

LIBRARY CAMPAIGN

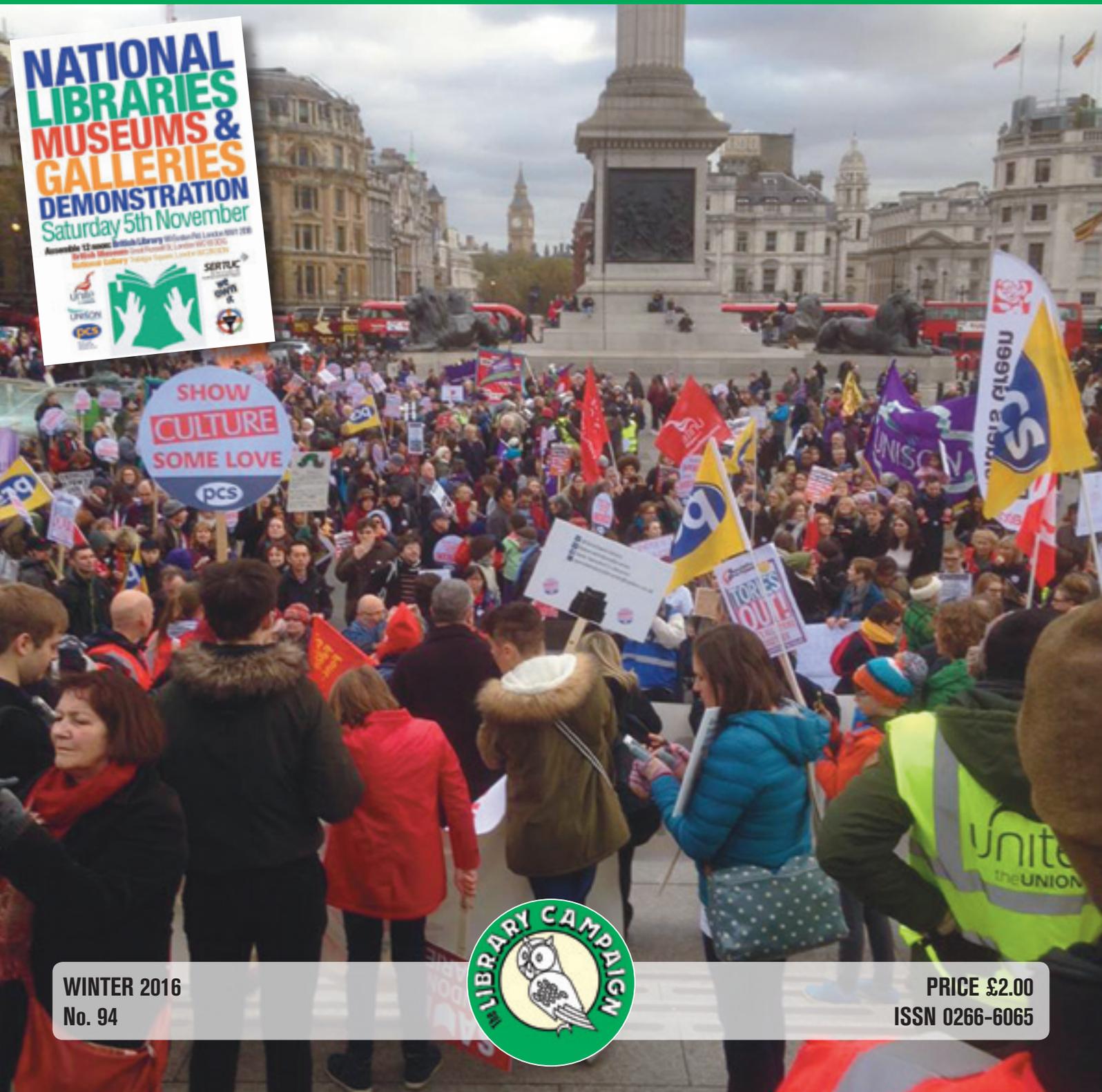
SUPPORTING FRIENDS AND USERS OF LIBRARIES

**NATIONAL
LIBRARIES
&
MUSEUMS &
GALLERIES
DEMONSTRATION**
Saturday 5th November

Assemble 12 unions: British Library, British Museum, London Museum, London Library, National Archives, National Library of Medicine, National Library of Science, National Library of Theology, National Library of Music, National Library of Poetry, National Library of Drama, National Library of Dance



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WINTER 2016
No. 94



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THE LIBRARY CAMPAIGN – AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

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



The Library Campaign

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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

www.librarycampaign.com

Twitter: @LibraryCampaign

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Registered charity (England & Wales) No. 1102634

THE LIBRARY CAMPAIGN maintains a FREE LIST of local FRIENDS AND USER GROUPS

with their contact details, on our website.

If you know of a new (or old!) group that is not on our list, please notify: 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 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.

2017 MEETINGS:

For details and future dates, check our website, or contact us to be notified (thelibrarycampaign@gmail.com)

ELECTED OFFICERS

Laura Swaffield London

Elizabeth Ash Croydon

Martin Wright Manchester

MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Elizabeth Ash Croydon

Geoffrey Dron Bolton

Bob Goodrick London

Mathew Hulbert Leicestershire

The following organisations send representatives to attend steering group meetings:

Unison,

Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals (CILIP).

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.

Taskforce (the Leadership for Libraries Taskforce): set up and funded by the DCMS to lead development following the Sieghart report 2014.

Start 2017 with two big days!

Saturday 14 January 2017

LIBRARY CAMPAIGN MEETING and AGM

This is a rare chance to meet face-to-face, swap notes, forge links, get ideas. No speaker as such this year. It's all about YOU.

WHEN?

1.30pm – tea, coffee, biscuits, networking

2pm – 4.30pm – discuss, decide, delegate to a new Executive Committee...

WHAT?

These are hard times, not least for TLC itself. We need to find new ways to work, new ways to be effective. The three basic questions are:

- what do campaigners need?
- how do we share and maximise our resources?
- how do we make libraries a national issue?

WHERE?

Room 633, Birkbeck College Main Building, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HX (entrance in Torrington Square). In the heart of London, handy for museums, theatre and shopping!

HOW?

If needed, TLC will pay travel costs for MEMBERS. Any queries, contact Laura Swaffield, lswaffield1@gmail.com; 020 7587 3517. And please let her know if you plan to attend.

We need new blood! Join our Executive Committee, and be central to our future. Nominations (for co-option) can be accepted on the day of the AGM. So come along, and think about it...



THE LIBRARY CAMPAIGNER WINTER 2016, No.94

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Photo on p.12: Society of Chief Librarians

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The more TLC grows, the more we can do.

Saturday 18 February 2017 CONFERENCE 2017



WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

We moved from our usual late-in-the-year slot because government fell silent on the 'Ambition' paper that is supposed to define libraries' future in England. And libraries have a new Minister at the DCMS, Rob Wilson, said to be much involved in revising the draft. Like it or not, 'Ambition' is the key document for now. And the libraries Taskforce which produced still has its central role.

WHO IS SPEAKING?

Kathy Settle, CEO of the Taskforce.

Lord (John) Bird, a powerful new voice campaigning for libraries (see pages 7 and 20).

Alan Gibbons, outspoken master of ceremonies.

As we go to press, we are still trying to get the new Minister on board...

AND THEN? Small groups in the afternoon, to focus on what government is offering – and what WE want. Plenary session to agree our message – and action for 2017.

WHERE? A new venue this year – UNISON HQ, near Euston station.

HOW MUCH? For a full day including morning coffee, lunch, tea – £25.

If needed, TLC will pay travel costs for MEMBERS.

TO BOOK: More details and online booking form SOON: <http://speakupforlibraries.org>

Telephone queries: 0845 450 5946



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...



Ed's OUT!

So it's farewell to Ed Vaizey,
longest-serving arts minister ever (2010–2016)



To be honest, it's hard to shed much of a tear. He's a charming chap. And in his long stint as opposition spokesman, he seemed to 'get' what libraries are about.

He was vociferous about the failings of the Labour government – especially its failure to exercise its powers under the 1964 Public Libraries & Museums Act. (He was finally wrong-footed by Andy Burnham, the only Secretary of State ever to hold a full-scale inquiry – Wirral, in 2009).

But once in power... The 1964 Act was forgotten again. Every single complaint to the DCMS about destructive library plans has resulted (after many months) in the same old letter saying 'the Secretary of State is not minded to intervene'.

What else? Ed was happy enough to turn up at the odd event to launch one or other library innovation that he'd done nothing to set up.

He did one very good thing. From 2012, he funded comparator tables by CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy). These put together groups of 16 similar library authorities, with easy-to-read tables to show how they perform on various basic measures.

They are still there on www.cipfa.org – and we hope the 2015–16 one will appear when CIPFA publishes its always tardy figures in December.

After that, though, Ed became largely famed for his annual 'libraries are thriving' speech. This argued regularly that all was well, pulling out the good news while ignoring the growing pile of very, very bad news.

TLC used to rather enjoy pulling this to pieces in the Campaigner each time it was published. Then it was no longer published.

He maintained this line as cut after cut made holes in what had once been a national network of libraries, all offering the same expertise and access to resources. That's pretty much gone.

Unforgivably, he failed to do a thing when councils started to seize on the dreadful idea of 'saving' libraries by dumping them on to – very reluctant – volunteers. He positively encouraged this, brightly pointing out that they are much cheaper to run...

There was no proper research into this – a fundamental change to the service on a scale never seen before. There is still none into how it is working in practice. It is a scandal.

As it was such a good idea, it's odd that he declined even to issue basic guidance to councils on how best to accomplish it. So they all thrashed about re-inventing the wheel and making wasteful mistakes.

He applauded handing the libraries brief to Arts Council England, where it just doesn't belong. Sure, libraries are part of 'culture', but they also contribute fundamentally to education, welfare, the economy and more.

He abolished the expert Advisory Council on Libraries, although it's a statutory requirement under the 1964 Act.

While Ed was still in office, a new daft idea took hold – libraries with no staff at all. Not a word from Ed.

Late in 2014 he commissioned – of all things – yet another report on libraries (the Sieghart report). Many, including TLC, frankly wondered if this was just kicking the can along the road. Sadly, this has so far been the case – while libraries have crashed and burned for another two years.

OK, he did come up with funding to instal wifi in all public libraries. Nice, but hardly a game-changer.

