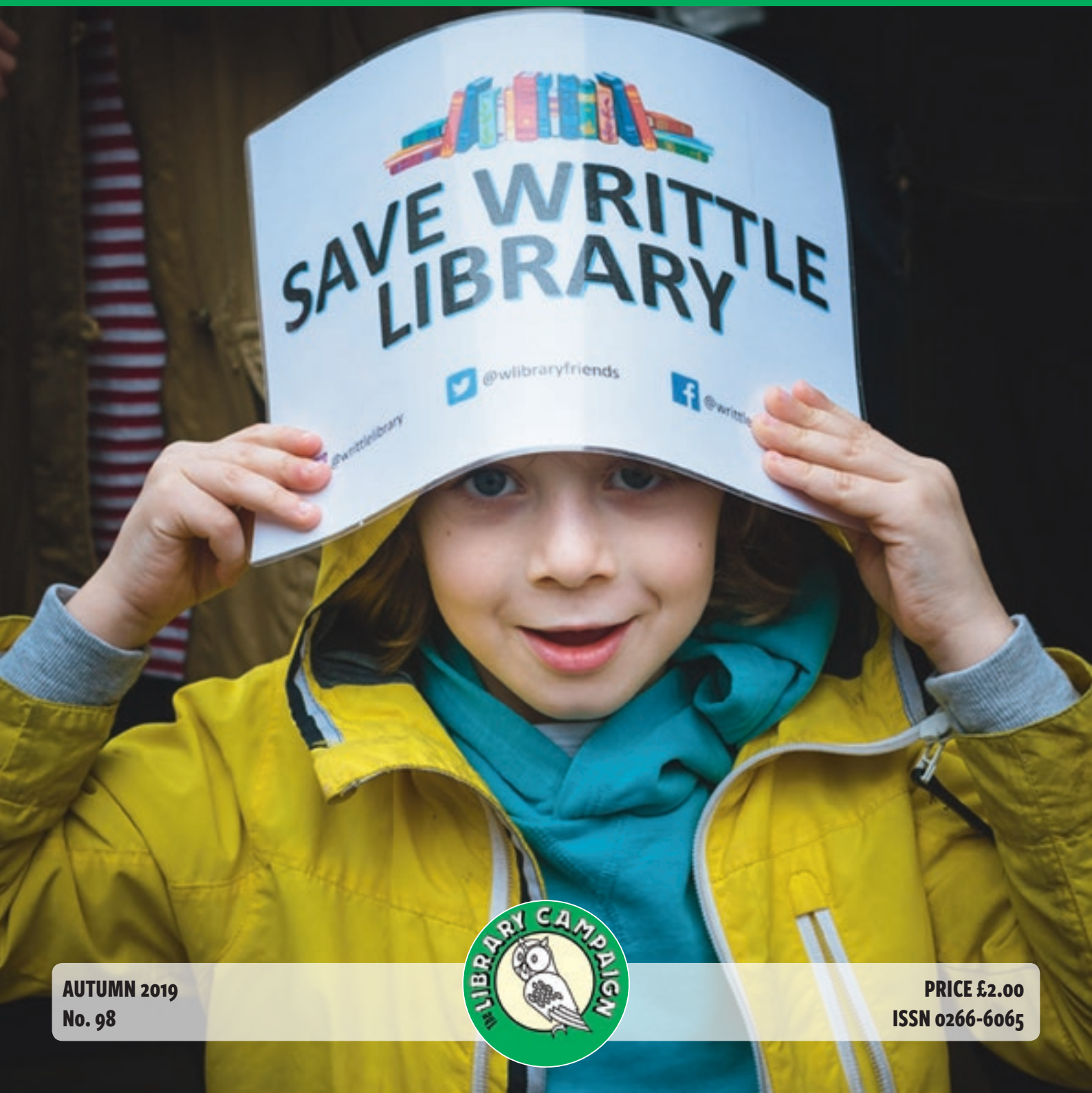


THE LIBRARY CAMPAIGN

SUPPORTING FRIENDS AND USERS OF LIBRARIES



AUTUMN 2019
No. 98



PRICE £2.00
ISSN 0266-6065

THE LIBRARY CAMPAIGN – AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

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



The Library Campaign

27 Old Gloucester Street, LONDON WC1N 3AX

For general enquiries: call 0845 450 5946

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

Alternatively, contact us by emailing thelibrarycampaign@gmail.com

www.librarycampaign.com

Twitter: @LibraryCampaign

Facebook: The Library Campaign

Registered charity (England & Wales) No. 1102634

THE LIBRARY CAMPAIGN

maintains a

FREE LIST

of local

FRIENDS AND USER GROUPS

with their contact details, on our website.

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

thelibrarycampaign@gmail.com



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.

Things fall apart?

Watching the news is currently like seeing a bad production of Richard III. There is no way to guess what's going to happen next.

The libraries world moves a bit more slowly. In this issue, as usual, we feature loads of new reports giving yet more evidence of how useful libraries are. With precious little to show the message is getting through. Indeed, the damage spreads wider.

We report (p.6) that cuts to library bookfunds are undermining the whole world of literature. Amazingly, we find (p.13) that the DCMS has seemingly abandoned any legal responsibility for the statutory service – if it is delivered by volunteers. Read that sentence again. It is astonishing. The march towards mass volunteering continues. Councils clearly don't know what they're doing.

Campaigners like those in Essex (p.8) or Ealing (p.12) are leading the fightback – way ahead of librarians' associations. The latter are too often seduced by crazed organisational 'innovations' hyped by the government. Some of these issues are discussed elsewhere (for instance, pp.14, 32–35).

I have a file labelled 'Bleeding obvious'. Here I collect stories towards a feature I'll probably never write. It's about those times when the government panics, and ostentatiously throws millions at crises that have arisen because it previously cut tens or scores of millions from commonsense basic provision.

Loneliness. Crime. Youth violence. Illiteracy. Mental ill health. Etc. Whoever would have guessed that these would sky-rocket if you slashed preventive work by police, youth workers, the NHS and, yes, libraries...? We can expect a lot more of this phenomenon if or when a general election comes up.

Meanwhile, some good news. 2020 will see a fantastic year-long BBC 'celebration of literature'. The programme will span TV and radio. It is dazzling, covering a whole range of writing from Aphra Benn to Chinua Achebe: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2019/literature>

I'll highlight just one major element. The Novels That Shaped Our World Festival will be 'a multi-platform collaboration' by the BBC with libraries (via Libraries Connected, CILIP, SLIC in Scotland, The Reading Agency and the Publishers Association).

100 major novels will be debated on Radio 2 and a live event, streamed into libraries. Local events, and monthly packs for reading groups, will lead to a final celebration in Libraries Week 2020. Public-minded bodies co-operating! THAT is real efficiency!

RIP UP THIS MAGAZINE!

We're always looking out for publicity material that campaigners might use. (One of the great mysteries of all time is the library world's failure to grasp this screamingly obvious need.)

This issue has a pull-out centre (pp 15–22). It has a poster on libraries and health. Back-to-back with it is UNESCO's manifesto for public libraries. Though updated in 1994, this is essentially a 1949 post-war vision. And still a true one. It's sobering to compare its ideals with the more ignorant, inward-looking society now being created in many nations.

This centre section is flanked by back-to-back one-pagers setting out libraries' role in (1) building communities and (2) the digital world. In each, one half is a taster of a four-sided leaflet produced by the Libraries Taskforce. You can print out your own full-size version. Or apply to the Taskforce for paper copies (details on the relevant page).

THE LIBRARY CAMPAIGNER AUTUMN 2019, No.98

EDITOR: Laura Swaffield

DESIGN & PRODUCTION: Owain Hammonds

CONTRIBUTORS: Anon, Ian Anstice, Leon Bolton, British Library, Carnegie Trust UK, Matheou Demetrios, Essex County Council, Libraries Connected, Libraries Taskforce, Luca Filippi, Chris Martin, Save Our Libraries Essex, The Reading Agency, Laura Swaffield, UNESCO, UNISON.

4 NEWS

8 ESSEX – A 'SOLUTION' THAT CAN'T WORK

Save Our Libraries Essex explains that volunteer-run libraries do not 'save' a library service – in Essex or anywhere else.

12 ESSEX REALLY IS THE ONLY WAY!

Matheou Demetrios on UNISON's national campaign for fully staffed libraries.

13 UNISON'S VOLUNTEER SURVEY

Can you contribute to this academic research on volunteers' views and experiences?

13 OUT OF CONTROL

Lewisham campaigners have had an alarming letter from the DCMS about volunteer-run libraries

14 WE CAN'T DO EVERYTHING!

Ian Anstice on the purpose of public libraries.

PULL-OUT POSTER SECTION

15 COMMUNITY IS THE CORE

Luca Filippi argues that social inclusion is the key contribution of libraries.

16 HOW LIBRARIES BUILD COMMUNITIES

Libraries Taskforce leaflet.

17 & 20 UNESCO PUBLIC LIBRARY MANIFESTO

It's 25 years old – and more relevant than ever.

18 PUBLIC LIBRARY UNIVERSAL HEALTH OFFER

Libraries Connected and The Reading Agency set out what libraries do for health – and why it matters.

21 LIBRARIES GET PEOPLE CONNECTED!

Facts about public libraries' much-needed digital resources.

22 HOW LIBRARIES OPEN UP THE DIGITAL WORLD

Libraries Taskforce leaflet.

23 LIBRARY LIST

An anonymous librarian lists 28 things she has learned from experience.

24 TROUBLE UP NORTH

Converting branch libraries to volunteer-run libraries has not been good for book loans...

28 DIGITAL? THE KIDS ARE NOT ALRIGHT...

It's assumed that young people, 'born digital', are fine using the internet. They are not. They need libraries to help.

29 LIBRARIES ARE THE BUSINESS!

Public library business advice centres are a huge success – especially for disadvantaged people.

31 MURDER MOST FOWL!

A way to put some fun into fund-raising

32 HOW LIBRARIANS LOST THEIR WAY

Leon Bolton argues that librarians have in some ways been their own worst enemy.

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

Dragon Lady



Welcome to the latest Children's Laureate, Cressida Cowell

Cressida is an illustrator and author of the much-loved *How To Train Your Dragon* (now a film franchise starring Kit Harington), *The Wizards Of Once* series and the *Emily Brown* picture books.

She told her presentation audience that she has 'a giant to-do list' to help ensure that books and reading are available to everyone.

She will campaign for libraries to be a statutory requirement in schools. And a wider vision is set out in her new charter...

'Books and reading are magic, and this magic must be available to absolutely everyone,' she said.

'I will be a laureate who fights for books and

children's interests with passion, conviction and action. Practical magic, empathy and creative intelligence, is the plan.'

Cressida has already spoken out strongly for libraries as part of that magic. In an article in the Independent (January 25), she said:

'Library funding cuts mean we are denying people the joy of reading for pleasure.

'Study after study has shown over the years that one of the two key factors in a kid's later economic and educational success is reading for PLEASURE. I put that in capitals because it is so important. Reading widely for the JOY of it, not because you have to.

'This is a statistic that cuts across all social classes, so it ought to be encouraging. It ought to mean that whatever economic background you come from, you still have the same chance to become a reader for pleasure as anyone else.

'That is the function that public and school libraries used to fulfil, making sure that children from less well-off backgrounds still had a chance to become readers for pleasure.

'We need librarians in school and public libraries, who are expert in getting children to read for pleasure, and getting the right book in the hands of the right child at the right time.

'A society in which social mobility is not



possible is an unhappy society.

'So we need to address the problems of library closure in schools and on the high street as a matter of urgent priority.

'And if people cannot afford books, we need to continue to encourage people to visit the library.

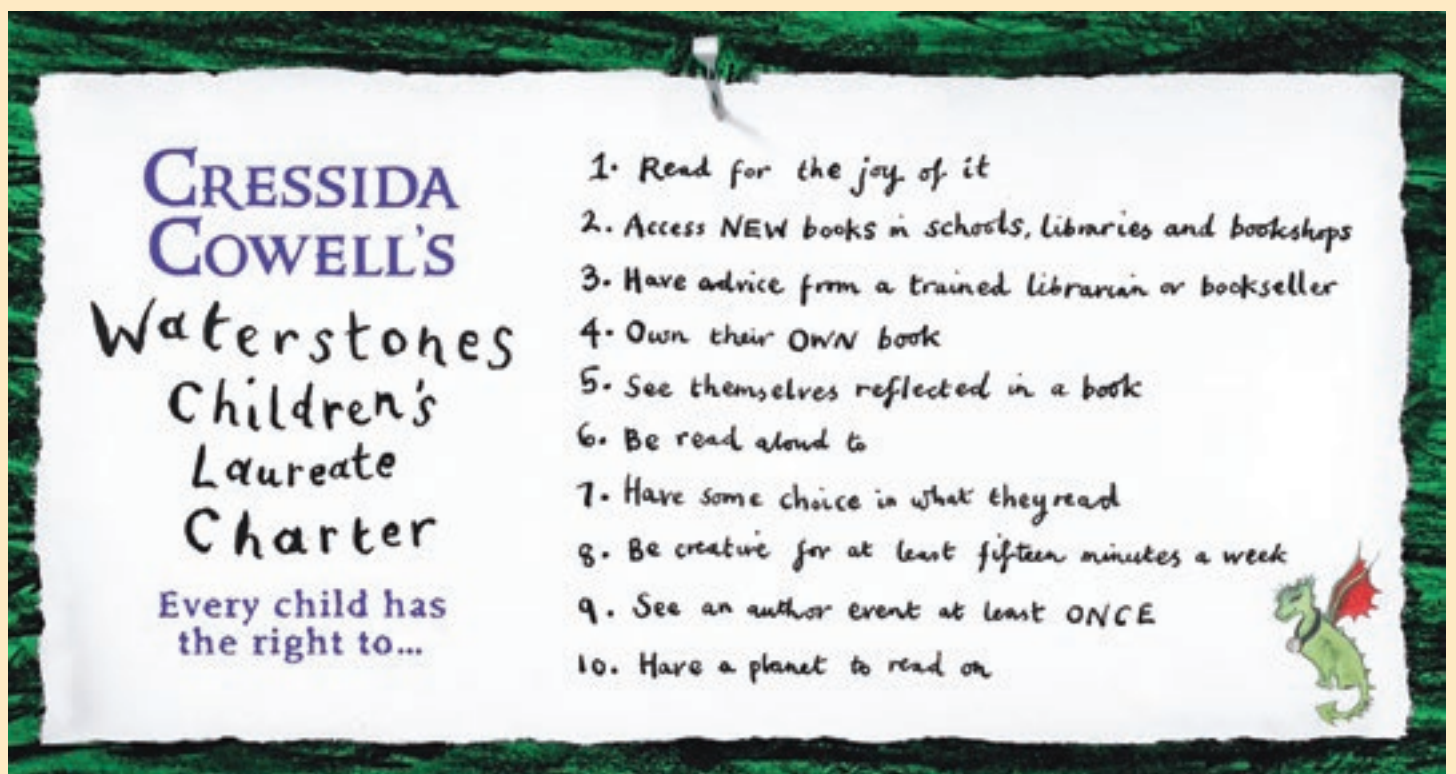
'But in order for that to happen, of course, the library needs to actually BE there.'

The children's laureateship is run by BookTrust, the UK's largest children's reading charity, and sponsored by Waterstones. It is awarded every two years to a children's author or illustrator 'to mark outstanding achievement in their field'. All have spent their two years working very hard for children's reading.

Quentin Blake was the first Children's Laureate (1999-2001). Cressida Cowell is the eleventh.

The idea began as a conversation between the then Poet Laureate, Ted Hughes, and children's writer Michael Morpurgo.

They thought it would be a good way to celebrate excellence in writing and illustration for children and honour individuals who have made a significant and lasting contribution.



**Lauren Child 2017–2019**

Multi-award-winning, best-selling writer and artist. The creator of characters, including Clarice Bean, Ruby Redfort and Charlie and Lola, that are loved the world over.

**Chris Riddell 2015–2017**

Prolific writer and illustrator whose work is familiar to both children and adults. Known especially for his distinctive line drawings with their clever caricature, fascinating detail and often enchanting fantasy elements.

**Malorie Blackman 2013–2015**

Acknowledged as one of today's most imaginative and convincing writers for young readers, who effortlessly addresses social and racial issues in her books.

**Julia Donaldson 2011–2013**

She has worked with many different illustrators and written over 100 books and plays for children and teenagers, in which her love of song and rhyme shines through.

