%	-22.1%	-32.9%
Leicester	-17.7%	-23.6%	-13.5%	-21.0%
Luton	-30.4%	-45.0%	16.3%	-21.2%
Medway	-7.8%	-3.0%	-8.5%	-33.7%
Middlesbrough			-4.5%	-30.5%
Milton Keynes	-21.3%	-32.1%	-24.1%	-32.4%
North East Lincolnshire	-27.1%	-39.1%	-2.0%	-29.7%
North Lincolnshire	-1.0%	-17.0%	-18.3%	-30.8%
North Somerset	-1.6%	-22.6%	10.3%	-22.2%
Northumberland	-29.2%	-36.2%	-8.9%	-23.1%
Nottingham	-13.3%	-48.9%	0.5%	-32.4%
Peterborough	-63.7%	-43.6%	9.5%	-35.3%
Plymouth	-34.0%	-38.4%	-19.2%	-33.6%
Poole	-25.2%	-23.1%	5.7%	-28.0%
Portsmouth	-19.4%	-38.7%	-3.0%	-30.0%
Reading	-11.3%	-18.9%	-8.6%	-20.5%
Redcar & Cleveland	-75.4%	-60.8%	8.5%	-30.9%
Rutland			0.8%	-13.6%
Shropshire	-24.0%	-33.6%	6.4%	-25.3%
Slough	-11.2%	-19.2%	21.6%	-11.8%
South Gloucestershire	-12.3%	-12.6%	18.1%	-10.7%
Southampton	-31.1%	-25.6%	-3.9%	-39.3%
Southend-on-Sea	-26.5%	-53.6%	13.7%	-27.8%
Stockton-on-Tees	28.0%	-27.0%	-8.6%	-34.5%
Stoke-on-Trent	-22.9%	-37.2%	11.7%	-29.1%
Swindon	-13.1%	-24.2%	-4.9%	-24.4%
Telford & Wrekin	-24.0%	-37.1%	-13.1%	-22.9%

Thurrock	10.4%	-39.4%	-16.8%	-36.6%
Torbay	4.3%	-32.0%	-16.6%	-34.2%
Warrington	-9.1%	-31.3%	-10.1%	-23.3%
West Berkshire	-28.8%	-19.8%	19.7%	-16.5%
Wiltshire	-35.2%	-27.7%	-10.8%	-27.6%
Windsor & Maidenhead	0.9%	-17.3%	6.3%	-6.8%
Wokingham				
York	25.7%	-19.2%	-2.5%	-22.5%

Buckinghamshire	-59.7%	-34.9%	-11.4%	-33.3%
Cambridgeshire	-19.1%	-30.8%	-15.1%	-26.7%
Cumbria	-50.1%	-37.0%	11.3%	-28.3%
Derbyshire	-13.4%	-20.8%	-14.6%	-17.2%
Devon	-29.9%	-31.5%	-19.6%	-27.3%
Dorset	-33.5%	-40.2%	-16.4%	-22.6%
East Sussex	-39.2%	-26.3%	-11.8%	-23.5%
Essex	-30.3%	-45.8%	-9.2%	-30.1%
Gloucestershire	-23.1%	-37.2%	-10.0%	-30.2%
Hampshire	-20.2%	-32.3%	-13.3%	-32.6%
Hertfordshire	-35.3%	-35.0%	-22.7%	-28.4%
Kent	-27.2%	-27.9%	-1.8%	-23.9%
Lancashire	-20.9%	-33.1%	1.1%	-23.6%
Leicestershire	-11.1%	-29.7%	-19.6%	-19.6%
Lincolnshire	-17.1%	-44.1%	-10.6%	-33.4%
Norfolk	-13.9%	-19.1%	20.8%	-18.4%
North Yorkshire	-13.2%	-24.1%	-29.5%	-26.9%
Northamptonshire	-32.5%	-39.4%	23.2%	-27.6%
Nottinghamshire	-25.9%	-27.0%	-5.2%	-28.8%
Oxfordshire	-32.4%	-4.9%	13.5%	-13.1%
Somerset	-45.5%	-31.0%	6.9%	-28.6%
Staffordshire	-20.5%	-38.3%	35.7%	-18.1%
Suffolk	-34.1%	-37.6%	-11.4%	-27.6%
Surrey	-43.1%	-21.1%	-9.9%	-25.7%
Warwickshire	-45.0%	-39.7%	17.1%	-32.7%
West Sussex	-41.0%	-36.9%	-9.4%	-24.1%
Worcestershire	4.0%	-3.6%	17.3%	-29.0%

