

# 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](http://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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## Contents List

### Did you see ...?

- *CILIP Update* – page 2
- *Museums Journal* – page 2
- *The Scotsman* – page 2
- *Society Now* – page 3

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

- *No longer us and them ...* – page 3

### Tackling social and digital exclusion – Other Agencies

- *The state of girls' rights in the UK* – page 7
- *Disability and poverty in later life* – page 9

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

- *Edinburgh International Culture Summit* – page 10
- *Community libraries ...* – page 11
- *Character matters: attitudes, behaviours and skills in the UK museum workforce* – page 14

Abbreviations and acronyms – page 16

## Did you see ...?

### ***CILIP Update***

The July/August issue<sup>1</sup> includes:

- Claire Meier Underhill “Project Bright Future: libraries – books for refugee children”, which “tells the story of how she came to help set up a project in Turkey to provide books in Arabic, English and Turkish to Syrian refugee children” [pp32-33]
- Jenny Peachey, David Hayden and Eileen Russell “Carnegie Library Lab: looking back, looking ahead”, which highlights some of the achievements of the first Cohort of Carnegie Partners<sup>2</sup> [pp40-42]

The September issue<sup>3</sup> includes:

- “Libraries help plug digital divide in Wales” [p13].

### ***Museums Journal***

The September issue includes:

- Rob Sharp “MA sets up taskforce to tackle challenges facing museums” [p7]
- Geraldine Kendall Adams “Museums struggle to cope with Brexit implications” [pp12-13]
- Maria Balshaw “Arts are key to creating inclusive cities” (“Comment” column) [p14]
- “Voxpop: In view of Brexit, how can museums address immigration fears?” [p15]
- Eleanor Mills [interview with Andrew Mackay] “Moving on up”, which looks at the work that Tullie House in Cumbria is doing to transform people’s lives, including work with excluded young people [pp32-35].

### ***The Scotsman***

The edition for 26 September includes a very interesting piece by Douglas White (head of advocacy at the Carnegie UK Trust), “We must all tackle the digital divide”<sup>4</sup>.

As he says:

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<sup>1</sup> *CILIP Update*, Jul/Aug 2016.

<sup>2</sup> The full report is also available: Jenny Peachey. *Carnegie Library Lab: final project snapshot from Cohort 1*. Carnegie UK Trust, 2016. Available to download as a pdf (1040 kb) from: <http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/carnegieuktrust/wp-content/uploads/sites/64/2016/07/CLL-C1-Final-Project-Snapshot.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> *CILIP Update*, Sep 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Douglas White “We must all tackle the digital divide”, *The Scotsman*, 26 Sep 2016, <http://www.scotsman.com/future-scotland/tech/douglas-white-we-must-all-tackle-the-digital-divide-1-4240497>.

“The pace of change is only likely to increase in the coming years. Public services will fully embrace digital disruption, the ‘internet of things’ will become the norm for many of us, and augmented reality will soon begin to roll out more much widely. As this is happening, the gap between those who are digitally engaged and those who are not is quickly threatening to become a chasm. Addressing these disparities is one of the great social challenges of our age.”

He goes on to cite research by the Carnegie UK Trust and Ipsos MORI who have interrogated the Scottish Household Survey dataset, and discovered a “high degree of overlap between digital exclusion and commonly cited characteristics of deprivation.”

“However, the research established that the relationship between digital and social exclusion goes much further than this. Those who don’t have the internet are less likely to have a car; to have been on a flight in the past year; to participate in sport; to go to the cinema, a library or live music; to read, dance, sing or play a musical instrument; to volunteer; to use council services; or take part in outdoor leisure or recreation at least once a week.

Meanwhile, those with less active lifestyles, poorer mental health and those who feel less socially connected to their local area are more likely to be offline than their peers even after all other factors are controlled for.”

The piece ends with something of a rallying call:

“What does all of this mean for public policy?