**Anthony Browne 2009–2011**

Internationally acclaimed author and illustrator of children's books. He blends near-photographic realism with fantastical, surreal touches and ingenious visual puns.

**Michael Rosen 2007–2009**

One of the best-known figures in the children's book world, renowned for his work as a poet, performer, broadcaster and scriptwriter.

**Jacqueline Wilson 2005–2007**

Her sensitive understanding of modern children, the way they live and the problems they encounter, together with her sense of humour, have made her an extremely popular author.

**Sir Michael Morpurgo 2003–2005**

Award-winning writer who believes in 'literature over literacy' and has written scores of imaginative and suspenseful books for children.

**Anne Fine 2001–2003**

Writes for both children and adults. Her interest in politics and social issues comes across in many of her books.

**Quentin Blake 1999–2001**

Best known for his collaborations with Roald Dahl and other leading writers in children's books, he has an unmistakable drawing style and has truly championed illustration.



Get creative. Get connected.
Learn new skills.

LibrariesWeek
7-12 OCTOBER 2019

LIBRARIES WEEK: Here comes Libraries Week again – Monday 7 October to Saturday 12.

This time the main theme is libraries' digital offer, with the slogan: 'Get connected. Get creative. Learn new skills.'

Libraries nationwide should be putting on themed events and displays. You can find out what's where via the website: www.librariesweek.org.uk.

As always, the website has attractive posters in English and Welsh that you can download free.

This year it has a section of useful facts on digital resources, reading and libraries in general (we've put together the digital facts for you on page 21).

Also a lot of advice and tools that you can adapt for use in your own campaigns.

These include complete 'toolkits' on marketing and on PR, advice on dealing with the media and how to engage with decision-makers, plus templates for different types of press releases and invitations.



AND – details of a £500 competition to 'get creative and imagine [your] Library of the Future in LEGO form' from CILIP, which runs Libraries Week. 'Participants should use LEGO bricks to build the structure but are free to use other materials to bring their library to life,' says CILIP.

They also need to be reasonably digitally literate, as you enter by taking a photo and tweeting it (between 23 September and 7 October).

Very 21st century!

LIBRARIES ARE AT THE FOREFRONT OF DEVELOPING DIGITAL LITERACY SKILLS THAT BENEFIT USERS IN NUMEROUS WAYS



99% OF LIBRARIES PROVIDE FREE WIFI ACCESS AND SUPPORT PEOPLE WITH OVER 82 MILLION HOURS OF INTERNET ACCESS.



DIGITALLY COMPETENT AND CONFIDENT CITIZENS ARE FAR MORE LIKELY TO LEAD HAPPIER, HEALTHIER, MORE PRODUCTIVE AND SATISFYING LIVES.



COMMUNITIES WITH ACCESS TO THE INTERNET ARE BETTER POSITIONED TO ERADICATE POVERTY AND INEQUALITY.



RESEARCH SHOWS THAT PEOPLE WITH GOOD IT SKILLS EARN 3-10% MORE THAN THOSE WITHOUT.

librariesweek.org.uk/facts

Happy birthday, PLR!

September marks 40 years of Public Lending Right. This was a ground-breaker in 1979 – an Act of Parliament to enable payment of a small sum to writers, illustrators, translators etc each time their book is loaned.

In February this year, PLR distributed £6m to 22,314 authors, at 8.52p per loan. This modest sum is a lifeline for many. Total payments are capped at £6,000 to sure the lucky ones don't hog the funds.

And, when our international standing has rarely been worse, it's a comfort that PLR is still seen as a world leader. Other countries are steadily adopting versions (Malawi is now the first in Africa). PLR International held a big conference this month at the British Library and its co-ordinator Dr Jim Parker (formerly the UK's PLR registrar) travels the world advising on new schemes.

In the UK, PLR has recently been extended to remote loans of e-books and e-audiobooks.

BUT...

But it's not all progress.

For one thing, shrinking library book funds mean fewer books, less range and of course fewer loans. That eats into the UK's whole stock of intellectual capital – current and future.

Benedicte Page, deputy editor of The Bookseller, told the Harrogate Crime Festival in July: 'The libraries market is so much less than it was, and less diverse.

'You could always rely on library sales for basic money for books that are not very commercial, or

beginner authors, or even mid-list authors, library staples. They all find it much harder now.'

And the uncontrolled growth of volunteer-run libraries is now a huge threat.

PLR is calculated by a rather elaborate system, carefully designed to be fair and representative of loans all over the UK. It is run by a group of 30 statutory library authorities, regularly changed, which pool their loans data.

PRINCIPLE

Volunteer libraries are outside all that. So their loans don't count – unless their council oddly claims they are part of its statutory service, as some do. Even then, it's very doubtful if hard-pressed volunteers could cope with that kind of admin.

The Society of Authors is rightly worried. It has tried for years to get PLR applied to volunteer libraries.

Its CEO, Nicola Solomon, told The Bookseller: 'The case for this is even stronger now, as the proportion of professionally staffed libraries decreases significantly, and local authorities rely on volunteers to try to fulfil their obligations to provide an efficient and comprehensive library service.

'PLR is designed to balance the social need for free public access to books against an author's right to be remunerated for the use of their work. This principle applies across the board, regardless of how a library is run.

'If data is not collected from volunteer libraries it is impossible to know how many books are being lent and to remunerate authors fairly.'

Meanwhile, PLR figures continue to be a fascinating source of info on book loans, readers' tastes – and the role of libraries.

The current list of the top 10 most borrowed authors contains no fewer than seven children's writers. Proof that libraries are still a crucial part of children's connection to reading.

Crime writing factory James Patterson has been the UK's most borrowed author for 12 years in a row. Thrillers dominate the top 10 most borrowed titles list.

Top 10 most borrowed authors in 2017–18

1. James Patterson
2. Daisy Meadows
3. Julia Donaldson
4. Francesca Simon
5. Adam Blade
6. Roald Dahl
7. MC Beaton
8. David Walliams
9. Roderick Hunt
10. Lee Child

Top 10 most borrowed titles in 2017–18

1. Night School by Lee Child
2. The Whistler by John Grisham
3. The Wrong side of Goodbye by Michael Connelly
4. Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Old School by Jeff Kinney
5. The Late Show by Michael Connelly
6. Camino Island by John Grisham
7. Rather Be the Devil by Ian Rankin
8. The Fix by David Baldacci
9. The Thirst: Harry Hole 11 by Jo Nesbo
10. The Midnight Line (Jack Reacher) by Lee Child

All change...

If it is still true when this magazine reaches you... the latest Secretary of State for culture is Nicky Morgan (MP for Loughborough).

There is some unease in cultural circles, as she talked down arts subjects in 2014 (when she was education secretary).

'Too many young people are making choices at 15 which will hold them back for the rest of their lives,' she said. 'If you didn't know what you wanted to do... the arts and humanities were what you chose because they were useful, we were told, for all kinds of jobs.

'We now know that this couldn't be further from the truth. That the subjects to keep young people's options open are STEM subjects – science, technology, engineering and maths...'

A year later she recanted: 'I firmly reject any suggestion that I or this government think that arts subjects are in any way less

important or less worthy than other subjects for study in school.' But doubts remain. And she's the eighth DCMS Secretary in nine years.

More important for us is the minister who covers libraries – though the word doesn't even appear in the job title (Minister for Arts, Heritage & Tourism).

Strange days here. During the summer recess minister Michael Ellis was replaced by one Rebecca Pow. But she has gone already.

The new, new minister is Helen Whately, MP for Faversham & Mid Kent. She has tweeted: 'Delighted to join DCMS. Already lost count of the number of people who've told me I have the best job in government.'

Let's hope she has time to make something of it. She's the fourth libraries minister in two years...

A little help from the US?

As we go to press, we are having meetings see what's to be gained from a new venture called Libraries Deliver. Its aim is to enhance library campaigning.

It has been formed by UK librarians' association CILIP and a USA librarians' resource called EveryLibrary. So – librarian-led, but potentially useful?

In the UK, it's fair to say that library users and campaigners have long stood up for libraries when librarians did not – because they were intimidated (at local level) or clueless (at national level).

So they need to be clear that this is not just librarians belatedly trying to muscle in ...

EveryLibrary contacted us well in advance of the soft launch in April. We gave campaigners' point of view and discussed ideas.

Their aim, they assured us, was not taking over but 'making sure that we are supporting your critical work as much as possible and doing as much as we can to help you'.

The basic concept is to:

- make it much easier for people to move from caring about libraries to actually doing something concrete
- harness individual interest – plus the support gathered by local campaigns – into a national movement that can have an impact on the basic issues like under-funding and government indifference
- provide tools and promo material.

The UK venture is branded as 'Libraries Deliver'. Not the best choice. This links it pretty firmly to the Libraries Deliver label used by the national Libraries Taskforce, seen by many as far too accepting of government cuts and daft 'innovations'.

There is not much to show yet in the UK, but they are asking people to sign up to register support*. Alison Richards, Northamptonshire campaigner, has spotted potential concerns with the wide range of personal info that they indicate they might request, or even search out. They have promised her that the wording will be changed.

TLC will be finding out more...

*<https://www.librariesdeliverer.uk>

National support scheme?

First news of an intriguing project being explored by CILIP and Libraries Connected (formerly the Society of Chief Librarians).

A report commissioned by Libraries Connected with funding from ACE (Arts Council England) suggests a 'new support model' for library services.

An initial scoping study is being backed by the Carnegie UK Trust. Around £1.7m will be applied for if the scheme is backed by 'key stakeholders'.

The basic idea is to have:

1. A national programme manager and regional engagement team to broker support and improve collaboration between services
2. A national subject expertise bank to provide specialist advice on topics such as service transformation, income generation and mentoring
3. An online 'library library' that shares evidence and advice and has tools to help manage transformation and innovation locally
4. An 'engine for evidence' to pilot new library standards and commission research on the impact of services
5. An advocacy campaign to highlight the contribution of libraries to local priorities and communities.

Mark Freeman, President, Libraries Connected, says: 'This comprehensive model for regional support has been the missing part of the puzzle for too long.'

'Through this programme, we will be able to deliver strategic support at a local and regional level that will help libraries to meet the structural challenges they face.'

Nick Poole, CEO of CILIP, says: 'It is time for a library renaissance, where much-loved public libraries are revitalised and transformed through investment to create scalable and inclusive services. We want to transform lives through modern libraries in communities across the country.'

TLC SAYS...

This looks as if the scheme might be focused, coherent and accessible to service planners in a way that the vast amount of work done by the Libraries Taskforce has never quite managed.

We'll see.

3 and 5 are things TLC has been crying out for. The vast website of information compiled by the old MLA (Museums, Libraries & Archives Council) disappeared when ACE took over its role.

And at least three national publicity drives (by the National Literacy Trust and The Reading Agency) have had huge success – and then been abandoned.

4 is a sign that library standards might be making a comeback – something we've all wanted for years.

BUT...

But enthusiasm for 'transformation, 'innovation' and 'income generation' etc needs to be tempered by common sense.

And a strong resolve to preserve libraries as trusted, solidly funded public services above all else...

This stunning former library at Everton, Liverpool, is in the Victorian Society's latest list of the 10 most endangered buildings of the period. It is grade II listed, and was built in 1896 by Thomas Shelmerdine, Liverpool Corporation's own architect and surveyor. It remained in use as a library until 1999. It was then used by community groups for a while, but has now been derelict for 13 years. Hidden Liverpool*, to whom we are indebted for this photo, reports that there have been plans since around 2012 to convert it into 'an arts, culture, heritage and enterprise centre' [like a library, really...]. Good luck to them.



*hiddenliverpool.org.uk

There are so many impressive campaigns going on that we normally don't feature the same one twice. But for Essex we'll make an exception.

Why? Because most campaigns feel they have done well if they persuade councils not to close libraries wholesale. And they have! When many councils refuse to listen at all, it's a real achievement.

But, far too often, 'saving' libraries means the council turns them over to be run by volunteers. Short term relief soon becomes long term trouble.

Essex is different.

They have shown the council just how much people value their libraries. The council – clearly taken aback by the huge response – now promises to keep them open. As always, it sees volunteers as the solution. But it clearly doesn't understand what it is doing.

So Save Our Libraries Essex (SOLE) is not giving in. It is campaigning harder than ever.

The new message? Volunteer libraries are NOT the solution.



Essex – a 'solution' that can't work

Essex County Council has dropped plans that could have seen only 15 of its 74 libraries run by the council, with the rest to close unless communities run them.

Now it promises to keep all 74 open for at least five years. But it hopes communities will still take on many of them – with very little support offered. Some of the small print will look very familiar to other communities struggling with council offers...

Save Our Libraries Essex (SOLE) explains that this deal can't work. No community should take the bait.

Libraries are a statutory service. As a local authority, Essex County Council has a duty under the Public Libraries & Museums Act 1964 to 'provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons' in the area that want to make use of it, and to promote library use.

Essex CC has revised its strategy for the future of library services.

In the draft strategy, the county's 74 libraries were divided into four tiers. Those in Tiers 3 and 4 were assessed as 'not required to meet ECC's statutory duty'.

Essex has now abandoned its tiering. However, it remains committed to handing libraries over to groups of volunteers, to run what Essex is calling 'community libraries'.

Some local councils and community groups have submitted an Expression of Interest (EOI) to run a community library, due to fear that the alternative was imminent closure.

When the revised strategy was announced, Council Leader David Finch said: 'No library will close in the next five years... I'm very clear that the library service will continue; that we will continue to operate the library service, with and/or without volunteers.'

Essex CC has also stated that it will not force any library to become a 'community library'.

And if no Expressions of Interest are made, or an EOI is withdrawn, or if a community tries to run a library and fails within the five-year period, it will continue to run the library service.

Therefore, under the revised strategy, there is no need for any group to come forward to run a library to prevent its closure.

EOIs are not binding. Indeed a recent report in the Guardian (August 5, 2019) demonstrated that community groups in Essex are already withdrawing their EOIs, 'claiming that the council has publicly misrepresented their requests for more information as support for the controversial plans'.

We would now urge groups to withdraw their offers, and work with SOLE to ensure that Essex CC upholds its responsibility to run a comprehensive and efficient library service across the whole county.

SOLE is a non-political group of Essex residents campaigning to protect the county's library service. SOLE members believe that the revised strategy would leave Essex CC failing in its statutory duty, for these reasons:

- Concentrating library provision on a small number of 'hub' locations would make it impossible for many residents to get to a library. The strategy fails to take into account the nature of our communities, and the available transport.



Saturday 28 September

SOLE will hold a day of action on Saturday 28 September with a 'love our library' street party in South Street in Manningtree, marches planned in Broomfield and Harlow, while further events will take place in Colchester, Galleywood, Wivenhoe, Shenfield, Castle Point and Tendring. Other places are also expected to organise events.

Check the latest news on SOLE's public Facebook page – and come along!

<https://www.facebook.com/SaveOurLibrariesEssex>

ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL SAYS:

We have listened to what Essex people told us in the consultation and the final strategy reflects this.

We will work with our communities, employees and volunteers to ensure that we create a modern library service that is fit for the 21st century, whilst also continuing to explore the opportunities that innovative technology affords and being open to new and creative ideas.

We have heard that libraries are not just about books or computers – but that they are spaces too for people to meet, learn and exchange ideas. And we have heard and seen the passion of communities that want to keep a local library. So we have changed the strategy.

We will invest in the library service to create new, vibrant, modern spaces in council-run libraries in towns, villages and suburbs across the county.

And we will work strenuously with local people to set up community-run libraries and provide funding and support to help make them a success.

We are convinced that there are better ways to run the service and by working with communities we can keep a library service in every current location. The passion and energy of local people can also revitalise library services and community spaces, bring communities together and help tackle social isolation and loneliness.

So, we will keep all libraries open while we work together to transform the service. We are still concerned about the declining use but believe a combination of council-run and community-run libraries offers the best hope to reverse the trend.

- Cutting off access to library services will disproportionately affect children, women, older people, people with disabilities and BAME groups, all of whom use libraries more frequently than other groups.
- **The community-run libraries would be cut off from services such as IT support, library catalogue, stock rotation and lending between libraries. They would be**

reliant on a piecemeal network of volunteers.

This would result in a postcode lottery of the availability, quality and consistency of library services.

Community or partner organisations are being sought across the county to run libraries with Essex CC support.