Inner London	-10.0%	-24.6%	10.8%	-17.4%
Total outer London	-21.7%	-34.4%	-6.0%	-29.8%
Total London	-17.4%	-31.3%	-1.0%	-26.5%
Total Metropolitan	-23.7%	-41.4%	6.3%	-25.6%
Total Unitaries	-19.3%	-25.2%	0.0%	-27.4%
English Counties	-29.1%	-32.0%	20.6%	-5.3%
England	-24.1%	-33.0%	4.1%	-25.6%

WALES	-6.8%	-25.1%	8.3%	-22.8%
TOTAL ENGLAND & WALES	-23.3%	-32.6%	-6.7%	-33.4%
SCOTLAND	-11.6%	-34.3%	-0.8%	-27.8%
NORTHERN IRELAND	-16.8%	-25.7%	1.9%	-31.5%
TOTAL UK	-22.1%	-32.6%	-1.1%	-26.2%

Unknown risks?

Tim Larden, managing director of non profit specialist Ladbroke Insurance, has 18 years' experience in the insurance industry. His job is to assess the risks run by community organisations – which they may not have thought of ...

Localism is still a relatively young movement, but my work with charities has given me some exposure to it. I am required to consider the risks that are presented by community organisations running local services in all their forms.

Volunteer-led libraries are a step into the unknown. There has been an incredible increase of these libraries in recent years. Estimates indicate there are now 350 volunteer-run libraries, but new ones form regularly.

In my experience, it is never a popular uprising, but a response to funding cuts. As soon as a local authority announces a consultation, campaign groups get to work to prevent closures. Only when other options are exhausted do those campaigners take up the mantle and run the library themselves.

The end choice many communities face is simple: run it or lose it.

With library provision, various approaches are being taken in different areas. Some councils are passing full control to a voluntary group, others want to retain management of the library, supported by volunteers.

Material risks

So, what risks emerge from passing control from the council to volunteers? One might think that the book stock is a key risk, due to its value. A typical community library might carry £70,000 of books with perhaps £25,000 more in fixtures, furnishings and computer equipment.

In my view, theft (on a grand scale) is not all that likely. The computer equipment would be most vulnerable, but it is not readily targeted by thieves as it once was.

Flammable contents will mean that fire remains a devastating risk. But while the impact would be huge, the likelihood seems slight. Perhaps vandalism is a greater concern.

Structurally, flat roofs are common and these are always susceptible to leaking. This would be of particular concern to groups who are required to manage or maintain the building in their agreement with the local authority. However, these risks to the material of the library exist no matter who is managing it.

The only additional impact of transferring to a voluntary group that I can conceive, concerns cafés and security. Libraries that choose to run cafés might be at greater risk from fire.

One could also argue that with more key-holders or occasional volunteers securing the building at night, perhaps there is an increased chance of a window or door being left open.

There are other interesting risks relating specifically to being a volunteer-led organisation.

In my experience, any community group relies on a few highly committed people organising a small army of volunteers. Even a library open for just 25 hours per week might have a roster of 100 volunteers.

An organisation composed of many people, with each playing a small part, has to invest much energy into communication and training if it is going to have well governed, consistent processes.

Duty of care

Can a voluntary organisation create the same professional culture that a larger body can? Are there risks that libraries face as a consequence of this?

I would argue that data protection is one of these risks. Libraries carry sensitive personal data. It is important that library volunteers understand the duty of privacy they owe to all users. In some areas, GPs refer patients to libraries for self help books. That is clearly one area where a community library needs to understand and manage risk.