It means that digital exclusion is deeply entrenched. It means that if we want to fix this then radical action is required. It means that all of us – charities, government, public service providers – who have an interest in tackling disadvantage, alleviating poverty reducing inequality and improving wellbeing must take an interest in eradicating digital exclusion.

To date, responses to digital inclusion across different sectors have tended to treat the issue as a standalone programme or delivery silo, important in its own right but required to compete with other, much more established players such as education, health, social care, welfare and housing for resources and attention.

Such an approach will no longer suffice. The world is now digital. If we want to enable everyone to maximise the benefits that this transformation brings – and mitigate the risks – then it’s time to move digital inclusion into the public policy mainstream.

This embedding of a previously discrete concept is not new – it has happened before with for example, our approach to equalities or to rural policy – but it is not straightforward. It requires all those developing or delivering services with and for citizens to recognise the critical nature of this issue and to be sufficiently confident in their own understanding of

the possibilities that digital has to offer. It needs real commitment and leadership. And it needs a willingness to try out new approaches, to fail as well as to succeed, and to share learning with others.

This is a critical social justice issue in the 21st century – we just need to realise it.”

### **Society Now**

The latest issue<sup>5</sup> includes an interesting collection of articles, “Brexit – what next?” [pp14-27], which includes Jane Falkingham “The implications for EU migrants” [pp26-27].

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

### **No longer us and them ...**

This final report<sup>6</sup> from the “Our Museum” programme was published in April.

Just to recap quickly, in 2009 PHF commissioned an initial report, *Whose cake is it anyway?*<sup>7</sup>, published in 2011, the key message from which was:

“[...] that the funding invested in recent years in community engagement and participation in the UK’s museums and galleries had not succeeded in shifting the work from the margins to the core of many organisations. Most engagement work and staffing were short-term, project-funded and vulnerable, with communities remaining passive beneficiaries rather than active partners.” [p4]

Following this, PHF commissioned Piotr Bienkowski to develop a programme to tackle these issues – this was “Our Museum: Communities and Museums as Active Partners”, and this report shares the learning from that work.

There are two basic, overriding messages:

- Small changes add up.

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<sup>5</sup> *Society Now*, 25, Summer 2016. Available to download as a pdf (2850 kb) from: <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/files/news-events-and-publications/publications/magazines-and-newsletters/society-now/society-now-issue-25/>.

<sup>6</sup> Piotr Bienkowski. *No longer us and them: how to change into a participatory museum and gallery – learning from the Our Museum programme*. PHF, 2016. Available to download as a pdf (3230 kb) from: [http://ourmuseum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Our-Museum-Report\\_single-pages.pdf](http://ourmuseum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Our-Museum-Report_single-pages.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> Bernadette Lynch. *Whose cake is it anyway? A collaborative investigation into engagement and participation in 12 museums and galleries in the UK*. PHF, 2011. Available to download as a pdf (381.83 kb) from: <http://www.phf.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Whose-cake-is-it-anyway.pdf>. This report was assessed in *The Network Newsletter*, 129, Jan 2012, pp4-6, [http://www.seapn.org.uk/uploads/files/newsletter\\_ns\\_129.pdf](http://www.seapn.org.uk/uploads/files/newsletter_ns_129.pdf).

- Participation is everyone's job.

The report highlights the main barriers to participation and how these can be tackled:

- The need for active leadership and governance
- Conflicting strategic agendas
- 'It's someone else's job'
- The usual suspects – always working with the same communities
- Staff resistance and skills
- Fear: "We have encountered fear related to financial survival, fear of participation as a perceived threat to professional expertise and status, and fear of an uncertain future that change might bring." [p9]

To tackle this:

"In order to address the barriers to participation, and support active partnership with communities, the *Our Museum* programme developed four overall outcomes – these were what we expected the museums and galleries taking part to strive for. Each of these outcomes had its own indicator of success, all of them qualitative and not quantitative – the sort of evidence of organisational behaviour we would expect to see if the outcome were being achieved. These formed the basis of the evaluation framework for the programme, against which the change journey of each organisation was assessed." [p10]

