



Minutes

English Public Libraries Stakeholder Working Group (EPL)

Date	Tuesday 6 th December
Time	15:00 – 16:00
Location	Virtual Meeting

Present:	Luke Burton	Director, Libraries, Arts Council England (ACE) (Chair)
	Alison Hoolihan	Officer, Libraries Development Team, ACE
	Isobel Hunter	Chief Executive, Libraries Connected
	Sophie Lancaster	Senior Manager, Libraries, ACE
	Lauren Lucas	Senior Advisor – Culture, Tourism and Sport, Local Government Association (LGA)
	Leah Mason	Policy Officer Apprentice, Libraries, ACE (Minutes)
	Iain Moore	Commercial Director, Libraries Connected
	Nick Poole	Chief Executive, CILIP, The UK library and information association
	Kelly Saini Badwal	Head of Cultural Services, London Borough of Sutton
	David Smith	Community Managed Libraries Peer Network (CMLPN)
	Simon Smith	Libraries and Museums Manager, Reading Libraries
	Sue Wells	CEO, Lincs Inspire
Apologies:	Prof. Steven Broomhead	Chief Executive, Warrington Borough Council
	Anthony Hopkins	Head of Library, Heritage & Adult Education Service, Merton Council

Neil MacInnes	Head of Libraries, Galleries & Culture, Manchester City Council
Liz White	Head of Public Libraries and Engagement, British Library (BL)
Emma Noyce	Assistant Director: Culture and Information Services, Hampshire County Council

	Action
1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS	
1.1 Luke Burton welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies were noted.	
2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	
2.1 There were no interests to declare.	
3. DATA STRATEGY UPDATE	
3.1 Iain Moore updated the group on the progress of the data strategy. A funding proposal has been submitted to DCMS, involving a procurement proposal for delivery, the engagement of the library sector including the mapping of current data reports, and the inclusion of social value indicators.	
3.2 Iain also noted that this proposal would include the testing of data schema and would lead to DCMS confirming the 6 data schema they require, as well as the sampling of different library services' use of LMS data reporting.	
3.3 The proposal includes procurement over Christmas and New Year and delivery over a 10-week period from January to March 2023, with dissemination to the wider sector at the end of the period.	
3.4 Iain highlighted questions to answer such as should the data platform be centralised and if so, who should hold this?	
3.5 David Smith asked the group about CMLs and where they would fit into a proposed data strategy for the sector, stating that there is a need to address the fragmentation of the sector. Iain stated that CMLs commissioned by local authorities would be included in the proposal. Iain said he will explore how CMLs will fit into the proposal and will highlight the importance of not double-counting CMLs.	Iain Moore

- 3.6 Isobel Hunter added that it is important to acknowledge CMLs but it may be too complex to incorporate CMLs into this phase of the project and that their inclusion may come in phase 2.
- 3.7 Lauren Lucas asked about the mapping exercise and whether wider council services who have done some good data work will be incorporated as well as libraries. Iain stated that they have looked at the Moving Communities data platform and would like something similar for the library sector. Iain commented that this type of platform would make data reporting easier for libraries, as the intention is not to add to libraries' reporting burdens.
- 3.8 Kelly Saini Badwal highlighted that an academic partner may be the best fit for the project given their robustness and integrity of research. Iain noted that an academic partner may be too slow to work to the tight DCMS timeframes in phase 1 of the project.
- 3.9 Sue Wells said she represents independent/charity run library services and that there is a reluctance to share financial data amongst this group and that the data strategy may get a better response from these services if this area is covered early on. Iain said he would look into building this into the current phase of the project.
- 3.10 Nick Poole stated that this is currently voluntary data collection from libraries, and he asked if DCMS had indicated any mandated data collection. Iain noted that the 6 schema required by DCMS had been submitted to DLUHC.

4 FINANCIAL RESILIENCE UPDATE

- 4.1 Luke introduced the financial resilience update and informed the group that he is working on the EPL joint statement on the current financial situation. Luke also highlighted the letters submitted to government by Kent and Hampshire Councils.
- 4.2 Nick updated the group on financial resilience and confirmed that a new date for the workshop is currently being agreed. The workshop will look at the independent review on public library funding and will consider the report's recommendations as well as looking at government models of funding.
- 4.3 Nick noted that it is important to advocate for the future of all public libraries as we go into the election cycle and that there is a need for a piece of work to propose several recommendations for funding, looking at the next 25 years of social and economic development, and moving away from the Victorian model of public library funding. He stated that recommendations arising from this work should be evidence-based and address governance, funding, impact and location. There is a need to

move from a position of fighting for what the sector used to have towards what the sector needs to continue to travel forwards.

