



## Minutes

### English Public Libraries Stakeholder Working Group (EPLG)

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Date Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> October 2020  
Time 14:00 – 16:00  
Location Virtual Meeting

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Present:

Sue Williamson	Director, Libraries, Arts Council England (ACE) (Chair)
Jenna Birley	Governance and Business Support Officer, Libraries, ACE (Minutes)
Prof. Steven Broomhead	Chief Executive, Warrington Borough Council
Anthony Hopkins	Head of Libraries and Adult Education, London Borough of Merton (Representing the Heads of Service Sounding Board)
Isobel Hunter	Chief Executive, Libraries Connected
Sophie Lancaster	Senior Manager, Libraries, ACE
Lauren Lucas	Advisor – Culture, Tourism and Sport, Local Government Association (LGA)
Nick Poole	Chief Executive, CILIP, The UK library and information association
Liz White	Head of Public Libraries and Engagement, British Library (BL)

Apologies: *None received*

Also attending:

Sheila Bennett (Items 3 and 4)	Head of Libraries Strategy and Delivery, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)
Jenny Harland (Items 3 and 4)	Senior Policy Advisor, DCMS Libraries
Julie Turner	Executive Assistant to Deputy Chief Executive, Places and Engagement, ACE
Dr. Fankie Wilson	Head of Assessment, Bodleian Libraries

**1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

- 1.1 Sue Williamson welcomed everyone to the meeting and those present introduced themselves.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

- 2.1 There were no interests to declare.

**3. MINUTES AND OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING**

- 3.1 Sue Williamson asked members for any matters arising from the minutes and actions which had been circulated prior to the meeting for agreement.
- 3.2 There were no matters arising raised.

**4. FINANCIAL RESILIENCE**

- 4.1 Nick Poole introduced this item which provided an update on CILIP's bid for funding from the Arts Council's Library Development Budget to undertake research into financial resilience. The project initiation document had been approved and funding granted.
- 4.2 Nick intended to circulate slides on the current state of the project to EPL for their comments. He also reiterated his point from the previous meeting that CILIP wished to use the EPL as a reference group as the project progresses.
- 4.3 Nick confirmed the projected timeline. Currently CILIP are scoping and convening the project, and he would like the commissioned research team to discuss this with the EPL in November 2020. It was hoped that headline results from the research would be shared with EPL in December 2020, a report to be drafted by January 2021, with the final publication to be in February 2021.
- 4.4 Nick confirmed that CILIP will be scheduling a meeting with DCMS to inform them of the project and that they have also approached CIPFA and the Institute for Fiscal Studies for guidance concerning appointing a provider that will have traction with the majority if not all sector stakeholders. He also confirmed that the work will focus on England only.
- 4.5 Nick informed members that, although the focus of this work will be on identifying relevant/alternative funding methods for public libraries in England, CILIP recognise that the core funding from Local Authorities

**Action**

**Nick Poole**

and Central Government is fundamental to their operation. CILIP hope to be able to highlight other types and sources of income available to public libraries and to look at what the barriers are to accessing them.

- 4.6 It was noted that Libraries Connected are doing related work with their Future Funding Programme. Nick confirmed there will be a close alignment between CILIP's work and that of Libraries Connected.

## **5. OPEN DATA**

*(Jenny Harland and Sheila Bennett joined the meeting)*

- 5.1 Jenny Harland updated members of EPL on the progress of the core dataset and open data project being undertaken by DCMS.
- 5.2 Members noted the development up to March 2020 when the project was paused as a result of the Covid-19 lockdown. DCMS were now going to resume this activity and Jenny outlined the next steps.
- 5.3 DCMS wished to convene a working group to ensure quality of the established schemas and to link up with local authority library services who have tested them to discover whether they have found them helpful/useful and to help analyse the impact of Covid-19 on the sector.
- 5.4 Jenny informed members that DCMS would like to ensure this work was sufficiently linked to other work concerning data collection and sharing being undertaken by stakeholders such as Libraries Connected and the British Library.
- 5.5 Members suggested DCMS approach external vendors who provide services to libraries such as Lorensberg and Bibliotheca to discuss what data could be shared to benefit this project.
- 5.6 It was noted that it would be beneficial to develop the schemas to enable auto-filling wherever possible, and to develop a strategy to evolve the schema nationally over time.
- 5.7 Members agreed to continue this item as part of the following discussion on a data strategy for libraries.