The four outcomes are as follows (and each is followed by a list of indicators of success):

- Rooted in local needs: "Museums and galleries understand their role within their localities: they are effectively informed of, and respond to, the range of their communities' needs and values, and are aware of and initiate opportunities for partnerships with communities and other sectors to meet local needs." [p12]
- Community agency: "Communities are sustainably at the core of all the values, strategies, structures and work of museums and galleries: actively and regularly participating and collaborating in dialogue and decision-making about the work of the museum/gallery." [p12]
- Capability building: "Museums and galleries play an effective role in developing community skills, capabilities and creativity: preparing and helping people to be engaged in their communities, to articulate their voices, to find employment or volunteering opportunities in the heritage sector and elsewhere; and supporting staff to learn how to work with communities." [p13]
- Reflection: "Museums and galleries embed reflective practice into their work: internally, with community partners, and across the sector, to ensure ongoing reflection, dialogue and openness to challenge, alternative values and working methods." [p13]

To reach these outcomes, organisations need to tackle five key areas of museum practice and management. These are:

- Governance
- Staff professional development
- The external voice – “Museums and galleries should involve people from outside their own organisation in open and honest conversations about the process of change underway in their institutions.” [p36]
- How to engage with community partners
- Evaluation and evidence of change.

These areas are illustrated with brief case studies.

The report then looks frankly at “What could have gone better? The challenges of embedding participation”:

- Diversity of community partners and sharing of authority: “In some cases this worked very well. In others, throughout the programme there was a lack of diversity in the community partners, so that the group was not representative of the diversity of the area; or the museum/gallery never succeeded in developing an effective joint team to manage the programme and make decisions.” [p42]
- The tension between income generation and participation
- Keeping community partners interested and involved
- Impact of restructures and staff changes
- The ‘real work’ of the museum: “Some staff still see participatory work as secondary to the ‘real work’ of the museum; and some are defensive rather than supportive, worried that professional issues could be de-prioritised. It is a major cultural change to shift the notion of this work away from consultation to one of strategic partnership and co-production with communities.” [p43]

The other major legacy of this project is the website<sup>8</sup> (which was assessed in a previous Newsletter<sup>9</sup>). A key feature is the bank of resources which are grouped under the following headings:

- Governance and leadership<sup>10</sup>
- Staff development<sup>11</sup>
- Engaging with communities<sup>12</sup>
- Evaluation and external voice<sup>13</sup>
- Structures and mechanisms<sup>14</sup>

A very useful report – and the website is well worth exploring.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See: <http://ourmuseum.org.uk/?welcome=1>.

<sup>9</sup> *Network Newsletter*, 172, Aug 2015, pp3-5.

<sup>10</sup> See: <http://ourmuseum.org.uk/resources/governance-leadership/#go>.

<sup>11</sup> See: <http://ourmuseum.org.uk/resources/staff-development/#go>.

<sup>12</sup> See: <http://ourmuseum.org.uk/resources/engaging-with-communities/#go>.

<sup>13</sup> See: <http://ourmuseum.org.uk/resources/evaluation-external-voice/#go>.

<sup>14</sup> See: <http://ourmuseum.org.uk/resources/structures-mechanisms/#go>.

## Tackling social and digital exclusion – Other Agencies

### ***The state of girls' rights in the UK***

This new report<sup>16</sup> from Plan International UK<sup>17</sup> is part of their flagship campaign, “Because I am a Girl”, which is fighting for girls’ rights<sup>18</sup>. It has had considerable media coverage<sup>19</sup>.

