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SPRING 2020
No. 99



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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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with their contact details, on our website.

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

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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...

ELECTED OFFICERS

Laura Swaffield London

Andrew Coburn Essex

MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Geoffrey Dron Bolton

Bob Goodrick London

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.

MHCLG (Ministry of Housing, 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 Digital, 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.

LIBRARIES CONNECTED (formerly Society of Chief Librarians) advises LGA on libraries. Does a lot of useful work, including research and resources, but tends to stick 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.

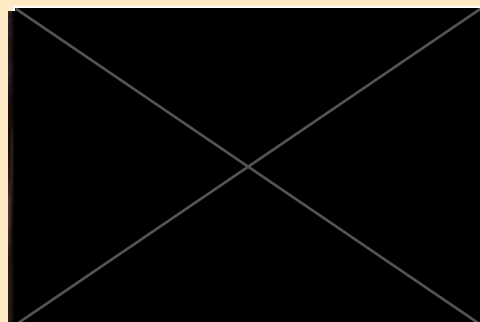
A world turned upside-down

That's how people felt when civil war hit England in the 1640s. They thought real change would come. In the long run it didn't.

Right now, it's difficult to say anything that isn't already obvious to all.

The people who actually run the country – and now risk their lives to do so – are cleaners, delivery drivers, binmen, posties, packers, shop assistants, care workers, crop pickers and all those other support workers.

They are 'unskilled' (to some eyes), underpaid, under-valued. Or were, until now. Let's hope some lessons will be learned. For the long run.



This appalling emergency has (second cliché alert) brought out the best and the worst among us. We can all see which is which.

Professionals in the public services have always had the full respect of the public. They have not had the respect of governments. Not in the form that really matters – proper funding.

By coincidence, this issue has three examples of public services working in partnership to create some wonderful things. Just because.

It also features several examples of the library world really getting its act together.



Making the best of a dreadful situation, a library in Western Australia devised a poster that any library could use and (as a public service) offered it to everyone.



CILIP has taken the case for proper funding to government. And it is getting to grips with a fresh view of libraries as an active force for change.

Libraries Connected stood up for libraries when government failed to get them closed (apparently not realising that they are places that many people visit).

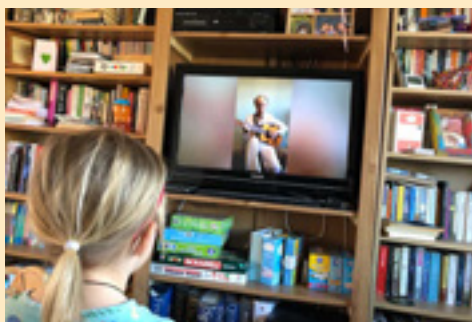
And it has revamped its Universal Offer formula, ready to highlight public libraries' vital services. Arts Council England will make the UOs a king-pin of future development. ACE itself has come to recognise that libraries are 'central' to all culture provision.

But for now, the kudos goes to front-line library staff. From the first day they have used all their (considerable) skills to go on serving the public.

They are telephoning round their more vulnerable users (Kirklees). They have made changes to allow new members to join online (Manchester, Newham). They have revamped their web pages to highlight their digital goodies (Suffolk, West Sussex).

They are tweeting ads and e-book recommendations, and running online rhyme-times, stories, coding clubs, writers' groups, games, courses and more (passim).

People with no online access remain a big worry. We've always said they were. Nobody listened. Perhaps they will now.



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A fantastic celebration of novels run by the BBC, with input from the full range of library organisations. A partnership to be proud of.

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Arts Council England has its next 10 years planned. Libraries are seen as of central importance.

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Another fantastic public-public partnership. Birmingham libraries and Birmingham University are opening up the city's unique Shakespeare collection.

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Yet another public-public partnership, led by the British Library, has created a wonderland of children's books – and, fortuitously, a handy resource for home-schoolers.

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From CILIP and The Big Issue, a ground-breaking report. It pulls together all the research that proves public libraries need long-term, sustainable funding – and would repay it many times over.

33 TIME FOR REAL CHANGE

CILIP is swapping 'advocacy' for 'activism' – working actively for social change. The concept is refreshing, but really this is just what good libraries already do.

36 JOIN US! The more TLC grows, the stronger we get.

Taking it to the top...

CILIP snagged Bobby Seagull (formerly of University Challenge) to front its National Libraries Week campaign. He's now designated CILIP's Library Champion. And he's literally their poster boy.

Next he put his name to a manifesto of stuff that he thinks are necessary for libraries of different types to succeed and /or survive.

Bobby presented this at the House of Lords last October, flanked by a delegation representing CILIP and Lord Bird from The Big Issue.

Alongside it was an important new report produced by CILIP and The Big Issue, with support from the other library bodies. Titled *Public Libraries: The Case for Support*, it does what it says on the tin. It pulls together all the major recent evidence for funding public libraries properly. See pages 28–32. This is a really important piece of work. And refreshingly short and well organised!

(TLC is also happy to acknowledge the report's sponsor, OverDrive, the 'digital reading platform for libraries and schools' that enables the loan of e-books from public libraries – and even has a website to help people trace their nearest subscribing library – <https://www.overdrive.com/account/select-library>).

CILIP CEO Nick Poole commented: 'We could not be more delighted to be working with Lord Bird and his colleagues and with Bobby Seagull to bring the case for long-term funding for libraries to Parliament... the overall financial situation for local government remains precarious.'

Lord Bird said: 'Public libraries are palaces of the people, supporting reading, literacy and learning at every stage of people's lives.'

The new report, he emphasised, 'gives politicians and policy-makers the evidence needed to make the case for further investment in our much-loved local libraries.'

The Big Issue has long campaigned for reading and libraries (see #WhyBooksMatter and its newsy website at <https://www.bigissue.com/tag/whybooksmatter>).

Finally, Bobby was a key figure in presenting a petition – again about sustainable funding for libraries – at 10 Downing Street.

The case has been well and truly made. But, of course, we're in a different world now. We hope government will have learned something about what it should value in future...



At 10 Downing Street, L to R: Lord Tope, longtime library supporter, Bobby Seagull, Nick Poole, CILIP chief executive.

Bobby Seagull's manifesto



HM Government has an opportunity to transform lives across the UK by investing in the future of our libraries. That is why I am calling on Ministers, MPs and representatives in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to get behind my 10-point Manifesto:

1. Ensure a fair funding settlement for local government, to enable councils to invest in public libraries at the heart of their communities;
2. Invest in the future of our communities by voting to support the establishment of a National Library Improvement Fund with a capital budget of £50m per year over the 5 years of the next Parliament;
3. Ensure adequate long-term sustainable support for further and higher education and research in our colleges and Universities;
4. Provide long-term sustainable funding for schools and encourage heads, teachers and governors to invest in libraries as the 'beating heart of the school';
5. Implement the recommendations of the independent Topol Review to enable librarians and knowledge specialists to transform evidence-based healthcare;
6. Invest in the prison service and encourage governors to develop their prison libraries and librarians as a core part of prisoner education and rehabilitation;
7. Recognise the value of libraries in building literacy (including media literacy) and skills by supporting the CILIP Building a Nation of Readers campaign;
8. Continue to promote the importance of good information governance and information security to business, supported by information professionals;
9. Endorse the vital work of professional librarians in delivering a strong library sector that responds to current and future needs;
10. Work with the library and information profession to develop fair and balanced approaches to copyright, to enable us to fulfil our public task in a digital economy.

By the way...

A similar delegation went to the Commons in October 2018. They met the then libraries minister, Michael Ellis, and a local government minister called Rishi Sunak...



The reception was felt to be sympathetic.

Well, the libraries minister has gone, as they so often do. Rishi Sunak has become a rather powerful person.

So it's worth quoting what he said about libraries: 'I grew up loving them, and still love them, and I know from experience that libraries touch on so many areas of people's lives.'

'Building strong communities is crucial, and libraries are an essential part of why we're each proud to call a community our home.'

Sing to save

Feel like singing? Why not. Craig and Andrew, in beleaguered Northants, have written a song* to help save their library in Thrapston.

They say: 'The song is generic and could be used in all library campaigns. Please offer it to any campaign that needs it.'

You can find more library (and other) songs from them by searching 'a major oddity' on youtube...

* <https://youtu.be/tQzNyZo6lJM>

Wonderful WBD

World Book Day smashed its Share a Million Stories target within 24 hours of the launch event at Clapham library, with 1,066,691 stories shared by Friday 6 March.

Children, parents, carers, authors, illustrators, schools, bookshops, libraries and publishers across the UK and Ireland shared 10-minute stories.

World Book Day CEO Cassie Chadderton said: 'It's wonderful to see this overwhelming response. Children and young people were given a chance to be part of the fun and excitement of story sharing.'

'We all took a big step forward in making reading for pleasure the habit of a lifetime.'



Oliver Dowden



Caroline Dinenage



Tracy Brabin

Who's in charge?

The DCMS merry-go-round continues. Nicky Morgan has gone, after an odd period when she was no longer an MP but continued in post as an unelected peeress (she had to watch silently from the gallery when questions were asked in the Commons).

The new Secretary of State is Oliver Dowden, MP for Hertsmere. He is a former Paymaster General and was Deputy Chief of Staff to David Cameron. He has not made any public reference to the arts since joining Parliament in 2015. But he is interested in, and has expertise in, digital matters. As a Parliamentary Secretary in Theresa May's cabinet office, he was the minister for implementation of the government's technology strategy.

More relevant to libraries is yet another new

libraries minister. Caroline Dinenage is MP for Gosport, Stubbington, Lee-on-the-Solent & Hill Head. Most recently she has been Minister of State at the Department of Health & Social Care (2018–2020), Parliamentary Under Secretary at the Department for Work & Pensions (2017–18) and Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Women, Equalities & Early Years at the Department for Education (2016–17). She was a local councillor in Winchester (1998–2003).

Tracy Brabin replaces Tom Watson as Opposition spokesman – the ninth since 2010. So far she is perhaps most famous for being called to the Commons when on her way to a dinner party in an off the shoulder dress. When people made a fuss, she gave as good as she got. A promising sign?



A turn-up for the books...

Loved Emma the movie? Here's an idea – try reading the book!

CILIP has come up with a whole bunch of resources* for you (or your reading group) to get the most fun out of the critically acclaimed film and the Jane Austen original – including background info, discussion points, where to go to visit the film's locations, and an interview with the screenwriter (and award-winning novelist) Eleanor Catton.

The interview concludes with a quote from library-loving Catton: 'It's such a completely and utterly radical idea, and so out of kilter with the dominant ideologies of today – that you can go into a library and, at no cost to yourself, enlarge your life.'

* <https://www.cilip.org.uk/page/Emma>

Back to work in Bromley

Unite members went back to work at Bromley's 14 libraries in February. This ended a remarkable eight month all out strike. It had begun on 6 June 2019.

Unite regional officer Onay Kasab said: 'I want to pay tribute to every single one of our members in Bromley, who have made a magnificent stand in defence of the library service.'

'This has been one of the longest all out, indefinite strikes of recent times. It serves as an example to workers across the country preparing to fight the latest onslaught of council cuts.'

The story is a long and tangled one. It seems that Unite had felt for some years that industrial action was the only way to get through to the council.

The pattern continued in 2017. The council decided to outsource its libraries. Candidates for the contract included an organisation that planned to use volunteers to run the service, and...er, Carillion.

Unite campaigned against both options. Partly this was on a widely-accepted principle - public services should be council-run, by professionals. Partly it was against Carillion as such - and, given its dodgy track record and subsequent collapse, Unite was right.

Both candidates, for whatever reason, withdrew. That left GLL (Greenwich Leisure Limited). There was to be no ban on outsourcing.

During the consultation, Unite fought GLL with a petition, an information booklet for the public - and a week's strike. Public response to consultations, said Unite, showed 83% wanted the service to remain council-run.



GLL got the contract in July 2017. Trouble started brewing in March 2018. The issue was the 2% pay rise agreed for all local authorities. Unite wanted a different 'compromise' arrangement. GLL stuck to the national agreement.

In May 2019, the Bromley situation became embroiled in a national campaign Unite was now running against GLL as a whole.

The company's leisure division is quite separate from the libraries division, and much larger. The leisure industry commonly employs fitness instructors on a freelance basis (in effect, zero hours) and (until recently) GLL also paid its younger employees less.

Unite wanted a 6% pay rise for all GLL staff, in addition to the national pay award. But issues specific to Bromley libraries remained.

At this point, accounts vary. The root of the dispute was GLL's desire to move staff from the back office into libraries, and focused on working with library users, rather than admin.

After a long history of distrust, Unite remained suspicious. It feared cuts and redundancies.

At one time, GLL left posts vacant so they could be filled by staff being displaced from a slimmed-down back office. There were also issues around left-over council 'spot contracts' that did not allow the holders to progress upwards.

The strike held firm through summer and autumn 2019. There was a re-ballot in November to make sure the strikers wanted to continue. Most did.

Meanwhile the service was run by frontline staff that were not on strike, back office staff, librarians from GLL's 'divisional team' and casual staff. No libraries closed.

With strike pay from Unite, the dispute could have continued indefinitely. Meetings with GLL continued throughout.

GLL developed an 'optimal' structure for the service. This was eventually accepted by Unite, with the loss of 11 posts. GLL also removed a variety of tasks from library staff to free up time - including covering crossword puzzles in newspapers and magazines, and recording the names of customers who buy compost sacks and garden waste stickers.

There's agreement on pay, pay arrears, the re-structure and redundancies (ie, none). Overall, says GLL libraries director Diana Edmonds, savings have been made - but not the 25% feared by Unite.