And so it went on. Ed was there for fashion, opera, video games – just about anything but libraries.

Since Theresa May rather brutally booted him out, Ed has expressed a few views that he says he'd have been 'murdered' for while still in office.

He told The Times (16 September) that the arts need...er... more state funding. (Did he include libraries? He didn't mention them once in a full two-page interview).

And he told the Telegraph (31 October): 'There were very few radical ideas put to me when I was a minister.

'The view seemed to be a simple one: no museum or library must ever close... if it was funded once, it must be funded for ever. All must stay the same.'

If that's really what he thought we kept trying to tell him, it's clear that he never 'got' libraries at all.

Rob's in...



Ed's replacement is Rob Wilson, MP for (appropriately?) Reading. He was formerly minister in the Cabinet Office's Office for Civil Society (OCS).

The thing is, he is taking his old job and office with him. He's just adding libraries to it.

So what does that imply?

PM Theresa May's written statement (21 July) said: 'The transfer... will integrate OCS's work to grow a stronger civil society with DCMS's existing work to enrich lives.

'OCS will continue its cross-government work in support of the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector and their important contribution to public services and the social economy; and its work to promote social and community action, social investment, mission-led business and mutuals.'

OCS will take the Big Lottery Fund into the DCMS, so all the different lottery providers will be in the same place – no bad thing. This busy office will also retain youth policy and the [volunteer] National Citizen Service.

Rob's matching statement said: 'I am delighted to be able to continue my role as Minister for Civil Society, helping to build a bigger and stronger civil society with compassion at its heart...

'The next period will be extremely exciting for the sector, particularly with the great synergies between the Office for Civil Society and DCMS.'

Rob said in a letter to his new DCMS colleagues (25 July) that he wanted to 'take a bit of time' finding out about libraries. Fair enough.

Since then, things have gone a bit quiet.

Well... we all know that libraries are the core of civil society.

But until we find out more, the fear remains they may be pushed even further into the world of volunteering, charities, outsourcing and DIY.

As we go to press, Speak up for Libraries (including TLC) have a meeting with Rob lined up.

The statistics saga... In March the BBC reported that since 2010, 8,000 librarian jobs and 343 libraries have gone, 224 libraries have gone to outside bodies or volunteers and 111 more closures were due this year (it's a lot more since then, of course).

Ed's official estimate was just 110 closures. A furious Alan Gibbons challenged Ed to a public debate. Ed said yes. TLC volunteered to organise it. But we never got a date from him, hard as we tried.



A word with Bird

John Bird, founder of the Big Issue magazine in 1991, has been Lord Bird (of Notting Hill) for just a year. Now he's focusing on libraries...

Lord Bird has been described as 'probably the first peer ever appointed on a lifetime of experience which includes being raised as an orphan in a slum, illiteracy, sleeping rough and being jailed as a young offender'.

He finally learned to read, aged 16, in prison.

We expect some interesting insights when he speaks at Speak Up For Libraries on February 18.

On his appointment, in October 2015, he said: 'Mine will be a voice in the legislative process for the thousands of people The Big Issue has helped over the past 24 years and continues to help today through our philosophy of social entrepreneurialism based on self-help.

'I believe that one of the complexities of modern policy is that sometimes the best thinkers, like The Big Issue, are left outside the box.

'Yet if we are to have social opportunity and social justice for all, the thinking within the box needs to change.'

A year later, he is still very much on message. Central to it is the crying need to improve literacy – not just the ability to read, but 'social literacy', the ability to function as a social being. Libraries are key to that.

It keeps him busy. He initiates debates, chips in on any relevant piece of business (suggesting, for instance, that political education be part of the shiny new volunteer National Citizen Service, and calling for 'emergency funding' for libraries when chancellor Philip Hammond made his budget speech in November).

Rushing from appointment to appointment, he sat down with three of us from Speak Up For Libraries (Andrew Coburn and Laura Swaffield from The Library

Campaign, Sarah Pearce from UNISON) to give us an update.

A crossbencher, he values his freedom from party constraints. He doesn't think much of any of them. So he's contacting MPs and Lords from all parties to set up a 'collective' to get things done.

'There are plenty of people in the Lords who speak up for people who are poor,' he told us. 'But I'm here to dismantle poverty at the roots.

'It's about preventing Little Johnny from being a

Big Issue seller in 30 years' time. It's about the quality of life we deliver to working people.

'Most government departments are not dealing with the roots, but just making do.

'Seventy per cent of the problems are unintended consequences. Gelding the unions in the '80s means we are now passing poverty down the generations. If you cut libraries, you have to build more prisons.

'It's obvious how expensive austerity is. We can't afford austerity.

'When I met David Cameron I told him it cost £250,000 to make him – Eton, Oxford and all. It costs £1m to make a Big Issue seller.

'We've got to bring in the unions, the librarians, the support staff, the van drivers.

'And the campaigners. People have done so much, used every possible means, but have lost. But that's no reason to give up.

'The demonstration on November 5 was beautiful, absolutely beautiful. Hundreds of people in the streets were supporting us as we passed by. It should have been filmed, and shown all round the country.

'We sell the Big Issue in South Korea. It has a command economy, lots of low paid workers. But they are letting the trade unions get a bit more powerful – and building lots of libraries. There's more chance there than here of no longer of needing any Big Issue sellers.

'We need people to be educated in politics, democracy. We've got to re-invent engaged politics. The whole system stinks. But knowing you are ill is half the cure.

'I do Tai Chi. It's slow – but if somebody attacks me, I can throw them using their own energy and aggression. We need a science of intervention.

'I believe in David and Goliath!'



■ Guests of honour at Lord Bird's first official reception at the Lords (he once worked in the Palace of Westminster kitchens) were 20 Big Issue vendors present and past, including James Bowen, now famed in the book and film *A Street Cat Named Bob*.

Ambition at last

Here, after months of delay, is the final version of 'Ambition' (**Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021**). It's the 'vision for the future' crafted by the Leadership for Libraries Taskforce.

After consultation, it has been tweaked rather than fundamentally changed. It retains many of the flaws of version number 1. But there are some interesting differences.

This is its summary, lightly edited.

Nearly 60% of the population holds a current library card; in the financial year 2014-15, libraries in England received 224.6m physical visits (more than visits to Premier League football, the cinema and the top 10 UK tourist attractions combined). Libraries also received 96m website visits – more than three every second. This is a strong base on which to build.

Local libraries provide a unique 'cradle-to-grave' service. They offer significant reach into local communities and a cost-effective way of ensuring that people are connected to services they need when they need them - through their buildings, outreach activities and online.

Under the Public Libraries & Museums Act 1964, local councils have a statutory duty to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service for all people working, living or studying full-time in the area who want to make use of it.

Local government in England spent £762m (net) on libraries in 2014-15 – just over 27p a week per person (under 1% of net expenditure).

However, in common with all other parts of the public sector, local government faces financial challenges. It needs to adapt and think beyond previous efficiency approaches, to take a more transformational approach.

So library leaders need to think innovatively - about how library services can help meet strategic objectives, how their service can best be organised, and how their libraries can be financed.

Our vision

Libraries are vital community hubs - bringing people together and giving them access to the services and support they need to help them live better.

Our ambition is for everyone to:

- choose to use libraries, because they see clear benefits from doing so
- understand what library services offer, and how they can make the most of what's available
- be introduced to new ideas and opportunities, then given confidence and quick and easy access to tools, skills and information to improve their quality of life
- receive trusted guidance through the evolving information landscape and build the skills needed to thrive in a changing world.

We also outline specific ambitions for communities, public services and other partners, and library services.

7 outcomes to focus on

– see chart on opposite page

7 design principles

- meet legal requirements
- shaped by local needs
- focus on public benefit, deliver a high-quality user experience
- make decisions informed by evidence, building on success
- support delivery of consistent England-wide core offers
- promote partnership working, innovation and enterprise
- use public funds effectively and efficiently.

Nationally co-ordinated action can complement strong local leadership and decision-making.

The Taskforce will encourage and help the library sector to work together more effectively – by learning from established good practice and by adopting innovative approaches.

Planning for local needs

Councils need to take a strategic, long-term approach to transforming their library service, to strengthen its organisational and financial resilience.

Decisions would then be made based on strategic assessment of need, and actively managed with the community and library professionals, not carried out in an ad-hoc or reactive way.

We encourage councils to provide DCMS with advance notice of proposals to change service provision, to assist the minister in carrying out his statutory superintendence role.

Different models

Once councils have a clear view of their communities' needs, they need to plan how to meet them. A range of different delivery models is already being used. We are working to ensure that councils have robust evidence to help in this decision making, through our toolkits and research.

During 2016-17, DCMS will provide dedicated support for library services to explore and, where it is



right for them, spin out into a public service mutual model. It will build on the experience of trailblazing library services, and previous government support programmes.

Longer term, DCMS will discuss with the sector the benefits of establishing a more permanent support body for public sector mutuals across all sectors at national level; for example, franchising support services to enable economies of scale and speedier spin-out.

Funding

Councils have historically been the primary funding source. But libraries increasingly need to diversify their funding: generating additional income to help support existing services and develop new ones.

DCMS and the Taskforce are setting up a £4m fund to pilot innovative activities.

We will pilot new ways for libraries to generate income from national government initiatives. For example, the Ministry of Justice has already established commuter hubs in some London libraries.

From January 2017 we'll explore ways libraries can be used in relation to the National Citizen Service programme, providing venues and supporting young people to participate.

An excellent service

We will support all services in developing and maintaining a culture of continuous improvement. Led by the sector itself, we'll establish a benchmarking framework that councils can choose to use to support self-assessment, planning and improvement. We will ensure the process does not preclude local flexibility and thus discourage innovation.

Better evidence

We want to gather, analyse and share data and train the workforce to make best use of it – to help make strategic decisions, demonstrate the impact of

libraries, meet user needs better, and improve day-to-day operation.

We'll publish a basic dataset showing the number of static libraries in England and the models under which they operate. We'll look at more and better ways to gather and use libraries data following consultation with the sector.

We'll also identify where we need research to evidence the impact library services have on the lives of individuals and communities, and commission it on an England-wide basis where that is most effective.

Partnership working

Services can be enhanced when libraries work as a network with national support, combining expertise and sharing improvement ideas and insight. Joint working can also reduce costs and make it easier for national partners to work with libraries.