The report is highly critical of the UK. As it states in the Executive Summary:

“In this report, marking an exciting new phase in our history, we turn our attention for the first time to the UK. Our analysis poses the question, ‘What is the current state of girls’ rights in the UK?’ Sadly, the answer is clear. We may be the fifth-richest country in the world, but we are failing our girls, and failing to meet international standards set out in human rights frameworks and the United Nation’s new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By exploring the real experiences of girls in the UK, our intent is for policy makers and decision makers to recognise this reality – and act.” [p8]

The report:

“[...] draws on the accounts given by 103 girls from diverse backgrounds and areas through focus group interviews. While this sample size is insufficient for statistical analysis, the girls’ voices give us a valuable depth of understanding. Their testimony is supported by 36 expert witness interviews as well as existing literature. The evidence presents several thematic areas in which it is clear girls’ rights are not being met, or at least not in full.” [p9]

These include:

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<sup>15</sup> Source: message to “Rethinking the Museum” LinkedIn Group from Piotr Bienkowski, 30 Aug 2016.

<sup>16</sup> Lucy Russell *et al.* *The state of girls’ rights in the UK*. Plan International UK, 2016. Available to download as a pdf (17120 kb) from: [http://www.plan-uk.org/assets/Documents/pdf/Plan\\_2016\\_UKGirlsRights\\_Report1.pdf](http://www.plan-uk.org/assets/Documents/pdf/Plan_2016_UKGirlsRights_Report1.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> “Plan is a global children’s charity, helping young girls and boys in communities around the globe [...] We work with children in the world’s poorest countries to help them build a better future.

For over 75 years we’ve been taking action and standing up for every child’s right to fulfil their potential by:

- giving children a healthy start in life, including access to safe drinking water
- securing the education of girls and boys
- working with communities to prepare for and survive disasters
- inspiring children to take a lead in decisions that affect their lives
- enabling families to earn a living and plan for their children’s future.” [Taken from: <http://www.plan-uk.org/about-us/>]

<sup>18</sup> See: <http://www.plan-uk.org/because-i-am-a-girl/about-because-i-am-a-girl/>.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example: Kate Lyons “Girls’ quality of life shows huge variation in England and Wales”, *The Guardian* 12 Sep 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/sep/12/girls-quality-of-life-shows-huge-variation-around-the-country-report>.

- Education, future careers and stereotypes
- Health and quality of life
- Violence and safety
- Citizenship and voice: “[...] with digital communication channels increasingly the primary mode of access to public and political spheres for young people, the risk, thanks to harassment and abuse in the digital space, is that girls find themselves squeezed out. This compounds the impression that politics is separate from girls’ lives, and is a ‘boys’ game’.” [p11]
- Digital health
- Body image
- Identity discrimination.

The report also looks at where the best and worst places for being a girl are, drawing (as far as possible, given missing data) on statistics from local authorities on:

- Child Poverty
- Life Expectancy
- Teenage Conception Rates
- GCSE Attainment
- Those not in education, employment or training (NEETs)

“Across England and Wales, the best place to be a girl was identified as Waverley, Surrey, and the worst place was Middlesbrough. The majority of the highest-ranking areas were in the south east of England, while towns such as Blackpool and Manchester ranked poorly in comparison. In Wales, Merthyr Tydfil, Cardiff and Caerphilly ranked behind their neighbours in Monmouthshire and Powys, while in London, Richmond upon Thames ranked best, with Barking and Dagenham worst.” [p12]

The report argues that we need to consider young women’s lives when we are thinking about other groupings:

“[...] we don’t talk enough about adolescent girls as a particular demographic group; we talk about ‘children’, ‘teenagers’ and then ‘women’. Nor do we understand with sufficient depth their complex identities: as girls, but also as being a particular race, class, sexual orientation or religion, or living with a disability. Very seldom do we talk about girls’ rights.” [p8]

and it makes a number of recommendations:

- Policy-makers must listen to girls
- We must tackle root causes of gender inequality – and this starts in school
- We need better data at local authority level
- We must involve men and boys
- We need a more joined-up approach to end violence
- We need a UK SDG delivery strategy. [Taken from p15]



This is an important report, and gives lots for us to think about in defining our 'audiences' and targeting our work. Recommended.

