

The LIBRARY *Campaigner*

Supporting friends and users of libraries



How do you value something like this?

Are you ready? This year, it all changes. Local councils will work in a completely new way. And library supporters will need completely new tools to make their case!

Inside, we explain how – and offer a special low-cost workshop to bring you fully up to speed...



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THE LIBRARY CAMPAIGN – AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

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



The Library Campaign
22 Upper Woburn Place
London WC1H 0TB

Tel: 0845 450 5946
Fax: 0845 450 5947
email: librarycam@aol.com
www.librarycampaign.com

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- **CILIP (Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals)** for permission to adapt certain material for this issue from its journal, **Update**.

ELECTED OFFICERS

NATIONAL SECRETARY: Andrew Coburn

13 Shrublands Close, Chelmsford, Essex CM2 6LR. Tel: 01245 244957 – Day; 01245 356210 – Eve. email: acoburn@blueyonder.co.uk

CHAIRMAN: Kathleen Frenchman

7 Barnsbury Square, London N1 1JL. Tel: 020 7607 2665. email: kf@librarylondon.org.uk

TREASURER: Martin Wright

24 Fairlands Road, Sale, Manchester M33 4AY. Tel: 0161 718 3637. email: wrightm191@hotmail.com

MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Judith Deschamps, 35 Medusa Road, London SE6 4JW

MATERIALS OFFICER: Eric Hiron-Smith, 2 Arrowsmith House, Wharnclyffe Hill, Rotherham, South Yorks S65 1HQ. Tel: 07835 259675. email: ehironsmith@hotmail.com

Ron Salmons, 14 Sherwood Road, Hampton Hill, Middlesex TW12 1DF. email: ron.salmons@blueyonder.co.uk

Anne Ford-Smith (Friends of Seaford Library), 27 Blatchington Hill, Seaford, East Sussex BN25 2AJ

Peter Richardson, 18 Manor Lane Terrace, London SE13 5QL. email: plr@ukgateway.net

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY: Tricia Kings

28 Morrab Road, Penzance TR18 4EZ. email: tk113@hotmail.com

EDITOR: Laura Swaffield

36B Crewdson Road, London SW9 0LJ. Tel: 020 7255 0586. email: laura.swaffield@cilip.org.uk

FRIENDS GROUPS LIAISON AND CO-ORDINATOR: Vacant

– if interested, please contact the Secretary

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Officers and the Executive Committee meet regularly every two months, 1–4pm usually on a Saturday, usually in central London. Campaign members are always very welcome to attend. If you want to come to a meeting contact the Secretary to receive an agenda. We would like to hold more of these meetings in the regions, both to encourage members to come and to help those committee members who have a long journey to London. We have recently met in Lewes, Birmingham and Rotherham. If a local group would like to invite us to meet in their area, we would be delighted to come.

2008 MEETINGS

Thursday March 27; May 10 (AGM & Workshop – see page 3); July 12; September 6; November 15.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

I wish to join The Library Campaign and enclose a Cheque/PO for £..... for one year's membership.

Name.....Tel:..... Email

Address.....Post code.....

GIFT AID: I confirm that I am a UK tax payer and pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax at least equal to the tax to be reclaimed in the tax year. I would like my/ our subscription (plus any donation) to be treated as Gift Aid.

Signed..... Date.....

MEMBERSHIP RATES

Individual £15.00 • Concessionary Rate £10.00 • Local Organisation £20.00 • Trade Union Branches £30.00

Local Authorities £200.00 • Company/National Trade Unions £100.00 • Others please write for details

Please make cheques payable to: **The Library Campaign**. It saves a lot of time and money if you pay by Bankers Order. If you are able to do this please fill in the form and return it to us.

BANKERS ORDER FORM

To The Manager.....(Name and address of your bank)

Please pay The Library Campaign (HSBC, Salford University Branch, The Crescent, Salford M5 4PB. 40-40-39, a/c 61277405) the sum of £..... every year starting on (date) until further notice

Signed..... Account No

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(BLOCK CAPITALS PLEASE)

Please return to: **The Library Campaign, 22 Upper Woburn Place, London WC1H 0TB**. Registered Charity (England & Wales) No. 1102634

TLC Workshop 2008

- you can't afford to miss this!

Activists – staff and service users – need to learn the rules of a new game. It's a sophisticated one! Are you ready?

Later this year (September, we hope), The Campaign will hold a low-cost workshop in London for library activists.

- It aims to:
- bring the very latest news about the big changes in local authority practice
 - explain how to make the new systems work for you
 - discuss and network on common aims.

2008 sees a complete new culture in local authorities. It is the biggest change in decades. And that includes public libraries.

As *The Campaigner* goes to press, much of the detail is still to emerge (see pp.7-10). But the pattern is clear. Gone are easily-understood targets like the old Public Library Standards. Instead, each public service has to use a whole new language to prove it is worth funding.

The name of the game is – in theory, at least – 'community engagement'. Local councils must negotiate their own targets and improvement plans in consultation with residents.

It won't come easy. What's needed, it's widely acknowledged, is a complete culture change! There are few clear guidelines. Whether it really works for your service is up to you!

So – do you know your Sustainable Community Strategy, your LAA, your CAA, your national indicators, your

Outcomes Measures, your Library Benchmark?

Where you live and work, will all the new jargon mean a Brave New World – or business as before? Are you confident you can make it work to improve your service?

Find out at The Library Campaign's Workshop 2008!



THE LIBRARY CAMPAIGNER

SPRING 2008, No.76

EDITOR: Laura Swaffield

DESIGN & PRODUCTION:
Owain Hammonds

CONTRIBUTORS: Fred Barnfield,
Andrew Coburn, Michael Leapman,
Alan Templeton

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The Library Campaign

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Saturday 10 May 2008 from 13:30 hrs

AT LONDON VOLUNTARY SECTOR RESOURCE CENTRE, 356 HOLLOWAY ROAD, LONDON N7 6PA

AGENDA

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Election of Chair for Campaign AGM 2 Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 12 May 2007 3 Annual report for the year ended 31 March 2008 4 Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2008 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 Election of Executive Committee – Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, 6 Ordinary members of the Executive Committee (of whom 2 shall be representatives of local groups) 6 Any other business |
|--|---|

Nominations for elections and items for other business should be sent to the Secretary by 3 May 2008.

The accounts and annual report will be circulated at the meeting and will be put on the Campaign website (www.librarycampaign.com) Members can also request them from the Secretary if they are not able to attend.

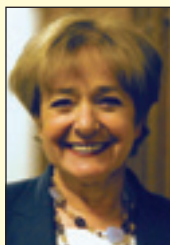
Any member intending to come for the AGM is requested to contact the Secretary in advance.

New faces ...