AGREEMENT

Staff posts have reduced by 11 - but by 'natural wastage' (there is a no redundancies policy). A bank of 'seasonal' workers are still employed, as they are in many library services, to cover for sickness. Some find this suits them; some have moved on to full-time posts; some would like to, but there's no vacancy.

Both sides, then, claim some justification. The libraries saw 'considerable investment during the time the strikers were away', but there is no doubt that the service suffered, says Diana Edmonds.

Customers were not willing to walk through the pickets - and some even thought the libraries were closed. Book issues had been rising after a long decline. They went down again. Coverage was less 'deep', with activities reduced.

Now, issues are rising again - or were, until libraries closed in March. She says: 'It is wonderful to see all staff working together professionally and creatively to take libraries outside their walls.'

'They are developing live streaming services and a fantastic digital offer during this period of unprecedented crisis, when library services are needed more than ever.'

Reading Well for children

In the nick of time... The Reading Agency has launched its latest Reading Well collection. It's for children. Developed with Libraries Connected and recognised by the Royal Society for Public Health, the list aims to support their mental health and wellbeing.

Let's hope some of these titles have found their way into children's hands in time for the stresses of the national shut-down. Or, as TRA puts it, 'feelings and worries, daily life and getting through a tough time'.

The booklist is targeted at children in Key Stage 2 (aged seven-11), but includes a wide range of reading levels to support less confident readers, and to encourage children to read with their siblings and carers.

It was 'co-produced with children and families', after selection by experts in public libraries, NHS England, Mind, the Royal College of GPs and the School Library Association.

This is yet another example of the power of public libraries when they work together at national level. They can call on the very best expertise, share promotions and share costs. And, of course, take full advantage of



Tom Percival, author of Ruby's Worry, supported the launch by delivering workshops and talks in South Gloucestershire, Leicestershire, and Windsor & Maidenhead!

their unique status as trusted sources of information.

The whole Reading Well programme has been a huge success. 1.2m readers have borrowed over 2.3m expert-endorsed Reading Well books from libraries.

There are four other book lists (so far) for: mental health, young people, dementia and long term conditions.

United in Bradford

Bradford has not had a happy recent history. Some libraries were handed to volunteers as long ago as 2011. Since then it's been up and down.

2013 saw a new £1m City Library (partly funded by selling a branch building).

After that came years of threatened cuts, protests, a decent refurb here and a closure there. In 2014 the mobile service went.

In 2015 began a long process of trying to turn over 19 out of 30 libraries to volunteers – with varying success, to say the least.

Then things got really bad. 2019–20 saw a cut of £950,000. A further cut of £1,050,000 was proposed for libraries and museums in 2020–21. This was a two-thirds cut over the two years.

At the same time, the council was bidding to be a future City of Culture. It didn't find this odd.

By September 2019 Unite members had voted 77% to strike and 94% for non-strike industrial action, to defend the service.

Unite regional officer Mark Martin said: 'We have had great and heart-warming support from the public. We are confident that this will continue during the forthcoming strikes.

'Libraries and museums are an integral part of the city's social, cultural and educational fabric. We believe they are worth fighting for.'

The strike was not continuous – one day here, three or four or five days there, at different sites, with demonstrations. Talks went on into

November. Unite suggested pausing the strikes while its own alternative plan was discussed. The council said no.

A public consultation closed on 20 December. There were over 3,000 responses.* Proposals included altered opening hours, using more volunteers and technology, service reductions and relocations.

To its credit, the council published a needs assessment and a profile of each library – with its visitor numbers, borrowing figures and the cost to the taxpayer of each visit (between £1.85 and £10.11!).

It said: 'Libraries play an important role in improving outcomes related to learning, civic pride, community cohesion, tourism, health and wellbeing and economic development.

'Bradford Council has made sure that its library network has remained intact, even when its budget has been cut significantly.

'But... it has to balance its ambitions with the need to reduce its budget and deliver savings because of government cuts.'

Mark Martin said: 'It is clear that public opinion is the key to resolving this.

'The public is strongly backing our campaign – we receive completed petition sheets every day and more than 100 residents have sent letters to their local councillors calling for the council to get back round the table and to stop the cuts.

'Their fantastic support has really buoyed up

our members. People have stopped to talk to the pickets and brought them warm drinks for free.'

The council held workshops with the public and – gasp! – library staff. It seems that here began the germ of some sensible new ideas.

By late December, the council was considering 'a change of approach... re-assessing our budget considerations'.

'There is,' it delicately added, 'a growing recognition of the significant and positive impact that libraries have on wider priorities.

'In recognition of the wider impact libraries have, in particular in improving health outcomes, tackling poverty, addressing social isolation, assisting people back into employment, and helping with school readiness, the council is exploring wider funding opportunities.'

By January 2020 it was pledging £700,000 every year for libraries from its health and wellbeing budget, and looking for more.

Now local people were getting into real dialogue with a rather wiser council. For instance, a new Friends of Keighley Library was formed – and immediately started talks on how to 'future-proof' the library. Further public consultation took place throughout February.

Sadly, that social role is now partly mothballed. But the new model looks set to get public and staff approval.

* <https://www.bradford.gov.uk/media/5697/librariesengagementfeedback.pdf>



2020 VISION



Ian Anstice picks some trends from 2019 that look likely to persist in 2020 – for good or ill ...

This does not pretend to be comprehensive, and will doubtless miss out on many important trends – if I included everything, it would be too long and no-one would read it. And of course it represents a personal view.

The big news is undoubtedly the re-election of the Conservatives for another five years. Despite a small amount extra being promised to library services before the election - basically a bribe – the deep cuts to services since the party started its current run in power in 2010 more than make up for it.

AUSTERITY

Although austerity had calmed down in the last couple of years (although it never went away), the prospect of Prime Minister Johnson until 2025, and the impending disaster of Brexit, means libraries can only expect a continuation of the bad times.

These cuts are the primary factor for a deep reduction in library usage over the past decade. They probably would have declined anyway, a bit. But the example of other countries suggests that the hit would have been nowhere near as bad if budgets had not been cut by 30% (without even taking inflation into account). That's the major bad news.

The good news is the expansion in the number of library services going fines-free in the UK.

Eight more services decided to stop punishing users for returning books late in 2019, with a notable concentration in the north-west, more than doubling the number in the country.

Few librarians still see charging everyone regardless of their ability to pay as a progressive step. As more services go fines free, there will be more evidence and more pressure to follow suit. Fingers crossed.

Librarians' association CILIP has upped its game by launching major political campaigns with school libraries and the US-inspired Libraries Deliver [see Campaigner no 98, p.7].

Its work on ethics has been notably prominent. This is a good thing, as ethics have tended to come last in local library services in practical terms. Few cash-strapped services, when push comes to shove, say 'no' to commercial funding – even from such dubious concerns as Amazon and Google.

This extends to the very highest levels, with a senior delegation of library chiefs

and others choosing this year to visit China – an unethical place for all sorts of well-known reasons and a leader in pollution – to boost links.



Environmental issues hit the global headlines as never before in 2019.

But public library services have conspicuously failed to market themselves as one of the greenest services out there. Mind you, this is not surprising as public library services have failed to market themselves in any way whatsoever, for the

170th year running.

ACE (Arts Council England) has been moving away from menacing libraries with far too many subsidised theatre shows and has instead become increasingly keen to promote, gosh, books and the other services that libraries provide. Recent pronouncements suggest that this trend will improve in the next few years. That is to be welcomed.

PROGRESS

Libraries Connected, the revamped Society of Chief Librarians, is starting to make its presence felt. This has not been fast enough for me. I want national promotional campaigns and the prospect of a realistic single digital presence (a national libraries website is not asking much) before 2030. Neither of these appear likely. But slow progress is being made and there is reason, as with CILIP and ACE, to hope.

The same cannot be said for CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountability). This continues to provide lacklustre and late



Trending up... Greta Thunberg in 2018 and 2019

information on the sector at sky-high prices, even though it gets its data for free [see Campaigner no 97, pp.7-8].

The organisation has come out clearly against any open data or co-operative approach because, well, it can't make any money out of it. It is in clear need of a good kicking. However, local or national library services need to come up with a viable alternative – not a certainty in a sector which often seems as unified as a bag of screaming cats. Until they do, CIPFA will continue doing the job terribly and charging through the nose for doing so.

UNHAPPINESS

Locally, a few library services are doing particularly badly. The most spectacular has been the proposed library cuts in Essex [see Campaigners nos 97 and 98]. There has been a very strong grass-roots campaign against the reductions, and some quite impressive gaffes by the council handling it.

The council appears to have been caught wrong-footed by the strength of feeling, and many of the councillors seem out of touch with libraries. Its moderated plan is being closely analysed and argued over.

There have been two notable library strikes. One, in Bromley, against GLL (Greenwich Leisure Ltd), is over a number of different things. It mainly boiled down to the union (Unite) being entirely against the library service being run by an outside body and unhappiness with how GLL is doing things.

In Bradford, the reason for the unhappiness is more clear-cut. It is simply about huge cuts to the library service, while the council hypocritically and simultaneously is bidding to become a city of culture.

There are many more examples of cuts to library services and bad management, but the one that sticks in my mind the most is Derbyshire. This has banned telephone renewals despite having staff, computers and, well, telephones. This

'digital by default' strategy is the exact opposite of putting the customer first. Hopefully it will not be the start of a trend.



Then everything changed...

Seven days in March 2020 will likely remain in everyone's memory for life. It started with chief librarians – and frontline staff – arguing vociferously for councils to shut down library services. I was impressed with all the library folk I was in contact with, from Libraries Connected who stepped up to the plate*, to chief librarians who fought hard with councillors and worked hard to manage the crisis and, above all, the library workers in the front line who had to open up despite the risks.

Boris Johnson finally went on TV and officially closed the sector for the duration. Whoa.

Then everyone had to get used to the new normal. This included basic precautions not previously seen outside of zombie movies.

Those with laptops and jobs they could do at home did so, others did what was necessary at the workplace and then went home.

Then came the concept of 'furlough' where government give 80% of salary, the idea of the 'shielded' who will have to stay indoors indefinitely and then the need to redeploy staff to other services, prominent amongst them Registrars.

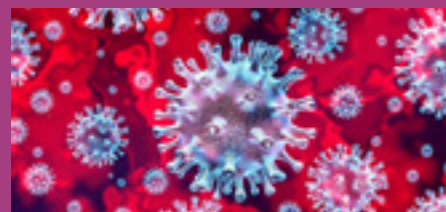
It's no surprise people were feeling a bit shell-shocked. Several librarians, all of them senior, have confided in me that they've never worked so hard before in their lives.

Some point out that there were no plans for this, or case studies, and a bunch has been made up on the fly. It turns out that contingency/scenario planning has not been a strength of government at any level, despite repeated near-miss epidemics in the past. Oh well.

So what will the future bring?

In terms of keeping the goodwill of staff, I think the key will be fairness. Walkouts happened in at least one service, with more on the cards if things hadn't changed so much, so soon. I can see other such pitfalls for the future. The challenge of management will be to be clear and open with staff, everywhere.

Ian Anstice continues to monitor the news – and libraries' lockdown innovations – on his website www.publiclibrariesnews.com. He also has a growing list of interesting things to do online!



Public libraries will become entirely digital for quite some time. A whole ton of money is going to be spent on e-books and other distance resources that would not have been bought before. Printed books will not be bought in normal quantities for a while.

Library staff are taking a crash-course in video rhyme-times, Zoom and conferencing. These developments alone will revolutionise the service.

Also, nationally, Libraries Connected has discovered it can be an independent voice, which can only be good. And if the Single Digital Presence for libraries, or whatever a national libraries website will be called, doesn't get off the ground this year then it never will.

And when will libraries reopen? Well, I'm guessing not until coronavirus is wiped out. Keeping books quarantined for 72 hours after being touched isn't going to fly (unless we go full closed-access of course – now there's a thought). And it's hard to see people, especially children, keeping two metres apart.

So – not for a few months at least. By that time, society itself may be changed.

This will be a marathon, not a sprint. The good news is that the sector has shot out from the starting blocks far faster than could reasonably be expected. I look forward to reporting more in the future.

* Libraries Connected wrote a strong letter to government urging an official order to close libraries, in the absence of any lead from the DCMS.



Greenwich Home Delivery staff have chosen to maintain a 'no-contact' service for their very vulnerable clients. Respect!

N
THE NOVELS
THAT SHAPED
OUR WORLD

Public partners

We're pretty cynical about 'partnerships', the much-touted way that libraries are now expected to make up the funds they should be getting as a public service. But if the partnership is with another public service, that's another matter...

Library advocates are constantly pointing out that public libraries are a creative, low-cost way to support government priorities at national level – and vastly expand their effects.

So it is with the BBC's amazing year-long 'celebration of novels' this year. It's catchily titled The Novels That Shaped Our World Festival.

Collaborating with libraries and reading groups – via a whole bunch of library-related organisations – is bringing 100 chosen novels right into people's lives.

It began late last year, to mark the publication of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* in 1719. This was, says the BBC, 'a landmark moment 300 years ago thought to herald the birth of the English language novel'.

The ultimate aim is to 'promote the joy of reading, particularly to new and diverse audiences'.

The official launch was last November at the British Library. Simultaneously the event was streamed into libraries that belong to the BL's Living Knowledge Network.

This innovative scheme (<https://www.bl.uk/living-knowledge-network>) links the BL, the National Libraries of Scotland and Wales and 22

public library services, from Belfast to Wakefield, to share performances and exhibitions.