- Essex will not be providing a library service in these locations, but will be outsourcing its statutory duty to local councils and other community groups.
- Staffing is to be agreed with Essex, with community volunteers replacing professional library staff.
- Opening hours would be dependent on the availability of volunteers. Essex has said that 'there will be a negotiated minimum number of hours if the community library is to receive council support'.
- There is no guarantee of digital access to the library network (library computer network or online catalogue facilities). Any computers, software and internet access would need to be provided by the community groups.
- Stock will be supplied by an initial one-off donation of books, which will be rotated quarterly from council stock 'in proportion to usage'. It is not clear if this rotation will carry on after the first three years.
- It is expected that 'community libraries would be run from premises owned or paid for by the community groups'.

- A grant would be available for the first three years (£8,000 in year 1, £7,000 in year 2, and £3,000 in year 3) to assist with costs such as maintenance, furnishing, property rent, and purchasing computers, internet access, or additional stock.

There is no money mentioned in the strategy document beyond three years. It appears every 'community library' is then left to fend for itself.

WHAT DOES RUNNING A LIBRARY SERVICE INVOLVE?

Essex County Council libraries are currently managed by professional library staff. In recognition of the value provided by professional library staff and their intrinsic relationship with the success of a library service, we are lobbying Essex to keep paid staff at the heart of the library service.

The challenges involved in running a library should not be underestimated.

Comment by volunteer at Lisvane Community Library, near Cardiff (17/04/15) <https://calmgrove.wordpress.com/2015/04/17/libraries> (accessed 20/01/19):

'It's really hard to run a community library. We don't have the money for acquisitions, so the books are out of date.

'We don't have trained staff, so there's little we can do in terms of helping with research and so on. We don't have enough staff, so we're only open 7-8 hours a week.

'We barely have the money to keep the building upright: it's an old portacabin, joyously full of asbestos (fortunately still safely intact and sealed).

'Councils are making a big mistake by handing such an important service over to the community, because no matter how dedicated or enthusiastic, the community lacks resources.'

We are aware of eight community libraries running in Essex at present.

Their opening hours (as advertised on council websites and social media pages) range from 16.5 hours per week (Jaywick) to just one hour per week (Lamarsh).

The existing volunteer-run libraries in Essex are already struggling to recruit and retain volunteers.

Finchingfield community library opens for six hours a week, yet was forced to close unexpectedly on three occasions between 22 September and 1 December 2018, due to lack of volunteers.

Springfield Library (currently managed by Essex County Council but run by volunteers) was forced to close for 97 hours during 2017-18 due to a lack of volunteers - 6% of its allocated opening hours for the year.

On other occasions, paid members of staff from other branches were transferred to Springfield to keep the library open, which would not be possible if it was not part of the Essex CC library network.

Each of our villages and towns is home to a large number of hard-working and caring individuals, who volunteer their time for all manner of activities, from picking up litter to running community cafés.

However, the pool of available volunteers is not infinite. It is our experience that most people willing and able to volunteer are already working at or near their maximum capacity.

Adding to this, the duties carried out by professional library staff are wide-ranging, and at times challenging. Not all members of the public would be qualified or suited to carry out such a role.

From the Essex Libraries website we note that existing volunteer roles are divided into many types (for example 'Baby and Toddler Rhyme

Time Volunteer'), in recognition of the varied duties involved in providing a library service. Many of these volunteer roles require a DBS [safety] check.

Recruiting and maintaining a network of volunteers is likely to be a job in itself. For this reason, some authorities have struggled to make the volunteer-run model financially viable.

According to Ian Anstice of Public Libraries News: 'In Oxfordshire it is estimated that transferring to volunteers is not saving any money at all, once all other costs (including a volunteer co-ordinator) have been included.'

The Public Libraries News page 'What do Public Library Staff Do?' gives a good overview of life as a public librarian (www.publiclibrariesnews.com).

Job adverts for library roles reflect the variety of skills required.

For example, the essential criteria required in a recent advert for Relief Library Assistant in Hampshire are reasonably typical of a library assistant in a customer-facing role:

- **Good general education (GCSEs or equivalent)**
- **Experience of working with the general public in paid or voluntary work**
- **Interpersonal skills**
- **Ability to communicate clearly in writing and orally**
- **Ability to work under pressure**
- **IT skills allowing use of Library Management Systems, SAP etc.**
- **Ability to cope with physical element of the job**
- **Ability to work alone and unsupervised**
- **Ability to process payments according to procedures**
- **Use of all equipment (e.g. library management system, telephone system, public IT)**
- **Moving and handling of objects up to 15 kg (daily requirement)**
- **Display screen equipment user**
- **Lone working**
- **Human Blood or Human Bodily Fluid e.g. First Aid (if designated First Aider)**
- **This post is subject to an Enhanced DBS Check.**

As the list above implies, libraries do far more than simply lend books. Libraries also provide hands-on support, training and digital literacy for people who aren't confident using computers or the internet.





According to the Office for National Statistics, 10% of people in England said they had not used a computer for at least three months when asked in 2018. There are many issues relating to IT provision in volunteer-run libraries – including daunting set-up costs and data protection concerns.

Essex County Council expects community-run libraries to be run from other community buildings, rather than from the library’s current location.

Costs involved with volunteer-run libraries include premises, stock, IT equipment and software, volunteer recruitment, training and legal checks, and security.

A Freedom of Information request revealed the current annual running costs, excluding staff costs, for every library in Essex.

For example, Prettygate Library had premises costs of £33,825 per annum, whereas its acquisition costs came to £14,260 per annum.

Essex is proposing to offer community libraries a grant of just £18,000, spread over three years – £8,000 in year one, £7,000 in year two, £3,000 in year three. **After year three, every ‘community library’ is left to fend for itself. The challenges involved mean that volunteer-run libraries have not always been successful.** In Doncaster, for example, there has been a staggering decrease in book loans since libraries were turned over to volunteers.

One branch (Wheatley) had over 17,000 book loans per year when it was run by professional staff. This plummeted to just over 1,200 last year under volunteers.

WHAT OTHER POTENTIAL ISSUES ARE THERE?

Residents have already paid for a library service through their council tax. Having to support a library through parish council taxes or through volunteers/other contributions is a form of double taxation. People should not have to pay twice to maintain access to a service that Essex has a statutory duty to provide.

The Public Lending Right (PLR) system makes payments to authors, illustrators and other contributors on the basis of loans of their books from public libraries. PLR is a major source of income for many.

If a community-supported library forms part of a library authority’s statutory provision, it would still fall within the PLR scheme. Any libraries

deemed non-statutory would fall outside the PLR scheme.

The Society of Authors has argued that if volunteer-run libraries are not covered under the PLR scheme it is unlawful for them to lend books, unless a license to lend was issued by the author.

Authors would be entitled to sue such libraries for copyright infringement. On July 25 2019 the Society of Authors called again for volunteer libraries to be included in the PLR system.

WHAT SHOULD LOCAL COUNCILS AND COMMUNITY GROUPS DO NOW?

SOLE will be continuing to put pressure on Essex County Council to continue to invest in professionally-run library services across the whole of the county. We hope that local councils and other community groups will join us in this campaign.



A longer version of this paper, fully referenced, can be found at: <https://38d.gs/essex-libraries>

Essex really is the only way!

Matheou Demetrios puts the Essex campaign into a wider context – as a key part of UNISON’s national campaign to protect proper staffing in libraries

UNISON is currently drawing up a Cultural Charter for Libraries, in a dramatic bid to protect the UK’s threatened library services.

Councils will be challenged to sign the charter and commit themselves to maintaining fully staffed in-house library services, with sufficient funding for their future development.

The move is the latest in UNISON’s campaign to oppose ‘closure by stealth’ as councils lure local communities to run library services on their behalf – without the resources or professional staff that make them tick.

RISK

Locally, the union has been involved in successful campaigns this year to keep libraries open, and is battling for others. But it remains concerned at the trend that continues to put them at risk.

‘So many libraries have experienced staff cuts and so many are being run by volunteers that we no longer have a national library service. It’s been totally fragmented,’ says Sarah Pearce, assistant national officer for local government.

‘That’s why it’s crucial that UNISON branches work with their local communities to save their libraries. We all want the same thing – a quality public service.’

One such campaign in Neath Port Talbot, Wales, saved four libraries from closure after UNISON led a local protest against the plans. The union believes that getting the community involved in that fight was ‘pivotal’ to its success.

PROBLEM

And Essex County Council recently performed a u-turn on its plans to close a number of its libraries, after a high-profile campaign [see Campaigner no 97, pp.9–10]. This saw UNISON join forces with other local campaigners and included marches, lobbies of council meetings,

petitioning, the involvement of local schools and celebrity tweeting.

However, that story has since become complicated, in a way that highlights the thorny problem of volunteers – whether in the form of parish councils, charitable trusts or even individuals.

Initially, the council had planned to close 25 libraries and seek community groups to run another 19. While agreeing not to close any, it’s now asking the community to take responsibility for the entire 44.

STEALTH

Andrew Coburn, retired members secretary of UNISON’s Essex County branch and a member of Save Our Libraries Essex (SOLE) says that the £18,000 over three years being offered to community groups to take on the running of libraries ‘is not going to get them very far’.

Moreover, the council has stated that libraries would not remain in their existing buildings – which it will likely sell – meaning that the volunteers would have to find them another home.

And hundreds of library jobs are at risk.

‘I’m disappointed and angry that Essex County Council is not investing in building a properly run and funded statutory public library service,’ says Andrew, who worked for the Essex library service for 37 years (latterly as an acquisitions and cataloguing librarian) before being made redundant three years ago.

‘Using communities to run libraries is closure by stealth. It will affect the jobs of many UNISON and potential UNISON members, as well as providing a worse service – if indeed there is a service in a few years’ time.

‘Councillors are not showing a real understanding and appreciation of what a decent library service looks like and how it can serve the community.’

FRIGHTENING

Sarah Pearce says that what is happening in Essex reflects the national pattern.

‘Councils are absolutely strapped for cash. They know how publicly disagreeable it would be to close libraries. But in order to keep them open they are farming them out at a frightening rate to volunteers to run them.

‘Now, the desire to keep your local library open is completely understandable. But UNISON knows that they are just being softened up for privatisation or closure.

‘The money being offered is not adequate to invest in the service. That means the service deteriorates, so there are fewer users, which allows the council to argue that it might as well be closed anyway. It’s a vicious circle.’

VULNERABLE

And those hardest hit by closures are the elderly and vulnerable who might not be able to make their way to the only libraries remaining open, in the centre of town.

Sarah Pearce feels that UNISON is well placed to educate communities about the dangers of handing libraries over to volunteers and on the need for paid staff.

‘By its very definition, a voluntary service is not sustainable. Workers have no contract. Are there set hours? Can you rely on them? Are they doing the jobs that need to be done or the ones they want to do? How much training have they had? Are they protected in the event of an accident?’

‘If libraries are run by volunteers they are not experts. They don’t have the knowledge, expertise or experience of library workers. Library workers don’t just stamp books. They are the portal to a world of information and advice.’

Unfortunately, a committed campaign in Ealing, west London – which saw over 17,000 signatures across eight petitions – seems to have failed to prevent the borough council from handing five libraries to community groups.

The UNISON branch believes 105 jobs are at risk, while ‘community libraries are being set up to fail’.

ACTIVISTS

In Essex the battle is far from over. After the council’s sleight of hand, SOLE has issued a plea to community groups to withdraw their interest in taking over libraries – effectively asking them to call the council’s bluff.

Says Andrew Coburn: ‘We pointed out that the council has promised not to close libraries for five years. If you withdraw, they are committed to running them, with trained staff, a proper book stock, etc...’

So far, four community groups have rescinded their expressions of interest. SOLE is continuing its campaign with a day of action on September 28.

Sarah Pearce praises 'to the hilt' those activists who are at the frontline of protecting libraries. 'These are campaigns that everyone can learn so

much from. It's very important to share that experience.'

Alongside the Cultural Charter, UNISON is carrying out research with Cardiff University into the impact of volunteering on the library service. The results of this will inform future campaigning.

UNISON'S VOLUNTEER SURVEY

Do you volunteer in a library? Either to supplement professional staff OR in a library entirely run by a community? (or something in between?)

UNISON wants to hear from library volunteers in every kind of situation.

The researchers are Dr Steve Davies and Dr Helen Blakely, based at Cardiff University. This is what they say:

What is the project about?

We are interested in finding out what people think about volunteering, why people volunteer in libraries, and about people's experiences of volunteering in libraries.

Who has funded the project?

The project is funded by UNISON.

Who is being invited to participate?

People who are volunteering in a library, or have volunteered in a library recently, are invited to participate.

What will the interview involve?

The project is interested in finding out about why you decided to volunteer in a library, what this experience is/was like, and what you think about volunteering more generally. The interview will give you the opportunity to discuss this at length if you want to.

The interview can take place somewhere convenient for you (for example, at home, at work or a public place, like a library) or on the telephone. The interview will probably last about an hour and it will be recorded using a dictaphone.

It is entirely up to you whether you get involved or not, and you can stop

the interview at any point without giving a reason. If you are not happy answering any of the questions then you do not have to.

What will happen to the interview recording?

The interview recording will be typed up by a professional transcribing company. Your name and any names you mention (of places or people) will be anonymised. The transcript and the audio recording will be stored on a password protected PC and the recording on the dictaphone will be deleted. The audio files and the transcripts will be stored in a secure location for a minimum of five years.

What will the information be used for?

The information you provide may be discussed at seminars and conferences with people who are interested in this area of research.

The findings may be written up as 'reports' for UNISON and 'papers' sent to relevant academic journals.

Any use made of interviews will ensure that participants are not identified either by name or by any other information.

GET IN TOUCH

The research project is already under way. So if you're interested, don't delay! If you want to take part – or just want more information – contact Dr Blakely (BlakelyH1@cardiff.ac.uk). If you can't use email, the postal address is: Helen Blakely, WISERD, 38 Park Place, Cathays Park, Cardiff CF10 3BB, Wales.

OUT OF CONTROL

Lewisham campaigners have made a very alarming discovery. It seems the government has quietly washed its hands of its legal responsibility for libraries – if they are run by volunteers.

In Lewisham, just four libraries are fully council-run. Nine others are run by a miscellany of different outfits. Lewisham says that all are part of its statutory service.

There are various problems. Uber-campaigners Pat and Peter Richardson have kept DCMS informed.

They expected, as we all do, that DCMS would do nothing, as usual.

What they did not expect was this:

'In respect of the community libraries, we are advised that the recruitment of volunteers is undertaken by the partner organisation, to fulfil the objectives of the recruiting organisation.

'Each organisation has their own recruitment policy... In terms of monitoring volunteers this falls to each of the partner organisations.

'The department does not have oversight of the use of volunteers by local authorities in the delivery of the library service.'

A gob-smacked Pat Richardson asks: 'Does anyone monitor the training, performance and management of the volunteer force, now widely used?

'Surely every local authority employing such a method of delivery of a public service should be required to submit relevant data.

'How can DCMS decide it has no duty to investigate the provision by managers who use their own volunteer force?

'The fragmentation in delivery of the service to the public completely contravenes the statutory requirements of the 1964 Public Libraries & Museums Act.

'The core belief that the public could expect the same level of service in any library across the country has been reneged on and destroyed.'

We can't do everything

Librarian Ian Anstice argues that taking on extra community services is fine in principle – but unrealistic while libraries struggle to fund basics such as books.

I was challenged a few days ago to explain what problem public libraries are designed to meet. This got me thinking. And I think this purpose thing is important because we are as a sector a bit rubbish at explaining what it is, which is a bit of a downer when we are trying to persuade people of our cause.

Once upon a time, of course, the answer was simple. It was a very Victorian paternalistic desire to provide reading, study, job-seeking and other 'betterment' services to the 'deserving poor'. *

The system set up for this was above all local, due to the knowledge that the expected clients could not afford to travel long distances.

Nowadays, we still do much of the same stuff, although we would recoil at using such patronising Victorian descriptions.

However, we have also added a ton of other stuff that has on the face of it only a tangential relationship with what we did before.



These include council services, theatre shows, pre-school entertainment, community centre style offerings, village hall style room bookings and social groups.

Basically, there's not been a service yet that the public library service can seemingly say no to.

This is fine in a way, in that the sector is still addressing the central need of providing resources to the resource-less: social groups for the lonely, theatre shows for those without a theatre, training on how to use the internet etc.

That's all good. It's also a strength, in that it means the service is definitely changing with the times.

But some of this is highly questionable, and

smacks of us trying to look busy. After all, community centres do community centre stuff better, theatres do theatre better, etc.