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## ***Disability and poverty in later life***

This new report<sup>20</sup> from JRF:

“[...] explores the relationship between disability and poverty among the older population. It emphasises the additional living costs that disabled people face, and the importance of taking disability costs into account when making poverty assessments in the older population. The report considers alternative directions of reform for the system of public support for older people with disabilities and casts doubt on some of the suggestions that have been made for improving the targeting of public support for older disabled people.” [ p i]

The main conclusions from the research are:

1. “Disability brings with it additional living costs, which can be very large – sometimes hundreds of pounds a week. People with disabilities often receive government support in the form of disability benefit, designed to meet part of those additional costs. If we include disability benefit in income but fail to make any allowance for the higher living costs that disability brings, then disabled people appear to be better off than they actually are. In the policy debate, we often see comparisons between the incomes of disabled and non-disabled people, or of the younger and older population (the latter have higher rates of disability). These comparisons are often made without any allowance for differences in living costs and are misleading because they make older disabled people seem better off relative to the rest of the population than they really are.
2. Britain currently has a dual system of public support for older disabled people. Central government pays disability benefits (mainly Attendance Allowance and Disability Living Allowance), while local authorities manage the provision of social care services. The two systems are quite separate and have little overlap, and it is sometimes suggested that they should be merged into a single system of disability support. While this sounds neater and may save some administrative costs, it runs the risk that many more people may miss out on government support completely. We think it is too big a risk to take with such a vulnerable group.
3. The present system of social care/disability benefit is quite good at using limited resources to minimise the number of older disabled people in poverty. But it is much less effective in protecting people from very deep poverty. The people most affected by this are those with severe disability (and therefore high disability costs), especially those who are unaware

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<sup>20</sup> Ruth Hancock, Marcello Morciano and Stephen Pudney. *Disability and poverty in later life*. JRF, 2016. Available to download as a pdf (2050 kb) from: <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/disability-and-poverty-later-life>.

of, or not able to negotiate, the systems for claiming help with their care needs.

4. There are failures in the targeting of the current system – the system misses some people in great need and it spends some public money on people with only moderate needs. But, in practice, no system of social support can avoid all such errors. Our findings suggest that the failure to meet severe need is a much bigger source of targeting error in the current system than is the spending of resources on the wrong people.
5. There is scope for improving the performance of the system of public support for older people with disabilities, by spending the current budget for disability benefit in a more effective way. Although introducing means-testing for Attendance Allowance or Disability Living Allowance is often suggested, it is possible to achieve similar improvements in poverty outcomes in a fully means-tested or a fully non-means-tested version of the disability benefit system. The reason for this is that people with low incomes are more likely to be affected by severe disability, and also have a stronger need for support and are therefore more likely to claim support.
6. Much more important than means-testing is the ability of the system to provide support to people living with severe disabilities and facing very high disability costs. Effective reforms of the disability benefit system could achieve major reductions in the burden of deep poverty by doing two things:
  - adapting the amounts of benefit paid to claimants of Attendance Allowance or Disability Living Allowance to match the costs of disability more closely;
  - increasing the reach of the system, particularly among the most disabled, by increasing take-up of entitlements and/or improving the quality of initial adjudication of claims.” [p1]

Important background reading.<sup>21</sup>

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

### **Edinburgh International Culture Summit**

The third Edinburgh International Culture Summit took place from 24-26 Aug 2016.

“The Edinburgh International Culture Summit brings together Culture Ministers, artists, thinkers and arts leaders from around the world to

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<sup>21</sup> Source: JRF *Weekly round-up*, 12 Aug 2016.

share ideas, expertise and best practice, with a view to inspiring positive change in cultural policy and investment.”<sup>22</sup>

The programme had three strands: Culture and Heritage, Culture and Economics, and Culture and Participation.