By now we should have been in the midst of a programme of events in libraries, run by Libraries Connected, CILIP, the Scottish Library & Information Council, The Reading Agency and the Publishers Association. They included workshops, walking tours, film screenings and live performances. Special information packs have been sent to reading groups.

Special projects run by 39 local services aimed to take the message much further – using multiple media, collaborating with artists and 'local partners', and often focusing on vulnerable people who may not be reading enthusiasts.

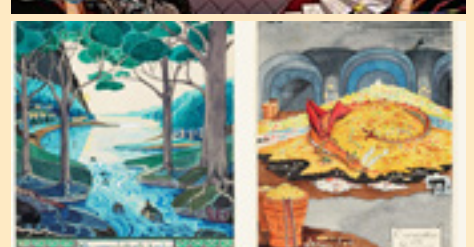
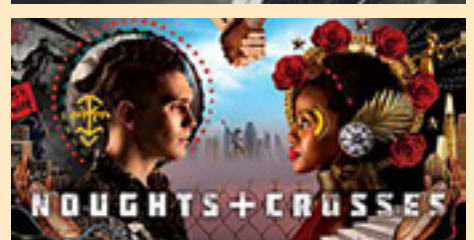
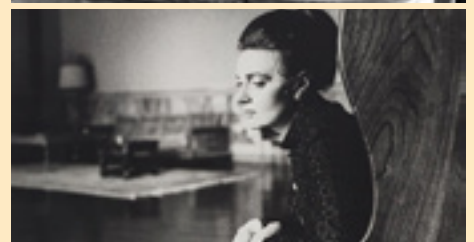
This part of the project is led by Libraries Connected. It is funded by £253,000 from ACE (Arts Council England)'s National Lottery Project Grants programme, with support from BBC Arts.

In addition, 'digital resources' for reading groups and libraries are being created by The Reading Agency and BBC Arts. And digital training for library staff will, everyone hopes, 'leave a legacy of digital resources, skills and new partnerships for libraries'.

The whole thing is underpinned by the BBC itself. There are programmes on national radio and TV, and local radio. The range on offer has been (and still is) fantastic, with famous people talking about their favourite books, documentaries about authors, and many readings and dramatisations.

The centrepiece of the season is a three-part BBC Two series, *The Novels That Shaped Our World*. Find on iPlayer. The series examines the novel from three perspectives: Empire and slavery (*Robinson Crusoe* to *Noughts and Crosses*), women's voices (*Pamela* to *The Handmaid's Tale*) and class (*Dickens* to *Aravind Adija*). It argues that the novel has always been an agent of social change, spearheading shifts in attitudes.

The year will close, we hope, with a special celebration in October – National Libraries Week 2020, naturally. Then there's a national conference.



To cap it all, a team from Wolverhampton University is analysing how well people engaged with the project. Computational linguists and English literature scholars are looking at the public's reading preferences and judgement of literary quality.

With the BBC, the team will investigate how age, gender, ethnicity and place shape readers' judgement of the 100 novels. They will also consider the implications shaping an 'inclusive' 21st century canon.

Apart from all the broadcasts and activities, there is a very enjoyable section of the BBC Arts website*. It points you to some of the goodies available on iPlayer and BBC Sounds, but its main virtue is a rather difficult to penetrate rabbit warren of features based around the 100 novels list – loosely. Anything from 'publishing design clichés' to spectacular illustrations from Tolkien and Pratchett books, interviews with writers, quizzes and questions for reading groups... and hooks to get you into taking part in the research...

* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/arts-books>

May: **Politics, Power & Protest**

- A Thousand Splendid Suns – Khaled Hosseini
- Brave New World – Aldous Huxley
- Home Fire – Kamila Shamsie
- Lord Of The Flies – William Golding
- Noughts & Crosses – Malorie Blackman
- Strumpet City – James Plunkett
- The Color Purple – Alice Walker
- To Kill A Mockingbird – Harper Lee
- V For Vendetta – Alan Moore
- Unless – Carol Shields

June: **Class & Society**

- A House For Mr Biswas – V.S. Naipaul
- Cannery Row – John Steinbeck
- Disgrace – J.M. Coetzee
- Our Mutual Friend – Charles Dickens
- Poor Cow – Nell Dunn
- Saturday Night And Sunday Morning – Alan Sillitoe
- The Lonely Passion Of Judith Hearne – Brian Moore
- The Prime Of Miss Jean Brodie – Muriel Spark
- The Remains Of The Day – Kazuo Ishiguro
- Wide Sargasso Sea – Jean Rhys

July: **Coming of Age**

- Emily Of New Moon – L.M. Montgomery
- Golden Child – Claire Adam
- Oryx And Crake – Margaret Atwood
- So Long, See You Tomorrow – William Maxwell
- Swami And Friends – R.K. Narayan
- The Country Girls – Edna O'Brien
- The Harry Potter Series – J.K. Rowling
- The Outsiders – S.E. Hinton
- The Secret Diary Of Adrian Mole, Aged 13¾ – Sue Townsend
- The Twilight Saga – Stephanie Meyer

August: **Family & Friendship**

- A Suitable Boy – Vikram Seth
- Ballet Shoes – Noel Streatfeild
- Cloudstreet – Tim Winton
- Cold Comfort Farm – Stella Gibbons
- I Capture The Castle – Dodie Smith
- Middlemarch – George Eliot
- Tales Of The City – Armistead Maupin
- The Shipping News – E. Annie Proulx
- The Tenant Of Wildfell Hall – Anne Brontë
- The Witches – Roald Dahl

September: **Conflict & Crime**

- American Tabloid – James Ellroy
- American War – Omar El Akkad
- Ice Candy Man – Bapsi Sidhwa
- Rebecca – Daphne du Maurier
- Regeneration – Pat Barker
- The Children Of Men – P.D. James
- The Hound Of The Baskervilles – Arthur Conan Doyle
- The Reluctant Fundamentalist – Mohsin Hamid
- The Talented Mr Ripley – Patricia Highsmith
- The Quiet American – Graham Greene

October: **Rule Breakers**

- A Confederacy Of Dunces – John Kennedy Toole
- Bartleby, The Scrivener – Herman Melville
- Habibi – Craig Thompson
- How To Be Both – Ali Smith
- Orlando – Virginia Woolf
- Nights At The Circus – Angela Carter
- Nineteen Eighty-Four – George Orwell
- Psmith, Journalist – P.G. Wodehouse
- The Moor's Last Sigh – Salman Rushdie
- Zami: A New Spelling Of My Name – Audre Lorde



Northumberland: Adventures in Libraryland

Three rural schools went on an adventure at their local library, with librarians offering tasters from a box of exciting adventure novels, both classic and contemporary. Later they created their own adventure themed character puppets at workshops with Life and Limb Puppets, a Newcastle based puppet company.

Dorset Libraries: Memory pots

Community artist Debbie Clarke worked to engage older people, including people with early stage dementia and their carers. They created literary themed pinch pots, which were fired in a kiln before returning to Blandford Library to create a community art installation. Workshops included outreach at a local day centre, a session at a local care home and a library session.

The pots then toured the town, before being returned to their creators.

Newham Library, London: Animating experiences

A series of workshops for refugee and migrant families took the theme Coming of Age. The aim is to improve accessibility and awareness of what libraries offer, and enable families to share their experiences. After discussions with campaigning author Onjali Q. Rauf, they had workshops with Salmagundi Films and Red Door Studios. The animations and art work created in these workshops was shared with friends, families and the wider community in a celebratory art event and screening.



Novel ideas!

Here are some of the highly imaginative activities planned by libraries to bring alive to local people the BBC's programmes. Some of these events happened. Others were killed by the lockdown. So let's just imagine they all took place...



**Harlow Library, Herts:
Re-imagining the story**

Harlow is one of the most deprived areas in the UK. Young adults (aged 14+) had the chance to rework parts of a novel in sound and visual form. They created soundscapes of novels led by local artists Tom Armstrong, a comic artist, and Chris Adam, a sound artist.

There were four workshops: two on sound and two on visual. These were part of the annual Essex Book Festival, which this year focused on science and creativity.



**Cambridgeshire Libraries:
Creating digital characters**

A virtual reality workshop in a local pub introduced VR technology and techniques for creating virtual props from popular novels. It was aimed at 19–29-year-olds enrolled on basic skills courses and was run in partnership with BBC Radio Cambridgeshire and a range of local partners.



Newcastle Library and Drake Hall Prison Library, Staffordshire: Celebrate with us, Dr. Dolittle

The New Vic Theatre helped to create an immersive story telling experience for families, based on Dr. Dolittle. The events were aimed at nursery and primary school aged children. Local schools were invited to participate, while the activity in the prison took place on their family day.

Staffordshire People's Choice encouraged people to vote for one of the 100 BBC novels that has had an impact on them.

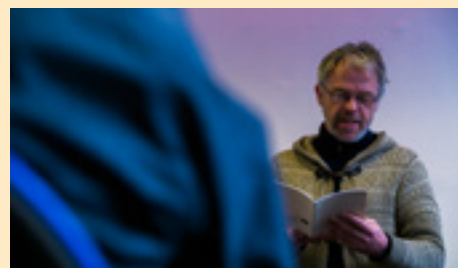


Plymouth Libraries: Zine workshop

At an all-day workshop with the Plymouth Zine Library, young people produced a zine to celebrate books, reading and the BBC's campaign. They were encouraged to respond creatively through writing, illustration and art.

The DIY culture of zines (short magazines or fanzines) encourages experimentation, participation and collaboration, and is an ideal way to reach an audience that may not be typical readers or library users.

The workshop was aimed at 15–24-year olds in areas of high deprivation and low library use.



**Leicestershire Libraries:
Treasure Island and more!**

Working with HMP Gartree, Market Harborough Library & Museum organised author visits to the prison and activities around Treasure Island. The library also worked with Leicestershire Shared Reading, to run a shared reading group with prisoners. The aims were to set up a prisoner led reading group, mentor prison library orderlies to become Reading Friends, promote reading via the prison media, TV and a local magazine, and create writing groups on novels identified.



**Liverpool Libraries:
Robinson Crusoe celebration**

Robinson Crusoe themed events were run with BBC Radio Merseyside, local artists and digital agencies. They were in community libraries in very deprived areas and minority ethnic and refugee communities. Topics included digital making with digitised watercolours, Sonic Pi sessions to create sound effects, 3D animation, laser cut your own Man Friday, speed dating books, a Desert Island Day on the radio and a multi cultural arts performance at Liverpool Central Library.

ACE: libraries' future

ACE (Arts Council England) took on national responsibility for libraries in 2011. Now it has finalised its strategy* for the next 10 years. What's in it for libraries?

* <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/letscreate>

As we have reported over our past few issues (especially Campaigner no 97), ACE has learned quite a lot about libraries since 2011.

Crucially, it has realised that public libraries know how to attract all kinds of people. They do so on a scale that other arts-related provision cannot really match.

Reaching out to people, encouraging their own creativity, is central to the new strategy. It has ruffled a few feathers in the corners of the arts world. But ACE passionately believes it.

KILLERQUOTE

So here's the killer libraries quote from the final version: 'We believe that England's network of public libraries provides a vital resource for the development of creativity and the promotion of culture across this country.'

'They are the country's most widespread and well-used cultural spaces, sitting at the heart of communities and often providing the first point of access to cultural activity.'

'They help to build stronger, happier communities, support social prescribing, develop readers and promote digital literacy.'

'They will be central to our delivery of this strategy, and over the next 10 years we will increase our investment in them.'

Savour that last paragraph. It is the only explicit promise of extra funds in the whole document – to anybody.

VISION

What it will mean in practice we don't know. The details are being worked out now.

Meanwhile, the strategy remains a statement of principles, not an action plan.