Maintaining good work policies and practices in the workplace is also a key issue. Volunteers are not treated as employees under health and safety law, but a library still owes a duty of care to them.

Volunteers can sue under civil law if they suffer loss or injury they feel was caused by the library.

As an example: although costly, council libraries often rely on council maintenance workers to do mundane tasks such as changing light bulbs. While most folk would not think twice about changing a bulb, a volunteer injured in a fall while doing so might have cause for a claim against the library if they had not been trained in how to complete the task safely.

Outside of the volunteers and users of the library, the trustees and management committees carry risk that they might not be aware of.

In dealing with any small non-profit organisation, one of the most common omissions of knowledge I



regularly encounter are trustees who do not realise that they are personally financially exposed. It is sobering to think you could lose your home because of your role, trying to help keep your local library open. Choosing the right legal structure can resolve this.

I am sure many library groups will manage these issues very well. Indeed, the service agreements I have read between councils and library groups are good documents for library groups to self-evaluate by.

Sustainability

My biggest concern with volunteer libraries is sustainability. And this is not something any insurance product can help with.

Funding plans from the local authority will either already be tapered or will be sure to come under pressure in future years. Future solutions might include the introduction of a café, hiring facilities out, membership fees... Will these add up to a sustainable model for the long term?

There is also a question over whether the volunteer base might deteriorate over time. Once the crisis is over and the library saved, will some volunteers lose the motivation to stay involved?

One could speculate that more affluent areas might have more motivation, skills and time than other, deprived, areas, leading to greater inequality of library provision.

It would not be fair to only list the risks to the voluntary model. No doubt, some groups will use the opportunity to engage a community and invigorate the library. I wish them luck.

I wish everyone campaigning against library closure luck, too.

I grew up in the suburbs of Birmingham. My first memories are of my nan walking me to Blackwood Library. It had the local library look, a brick one-storey building set back from the road, rectangular and purposeful. Inside, my hazy recollection is that it was colourful and calm, and I sat on the floor.

I had forgotten all about it until sitting to write this, so I looked it up. It is now called Streetly Library and due to Walsall Council needing to save £86m, it is under threat of closure. I joined the Facebook campaign group, and hope a solution is found...

Tim Larden: www.ladbroke.co.uk, 01909 565858, @tim_larden, tim@ladbrook.co.uk



Read it and weep

Library services are expanding. Librarians are keen to try new ideas. This should be a time of major development for a public service that's needed more than ever. But it isn't...

Extracts from a new **UNISON Scotland** survey of library staff:
<http://tinyurl.com/qb8j3rb>

Libraries do a lot more than lend books. They have always been an information resource and hub (and key to literacy promotion). There have, of course, been massive changes in how we access all sorts of information. Libraries have adapted alongside this.

They have also increasingly become part of a one stop shop approach. [For example, in one service, this includes]: council payments (eg rent, fishing permits, bulky uplift charges, fines, garbage bag sales); bus pass applications; assisting with online job searches and applications using library PCs; scanning and submitting evidence for benefit claims.

This expansion in services, and the shift to online provision, brings with it a need for continual on the job training. Staff are often expected by customers to be au fait with the often quite wide range of software on public access terminals.

Around half of members state that the training they receive is inadequate. The most often pointed-to reason is that there are simply too few staff – rotas are so tight that there is no scope for taking people off for training.

Tightening resources, at the same time as an expansion of services, haven't gone unnoticed – 70% of staff reckon that public attitudes have changed. They report a varying mixture of sympathy and frustration on the part of the public, who are well aware that their service is being pared back – but are finding themselves inconvenienced.

Anti-social behaviour

Anti-social behaviour is both serious and growing. Providing digital services means staff are expected to solve problems for users, which in some cases they are poorly equipped to do.

People deal online with a variety of public agencies over issues such as benefits. There are many accounts of customers taking out their frustrations on library staff when interactions with the DWP (or similar) haven't gone the way they would like.