The session transcripts are available<sup>23</sup>, and of particular interest are the comments made by Matt Hancock, UK Minister for Digital and Culture, in his welcome speech<sup>24</sup>:

“[The role of Edinburgh in terms of being at “the cutting edge of culture, innovation and exploration”] is important for two reasons, the first of which is the economic one. The creative industries in the UK are responsible for more than 4 million jobs and more than £200 billion of value, and they are one of the most rapidly growing parts of our economy. They employ people of all ages, and at this Summit it is relevant to welcome the younger participants, who are playing such a central role.

However, that economic value is not all—in fact, it is perhaps not as important as the social and the human value. Britain is an outward and optimistic country that is engaged with and open to the world. It is in that spirit that we welcome you all here. The task now is to make sure that we use the arts and culture to demonstrate the social glue that binds us together and, domestically, to spread culture and access to culture to all parts of the country, not just to the heights of London and Edinburgh, and to all people, not just to the affluent, thereby building the strength of communities and building that social glue.

We are talking not just about culture within one country, because culture transcends borders. Globally, Britain’s culture has shaped its role in the world and its identity. Culture is about binding humanity in mutual understanding and appreciation, and celebrating that which brings us together rather than concentrating on that which divides us.” [p5]<sup>25</sup>

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## **Community libraries ...**

This new guidance<sup>26</sup> has just been published by Locality as part of its “My Community” strand<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> Taken from: <http://www.culturesummit.com/about-summit/about-summit>.

<sup>23</sup> See: <http://www.culturesummit.com/about-summit/session-transcripts>.

<sup>24</sup> Matt Hancock. “Welcome to the 2016 Edinburgh International Culture Summit”, [http://www.culturesummit.com/sites/default/files/2016-08-24\\_opening\\_ceremony\\_transcript\\_1\\_0.pdf](http://www.culturesummit.com/sites/default/files/2016-08-24_opening_ceremony_transcript_1_0.pdf).

<sup>25</sup> Source: *Heritage Update*, 330, 2 Sep 2016.

<sup>26</sup> *Community libraries: key considerations for community organisations seeking to take over library services and assets*. Locality, 2016. Available to download as a pdf (614.87 kb) from: <http://mycommunity.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/4.-Community-libraries-v4.pdf>.

<sup>27</sup> “My Community gives you the tools and information you need to take action and make your community a better place to live.

“This guide forms part of a series of resources produced for the My Community programme, which is funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government. This guide explores the subject of community managed and/or owned libraries, and contains advice that is relevant to both established and new community organisations, as well as Town and Parish Councils who are interested in exploring how they may play a role in supporting and developing local community library services and buildings.” [p4]

Locality’s role is described as:

“Locality is the national network of ambitious and enterprising community-led organisations, working together to help neighbourhoods thrive. We support organisations to work effectively through best practice on community enterprise, community asset ownership, community rights, collaboration, commissioning support and social action.”<sup>28</sup>

Given this, it isn’t a surprise that a lot of this guidance is around assets:

“The benefits of transferring library assets and services will vary depending on a range of factors, including the local authority’s approach towards asset transfer, the aims and capacity of the group involved, the physical asset, the support and funding available, etc.” [p7]

The introduction goes on to spell out what it sees as the benefits and “risks and concerns”:

[...] a number of positive benefits are commonly reported by community organisations who have taken on community assets such as libraries, and by local authorities who have been supportive of the process, e.g.:

- Local branches can be saved from closure, helping to retain local access to library services
- Community management often results in a greater degree of community engagement and involvement in service delivery, including volunteers
- Asset transfer can lead to the community becoming more engaged in wider community activities
- Asset or service transfer can help strengthen local community enterprises
- Transfer can open up new opportunities for fundraising to help improve library buildings.