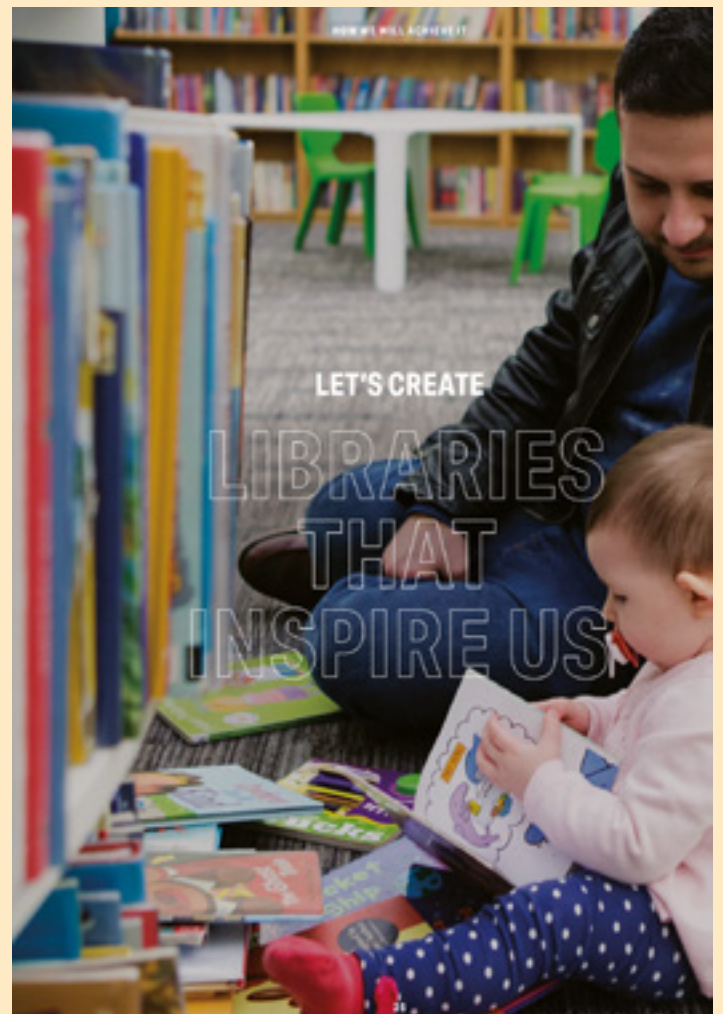
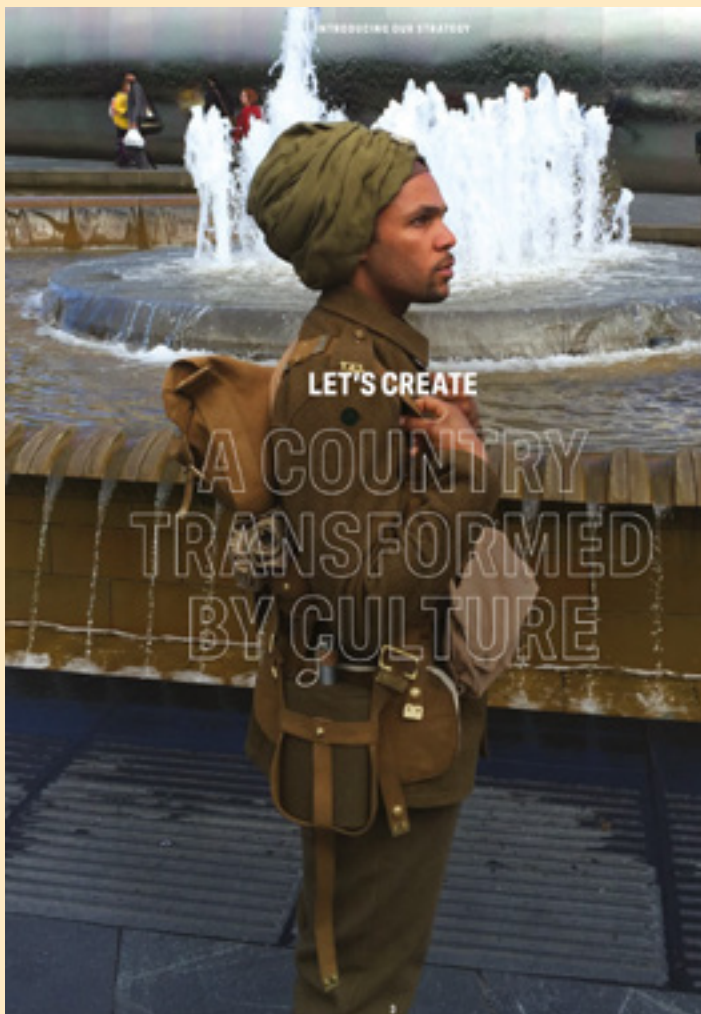
The introduction by ACE chair Nicholas Serota spells it out. He refers to the Somme commemoration in 2016.

'Hundreds of volunteers, of all ages and from all backgrounds, trained in secret before taking to the streets in the uniforms of 100 years ago, each representing one of the soldiers who died on the first day of the Battle of the Somme.'

'Thousands of people came upon the work in person; millions more saw it shared across the news and on social media.'

'Strangers struck up conversations, children turned to question grown-ups, passers-by were moved to tears. "Most memorials, you have to go to," said [co-organiser] Jeremy Deller. "This memorial will come to you."

'The boldness of the vision, and its trajectory from public spaces onto social media; the



collective creativity of all the participants; the partnerships, local and national, that brought the piece to life; and perhaps most important of all, the dissolving of barriers between artists and the audiences with whom they interact: these are the elements that our new strategy supports.

‘It will value the creative potential in each of us, provide communities in every corner of the country with more opportunities to enjoy culture, and celebrate greatness of every kind.

‘It marks a significant change, but an evolutionary one: honouring and building upon the successes of the last decade while confronting the challenges and embracing the exciting possibilities of the next.

‘These challenges – inequality of wealth and of opportunity, social isolation and mental ill-health, and above all of these, the accelerating climate emergency – are many...’

INVESTMENT

Below are some more quotes, from different pages of the strategy:

‘Recognition of the part that creativity and culture can play in supporting local economies and talent, health and wellbeing, and children and young people, has flourished over recent years, strengthening our partnerships with local

and national government, opening up new avenues for all who work in museums, libraries and arts organisations, and improving the lives of people everywhere.

‘Understanding of the role of culture in building and sustaining communities has come into clear focus and will sit at the heart of our work over the decade to come.

‘We’re beginning the new decade with a far clearer understanding of the role culture can play.

‘By 2030, we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish, and where every one of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences.

‘We believe in the inherent value of creativity and culture: in their power to delight and move us, and in their capacity to help us make sense of the world.

‘But we also know that investment in creativity and culture can deliver broad social benefits, through the skills they offer to young people and workers, the economic growth they generate, and the part they play in building healthy, close-knit communities.

‘Over the next 10 years, we will work to

improve the way we make the case for the social and economic value of investing public money in culture.

‘Libraries reach audiences from all backgrounds and of all ages, and provide meeting places, maker spaces, and focal points for creative and cultural activity within local communities, in conjunction with their delivery of four national Universal Offers (see pages 18–19).

‘Over a year-long consultation, two clear, unifying messages emerged. On the one hand, people talked about the deep joys and broad dividends that creativity and culture bring – especially for children and young people.

‘But on the other, we heard again and again that while talent in this country is everywhere, the opportunities to use it are not.’

PRESSURE

All this is the natural territory of public libraries. They are surely raring to go.

The strategy also frankly acknowledges that: ‘In many places, the libraries and community spaces that play a vital role... are under pressure.’

Now we need know what ACE can do to ease that pressure. So that libraries can play their full part in the next 10 years.

Funding fundamentals

Libraries have a vital job to do. Libraries are under-funded. What now?

There is no ring-fenced pot of ACE money for libraries. Once there was, under the National Lottery Grants for the Arts fund.

But under the newer system of National Lottery Project Grants, libraries now have to compete on an equal footing with other cultural organisations.

ACE intends to draw up formal ‘Delivery Plans’ for specific periods of time. These will be monitored and reported on regularly.

In the first is due in early summer. It will ‘enable’ libraries to apply for grants to deliver work based on the four library Universal Offers (Health & Wellbeing, Information & Digital, Culture & Creativity, Reading). See pages 18–19.

‘We hope,’ says Sue Williamson, ACE’s Director of Libraries, ‘that this will support libraries to develop their practice as we support other cultural organisations.

‘The emphasis on creative people and creativity in the community is one which enables libraries to be at the heart of the strategy.’

TLC finds this disappointing.

We see libraries as the very core of nationwide culture provision (see Campaigner no 97, pp.29–32).

So we want to see them built into a coherent ‘offer’ that is available everywhere at a basic level – and can be enhanced by individual services where possible.

This aim is not best served by just making funds available that have to be bid for by individual services with individual projects.

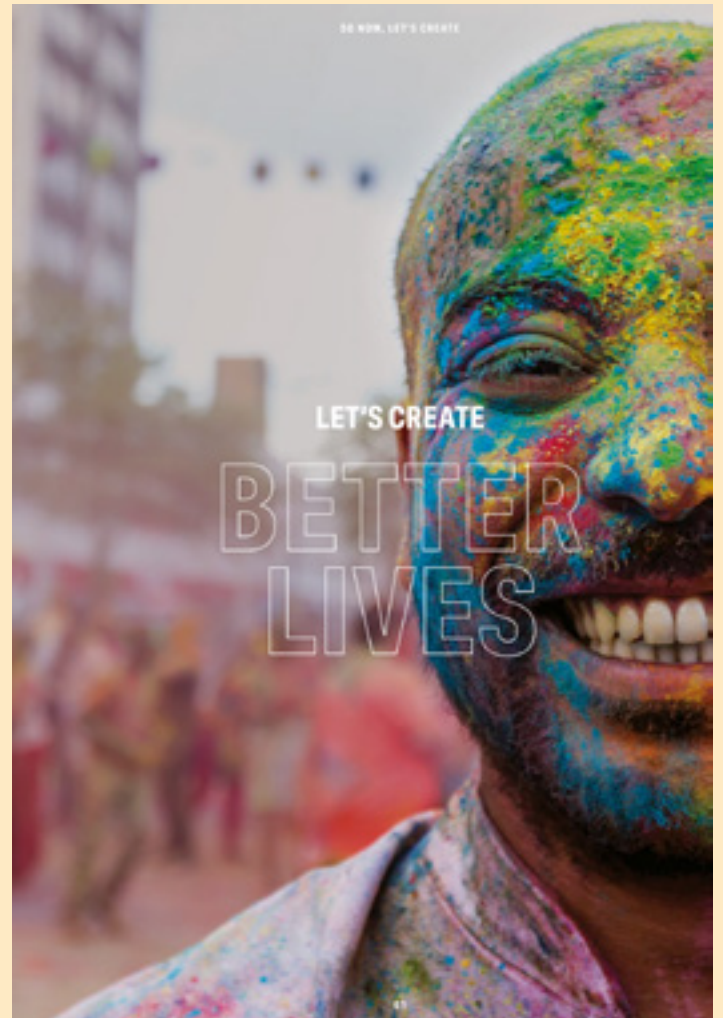
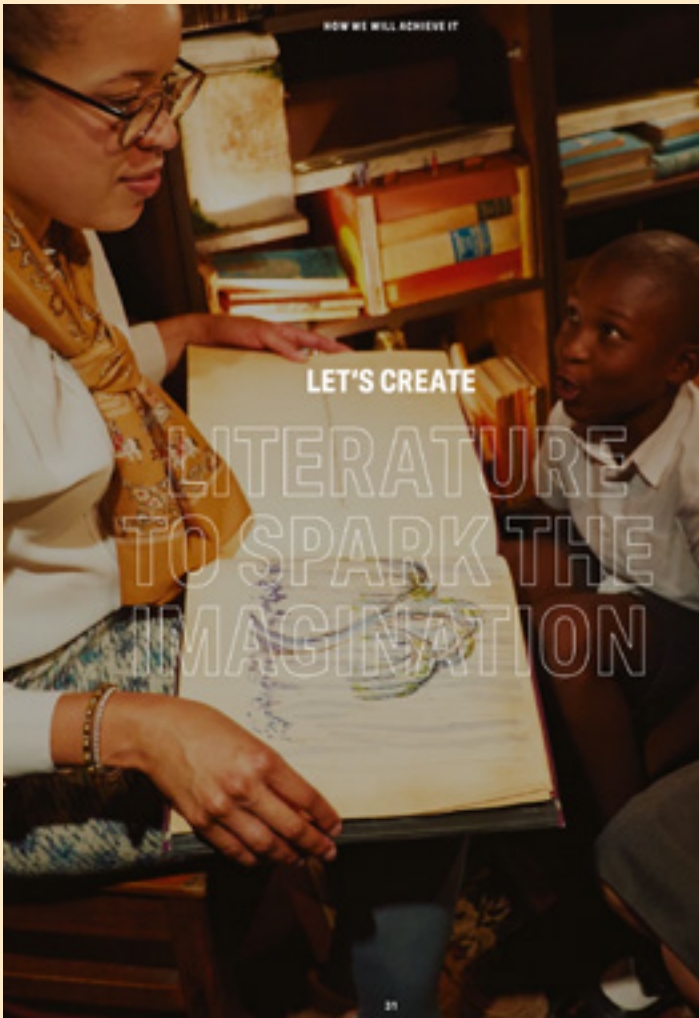
We need to get away from a pattern of different services applying for odd grants, many aimed at putting random culture events into library venues, most forced to be somehow ‘innovative’.

We would like to see joint work to create a national infrastructure – including national publicity, and a shared database sorting out the mass of resources available from different organisations.

On top of that, we’d like to see funds for all library services, to be spent against an agreed checklist of required ‘cultural’ provision.

This would enable the poorer services to catch up – while not penalising the better services, which could use the funds to develop further.

After all, this approach worked for the People’s Network in 2000. Grants to all library authorities created 100% internet access at a stroke.



Meeting of minds?

TLC went to see Darren Henley, ACE's Chief Executive, and Sue Williamson, ACE's Director of Libraries. This is what we agreed between us.

TLC is fully supportive of ACE's new 10-year strategy. We note that it states (we quote):

(i) Public libraries are a vital resource for the development of creativity and the promotion of culture... [and] central to the delivery of this strategy.

(ii) Provision must be locally accessible, but part of a national cultural ecology.

(iii) Libraries reach people from all backgrounds and of all ages.

(iv) We want to see the development of a more informed and effective data culture... the sector has to fully utilise the power of data.

The strategy also notes:

In many places, the libraries and community spaces that play such a vital role... are under pressure.

We all agreed that public libraries are key providers of culture as defined in the new ACE

strategy. Much of this is accomplished via their basic offer of:

(i) easy access to resources in multiple media;

(ii) work in developing reading and running events;

(iii) a further role as the natural source of information on other local cultural provision (the need for this was highlighted in ACE's consultations)

Most library services already offer much, and can readily develop further with the right support.

We all agreed that it is essential to stress the good news about libraries:

(i) the contribution they already make to national & local priorities;

(ii) the potential for further development.