The latest Secretary of State for Culture, Media & Sport is **Andy Burnham**. Now just 38, he has risen fast since he became an MP in 2001. He is a New Labour loyalist, and is not noted for raising library matters in the Commons. He did work briefly as a 'special adviser' to Chris Smith, a culture secretary who did much for libraries – and is quoted as saying Andy is 'the best possible choice'. Andy himself says he is 'the luckiest man in Britain', with his 'dream job'. However, it's not the Secretary of State but the minister for libraries one really needs to talk to (see below).



New Culture Minister **Margaret Hodge** has so far declined to meet us – offering a tryst with a senior civil servant whom we already know. She has also made it clear to librarians' association CILIP that there's little or no chance she will ever use her legal power to intervene in a failing library service.



In a speech in March, she praised government schemes to give children books. But her ideas showed little understanding that the new policies being

set for local councils aren't about books (see pp. 7-10). She suggested expensive ideas such as longer opening hours, incentives to borrow (eg, 'a free cup of coffee if you borrow 12 books'), loyalty cards, Amazon-type book recommendation systems (with books delivered to your home), modern buildings, more IT and a universal card to let you borrow a book in one borough and return it in another.

Unfortunately, she said there was no money on offer. But, she said, libraries do not have 'a given right to prosper' if they cease to be relevant and popular. The speech caused a storm in the national press – but again it puts the real burden on local campaigners.

The Campaign was quick to book a meeting with **Roy Clare**, the new Chief Executive of MLA. That's the Museums, Libraries & Archives Council, funded by the government but tasked to be its independent adviser.



Some say MLA has churned out a lot of useful work for libraries (see its website: www.mla.gov.uk). Others say it is costly, unfocused and has failed to give badly-needed leadership.

Everyone says Roy is a new broom, set

to get what he wants. He began in the Navy, and progressed into culture via directing (and by all accounts revitalising) the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

He says he wants to do the same for libraries. But his first action has been to begin 'streamlining' MLA itself – fewer staff, a Birmingham base (rather than London) and a drastic revamp of its nine regional offices.

Roy told Campaign Secretary Andrew Coburn and Chairman Kathleen Frenchman that he wants to focus resources on front-line services – especially research to prove libraries' value (see this issue passim), encouraging innovation, better online services and better staff skills. He has negotiated a (not very big) library improvement fund, and is working on a shared ICT network to deliver more bandwidth, cheaper.

Discussion ranged widely. Andrew and Kathleen in particular pointed out users' concerns about staff training at all levels – and qualified staff are still needed (eg at the reference desk) but are routinely being made redundant.

Roy's baseline view is that decisions on libraries mostly have to be taken at local authority level. Library users should demand the service they deserve! So – you can feel free to go ahead and do just that...

A drop in the ocean?

Fred Barnfield, library activist in Sandwell, is a self-taught artist and writer. He used Wednesbury public library to pursue his early interest in painters and was offered his first exhibition at West Bromwich Library after being spotted by the local librarian. This article, written for Wednesbury, has been selected as the preface to a collection of exemplar Town Charters.

When I was a kid I had a recurring dream: I imagined myself made of salt and walking into the sea and dissolving into nothingness, only to be taken through the air to become a cloud.

The image has always stayed with me and has come to mean a lot to me, and I now see it as a metaphor for the work I do in the community.

I've always thought that in order to find yourself, you have to lose yourself. It's through that process of dissolving your ego that you see yourself through the eyes of other people. Taking part in your community involves the same process.

I've always been interested in horse racing – not so much the betting, but the unpredictable mystique of it. When I was about 15 there was a horse named Gudmenmist, which I used to mispronounce until I heard someone say it the way it should be said: 'Good men are missed' (and it's never been lost on me the link between 'missed' and 'mist').

My mother was a Methodist and involved in their activities. She was never the type to go on committees, but used to do what you might call the 'donkey work'. I don't think there was

anyone more happy than her, but nobody was aware of it. In other words, she'd made herself invisible.

But it's only when these people are no longer there that we realise they leave a hole. It's only when they're not there that they're missed. Take the example of Wilfred Owen. He only had four poems published in his lifetime and once he was suffering from shell shock, he could have avoided the end of the First World War. But he chose to go back to the trenches because he felt he owed something to his comrades and had to go through what they were going through. He went back

Big libraries need Friends too...

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the British Library's move to its splendid headquarters at St. Pancras. Michael Leapman, a trustee of the Friends of the British Library and editor of its newsletter, explains its role, and why it welcomes new members.

For libraries in general, and scholarly libraries in particular, last year's main event was the opening of the state-of-the-art Conservation Centre at the British Library in St. Pancras. Not only will it greatly enhance the tender loving care that the Library can give to its oldest and rarest books, but it also provides a badly-needed centre for training conservators from around the country and overseas.

The opening of the Conservation Centre was also a highly significant landmark for the Friends of the British Library, a support group established 19 years ago with the specific object of raising funds to help the Library add to its collections and improve its facilities.

For the Centre was the recipient of by far the largest grant ever handed out by the Friends – £130,000, made possible by a generous legacy from Mary Welch, a long-standing member. While this seems a small sum when set against the £13.25m cost of the whole project, it was enough to pay for fitting out an entire studio – named after Ms. Welch – within the Centre.

Mostly, Friends' grants are at a lower level, seldom more than four figures, and they are put towards buying specific artifacts that in many cases, given the tight government funding regime, the Library would be unable to acquire without our help.

For instance, if a rare book comes on the market at a time when the relevant department has already spent most of its budget for acquisitions, the head of the department will put his or her case to the Friends' Council. We help wherever we can.

Apart from bequests, the bulk of the Friends' revenue comes from membership fees paid by the 3,100 members. Over the years they have funded, wholly or partly, a wide variety of acquisitions for the Library, including medieval manuscripts, ornamental bindings, a book of Japanese cartoons, a rare French version of *Sense and Sensibility* and even a collection of football fanzines.

We paid for Peter Turnerelli's bust of George III, displayed in front of the King's Library tower, and have helped the Library complete its important recent purchase of Harold Pinter's archive.

We invariably contribute something to major exhibitions: for the winter 2007 display of Avant Garde material we sponsored the visitors' brief guide, and for an earlier show we funded an

advertising campaign on the London Underground.

In addition to the satisfaction of knowing that they have made such purchases and events possible, Friends enjoy other benefits. There is an active programme of visits to specialist departments within the British Library, and to other historic libraries and archives. Friends receive a discount at the Library shop and they have exclusive use of a comfortable room near the reading rooms, with a coffee machine and a selection of newspapers and magazines. A quarterly newsletter keeps them up to date with what is going on at the Library.

Membership costs £40 a year, £30 for concessions, and there is a discount for paying by direct debit. For more details phone 020 7412 7734, go to friends-of-bl@bl.uk or write to Friends of the British Library, 96 Euston Road, London NW1 2DB. Better still, if you are visiting the Library you will usually find one of our knowledgeable volunteers at the Friends' desk in the lobby, to your right as you enter the main doors, and they can enrol you on the spot.