Sometimes, this search for replacement activity results in libraries trying to muscle into these services while perfectly good and better alternatives exist nearby.

But the main problem with this Jack Of All Trades approach is that the service has greatly expanded its remit, while at the same time the budget has substantially shrunk.

BUDGET

This has led to a lower quality service overall, notably on the book side but also on the building quality and staff side as well.

Don't get me wrong. As purposes go, 'resources for the resource-less' is a pretty long-term and lofty goal.

If Labour eventually gets its act together and wins an election, then it is hoped by many that we will be showered with money and everything will be OK.

If not, then it means an increasing need to muscle in on funding previously given to the health sector, the cultural sector, the charity sector and, well, probably the kitchen sink sector too.

But I think the major problem with this catch-all approach is that as long as librarians fail to put a limit on their ambition, they will forever find the funding wanting.

This is ironic, because many of the reasons for doing all this other stuff in the first place is to chase funding. By doing so, the library service is moving away from the purposes it once had – and these are more easily articulated when defending core services to budget holders.

***The major arguments against the Public Libraries Act 1850 included:**

- Although the boroughs were represented by elected bodies, many people argued that the Act enforced taxation without consent.
- There was opposition to the Act simply on the grounds that founding and maintaining the new libraries would mean an increase in taxation at all, consensual or otherwise.
- Concerns were expressed that it would infringe on private enterprise and existing library provision such as mechanics' institutes.
- Access to certain publications would neither promote civil society nor act as a form of social control. Libraries would instead become sites of social agitation. This issue was linked to the common concern that extending education to the lower orders of society would lead to libraries becoming working class 'lecture halls' 'which would give rise to an unhealthy agitation'.
- Others felt that there were more pressing concerns, and wondered about the necessity for a library when literacy levels were so low.
- The greater levels of education attained by providing public libraries would result in lower crime rates.

From Wikipedia

Community is the core

Libraries are diverse places with social inclusion at their core, says librarianship student Luca Filippi. This makes them fit for the times...

Many people believe that libraries do little other than loan books.

On July 12, the Times reported that book lending rates in British public libraries had almost halved within a decade, prompting criticism that librarians were focusing too much on digital services rather than maintaining an up-to-date stock of books.

One figure to criticise librarians was Tim Coates, the former managing director of Waterstones. He believes librarians were focusing their investments too much on digital services such as e-books.

BOOK LENDING

Tim Coates's comments came alongside news that sales of printed books were continuing to rise, with over 190 million sold in Britain last year. Coates argued that if libraries did not update their collections, the decline of public libraries was to become a 'self-fulfilling prophecy.'

Public librarians responded to the criticism by blaming the slump in book lending on cuts to local authority budgets, which has seen some library services facing funding cuts of 40% over the same period.

Yet the idea that there is nothing more to libraries than the catalogue provides a limited view of an institution that at its core is about social inclusion.

SOCIAL ISOLATION

When I began volunteering in libraries, I quickly began to realise the importance of these public spaces. I would frequently see children enter and play with the tablets or the puzzles. It is these experiences that do not translate into lending statistics.

At its core the library is a place for people of all ages and backgrounds to escape and take refuge. Rather than a place of solitude, the library is essential in combating social isolation amongst at-risk groups such as the elderly.

It came as a surprise, therefore, to see the extent of the criticism by people who wanted to return to the quiet library where staff actively shushed patrons.



Libraries Connected

This was reflected by a number of commenters underneath the article who felt that the emphasis on children's activities were transforming public libraries into 'noisy resource centres.'

One Times subscriber went as far as to take issue with his local library's 'ADHD features' such as 'colourful chairs and curved bookcases'.

WELCOMING

The library should be noisy, as a noisy library is a busy library. It is a library where people of all ages and backgrounds gather to share stories, experiences and knowledge.

The closer libraries get to vapid rows of books, the closer we get to facing continuing library closures and the extinction of this important community resource.

Some people, such as the Times subscriber, might take issue with the Saturday morning singalongs of the modern public library. I argue that we should rejoice that these welcoming places exist in our communities.

We should celebrate the public library as a safe haven in the midst of diverse communities, where citizens of all ages can come and take refuge.

The key to saving libraries from closure is for us all to use them, and use them often.

Presenting the role of the library as nothing more

than a book-lending establishment would be misleading and dangerous.

We may get the urge to be pessimistic about the future of libraries if newspaper headlines continue to suggest the library is on its way out.

Yet there are signs of optimism. Despite the fall in lending, a 2018 report for the government stated that visits to English libraries numbered more than visits to Premier League football games, A&E, and cinemas combined.

COMMUNITY

It is these figures we should keep an eye on, as librarians continue to welcome people through their doors. Book lending rates might continue to fall, but the library will stand strong. By going beyond the book, we do not lose any value in the importance of these places.

Paula Poundstone, comedian and campaign spokesperson for the American Library Association, once said: 'The truth is libraries are raucous club-houses for free speech, controversy and community.'

These are words that we can all take on board when we consider the importance of these institutions in society.

Luca Filippi is a postgraduate student at the University of Strathclyde.

HOW LIBRARIES BUILD COMMUNITIES

Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021

LIBRARIES TASKFORCE

Stronger, more resilient communities

Libraries are free and open to everyone. They bring people together in vibrant community hubs, provide a shared sense of place for their users and play a vital role in helping public services reach out into communities.

Stronger, more resilient communities

Libraries should be acknowledged and celebrated as an essential part of community life, promoting independence and resilience, where the profile of local library users reflects the makeup of their community. Councils and other commissioners should consider libraries first when planning to provide access to a range of public information and services.

CASE STUDY
Communities flourish in Rotherham
A library project in a deprived part of Rotherham is giving residents with mental health issues a vital way to share their experiences, gain strength from each other and feel "normal" again. Based at Mowbray Gardens Library, 'Flourish' uses art-based activities such as storytelling, creative writing, poetry and painting to allow people to come together and develop friendships. In collaboration with guest poets and artists, who have the experience of working with those with mental health issues, 'Flourish' challenges the stigma about mental health. More importantly, it creates an empowering, safe space for participants where their experiences can be shared and help others to recover.

"The love that I get here and the help that I can give to other people, it's the first time I feel wanted and it's absolutely excellent."
Customer comment of Mowbray Gardens Library

Libraries Deliver

Places where diverse communities can integrate

Events to suit a variety of needs

A welcoming space for all

Activities for all ages to enjoy

Safe, non-judgemental spaces for social interaction

Opportunities to reduce loneliness

COMMUNITIES

LIBRARIES:

- Reach and support the whole community regardless of age, gender, socio-economic status or educational attainment.
- Provide space where groups can come together and enjoy activities that are co-designed with local people, to meet their needs.
- Offer local services available through 'community hubs', bringing together different partners' offerings in a seamless way.
- Are safe, welcoming and accessible physical and virtual environments freely open to all, which encourage participation, creativity and mutual learning and support.
- Are uniquely placed to help local government and its partners deliver their strategic objectives, whether linked to community cohesion, health and wellbeing, economic growth, promoting independent living or increasing life chances.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES:

- Councils to integrate library strategies more closely into their broader strategic planning.
- Consider how partnerships with other public services can work better for people in the trusted setting of a local library.
- Encourage people who commission central and local government services to regard libraries as one of their natural first choices to deliver services to local communities.
- Help to reduce digital exclusion by bringing people together through access to free technology and innovation.

35.6% of people living in the most disadvantaged areas visit their library.
Being Part Survey: England 2014/15

"Libraries can connect communities and change lives. They provide safe spaces in the heart of their communities, and provide many services targeting people who are living on a low income, people who are lonely, unemployed, or elderly, and people with long term medical conditions or disabilities."
Gemma Lill, Trust

CASE STUDY
Finding sanctuary in libraries
Theaterland Library in Sandwell is the UK's first 'library of sanctuary', which recognises the role the library plays in welcoming refugees and migrants into the local community. The library is a focal point for refugee support work in the local community. It plays host to Birmingham Action for Refugees - a local voluntary group which raises money for refugees in Europe and supports people seeking sanctuary in the local area. It also runs training courses in befriending refugees, and hosts monthly community lunches to welcome people seeking sanctuary in the local area. In addition, it offers several local services, including ESOL (English as a Second Language) classes, health walks and community tea-and-toast sessions.

CASE STUDY
Making new friends in the City
Workers in the heart of London are making new friends and finding support networks thanks to weekly activities held in a local library. Shoe Lane Library is situated in the business heart of London and is the only community facility in the area. Weekly 'Stay and Play' sessions offer a vital meeting place for parents - many of whom are living and working in the City but far from family and friends. The City Corporation's Social Wellbeing Strategy has now been approved and includes a commitment to adopt the 'Libraries First' approach outlined in Libraries Deliver: Ambition.

"We want to see vibrant communities in which everyone plays a part and for people from all backgrounds to have access to, and make use of, community hubs such as libraries. We support the use of libraries and other community hubs to support integration and challenge them to maximise their contribution to building integrated communities."
Integrated Communities Strategy, Green Paper 2016, HM Government

"Libraries are more than just repositories for books - they play a broad and valuable role in their communities. Public libraries are trusted spaces, free to enter and open to everyone. In them, people can explore and share reading, information, knowledge and culture."
Ais Gourd, England

Libraries Deliver

NEXT STEPS

- Get in touch with your local libraries to see how you can work together
- Read the Libraries Deliver: Ambition report
- Talk to local groups and organisations who might want to work with libraries
- Listen with other service providers to share learning and best practice around working with library services

Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England
www.gov.uk/government/publications/libraries-deliver-ambition-for-public-libraries-in-england-2016-to-2021
Follow progress on our Action Plan via:
Our website www.gov.uk/government/groups/libraries-taskforce
Our blog libraries-taskforce.blog.gov.uk
Twitter @LibTaskforce
Contact the Libraries Taskforce team:
Email: libraries-taskforce@culture.gov.uk

© Copyright 2016. This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0

Another promotion leaflet from the Libraries Taskforce. Set of four at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/libraries-deliver-ambition-for-public-libraries-in-england-2016-to-2021>
Download (A4 size) free, or the Taskforce will send a reasonable number of paper copies if you email: librarytaskforce@culture.gov.uk

Missions of the public library

The following key missions which relate to information, literacy, education and culture should be at the core of public library services:

- 1 creating and strengthening reading habits in children from an early age;
- 2 supporting both individual and self conducted education as well as formal education at all levels;
- 3 providing opportunities for personal creative development;
- 4 stimulating the imagination and creativity of children and young people;
- 5 promoting awareness of cultural heritage, appreciation of the arts, scientific achievements and innovations;
- 6 providing access to cultural expressions of all performing arts;
- 7 fostering inter-cultural dialogue and favouring cultural diversity;
- 8 supporting the oral tradition;
- 9 ensuring access for citizens to all sorts of community information;
- 10 providing adequate information services to local enterprises, associations and interest groups;
- 11 facilitating the development of information and computer literacy skills;
- 12 supporting and participating in literacy activities and programmes for all age groups, and initiating such activities if necessary.



Funding, legislation and networks

The public library shall in principle be free of charge.

The public library is the responsibility of local and national authorities. It must be supported by specific legislation and financed by national and local governments. It has to be an essential component of any long-term strategy for culture, information provision, literacy and education.

To ensure nationwide library co-ordination and co-operation, legislation and strategic plans must also define and promote a national library network based on agreed standards of service.

The public library network must be designed in relation to national, regional, research and special libraries as well as libraries in schools, colleges and universities.

Operation and management

A clear policy must be formulated, defining objectives, priorities and services in relation to the local community needs. The public library has to be organised effectively and professional standards of operation must be maintained.

Co-operation with relevant partners – for example, user groups and other professionals at local, regional, national as well as international level – has to be ensured.

Services have to be physically accessible to all members of the community. This requires well situated library buildings, good reading and study facilities, as well as relevant technologies and sufficient opening hours convenient to the users. It equally implies outreach services for those unable to visit the library.

The library services must be adapted to the different needs of communities in rural and urban areas.

The librarian is an active intermediary between users and resources. Professional and continuing education of the librarian is indispensable to ensure adequate services.

Outreach and user education programmes have to be provided to help users benefit from all the resources.

Libraries support health literacy and self-management, provide health related events and activities, stimulate creativity and learning and connect individuals and communities...

Expert staff in a non-stigmatised & trusted community space



WHAT IS IT?

WHY WE NEED THIS OFFER



1 in 4 people and their families experience the consequences of poor mental health

Provide health information & support



MOOD BOOSTING BOOKS

WHY WE NEED THIS OFFER

15m people



are living with a long term physical condition

Creative opportunities for individuals and groups



Health promotion events

LIBRARIES HELP LOCAL COMMUNIT ES TO

Your public library supports health wellbeing communities

LIBRARIES CONNECTED HEALTH OFFER

Libraries Connected and The Reading Agency



Libraries
Connected

Assisted digital
access

Volunteering
activities & events

Public
libraries
are the
heart
and
soul
of
communities

TO BE HEALTHY AND LIVE WELL

Libraries Deliver:

Ambition for
Public Libraries
in England
2016-2021 by the
Libraries Taskforce

...describes how libraries support a number of outcomes aligned with national and local priorities, including healthier and happier lives for individuals.

WHY WE NEED THIS OFFER

10% of older
people are lonely

Dementia Cafes &
reminiscence groups

Dementia
Cafe

WHY WE NEED THIS OFFER

One person
develops
dementia every
3 minutes

Admiral
Nurse

As a nurse, sometimes I have the feeling that I haven't much to offer, except for a shoulder to cry on. Whereas a book to read is something tangible, something else to suggest and offer.

CBT
therapist

One of my patients suffers from social anxiety: we are working together using the book that I prescribed to him. He reads one chapter or paragraph every week, and our conversation starts from that. He finds it very useful.

Public Library Manifesto

25

1994 - 2019

2019 marks the 25th anniversary of the UNESCO Public Library Manifesto 1994. This was originally ratified in 1949. The 1994 version is the third and latest update.

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organisation) exists to ‘encourage international peace and universal respect for human rights by promoting collaboration among nations. Its mission is to contribute to the building of peace, the eradication of poverty, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue.’

Public libraries have always been seen as central to this mission.

The Manifesto packs a lot of meaning into few words. It is worth careful reading – and reflection...

UNESCO Public Library Manifesto 1994

Freedom, prosperity and the development of society and of individuals are fundamental human values. They will only be attained through the ability of well-informed citizens to exercise their democratic rights and to play an active role in society.

Constructive participation and the development of democracy depend on satisfactory education as well as on free and unlimited access to knowledge, thought, culture and information.

The public library, the local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development of the individual and social groups.

This Manifesto proclaims UNESCO’s belief in the public library as a living force for education, culture and information, and as an essential agent for the fostering of peace and spiritual welfare through the minds of men and women.

UNESCO therefore encourages national and local governments to support and actively engage in the development of public libraries.

The public library

The public library is the local centre of information, making all kinds of knowledge and information readily available to its users.

The services of the public library are provided on the basis of equality of access for all, regardless of age, race, sex, religion, nationality, language or social status. Specific services and materials must be provided for those users who cannot, for whatever reason, use the regular services and materials, for example linguistic minorities, people with disabilities or people in hospital or prison.

All age groups must find material relevant to their needs. Collections and services have to include all types of appropriate media and modern technologies as well as traditional materials. High quality and relevance to local needs and conditions are fundamental. Material must reflect current trends and the evolution of society, as well as the memory of human endeavour and imagination.

Collections and services should not be subject to any form of ideological, political or religious censorship, nor commercial pressures.

Implementing the Manifesto

Decision makers at national and local levels and the library community at large, around the world, are hereby urged to implement the principles expressed in this Manifesto.

Libraries get people connected!

THE BIG PICTURE

- Libraries are unique community spaces where everyone is welcome.
- Libraries are engaging communities through technology, building digital skills and confidence, and encouraging digital participation and inclusion.
- Libraries create opportunities for all by providing free access to wifi, computers, reading, activities and support.
- Libraries play a central role in building digital and information literacy skills that support health, wellbeing and education.
- Libraries are supporting local business and enterprise, providing digital skills, information, confidence and connections.