The opportunities also need to be balanced against the key risks and concerns often encountered, e.g.:

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My Community and Locality deliver three programmes of grants and support on behalf of the Department for Communities and Local Government in collaboration with our partners [...]. Taken from: <http://mycommunity.org.uk/about-us/>.

<sup>28</sup> Taken from: <http://mycommunity.org.uk/about-us/>.

- Concerns that volunteers are substituting paid jobs
- The potential for the quality of the library service to diminish without professional staff input
- Transferring liabilities can place significant strain on community organisations.” [pp7-8]

The guidance takes the form of practical advice on organisational structures, governance, staffing, income generation, as well as some advice on actually running a library.

However, it’s often boiled down to fairly basic lists, none of which seems particularly strong on service-delivery:

“Shared aspirations may include:

- A desire to keep a local library branch open
- Improving the quality of the asset leading to an increase in the satisfaction of the experience for users
- Increased opportunities for learning, community usage and participation in libraries.

A community organisation may also be driven by a desire to:

- Establish a physical base or presence in the community
- Diversify its income base, including generating income from room hire or rent
- Take on a library building and develop new uses that meets community needs.

In addition, a local authority may have additional drivers such as:

- Reducing the revenue costs of running the service
- A desire to reduce its asset base, and potentially generate a capital receipt from the sale of assets to invest in other projects.” [pp31-32]

For us, it is also important to assess the community impact (social justice) of the development of community-run libraries.

In the section on community need, the guidance suggests that:

“In most instances it is those libraries that have low levels of usage that are the ones being prioritised for community transfer. Therefore, to become more viable and popular it is important for something to change to reverse any trends of declining use. This presents an opportunity for community organisations to tap into their local knowledge and provide a service that will engage with the community in its broadest sense.” [p33]

It also suggests some examples of strategic objectives:

“Objectives may relate to intended social outcomes, or the sustainability of the organisation. Examples of strategic objective may include:

- To support learning for people of all ages in the community
- To provide a diverse range of educational, cultural and leisure activities
- To provide local residents and visitors with access to good quality information about the local area
- To develop a strong and sustainable organisation.” [p34]

It also suggests that

“[...] aims for a community library project may be:

- The encouragement of reading and the improvement of reading skills
- Providing access to ICT, and support with ICT skills
- Providing access to important information and services relevant to the local community
- Enabling active participation in local democracy and decision making.” [p34]

This is all fine, but it does not really reflect the wider role that public libraries play in tackling social exclusion and working towards social justice.

The recipe here does not seem to me to be leading to a modernised public library service which will reflect fully the needs of local communities.<sup>29</sup>

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### ***Character matters: attitudes, behaviours and skills in the UK museum workforce***

This new report<sup>30</sup> was commissioned by ACE in partnership with Museums Galleries Scotland, the MA, and the Association of Independent Museums, and produced by BOP Consulting with the Museum Consultancy.

Its research aims were to:

- “identify the attitudes, behaviours and skills needed in the UK museum workforce for the next 10 years
- address how museums can recruit or support people to develop these.” [p1]

The research included a literature review, a consultation, interviews, an analysis of recruitment materials, and an online survey (responded to by over 2000 people). It identifies a number of challenges:

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<sup>29</sup> Source: *Public Libraries News*, 25 Sep 2016.

<sup>30</sup> BOP Consulting with The Museums Consultancy. *Character matters: attitudes, behaviours and skills in the UK museum workforce*. ACE, 2016. Available to download as a pdf (1940 kb) from: [http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/ACE\\_Museums\\_Workforce\\_ABS\\_BOP\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/ACE_Museums_Workforce_ABS_BOP_Final_Report.pdf).