IN BRIEF

On 5 June, an evening workshop on **How our libraries are performing** will feature Flick Rea. Flick is well experienced in local authority library affairs – Camden council's executive member for culture, Chair of the London Libraries Development Agency and a member of the London division of MLA (Museums, Libraries & Archives Council). The workshop is organised by LLL (the umbrella body for London library users).

Venue: 7.30-9.30pm, Camden Town Hall, Judd Street, London WC1 (close to King's Cross station). ALL WELCOME!

We are sad to report the death, at 85, of long-standing political activist and TLC supporter Ruth Frow. She and her husband Edmund joined their personal collections into the Working Class Movement Library. When it outgrew their house in 1987 it was housed by Salford City Council. Run by an independent trust, it is now an outstanding, internationally-known reference resource with thousands of books, pamphlets, cartoons, emblems and objects dating from the days of Tom Paine to the present day. An extraordinary achievement.

to his death, which happened only a day or two before the Armistice. For him, life didn't mean anything unless he was there in his community.

I've taken an active role in my community, as an artist and a local activist, for many years now, and still do. I enjoy living, because I know it's a short thing. As Einstein says, 'The future comes all too soon'.

I've never been bored for a second in my life, and there's not many people like that. But for me, these are the things that make a street or a town or a neighbourhood an interesting place to live: those people who contribute something. those people who give something to their community.



Fred's library bird sculpture, on show at Wednesbury library, suggests, he says, 'freedom and independence, an endangered species threatened with being caged up, a need to be saved from extinction'...

Volunteers – whose view is it anyway?

Alan Templeton, chair of two prominent library user organisations, wants to start an argument...

One recurring topic of discussion in UK public library circles is volunteering. This is something that tends not to occur elsewhere, as other countries do not have the same problems as the UK in utilising the large public library user resource. Those other countries have shown that it is possible to successfully run a public library service based wholly or partially on unpaid volunteers.

Why then does this country's library service find it so difficult when other UK public services have successfully implemented the concept? Unfortunately, the answer to the question seems to be entrenched attitudes and a reluctance to change.

The most widely quoted documents on volunteering in UK public libraries (see box, refs 1, 2 & 3) are preoccupied by organisational and staff matters. When volunteers / users are considered, this preoccupation is very evident.

They are published by a professional librarian organisation (The Library Association, now renamed CILIP) and can be considered to give the opinion of this group of people. They do not provide more than this, even though attempts are made to suggest otherwise. It is a valuable opinion, but is that of only one of the three parties to any volunteering scheme.

Community engagement is flavour of the month. But this means much more than 'recruiting volunteers'. And as for volunteering, who is setting the agenda about what they should and shouldn't do? Is the present consensus the right one?

The second participating party in any scheme is the local authority. There is no doubt that most local authorities believe that anything capable of improving services to the public at little cost is a good thing. Of course, there is the suspicion that some councils are interested in cost reduction rather than service improvement. It is this that is the basic problem. However, it is a problem that can be solved by negotiating robust agreements.

The positions of two of the parties to any volunteering scheme are therefore quite clear. The third participant has not yet said anything and there is the danger that the two other agendas will dictate how schemes are implemented.

Exactly what is the opinion of the public library users? What do they want from volunteer schemes? They are the most important element in any scheme and they should not be ignored or dictated to. After all, it is they who would have to provide the free/low cost labour – the national charities, hospitals etc have already swept up most of the available help from the general population.

If users accept that volunteers should not be used to displace paid staff, where should the line be drawn on the tasks to be undertaken by volunteers? The professionals suggest that these tasks should exclude core activities i.e. the activities which would benefit users the most. Is this reasonable? If these activities are excluded, is it likely that a volunteer scheme would succeed in providing an improved service to the public rather than just a small peripheral change?

Surely it is time that the library users made their views known.

Alan Templeton is chair of LLL (Libraries for Life for Londoners, the umbrella group for London user groups) and of CPLUG (Camden Public Libraries Users Group). The views expressed here are entirely his own.

REFERENCES

- 1 "Involving Volunteers in Public Libraries: Guidelines" available at: http://www.la-hq.org.uk/directory/prof_issues/ivpl.html
- 2 "The Use of Volunteers in Public Libraries" by Noeleen Cookman, David Haynes & David Streatfield; available at: www.la-hq.org.uk/directory/prof_issues/vols.pdf
- 3 "Volunteers – a way of encouraging active community participation" by Noeleen Cookman available at: <http://www.cilip.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/A15D81FB-DC4B-4B58-8EB7-A75B73D59545/0/article81a.pdf>

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Institute for Volunteering Research report "Volunteering in Museums, Libraries & Archives" by Steven Howlett, Joanna Machin and Gertrud Malmerjso; available at: http://www.mla.gov.uk/resources/assets//V/volunteer_survey_2006_9500.pdf#search=%22%22volunteering%20in%20Libraries%22%22

A top down menu for setting up a volunteer program:
<http://www.csv.org.uk/Volunteer/Part-time/Lending+Time/Key+Features.htm>

Volunteering throughout the world:
<http://www.e-volunteerism.com/search/country.php?PHPSESSID=ZrmrR6Q3HPERMDNC9cmg>

How do you value a library service?



All the photos in this section are of the Fusion Festival in Lambeth libraries. This is best practice in the new way of working. This giant festival for youth and families was put on to launch the National Year of Reading in Lambeth. Senior Children's & Young People's Librarian Sandra Davidson organised 100+ events in libraries for all ages, from puppets to DJ-ing courses, stories in Portuguese to a debate on the role of dads. She ensured excellent attendance by contacting over 150 local groups for families. She was able to prove the value of the festival to Lambeth council's Children & Young People's Department and two arts funding bodies, and so got extra funding from them. The festival was not aimed directly at getting in lots of adults (the national indicator) – although many parents would certainly have been tempted in by all these goodies for children. What it did was prove to other council departments that it would contribute to the welfare of young people – a very high priority, chosen by Lambeth. So the library takes its place as a vital service, at the heart of the agenda of the council as a whole...

This moment is priceless – but it has to be planned and paid for. There is no earmarked budget for public libraries. They must make their case, one by one, to each local authority.

2008 sees a whole new way of working for all councils, in all their activities. There are far fewer targets laid down by central government. Instead, councils are supposed to 'engage' with their own residents and provide what they ask for. A whole new way of working has been set out. Library supporters need to learn to pull new strings...

This is what they're looking for

From April 2008, local councils must produce data on 198 'national indicators' laid down by central government. These 198 indicators will now be the only measures used by central government to judge how well local councils are doing – across the whole range of their activities, from schools to roads, social services to crime prevention. They replace the 1,800-odd assorted national targets previously enforced, and inspection structures such as Best Value or CPA (Comprehensive Performance Assessment).