TLC urges more collaboration between the library sector and users and Friends groups:

(i) at national level, to add a necessary consumer perspective to vision and planning;

(ii) at local level, where Friends can form an invaluable bridge to the local community (providing contacts, feedback, publicising existing services, researching unmet needs, organising cultural activities).

TLC believes that the way forward is a more coherent, nationally co-ordinated approach.

It was good to hear that the Single Digital Presence project [to create a single web presence for all public libraries] is more advanced than we had thought.

A similar degree of co-ordination is already embodied in:

(i) the development work for LC (Libraries Connected)'s Universal Offer for culture/creativity, and

(ii) LC/CILIP's current work to create a libraries

blueprint (which aims at ‘a national, co-ordinated programme of support for libraries’, to include a monitored accreditation framework, ‘nationally organised and funded infrastructure and creative programmes’, regional support, and nationally co-ordinated workforce development.

LC and CILIP say they ‘believe that each of the above elements will only be successful as part of a coherent programme’.

Of the planned regional support programme, they say:

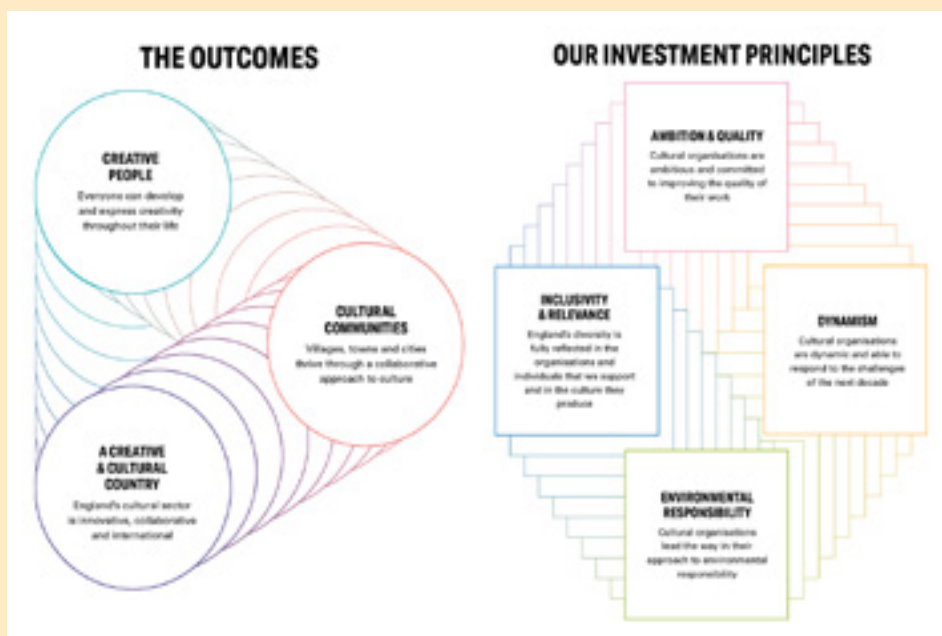
‘The current library sector landscape is complex, and library managers find it difficult to navigate...

‘[They] can’t easily access the type of expert support they need when they are under pressure or trying to think outside the box... [they need] facilitation of collaboration and innovation.

‘The myriad toolkits, case studies and collaborative tools also needs to be streamlined through one portal as much as possible.’

TLC suggests more of this kind of approach, less use of disparate grant funds requiring services to develop individual projects and bids.

(You said you would like to see more successful applications from library services and a better understanding across all library services of the ways in which ACE could support them.)



We envisage:

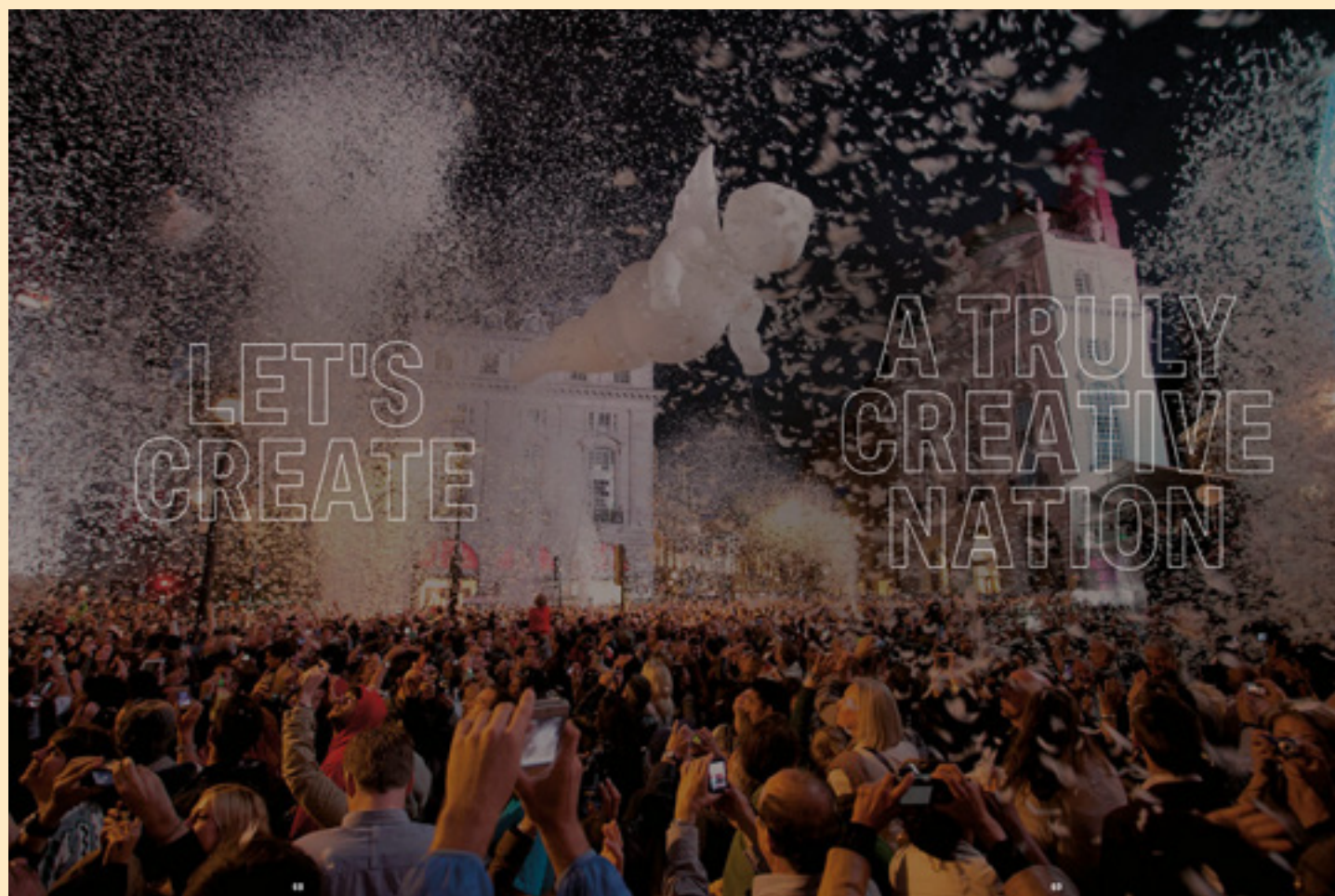
(i) a body of infrastructure useful to all (as defined above, with the addition of a national publicity campaign and further databases to streamline access to useful resources and provide updates on national projects, anniversaries etc)

(ii) grants to library services based on a nationally-agreed checklist of desired provision, with basic and stretch targets (already sketched out in the Universal Offers work).

Starting with comprehensive early years work, crafts etc, moving on to makerspaces, music, specialist arts posts etc.

Mapping current provision, and identifying gaps and potential growth points, would be a valuable exercise in itself.

It would also contribute to the maximisation of libraries’ role in underpinning the whole culture sector.



In 2013 the SCL (Society of Chief Librarians) launched its Universal Offer project. The idea was simple, and welcome.

Public libraries would clearly set out what they offer in various areas – reading, digital and so on – and list the things libraries can do for each one.

Individual services would sign up to each Offer. They would be a practical tool for service planners, helping them to spot strengths and weaknesses.

They would also act as a simple statement to publicise libraries' value, and explain what they do to decision-makers, and to potential 'partners'.

Over the years, more Offers were added. Finally there were six – plus two overall offers for children and for people with sight problems. They were useful – but getting a little unwieldy.

The SCL expanded, and re-branded as Libraries Connected. It decided to review the Offers...

Now they have been tidied into just four – still with the extra children's and sight loss elements. Easier to digest and use.

Now they are fundamental to Arts Council England's future plans for libraries.

Here they are – with a calendar to show how they fit in with the year's activities.

Health and Wellbeing

Healthier, Happier, Connected

To support the health and wellbeing of local people and communities through services that inform, engage and connect.



Information and Digital

Inform, Inspire, Innovate

To ensure local communities have access to quality information and digital services, to learn new skills and to feel safe online.



Six Steps

To ensure that every library service provides a nurturing, accessible, reading and learning environment to blind and partially sighted people.



Universal Library Calendar

JANUARY

64 Million Artists January Challenge
13-19: Obesity Awareness Week
27: Holocaust Memorial Day

FEBRUARY

LGBTQ History Month
1-8: National Storytelling Week
3-9: Children's Mental Health Week
6: Time to Talk Day
11: Safer Internet Day

MARCH

Women's History Month
5: World Book Day
5-2 Apr: 200 Million Minutes
6-15: British Science Week
16-22: Shakespeare Week

JULY

Jul-Sep: Summer Reading Challenge
Health Information Week

AUGUST

9: Book Lovers Day
12: UN International Youth Day

SEPTEMBER

8: International Literacy Day
13: Roald Dahl Day
21-27: Banned Books Week

The new Universal Library Offers aim to connect communities, improve wellbeing and promote equality through learning, literacy and cultural activity.



**Libraries
Connected**

**Universal
Library Offers
Spring 2020**



Culture and Creativity

Explore, Create, Participate

To enable local communities to access and participate in a variety of quality and diverse arts and cultural experiences through local libraries.



Reading

Engage, Imagine, Discover

To build a literate and confident society by developing, delivering and promoting creative reading activities in libraries.



Children's Promise

To inspire children and young people to read for pleasure and to provide them with materials and activities to support their education and wellbeing.



APRIL

- 30 Mar-5: World Autism Awareness Week
- 2: International Children's Book Day
- 23: World Book Night

MAY

- Local and Community History Month
- 9-17: Get Creative Festival
- 18-24: Mental Health Awareness week
- 13 May: National Numeracy day
- 20-26: Dementia Action Week

JUNE

- 1-7: National Volunteer week
- Pyjamarama
- 9: Empathy Day
- 1-14: Make a Noise in Libraries Fortnight
- 15-21: Refugee Week
- 21: Make Music Day

OCTOBER

- Black History Month
- 1: National Poetry Day
- 3-4: Fun Palaces Weekend
- 5-10: Libraries Week
- Get online week
- 19-3 Nov: Family Learning Festival

NOVEMBER

- November, Men's Health Awareness Month
- Novel Writing Month
- International Games Week

DECEMBER

- 10: Human Rights Day

It's not public if we can't get in!

Last spring, the Campaigner (no 97) focused on unstaffed libraries. One story came from Barnet, where campaigners were pushing the DCMS to evaluate the damage done. Here's an update from Emily Burnham and Barbara Jacobson. There's good news and bad news...

Barnet council has been forced to evaluate the impact of unstaffed libraries.

Last spring we wrote about Barnet's unstaffed libraries and the statutory complaint Save Barnet Libraries (SBL) had submitted to the Minister for Culture.

Shortly after this, in April 2019, the Minister finally made a decision – and refused our complaint.

A POLITICAL FIX?

The decision was not a surprise, given how politically difficult it would be for a Conservative minister to challenge the impact of austerity-imposed cuts on a Conservative-led council.

But it was a disappointment. We were particularly concerned when answers to FoI requests brought to light that the DCMS had shared legal advice with Barnet council a few months before it issued its decision.

Is the minister's role to act as an impartial judge of whether a service is 'comprehensive and efficient', or to help a council to avoid the embarrassment of a statutory inquiry?

If the latter is the case, there is no transparency, and no real standard.

IGNORING IMPACT

The minister's decision largely failed to address the stark evidence we had presented that many library users (particularly young people, people with disabilities and older people) were unable to access unstaffed libraries.

It was also, apparently, irrelevant that usage figures had fallen dramatically; that the council had stopped even counting visitors at three branches; that people with disabilities and many others were blocked from library use by locked toilets, access problems and safety fears; and that schools had voiced concerns.

Nor did it matter that large, unplanned sums were being spent on security guards to replace library staff during most of the unstaffed hours. This showed that unstaffed libraries didn't really work.



At Hendon Town Hall before the council meeting to discuss the evaluation report. PHOTO: Erini Rodis

Instead, the minister concluded that the council had 'given careful thought to ensuring that its library service continues to meet the needs of the community'.

SEEDS OF VICTORY

But the minister's decision did contain a sting in the tail for Barnet council. It also contained the seeds of a victory for library campaigners. We report on it here. We believe our experience is relevant for campaigns across the country struggling with the dilemma of what to do in the face of DCMS intransigence.

The substantial evidence we collected from library users in Barnet showed that children, older people and people with disabilities were particularly harmed by unstaffed libraries.

We therefore argued that both the minister and the council had an ongoing duty to monitor

the impact of the cuts under the Equalities Acts 2010.

With the help of a motion put forward by Labour opposition councillors, the council was forced to accept this principle of a library 'review'.