To support this, the Taskforce will:

- continue to investigate new approaches to procurement, and work with suppliers to identify innovative approaches
- explore whether and how libraries' digital presence could be improved through a single national digital platform that all services could tailor to their needs
- support DCMS and the book industry to implement

- ways to remunerate authors for remote e-lending
- support the expansion of innovative initiatives such as makerspaces and BFI Mediatheques
- identify further ways to add value and share good practice, and regularly review whether any changes are required in capacity and capability at the national level.

The workforce

Skilled, knowledgeable staff are vital in providing an excellent library service. We will produce a Public Library Skills Strategy to equip [them] to deliver the 7 Outcomes successfully and give them the confidence, skills and knowledge to lead and succeed in a changing environment.

We want to attract the best new talent, from diverse backgrounds, and retain talented and well-trained staff.

Our strategy will cover leadership at every level, customer service and continuing professional development and training. We'll broaden and deepen skills in areas like marketing, data analysis, commercial, digital, and how to harness the commitment and expertise of volunteers.

The case for libraries

We need to significantly refresh the image of public libraries and raise awareness of the wide range of

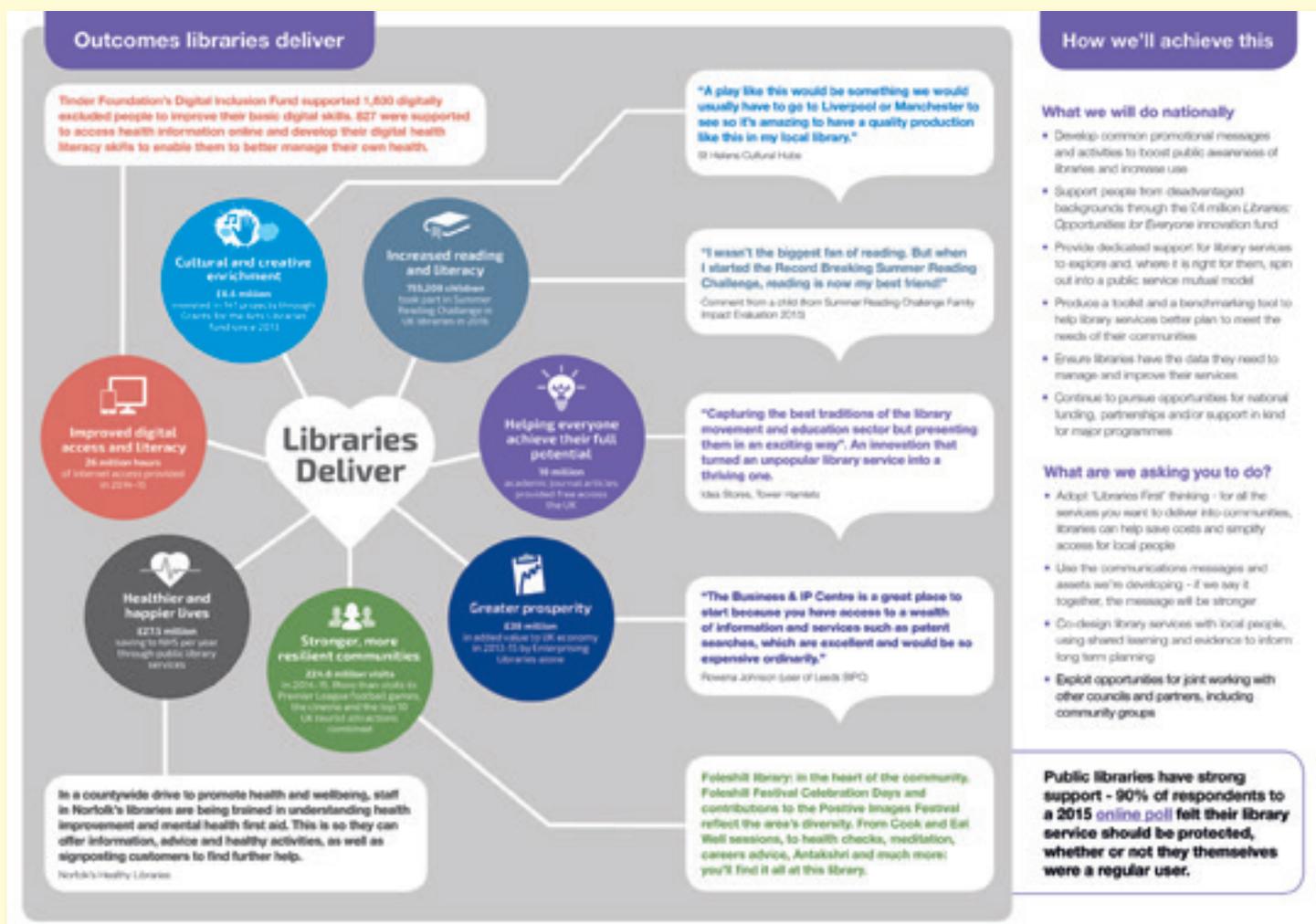
services libraries provide and benefits they bring – with the public, service commissioners and decision-makers. We'll:

- transform public awareness of what libraries do, creating positive but realistic views of the library 'brand'
- develop positive messages, reflecting these consistently across all library communications channels
- highlight how libraries can help achieve the objectives of central and local government and other partners
- urge all public service commissioners to think 'Libraries First' whenever they need to deliver a service direct to communities.

How we'll take this forward

We want this report to reform through action. Our action plan says what the Taskforce will do. We are also challenging central and local government to act. We'll review this document annually and report on progress every six months.

Our Vision is endorsed and supported by central government and local government. We already have some of the best libraries in the world; if we learn from them and deliver the shared ambitions we set out here, we will have a vibrant, thriving and world-class public library network in England.



■ Part of a short 'brochure' aimed to get the main points across to local authorities.

You said it!

Some highlights from the consultation on the first draft. Some suggestions have been added into the wording of the new version. Others were turned down flat.

It's noticeable that involving 'the community' appears only as an add-on phrase here and there – never as a central concept. (It would have been nice to have a breakdown of the proportion of the feedback that came from the various groups – library users, staff, managers, council officials etc.

Mainly in the Taskforce's own words. TLC's words are marked as such.

THIS SUMS IT ALL UP

There was general support for the Vision stated in the document, although a considerable number of people raised concerns that it would not be achievable within the current financial constraints.

Another body of opinion felt that the Vision should be more ambitious, and that the document as a whole was stating only what a well-run library service was doing at present.

PEOPLE WANTED MORE ABOUT...

- The importance of library spaces, both physical and virtual
- Diversity
- Information literacy
- Local studies
- Families
- Measures of what 'success' would look like by 2021

SO... TLC says: There's more about these in the wording, in various places.

BETTER PLANNING BY COUNCILS

Most responses supported the concept of the design principles and the need for strategic, evidence-based, mapping and planning.

Many stressed urgency in providing guidance on this, as councils are already making decisions about their library provision.

SO... TLC says: Some of the earliest actions planned are in this area, though the focus is on finding new ways to get funding.

WHAT IS A GOOD SERVICE?

There was strong support for an 'expectation set' (now renamed as a benchmarking framework) – a sector-led self-assessment tool to support planning and improvement, based on clear definitions of what constituted an excellent library service.

The benefits of a voluntary accreditation scheme drew a more mixed response.

There were concerns that both schemes would have less impact if they were voluntary and too onerous on resources.

A relatively high number called for the reinstatement of library standards, or the prescription of certain

elements through the document (eg the benchmarking framework). People felt this would enable them to better hold their council to account for delivery of library services.

BUT...

The Taskforce does not have the power to prescribe standards for local government. Central government has a focus on localism and devolution, and wants decisions made by those closest to the public, in consultation with the community...

TLC says: No surprise, but still a disappointment.

DIGITAL

There was general consensus that the quality and delivery of digital services through libraries was disparate, and that a nationally-led approach to create a single library digital presence would improve this.

Barriers to improving digital provision were identified that need to be addressed. Where technology is used to extend access to library buildings outside staffed hours, councils need to take into account equality of access (eg, children) as well as health and safety.

SO... TLC says: Good points made and accepted, but we'd like to see earlier guidance/ action.

NEW MODELS

The consultation emphasised that any co-location needs to be carefully designed so that selected services are complementary to each other, library services aren't overwhelmed by other services, and issues such as child protection are identified and managed.

There was a general view that more support was needed to pursue alternative delivery models and understand the benefits they may bring. This sat alongside an appetite to consider more opportunities for cross-boundary co-operation and planning. There was strong support for libraries to see themselves as organisations to be commissioned to deliver services, as well as organisations that might themselves commission services.

SO... TLC says: People are open to new ideas, but expressed clear concerns. We want to see these concerns properly taken on board.

MONEY

Many respondents were concerned about the financial sustainability of libraries. Some respondents wanted funding for libraries to be ring fenced...

BUT...

Prescribing a specific amount would contravene the current focus on localism and devolution of decision making.

TLC says: The elephant in the room – too readily brushed aside. It's no surprise that ring-fencing is rejected, as it has been for decades. More than ever now, the government is happy to dump on to local councils the 'tough decisions' its cuts demand.

But DCMS and the Taskforce are still avoiding – or being slow with – real, solid work on the big, difficult issues where they could help services make big savings. Like joint procurement, a unified library management system, the digital platform, electronic ordering...

VOLUNTEER LIBRARIES

Many respondents thought that the document didn't fully reflect uncertainty over the sustainability of community libraries and the current number of volunteers.

SO...

Government will undertake assessments of the long term financial sustainability and service quality of different library governance models, including community libraries.

TLC says: High time! But we want these assessments to be honest, pointing out the cons as well as the pros.

STAFF

Respondents strongly endorsed the creation of a skills strategy.

SO...

TLC says: Of course. This will be produced with CILIP and the Society of Chief Librarians by March 2017. But there needs to be far stronger recognition – and promotion – of the skills library staff already have (those that haven't already been made redundant by employers who haven't a clue).

MARKETING

There was wide support for the suggestions made in the draft.... Many people commented on the need to combat stereotypes and promote the diverse range of activities now available in libraries. They also emphasised the need to promote library services to decision makers.

SO...

This endorses our decision to prioritise communications to ministers, councillors and officials in both local and central government.