Public libraries get few obvious favours in the new indicator set, published by the Department for Communities & Local Government*.

The only specific measure for libraries is 'Use of public libraries' – No. 9 – one of 14 items grouped under the heading 'Stronger and safer communities'. There is one comfort – many people feared that public libraries would be bundled into one vague 'culture' indicator, with not a single one to themselves.

It is listed as a 'new' indicator not previously collected. It will mostly be researched via a new participation survey to be carried out by Sport England. Like its 197 fellow indicators, it is fixed and non-negotiable, because it 'represent[s] government decisions on national priorities'.

'Use' of the library service is defined as any contact – visits, online, phone, letter, email, outreach (e.g. event, housebound service). But not books borrowed. This will irritate many people. But libraries as a whole may well breathe a sigh of relief – nationwide, book issues are declining, while visits are going up. So libraries will not be measured on a weak spot.

More worrying for many, only residents and only adults (16+) are to be counted (plus councils should aim 'where possible and appropriate', for a 'closer match' with their community profile). This is bad news for councils that are heavily used in the daytime by people who work, but don't live, in the borough. It is bad news for the many services that are well used by under-16s and feel this work is a high priority. Or is it?

This is where ingenuity must come in. It's very important to understand how these indicators are meant to be used. The full list of 198 is the first concrete result from last year's Local Government White Paper (*The Campaigner*, winter 2006). This promised a big cut in the indicators then being set by government. It has been achieved as promised – and as long desired by the Local Government Association.

In return, local councils are expected to send in data on all 198 – but to select up to 35 from the 198 for special attention – via 'genuine negotiation' with local people. (There are a few extra, compulsory ones – but we won't go into that now...)

It isn't, frankly, very likely that the library indicator will one of the magic 35-odd in many 'local area agreements' – although something to do with 'culture' might just be. Most councils will, however, go for the vote-catchers like education, safer streets, youth services etc.

The guidance to the indicators states that libraries contribute to many local government priorities, such as



community cohesion, education and wellbeing. But they may need to prove this to hard-pressed councils looking for cuts. So library supporters will have to take a good look at the indicators their council chooses – and show how libraries can contribute to delivering them.

To be honest, not many of the other 197 indicators point obviously to libraries. The full list covers everything from education (dozens of indicators here, for all age groups), crime, health and housing, to the economy and climate change.

There are comparatively few in areas such as skills, enjoyment of reading, lifelong learning, quality of life etc, where public libraries might shine. For instance, the ‘children and young people/enjoy and achieve’ list has just one measure about ‘participation in positive activities’ among 44 measures largely centred on education targets.

The good news is that libraries are so versatile, so available, that you can argue they are useful to almost anything a council might want to achieve. Improving results in education, keeping teenagers off the streets, improving quality of life for old people, running multi-cultural festivals, spreading information on health – you name it.

But make no mistake. Unless library services can prove they contribute to the chosen targets, in each local authority, they may have a grim future.

The New Performance Framework for Local Authorities & Local Authority Partnerships: Single Set of National Indicators:
* www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/nationalindicatorsupdate



Goodbye PLSSs!

The DCMS (Department for Culture, Media & Sport) has just published the last-ever results of the Public Library Service Standards (PLSSs). Introduced in 2001 by Chris Smith, then Secretary of State, they were a heroic attempt to define clearly what is a ‘comprehensive and efficient’ public library service – as required by the law (Public Libraries & Museums Act 1964).

The PLSSs put down numerical targets to aim at for a host of library basics – how many library buildings, how many books, how many satisfied customers, and so on. Very few services met all 10, but they knew what they were supposed to aim at. The original 26 items were drastically ‘streamlined’ to 10 in 2004. But they were still clear numerical targets.

All that has now gone. Now there’s the Library Benchmark – a list of things to measure, but with no targets at all. Councils decide their own.

It will never again be quite so easy to check your council’s performance. The last set of PLSS results is now on the DCMS website: www.culture.gov.uk/Reference_library/Publications/archive_2008/plss_results2006-7.htm

ACCESSIBILITY

PLSS 1 Proportion of households within specified distance of a static library: 1 mile – inner London 100%, outer London 99%, metropolitan 95%, unitary 88%; 2 miles – metro & unitary 100%, county 85%. Provision for the 10% most ‘sparse’ local authority areas: 1 mile (unitary 75%); 2 miles (unitary 85%, county 72%).
NB: Councils that fail PLSS1 can bid for a higher score by showing how mobiles and ‘other’ outlets fill the gaps. When ‘sparse’ councils do this, the result must meet the ‘non-sparse’ standard.

PLSS 2 Aggregated opening hours per 1,000 population – 128.

ICT

PLSS 3 % of static libraries connected to internet. 100%.

PLSS 4 Workstations with internet and online catalogue per 10,000 population (in mobiles, static libraries or other service points). 6. NB: See also PLSS 6.

USAGE and SATISFACTION

PLSS 5 Requests for books met: (i) 50% in 7 days (ii) 70% in 15 days (iii) 85% in 30 days.

PLSS 6 Library visits per 1,000 population: 7,650 inner London (6,800 for ‘enhanced population’); 8,600 outer London; 6,000 metro; 6,300 unitary; 6,600 county. Councils can count use of library’s web resources (both on the premises and remote) and visits to premises for events, etc.

PLSS 7 % of over-16s who view service as ‘very good’ or ‘good’ (on a 5-point scale that also offers ‘adequate’, ‘poor’ or ‘very poor’, as in Cipfa PLUS): 94%.

PLSS 8 % of under-16s who see service as ‘good’ (on a 3-point scale that also offers ‘adequate/OK’ or ‘bad’, as in Cipfa Plus): 77%.

STOCK

PLSS 9 Number of items (books & all media) bought per year, per 1,000 population. 216.

PLSS 10 Time it would take to replenish all stock available on loan. 6.7 yrs. (PLS18 – 8.5 yrs.)

Hello, Library Benchmark!

The new Library Benchmark lists 23 items, grouped under five headings: satisfaction, participation, access, resources and efficiency. Much of this data is already collected in the regular Cipfa (Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy) and Cipfa PLUS (Public Library User Survey) surveys done by nearly all library services.

Instead of being still quite closely modelled on the terms of the old PLSSs, many items on the new list are different – more user-focused, more about quality than quantity, more about showing actual outcomes/impact on users.

Some might call it a starter kit that can make it clear what modern public libraries are meant to be about, even to the least enlightened head of service or councillor.

The task of producing the Library Benchmark was carried out by MLA (Museums, Libraries & Archives Council), overseen by a steering group from the Society of Chief Librarians, the Audit Commission, IDeA (the local government improvement agency), Cipfa, MLA and DCMS (Department for Culture, Media & Sport). ‘Interested groups’ were also consulted, including a youth focus group. The Library Campaign had a meeting with MLA, sent in comments and also organised a focus group.

