

The Network Newsletter: tackling social exclusion in libraries, museums, archives and galleries

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The Network's Website is at www.seapn.org.uk and includes information on courses, good practice, specific socially excluded groups, as well as the newsletter archive.

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Did you see ...?

Museums Journal

The November 2014 issue includes two key articles:

- Gareth Harris “Economic climate hinders diversity push”, which suggests that museums may have taken their “eye off the ball”, and that there needs to be “an increased focus on diversity and equality” [p7]

This article also includes a strong ‘side-panel’ piece by Lucy Shaw (who coordinated the MA’s Diversify scheme), which is worth quoting in its entirety:

“It is important that museums reflect the diversity of the communities they serve. A diverse workforce that is experimental, prepared to take risks and thinks differently is a key element to an organisation becoming more entrepreneurial and, therefore, more resilient.

It is great that diversity is at the core of the British Museum’s Learning Museum. Such programmes can have an impact. The MA’s Diversify scheme succeeded in getting people from diverse backgrounds into the sector, and it led to organisational change at some museums that took part. But it is arguable as to whether Diversify alone resulted in a significant shift in the sector’s workforce diversity.

A combined approach, not one-off intervention, is needed. Another lever is the one that external funding bodies can exert. It is appropriate that ACE expects its funded organisations to show how they are working towards a more diverse workforce, as it is public money being allocated.

Increasing diversity through training schemes and funding is important, but the driver to change must come from within.” [p7]

- Geraldine Kendall “How 20 years of the HLF has transformed museums” [pp12-13]

Tackling social and digital exclusion – Libraries, Museums, Archives and Cultural and Heritage Organisations

"An overlooked resource? Public libraries' work with older people"

This article¹ by John Vincent (which a number of Network contacts contributed to) has just been published.

This article looks briefly at the role of public libraries in working with and supporting older people and their families and carers.

“However, much of this work is ‘under the radar’, and this article aims to introduce some of these themes to a wider readership. It draws heavily on our *Good practice guide* ... [2] and the updated information gathered since [3, much of which has been collected from public library contacts for this article.”

“Reading for Excellence: SLA One-Day Conference”

The School Library Association’s one-day conference in November 2014 was planned around the ‘Reading for Pleasure’ agenda in schools, aimed at teachers, headteachers and school librarians.

A selection of presentations from the Conference is now available on the SLA website⁴, including:

- Prue Goodwin “Creating Readers”
- Karen Goulding “Reading and Change”
- Clare Wood “Reading Research and Insights into Achievement”
- John Vincent – notes from the workshop, “Working with/supporting young people who are identifying as LGBTQ”, plus a resources list.

Public Libraries 2020

Public Libraries 2020⁵ is a cross-European programme run by the Reading and Writing Foundation⁶. One of its themes is “Libraries Change Lives”:

¹ John Vincent "An overlooked resource? Public libraries' work with older people", *Working with Older People*, 18 (4) 2014, pp214-222. For a summary and purchase information, please see: <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/doi/pdfplus/10.1108/WWOP-06-2014-0018>.

² Margaret Sloan and John Vincent. *Library services for older people – good practice guide*. The Network, 2009. Available to download as a pdf (539.18 kb) from: <http://www.seapn.org.uk/uploads/files/Library-services-good-practice-guide-1336795.pdf>.

³ See: <http://www.seapn.org.uk/uploads/files/RECENT-INITIATIVES-IN-LIBRARY-SERVICES-TO-OLDER-PEOPLE-table.pdf> and <http://www.seapn.org.uk/uploads/files/LIBRARY-PARTNERSHIPS-TO-DELIVER-SERVICES-TO-OLDER-PEOPLE-table.pdf>.

⁴ See: <http://www.sla.org.uk/reading-for-excellence-sla-one-day-conference.php#sn3128>.

⁵ See: <http://www.publiclibraries2020.eu/content/home>.

⁶ “The Reading & Writing Foundation ... was founded in 2004 by H.R.H. Princess Laurentien of the Netherlands with the aim of structurally solving illiteracy in the Netherlands. Over the course of the years, we have also started working towards this goal internationally.” Taken from: <http://www.publiclibraries2020.eu/content/about-us>.

“Public libraries are about empowering citizens of all ages to develop and create the skills, knowledge and ideas they need to participate fully and independently in society.