TLC says: Do it soon! This should have been a priority from day one. Much damage has been done for lack of it.

PUBLICITY

There was strong support for the idea of a national campaign, balanced by local promotions....

People also recognised the difficulties in any national picture not consistently reflecting realities on the ground in specific places.

SO...

In light of the above, and as there are limited funds for any immediate large scale campaign, our proposal in the short-term is to focus on co-ordination and consistency of messaging, and work to ensure that all library services are equipped to contribute to the overall programme.

We'll assess the effectiveness of this to inform future awareness raising activities.

TLC says: It's hard to know what this actually means, and even harder to imagine how this can be done. It's a crying shame that the very urgent need for national publicity has been put on the back burner. The cost could be managed, if there was a will.

CASE STUDIES

There was a clear demand for case studies: those that illustrate how individuals had benefited from library activities, and those that aggregated data about the impact of specific interventions.

SO...

These will be valuable both to make the case for libraries and for publicity, so we'll prioritise work to commission and promote these.

TLC says: Good! Publicise these competently and you've got a good basis for national publicity.

ACTION PLAN

We asked people to state the things they would most like to see in the action plan.

The top four:

1. Making the case for libraries
2. Workforce development
3. Funding
4. Data

These are reflected in our action plan priorities and our challenges to central and local government.

Action

The people who use libraries and fight for them are still excluded from the Taskforce steering group. So 'Ambition' is still adrift from the real crisis out there.

The assumption throughout is that 'innovation' is best directed towards finding weird new ways to finance basic provision. But that provision is already so very cheap. A much stronger grip on irresponsible local councils is what's needed in the real world.

The silliest thing is that the Taskforce constantly stresses the benefits of all libraries working together, sharing resources, making a consistent offer across all of England.

That's already fatally holed – and all this 'innovation' and adoption of lots of different models will make it harder and harder.

However... This final report is a little bit sharper than the draft. Its various ideas are now neatly stated as a set of specific 'challenges' to local government and (daringly!) even central government. A handy checklist. But of course there are no real teeth behind it.

There's also now a clear list of 22 actions for the Taskforce to perform. But it's notable that precise deadlines melt away, and the language gets all woolly, on the more 'ambitious' items such as better procurement, joint working between councils, influencing local decision-makers, or getting more national funding.

These are Taskforce actions identified and given early deadlines (though it's not always quite so clear what they mean in practice):

- 1 'joined-up programme of promotional activity', with materials to use
- 2 new core dataset
- 3 baselines and progress measures for the 7 Outcomes
- 4 identify further research needed to establish (3)
- 5 identify 'barriers to staff promoting their work effectively'
- 6 the benchmarking framework
- 7 the staff skills strategy

Money - the elephant in the room...

One big, big flaw remains in version 2. It's pointless waffling on about the wonderful potential of libraries while ignoring the fact that hundreds have closed, hundreds are undermined by budget cuts, hundreds are now run by unqualified volunteers – oh, and thousands of qualified librarians have gone. And the carnage continues unchecked.

That alone means 'Ambition' no 2 has been greeted with universal fury. It does, in fact, make more of an attempt to acknowledge the problem. But this just serves to highlight how appalling it is...

* The Taskforce will 'publish a basic dataset showing the number of static libraries in England and the models under which they operate'. How shocking this has not been done before.

*There is more mention of the DCMS actually doing something. It will 'provide and fund enhanced advice and support to encourage library services to explore and, where right for them, spin out their service as a public service mutual'.

Obviously, councils have long needed proper guidance from DCMS as cuts began to hit. That's its job. Up to now it has done nothing.

However, 'Ambition' is soft on councils – merely hoping to 'explore' or 'encourage' them in doing their legal duty. The full onus falls on library services to 'innovate' and 'fundamentally transform', to find exotic new ways just to fund basic provision.

Note that there's nine pages on 'alternative funding' – but less than one on laying down standards, and these will be voluntary.

Note, too, the heavy emphasis on forming a trust as an attractive option – with real, concrete support lined up for the future. This is the hand of the new minister...

* The headline story is the new £4m Libraries: Opportunities for Everyone 'innovation fund to pilot library service projects that provide people with opportunities that they might not have otherwise'.

This is baffling. What current library does not do that? By public library standards, £4m is a big deal. But compared to what's needed, it's pathetic.

That's precisely the problem – libraries are always at the back of the queue, and they will stay there until DCMS and the Taskforce get real.

By contrast, Arts Council England will spend £35.2m over two years on arts pilots in just one of its funding programmes (Ambition for Excellence).

JANUARY FORUMS

There's four free forums you can go to. You'll hear about 'Ambition' and discuss it in workshops including: mutuals and other alternative models; alternative funding; communications (eg, barriers to involvement, shared assets), data, workforce development. Typically, the Taskforce says the forums 'are open to everyone with an interest in libraries but are particularly aimed at the library workforce and local council members and officials'. Library users, not so much...

When & where: 10.30am – 4.30pm, refreshments from 10am. Lunch provided.

16 January – Newcastle City Library

19 January – Whitechapel Idea Store, London

23 January – M Shed, Bristol

24 January – Victoria House, Birmingham

Book via Eventbrite: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/libraries-taskforce-10036751881>

Any questions, email librariestaskforce@culture.gov.uk.

Real value

A brief statement of the obvious, from *The Library Campaign*.

The UK has a huge network of easily-reached local drop-in centres, open to all. They are called libraries.

They offer a personal service that can give advice, connect to any local or central government agency, and to massive resources for education and entertainment. All free.

The staff are uniquely trusted. They are not trying to sell anything, and they are not seen as 'officials'. They are trained experts who can find the answer to just about any query.

This ranges from health information to business data, from baby books to research papers for post-graduates, from all the major reference works to the gorgeous illuminated manuscripts held by the British Library. All yours, by right.

Staff also deliver vital social 'glue' via free activities, including mother and toddler sessions, reading groups, homework clubs, hobby groups...

The potential is unlimited. And the whole thing costs peanuts to run. There are currently about 3,900 libraries in the UK. Total cost – about £700m.

Excessive closures have badly damaged this potential already. The damage roars on, unchecked. And it's directed at the small branches that alone can deliver the service where it's most needed.

Section 7a of The 1964 Public Libraries & Museums Act requires a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service to be available to: 'all persons desiring to make use thereof [or at least]... those whose residence or place of work is within the library area of the authority or who are undergoing full-time education within that area' [including provision of] 'such buildings... as may be requisite'. Section 7b also specifies a duty of 'encouraging both adults and children to make full use of the library service'.

It is not encouraging if the nearest library becomes a bus ride (or two) away. Those who need a library most are the least likely to be able to travel to a more distant branch.

If it is a large, shiny 'centre of excellence' it is likely to be intimidating. Offering a 'better' service in a remote building does not meet the needs of all.

A library service cannot be comprehensive if it is more or less unavailable to some residents. Nor is this 'efficient' in any acceptable sense. The only inquiry held under the Act – at Wirral in 2009 – specifically rejected the council's argument that providing a service in far fewer buildings would be 'efficient', since this would consist simply of transferring time

and money costs to vulnerable people denied their local service.

It is ironic, then, that many local authorities are closing accessible local buildings just when the internet enables each one to offer an unprecedented range of information and entertainment – everything that is available online at the large central libraries.

The current trend to 'save' some libraries by turning them over to volunteers creates a two-tier service, which is similarly unacceptable under the Act.

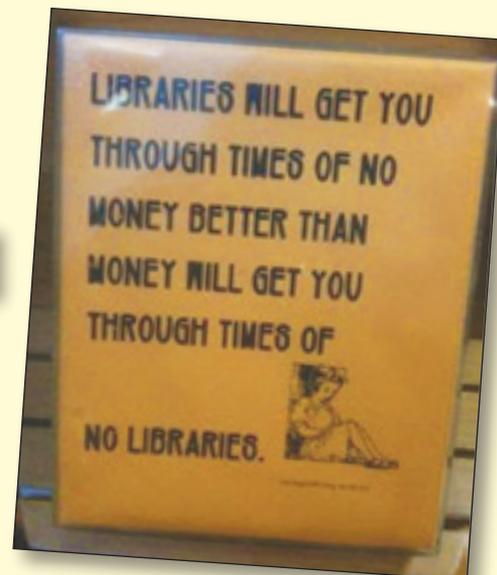
Children and young families are very heavy users of public libraries, as are the elderly, the unemployed, and those on low incomes.

Fares are expensive (and rising). It is absurd to expect elderly or disabled people, or mothers with push-chairs, to travel to a distant library, or a school to take classes to visit a library miles away, or children to head off in the dark to find a homework space after school. (In many deprived boroughs, the study spaces are packed.)



As austerity continues, the needs of the most vulnerable are obviously set to grow. Libraries are a safe, quiet, sociable space for people whose homes do not offer such luxuries. Loneliness is thought to be as dangerous to health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

Many jobs are now only available online. Jobseekers are obliged by government to spend multiple hours job-searching – or be 'sanctioned'. The current government aims to make all benefits 'digital by default'.



Millions still can't afford IT at home. Even if they could, they would be unable to use it without help. And they need help they can trust.

Trained library staff are a gateway to all kinds of information, and to online resources that people need (or would enjoy) but don't know how to find. This guidance cannot be given remotely. Least of all to those who most need help.

Trained staff can also inculcate the badly-neglected skills of 'information literacy' – sorting out the good information from the dangerous rubbish. Government needs to focus more on this, instead of being preoccupied with the distribution of hardware.

There is more. As we learned with the disastrous Beeching cuts to the railways, small local outposts are feeders to the larger centres. Those who take the first step at a familiar, convenient local building will be encouraged to seek wider cultural and educational experiences of all kinds. The first step should be made easier, not more difficult.

This is especially relevant as the UK slips further down the international literacy tables. Reading for pleasure is identified as a key route to literacy, and one in which the UK is particularly deficient. Finding a book you enjoy reading requires a wide choice of books, and the chance to experiment.

But public libraries are more than just a means to deliver goods to the individual, isolated consumer.

As they attract all ages, classes, races, libraries provide a unique space to encounter other kinds of people, and to practise the basic social skills of negotiating and sharing resources, sharing space.

They embody the civic qualities that we badly need to build social capital – mutual respect, community engagement, citizenship, social cohesion, co-operation, personal responsibility. In many areas the library is the last public building left.