There is a change to more user-specified criteria. For example, the benchmark now drops all reference to number of hours open. This rarely-met target from the old PLSSs was bravely

retained all the way through the consultation on the Benchmark (though without any number to aim at). Now it has gone completely, replaced by the percentage of users/young users who say the hours are ‘good’.

Similar is the loss of the measures of how many people live a specified distance from a library service. This was cherished by users, but less loved by cash-strapped services looking for cuts, services whose transport links did not fit the implied pattern – or innovative services with new ideas on access. Now there’s nothing about distance. It’s about how many users/young users find a library ‘easy to get to’. Both these new-style measures rather leave out the important question of how many people don’t use the library at all because of hours or location.

Gone, too is any real reference to quality of staff. Mention of staff qualifications are long gone, but until now there were questions about numbers who found staff helpful or ‘good’. Now the sole direct mention of staff is – under the heading ‘Efficiency’ – about user visits and interactions per full-time equivalent. This hardly presents contact with staff as a potential quality experience.

Not gone, alas, is the focus on ‘time taken to replenish lending stock’ (15). This, as users have argued, has long been an excuse for librarians to chuck out perfectly good books, badly needed within a poor choice of books.

There are lots of items in the benchmark about children and young people. Several (e.g. 5, 12) are similar to the items previously found in the ‘impact standards’ trialled by DCMS (Department for Culture, Media & Sport) from 2004. These were an earlier attempt to encourage library services to prove their popularity by counting how many children took part in various library activities.

Some items need information from other council departments such as social services (e.g. number of housebound people). This will be a routine matter to some library services – a new step for others. Again, the Benchmark is encouraging libraries to make sure they use all available information to find out who their potential users are – and tailor their service appropriately.

Different types of contact (visit, online search, book issue etc) are clearly separated out – to provide a useful ‘comprehensive’ view of the ways the service is used. This is an important area, especially as it is the focus of the sole remaining ‘national indicator’ that government will monitor.

There are gaps, too: no measure of community engagement, no push to consult non-users. And MLA still has not cracked the problem of how to measure use of virtual services in a way that suits all. The Benchmark admits there are ‘issues’ here, with services using so many different ICT arrangements, library management systems etc.

SATISFACTION

1. % of residents [not users] satisfied with the service ‘taking everything into account’.

PARTICIPATION

2. ‘Interactions’ per 1,000 population: visits; reservations by email/phone/post; requests; enquiries handled by email/phone/post; enquiries; visits to housebound; visits to network resource; searches of online databases (inc. catalogue) & subscription-based content; book issues; audiovisual etc issues.
3. Active borrowers per 1,000 pop.
4. % of residents who are frequent users.
- 5a. % of girl starters who complete Summer Reading Challenge.
- 5b. % of boy starters who complete Summer Reading Challenge.
- 6a. % of girls aged 4-11 who are library members compared to pop. aged 4-11.
- 6b. % of boys aged 4-11 who are library members compared to 4-11 pop.
- 7a. Total getting ‘at home’ service per 1,000 pop
- 7b. Total getting ‘at home’ service per total helped to live at home.

ACCESS

- 8a. % over-16s who say hours v.good/ good/open ‘when I want to come in’.
- 8b. % under-16s/who say hours v.good/ good/open ‘when I want to come in’.
- 9a. % over-16s who find library ‘easy to get to’.
- 9b. % under-16s who find library ‘easy to get to’.

RESOURCES

10. Total books/audio-visual stock per 1,000 pop.
11. Total books/ audio-visual acquisitions per 1,000 pop.
- 12a/b/c. % Bookstart packs delivered to children at right age for Bookstart stages 1/2/3.
- 13a. ICT time available per 1,000 pop
- 13b. % take-up of ICT time
- 14a. % users who say library is very good or good
- 14b. % users under 16 who say library is good.
15. Time taken to replenish lending stock.
- 16a/b/c/d. Book issues vs. books available for loan – adult fiction/adult non-fiction/children’s fiction/children’s non-fiction.
- 17a. % users who find choice of books v.good or good
- 17b. % under-16s who think books are good.
18. % users of ‘at home’ service who find choice of materials v.good or good.
- 19a/b/c/d/e/f. % under-16s who say library use has helped them to: read better/do better at school/use ICT better/ make friends/join in & try new things/learn & find things out.

EFFICIENCY

20. Net expenditure per 1,000 pop.
21. Cost per physical visit.
22. Number of issues/requests/enquiries per FTE (full-time equivalent) staff.
23. Number of physical visits per FTE.

So what's it all about?

More measures but no targets, no compulsion. That's the shape of the 'Library Benchmark' that is to replace the Public Library Service Standards (PLSSs). This new name is to make it super-clear that it is not a new set of PLSSs.

As soon as the local government white paper came out, it was clear that it meant 'the end of the PLSSs,' says MLA (Museums, Libraries & Archives Council, the sector's advisory body). 'The time for nationally set targets for all library authorities is over.'

PLSSs, says MLA, were a way for government to monitor local services. The Library Benchmark is 'a sector-led voluntary improvement tool'. Local managers should use it to mark their own progress over time, compare their service with others and with 'the national position', identify best practice and plan improvements – in their own way.

What's coming is a 'total culture change', says Andrew Stevens of the MLA. 'This is taking services out of their comfort zone. It is much more sophisticated. It's a much bigger game.'

The thousands of targets set by central government for all local services have been replaced by far fewer targets. Local councils will choose just a few to work hard on, in a 'place-based, cross-service assessment of outcomes' (not input) – ie, of results for people, not what is provided or what is spent.

Priorities for future services will be chosen by local councils and local people. This devolution has been urged for years by the Local Government Association. How it works in practice is left to each local council to decide. And whether there is really a culture change – or just some new jargon to describe business as before – remains very much to be seen.

The old, detailed PLSSs were seen as too rigid by innovative, dynamic councils and library services. Wangling a good score could have perverse effects. The PLSSs assessed input (resources), not successful outcomes. And they did not really address the wider social/educational benefits that libraries now need to prove to get better funding.

But they were valued by many library chiefs and users, because they gave clear guidance that helped them in arguing for

better resources – and (to start with, at least) they fostered a belief that they would somehow be enforced.

In fact, a 'main concern' during consultation on the new Benchmark was that it will not be statutory. It is completely voluntary. What's more, it specifies no targets at all. This worries many library chiefs.

But, says Andrew, services 'have a huge self-interest' in using it to assess their service, benchmark with others, plan improvements – and make a case for resources in the new local authority world.

The Library Benchmark also gives no ideal figures to aim at – just a list of things to measure, with no targets for them laid down. Services will fill in their own current figures to get a portrait of their own strengths and weaknesses. They can then compare themselves with similar areas and set their own targets for improvement.