All European countries have public libraries. The 65,000 public libraries within communities invite people to read books and to use computers and the Internet, but also offer courses on a wide range of topics. Trained staff provides personal assistance and are a resource customised to the members of their local communities.

We believe that the initiatives we are championing will leverage the power and opportunities offered by Europe’s public libraries and can bring a change in the delivery of lifelong learning opportunities to a wide range of European citizens. Public libraries are a space – trusted and open to all – to learn, discover and share.”⁷

On 10 December, they launched a video, “Libraries Change Lives”⁸, which briefly highlights how public libraries in Europe strengthen communities and help people, particularly around literacy and digital literacy.

Tackling social and digital exclusion – Other Agencies

Monitoring poverty and social exclusion 2014

The latest annual assessment report⁹ by JRF of tackling poverty and disadvantage in the UK has just been published.

The key points include:

- “Household incomes fell in real terms for the third year in a row. Median income in 2012/13 was 9 per cent below where it was in 2007/08 and 4 per cent lower than a decade ago. Incomes of the bottom tenth have fallen further and for longer and are now 8 per cent below their level in 2002/03.
- Unemployment fell by 300,000 in the last year and the number unemployed for over a year fell for the first time in a decade. The number of people working part time but wanting a full-time job also fell, by 50,000, also the first fall in ten years.
- At the same time, wages have fallen, for men and women, working full and part time, for low and high earners. The average full-time hourly pay for men has fallen from £13.90 to £12.90, after adjusting for inflation. For women, it has fallen from £10.80 to £10.30.

⁷ Taken from: <http://www.publiclibraries2020.eu/content/libraries-change-lives>.

⁸ See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OgkUZylvsP0>.

⁹ Tom MacInnes *et al.* *Monitoring poverty and social exclusion 2014*. JRF, 2014.

Available to download as a pdf (5130 kb) from: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/MPSE-2014-FULL.pdf>.

- The report shows the movement between worklessness and low pay – two thirds of those in work now but unemployed a year ago are in low-paid work.
- Changes to the way the welfare system operates have worsened the experience of poverty for many of those affected – whether through rising sanctions, longer waits for assessment or poor job outcomes through welfare-to-work programmes.
- Legal support for social welfare cases has been almost completely withdrawn. As well as cutting support to people with debt and housing problems, this leaves people powerless to challenge incorrect decisions related to their benefits.
- There are now as many people in poverty in the private rented sector as the social rented sector (around 4m in both). The private rented sector is increasingly insecure – the number of repossessions in the private rented sector is rising while mortgage repossessions are falling.
- Child poverty is still highest in cities, but urban areas now appear to be better at providing a decent level of education than rural areas. Unemployment rose right across the country during the recession. Some of the biggest rises were in places where unemployment was already high, with some big rises in smaller cities and towns.”¹⁰

The report includes some specific aspects of poverty, which offer us important background information, including:

- Disability: “The way poverty is measured makes a big difference for disabled people and their families, leading to an underestimate of the number of children, pensioners and working-age adults in poverty.” [p32]
- Ethnicity: “Pakistani, black and Bangladeshi adults have seen the largest increases in their employment rates over the last five years, while those of mixed and ‘other’ ethnicity have seen the largest increase in low pay. Black African and Caribbean adults had the highest unemployment of any ethnic group in 2013 at 12 per cent.” [p76]
- Digital inclusion: “... while the proportion of low-income households lacking internet access or a mobile phone has fallen steadily in the last decade, such households remain much more likely to lack these goods or services than the average household. This is particularly true in the case of internet access where more than half of households in the lowest income group still lack internet access and the access gap does not seem to be narrowing.” [p118]
- Educational attainment at age 11: “The proportion of 11-year-olds not meeting expected standards in reading and maths is less than half what

¹⁰ Taken from the Summary (which also has some interesting infographics): http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/monitoring-poverty-and-social-exclusion-2014?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=JRF+Newsletter+-+November+2014&utm_content=JRF+Newsletter+-+November+2014+CID_b4133082f57623e103f9db75e57e83fe&utm_source=Email%20marketing%20software&utm_term=Monitoring%20poverty%20and%20social%20exclusion%202014.

it was 15 years ago. However, gaps persist between pupils receiving free school meals and other pupils. Following the largest year-on-year falls in more than a decade in 2012, progress in reducing educational under-attainment has slowed. In 2013, 14 per cent of 11-year-olds did not achieve expected standards in reading and 15 per cent did not achieve this level in maths – up 1 percentage point and down 1 percentage point respectively on the previous year.” [p126]

Important background report.