The effects of closing a local community library run deep. Some rationalisation may make sense, but closures must be the last resort, not the first.

Obvious, isn't it?

REMEMBER!

November 5, 2016, was a day to remember for a new reason – the first-ever national demonstration to support culture. That was defined as libraries, museums and galleries.

But the delegations who came along – writers, artists, actors, railway workers and of course campaigners from everywhere – showed just how these resources are seen as central to the life of this country.

Over 2,000 people met in London at the British Library, marched past the British Museum and ended up at the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square. Cheers from passers-by greeted us everywhere.

The main organisers were UNISON and PCS (Public & Commercial Services union).

Library supporters were the core of the event. They came from Barnet, Bromley, Cardiff, Gloucestershire, Lambeth, Lewisham, Warrington, Swindon, Durham, Gateshead... and more, with some brilliant placards!

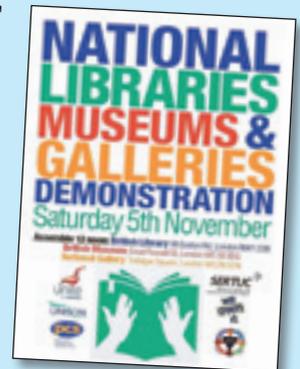
Under the logo 'Show Culture Some Love' (designed by internationally-famed artist Bob and Roberta Smith) this campaign 'believes there is a powerful case against austerity and supports the case for greater investment in arts and culture'. More events are planned.

Among the speakers were:

Authors and artists: Alan Gibbons (compere); Philip Ardagh, Cathy Cassidy, Zita Holbourne, Chris Riddell, Michael Rosen, Steve Tasan.

Unions/ associations:

Lord Bird, The Big Issue; Clara Paillard, President of PCS Culture Sector; Kathleen Smith, Unite the Union, Bromley Library; Barnet UNISON library strikers; Sara Wajid, Museums Association; Paula Peters, Disabled People Against Cuts; Douniazed Zauouche, CGT union (France); Corinne Sweet, Writers Guild of Great Britain.



Public libraries crisis

This is an edited version of the briefing for the Lords debate (October 2016)
by CILIP (Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals)

In brief...

The UK stands on the precipice of the most significant literacy and skills crisis in the post-war era. We rank at the bottom of teenage literacy league-tables amongst 23 developed nations. Yet our senior citizens have some of the highest literacy levels in the developed world.

In order to compete in the global economy, the UK's success hinges on a workforce with advanced skills. Yet we are failing to develop basic literacy skills amongst young people.

Public libraries provide everyone with equal opportunities to develop a love of reading, access books and learn new skills. They directly improve the life-chances of the communities they serve by providing cost-effective services.

Since 2010, however, the public library network has been largely neglected. The number of libraries has fallen by over 6% and the number of qualified librarians has reduced by a quarter.

Expenditure on public libraries in England fell by £69.1m in three years. The number of books has reduced by 20.5m in five years.



The positive impact of books, reading & literacy

There is a clear and evidenced relationship between access to books and reading support and positive outcomes later in life.

Children need to grow up in a world of books and reading if they are to become happy, productive, well-integrated citizens who make a positive contribution to society.

Successive research highlights the positive effect of books on attainment, health and wellbeing and empathy. Maximising these benefits depends on a co-ordinated effort by policymakers, parents, booksellers, publishers and the library sector to deliver high-quality books and reading support for every child, whatever their economic circumstances and wherever they live.

Save the Children's Read On, Get On campaign highlights the vital importance of literacy for development:

"Reading is the key to unlocking every child's full potential and opens up a world of possibilities. A good education is of course about much more than just reading. But being able to read well is the foundation on which so much else depends: children first 'learn to read' and then they 'read to learn'."

– Save the Children
Read On, Get On report

Responding to the findings, Nick Poole, Chief Executive, CILIP, commented:

"Access to opportunities to read and develop their literacy in libraries, supported by professional librarians, is the key to ensuring equality of opportunity and mobility. Children who are not supported to develop their reading skills – particularly those in deprived areas – fall behind their peers by as early as 5-7 years. Evidence suggests that the skills gap becomes increasingly difficult to close."

[https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/images/Read_On_Get_On.pdf]

The skills crisis

In 2010, the coalition government published its Skills for Sustainable Growth Strategy, setting out the government's commitment to the development of a future-facing workforce equipped with advanced skills to meet the current and future needs of industry and the economy.

Despite these ambitions, the UK stands on the precipice of the most significant crisis in literacy and skills in the post-war era.

The link between literacy, reading and the creation of a skilled workforce is clear.

Yet the latest 2015 OECD PISA Rankings place the UK at the bottom of 23 developed nations for teenage literacy (16-19).

It is notable that UK senior citizens exhibit amongst the highest levels of literacy in the developed world – demonstrating the marked decline in literacy provision and access to reading over the past four decades.

The 2015 CBI/Pearson Education and Skills Survey highlighted some of the key concerns:

- More than half of UK firms fear that growth will be held back by skills shortages.
- There is an urgent need to promote literacy and communications skills in formal education.
- 68% of businesses expect their demand for advanced skills and literacy to grow in the next few years.

"Better skills are not only the lifeblood of the UK economy – as fundamental to British business as improving our infrastructure, technology and transport links – they are also critical to improving young people's life chances, of enabling them to be a success in life and work."

– Rod Bristow, President, Pearson's UK

[HM Government Skills for Sustainable Growth Strategy (2010); <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/aboutpisa> (Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development, Programme for International Student Assessment); <http://www.cbi.org.uk/news/skills-emergency-could-starve-growth-cbi-pearson-survey>]

The literacy crisis

The literacy crisis is illustrated in figures from the Reading Agency:

- Research in 2012 found that 17% of 15-year-olds do not have a minimum level of literacy.
- Out of 24 OECD countries, England is the only one in which 16-24-year-olds have lower levels of literacy than 55-65-year-olds.
- 16% of adults (around 5.8 million people) in England and Northern Ireland score at the lowest level of proficiency in literacy (at or below Level 1).

The period of the decline in literacy and reading skills intersects exactly with the period during which public and school library provision shrank.

[<https://readingagency.org.uk/about/impact/002-reading-facts-1>]

STATISTICS

There are currently **3,917** libraries (including **316** mobile libraries) in Great Britain.

265 million visits are made to public libraries in Great Britain each year.

There are **8.9 million** active borrowers using public libraries in Great Britain.

There are **18,028** FTE staff working **35 million** hours in GB libraries and **41,402** volunteers working almost **1.5 million** hours.

[CIPFA, (December 2015). Public library statistics 2015-16 Estimates & 2014-15 Actuals]

Local libraries

Libraries offer a wide range of very significant and cost-effective benefits for their communities, including:

- A UK-wide network of trusted and accessible places, embedded into the heart of the community
- A skilled and committed workforce of 50-60,000 information professionals supported by volunteers
- Over 68m hours of free, supported Internet access via 30,000 networked computers and 99% free WiFi coverage
- Access to quality information and reading materials, including local information
- Mediated access to a wide range of council services
- A vibrant cultural and creative programme in collaboration with Creative Industry partners.

Librarians

Librarians provide a range of services and support which help people improve their literacy and develop their skills and confidence.

According to the Value of Trained Information Professionals research published by CILIP, librarians deliver value in the following areas:

- A Return on Investment for the local economy of £5 for every £1 invested in library services
- Helping people improve their education and learning
- Supporting better health and wellbeing, including relieving pressure on local health services
- Enhancing people's sense of place and belonging to a community
- Improved attitudes to reading and improved reading ability

[<http://cilip.org.uk/about/projects-reviews/value-trained-information-professionals>]

The wider picture

The UK's existing public library network represents the most important, trusted, accessible and networked infrastructure for learning and education outside the school system.

- Libraries contribute to a range of agendas including digital literacy, public health, business start-ups and employment, reading and literacy and deliver government services such as Universal Credit.
- Libraries are uniquely placed in their communities, providing opportunities for all. The Business & IP Centre Network of Libraries saw that of the people that started a new business 47% were women, 26% black, Asian and minority ethnic, and 25% were unemployed or made redundant.
- Arts Council England research estimates that libraries save the NHS in England £27.5 million, as the library regularly results in a 1.4% increase in people reporting good general health.

[<https://readingagency.org.uk/about/impact/002-reading-facts-1>; <http://www.bl.uk/britishlibrary/~media/bl/global/business%20and%20ip%20centre/documents/270-001%20british%20library%20enterprising%20libraries%20infographic-with%20trims.pdf>; <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/blog/hearts-and-minds>]

The neglect of UK libraries

Despite the positive impact of libraries and librarians on literacy, skills and attainment, the UK's national library network has suffered from severe neglect as a result of successive programmes of government policy.

The European benchmark for library service provision is one service point for 13,000 people. In the UK, this has fallen to around 1:20,000. Some local authorities are implementing spending cuts which would reduce this to as little as one library per 40-50,000 people.

In real terms, the number of public libraries has fallen by at least 6.25% since 2010. However, this figure does not account for the reduction in service hours and quality.

The number of qualified librarians employed in libraries has reduced by 25% (8,000 jobs lost) since 2010.

The total net expenditure by local authorities in England on public library services fell by £69.1m between 2012-13 and 2014-15. There were 20.5 million fewer books in English, Welsh and Scottish public libraries in 2015 compared to 2010.

This programme of neglect of the library network has had a profoundly damaging effect on the average person's ability to access books and other reading materials.

[Analysis by CILIP of Eblida EU library statistics; DCMS, (September 2012), Taking Part 2012/13 quarter 1 report: statistical release; DCMS, (January 2016), Taking Part 2015/16 quarter 2 report; CIPFA statistics for various years quoted in House of Commons Briefing paper no. 5875 Woodhouse, J. & Dempsey, N., (April, 2016). Public libraries]

The law

The Public Libraries & Museums Act 1964 is the law that makes public libraries a statutory service. It requires local authorities in England and Wales to provide a comprehensive and efficient public library service. Councils must:

- Provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to use it.
- Promote the service (section 7 920 (b))
- Lend books and other printed material free of charge for those who live, work or study in the area (section 8 (3)(b))

What such a comprehensive and efficient service might look like is set out in section 7 (2 (a), (b) and (c)). A library authority shall in particular have regard to the desirability of:

- Securing books and other printed matter and other materials sufficient in number, range and quality to meet the general requirements and any special requirements of both adults and children by either keeping these items themselves or having arrangements with other library authorities to obtain them.
- Encouraging full use of the service by adults and children, providing advice as to its use and making available the resources so people can use them.