## **6. DATA STRATEGY**

- 6.1 Sue Williamson introduced Dr Frankie Wilson, Head of Assessment at Bodleian Libraries, who had been invited to the meeting to discuss her experiences formulating a data strategy in academic libraries
- 6.2 Frankie highlighted key points she considered important in the formulation of a data assessment, namely:

- Assessment of use; what one wants to know and the reasons why
- Trust in the collection methods and results
- Stakeholder buy-in ('brand' building); how to achieve this
- Relevant specialist skills in data literacy, collection and technology
- Leadership; being flexible individually for the collective good

6.3 Members discussed the appetite and capacity amongst themselves and the library sector to implement a data assessment project. It was widely felt that this work was important to the sector and needed to be instigated as soon as possible.

6.4 Frankie suggested that the EPL members discuss each point above, answer them in a structured way and find areas of overlap to take forward. She facilitated a short exercise to demonstrate how this might be achieved, asking members what they wished to use data collected about the library sector for.

6.5 Common themes in the members' answers included:

- To demonstrate the social value of libraries to users and decision makers
- For advocacy purposes
- To identify areas for improvement
- To identify, influence and secure funding sources.

6.6 Members agreed to send their completed exercise to Jenna Birley for collation and further discussion. They also agreed to organise a session to apply the same exercise to the other key questions presented.

**All /  
Jenna  
Birley**

6.7 Members asked Frankie for a steer in finding a specialist to help formulate a fuller data assessment. Frankie agreed to contact organisations she thought may be able to assist on behalf of the group.

6.8 Members discussed the need to move away from the library sector's view that data collection was an obligation. Frankie suggested that improved data literacy across the sector, showing those involved what the data is being used for and the impact it is having, empowers individuals and helps keep them invested in the project.

6.9 Members discussed a data assessment in relation to the schema discussed earlier. It was noted that the schema ought to form part of the development of any national assessment. It was agreed that Sophie Lancaster and Iain Moore would join a working group to ensure communication between the open data project and the development of a data assessment. It was also suggested that DCMS utilise the Heads of Service Sounding board for feedback where appropriate.

**Sophie  
Lancaster**

6.10 Members thanked Sheila, Jenny and Frankie for their participation in and facilitation of this discussion.

*(Jenny Harland and Sheila Bennett left the meeting)*

## 7. TASKFORCE CLOSURE REPORT STATUS

- 7.1 Sophie Lancaster provided an update on the status of the Libraries Taskforce Closure Report. The report was being finalised and would be published on Arts Council England's website. Members would be notified when it was available.
- 7.2 Sophie informed members she was in the process of compiling an action plan specifically for EPL activity. This would be circulated for information as soon as it was completed.

**Jenna  
Birley**

**Sophie  
Lancaster**

## 8. AOB

- 8.1 Sue Williamson proposed a one-hour session in a month's time to discuss Community Managed Libraries. This was agreed.
- 8.2 Sue Williamson thanked members for their contribution to the response to Danny Kruger's recent report. Isobel Hunter and Nick Poole agreed to provide their electronic signatures for the document.
- 8.3 Liz White notified members of an upcoming press release from the British Library, detailing the next steps in its phased reopening, and the launch of a six-month programme, '*Reset. Restart*', designed to support small and medium-sized enterprises through the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 8.4 Members were informed that Libraries Connected would soon publish their report, 'Libraries in Lockdown', and that Carnegie Trust UK was about to publish 'Learning from Lockdown: 12 Steps to Eliminate Digital Exclusion'. Links to these reports would be circulated to members.
- 8.5 Members discussed the potential for library services to feature as part of the Festival 2022 programme. It was noted that further development was needed in this area, which would be led by Libraries Connected.
- 8.6 Members wished to note congratulations to Isobel Hunter for being awarded an MBE for services to public libraries.

**Jenna  
Birley**

**Isobel  
Hunter/  
Nick Poole**

**Jenna  
Birley**

**Date and location of next meeting:** Tuesday 15<sup>TH</sup> December 2020, 14:00 – 16:00, Virtual Meeting