FROM: <http://www.librariesweek.org.uk/facts>



Oldham libraries

THE DETAILS

- We made over 233 million visits to libraries in 2018 and 115 million visits online (CIPFA, 2017–18 actuals).
- Libraries are at the forefront of developing digital literacy skills that benefit users in numerous ways. Research shows that people with good IT skills earn 3–10% more than those without.
- Increasing digital literacy helps people to make better lifestyle choices that can prevent health problems: such as using trusted medical sites: NHS Choices, or Public Health England approved apps on healthy eating.
- Digitally competent and confident citizens are far more likely to lead healthier, happier, more productive and satisfying lives.
- 99% of libraries have free wifi access, allowing everyone to get online.
- In 2017–18, libraries across Great Britain provided people with over 82 million hours of supported internet access (CIPFA, 2017–18 actuals).
- In Great Britain over 12.2 million e-books were borrowed from public libraries in 2016–17 (CIPFA, 2016–17 actuals).
- Libraries help to reduce inequality by providing safe, civic spaces open to all located in urban and rural areas and part of this offer is access to computers and the internet.
- Communities that have access to timely and relevant information and to the internet are better positioned to eradicate poverty and inequality and support people's health, culture, research, and innovation.
- The critical importance of libraries in supporting digital inclusion and skills development continues to grow, with nearly half of public libraries reporting an increasing number of customers requesting this kind of help.

REFERENCES: <http://www.librariesweek.org.uk/facts>

THE FUTURE

Lorensbergs is the PC booking facility (netloan) used by over half the UK public library sector. Each year, it surveys its customers 'to explore how library needs are changing and hear customers' plans for their services in the year ahead'. Over 80 library authorities took part in the 2018 survey. The key findings are:

- The critical importance of libraries in supporting digital inclusion and skills development continues to grow: nearly half of public libraries saw increasing numbers of customers request this kind of help. Only one library authority reported a decrease.
- The Assisted Digital services provided by library staff offer a lifeline for customers' wellbeing and future prospects. Informal 'ad hoc' provision of this help is rated as the most important, with 97% rating it 'essential' or 'important'.
- Almost one in five libraries saw People's Network computer usage increase in 2018. Demand was driven primarily by Universal Credit claimants, followed by Universal Jobmatch users.
- Over 40% of libraries have plans to increase or develop digital support services and resources in response to customer demand. These range from basic computer skills classes to code clubs and innovation labs, as well as visa applications support.
- The role of self-service in enabling library staff to focus on delivering these value-added services is growing. Over 50% of routine transactions are undertaken through self-service, with plans in some libraries (40%) to increase this total to over 80% of transactions.
- Providing up to date computers is a key part of maintaining the People's Network in libraries. 50% of libraries will be using Windows 10 by the end of 2019. (Upgrade plans for the other 50% are either further away or not yet known.)

MORE INFORMATION: www.lorensbergs.co.uk/media/119093/netloan-public-library-survey-results-2018.pdf

HOW LIBRARIES OPEN UP THE DIGITAL WORLD

Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021

LIBRARIES TASKFORCE

Improved digital access and literacy

Helping everyone to achieve their full potential

Libraries support lifelong learning, self improvement and social mobility. They are places where communities and individuals can share ideas and learn, offering facilities and practical support to help people get online and develop their digital skills.

Helping everyone achieve their full potential by offering improved digital access and literacy

Libraries play an important role supplementing formal learning through activities such as book groups, homework and code clubs, discussion groups and events for children and families. They also provide opportunities for adult learning at all stages and levels, giving everyone opportunities to learn new skills and explore a range of subjects, either independently or in groups.

Libraries provide digital access and support the improvement of digital literacy, which is critical to central and local government strategies around economic development, channel-shift, reducing social isolation and creating community cohesion.

CASE STUDY
Hour of Code with the over 60s

You're never too old to learn something new. Leeds Libraries are using digital technology to promote the health benefits that mentally-stimulating activities have on older people. The workshops covered an introduction to coding, avoided any unnecessary jargon, and provided examples of coding the audience could relate to. Older people coding clubs in Leeds © Rachel Beard, Leeds Libraries.

Libraries Deliver

Free resources for study and learning

Access to ebooks and e magazines

Digital literacy skills

Quiet space for study and reflection

Free wifi and People's Network computers

Direct and family based learning

DIGITAL & LEARNING

LIBRARIES OFFER:

- Online access including free wifi and over 40,000 computers.
- The opportunity to borrow devices such as tablets to extend digital access beyond library buildings.
- A wide range of digital initiatives, including code clubs, and the innovative Make It Digital in partnership with the BBC.
- Makerspaces, FabLabs, studios and innovation spaces, and other physical places where people can use cutting-edge digital equipment. They are inspiring the younger generation to engage with the STEM agenda (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths), exploring new ideas to build their creativity and confidence.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES:

- Work closely with the Department for Education to consider how learning in libraries could further complement the role of schools, colleges and universities.
- Develop ways to deliver the legal entitlement to free publicly-funded training in basic digital skills for people in England aged 19+ who need it.
- Extend makerspaces to more libraries in England.
- Work with private sector partners for mutual benefits in giving communities the opportunities to learn.

"Access to Research provides free access to over 15 million academic research papers through local libraries"
www.accesstoresearch.org.uk

"In 2017, nearly half of public libraries saw an increase in the number of customer requests for help with digital skills and resources"
www.library.org.uk

CASE STUDY
Idea Stores

One of the most visible illustrations of the natural partnership between libraries and learning can be seen in the concept of Idea Stores. The first was set up in 2002, when Tower Hamlets came up with the concept of putting a library, cafe, adult education classes and computer access under one roof. "Idea Stores are more than just a library or a place for learning. As well as library services, they offer a wide range of adult learning courses and an extensive activities and events programme."

Idea Store library spaces and learning spaces are totally integrated: all classrooms or 'Learning Labs' are in the main body of the store; and the continuum between informal and formal learning opportunities is clear to all.

www.ideastore.co.uk
Idea Store (Library Market, Tower Hamlets)

CASE STUDY
Kent libraries Digital Dens

Recognising that digital skill development is a vital area to address, Kent started with a Code Club in one of their libraries. This was oversubscribed, proving there is an appetite, and Kent were successful in winning funding to set up 5 digital clubs in locations of deprivation in the county. The aim of which was to tackle disadvantage among children (ages 8-11) by providing access to technology that they might not otherwise have.

Training on all of the equipment and an introduction to coding has been provided to staff and current volunteers, who in turn can pass on that knowledge to anyone who joins at a later date.

Digital Den in Gravesend © Kent Libraries

"Libraries have an important role to play in making sure everyone, in every part of the country, makes the most of the digital economy... Libraries are also increasingly helping people develop higher level digital skills."
UK Digital Strategy, 2017, HM Government.

"People are increasingly being directed by other agencies to the library, such as job seekers from the Department of Work and Pensions. There's definitely the expectation now that the library is where to go to if you want free internet access, or if you need support in filling out online forms."
More about what's from the People's Network, Luton Library CLIP

Libraries Deliver

Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/libraries-deliver-ambition-for-public-libraries-in-england-2016-to-2021

Follow progress on our Action Plan via:
Our website: www.gov.uk/government/groups/libraries-taskforce
Our blog: libraries-taskforce.blog.gov.uk
Twitter: @LibTaskforce

Contact the Libraries Taskforce team:
Email: libraries-taskforce@culture.gov.uk

NEXT STEPS

- Read the Libraries Deliver: Ambition report
- Talk to local learning providers and see how you might be able to work together
- Look at the support and training offered by CLIP and Libraries Connected around digital skills and literacy
- Look at national initiatives such as digital skills partnerships and see who you might be able to work with locally

© Copyright 2018. This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0

Another promotion leaflet from the Libraries Taskforce. Set of four at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/libraries-deliver-ambition-for-public-libraries-in-england-2016-to-2021>
Download (A4 size) free, or the Taskforce will send a reasonable number of paper copies if you email: libraries-taskforce@culture.gov.uk

1 A huge number of people under 20 can't read face clocks, having grown up with only digital ones.

2 Many people don't know how to spell 'library'. It's in our email address. This causes problems.

3 A disturbing number of young people don't actually know how book-lending at the library works. They assume it costs money! Teach your children about libraries!

4 Crime and thriller are basically the same thing in many cases. In fact, we have doubles of books because of that.

5 People use hidden codes like asterisks to mark which books they've read. Please don't do that! The system will let you know if you've already borrowed something! Just ask.

6 If an automatic door breaks, people will walk into it instead of reading the sign at face height.

7 Libraries are a godsend for blind and deaf people, and not just for audiobooks. They can come for help with filling out forms and getting directions.

8 Some elderly people go through books at a TERRIFYING rate. They are to be feared and respected.

9 Some people are so afraid of computers that they will come to you with a query and then become upset if you offer to look it up on the computer instead of in a book.

10 Some people have never, ever used a telephone. Especially older women. Their husband did it for them.

11 The DWP f**k over everyone, but especially the most vulnerable. I haven't met a single library worker who hasn't helped struggling library users with food or phone calls or even a cup of tea when it's cold and they can't afford heating.

12 The Jobcentre regularly lie to people, and like to tell them they can get services at libraries that simply do not exist. We will try our very best to help you get what you should have been given at the Jobcentre.

13 Most banks assume that everyone has an email now. In fact, some people have trouble proving that they exist at all without one.



Library list

Harvested from Twitter... people loved this anonymous librarian's list of 'things I have learned about the general public whilst working at the library'. More from her at <https://grumpwitch.wordpress.com>

14 Library folk are good folk. We do this because we are passionate about it. We have to be.

15 Libraries aren't quiet anymore. They're community hubs now. They may have quiet study areas but most libraries are bustling with activity. Between kids' classes, singing and memory groups for those with dementia, craft sessions and noisy office equipment, don't expect silence

16 Libraries remain the only place where you can spend hours in a publicly-accessible building without being expected to spend money. Parents come to entertain their children for free on wet days. People in poverty come for a warm place to sit. Libraries are a haven.

17 Some people will go their entire lives only reading two or three authors, but still have enough material to read a book every month. (See also: Danielle Steel, James Patterson, Clive Cussler, etc.)

18 A library lives and dies by the staff on the counter. You can have the best funding, all of the books and tech in the world but you'll only get footfall if your staff go above and beyond. Sometimes even that doesn't work, though, and it's frustrating.

19 We're funded based on footfall. I've seen staff cry because we lost a youth group to a private hall that has fancier facilities, like a cafe. We need all the footfall we can get.

20 Staff are hitting their heads against walls volunteering to create events, classes and groups only to have them shot down because local councils don't understand social media, or want to charge for them. I can't overemphasise just how much unpaid work staff do.

21 Most of the facilities are only working because staff pay out of pocket to get things working. My manager bought a new laminator when we couldn't afford one. She buys in colouring materials for kids. We sometimes bring in our own stationery. We even put in lightbulbs.

22 Authors don't like to visit little libraries because they don't get paid. Bookstores often pay.

23 The 'sexy librarian' trope has actually done a LOT of harm and has caused countless incidences of sexual assault by men who can't tell the difference between porn and reality.

24 Old ladies keep libraries in business. Old ladies who read are the best. Old ladies who can tell you exactly which page features the most gruesome murder scene are the very best.

25 Library staff ALWAYS want to know what you thought of the book. We want to know what to recommend to others!

26 I'm not supposed to have favourite library users but I do: I love library couples who bicker over each others' reading tastes, or share books and then argue about the themes. I also love the autistic kids with special interests. I will crawl over hot coals to get you a book about the specific type of train you are interested in, tiny child. I will listen to you tell me about it in great detail. I will try to remember for the next time you come in.

27 The single best moment, for me, is when a library user graduates from Young Adult to Adult and suddenly the entire library is open to them! They can read anything! No more tiny teen section! All of the classics! Sci fi! Horror! They often get overwhelmed.

28 And finally, remember this: Library staff can overcome many challenges but Book Gods help you if you deprive us of caffeine. You don't want to see what happens then.

Trouble up north

Volunteer-run libraries seem linked to catastrophic falls in book issues, as we've pointed out before. We received a personal view from one library user in Sheffield. Shortly afterwards, we received an analysis that shows the same pattern spreading across South Yorkshire and beyond...



Dear Editor,

I am writing as a library user from Sheffield. I have been using libraries intensively since 2008, having always had an interest in reading.

The interest I had for libraries and reading developed into a passion and hobby purely on the strength of visiting our beautiful art deco central library. At that time had its own music library, a fully staffed and stocked reference library and much more.

In recent years our libraries in Sheffield have borne the brunt of austerity cuts. Fifteen libraries are now run by volunteers, each with their own book collections in addition to the council

controlled stock. These books are not on the main Sheffield Libraries catalogue, meaning library users may be missing out on accessing particular titles.

Tinsley, an area with high numbers of adults and children who speak English as a second language, now does not even have such a volunteer-run library. It has to make do with a small room full of books, housed in the local community forum. This is despite the council owning an empty Carnegie Library literally just over the road.

Book loans, according to the council's own figures, have declined at volunteer-run libraries. So

has income. Ironically in the same period charges for library fines, printing and other services have increased.

A new strategy obviously needs to be adopted in Sheffield.

Libraries are such vital institutions. It is only right that Sheffield gets the library service it deserves to enable future and current generations to change their lives as I have done mine, through reading for pleasure.

Yours faithfully
Matthew Smith,
Hillsborough, Sheffield

SOS South Yorkshire Libraries

Libraries in South Yorkshire continue to be in decline, and it seems only to be getting worse. Sheffield put 16 of its 28 libraries out to volunteers between 2014 and 2016, with a predictable impact on book loans.

To give an example of decreased usage at branch libraries now run by volunteers, the number of book loans at Ecclesfield Library under staff in January 2014 was 2,230, down to 790 in January 2016 under volunteers.

Two other libraries, at Jordanthorpe and Stannington, saw 1,222 and 3,121 book loans respectively in January 2014 when run by staff, down to just 367 and 1,425 respectively under volunteers.

Updated figures up to 2018 shows a continued decline in book loans at all volunteer-run libraries.

Book Loans	2011 <i>(run by staff)</i>	2018 <i>(run by volunteers)</i>
Balby	29,117	4,194
Stainforth	22,175	3,609
Warmsworth	14,893	1,792
Wheatley	16,784	1,289

Sheffield, however, cannot compete with neighbouring Doncaster when it comes to amateurising library services. Here, a whopping 21 out of 25 libraries are now run solely by volunteers. A sample of the book loans gives a clear picture at the impact this has had on usage. This trend is

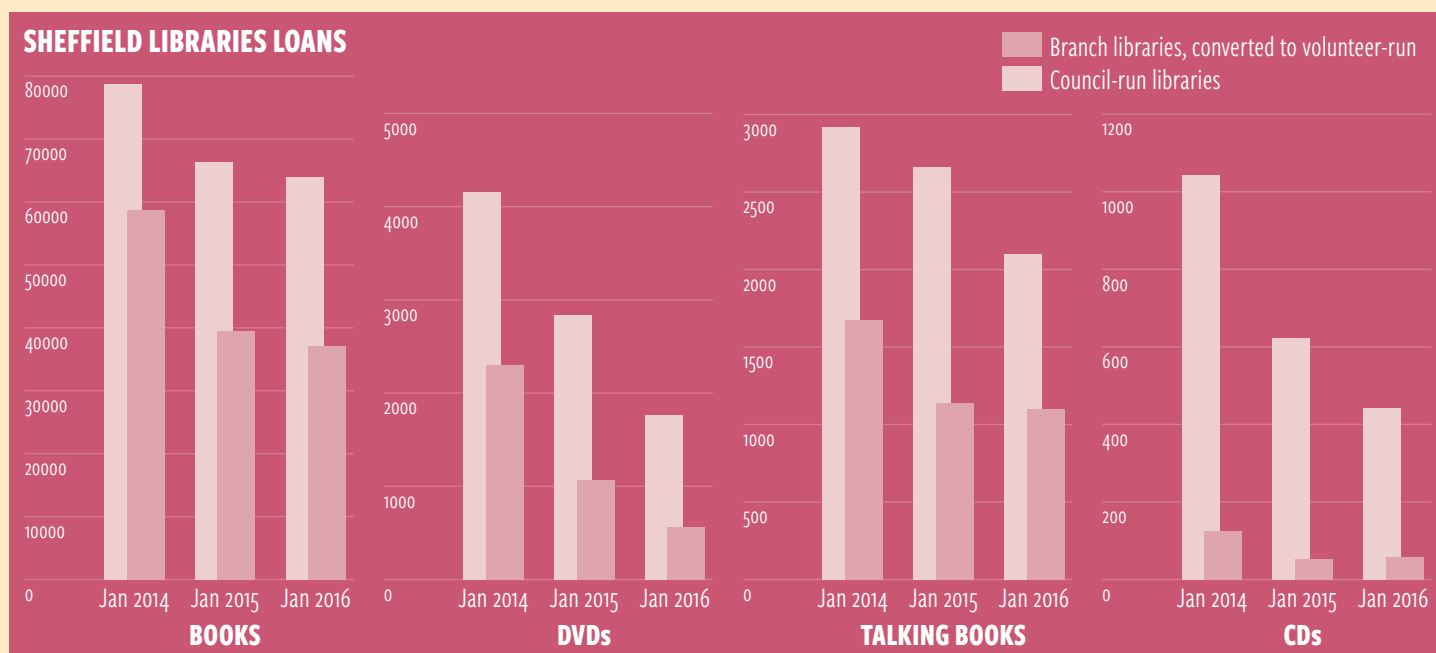
replicated across all volunteer-led branch libraries, according to the council's own figures.