Beneath the surface: child poverty in Northern Ireland

This new report¹¹ from the Child Poverty Alliance includes nine papers:

“The Child Poverty Alliance steering group commissioned experts to write articles on key aspects of child poverty in Northern Ireland. The purpose is to highlight the extent of child poverty and inequality, the complexity of the problem and the need for the Executive to adopt a more progressive approach to ending child poverty within a child rights framework.” [p1]

The papers include:

- An overview of the European Union’s Recommendation on child poverty. The three pillar approach looks at access to adequate resources, access to services and opportunities and children’s participation, arguing for a strong rights-based approach to eradicating child poverty.
- A look at the Poverty and Social Exclusion study, *Child Poverty in Northern Ireland*, starting with how poverty is measured and the PSE ‘consensual poverty’ approach before highlighting how poverty is linked to experience of conflict.
- An overview of social security reform, which highlights the changes to the social security benefits from October 2010 to October 2013 and the impacts of these changes on child poverty.
- A reflection on how children with a disability are experiencing poverty
- The impact of poverty on education. It starts by examining the facts and figures and then explores what the evidence indicates.
- A paper from JRF, which discusses the current link between work and poverty, highlighting the need to look beyond the simple approach of work as a route out of poverty but developing a more comprehensive approach to reducing child poverty that brings together a child poverty strategy, employment, skills and workforce development strategies.
- A discussion on the existing childcare system in Northern Ireland and the links between childcare provision and child poverty.
- The paper, “Child Poverty, Advice, Food Banks and Debt”, notes the growing succession of cuts to government spending on social security and the huge impact this is having upon children and families. With low

¹¹ *Beneath the surface: child poverty in Northern Ireland*. Child Poverty Alliance, 2014. Available to download as a pdf (1350 kb) from: http://www.ci-ni.org.uk/DatabaseDocs/nav_4786494_beneaththesurface_web.pdf.

wages, rising household bills, food banks and debt more families than ever are contacting advice services for help.

- The concluding chapter aims to reflect on the learning and insight from previous chapters and to begin a conversation about what needs to be done to eliminate child poverty in Northern Ireland. [Taken from pp3-4]

In order to start acting on the findings:

“The Child Poverty Alliance plans to hold a series of meetings over the next year to reflect on the report’s findings and begin a dialogue about what needs to be done to eliminate child poverty in Northern Ireland by 2020. We would like this conversation about a range of options to involve key stakeholders, policy makers, children in poor families and the report’s expert authors.” [p ix]

This is also an important background report – and the considerations in it apply just as well to the rest of the UK.

Health & Wellbeing issues – Libraries, Museums, Archives and Cultural and Heritage Organisations

Beyond books: the role of enterprising libraries in promoting economic wellbeing

This new report¹² from the Carnegie UK Trust looks at the results of the “Enterprising Libraries” programme.

“The Enterprising Libraries programme involved four projects that were already exploring creative ways of encouraging enterprise and digital skills development. Independent evaluation of the projects was conducted to ensure that lessons and experience from the projects were captured and could be shared with public library professionals and policymakers.

The four case studies discussed in this report demonstrate four diverse and innovative ways in which libraries can work towards supporting and promoting economic wellbeing: hosting digital careers events; facilitating children’s interest in STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) subjects; supporting individuals to borrow, share, lend and learn skills and develop small enterprises; and sharing knowledge about one approach to enterprise support between library authorities.” [p1]

The four projects were:

- Northamptonshire Libraries “Enterprise Hubs and Knowledge-sharing”¹³

¹² Jennifer Peachey. *Beyond books: the role of enterprising libraries in promoting economic wellbeing*. Carnegie UK Trust, 2014. Available to download as a pdf (3800 kb) from: <http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/CMSPages/GetFile.aspx?guid=4ca13e87-e54f-47c1-92b8-875af5a13efc>.

- Neath Port Talbot Libraries “Technoclubs” (library-run computer-coding and robotics clubs)
- Gateshead Central Library “Digital Events”, “daylong drop-in activities that enabled young people to experience new technologies at first hand, learn new skills and have direct contact with digital sector employees” [P3]
- The Waiting Room, Colchester “Library-Hack-Makerspace”.