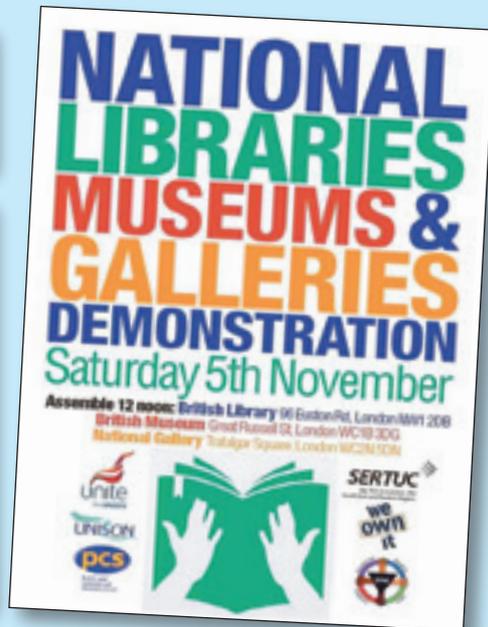
The government, or more specifically, the Secretary of State, oversees councils' role in complying with the Act. The Secretary of State has a duty to:

- Superintend, and promote the improvement of, the public library service provided by local authorities in England and Wales.



Everyone agrees... except the government

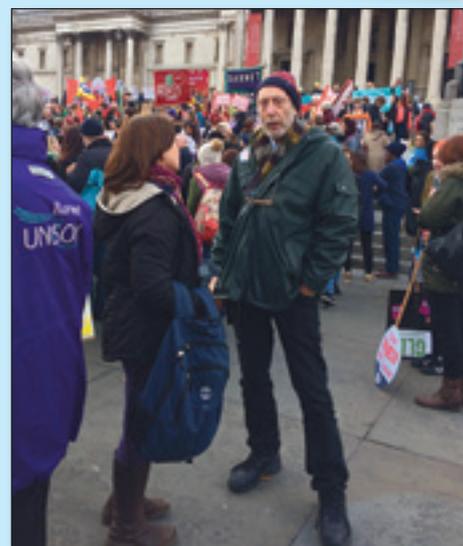
Many, many organisations joined in to show that libraries, museums and galleries are all in danger. And this culture crisis threatens us all. Will our austerity-obsessed government finally take notice?



■ Barbara Band, school librarian and CILIP former President.



■ Writers Philip Ardagh and Alan Gibbons (who was compere).



■ Even Guy Fawkes joined in, on his special day.

■ Michael Rosen, Children's Laureate 2007-9.



■ Simultaneous demonstration in Glasgow.



■ Artists have a union too...



■ Unions from all trades, united.



■ Railway strikers from RMT choose a suitable backdrop.



■ Workers from the BBC - another world-class resource under pressure.



■ A delegation came all the way from France.



■ PCS museum and gallery workers show their musical side.



■ Pointed quotations at the Shakespeare's Globe theatre.



■ Actors' union Equity stage a mini-demo at their HQ before joining the march.

Libraries Change Lives 2016

Libraries Change Lives is the annual UK award that shows just how much a good public library can do, presented by CILIP (Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals). This year, the shortlisted services all focused on one thing – health. And, of course, the key to success was the expertise of staff...

Increasingly, public libraries are showing their capacity to encourage public health and wellbeing. They are reaching out to promote a healthy way of life and help people to self-manage their own health.

Dr Ann Wales, Programme Director, Knowledge Management at NHS Education Scotland, says: 'There is a growing evidence base that links literacy and reading to improving health and wellbeing.'

SEE THE VIDEOS
<http://tinyurl.com/jguu9xj>
 READ ABOUT PREVIOUS WINNERS
www.cilip.org.uk/lcla

'Public libraries are becoming key partners with health and social services in helping to prevent ill-health and supporting people to fulfil their potential and live well with any conditions they may have.'



THE WINNER

Healthy Libraries, Norfolk

Building on the existing Universal Health Offer, Norfolk's libraries are actively promoting health.

Working in partnership with Norfolk Public Health, the Healthy Libraries initiative is delivered in all Norfolk's 47 libraries.

Staff have been trained in health improvement and mental health first aid. They offer information, advice and guidance on local health services – signposting people to suitable local health projects.

Group activities in the libraries include a monthly wellbeing or nutrition themed 'neighbourhood lunch' and adult colour-me-calm sessions.

Exercise-based activity has included hula hoop challenges and a pedal-powered bike to blend smoothies, used to raise awareness of the benefits of the government target of five a day fruit and vegetable portions.

Practical sessions include 'slipper swaps' to prevent and reduce falls among elderly people.

Almost two thirds (65.7%) of the adult population of Norfolk are overweight or obese. Instances are increasing among the child population, who have one of the lowest levels of childhood activity in the East of England (49.7%).

Norfolk's population has an older age profile than England as a whole. An estimated 16,400 people have dementia (diagnosed or

'Within Scotland, libraries' community-centred, enabling approach is central to delivering Scotland's national goals of helping people to become successful learners, and to live longer, healthier lives in resilient and empowered communities.'

John Vincent, chair of the judges for Libraries Change Lives, says: 'The 2016 shortlist was all about wellbeing.'

'It showcased services targeted at health as an extension of the library's core functions around literacy, keeping people informed, and supporting social justice in our communities.'

'These three different library services clearly show the need for non-clinical spaces and

- 42% of working age adults in England struggle to make use of everyday health information; 43% struggle to understand instructions to calculate a childhood paracetamol dose.
- The National Health Literacy Action Plan for Scotland asserts that healthcare professionals often underestimate the public's 'health literacy' needs.
- Almost seven out of 10 men and six out of 10 women in England are overweight or obese. Around 4 in 10 children are physically inactive.

support – and the increasing role libraries are playing as a channel for the public health message.'

The Libraries Change Lives Award is judged by CILIP's Community, Diversity & Equality Group. Over 24 years, it has recognised a number of initiatives in health and wellbeing,

including bibliotherapy and services to support people dealing with dementia, autism, visual impairment, domestic abuse and mental health issues.

Health is one of the five Universal Offers in England, which public libraries are committed to deliver and promote.

undiagnosed) and the recorded annual number of strokes is very high.

Between May 2015 and April 2016, over 2,000 Norfolk residents participated in a health-based activity under the programme.

Accepting the award Sarah Hassan, Assistant Head of Service, said:

'The success of this project has been down to the sterling efforts of individual staff and library teams, who have made it work locally.'

'Library teams are the filter through which Healthy Library activity has happened.'

'Library staff, customers and volunteers have been able to enter at any level they choose, and tailor what happens in their library to the local community.'

'So if customers express an interest in walking, or there is an obvious need for a friendship group, then a very small amount of money for staffing, materials and refreshments can make those things happen.'

'We have found that the rest will then follow. People and partners want to get involved. Supermarkets will donate fruit and veg for the smoothie bike. A tremendous amount of goodwill is generated, and we can make sure that all sorts of health messages are embedded.'

'These are important for our staff as well as for our customers. The £4,000 we have won will help us to take the next steps.'

'Libraries have always done an amazing amount on a shoestring. This will help us make much more happen. We can now open it up for staff to bid for money. Bidding for small pots of money has proved to be a very successful way of engaging people in the past year.'

'We will continue to work with the Public Health team in Norfolk as well as doctors' surgeries to continue to embed the Universal Health Offer in all our libraries.'

'This is now no longer a project but part of our mainstream service. I think for many of our staff it is a real mission.'

Falls among elderly people in Norfolk are estimated to cost local health and social care services about £19 million every year, not including unknown costs such as GP time treating people who have fallen.



Skooobmobile, Renfrewshire

Skooobmobile is Renfrewshire's specially adapted mobile library outreach service, designed to encourage early years wellbeing through combined reading, play and exercise.

It travels around the county to schools, nurseries and community events where children up to 12 and their families are gathered.

It is equipped to promote reading and play combined, stocking a broad range of children's books and providing flexible space for a range of activities based around play, activity and exercise.

The service targets schools more than a mile from a public library, and nurseries and pre-schools more than 0.7 miles from a library. It works more intensively with schools in the Scottish Index Multiple Deprivation zones.

Over the school holidays, 'Play In the Park' takes the mobile to parks and green spaces, encouraging families to get on board to listen to a story and then complete an outdoor activity trail.



Working with community groups, third sector organisations and health agencies, the primary aim of the service is to help improve children's life chances by encouraging a lasting interest in reading, literacy, physical activity and learning.

It brings the opportunities of the public library service directly to children and families in the community.

From the launch in April 2015 to February 2016 there were 10,907 visits by children and 1,859 visits by adults, lasting from 20 minutes to 1.5 hours.

The service visited 28 different primary schools, 21 pre-5 establishments and all the schools for children with additional support needs.

Renfrewshire Council's Tackling Poverty Commission estimates that more than one in five local children is growing up in poverty. One of the council's six priorities is to improve levels of physical and mental health of children in low income families.



Lost Voices, Sefton

Lost Voices is a Sefton Library Service project which goes into the community to record the oral histories of local people in the early stages of memory loss, in their homes and care homes.

This provides a reminiscence tool for the patient's care and a valuable primary history. Residential care workers are using the material to establish a rapport with their residents and find topics of conversation.

The recordings are also provided to the subjects and their families to keep them connected.

The work is delivered in partnership with the Alzheimer's Society, Age Concern, Age UK and care homes in the Sefton area, who refer people recently diagnosed with memory loss.

The material forms part of Sefton's oral and local history collections. The recordings are accessible to the public via the local history archive at Crosby Library.

Reminiscing to rekindle forgotten memories (cognitive stimulation therapy) has been shown to slow the progression of dementia.

Memories recorded include wartime experiences, childhood times, and family and working lives spent in what is now the Sefton district of Merseyside.

The library service is a member of the Sefton Dementia Forum and Sefton's Dementia Action Alliance.