Despite all this, Rotherham Council and Derbyshire County Council are currently considering options for their own library services, including increased use of volunteers. One would hope that they would take note of what has happened just over the border and reconsider.

On a more positive footnote, Barnsley Libraries has recently announced it is to attempt to boost library usage by abolishing library fines, a highly progressive move which Doncaster and Sheffield should follow.

SHEFFIELD LIBRARIES

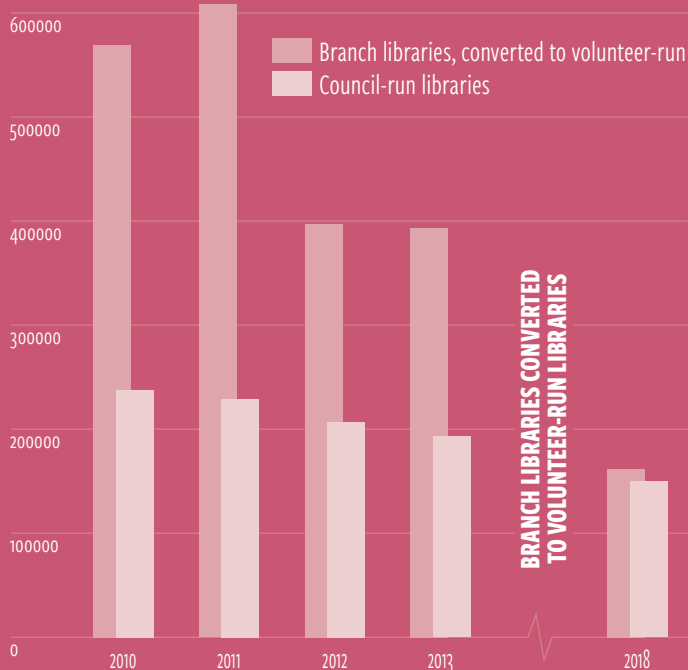
	BOOKS			DVDS			TALKING BOOKS			CDS		
	Jan 14	Jan 15	Jan 16	Jan 14	Jan 15	Jan 16	Jan 14	Jan 15	Jan 16	Jan 14	Jan 15	Jan 16
Volunteer libraries												
Broomhill	6,958	4,981	5,377	296	156	58	253	183	236	8	3	7
Burngreave	1,131	964	717	57	42	4	23	11	9	4	2	-
Ecclesfield	2,230	1,309	790	79	24	6	48	25	24	-	-	-
Ecclesall	16,250	12,742	14,003	552	371	302	582	513	458	108	46	46
Frecheville	1,581	884	818	82	26	1	47	29	10	-	-	-
Gleadless	3,132	1,451	1,291	129	24	6	21	19	21	-	-	-
Greenhill	4,346	2,907	2,591	161	61	22	60	44	62	-	-	-
Jordanthorpe	1,037	504	367	71	27	2	33	8	14	-	-	-
Newfield Green	1,222	725	490	93	14	3	50	15	3	-	-	-
Park	2,914	1,021	817	65	44	5	25	15	10	-	-	-
Southey	1,171	546	527	44	3	10	56	5	21	-	-	-
Stannington	3,121	1,918	1,425	148	47	17	164	16	21	-	-	-
Tinsley	1,028	711	515	30	35	3	19	3	6	-	-	-
Totley	5,139	3,973	2,935	144	56	49	22	165	139	4	1	4
Upperthorpe (Zest)	2,560	1,562	1,785	116	25	13	168	12	14	-	-	-
Walkley	2,605	1,994	1,501	122	67	30	50	48	38	-	-	-
Woodhouse	2,375	1,294	1,227	109	50	31	52	29	17	-	-	-
Staffed libraries												
Chapelton	6,562	5,566	6,626	359	241	171	258	260	150	21	12	17
Central Lending	23,351	19,719	18,424	1,672	1,140	724	1,124	922	827	864	516	372
Crystal Peaks	7,913	6,684	6,828	369	216	186	361	295	286	30	24	19
Central Children's	4,324	4,269	4,287	77	80	51	74	56	36	3	5	2
Darnall	3,004	2,505	2,761	106	87	57	133	74	92	11	7	-
Firth Park	5,001	3,823	3,706	260	176	78	334	161	152	13	3	3
Hillsborough	6,456	5,255	5,404	238	151	87	190	185	165	32	18	-
Highfield	6,095	4,513	5,635	318	228	178	120	106	81	16	21	24
Manor	4,311	4,003	4,200	139	130	55	182	212	177	6	-	-
Parson Cross	2,207	1,865	1,967	121	66	54	30	45	14	-	-	-
Stocksbridge	4,104	3,456	3,648	233	133	119	70	162	107	24	8	4
Woodseats	5,450	4,670	473	268	194	5	41	186	12	24	8	-



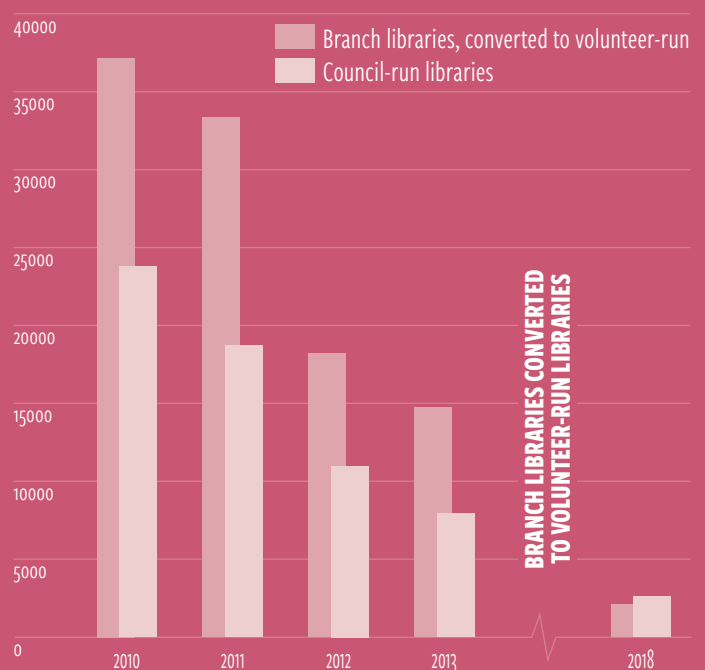
DONCASTER LIBRARIES

	BOOKS	CDS	DVDS	PC SESSIONS	TALKING BOOKS	BOOKS	CDS	DVDS	PC SESSIONS	TALKING BOOKS	BOOKS
	2010					2011					
Volunteer libraries											
Armthorpe	38320	171	3181	8,252	1367	48081	140	2500	7,806	1632	36641
Askern	22888	125	1296	3,584	684	28716	138	1512	3,054	421	22321
Balby	26180	190	1933	10,384	792	29117	148	1798	8,369	645	16607
Bawtry	36185	98	2004	2,098	1030	38420	191	1515	1,968	525	28093
Bentley	35916	313	2987	9,928	1383	41867	243	2228	10,225	1115	35699
Bessacarr	14311	14	544	459	295	13535	19	316	288	83	8915
Cantley	49948	171	3008	6,383	1239	53457	166	2257	5,171	872	51494
Carcroft	20121	48	833	-	268	20439	33	753	-	171	
Conisbrough	23787	171	1820	6,053	525	25930	238	1778	5,360	376	26366
Denaby	7805	28	717	-	179	8062	17	567	-	218	
Edenthorpe	26608	87	1051	1,004	756	22667	81	1218	755	836	7284
Hatfield	45100	138	1844	2,897	2039	41934	98	1772	2,644	2000	44371
Intake	28195	140	1522	6,525	1986	27791	107	1138	6,027	1504	13103
Moorends	7669	11	608	1,657	308	8854	23	719	1,459	174	3622
Rossington	20679	23	974	2,112	505	18467	23	677	2,181	413	6637
Scawthorpe	28530	223	2120	6,117	833	31077	197	2176	1,606	676	14693
Sprotbrough	31740	134	1618	2,768	715	35372	190	1607	1,781	941	21565
Stainforth	19473	44	1377	7,303	1037	22175	15	1015	7,356	644	13620
Tickhill	26368	67	855	2,069	598	30063	168	1132	1,613	532	29288
Warmsworth	14761	16	460	823	766	14893	5	535	762	546	6400
Wheatley	17457	179	1437	679	275	16784	133	1133	457	257	6999
Woodlands	27227	143	2444	8,256	737	30647	96	2519	8,130	660	3465
Staffed libraries											
Central Library	147640	3512	13646	47,339	10649	127739	2315	9696	41,232	5177	118395
Edlington	26661	246	1923	11,848	521	29354	165	1340	11,874	599	24776
Mexborough	28588	263	1564	10,607	551	32566	193	1154	9,633	508	28555
Thorne	34619	297	2331	9,089	791	39546	280	3597	7,579	616	35371

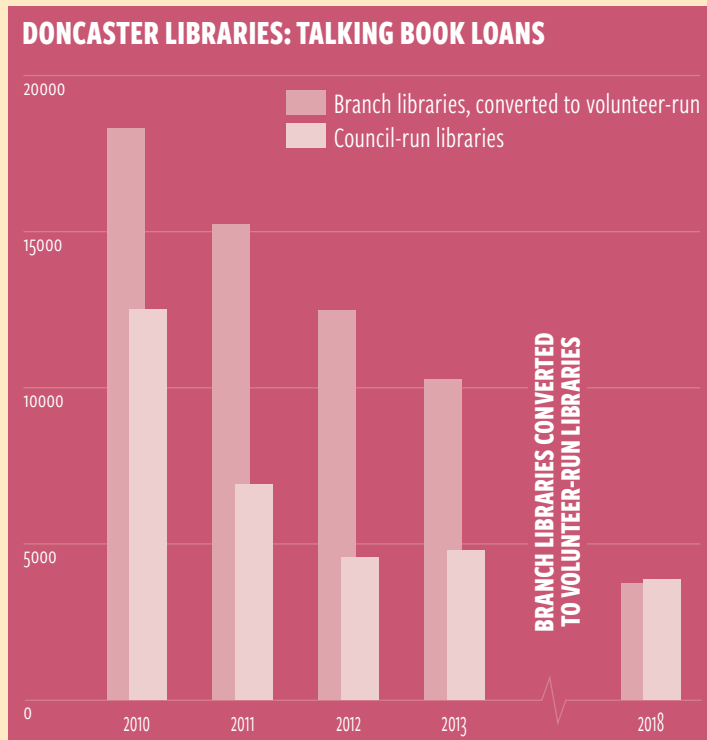
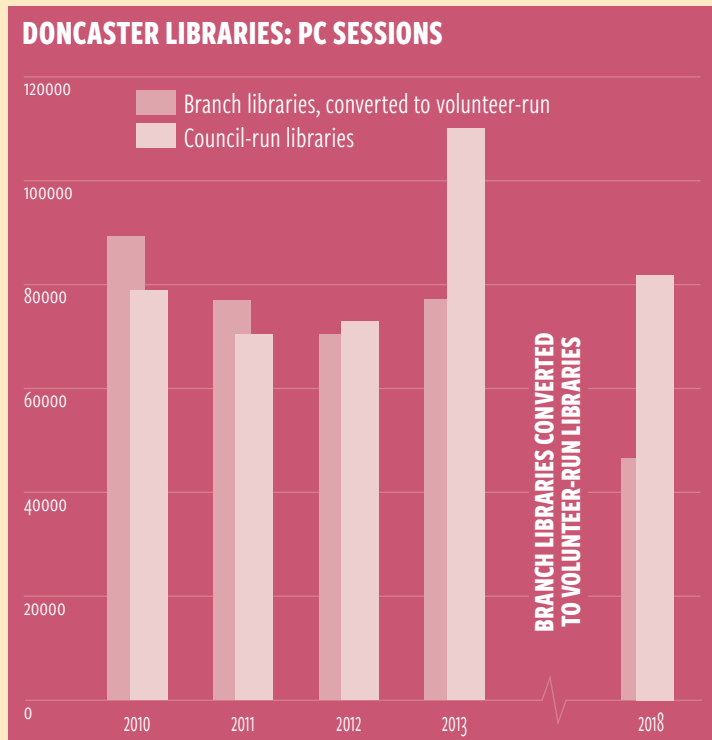
DONCASTER LIBRARIES: BOOK LOANS



DONCASTER LIBRARIES: DVD/CD LOANS



2012				2013					2018				
CDS	DVDS	PC SESSIONS	TALKING BOOKS	BOOKS	CDS	DVDS	PC SESSIONS	TALKING BOOKS	BOOKS	CDS	DVDS	PC SESSIONS	TALKING BOOKS
123	1690	8,197	1824	40446	81	1368	8,947	1650	15,271	13	185	4,448	501
64	641	2,860	451	19855	15	334	3,500	369	5,541	2	37	1,757	67
49	690	5,531	390	12539	4	652	4,110	115	4,194	3	6	3,773	82
174	946	2,144	518	24084	72	627	2,256	401	14,167	33	288	3,097	203
85	1450	9,341	863	29561	29	1139	9,526	788	9,002	6	19	4,389	306
4	226	176	39	6797	6	141	130	34	3,599	0	40	117	9
240	2266	4,679	1240	58079	127	2182	5,529	1958	21,589	41	129	3,091	419
CLOSED													
250	1120	6,637	658	19420	68	793	7,821	491	7,079	2	99	3,934	145
CLOSED													
				553	1	0	759	2					
12	273	370	235	4566	1	139	382	19	3,935	13	65	282	12
172	1279	2,723	2605	44432	117	1044	3,340	1824	12,079	38	79	1,607	539
34	517	3,284	912	8470	4	266	3,137	518	4,260	0	2	2,453	188
6	114	903	60	2841	2	110	1,141	37	2,086	0	92	1,065	13
18	201	1,140	112	8164	13	353	1,594	122	3,506	0	30	756	123
48	767	655	291	12219	22	556	336	172	6,098	9	92	1,100	104
60	571	1,474	559	19019	46	441	1,955	278	12,363	5	185	2,236	138
28	729	6,415	256	9427	97	1060	6,381	215	3,609	51	158	4,082	38
57	336	1,629	579	33649	62	1111	1,702	528	20,248	1	204	1,186	367
20	234	544	203	4966	4	91	644	135	1792	1	14	492	101
12	559	394	41	4002	3	184	377	28	1,289	0	31	241	1
100	2058	11,239	631	30609	59	1294	14,366	589	9,441	30	56	5,604	363
CLOSED													
1606	6261	43,790	3446	110799	1111	4388	76,758	3464	84,550	52	1,562	54,740	2,089
48	711	10,810	549	20762	43	477	11,014	607	20,038	1	352	5,482	643
38	899	11,978	251	28589	14	658	16,052	416	17,043	13	170	13,880	896
204	1213	6,366	327	32983	169	1053	6,300	307	28,016	0	452	7,755	240



Digital? The kids are not alright...

We all know it's a myth that 'everyone' has access to the internet, and 'everyone' has the skills to use it. Except young people, who are 'born digital', of course. They are fine, aren't they? But they are not.

A new report from Carnegie Trust UK* focuses on school-age children in England. It collates a lot of studies and looks at 'access' and 'skills' in the widest sense... such as the child who has no computer at home, the teen who has only a mobile phone, the girl who loves to chat online with fellow Roma – but is kicked back by the hate messages these sites attract. And so on.

It concludes that 'there remains a substantial group of children and young people who are disconnected'.

In this age of the internet, such children are 'at risk of being at an even greater disadvantage than previous generations, given the rapid and widespread adoption of digital means and methods throughout all facets of life and the expectation from others that they are digitally engaged'.