Councillors and users will (in theory) also be able to make comparisons: 'Council X has a similar population to ours but far more people use the libraries – why?' or 'Why do we spend far less than the average on stock?' (or, of course, 'Council X runs their service for far less than we do – how do you justify the extra?')...

It remains to be seen if every service head will be 'sophisticated' enough to play the new game, with its numerous tools. Library users, too, will have to get their heads round far more complex material. And they no longer have any national standard to back them up – save that very limited 'national indicator'.

The MLA admits that much more work must be done on toolkits and research to demonstrate how libraries contribute to those all-important community outcomes. 'Some' services, it says, are finding partners and showing what they can do in the community – but 'many more' just aren't. This looks potentially disastrous.

Maybe it is significant that, when asked what support they most wanted, library chiefs called for research on the impact of libraries on people – and lots of advocacy.

www.mla.gov.uk/website/programmes/framework/framework5

Still to come

The Library Benchmark is just one part of a jigsaw of 'improvement tools' for public libraries. The rest are still in the pipeline as we go to press. When all are published, TLC will produce a complete guide for members.

Still to come is a Culture & Sport Improvement Strategy, which will cover libraries. This has its own enormously elaborate 'toolkit' for evaluating services and planning improvements.

Then there's the Outcomes Framework, a tool to help demonstrate libraries' (and museums' and archives') impact on the people's lives. This will be important. In the new local authority climate, all services have to prove their value not by declaring what they spend or want service they offer – but by showing how they affect local people.

And MLA will launch a new 'improvement section' on its website, which will set out 'the context, the available tools and how to use them'. MLA also promises to share good practice, and continue organising peer reviews (investigations by fellow librarians).

Jargon guide

Or, if you prefer, the context within which library services (and all other services) will have to compete for support. From now on local councils must 'engage with their communities' – how they do so is not specified. Together, council and residents will:

- Use a Local Strategic Partnership (made up of relevant local bodies) to set the priorities for an area – in a Sustainable Community Strategy.
- Turn this strategy into a 'delivery plan' called the Local Area Agreement (LAA). This will include up to 35 targets chosen from the menu of 198 'national indicators' – plus some extra ones devised locally, and a few compulsory ones from government, mainly to do with education.
- Prepare for a new type of inspection called the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). So far, very little is known about CAAs. They are being worked on by the miscellaneous agencies (such as the Audit Commission) that used to inspect different local authority services. In future all this will go into the CAA. And the CAA will (it's assumed) focus less on detailed targets and more on how happy local people are with the place where they live, in all its aspects.

Watch this space!

National Year of Reading 2008

This nationwide promotion starts – in April – by focusing on public libraries. What's it all for?



2008 is the National Year of Reading (NYR 08). It is billed as 'a year-long celebration of reading, in all its forms. It aims to help build a greater national passion for reading in England'. It is being targeted mainly at children, families and adult learners.

Central government sees libraries as the key to its success. In turn, library leaders are urging it as 'a great opportunity for libraries to showcase their pivotal role in reading'.

And it's also a great opportunity, libraries are being told, for 'partnership working – develop and embed existing relationships and forge new ones – potential partners will be at their most receptive as NYR gathers momentum and enters the national consciousness'. Maybe these 'partners' could include hard-working Friends and Users...

But first, what exactly is NYR for? The first NYR was 10 years ago, run by the charity the National Literacy Trust (NLT). It was simply a massive national promotion of the joys of reading, with lots of publicity material available for local use, national media cover and events nationwide. NLT continued the momentum as best it could in later years, under slogans such as 'Read on'.

The aim was to 'change the national reading culture'. If you wonder if it worked, think... Ten years ago, reading

What is your library service doing?

TLC is meeting the NYR team to discuss how Friends and Users can be better involved in NYR's work.

Meanwhile, we'd like members to report how well their own services are making use of NYR – especially the national membership campaign – and how well they are linking to the great resources offered by their own users!



Comedian and author Stuart Maconie (*Pies and Prejudice: in search of the north, Cider with Roadies*) was born in Wigan and has been co-opted as the library service's official patron. He turns up regularly to launch events and boost the library's publicity efforts. NYR hopes that equally fruitful partnerships can be made this year between other writers and libraries.

National membership campaign

April sees the first-ever national library membership campaign. Its basis is a 'Join Your Library Now' message in the national press – with a simple, standardised joining form that can be used in any library in England. Reinforcing the message will be a two-week radio campaign. The campaign is running throughout April 2008, with the main media activity towards the end of the month.

The campaign focuses on the main target audiences – children and young people – through their parents or carers. There are three key messages – libraries are still the powerhouse of radical thought and ideas, they are free and they are open to all.

It is a unique chance for libraries to attract new members and showcase their reading service. It will create the national context for local action. But, of course, it will

be a success only if new members not only join but keep coming back.

The keys are the quality of the welcome that all new members receive, whichever library they visit, and the reading offer they experience. Many services have already decided how they are going to complement the national campaign locally. Kent, for example, is harnessing the strength of their existing customers and asking them to recruit a friend. Brilliant!

That's why the Reading Agency is working with SCL (Society of Chief Librarians) and other partners to ensure all services offer 'a consistent, high-quality welcome'. And new members must all be told about local services and the reading opportunities – Bookstart, reading groups, the Summer Reading Challenge etc – they can access through their local library.

The modernised reading service

NYR signs up to a view of a library service that offers:

- **Book-lending plus... a lively, participative 'reading offer'**
- **Active help with book choice – staff, promotions, contact with other readers**
- **Social reading experiences: events & activities; author visits, readers' days, toddler sessions, festivals etc**
- **New formats – e-books, MP3, reading websites, listening posts, graphic novels...**
- **Special offers for target groups – eg reading for pleasure support for basic skills learners; sessions for small children; teen zones etc**
- **Active outreach – housebound service, mobiles etc**

groups were almost unheard-of, as were author visits to schools and libraries. Few libraries had book promotions designed to commercial standards.

The migration of books into IT was in its infancy – now there is whole world of websites promoting books, swapping readers' views, librarians' websites to help you find a book you fancy, library websites to tempt in teens, virtual reading groups, online votes for book prizes...

National 'offers' like Bookstart (free books for babies) or the children's Summer Reading Challenge were just coming into sight. To have massive book promotions on popular TV programmes like Oprah or Richard & Judy was unthinkable – as was the youth mania for authors such as Jacqueline Wilson or J K Rowling. And think how libraries have created and nurtured this culture.

For 2008, the idea is to 'take it to the next dimension'. One concept is to widen the definition of reading beyond books and into words. 'Whether it's film scripts or Manga, sci-fi or song lyrics, we want to get everyone reading more,' says the

publicity. But the emphasis will be firmly on reading – and the statistics still show clearly that what people (even teenagers) go to libraries for is, above all, books.