When the minister refused our complaint, he relied on the council's 'intention to undertake and complete a formal and independent review of the Library Strategy during 2019'.

He took the stance that it is the council's duty to monitor impact under the Equalities Acts. He then used this position to argue that the impact of cuts on library usage is not fundamentally an issue under his 1964 Act duties. So far as we know, this position has not been tested in the courts.

The Barnet library service evaluation – who, how, what, when The council commissioned the

review (now termed an ‘evaluation’) from the consultancy company Activist. It was to focus on the impact of the cuts on the three key groups: children, older people and those with disabilities.

Obviously, the scope and independence of the council’s review were crucial issues. We focused on rallying supporters to e-mail council committee members about the impact of the cuts.

As a result of this concerted campaign, the scope of the review was extended to include the removal of library space (for largely failed ‘commercial rental’) as well as the impact of unstaffed hours.

Councillors committed explicitly that the review would take evidence from library users and schools.

In autumn 2019 Activist staff met with library staff, teachers, youth workers, the voluntary sector, and SBL (Save Barnet Libraries).

They carried out ‘mystery shopping’ visits to library branches, held focus groups and two public meetings. SBL had to push the council to publicise the residents’ survey and public meetings by displaying posters in library buildings, providing paper copies of the survey, and asking schools to help publicise them too.

The survey produced about 1,200 responses. The report, Evaluation of Libraries Transformation, was published in March 2020, with a revised Equalities Impact Assessment and SBL’s written submission as appendices.



Protesters on World Book Day refused to be deterred by snow (2018) or rain (2020). PHOTOS: SBL, Erini Rodis

FINDINGS

Most significantly for Barnet – and hopefully for library services across the country – the report’s findings fundamentally question the degree to which libraries can function without staff:

‘The reduction in staffed opening hours has gone too far ... we have found that the reductions deter many library users and are a barrier to those young people who cannot access the library on their own during SSO [Self Service Opening] hours, and have impacted on people with disabilities.’ [para 31 of Executive Summary].

The report questions the council’s equation of unstaffed libraries with ‘modernisation’:

‘We would also question the use of the phrase “21st century” to describe the borough’s libraries, as this implies a level of modernisation that is not reflected in the 2016 strategy.

‘The introduction of self-service opening, on its own, does not make libraries fit for the 21st century. Other library services have invested more in their digital service offer; the quality of PCs and software; and in creativity, culture and community collaboration.’ [para 3.16]

There is, says the report, a negative impact on many users:

‘A majority of respondents report visiting a library less often (56%) since the changes were introduced over the last three years. This is largely consistent across the board when we look at specific groups (over 65s – 55%; under 65s – 58%; disabled – 59%; not disabled – 57%; young people – 46%).’ [para 5.109]

‘A significant majority also report that the changes to the library service over the last two to



WHAT BARNET DID

In Barnet the 2016–17 cuts were particularly focused on reducing library staff (about half the workforce was made redundant in 2017) and converting space in library buildings for commercial rental.

Designated children’s, teen and computer/study rooms were mostly removed from public access.

In total 70% of staffed hours were replaced with self-service or technology enabled opening (at 10 branches), and limited volunteer hours (four branches).

Young people under 15 (and in school year 11) are prevented from independently accessing self-service hours. Toilets are closed when no staff are on site. Security guards are used far more than originally envisaged to monitor unstaffed libraries.

three years have had a negative (68%) impact on them. In particular, 75% of disabled people reported a negative impact.’ [para 5.110]

The report presented evidence from teachers who, we have found, can be reluctant to speak out because they are employed by the council.

‘There was an impact due to the financial situation affecting schools not only because they can’t afford as many books, but because SSO [self-service opening] restricts how excluded and children with additional needs can access the libraries.’ [para 6.68]

‘There was concern expressed by headteachers and youth workers that young people of 14 and 15

can no longer use the library after school hours without a parent or their permission.

‘One educationalist told us: “We close the school and homework club at 4.30 and in the past our pupils would go on to the library for revision purposes.”’ [para 5.104]

The report also highlights the impact of the loss of library space:

‘All the groups we spoke to agreed that there was not enough space in the library, particularly the inability to separate off the children’s area and the study spaces.’

These findings largely back up concerns raised by SBL and call into question the council’s statements that have repeatedly sought to underplay the negative impact of unstaffed libraries.

For example, in June 2018, addressing criticism by the borough’s own Youth Assembly, the Director of Family Services stated to the press:

‘Libraries are there, young people are using them, there is an increase in satisfaction.’

Our criticism of this PR-led approach is echoed in the report’s description of the council’s overall commitment to the library service:

‘While, as we shall see below, the library service itself has articulated how it can support the council’s wider ambitions for the borough, it is less clear that the council, at a corporate level, has embraced that vision, and made the library service an integral part of its overall strategy for service delivery.

‘The council is now in a position to change that.’ [Para 3.19]

RECOMMENDATIONS

The report contains many recommendations, some of which are important milestones for library campaigners – and a challenge to Barnet’s model:

‘To increase staffed opening hours by increasing staffing resources in the short to medium term at least until adequate numbers of volunteers can be recruited and the use of volunteers stabilised.’ [Key recommendation, page 12]

Alongside this recommendation, the report recognises the need for additional investment in the service, calling on the council to:

‘Review the extent of budget reductions, and explore the scope of additional investment in the service given the relative decline in the take-up of the service.’

As part of this, it is recommended to ‘maintain the Media Fund at its current level in real terms’.

VISITOR FIGURES

Based on the most recent data that is available from the council (2018–19 visitor figures), we calculate that the borough’s unstaffed libraries show substantial declines in visits since the cuts were implemented in 2016/17: Burnt Oak 30%; Golders Green 64%; North Finchley 61%; South Friern 47%.

Even the ‘Core Plus’ library, Finchley Central, is 18% down, despite benefiting from more staffed hours than the others and being trumpeted by the council as an example of ‘investment’.

Three unstaffed libraries do not even collect visitor data any more (East Finchley, Hendon and Chipping Barnet).

The four partnership libraries also show substantial (though varied) declines: Childs Hill 26%; East Barnet 65%; Mill Hill 49%; South Friern 47%.

Very importantly, given the government’s ongoing refusal to increase local authority spending, the report also makes clear that any further cuts would be inadvisable:

‘We should stress that it is extremely unlikely that the council could reduce its spending on libraries in order to address severe financial pressures without there being a negative impact on users.’ [para 5.124]

Some of the other recommendations are positive to some extent:

- to pilot allowing younger people aged 14 and above to use unstaffed libraries (and to remove the extra hurdle of certification of age by schools); and
- to review the policy of closing toilets during unstaffed hours.

Obviously, these points address hurdles to library use. But SBL takes the position that the best means of restoring access is to restore staffed hours.

Unsurprisingly, there are also recommendations that we do not agree with.

In some places the report aims not to be too critical (neglecting to mention, for example, that Barnet has lost 60,000 registered borrowers pre and post cuts despite population growth).

The report is supportive of the four volunteer-run ‘partnership’ libraries, ignoring concerns raised by residents and the very substantial drops in visitor numbers (up to 65%!).

The recommendations make clear that ‘staffed hours’ in all branches may include paid or unpaid staff. They call for investment in a volunteer recruitment plan.

DATA AND MONITORING MATTER

The report is highly critical of the council’s failure to collect accurate visitor data at all branches. SBL has raised this failure repeatedly and DCMS, to its shame, ignored it.

The report calls for ‘an independent review of the failure to implement new visitor count technology effectively and fund an urgent recovery plan to correct the problems’.



East Finchley library: Barnet council’s idea of a welcome. PHOTO: SBL

Without this ‘an important aspect of the performance of the library service cannot be monitored, reported and acted upon’.

The report also calls for regular monitoring by council committee members of performance data, to ‘identify the ongoing impact of the transformation programme’.

CONCLUSION

Our and others’ experience has thrown an unprecedented spotlight on the hugely inadequate role played by the DCMS.

It is obvious that DCMS is part of the problem in imposing central government cuts on councils, and it is extremely unlikely to oppose them!

The evaluation report helpfully takes the opportunity to celebrate library services and attribute drops in library usage in part to these spending cuts:

‘The slow death of libraries in the digital age has been predicted for many years, but they continue to be hugely popular, with over 204 million visits to libraries in England in 2018 ...

‘However, library usage has declined steadily over the last decade, a trend that can be attributed in part to digital materials, including e-books, but also to the impact of spending cuts resulting from government policies on public spending following the financial crash in 2008.’ [paras 2.23–24]

The findings and recommendations of this report are critical for the ongoing campaign to restore library services in Barnet. In a sense they represent a line in the sand: the council can no longer spin its PR to say that the service is meeting residents’ needs.

The evaluation exercise also has implications nationwide, because it is about the actual effects of library cuts on service users rather than just a consultation about future cuts. It shows it isn’t enough to get consulted beforehand and ignored afterwards. The result could have an effect nationwide, too, as Barnet’s controversial reliance on unstaffed libraries is called into question.

In Barnet the next stage is the council’s consideration of its response to the report. The timescale is uncertain – unfortunately, much more so now that we are facing lockdown from Covid-19. But we know that the fight will need to continue.

New limits on public participation have been introduced to gag residents at council meetings and undermine the kind of concerted action that helped to win the evaluation in the first place.

SAVE BARNET LIBRARIES



PROTEST & COUNCIL MEETING
Hendon Town Hall 6:30pm Tuesday June 11th

Send us your library stories via Facebook and
savebarnetlibraries.org

One of many posters used over the years, some home-made and some highly professional. PHOTO: SBL

But the report does draw a line – the damage that has been done by unstaffed, smaller libraries has been recorded. The recommendations are direct.

There are many predictions about what the future will bring. But certainly we know that residents and campaigners will continue to care about their libraries and the central role they play in our communities. We miss them now. We want to see them back as soon as possible! Meanwhile, we hope that you can take what is useful from our experience to support your campaigns.



Street art by Chewing Gum Man for yet another protest.

CONTACTS

To contact SBL, please email: savebarnetlibrariesnow@gmail.com

To read the evaluation report: <https://tinyurl.com/r5z3n2g>

Birmingham meets the Bard

Here's another public-public partnership. This time it's between a single public library and a university. Both in Birmingham. Find out more at <https://everythingtoeverybody.bham.ac.uk>

'Everything to Everybody' seems a wildly over-ambitious title for any project. But in fact it's a quote from a 19th-century Birmingham preacher with big ideas.

George Dawson wanted to open up the work of William Shakespeare, local(ish) boy made good, to the people. And to make Birmingham 'the most artistic town in England' and 'the best governed city in the world'. He preached a 'Civic Gospel', urging Christians to get involved in improving people's lives.

'The time has come to give everything to everybody,' said Dawson. It was the 300th anniversary of Shakespeare's birth (1864). So he co-founded Birmingham's unique Shakespeare Memorial Library. All the founders were nonconformists.

It was sited in the city's first free public library, opened in 1865, which Dawson had campaigned for. This was the first, and largest, Shakespeare collection in any public library in the world. It is still one of the UK's most important cultural



The day will come when a man will be ashamed to shut up a picture by Raphael or a statue by any great master in a private house. These gifts of genius should be like the gift of God's sunshine, open to all, for all, to be reached by all, and ultimately to be understood and enjoyed by all.

George Dawson (1821–1876)

assets. This library is now housed in the great big new Library of Birmingham.

So is a large collection of Dawson material. But the project planners freely admit that both are 'almost-forgotten'.

It's refreshing to see a library make major efforts to open up to potential users. And it's refreshing to see a local authority that understands how a library can build up civic pride and democratic inclusion.

Now comes a major £1.7 million project to 're-connect Birmingham's communities with the city's Shakespearean heritage'. It's a collaboration between Birmingham University and Birmingham City Council, with international connections. Core funding comes from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and History West Midlands.

Project Director Professor Ewan Fernie says: 'The founders... wanted to make a new, more richly inclusive kind of culture with all the citizens of the city. Now, more than 150 years later, we're going to try again.'

'The vast majority of the Memorial Library's publicly-owned treasures are unknown, their potential to excite new audiences untapped.'

'Using modern digital technologies will allow us to realise Dawson's radically democratic programme for sharing the Library. Working with Birmingham's diverse communities will breathe new life into traditional English heritage and culture.'

The project is divided into four interdependent strands:

UNLOCKING: Identifying new opportunities to make the two collections more accessible.

SHARING: Creating activities to encourage people from different backgrounds to enjoy the collections.

PHYSICAL FOCUS: Using iconic artefacts from the collections to generate interest.

DIGITAL ACCESS: Exploiting online resources to give people easy access to materials.

Community outreach will include family days, open days, workshops, community-curated exhibitions, digital exhibitions and neighbourhood productions.



Adrian Lester (left), William Shakespeare and Ewan Fernie.

The project will also enable volunteers to gain new skills as they help to digitise the collections, and work with community groups and partners to organise events.

Birmingham-born actor Adrian Lester is the project's Patron. He says:

'There are so many brilliant, talented, curious people in Birmingham, who will get the chance to explore the work of our greatest writer like no other generation before them. Creating access changes everything.'

'This project will help revive the legacy of the city's great people's Shakespeare Library,



connecting it to the forgotten history of Birmingham as a pioneering cultural centre. It will seek to engage and involve ordinary people from all of Birmingham's diverse communities.'

The programme will be delivered via more than 40 collaborations with established and grassroots cultural organisations, including the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Birmingham Rep, Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, Desiblitiz, Sense Arts for people with complex disabilities, the Canal & River Trust, the Muath Centre, the Jewellery Quarter Research Trust and the Polish Millennium House.