Those who are already disadvantaged in other ways 'are most likely to lack digital access, further widening the social inequality gap'. Not being able to access the internet for homework compounds their problems. One review, for instance, found that 'the availability of a computer at home was positively associated with Key Stage 4 test scores, and that young people with a computer at home are less likely to play truant at ages 14 and 16 than those without computer access'.

Wild assumptions about young people's digital skills mean it's hard for them to ask for help – or even to realise that they need it.

Even everyday internet usage has its hazards: 'One report described how some young people could technically complete a Google search, but struggled to navigate the results, feeling overwhelmed by the huge list and confused about why there was not a clear, direct answer.'

The implications are especially scary in terms of safety.

'This is an issue of growing concern,' says the report. 'For example, over half (53%) of young people aged 12 to 15 who go online think they can easily delete information that they have posted about themselves if they don't want people to see it.'

'Over a third of 12–15s have seen hateful content directed at a particular group of people in the last year.'

The report says the responsibility to protect young people online lies with 'schools, parents, carers, tech companies, regulators and government'.

But they should have 'the skills and confidence to be able to take certain sensible actions, such as safeguarding their personal details or making wise choices about the sites and individuals that they interact with'.

Librarians, with their information skills, should be a key resource for teaching 'digital literacy'. But with constant cuts, how many are able to provide extra services like this? Or even get updated training to do it?

Even simple access to IT is hard for cash-strapped libraries to provide as needed: 'Libraries are a key provision of digital access – yet local libraries are rarely open in the evenings or on Sundays, and access may depend on parents or guardians being able and willing to transport and/or accompany the child...'

'Some libraries have to allocate computer access through time slots of 30

Switched On
Exploring the challenge of adequate digital access for all children and young people
Background for the Digital Access for All initiative • Read the full report at <http://bit.ly/DAFASwitchedOn>

Digital access must be available to all children and young people

- In 2018, of all households in Great Britain, 10% do not have access to the internet.¹
- 700,000 11–18 year olds (12%) have no home internet access from a computer or tablet.²
- A further 60,000 11–18 year olds do not have any home internet access at all.³
- 12% of rural premises in the UK cannot access even a basic fixed broadband service.⁴

Digital access must be affordable

- 2.7 million children live in low income families.⁵
- The average household monthly spend on communications services is £124.62.⁶
- Around one in ten adults have had difficulty paying for communications services; this is highest among younger consumers and those with long-term mental illness.⁷
- 36% of 16–24 year olds live in mobile-only households.⁸

Disadvantages of no digital access⁹

- ➔ Poorer health outcomes
- ➔ Lower life expectancy
- ➔ Increased loneliness
- ➔ Less access to jobs and education
- ➔ Paying more for essentials
- ➔ Risk of falling into poverty
- ➔ Lack of voice and visibility

Digital access requires digital skills

- 11.3 million people lack the basic digital skills they need to participate fully in our digital economy.¹⁰
- 21% of the UK population lack at least one Basic Digital Skill.¹¹
- There are as many as 300,000 young people (aged 15–25) in the UK who still lack basic digital skills.¹²

Digital access requires awareness of privacy and safety issues

- 53% of young people aged 12–15 think they can easily delete information they have posted about themselves.¹³
- 40% of disadvantaged young people struggle to make decisions about their own online behaviour and safety.¹⁴
- 1/3 of 15 year olds have sent a naked photo of themselves at least once.¹⁵
- Over a third of 12–15s have seen hateful content online.¹⁶

Advantages of digital access

- ➔ Access to a wide range of services from banking of medical appointments to finding out entry requirements
- ➔ Help with school work if the ability to complete school work
- ➔ Access to job market
- ➔ Other training, learning and development opportunities
- ➔ Connections with mentors and virtual communities around particular health conditions, life experiences or specific interests
- ➔ Connections with peers in social networks

1. Office for National Statistics, 2018 Internet access - Great Britain, available: June 2019
2. Bank for Social Justice, 2018 Connected Digital Skills Survey, 2018
3. House of Commons, 2018 Access and Inclusion 2018, London, 2018
4. Ofcom, 2018 Broadband Availability in Rural Areas, London, 2018
5. Office for National Statistics, 2018 Income Deprivation Affects Children, London, 2018
6. Ofcom, 2018 Communications Market Report, London, 2018
7. Ofcom, 2018 Communications Market Report, London, 2018
8. Ofcom, 2018 Communications Market Report, London, 2018
9. Office for National Statistics, 2018 Digital Skills Survey, London, 2018
10. Office for National Statistics, 2018 Digital Skills Survey, London, 2018
11. Office for National Statistics, 2018 Digital Skills Survey, London, 2018
12. Office for National Statistics, 2018 Digital Skills Survey, London, 2018
13. Office for National Statistics, 2018 Digital Skills Survey, London, 2018
14. Office for National Statistics, 2018 Digital Skills Survey, London, 2018
15. Office for National Statistics, 2018 Digital Skills Survey, London, 2018
16. Office for National Statistics, 2018 Digital Skills Survey, London, 2018

minutes or an hour. This can lead to increased stress by having to complete tasks in a time limit... and restricts the opportunity to gain skills through more unstructured or leisurely use of the internet.'

If only libraries had the resources they need...

* <http://bit.ly/DAFASwitchedOn>

Libraries are the business!

Decision makers often don't realise what public libraries do for business. They should. Every library service gives free access to loads of expensive business information. And a growing network of specialist advice centres is doing much more...

A report on the British Library's business support network* shows it's a huge success. It is now opening up all over the country.

And, as an interesting side benefit, it is being especially well used by groups who are under-represented in the business world.

That's what public libraries do.

Overall, 48% of network users went on to start a business, mostly within a year. Of these, 55%

* Democratising Entrepreneurship, ERS Research & Consultancy: <https://tinyurl.com/yxtz63zb>

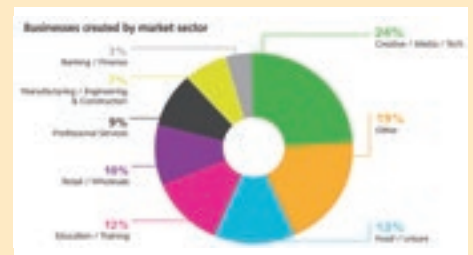
were women (65% in London), 31% were from a Black/Asian/minority ethnic background (44% in London) and 17% had a disability.

Figures from BEIS (Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy) show that nationally, only 22% of businesses are owned by women and only 5% by Black/Asian people.

The most deprived communities were also well served by the network. 22% of users were drawn from the top 20% most deprived areas in the UK, where typically just 7% are self-employed.

BL-backed businesses also had a better survival rate. Overall, only six out of 10 new businesses are still trading after three years. For BL network clients, the figure was nine out of 10.

An interesting light on this: two-thirds had not started their business when they first used the network. Some of them were saved the time, resources and heartache of failing – 12% decided



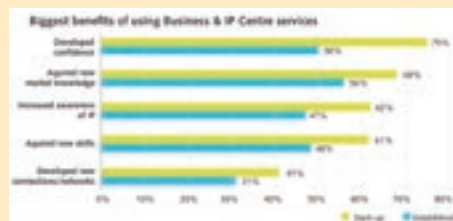
not to start a business, after concluding their idea was not viable.

'This report shows that libraries are driving the UK's regional and small business economy by equipping anyone, no matter what their background, with the tools and expertise needed to become their own boss,' says Roly Keating, Chief Executive of the British Library (BL).

'We look forward to partnering with even more libraries, as we work towards our goal of opening 20 centres by 2023 – and expanding business support to high streets via branch libraries.'

But the writers of the report want more: 'This report clearly points to the potential of the network to be scaled much more widely.

'With appropriate government investment, we believe this could be a game-changing intervention for business support, powering



THE BACKGROUND

It all started 14 years ago. The BL set up a 'Business & IP (intellectual property) Centre' at its HQ in London. It was a whole new model of service. It provided targeted support to aspiring entrepreneurs, and helped established SMEs to scale up – and protect their intellectual property. So far, over 100,000 businesses have benefited.

It was soon clear that all this was also needed at local level. As always, public libraries were the obvious way to deliver a standard national service in a locally accessible form.

Work began in 2010 with a successful pilot in Newcastle. In 2012, with support from the UK Intellectual Property Office, the Business & IP Centre Network was born.

Centres are now running – or on the way – in Birmingham, Brighton, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough (combined authority), Devon, Glasgow, Hull, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester (including nine neighbouring boroughs),

Newcastle, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, Nottingham, Sheffield and Worcester.

A new project launched this year, Start-ups in London Libraries, is establishing a co-ordinated network across ten London boroughs.

All centres offer:

- free access to high-quality UK and global market intelligence, customer insights and company data (worth over £5m), plus intellectual property advice
- free and low cost one-to-one support, from the BL and private/public sector business experts
- networking events, featuring role model entrepreneurs
- accessible and welcoming spaces with access to PCs, desks and wifi.

Each centre operates to a standard service level, and gets guidance on all aspects of setting up and running. Local staff are trained by both the BL and the UK Intellectual Property Office.

Each centre tailors its programme of

activities to local needs. And 50,000 face-to-face, email and telephone enquiries are handled every year.

The results have been impressive. Between January 2016 and December 2018, the network supported 43,000 individuals either directly (one-to-one clinics, workshops and events), or through online webinars and live streaming of events.

It supported the creation of 12,288 new businesses – 15 every working day. Of these, 47% were in the 'Northern Powerhouse' area.

New and established businesses created an extra 7,843 FTE jobs. Net additional sales growth was an estimated £239 million. After expert advice, 41% of centre users took some action to safeguard or exploit their intellectual property.

Net additional GVA (Gross Value Added) for Business & IP Centre supported businesses was an estimated £78 million. The report values the 'Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR)' to the public purse at £6.95 for every £1 invested.

start-ups and SMEs across the UK to create a thriving entrepreneurial economy?

That would make sense. But what are the chances? The report was welcomed by culture secretary Jeremy Wright. The network, he said, is 'helping to deliver the skills and training people of all backgrounds need to succeed.

'By breaking down the barriers to women, black, Asian and minority ethnic groups looking to start up new businesses, the BL is helping everyone to expand their ideas and grow our economy.'

Of course, that secretary has now been replaced. And where was the business secretary?



Below: Jennifer Lam and Jen Hoang are co-founders of Stitch & Story (<https://www.stitchandstory.com>). This website sells knitting and crochet beginner kits, with 'everything you need to get started and learn the basic techniques'. They include 'super-easy patterns' and online tutorials to help with every step of the way. With advice from a BL centre, they have turned a kitchen start-up into a global business, exporting to 50+ countries and securing key contracts such as John Lewis, Liberty, and Anthropologie and Nordstrom in the USA.



Why libraries?

The report spells out how – and why – libraries could be the lynchpin of a nationwide small business support service. TLC has one proviso: core library services should not be crowded out by a mass of 'co-located' extras. But, apart from that, this is a strong endorsement of the value of libraries. Will the government listen?

Libraries as place-makers

Libraries already exist in cities, towns and villages across the UK.

They anchor major urban redevelopment projects, they appear in shopping centres and high streets, and sympathetically remodelled landmark libraries sit as proud civic icons in our major cities.

The government-commissioned Self Employment Review highlights the importance of making advice and support as accessible as possible. It recommends that shared work spaces should be incorporated in local libraries, 'bringing commercial activity and life to under-utilised resources already in place'.

85% of BL Business & IP Centre users rated accessibility of services as good or very good. 96% would recommend them to others. The emerging hub and spoke approach meets the needs of both urban city and town dwellers, as well as rural communities, and capitalises on

existing infrastructure.

Reinvigorating the high street

Libraries sit on or near high streets across the country. Working with Business & IP Centre hubs [they] could be transformed into business 'spokes' offering dedicated areas for people to work and get proven support to start up and run viable businesses.

Growth Hub support services could also be delivered through the library network.

Other high street and council services, such as cash points, post offices, Job Centre Plus and Citizens Advice Bureaux could be co-located with business support services, to provide a one-stop-shop and holistic support for local residents.

Some local authorities have already moved some of their council services into central libraries.

Leading the way in diversity and inclusion

Libraries sit in the heart of communities and are vehicles for inclusion and social mobility.

Approximately 10% of all BL Business & IP Centre users were unemployed or looking for work when they first received support. Just under half of them are now running their own business (46%) while a further quarter (23%) of them are now in employment.

Business & IP Centres have unparalleled reach and engagement with diverse audiences, supporting a high percentage of women and black, Asian and minority ethnic entrepreneurs to start up and grow their businesses, when compared with other business support providers.

Our ambition

Our long-standing ambition is to grow the Business & IP Centre Network to 20 centres by 2023.

However, this report clearly points to the potential of the network to be scaled much more widely through a 'hub and spoke' model. With appropriate government investment, we believe this could be a game-changing intervention for business support, powering start-ups and SMEs across the UK to create a thriving entrepreneurial economy.

Murder most fowl!

Here's a wheeze from Chris Martin for putting some fun into fund-raising, with an easy-to-stage murder mystery set – of course – in a library.

Chris Martin is a long-time lecturer in drama who has now turned to writing daft plays to help people raise funds. His website (www.murderplays.com) lists comedy murder plays set in a school, a golf club, a football club – you name it.

Now there's one set in a library (and ... er ... a chicken farm).

Each is easy to perform, with minimal props, little skill and no need to learn lines. Ridiculous costumes help, he says.

Each play comes in a long or a 'mystery short' version. He recommends the latter. This can be read from a script and takes about two hours, including a half hour break for the audience to work out who dun it and have some refreshments.

The cost is £35. This buys a downloadable package which includes the script, audience answer sheets, poster and ticket templates, and assorted advice.



Murder Most Fowl had its premiere at Chris's local library in Adlington, Lancs. Then the nearby Friends of Parbold Library had a go and made £700 on tickets alone.

The website lists lots of other satisfied customers who have raised much more with other plays. Worth getting in on the act?

'Murder Most Fowl!' by Chris Martin

An extract from Act 1. You can ask to see the whole of Act 1 via chris_and_june@hotmail.com

Setting: The village library in Milton Tweedings.

Date: July 13, 1954.

Act 1:

CAST

AGNES (OR ARTHUR) DALRIMPLE: Author of international renown.
AMOS RAMSBOTTOM: Farmer.
CONSTANCE RAMSBOTTOM: Farmer's wife.
THOMAS RAMSBOTTOM (18): Amos and Constance's son.
BURT LARD: Local butcher.
LOTTIE BELCHER: Scarsdale's Lady Mayoress.
MISS MABEL NIPPITT: Veteran super-sleuth.

AGNES/ARTHUR: Good afternoon/evening. Might I start by saying what a pleasure it was to be invited by Miss Mimms to your charming little library here in Milton Tweedings.

Libraries, I believe, are the beating heart of any community and we can only count our blessings that Prime Minister Churchill supports this sentiment wholeheartedly.

I mean, what a sorry state it would be if libraries were no longer heralded as the pinnacle of cultural and spiritual enlightenment that they are today. Imagine that, eh?

Now, for those unfamiliar with me, my name is Agnes/Arthur Dalrimple and I'm the world's leading writer of popular crime fiction. I'm also lucky enough to have a play running in the West End.

'The Flickknife Mystery' or 'A Slash in the Night' as it's become known, has been running for 21 months now, a record which I can't ever see being beaten.

Miss Mimms has invited me here to present my talk 'How to Write a Successful Murder Mystery'. And my aim today is to guide you through this process with help from the Milton Tweedings Amateur Dramatic Society...

The piece you're about to hear is called 'Murder Most Fowl!' but fowl spelled not F-O-U-L, meaning terrible, but F-O-W-L as in chickens, because the crime you're about to witness takes place... out on a desolate farm in the bleak, inhospitable district of Scarsdale.

Indeed, the victim himself is discovered inside a rickety barn which doubles up as a chicken coop. And here he is. (Amos moves DS) Amos Ramsbottom is one of Scarsdale's most reclusive farmers. An insensitive, pig-headed man who there'll be no shortage of people wanting to kill...

(Agnes moves over to her writing desk. Amos stands downstage.)

AMOS: I'm Amos Ramsbottom. The owner of Crow's Skull Farm...

AGNES: Crow's Skull Farm, note my spooky choice of name!

AMOS: My land's been passed down through the generations. And in the same way that my father stepped aside when the time was right, one day it'll be Thomas who'll take over from me. If the weedy little runt can bear to get his dainty little hands dirty, that is. But man up he will.