The evaluation identified the key factors that contributed to success, including:

- Strong leadership
- Clarity of purpose
- Enabling culture and staff time: “The importance of staff time is clear in the case of Gateshead Library, where planning digital events was a process that took several days over the course of two or three months. Senior management were willing to allow staff to take this time. This enabled staff to deliver a well thought through and targeted event that fulfilled a need in the local community.” [p5]
- Motivation and enthusiasm
- Skills and a willingness to learn
- Willingness to use the library as a noisy and social space
- Strong partnerships and networks
- Physical space needed to run successful activities – these may not necessarily be in the library” “Neath Port Talbot made Technoclubs both manageable and successful by keeping the initiative small-scale and by leaving the library building to hold Technoclubs in schools.” [p8]
- A little goes a long way: “It is inevitable that enterprising initiatives cost money. However, the sums the Trust provided were modest – £3,000 to each project. This indicates that a little can go a long way in expanding the library offer and attracting new audiences.” [p8]
- Self-evaluation and logic models: “Self-evaluation and the use of logic models were helpful in enabling project leaders to focus on their aims, track their progress and identify areas for development.” [p8]

The work also faced challenges, including:

- “How to persuade the public library service of the relevance of alternative approaches to the concept of a library.
- How to encourage staff to engage in new activities at a time when there is a challenge to the service as a whole, with threatened reductions in services and staffing.
- How to find a way to promote new library-based activities in a consistent way so as to build a coherent series of events, with strong branding.” [p9]

In addition:

“A broader issue that may face those wanting to share skills across library authorities, is whether or not there is support at UK and devolved level for

¹³ Northamptonshire won the CILIP Libraries Change Lives Award in 2014 for this work; see: <http://www.cilip.org.uk/cilip/advocacy-campaigns-awards/libraries-change-lives-award/finalists-libraries-change-lives-award>.

promoting new models of service development in which one library authority leads service development and others are encouraged or required to replicate the service model. An approach that specifically aims to ‘scale up’ innovation could be beneficial to the sector.” [p9]

Finally, after a brief “Discussion” section, the report makes ten recommendations (four for public library services, four for professional organisations/national bodies in the library sector, and two for Government). Those for public library services are:

1. “Assess the extent to which your library service is supporting economic wellbeing in your community, the extent of its support for enterprise creation and its encouragement of creative digital activities.
2. Consider whether there are partnerships in your local communities which libraries could develop in order to create new types of activity in the library space which would support economic wellbeing.
3. Think about whether there is space or time in which your libraries could be used for social, collaborative and noisy activities targeted at fostering economic wellbeing.
4. Share knowledge and ideas about successful initiatives which you are already involved in among staff and between library branches and authorities.” [p12]

Very useful brief guide to developing provision that promotes economic wellbeing.

Broader issues – Libraries, Museums, Archives and Cultural and Heritage Organisations

Raising our quality of life: the importance of investment in arts and culture

This recent paper¹⁴ from CLASS investigates Government attitudes to cultural policy:

“Cultural policy under the Coalition government has emphasised reducing subsidy and state intervention, in favour of private giving and sponsorship, while continuing previous governments’ expectations of ensuring quantifiable ‘returns on investment’. The biggest challenge for arts and culture under the Coalition has been the severe funding cuts to local authorities across all service areas. With local authorities increasingly struggling to provide statutory services, funding for arts and culture has become a much lower priority.

Despite ringing huge changes to arts and culture through rolling-back state involvement and public funding, the Coalition has failed to articulate

¹⁴ Abigail Gilmore. *Raising our quality of life: the importance of investment in arts and culture*. CLASS (“Policy Paper” series), 2014. Available to download as a pdf (620 kb) from: http://classonline.org.uk/docs/2014_Policy_Paper_-_investment_in_the_arts_-_Abi_Gilmore.pdf.

a clear vision for cultural policy which impacts positively on quality of life for all. In contrast, the previous government sought to expand the aspirations of cultural policy through emphasising the potential economic and societal benefits of strategic investment in culture. Arts and culture became a tool for achieving wider policy goals including regeneration, economic development, social inclusion and health. However, this emphasis was explicitly concerned with equating the value of investment with its returns, so that politicians, central and local, could argue their decisions provided value for money in the competition over resources. This ‘instrumental’ focus has continued to some degree under the Coalition, albeit against the backdrop of stringent cuts.” [p4]

The paper begins with a brief overview of the debate around the role of arts and culture, and their role in enhancing quality of life, harking back to the 1965 White Paper, *A Policy for the Arts*¹⁵, and then looks at the approaches to cultural policy, firstly under New Labour:

“... what characterises the New Labour period is how this new view regarding arts and culture as a tool for achieving wider policy goals – instrumentalism – was institutionalised on every level. From individual arts organisations through to Regional Development Agencies, there were great efforts to record and articulate how audience and participants in music, the visual arts, museums, heritage and theatre benefit from their experience, and moreover how these benefits can be translated into broader societal impacts.” [p10]

This is followed by an assessment of the approaches under the Coalition:

“Cultural policy under the Coalition government has not radically diminished these expectations of ‘returns on investment’, but has changed the emphasis on who should make this investment in an age of austerity.” [p10]

The emphasis has shifted towards investment by philanthropists and by business.

The second chapter looks at “Arts and cultural-led regeneration”, focusing particularly on the impact of the DCMS report, *Culture at the heart of regeneration*¹⁶, and the work of Richard Florida¹⁷.

Chapter 3, “Quality of life and evidence of value”, looks very critically at the move towards assessing culture by its quantitative and economic value (including by the Arts Council¹⁸):

¹⁵ A policy for the arts: the first steps, presented to Parliament by the Prime Minister by command of Her Majesty, February 1965. Cmnd 2601. HMSO, 1965.

¹⁶ *Culture at the heart of regeneration*. DCMS, 2004. Available to download as a pdf (878.6 kb) from: http://www.shiftyparadigms.org/images/Misguided_Loyalties/Culture_at_the_Heart_of_Regeneration.pdf.

¹⁷ Richard Florida. *The rise of the creative class: and how it's transforming work, leisure, community, and everyday life*. Perseus Book Group, 2002.

“This articulation of cultural value is devoid of distinction, taste, inflection, power, feeling, challenge or emotion – all the things associated with our experience as human beings of arts and culture. It also ignores the historical and environmental factors which influence and mediate our experiences – what Raymond Williams ... [19] calls ‘structures of feeling’ – the emerging social forms through which we can relate and make sense of the messiness of lived experience.

Our lived experience of arts and culture is in turn shaped by who we are, how our tastes are developed, the demographic we belong to in terms of class, age, ethnicity locality and so forth – and what we have access to as a result. The economic measures of cultural value for policy making cannot take these factors into account – they fail to include the conditions under which we form, develop and express cultural value.” [p19]

It argues instead for the need to consider qualitative assessment of cultural policy.

The chapter ends with a question:

“So how might an arts policy that strives for an improved quality of life be informed by our understandings of previous policy priorities alongside the studies discussed above and the findings they report?” [p21]

Chapter 4 considers “Arts policy for quality of life”, and makes a series of recommendations:

1. Respond to local contexts – cultural policy must work as well, if not better, at the level of the local than the level of the national or international. Funding must be equitably distributed, by means which do not disadvantage by geography or demography.

2. Ensure access to arts and culture is democratised and publicly planned – through policies that remove barriers to participation and by developing initiatives to proactively target excluded groups and include them in decision-making.

3. Provide resources for everyday participation within communities as well as for, and alongside, institutional settings – policy should not only be about creating access to arts establishments and institutions, but must also provide resources for everyday participation within communities.

4. Develop methods of connecting and streamlining funding interests – and ensure a strong and secure role for the public sector in arts investment.” [p5, emphases theirs]

¹⁸ *Great art and culture for everyone: 10 year strategic framework 2010-2020*. Arts Council England, 2013. Available to download as a pdf (488.03 kb) from: http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/Great_art_and_culture_for_everyone.pdf.

¹⁹ Raymond Williams. *Marxism and literature*. Oxford University Press, 1977.

The brief Conclusion draws together the main arguments, partially summarised as:

“A policy which genuinely responds to the evidence reviewed above with recognition and trust, and which hopes to fulfil the universal entitlement to arts and culture, must be targeted at creating capacity within local areas and communities to ‘plan in’ places and opportunities to participate. It will include policies to develop active and creative citizens who can join in and take part, and contribute to a complex mix of private and public resources which support the cultural lives of communities.”
[p26]

To be honest, museums, libraries and archives are barely mentioned, but, despite this, this is an important and thought-provoking contribution – recommended.

Abbreviations and acronyms

ACE = Arts Council England
DCMS = Department for Culture, Media and Sport
HLF = Heritage Lottery Fund
JRF = Joseph Rowntree Foundation
MA = Museums Association

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