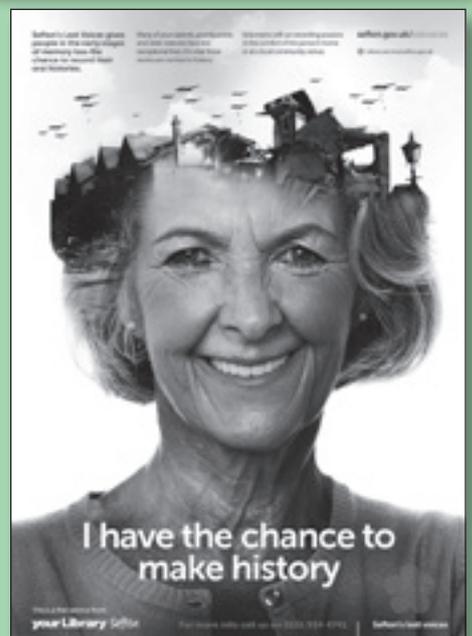


Plans are underway to work with NHS Care Commissioning Groups to enable doctors' surgeries to directly refer patients to the service when a memory loss condition is first diagnosed.

Over 50 sufferers had their memories recorded in the first year.

The service aims to increase the number of people who benefit by 50% by April 2017.

The number of people with dementia in Liverpool is expected to rise by more than 10% between 2013 and 2021. One in 100 of the local population are estimated to be living with dementia, but only one in 200 have been identified and are receiving support services.



Lord help libraries!

Another day, another debate...
Lord Bird's recent speech, and
 some interesting extracts from
 the Lords debate it sparked.

My Lords, I come here to talk about poverty – the poverty of our streets, the poverty of our libraries and the poverty of our bookshops.

If we do not sort out our libraries and bookshops, and if we turn our high streets into places that are denuded of bookshops and our libraries are closed down, we will have a real problem in other areas.

When government departments cut budgets in one particular area, it tends to find a manifestation in another area. For instance, if

you start cutting the number of libraries – we have lost more than 500 since 2010 – you are building up a bill that will occur in another part of government.

It will be shifted into disorder, crime, problems for schools and the fact that children will not be able to get a job because they will not have the skills and abilities.

So if you wish to cut libraries, please do so. But do it on the basis that you build more prisons and more hostels for homeless people and put higher walls around your houses.

It is not just this government or the previous government or the government before that; it will be the government again. There seems to be a real problem about understanding budgets.

If a department cuts support for local authorities, the local authorities are put into a

situation where they then ask: 'How can we save some money?' So what do they do? They cut libraries.

As I have said, more than 500 have been cut and nearly 8,000 librarians have gone in the past five years. That is in spite of the fact that in 1964 a law was passed making it a statutory requirement for local authorities to provide a proper library system.

That was their duty – so how can you lose 500 libraries? How can you cut 21 libraries, as the county of Lancashire is looking to do? Mr Ben Wallace, an MP there, has raised the question of court action. How can you have a situation where we do not ring-fence libraries because we are not taking into account what will happen around literacy and association?

A lot of people are learning on their own;



Baroness (Gail) Rebeck
(Labour)

Books [have] enduring importance to civil society and bookshops and libraries are essential to their continued success. Without both, we will not achieve 100% literacy, which is an essential aim in the 21st century and a bedrock of social mobility, social cohesion and a strong economy.

I declare an interest as a publisher [Random House] and founder of two literacy charities: World Book Day for children and Quick Reads for emergent adult readers, for which Lord Bird contributed one of the first books.

Recently, many of our top authors, including Philip Pullman, Malorie Blackman and Michael Holroyd, wrote to the new Secretary of State for Culture, pointing out the crisis in the library sector.

Since 2010, too many libraries have shut. Opening hours have been cut, alongside educational programmes and mobile libraries, and 8,000 trained library staff have been lost, together with hundreds of thousands of new books.

There has been a 93% increase in volunteers – amazingly, this civic-minded army of helpers is larger than the entire staff of some of our well-known book chains.

This is all due to the impossible choices local authorities have to make when their central budgets are slashed.

Libraries should be seen as key community centres, open to all, where, alongside books, people can rely on other essential life services. Arts Council England recently evoked a vision of libraries as cultural and performance hubs for local communities.

Reversing the decline in library provision and ensuring that every school has its own library will be a start to reversing the decline in the literacy skills of our young.

Our poor performance is also affecting our economy. It is estimated that more than 9 million adults of working age in England have low basic skills, which is costing our economy around £80 billion per year.

The leading creative position of UK publishing, the global influence of British authors and the whole extended creative industries which thrive on books are in danger of collapsing if we do not have a diverse and vibrant high street for bookshops, both chains and independents, as well as a decently funded library system.

We have a stark choice. If we lose our celebrated bookshops and libraries we will never improve our nation's literacy. We will also lose our next generation of authors and the source of our competitiveness in the creative industries.

This simply cannot be allowed to happen.



Lord Tope
(LibDem)

I declare an interest as a trustee of Cityread London, a charity that unites the whole capital every year by inviting it to read the same book together. Every April, more than 30,000 Londoners engage in a shared, cultural experience that connects us to each other and the city we call home.

London's libraries guide and inform Cityread's accessibility and inclusivity objectives, providing support and infrastructure for our work with specialist partners for non-English speakers, emergent readers, visually impaired readers and London's prison population.

I want to concentrate on an area I know best, from 40 years as a London borough councillor, including 13 as leader of that council and the next 12, by my own choice, as cabinet member for its library service.

Over the past decade, the public library world has not been short of reports; there has been report after report by two successive governments on what they could and should do.

What has been singularly lacking from successive governments – Labour, coalition and Conservative – has been any action. We look forward to hearing what the government are going to do, not with further reports and reviews but with action.

AGREED: That this House takes note of the cultural, civic and educational significance of libraries, bookshops and booksellers in the UK.

Full transcript – <https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2016-10-13/debates/C8C0345D-B9F6-4EF9-BFE2-A58A6618529D/LibrariesBookshopsAndBooksellers>



■ Lord Bird

that is increasing. You have broken the communal sense of people learning in groups. The fewer libraries you have, the more people are studying on the internet and by themselves.

But they really need association. There are many uses of libraries. The fact is that you can go into a library and feel the knowledge and the history.

When I was a young boy I could not read or write, but I would go to the library and just sniff the books and that feeling of knowledge. I would say: 'One day, this will be mine. All I've

The picture is stark enough, but it is a historical picture which, by its nature, is inevitably out of date because it comes from figures reporting what happened last year or the year before.

It does not look at what is going to happen or at what is happening in the current year. The outlook for local authorities is far worse now than it has been in recent years. We face a very grim outlook for the public library service.

In the past, ministers have been very reluctant to review whether a library authority is properly fulfilling its statutory duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service. There has been some indication that the new minister may be willing to take a more robust attitude towards this.

It is unrealistic to believe that library services can be immune from the severe budget cuts that are hitting all local authorities, but in my experience library authorities are becoming increasingly polarised between the good and the bad.

A good library authority recognises the wider and important role that libraries can and should play, not only at the heart of their local communities, but in making a significant contribution to the wider aims and strategies of the local authority and its partners, not least in employment and skills and in public health and well-being.

That means working with partners to invest in the library service for the future, something which significantly happens in other countries in times of recession.

A bad library authority simply sees its libraries as out-of-date book-lending services in old and expensive buildings, often in the wrong place.

got to do is go to prison at some stage, where they will teach me to read and write' – which is exactly what they did.

Libraries are essential, yet what is happening is that they are being cut. I recommend that Her Majesty's Government supply some emergency relief money to stop local authorities doing this dastardly deed, this process of philistinising our communities.

That is one thing they must do. Another thing they must do is make sure that every school in the country has a library. Many schools do not.

Think again. As I said earlier, if we make a saving here, we will make a loss elsewhere. Health, sociability, work and all other issues will come into play. I beg us all, before we allow another library to be lost or librarian laid off, to think seriously, 'Is this a saving?'

I wrote an article for the Big Issue a few years ago in which I said that the problem with austerity is that it is too expensive. It is so expensive but does not look it. It looks like you have a saving, and then you move on.

We need more good library authorities, and we need real leadership from a government who truly understand and appreciate their importance and value.



Lord Suri
(Conservative)

The role of institutions in nurturing some of our most productive industries is neglected. Libraries are one of those institutions that are a cog in the machine that drives our prosperity and plugs our current account deficit with the world.

Listening to the Chancellor's speech [at the party conference] in Birmingham, I got the general flavour of a relaxing of the fiscal tightening we have seen since 2010.

He mentioned that we must prioritise the industries that we excel in and develop the infrastructure around them. If he is serious about that, he could well start by reducing the cuts pencilled in for library budgets.



Lord Griffiths of Burry Port
(Labour)

Our briefing note looks at the costs/benefits in the world of economics, health and well-being, education and culture.

If we save our libraries, what about our high streets? What about the fact that we are losing bookshops? We have lost more than 450 since 2010.

Bookshops are an essential part of the community. If we are to do anything about them, we will have to look upon them as a cultural resource. We will have to look upon them as precious.

I started The Big Issue 25 years ago. One of the reasons I started it was my absolute commitment to literacy. I am not talking about just the literacy of books but social literacy – the literacy of being together, of working together, of loving each other, rather than being against each other in whatever way.

Since I started The Big Issue we have put an enormous effort into literacy, probably under my influence because I spent the first 16 years of my life unable to read and write and I had to rely on Her Majesty's Prison Service to teach me how. All the work I have done is about literacy and social literacy.

It comes to this conclusion: a library is an investment in the many facets of a properly organised and balanced social activity for a nation, community or neighbourhood.

But here we are fulminating, voicing our anxieties and saying we want more attention to be given to libraries and bookshops because we feel that, despite that evidence, there is a diminishing degree of investment in what ought to be an infrastructural part of a properly organised and healthy society.

It was the Burry Port public library that fed me intellectually at a time when I could not afford books. When I became a student of English literature – I got a degree in it and went on to teach at the University of Wales – it took me until I was 16 to have a book to put on a shelf at all.

What would have happened to me, for all that my grammar school was brilliant, if I had not had a library at my disposal? I did not have to go to the Bodleian or the Cambridge University library for those books; I had them in Burry Port, a tiny backwater in south Wales. I hope that does not go on the record. They will never forgive me if they hear me call them that.

Yet all the advances in which we can ascribe some importance to these social developments are now under threat. It is a sad day indeed.