Inevitably, there is no injection of major funding. Instead, libraries are expected to 'exploit the buzz of a major national promotion' to 'demonstrate the value of what they do day-by-day, without the need to invent new services... all it requires is commitment, energy and ingenuity'.

NYR 08 is again run by the National Literacy Trust (NLT), this time in partnership with the Reading Agency (TRA, see *The Campaigner* no. 73). The latter is a 'reader development agency', something else barely known 10 years ago. The government department behind

is asked to join in by offering 'the modernised reading service' (see panel). The national publicity should also help them demonstrate the value of libraries to their Cabinet member, Chief Executive and directors of children's and adult services. And they desperately need to do this! (see page 7).

Many library services have got themselves represented on, if not leading, the cross-authority steering groups that are working together to deliver NYR. These include Staffordshire, Manchester, the Isle of Wight, Leicestershire, Westminster and Newcastle.

The idea is for these groups to be sustained after 2008 – to consolidate and transform local councils' support for reading. The period up to 2012 and the

Get your author here!

Connecting readers and writers is a key element of NYR. TRA has a long-standing 'Reading Partners' project with leading publishers. These have now pledged to pair an author with every English library authority. Who will yours be? This is not just a fun idea for library users – it should be an easy way for library services to demonstrate to publishers that events in libraries can deliver the goods for them and their writers.

The NYR team is working on how to involve authors on a continuing basis through the year. One idea being explored (and attracting a great deal of interest from publishers and writers) is for writers to pledge to do three things for their local library – for example, help to recruit new members during the membership campaign, run a local event or just talk to readers as they come in.

it is the Department for Children, Schools & Families.

NYR is supported by a consortium of organisations committed to promoting reading: Arts Council England; Booktrust (book promotion charity funded by publishers); the Campaign for Learning; the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education; ContinYou (out-of-school education body); Museums, Libraries & Archives Council (advisers to government); The National Youth Agency; NIACE (adult education); and Volunteer Reading Help.

TRA is the lead partner on 'library engagement'. It is working closely with the Society of Chief Librarians (SCL) on a joint work plan. Every library authority

London Olympics is supposed to deliver 'a step change in the nation's reading culture', just as NYR did ten years ago.

The national launch in early January clearly demonstrated the government's support at the highest level.

Downing Street was the venue. The Prime Minister was there – and for the second year running his Christmas card had been designed to publicise Bookstart. Also there was arch-Brownite Ed Balls, Secretary of State for Children, Schools & Families.

'I want every school, college, library and employer to pledge to join in with NYR by signing up online,' Ed said. 'Every child must be able to read and write confidently; that is one of the highest priorities of this government.'

'But NYR is about much more than children's achievement at school. It is about the potential of reading to open doors. We need children, adults and families to be reading because they love it, not because people like me say it's important.'

Find out more

Interactive website: www.yearofreading.org.uk

**National Year of Reading Group on Facebook • An entry in wikipedia
NYR marketing material – posters, bookmarks, window vinyls etc
– went to all English libraries in March.**

Libraries change lives!

The best local libraries are moving into radically new territory. But it all ties in to their community role – just as this is highlighted as never before in the new regime for local authorities. Of which more, elsewhere in this magazine...

That's the message of the shortlist for this year's CILIP/LiS Libraries Change Lives Award. It features a TV service, service development through volunteers and making mainstream service users out of adults with learning disabilities. The three were chosen from a record 37 entries.

The winner of the £5,000 award will be announced by celebrity schoolteacher Phil Beadle on 23 April at the Library + information Show (LiS). The award is sponsored by LiS, and run by the Community Services Group of TLC's supporter CILIP (Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals).

Linda Constable, Chair of the judges, says: 'All the judges felt the entries were of a very high standard and showed the wide range of innovative and inclusive work going on in libraries. The shortlisted entries demonstrate best practice, the benefits of partnership working and the impact that libraries and their staff can have on individuals.'

Since it began in 1992, the award has had a significant impact. Previous winners include Bookstart, first piloted by Birmingham Libraries and now nationwide, and the pioneering Big Book Share, helping fathers in prison to keep contact with their children.

The award has now chalked up its first MBE in the 2008 New Year Honours. Helen Carpenter MBE, leader of the 2007 winning project, Welcome to Your Library (see *The Campaigner*, no. 74,

One of the highlights of the show is the Libraries Change Lives Award, for public libraries that make the very most of their potential. Here are the three services on the shortlist – all real pioneers. Does your library match up?

spring 2007), says: 'Winning in 2007 was a real vote of confidence, giving added credibility to our project.'

With public libraries having to prove their worth in a very new way, this kind of publicity is more valuable than ever. And so are innovative, eye-catching services like these!

Nunny TV, North East Lincolnshire Library Service

Nunthorpe library serves a community with poor health, high unemployment and teenage pregnancy rates and low education achievement. Working with Channel 7, local businesses and Grimsby Institute of Further & Higher Education, the library offers free training with digital stills, video cameras and digital editing. The aim is to give the community a 'visual voice', to say 'what they want, to whom they want'. The library also produces a monthly half hour TV show on Virgin Media Channel 879. Volunteers aged 11–70 work together. Stories range from virtual councillors' surgeries to reports on local events.

New skills in teamwork, research, planning, timekeeping, presentation, communication skills and ICT have boosted self esteem and employability. Many work placements have been arranged with Nunny TV through local employment services, and the scheme has encouraged people to take an interest in their community.



Time2Give, Kent Libraries & Archives

This volunteering programme encourages local people to become actively involved by helping develop extra activities. It has changed the lives of many volunteers, staff and customers and expanded the library's outreach via active community engagement, personal development, skill enhancement, asset sharing, health and wellbeing and personal development in an atmosphere of inclusion and diversity.

Time2Give offers a broad choice of activities, including computer buddies helping with ICT queries, work with staff to develop extra local studies resources, family and older people's activities and supporting access to the service. This has enabled the library to reach a wider community than before. But there is a downside: the scheme does not meet CILIP guidelines (see page 6) and has been accused of facilitating a programme of redundancies in Kent libraries.