It will culminate in a festival to complement the Commonwealth Games in the city in 2022.



The Birmingham Shakespeare Memorial Library

Birmingham's Shakespeare Library is owned by Birmingham City Council. It has been built up through purchase and donation by individuals and organisations over 150 years.

It contains the only copy of Shakespeare's 1623 First Folio to be bought for a public library. It was duly stamped as the property of Birmingham Free Libraries. The collection also holds the second folio, both editions of the third and fourth folios, and about 70 further rare and early editions.

There's a near-complete set of 18th and 19th century English language editions, a large German collection and books in 93 languages from Abkhazian to Zulu – plus an 1880s complete edition in Braille.

In all, the library contains more than 40,000 volumes, 17,000 production photographs, 2,000 music scores, hundreds of British and international production posters, 15,000 performance programmes, and 10,000 playbills.

Plus large collections of illustrations, scrapbooks, annotated scripts, prompt books, TV and radio adaptations, and newspaper cuttings, as well as unique material on the greatest Shakespeareans, from Ellen Terry to Laurence Olivier.

Works of art include Salvador Dalí's Macbeth illustrations, Shakespeare-related artworks by Picasso and Kokoschka, and costume designs by Jean Cocteau.

Download an illustrated history at: <https://everythingtoeverybody.bham.ac.uk/resources>

Public partners – pint-sized

For home-schoolers and... well, anyone who likes children's books –there's a massive new resource* on the British Library website

* <https://www.bl.uk/childrens-books>

Discovering Children's Books is another example of a brilliant partnership between public bodies. In this case, that's (deep breath): Seven Stories (the National Centre for Children's Books), the Bodleian Library at Oxford University, the V & A and Newcastle University.

Other material came from contributors ranging from the Royal Collection Trust and the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education, to the Roald Dahl Story Museum.

The result presents 'treasures... drawing on inspiring material from medieval fables to contemporary picture books'.



their creative processes, memories of childhood reading and tips for budding writers and artists.

That's just the start.

Grown-ups can find one-of-a-kind manuscripts, original illustrations, original drafts, artworks, poems and notebooks by beloved authors and illustrators including Lewis Carroll, Edward Lear, Kenneth Grahame, Judith Kerr, John Agard and Liz Pichon.

Oh, and books. Most fascinating of all, perhaps, the website provides illustrated accounts of some

153 children's books. Some show manuscripts or typescripts, some give decent-sized extracts to read, some focus on the illustrations. All have information about the book itself.

Included are moveable and pop-up books (some older than you might expect), miniature, noisy and toy books, propaganda stories, comics, poems and fairy tales.

There are plenty of modern favourites, but there're also some of the earliest printed works. One joy is James Janeway's improving little book (1671 – still in print in 1895), urging children to be dutiful, weep for their sins, think about how to avoid Hell, and ideally have a 'joyful death' before they grow up.



First, the kids.

There's a gallery of activities to spark children's creativity.

For budding writers, for instance, there are 15 big ideas, including creating an animal or a comic book character, a story about yourself, an imaginary school, a Dahl-style dictionary of nonsense words, and 10 ideas for poems (by Joseph Coelho).

Apart from writing, children can make their own super-hero puppet, recipes, comic book, soundtrack or illustrations. There are films showing illustrators at work in their studios – with a masterclass by Axel Scheffler on how to draw a Gruffalo.

There are interviews with authors and illustrators such as Quentin Blake, Julia Donaldson, Michael Rosen, Lauren Child, Andy Stanton, Zanib Mian, Joseph Coelho, Jacqueline Wilson, Viviane Schwarz and SF Said, revealing



There's an abolitionist poetry book, Bronte juvenilia, and the only book about suffragettes written at the time for children. It is jolly, but not sympathetic.

There are letters from T S Eliot with his cat illustrations, and an alphabet hornbook. There's the whole of Lewis Carroll's self-illustrated manuscript of Alice's Adventures Underground. There's We're Going on a Bear Hunt in English and Somali, and a 1928 Russian book on how things have improved compared to 'how people lived long ago'...



Public libraries — the case for support

This says it all... library organisations have worked together to sort all the best recent research into one succinct, well-organised briefing. This is why public libraries matter. This is why they richly repay investment. That means long term, sustainable funding. Will government listen? Here we print some extracts. But you need to see the whole thing! Find it here: <https://www.librariesdeliver.uk/report>



Introduction

We know that these are challenging times, but we believe that an investment in our public libraries is the best investment we could make in our communities and our economy to deliver a lasting and transformative return.

CILIP, the Libraries Taskforce, Libraries Connected, Arts Council England

Summary

This paper sets out the evidence-base and case for long term sustainable funding for public libraries as a platform for local and central government to enhance efficiency and increase impact in the following policy areas:

- PLACE-SHAPING & INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH
- EDUCATION, INFORMAL LEARNING & SKILLS
- HEALTH, WELLBEING & SOCIAL CARE
- DIGITAL SKILLS & GETTING ONLINE
- ENTERPRISE & BUSINESS SUPPORT
- POVERTY PREVENTION, SOCIAL MOBILITY & SOCIAL ISOLATION

KEY FACTS & FIGURES

- Public libraries reach a strongly diversified audience across all protected characteristics, and particularly in terms of ethnicity and age;
- The demographic most strongly correlated with library use is young people aged 15-24;
- Librarians are amongst the top 5 trusted professionals (according to a YouGov survey commissioned by CILIP), helping people improve their ability to find trusted information and combat fake news;
- Public libraries increasingly act as 'anchor' institutions for regeneration and place-making, supporting local economic development;
- Libraries offer safe, trusted access to a wide range of local authority services, enhancing and extending the council's support for local people;
- Libraries make a powerful contribution to education and learning – 88% of learners say using the library makes them more confident and 76% say using the library helps them improve their qualifications;
- Public library use has a proven positive impact on health and wellbeing. Regular library users report higher life satisfaction, happiness and sense of purpose in life;
- Public libraries provide 26m hours of supported internet access each year through 40,000 PCs and free public wifi – helping people get online, apply for jobs and access services and support;
- Libraries also deliver a wide range of digital skills initiatives, helping to close the UK's digital skills gap (which costs the economy an estimated £63bn per year);
- As part of the British Library's Business & IP Centres initiative, supported by the Arts Council England, public libraries across the UK are providing successful business and enterprise support which boosts local economic development;
- Public libraries are also delivering a range of targeted services which combat loneliness and social isolation, including events and activities which encourage people to come together, make friends and participate in their community;
- Libraries also have a demonstrable impact on social mobility, helping their users build skills and confidence and improving their life chances and employability.

WHAT LIBRARIES NEED

We have created a blueprint for the transformation of England's public libraries. Our ambition is to ensure that every library, everywhere is as good as the best.

Delivering this transformation requires a commitment to sustainable long-term funding for public libraries. Specifically, we are seeking:

- A commitment from the Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government to enable local authorities to maintain core funding to their library services, and;

- A commitment from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport to securing up to £50m per year over 5 years to create a Library Transformation Programme that will deliver a modern, efficient library service for the future.

With more than 225m in-person visits every year, 90m online and one of the most strongly diversified audiences of all local services, investing in England's public libraries represents an unique opportunity to improve local outcomes and amplify the impact of national policy.

VALUE FOR MONEY

The social and economic return on the taxpayer's investment in public libraries is huge. Estimates suggest that every £1 invested in libraries returns between £5 and £7 – a staggering return of between £5bn and £6bn a year for the UK economy.

Yet this return is at risk as libraries experience a sharp decline in public investment. Library funding has reduced by £213m in real terms since 2010, resulting in the loss of 10% of our library service points and reduced services in many others.

Many library services have been forced to replace professional librarians with volunteers, creating the risk of a postcode lottery for access to services.

Looking ahead, this situation will become acute as local government – the primary funder of local public library services – faces a reported £18bn funding gap. A financial challenge on this scale may put hundreds of vital library services directly in the firing line.

THE RISK OF DECLINING INVESTMENT

The table below sets out the overall funding trends in public libraries across the UK since 2010:

Calendar year	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Expenditure (£m)*	1066	1011	963	954	944	919	853
Reduction (£m)	-	55	48	9	10	25	66
Reduction (%)	-	5	5	1	1	3	7
UK pop'n (m)**	63	63	63.7	64	65	65	65.7
Per capita spend (UK)	17	16	15	15	15	14	13
Service points	4466	4265	4191	4145	3962	3827	3650
Cost per library	238692	237046	229778	230157	238264	240136	233699
Pop'n per library	14107	14771	15199	15440	16406	16985	18000

Based on these figures, the 'funding gap' (the total gap between the cost of delivering a comprehensive and efficient public library service and available investment from local government) may follow a number of possible projections.

- If funding remains stable (no further reductions) at c.£853m per annum, demand will continue to rise as a proportion of population – resulting in a continued drop in per-capita spend;
- If funding declines on an historic average (3.6%) then it will reduce to £822m (2018),

£793m (2019) and £764m (2020) – resulting in a net spend on libraries of £710m by the end of 2022, or a per-capita spend (based on a projected population of 70m) of £10 per year;

- If funding declines on the recent accelerated basis, (1–3–7%) then it will reduce by a potential 31% cumulatively to the end of 2022, a total expenditure of £589m per annum (a net loss of investment of a further £264m each year).

Based on these principles, local and central government in England ought to be investing c.

*Source: CIPFA annual release ** Source: ONS Census data

£15 per capita for public libraries. If population stabilises at 67m, this equates to c. £1bn annually (or the equivalent of 2.5% of the total UK annual expenditure on schools).

Based on current expenditure and projections, this leaves a funding gap of £150–200m per annum.

Reductions in investment in public libraries put the social and economic ROI of these services at risk, which is why it is essential to secure long-term sustainable investment in public libraries.

A DIVERSE AUDIENCE

Very few public services have the demographic or geographic reach of public libraries.

Libraries are amongst the most widely used and trusted platforms, with more than 250m in-person visits, over 90m online visits and a strongly diversified audience, particularly in terms of ethnicity and age.

However, declining investment since 2010, taken alongside reductions in transportation and related services, has been accompanied by a consistent pattern of decline in usage – from 50% in 2010 to just under 34% in 2017–18.

New evidence from the evaluation of the Arts Council England's £3.9m Libraries Opportunities for Everyone: innovation fund shows that investing in innovative activities in public libraries results in increased engagement with the library service.



PHOTO: The Reading Agency

PLACE-SHAPING & ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

Public libraries represent an unparalleled infrastructure for learning, access to services and digital participation. With more than 3,260 trusted and networked locations distributed across rural and urban communities, no other public network provides the same platform for place-shaping or inclusive local economic growth.

Not only this, but public libraries represent a phenomenally cost-effective multiplier for local economic activity. The ROI [return on investment] of a local library service is estimated at between 5.5 and 7.5 times the cost of provision.

Sustaining this infrastructure of trusted local institutions requires ongoing investment in estate, facilities, IT and services.

This is why public libraries need long-term sustainable funding to ensure they can continue to deliver high-quality services for every community across the UK.

INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH

Studies find a strong correlation between the provision of a local public library service and direct and indirect inclusive economic growth. Directly, libraries impact positively on local economies and consumer spend.

Indirectly, they enhance the liveability and attractiveness of places while also providing access to skills and information, which in turn promotes local economic development.

LIBRARIES' SPECIAL ROLE

Libraries are familiar and well-recognised locations, often on high streets or adjacent to schools, GPs and local shopping parades.

We also know that libraries are perceived by the public to be safe, neutral and trusted public spaces – free from any political or ideological agenda, or commercial incentive, and where users are free from the judgement of others.

Added to their scale and perceived trustworthiness, what also makes public libraries relevant to place-shaping is the fact that they reach all sections and demographics of the community.

<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/publication/re-writing-story-contribution-public-libraries-place-shaping>

VALUE FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Creating the conditions for inclusive growth is one of the most significant ways in which local authorities can fulfil their place-shaping role.

Rather than through their spending power alone (which is diminishing) they can deliver inclusive growth through measures to raise skills and knowledge in their communities, alongside their use of regulatory and influencing powers.

<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/publication/re-writing-story-contribution-public-libraries-place-shaping>

EDUCATION, INFORMAL LEARNING & SKILLS

Described in 2000 by Chris Smith MP, Secretary of State for Culture, as ‘the original street corner University’, public libraries provide arguably the most important infrastructure for formal and informal learning outside the classroom,

They offer significant impact on education, literacy, skills and attainment for local communities.

Supported by professional librarians, they deliver life-long interventions, from early years to adult learning and active ageing, which help learners of all ages build their skills and confidence.

88% of learners report that using the library makes them more confident; 76% reported that it helped them improve their qualifications.

Without long-term sustainable funding, public library staff cannot support the range of learning activities which their users demand. They cannot build relationships with local schools.

If their staffing is hollowed-out, will not be able to deliver specialist educational activities which enhance and extend learning.



PHOTO: Libraries Connected

DIGITAL SKILLS

Public libraries have transformed their digital offer, providing an unparalleled trusted digital infrastructure which helps people in every part of the UK get online, build their skills and make use of digital services.

With 99.3% of public libraries providing free public-access wifi (thanks to investment from DCMS) and 40,000 Internet-connected PCs offering 26m hours of Internet use every year supported by 14,000 trained staff, public libraries are the most cost-effective public platform for digital transformation.

Public libraries need long-term sustainable funding to secure this new digital role at the heart of their communities – offering a tremendous opportunity to invest in the UK’s digital future.