- “The retention, protection and sharing of specialist knowledge and heritage-specific skills, particularly around collections, is a clear challenge for the museum workforce going forward. Museums must maintain this vital knowledge and skills while broadening roles and responsibilities as well as encouraging collaboration across specialisms.
- A wide ranging set of business and management skills (which are needed by people well beyond just those with the word ‘manager’ in their job title) are those that are most needed now and in the immediate future for museums. However, our survey suggests that, at present, not enough people are accessing CPD and training in these specific areas.
- A growing body of evidence as well as new HR practices highlight the increasing importance of particular ‘personal qualities’ in terms of their effect on employability, organisational performance, and entrepreneurialism. However, employers in the sector do not typically emphasise these qualities during recruitment, preferring formal qualifications instead.
- Using validated psychology question-sets, our survey findings suggest that some of these kinds of ‘personal qualities’ are also found less widely across the museums workforce than in many other sectors.
- The research in our literature review also indicates that developing these ‘personal qualities’ for the existing workforce is likely to require sustained interventions over a period of time as ‘personal qualities’ are not quick nor easy to change. This would indicate a need for more relationship-based models of CPD, such as coaching or mentoring – but the sector does less of these kinds of CPD activities.
- What is more, the organisations in which people work or volunteer, are themselves rated as also not very dynamic or supportive in terms of managing change and innovation or supporting CPD for their staff and volunteers.” [p3]

The key issues to be tackled therefore are identified as:

- “How to recruit a more diverse workforce (both paid and volunteer) into the sector in general, including people with more of the kinds of ‘personal qualities’ that are identified as assets in an environment that will likely increasingly emphasise adaptability, entrepreneurialism and fewer deep specialisms?
- How to develop the existing workforce, not just in terms of skills, but also in terms of developing their ‘personal qualities’, particularly given that some ‘personal qualities’ are difficult to change?
- How to get organisations themselves to be more flexible, agile and entrepreneurial and supportive of their workforce?” [pp3-4]

These are followed by thirty specific recommendations.

The report says that the ‘personal qualities’ that are required include:

- “[...] conscientiousness, optimism, motivation, self-efficacy, persistence, curiosity, creativity and the ability to learn and collaborate [...] d to be important to be more entrepreneurial, take more risks, and be more creative.

- Some of these ‘personal qualities’ can be influenced and changed while others such as self-efficacy are relatively fixed by the time people reach adulthood. Therefore, museums will need a two pronged approach of careful skills development relating to ‘personal qualities’ as well as more innovative recruitment methods to develop a more diverse, well-rounded workforce which can meet the needs of tomorrow’s museums.” [p11]

In addition, the report highlights the lack of diversity in the workforce:

“The pace of change in workforce diversity has not kept up with the pace of change in the demographics of the population. In addition, the end of schemes like Diversify coincided with the financial downturn and a subsequent shrinking of the job pool in museums. These wider factors have slowed progress to open-up the workforce.” [p63]

In commenting on the report’s findings in the MA news release, Sharon Heal (Director of the MA) said:

“We believe that the sector needs to foster values such as equality, diversity and inclusion in order to best respond to the changing environment in which we operate and that these values are at the heart of our new professional development programmes.”<sup>31</sup>

This is a timely review (and could possibly be linked to the workforce mapping being carried out in archives and libraries to look more widely at issues such as diversity, recruitment, and skills gaps).

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## Abbreviations and acronyms

ACE = Arts Council England  
JRF = Joseph Rowntree Foundation  
MA = Museums Association  
PHF = Paul Hamlyn Foundation

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This Newsletter was compiled by John Vincent, and all items are written by him, unless otherwise stated. Please send any comments or items for the next issue to:

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<sup>31</sup> Taken from: Patrick Steel “UK museums need more diverse flexible workforce, report finds”, MA, 19 Sep 2016, [http://www.museumsassociation.org/news/19092016-uk-museums-need-more-diverse-flexible-workforce?dm\\_i=2VBX,B7US,27LU0M,136QN,1](http://www.museumsassociation.org/news/19092016-uk-museums-need-more-diverse-flexible-workforce?dm_i=2VBX,B7US,27LU0M,136QN,1).