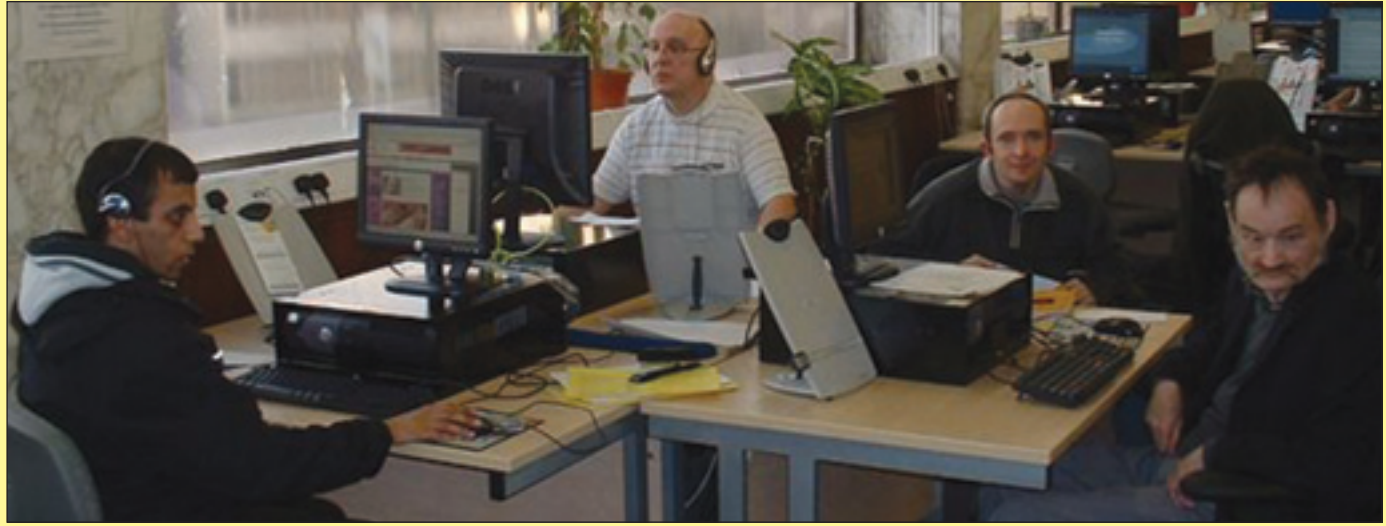
Left: volunteers have made the garden at Sittingbourne Library a three-time prize winner. Above: Carol Johnson (centre) was Kent library service's Volunteer of the Year 2007, flanked by runners-up Paul Jakes and Joyce Catt.



Bradford Care Trust Libraries Partnership Project, South Bradford Libraries, Archive & Information Service

In August 2007, the Care Trust approached the library with a proposal for a ground-breaking course for people with profound and multiple learning disabilities. This group is frequently excluded from educational opportunities due to their physical needs.

The project aimed to integrate service users with learning disabilities into the community using the Central Library as a focus for activities. Rooms were adapted for the Care Trust Sign Posting Service, as a classroom and as the 'Changing Places' changing and feeding facility for people with severe disabilities (the only one in the city centre.) Service users also made extensive use of the library's Learning Zone and café, where they could socialise with other library users. Regular visits ensured they feel comfortable and gradually became more IT literate, enabling them to access e-government services. Both learners and support workers were delighted with the course and the support they received from library staff.



Library+ Information show 2008 – Birmingham

Now in its 19th year, this is the national show for library people. The free exhibition and high-quality seminars give you a unique insight into what's going on – and some ideas for improvements...

Pre-register for the exhibition now and avoid the queues. It's free.

Hall 11, NEC Atrium, National Exhibition Centre (NEC), Birmingham

Nearest station: Birmingham International

Opening hours: 23 April: 10am – 5pm; 24 April: 10am – 4pm

Information/registration: www.lishow.co.uk

TLC recommends: do some research and plan your visit in advance – there's a lot on offer.



120 exhibitor stands

TLC's tips:

548 – CILIP, the librarians' professional association, which supports TLC.

808 – FunderFinder, an invaluable tool for organisations seeking a grant.

Plus – Library décor and furnishing companies galore. A great source of ideas. The Opening the Book stand (**410**) has regular short illustrated talks.

Free seminar programme

TLC's tips:

NB: there are no reservations – first come, first served.

NB2: there are two parallel all-day programmes, running in two theatres.

Public library policy: Roy Clare (see p.4) and John Dolan of the MLA (Wednesday am) and/or discussion panel (Weds pm).

Public library innovations: music for teens, Libraries Change Lives Award, self-service, reader-friendly future (all Weds pm); National Year of Reading (Thurs am); Muslim writers project (Thurs pm).

Something different: school libraries (Weds am & Thurs pm); information literacy, efficient book supply (Weds pm); the Olympics (Weds am); historical maps (Thurs pm).

Book Zone

Talk about books with publishers of anything from graphic novels to award-winning fiction, academic titles to special books for the reluctant reader.

Plus a whole section for the Independent Publishers Guild.

Celebs!

R.J Ellory (Thurs pm) – his thriller *A Quiet Belief in Angels* was the Richard & Judy Book Club Selection in January.

Celia Rees (Thurs pm) – her new novel for young adults, *The Stone Testament*, was published late last year.

Sophie Hannah (Weds pm) – will introduce her latest novel and talk about writing books that readers want to read.

Gervase Phinn (Thurs pm) – the popular author of gently funny tales about teaching in the Yorkshire Dales is

also President of the School Library Association. He'll talk about the value of school libraries.

Phil Beadle (Wed pm) – the award-winning teacher and star of Channel 4's *The Unteachables* presents this year's Libraries Change Lives Award. Guaranteed to raise the spirits!

Technology Zone

RFID in Action – this rapidly-spreading technology enhances security, may save money and enables library users to check their own books in and out. But does it really improve the service?

E-books – a future that never quite arrives. If/when it does, what are the implications?

Plus:

There is an all-day conference on Wednesday for library professionals, covering policy, design, use of technology, evaluating performance, marketing, managing change, case studies... But it costs money!

COME TO STAND 128 – TLC/ THE LIBRARY CAMPAIGN.

Come and meet the faces behind the names, swap news and ideas.

Or even help out for a bit – everyone welcome (contact Eric Hirons-Smith, see p.2).



John Dolan



Roy Clare



R.J. Ellory



Celia Rees



Sophie Hannah



Gervase Phinn



Phil Beadle

Take a voyage of discovery at the new look Library + information Show!

23 – 24 April 2008 NEC, Birmingham



Learn. Discover. Develop. Share.

Whether you work in a Public, School, Academic or Workplace library, LiS is packed with new discoveries for you.

- **Over 120 exhibitors** demonstrating the latest products and services including:
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 - RFID and security solutions
 - Shelving, furniture, signage and display
 - ejournals and ebooks
 - AV equipment and supplies
 - Books and periodicals
 - Subscription agencies
 - Special needs services
 - And more!
- **The Bookzone** – bringing you the latest developments in the world of books including booksellers, publishers and the EBook Exploratory

- **Ideas Lab** – meet and learn from other librarians who have implemented new projects or initiatives
- **RFID in action** – discover more about RFID solutions
- **Free seminar programme** led by independent experts and practitioners
- **The CILIP Libraries Change Lives Award** presentation
- **Leading authors** talk about their work

Plus
New Conference

Public Libraries in the 21st Century conference

One day in-depth conference exploring the future of public libraries, working with partners and engaging in communities.

Find out more at www.lishow.co.uk/conference

Register now for free exhibition entry at www.lishow.co.uk