Libraries offer safe space, at a dangerous time, for children and vulnerable people to sit and enjoy social activity and to be together in each other's company.

We do ourselves no service if we rob ourselves of facilities of this kind and if we do not see that the money put into developing libraries in this way is not a drain on the public purse but an investment in the future of the country. It is simple – a no-brainer.

Is the Secretary of State right to discharge his duty simply by passing the buck to the local authority? No.

It should be a truth universally acknowledged that any civilised society worthy of the name must be in want of libraries.



**Lord Addington
(LibDem)**

Libraries have to be the easiest and cheapest way of having outreach into the community by local or national government. They are instantly accessible.

I remember going to the library and leaving with recycling bags, leaflets about road closures and transport plans, and information about new planning structures. Libraries also offer decent online computer access.

If we do not ensure that that aspect of libraries is there, all their functions other than just issuing books will suffer.

All these things happen in one place, with support, structure and people behind you. That is important in delivering local and national services or engaging on a voluntary basis.

If we damage that, we damage everything that happens at libraries and make things more expensive.

If you are trying to become a fully formed part of the culture of our society, access to books is very important, as is your feeling welcome when you access them.

We also need to make sure that the big online monster that is Amazon realises that the appetite for literature it is feeding is initially fed by bookshops and libraries, which encourage people to read that extra book, to engage and fill the gaps. We must make sure it pays its way.



**Baroness Hollins
(cross-bencher)**

My main question is whether the general duty, 'to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons', as outlined in the Public Libraries & Museums Act, is in fact being met with respect to an often excluded group: people with learning disabilities.

Books Beyond Words, the charitable company that I set up five years ago, has been developing book clubs in the south-east for adults whose visual literacy is far superior to their word literacy.

The county that has taken this further than any other is Kent, where 16 libraries now offer regular book clubs, and 10 special schools are starting book clubs. These clubs will transition to a community

library as school leaving approaches. I hope that their local libraries will survive, because these are people who do not have easy access to transport.

Books help people access and share their feelings and their own stories, and support each other.

Group members are part of the life of the library - reading their books, talking and signing about the stories, guessing what comes next. Book clubs then develop in a range of ways and expand beyond their original remit.

Their teachers consider the whole experience a really useful part of their education, preparing them for their next steps in a very practical and enjoyable way.

Libraries and bookshops should be important parts of all communities, to support the widest possible range of people, including disabled people, to socialise, enjoy and learn.



**The Lord Bishop
of St Albans**

Rural areas face particular challenges when it comes to connecting with the wider world. Many rural towns and villages can be hard to reach by public transport, while telecommunications access can be very poor indeed.

Isolation is one of the greatest threats to rural life, and shared community services and spaces such as libraries provide the best way in which to combat that threat.

What is required is that shared community space, a platform from which these vital services can be provided.



**The Earl of Clancarty
(cross-bencher)**

There are fundamental questions about how important books and libraries are in 2016. There are questions about how literate you can be using only, or mainly, the internet and how much we ought to redefine what literacy means in the digital age.

Nevertheless, the libraries expert, Sue Charteris, has pointed to the UNESCO report that indicated that reading for pleasure is the single best indicator of social mobility, with the UK currently rated 47th out of 65 nations in this regard.

Within this context, she made the observation that: 'Those that need [a library service] most are the ones that don't know they need it.'

Reading for pleasure is not necessarily something that a school will teach you, at least not by itself.

It is useful to put that UNESCO finding next to this

year's widely reported OECD study on basic skills, which found that, out of 23 countries of the developed world, England has the lowest of all literacy rates for 16 to 19 year olds.

I thought it might be interesting to compile a few statistics of my own... South Korea has been building hundreds of libraries in the last few years, and is at the top of the table.

Finland, which is close to the top of the literacy table, has one library per 6,900 people. Germany, whose literacy levels are significantly higher than ours but lower than Finland's, has one library per 7,900 people.

The UK, at the bottom of the table, has one library per 17,000 people.

Of course, these are rough stats that do not tell the whole story; nevertheless, we are going in entirely the opposite direction to Korea.

We are rapidly closing libraries, which in itself will send out a strong signal to younger people about the value that society now places on libraries and, therefore, books in whatever context.

And this is despite the clear love that much of the British public have for libraries and the protests about closures that we hear about, almost on a daily basis.

At present, for too many young people, libraries are desperately uncool, not just because of the dominance of the internet but because there is no investment, they are being closed and books are being sold off.

It is a downward spiral. The more libraries we lose, the more our literacy problem is going to get worse because schooling does not exist in a vacuum.

Libraries are part of the wider social context. A belief in libraries is a belief in books. I emphasise that by libraries I mean public libraries, not volunteer libraries, because it has to be a belief recognised by society at large.

Volunteer libraries are part of the great British spirit but I believe very strongly that they should not be a substitute for properly funded public libraries.

In the end, illiteracy is caused by poverty. The closure of libraries is itself a form of poverty: it is the poverty of access to culture, literacy and reading for pleasure.



**Baroness Blackstone
(Labour)**

Reading and literacy are central to every child's learning. Those who are slow to read and grasp the essentials of literacy will be greatly disadvantaged in their levels of achievement across all other subjects.

Moreover, if they fall behind, it is often hard to catch up and their opportunities for further education and fulfilling jobs will be seriously damaged. We know, for example, from an OECD study that 40% of unemployed adults have low basic skills.

A love of books is best instilled early and public libraries can play a vital role in developing the habit of reading through hosting book clubs and running reading programmes.

Public libraries also have an important role in collaborating with primary schools, welcoming visits from groups of children with their teachers. This is especially valuable in areas where parents are unaware of their local library and what it can offer.

For older children libraries also offer a quiet haven where they can study in the evening and on Saturdays, doing their homework and preparing for public exams.

In this way libraries have a role in mitigating the inequality that derives from cramped and noisy homes, where concentration for these children and young people is truly difficult.

For adults, libraries have played and still are playing a helpful role in developing information and computer literacy skills. They also have an invaluable role as sources for wider lifelong learning.

For these educational reasons alone, the closure of public libraries over the last five years is a disaster.

Can the minister say what the government plan to do to stem these closures? Can he assure the House that they will find ways of preventing the implementation of these plans? Can he say what financial help the government will give to local authorities to maintain libraries to fulfil their statutory functions?

Libraries are an essential part of the knowledge economy. They are often at the heart of communities, provide both a physical space and usually digital access, and are well placed to be entrepreneurial hubs.

Libraries can help create jobs and contribute to economic growth, as well as all the things they do for education, culture and local communities by providing information to people who need it and have no other way to find it.

I hope that the minister will acknowledge this important economic role and that the government will act to maintain our public library system,



Lord Crisp
(cross-bencher)

Our young people are less literate than our pensioners. We are the only OECD country, and probably the only country in the world, where this is the case.

It is development in reverse.

It seems similar to that other dreadful projection we know of: that life expectancy for our grandchildren will be lower than it is for ourselves.

If there were any worrying signs of a civilisation in decline, these would be two of the sort of ones you would look for.

Three major problems of modern life impact enormously on our health and well-being: child development; loneliness, particularly in older age; mental illness. They all affect health but none of them is within the control of the NHS and the curative health services.

There is an old African saying which sums it up rather well: 'Health is made at home, hospitals are for repairs.'

A few years ago, the Scottish government initiated the early years programme with the great ambition of making Scotland the healthiest and best place in the world to grow up.

One of the major interventions was encouraging parents to read their children bedtime stories. That has all kinds of implications relating to books, imagination and, of course, human contact, creating healthy and resilient children for the future.

You will realise that it means we need libraries.

Loneliness in our society has a health risk which has been calculated to be equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

There is some very clear evidence that a healthy old age derives from being healthy when you get to 60, having some meaning in life and having a good social network.

Again, libraries are part of the solution here: they are about older people meeting and swapping books. I remember that when I was a community worker in Liverpool years ago, older people used the library very much as a meeting place.

Libraries are specifically working on a health issue – mental health. The Reading Agency and the Society of Chief Librarians developed a programme called Reading Well Books on Prescription. This was about ensuring the availability of a whole range of books, chosen by experts, about mental health and depression, and how to handle some of these issues ourselves. I gather that half a million people have used this service.

This seems a very valuable approach that a library can take in targeting a particular condition or range of conditions, and it may need to be expanded.

Our health system at the moment is severely under strain, and we know that the NHS cannot reach everywhere. It cannot deal with child development, loneliness in old age, causes of stress and mental ill-health. It can only, as the African might say, deal with the repairs.

Education is not just about schools, and health is not just about the NHS.

I do not suppose that anyone is actively trying to destroy libraries, but there is a danger of our destroying part of the fabric of our life almost by accident.

We are getting rid of something valuable and which could have an even more valuable role in the future if a bit more imagination and vision were applied to the issue.

Do the minister and this government understand the actual and potential wider role that libraries can play in building strong, resilient and healthy communities? If so, what are he and they doing to make sure that this potential is realised?



Lord Collins of Highbury
(Labour)

Libraries are a practical tool and a vital public space for individuals and families across the country.

They are a resource for parents with young children, schoolchildren without a place to work at home, jobseekers trying to gain new skills and employment, elderly people living in isolation, and community groups. Increasingly, they are an incubator for new ideas and businesses to come to fruition.

The withdrawal of financial and political support for public libraries in England has gone unchecked. The last time that a Secretary of State used powers to order an inquiry into whether a local authority was fulfilling its statutory duties was in 2009.

The reality is that Ed Vaizey, the minister for most of this time [from 2010], refused to intervene in any library reductions whatsoever.

Despite having the resources of his department at his disposal, he preferred to rely on desktop research to assess library closures.

The government figure touted was totally at odds with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, independent BBC research, and what the public could see happening to their local libraries.

The government are slashing local government finance to the bone and leaving local authorities to pick up the pieces.

Sadly, when many library services were under threat we had a minister with no sense of urgency, no coherent strategy or strategic direction, no guidance for local authorities and no idea what might be the minimum acceptable outcome.



The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Culture, Media and Sport
(Lord Ashton of Hyde)

Libraries, bookshops and booksellers contribute enormously to the civic, cultural and educational well-being of this country. I think that we all agree that access to books is vital.

The rest of his speech can be looked up online. It outlined the well-known roles of the various bodies involved with libraries, side-stepped the question of funding and made no promises about anything.