Allied to this is a big increase in lone working due to staff cuts. Many staff report being uneasy at the single manning of libraries, particularly at night.

Volunteers

There is a long tradition of some use of volunteers in libraries. But as employers look to make savings

there is a feeling (expressed by around 40% of respondents) that attempts are being made to replace staff with unpaid labour. Some point out that as staff numbers are reduced it becomes not simply that volunteers are present, but that without volunteers the work simply couldn't be done.

Asking whether employers have a vision for the future prompts either a degree of disbelief that a vision exists, or knowledge that there is a vision, but little belief that it can be delivered.

This doesn't include those – a disconcerting number – who suggested their employers' vision for libraries was 'closure'.

Community centres?

The idea of libraries being centres in the community, providing a hub for many functions, is in the [Scottish] national strategy for libraries published this year.

Reference is made to library services 'embodying the spirit of co-production' and to The Community Empowerment Bill currently going through the Scottish Parliament. The Bill concerns itself, amongst other things, with 'enabling communities to take over publicly owned land and buildings'.

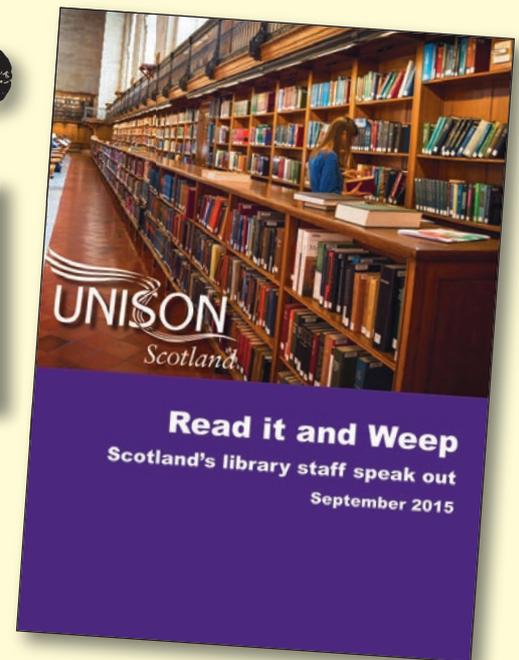
Whilst UNISON Scotland has always promoted co-production, and the idea of service users and staff being involved jointly in the design of services, it is wrong to conflate this with ownership.

Fragmented

Enthusiasm for ownership of facilities is slender. Leaving aside (very real) staffing issues of communities taking on responsibility as employers (pension provision, career structure etc) there are issues of how service standards are to be maintained.

Already staff point to difficulties in keeping IT equipment running to acceptable standards, difficulties accessing training. Removing libraries from existing networks is unlikely to make resolving such issues any easier.

Fragmented stand-alone institutions are likely to lose out not just on economies of scale but also on capacity to plan and adapt in what is a rapidly developing field. If, as the strategy suggests, libraries are to be public service and community hubs they will



need to be more, not less, networked and co-ordinated.

The overwhelming majority of staff are happy at the expansion of library roles – although there is a degree of hurt and anger that this has often been at the expense of, rather than complementary to, the core functions.

Neither are staff lacking in ideas as to how the service can be developed and improved – although there is little sign of any serious engagement with staff on the part of employers in order to do so.

Frustrations at employers' lack of promotion of services, or interest thinking through services in the round, are acute.

Frustration

This frustration is compounded by the knowledge that in order for our libraries to match anyone's vision for the future – staff, employers or even the government – investment will be necessary. There is no belief that this is likely. Confidence and morale suffer accordingly.

Libraries are a valued and vital cultural and community resource. If good intentions and fine words were reflected in budgets, our library staff would be substantially happier than they are.

Instead they cope daily with increasing workloads, widening responsibilities and a more demanding set of customers. This is compounded by their own knowledge that it doesn't have to be like this.

They know what they are capable of, and how their service could be delivered better and adapted for the future.

Government at all levels needs to start backing up their professed affection for libraries with the investment the service requires to go forward.

Library staff are understandably frustrated at the current state of affairs. They, and all of us, deserve better.