GETTING ONLINE

Public libraries have transformed their digital offer. They now act as a vital, trusted and networked infrastructure in every community across the UK to help people get online and

develop their digital skills and confidence.

In light of the UK’s digital skills gap and its potential cost to the UK economy, sustainable long-term funding for public libraries provides an opportunity to ensure that the benefits of digital transformation reach every community.

SOCIAL ISOLATION

Public libraries provide a low-cost, high-value mechanism for the government to invest in combating loneliness and social isolation, whilst helping people build the skills and confidence they need to improve their employability.

HM Government’s own social mobility policy highlights the importance of literacy support and early-years intervention to improving people’s educational attainment and life chances.

Libraries already provide these services in a way that ensures they reach the hardest-to-reach communities across the UK.

Public libraries need sustainable long-term investment in order to secure this support for every community.

Without it, we are likely to see the emergence of a 2-tier library service which disadvantages those most at risk of being left behind.



ENTERPRISE & BUSINESS SUPPORT

Public libraries provide a range of information, advice and support services for local businesses.

The British Library's pioneering Business & IP Centres programme demonstrates how we can build on the existing public library network to accelerate startups and enterprise across the UK.

The GVA for the UK economy delivered through the Business & IP Centres is estimated to hit £214m by the end of 2018, a return of £25 for every £1 of public investment.

With sustainable long-term funding, there is tremendous potential to position every UK public library as a catalyst for local economic development through business and enterprise support – working with schools, colleges, entrepreneurs and councils to create a generation of entrepreneurs and innovators.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The success of the Business & IP Centres initiative highlights the power of the public library network as a trusted, cost-effective platform for inclusive local economic growth. Building on the traditional strengths of public libraries (spaces, welcoming services, up-to-date technology and connectivity), they have demonstrated how the sector can contribute to economic development.

There is tremendous potential to expand the network of Business & IP Centres (and to extend their reach through the 'hub-and-spoke' model proposed by the Libraries Taskforce) so that they can act as a catalyst for startups and local enterprise across the UK.

However, delivering on this potential depends on ensuring that sustainable long term funding is available to public libraries.

SOCIAL MOBILITY

Many local public libraries offer a wide range of business and enterprise support services.

Examples include:

- Access to low-cost meeting and workspace
- Free access to business and market intelligence
- Early-stage creativity, innovation and idea generation
- Patents, trademarking and IP advice
- Access to rapid manufacturing tools including 3D printers for prototyping
- Targeted workshops in partnership with leading brands (eg. Google Garage)
- Digital innovation support

HEALTH, WELLBEING & SOCIAL CARE

HEALTH

A growing body of evidence suggests that public library use correlates to positive impact on health and wellbeing.

Our evidence shows that regular library users report higher life satisfaction, happiness and sense of purpose in life.

Libraries provide services and signposting which improve health literacy, support self-care and community prescribing.

They save the NHS at least £27.5m per year in reduced usage of health services (although the real saving is likely to be much higher).

WELLBEING

Evidence suggests a strong positive correlation between reading activities in libraries and overall health and wellbeing.

We know that reading for pleasure reduces stress and depression, and that reading fiction leads to higher empathy and better relationships with others.

Public libraries are part of the local ecosystem of health and social care provision. They alleviate pressure on local health and social care budgets and provide a much-needed frontline for community-based support for people's health and wellbeing.

This is why it is essential to secure these benefits through long-term sustainable funding.

THE CONNECTION

There is a strong and growing connection between public libraries and the provision of services to promote health, wellbeing and social care across all age ranges.

The primary source of evidence which captures these benefits is the 2015 report *The Health & Wellbeing Benefits of Public Libraries* (Fujiwara, D et al) commissioned by Arts Council England.

Key findings from the ACE research include:

- The average 'willingness to pay' [WTP – the additional council tax an individual would be willing to pay to sustain library services] for library users is £19.51. However, the WTP for people using health information in public libraries is £39.03. This demonstrates that library users attach a significant premium to the value of engaging with health information in public libraries;
- Library users demonstrate a 1.4% increase in likelihood to report good general health. This correlates to £1.32 per person per year, or an aggregate saving of around £27.5m to the NHS annually.

<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/The%20health%20and%20wellbeing%20benefits%20of%20public%20libraries.pdf>

BOOKS ON PRESCRIPTION

The 2017 evaluation of the Reading Well: Books on Prescription programme highlights the impressive scale and reach it has achieved:

- Circa 778,000 people supported since 2013;
- Available in 98% of public libraries in the UK;
- 90% of users found the common mental health conditions booklist helpful or very helpful;
- 96% said the same of the dementia and young people's booklists;
- 90% of prescribers reported using the programme most for increasing access to patient information and advice.

<https://reading-well.org.uk>

PHOTO: Laura Swaffield

Time for real change

Here's a new position paper¹ from CILIP: **Libraries, Information & Knowledge Change Lives (also known as Changing Lives)**. It sets out how CILIP should be 'an activist for positive social change and social justice'.

Activism? Librarians? The new angle has caused some pearl-clutching in a few quarters. But really, it's a logical extension of the words we often see about the social value of libraries.

Becoming an 'activist organisation', says CILIP, is simply being 'an actively ethical organisation'. It applies to all library sectors, not just public libraries.

It covers 'a spectrum, from taking direct action to achieve political change, to the pro-active pursuit of values or principles'.

It is apolitical: 'Advocating for positive social change, inclusion and diversity is not the preserve of any political party or viewpoint.'

NICENESS WILL NOT DELIVER

The paper does contain some quite heady stuff, compared with CILIP's sometimes genteel stance in the past.

There's this: 'We have both an opportunity and a duty to use our influence and to support our members to challenge inequality and help create a fair and just society for all.'

'We recognise that "niceness" will not deliver the scale of change that we want to see.'

There's this: 'In order to achieve real equity in our profession and our society, we must:

- disrupt structures of power, without undermining our ability to deliver quality services,
- proactively challenge inequality,
- reflect critically on our own role and engage with the widest possible range of voices to help shape the future of our profession.'

WE WILL SPEAK OUT

There's this: 'We will speak out more clearly, vocally and pro-actively on issues which affect our sector, such as the impact of austerity, the need to promote inclusive economic growth outside of London and the south east, and the need to resist the rising tide of racism and prejudice in our public realm.'

'We will actively promote the role of the profession in delivering services which lift people out of poverty.'

There's this: 'We will do more to be a better ally for marginalised groups.'

'We will make a clear declaration on behalf of the library and information profession that we will not tolerate discrimination or hate speech.'

And there's this, turning the spotlight on the library profession itself: 'We will actively work with the sector to understand how class and socio-economic status impact on our profession.'



This includes the impact of low earnings, unstable employment (zero hours or term-time only contracts) and the high academic barriers to entry in some parts of the profession.'

Finally, there are some hard-hitting questions for librarians – and CILIP itself – to consider further. They include:

- how to 'live' values such as human rights, access to knowledge, public benefit, intellectual freedom, impartiality, confidentiality,
- how to root out social barriers within the profession,
- how to support library workers better, especially those with caring responsibilities,
- how to 'resist systems, structures and cultures which perpetuate inequality or disempower information users'.

EMBRACE DISSENT

Among the questions for CILIP as an organisation is this: 'What would it mean for CILIP to embrace dissent, to resist, to stand up for what is right and not tacitly to endorse what is not? How do we make sure that we speak with the voice of our membership when doing so?'

It all looks very challenging. There's much material here for reflection and debate.

But here's the nice thing. Most of the position paper is taken up with examples of things library services are doing right now.



Six priorities

CILIP supports the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals by focusing on six priorities for action. We will support programmes and activities in the library, information and knowledge management profession which address these priorities:

1. True equality and equity for groups that are marginalised in our society
2. Equality of opportunity for all, irrespective of class or socio-economic status
3. Overcoming the debilitating impact of all forms of poverty on people's lives
4. Opposing all forms of prejudice, conscious or unconscious bias, discrimination or hate speech
5. Supporting our members to rebalance structural inequality in their collections and services
6. Environmental and climate change and their social and ecological impact

Quite simple things, like:

- story-telling to support LGBT Month (Derbyshire)
- actively seeking out, and working with, under-represented groups (Lambeth)
- a special Library of Sanctuary for refugees and asylum seekers (Sandwell)
- a law firm that ensures its librarians use their specialist knowledge to buttress tricky pro bono cases
- dedicated digital inclusion officers to train and support jobseekers (Stirling)
- reporting centres to encourage victims of hate crime to seek help (several authorities)
- a multi-media project for LGBT young people to record their experiences (Brighton & Hove)
- 'human libraries' to set up conversations between people who wouldn't usually meet (Shropshire)
- an academic library working to diversify its collections and 'de-centre whiteness' (Goldsmiths)
- 'environmental champions' to help academic library users adopt greener habits (Queens, Belfast).

Have a look!



The story so far

It all started in 2012 with an Equalities Summit at CILIP. This agreed that the profession needs leadership on matters of 'equalities, diversity, inclusion and social justice'.

Cue for a flurry of activity.

The ensuing years have seen a whole bunch of projects, working on some basics.

In 2015, 'workforce mapping' produced evidence that will inspire efforts to open up and diversify the workforce.

2016-17 saw discussions on CILIP's purpose – and future. 'Equalities, diversity and inclusion' were identified as first principles underpinning its work. Some official statements² were agreed.

In 2018 a committee (led by TLC's good friend Dawn Finch) revitalised CILIP's Ethical Framework. A clear statement on ethics is a key tool for any professional body.

The new one³ explicitly includes a commitment to diversity, equalities and social justice.

Finally, events in the outside world have created 'a new dynamic for change', says CILIP.

Hence this new position paper to wrap it all up. It was published in October 2019.

Now work has begun to draw a new 'strategic plan' for the whole organisation over the next few years – firmly based on this paper.

And meanwhile, CILIP is busy discussing what it (or the profession) can actually do. About climate change, for instance. It's the obvious source of knowledge – but how can it 'help our communities and organisations harness knowledge and information to manage the risks associated with climate change'?

CILIP is consulting its members on all six priorities in the new position paper.



¹ www.cilip.org.uk/changinglives ² www.cilip.org.uk/page/EqualitiesandDiversityActionPlan

³ www.cilip.org.uk/page/ethics

Action!

In some areas, action has already started.

A new LGBTQ+ Network was launched in February. A Disability Network and a Women's Network will come next.

A 'diversity review' looked at CILIP's high profile Carnegie and Kate Greenaway awards for children's books. Now the awards have a new mission statement, which emphasises that 'quality and diversity in children's books/illustration are synonymous'.

CILIP is also working on Building a Nation of Readers, a long-term programme to 'promote readership and encourage diversity in children's books and publishing'.

A new BAME Information Professionals Network supports library professionals from

Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds.

Bursaries and other 'development opportunities' target this group.

Apprenticeships are being developed 'to provide new pathways into the profession'.

Plus boosting 'experience-based routes' through the profession on equal terms with academic qualifications.

CILIP is researching other issues, including the reasons for the gender pay gap and the role of librarians supporting Universal Credit claimants.

And, yes, CILIP has begun to improve its contacts with active library campaigners. It invited all-comers to a 'town hall meeting' last November. It was a start, at least.

And TLC has had a face-to-face with CILIP chief exec Nick Poole. This is to be the first of many. Or was, before all meetings became a thing of the past...

CILIP's Ethical Principles commit us to uphold, promote and actively defend:

- Human rights, equality and diversity
- Public benefit
- Preservation
- Intellectual freedom
- Impartiality
- Confidentiality
- Information skills and literacy

CILIP says...

The #MeToo movement has called time on sexual harassment and abuse.

The youth movement that has emerged around Greta Thunberg has given new urgency to the need for concerted political action to counter the impact of climate change for future generations.

New data has thrown light on issues of gender inequality and pay disparity in our sector.

More generally, an atmosphere of intimidation and the legitimising of hate speech has re-emerged in our public discourse in recent years.

This means that people who were already at risk of being marginalised in our society, and our profession, are now actively afraid.

Books such as Reni Eddo-Lodge's *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People about Race*, Akala's *Natives*, and Angie Thomas' *The Hate U Give* mark a fundamental shift in discussions of ethnicity and power.

The emphasis is moving away from black and minority ethnic people needing to explain the experience of racism.

Now there is an expectation that the majority white population will educate themselves about the systemic barriers and prejudices in our daily lives, and then take action to remove them.

As these ideas increasingly form part of



mainstream discourse, there is an increased expectation that all organisations – and perhaps mission-based organisations like CILIP more than others – will consider them, and articulate how best to use our influence to bring about positive change.

Throughout the position paper, there are examples of 'everyday activism'. These are things that librarians, information and knowledge professionals are proactively doing to bring about positive social change.

Examples include:

- providing space and support for refugees and asylum seekers,
- offering pro-bono legal advice to marginalised or underserved communities,
- hosting events to mark International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia & Biphobia,
- projects to diversify library collections.

CILIP will be an ally to individuals and groups that are under-represented, both in society and in our profession.

This means ensuring that:

- these groups are actively included in our work,
- we do more to listen to and amplify their voices,
- we think critically about – and take action to address – our own role in perpetuating exclusion and inequality.

Librarians, library workers, information and knowledge management professionals in all sectors:

- enrich the lives of individuals,
- contribute to strong communities,
- promote inclusive economic growth,
- help create a fair and just society for all.

Our vision is of inclusive, participatory and socially engaged knowledge and information services and libraries at the heart of their communities – whether these communities are based around a locality, an organisation, a business or a community of practice.

And – CILIP will be actively standing up against library cuts and closures.