There's been a Ramsbottom out in those fields for centuries, and there'll be a Ramsbottom there for centuries to come. Oh, farming's a tough existence, no doubt. Out in all weathers at all times of the day and night. But it's precisely this upbringing which has strengthened my resolve. Anyone intending to take Crow's Skull Farm from me will be told in no uncertain terms to 'Get off my land!' Oh yes... the only way I'll be leaving here is in a coffin!

AGNES: Note the clever use of irony, there, eh? Or should that be cleverer use, because poor old Amos is just about to be stabbed to death. Butchered, in fact. And, once that's done...

AMOS: (Alarmed) Hang on. Am I dead now?

AGNES: Well... yes.

AMOS: So that's all the acting I get to do?

AGNES: Yeah, sorry. But without you getting the hatchet right at the start there'd be no murder mystery. So, yes, you're free to go. Why not hit the bar/buffet early?

How librarians lost their way

Public libraries are – to put it mildly – going through a bad patch. The problems have built up over some time, says librarian Leon Bolton. And librarians themselves have a lot to answer for...

Libraries are facing an existential crisis. Not because they are in danger of disappearing altogether but rather a crisis of identity: who they are, what they are, what they stand for.

This goes beyond closures, hollowing-out, de-professionalisation and amateurisation. All are critical factors, but they are symptoms rather than the cause.

Austerity has been a major driving force behind the changes. But again, this is not the whole story. Nor is the lack of strategic leadership within the sector.

This is without doubt a significant factor, especially as the library leadership are enabling government policies in return for organisational funding – the very same policies that are causing the current crisis! As always, when you follow the money, you end up in someone's pocket.

Despite all this, there is also a deeper malaise. And as a profession we all have to accept responsibility for it. That is a loss of belief in the profession itself. We have lost our sense of identity, and by doing so lost our sense of purpose.

And because we have lost this self-belief we have allowed others to fill the void with short-termism, self-interest and managerial and technological fads.

We have allowed ourselves to be convinced that libraries are just victims of technological and societal changes. A sector shaken by political and financial whims to which the only pragmatic response is compliance. This is 'realpolitik', so grow up and get with the programme!

Partly through not having a unified voice, partly through fear for jobs and livelihoods, partly because we never quite believed it would



Ad for thinking in Finland (no, we don't know why it's in English)

get quite this bad, we acquiesced. We kept our heads down and refused to speak out.

After all, as the Americans say, 'you can't fight city hall'. Not when 'city hall' is the DCMS, Local Government Association, Libraries Taskforce, Arts Council England and Libraries Connected (formerly the Society of Chief Librarians). Not when they tell us they are right and anyone who disagrees is wrong. Not when they hold all the political cards, the patronage, the funding.

And the profession – full of doubt, and fear, and a loss of belief in who we are and what we stand for – has played right along.

As austerity took hold, like many, we fell for that typical neo-liberal con trick: 'Things can only get better in the long run by becoming worse in the short term. Deal with it!'

We slashed budgets, reduced staff, bought less and less stock, closed libraries, recruited volunteers, merged services, co-located, changed job roles (from dedicated, knowledgeable library staff to Jack and Jill of all trades), re-organised,

restructured... and when that didn't work we did it all again... repeatedly!

The small state ideology has become the accepted dogma within libraries. We have adopted the language of commercialism, become entrepreneurs, instigated corporate practices, and explored 'alternative delivery models'.

But guess what, things haven't got better. They've got worse. They continue to get worse with each passing year.

In February this year the Institute for Government published 10 key facts* about neighbourhood services. It revealed how badly council services have been hit, with libraries facing among the worst reductions, including:

- Since 2009–10, libraries have borne real-terms day-to-day spending cuts of 41%.
- Between 2009–10 and 2017–18, the number of full-time equivalent library staff declined 38%.
- Local authorities have increased their reliance on volunteers. The number of library

volunteers increased by 187% between 2009–10 and 2017–18. The number of volunteer hours tripled over this period, increasing from 500,000 to almost 1.7m.

- There were 17% fewer libraries in 2017–18 than in 2009–10.

Another recent investigation in the north-east revealed the scale of closures, reduced hours and a huge drop in spending on books.

But, sadly, far from being unique, this is merely indicative of how badly library services have been impacted and provision degraded.

THAT WAS THEN!

It could be argued that the evolution of the public library service has until recently been one of upward progression, despite some faltering steps and periods of inactivity.

Certainly, the creation of libraries can be counted as one of the most important social reforms of the Victorian era with the Public Libraries Act of 1850.

As with many other institutions, it was mainly due to philanthropy that we saw the expansion of libraries. By 1914 about 62% of England's population lived within a library authority area. In 1919 a new Public Libraries Act gave responsibility for libraries to county councils.

This is not to downplay periods of stagnation or regression. But ultimately library provision was an upward trajectory, culminating in the 1964 Museums & Libraries Act with the goal to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' service. Not just locally, but for the whole nation.

THIS IS NOW!

So can the current crisis be viewed as a slight regression, from which the sector will recover?

It would be wrong to say that the pendulum cannot eventually swing back towards investment and expansion.

But the damage done nationally to the underlying infrastructure will, in my opinion, take a long time to recover from. That's assuming the political will and inclination is even there.

The fragmentation of services, the closures, the increase in volunteers in service delivery or running libraries, the split between statutory and non-statutory provision, the expansion of public service mutuals, and delivery by second-tier authorities such as town and parish councils, all mitigate against a quick return to a national model for libraries.

This disintegration of the library eco-sphere, along with the dramatic decrease in funding, will

take years, if not decades, to reform. And based on current evidence there appears to be a distinct lack of political will to do so.

Unfortunately, while this current crisis can be laid squarely at the feet of the Conservative government and its predecessor the coalition – which means the LibDems also carry responsibility – no mainstream party has a coherent strategy for libraries.

Labour councils have been as quick as their Tory counterparts to adopt localism. The Labour party manifesto states the party's commitment to both localism and devolution. Equally, shadow ministers have been as unwilling to criticise library cutbacks as government ministers.

This lack of strategy has turned into farce in some areas.

The move by Derbyshire Council to hand 20 libraries over to the community was dubbed 'devastating' by the local Labour councillors, who demanded a professionally-run service. Meanwhile next door in Sheffield, Labour has heaped praise on volunteer-run libraries and lauded them as innovative!

Sadly, there seems to be very little to choose from between both main parties. Some of the worst reductions are seen in Labour-controlled areas such as the aforementioned Sheffield

(where the chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for libraries, Gill Furniss, is a local MP).

So the expectation that the worst depredations of the current library crisis will be rolled back with a change in administration is not supported by any evidence or facts.

LOCALISM: THE ROAD TO NOWHERE

Localism has been presented as a way of empowering communities and giving residents a greater say in local decision-making.

Unfortunately the reverse is true where libraries are concerned.

Far from being empowered to influence decision making around library provision, residents are forced to contend with highly biased consultations, with limited options.

The outcome is usually a binary choice of closure or the forced imposition of responsibility on to an ill-prepared community. All dressed up in the language of localism, community empowerment and local control.

In a piece written for the Guardian by Laura Swaffield, chair of The Library Campaign, she wrote that we no longer have a national public library service:

'Until very recently, every local public library was part of a joined-up national network.

'In even the smallest library, people could be sure to find certain basics such as books and PCs, plus trained staff able to provide a gateway to national assets, including standard online reference works, national newspaper archives, a link to the British Library, access to the Summer Reading Challenge for children in the holidays and much, much more in terms of books, educational resources, reference material and contacts.

'The whole point was to provide a standard service nationwide. But that has now gone.'

Ignoring the national nature of library provision in favour of localism means the underlying issues and challenges are discounted.

For example, residents are misled into believing that funding is only a problem to be resolved locally, rather than adopting a macro perspective that recognises funding as a national issue shaped by government policy.

This reflects an imbalance in the infrastructures of power. Local people have responsibility forced on them but without genuine access to the mechanisms of political influence.



Reminding people of the obvious in New York



Making a point in Toronto

Ultimately volunteer libraries are a highly visible but shallow form of localism. By concentrating solely on local problems, communities are treating the symptom rather than the underlying cause.

This in turn leads to the unwitting implementation of government reforms that exacerbate rather than resolving the crisis.

Rather than bringing people and communities closer together, the crisis in libraries has created division, fragmentation and lower quality provision.

As the Civil Exchange report on the 'Big Society' noted: 'Fewer people feel they can influence local decisions, disenchantment with the political system remains widespread and communities are less strong.'

'A market-based model for reforming public services is concentrating power in the hands of new "quasi-monopoly" private sector providers rather than in those of local people and is reducing, not increasing, transparency and accountability.'

If anything, the localism agenda has lessened accountability, entrenched inequality of provision, and created library elites at the expense of a fairer distribution of resources.

Library services more willing to embrace and implement the government's agenda

(especially mutuals, commercialism and volunteer participation) have been rewarded with greater opportunities through funding and influence.

Unhappily, this is the politics of division rather than cohesion. But rather than challenge the inequities of such a model, the library leadership has embraced it. You cannot promote equality by adopting delivery models that actually entrench the opposite.

LOCALISM AND LIBRARIES

Libraries, at least for the foreseeable future, will remain on the downward course that began with the introduction of austerity.

Service provision will continue to be fragmented along with deep reductions in funding, staffing, resources, plus library off-loading with the occasional closure.

There is no evidence of change by a government divided and distracted by Brexit. Indications are for deeper and more damaging cuts to the national network yet to come.

Until recently this was mainly a problem in England. But funding cuts are now starting to impact in Wales and Scotland as well.

Cuts and closures, however, are only partial aspects. Off-loading libraries to other providers seems to be the preferred approach, either to community groups, or parish/town councils, with

Cornwall leading the way [see Campaigner no 97, pp.21-23].

Even a cursory glance at Ian Anstice's Public Libraries News website (www.publiclibrariesnews.com) reveals, despite the occasional new library or refurbishment, a depressing pattern of cuts and threatened closures. (Derby and Essex are two current stand-out proposals.)

Again, local people are fighting hard against the plans. Again, it is likely their wishes will be discounted. Many will be expected and required to step in to run libraries themselves.

It is this total disregard of public opinion that reflects what localism actually means in practice to many communities.

To be fair, these two services are only the latest in a long list of failing services.

Perhaps the rather dubious award of the most failed service should go to Northamptonshire (see Campaigner no 95, pp.8-9). This outsourced many aspects of council services, including libraries, and did it so badly that the council almost went bankrupt.

The then CEO of Northamptonshire, Paul Blantern, was also chair of the Libraries Taskforce. Along with other members he promoted outsourcing libraries, greater commercialisation and the replacement of paid staff with volunteers. Rather than learn from the mistakes of Northamptonshire the current Taskforce members continue along the same discredited route.

CAREER PROSPECTS

Recruitment to the sector, particularly new talent, will remain flat.

Sadly, years of austerity, hollowing out and de-professionalisation have made public libraries an unattractive proposition for new library graduates.

An article in *The Bookseller* described the relentless cuts as turning the sector into a 'war zone'. This hardly makes public libraries an appealing long-term career prospect.

Even at the senior level of head of service we have seen changes that, while not quite a trend, have some worrying implications for the future.

Suffolk and Devon, both mutuals, have recently appointed charity bosses as CEOs rather than people with a library background. Having a library qualification might no longer be enough for staff with aspirations to become HoS. Hardly a welcome thought to ambitious new graduates.

Already, many library service managers are no longer HoSs in the traditional sense. They are merely the most senior grade in a diminishing service, reporting to an ever-rotating round of departmental managers: leisure, culture, children's services, housing etc.

It also appears that the role of chief librarian/head of service is being shunted down the management structure, ever further away from the senior echelons and decision makers.

Obviously, this represents a loss of influence. While some HoSs enjoy good working relationships with senior officers, many have to wade through several layers of intervening management, each with their own agenda, to get the library message heard.

It is one thing to say libraries must do more to influence key policy makers. But the reality is one of services being corporately sidelined and merged with other areas, with the danger that libraries are devalued and no longer viewed as a distinctive service but just another council outlet.

Added to this is the proliferation of volunteers in service delivery, and the widespread view among local councillors and national politicians that library staff are unnecessary.

The situation has become so dire that self-service technology is considered a suitable replacement to having paid staff on site.

Yet far from defending the role of paid staff, Libraries Connected is heavily involved in advocating for volunteer-led libraries. It provides

direct training and support for volunteers via its website.

Along with Locality, LC has set up the Community Managed Libraries Peer Network to 'help develop sustainable community managed library business models and approaches.'

After 100 years of support through the public purse, libraries seem now to be regressing backwards to a model that is overly dependent on ad-hoc philanthropy, the goodwill of volunteers, a two-tier system that entrenches inequality of provision, and commercial partnerships that undermine the value of a 'safe and trusted' service.

The irony is that none of these approaches will alleviate the underlying structural issue of insufficient revenue funding.

In years to come localism will not be seen as saving libraries, but as a political dead end that destroyed the principle of a 'comprehensive and efficient' service.

More damning will be that the profession itself was complicit in allowing it to happen.

LIBRARIES AS A COMMONWEALTH

Far from being just a local resource, libraries should be viewed as part of a national commonwealth. Rather than localism, with its emphasis on 'community led', a more joined-up approach should encourage services to be 'community focused' while adopting a coherent and cohesive model underpinned by a set of national standards.

We should develop the narrative, whether it's politically palatable or not, that libraries are a national asset and as such should be wholly publicly funded for the common good.

Services should also be publicly accountable – an essential point that is being lost as some services morph into quasi-business entities that hide behind charity law or commercial sensitivity.

Without overly simplifying, library provision should centre around three areas: stock, buildings and staff. Time after time this is what patrons and communities say is most important to them. We need to start listening.

Added to this, our core purpose should be to develop and promote literacy, education and access to information and knowledge, particularly around widening access, facilitating opportunity and helping disadvantaged individuals and communities to close the attainment gap.

These are not abstract issues but a fundamental challenge to defining libraries' place in society.

Equally, we need to put aside the fads and fashions that seem to plague the profession.

Traditionally libraries have always prided themselves on providing access to knowledge and learning, being the champions of literacy. But slowly, exacerbated by austerity, these principles have been eroded.

Library services are increasingly used as a shop front for other council services. This is indicative of a narrow view of libraries as just another building, rather than as a unique and valuable service in their own right.

While libraries do have an essential social role to fulfil, merely viewing them as 'community hubs' mistakenly puts them on a par with almost any other space.

Leisure centres are community hubs. Parks are community hubs. Pubs are community hubs. But libraries are unique in being community hubs and something else, something extra, something special.

Libraries are more than just another meeting space, somewhere where people come together. They have a higher purpose and value.

That's what we need to bear in mind, that's what we need to cherish and preserve for future generations.

Despite social and technological changes, the core purpose of the library is as valid today as it's always been.

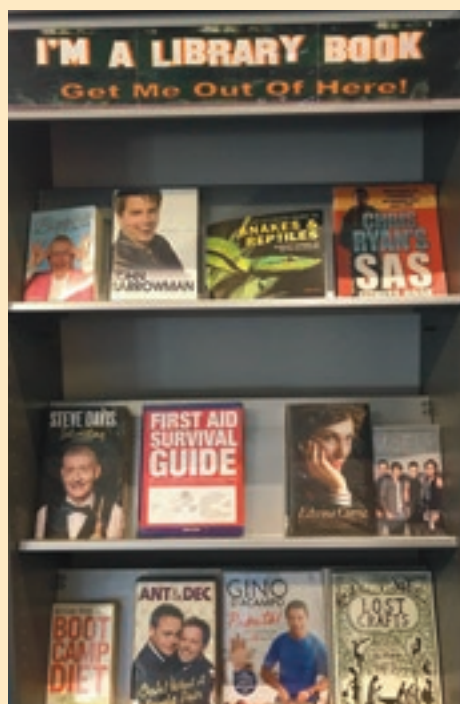
I reject the narrow vision of localism, the fragmentation of a national resource, the inequality of provision. Public libraries are not a luxury dependent on philanthropy. They are a common resource for all.

And despite current political dogma, they do not belong to individual communities but form part of the wider commonwealth of the nation.

I hope and aspire towards a better future. For a strategic vision that leads towards a national approach to library services; that provides genuine oversight, development and resources to enable libraries to be the best they can be – for the benefit not only of local communities but for society as a whole.

This should be the aspiration of the whole library profession. We should demand better – not just from the politicians but from our own leadership.

* <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/explainers/neighbourhood-services-10-key-facts>



Creating some fun in Grays