- 4.4 Nick suggested using EPL as the governing board for this work.
- 4.5 Luke commented on the need to have tangible impacts and case studies for this work. Nick agreed, saying that this work needs to be a national-scale overview looking at libraries and how they will change over the next few years, and needs to advocate for libraries as a key part of social and economic development in the future.
- 4.6 Isobel stated that Libraries Connected are very interested in this piece of work and highlighted the Futures Lab part of the new [LC strategy](#). Isobel also informed the group that they are currently working on a briefing on the three-channel library as part of the future library model – physical, digital, out in the community. Isobel asked if it is worth finishing the current financial resilience work before embarking on the future of public libraries work. Nick stated that the financial resilience work will feed into this new piece of work.
- 4.7 Lauren shared LGA's [Signals of the Future](#) report, which looks at the issues that will be on the local government agenda in 2027.

5 E-BOOKS

- 5.1 Iain updated the group on the e-book proposal that LC have been working on with ACE, looking at the affordability and the availability of e-book content for public libraries. The project will commission a freelance/organisation to research the landscape, practices and commercial interests of e-licencing between publishers, aggregators and public libraries; to develop conversations with selected publishers to clarify the library offer and develop a model of simplified licensing terms with defined benefits for all parties; and to pilot an implementation of this model with a selected group of library, aggregator and publisher participants.
- 5.2 Iain stated there is a need for libraries to demonstrate their value and impact to publishers in return for a better commercial model from publishers. He also noted that The Library Consortium is being considered as the pilot group for this project.
- 5.3 Nick informed the group that CILIP's policy committee had recently met to review e-books and that the approach being taken is one of how borrowing e-content is good for learners and readers, rather than being good for libraries. It is important to position access to e-content as an equalities issue.

- 5.4 Sophie Lancaster asked that e-books be added as a regular update item at EPL. Alison to add to the agenda.

6 MEMBER UPDATES

6.1 CILIP

CILIP is currently updating the Controversial Materials guidance, with extended sections on activities, programming, and stock. Also, CILIP have just received confirmation of the next stage of Green Libraries and are looking at more funding partners. The Welcome to Libraries induction pack is ready to be launched. Nick stated that CILIP is eager to maximise its reach so would welcome opportunities to plan its launch.

6.2 KELLY SAINI BADWAL – LONDON BOROUGH OF SUTTON

Sutton Libraries, as part of The Library Consortium, have recently launched a new [digital library](#) platform that highlights book recommendations, events, room hire.

6.3 COMMUNITY MANAGED LIBRARIES

The network is currently recruiting regional network coordinators to support Chris Neath as the central coordinator. Dorset and other areas are about to celebrate the 10th anniversary of some CMLs and other CMLs are adding hours and days to their opening hours, indicating that confidence is returning following the closures during the pandemic.

6.4 SIMON SMITH – READING LIBRARIES

Budgets are currently being looked at for 2023/24. A Christmas Rhymetime planned by Reading libraries has sold out with 850 tickets booked, indicating, in agreement with David from CML, that confidence is returning.

6.5 SUE WELLS – INSPIRE (LINCS)

Libraries have had funding from the Holiday Activity Fund and have used it for children to takeover libraires on their closed days, which has been a great success. The BIPC in Lincs is growing and doing great work supporting new cultural organisations, including a new NPO. It is also bringing in new footfall.

6.6 LGA

The LGA have been responding to the Autumn statement and also engaging with Kent and Hampshire following the submission of their letters to government. The [Commission on Culture and Local Government](#) is published on 8th December. This is an advocacy document on how culture can contribute to health and civic pride.

6.7 LIBRARIES CONNECTED

The Future Funding programme is about to publish a guide to income generation and the next cohort has been recruited for January 2023. Libraries N.I and Welsh Libraries are now part of this. Greenwich and Essex have joined the UKVI service. This service brings in £2.5m every year, over £1m of which is profit. LC are also working with CILIP on a survey on perceptions of book stock diversity. A report on regional working is about to be published, and the peer mentorship scheme now has 10 pairs of mentors/mentees for the pilot scheme. A research project on library impact and evaluation in the East of England is drawing to a close. This independent research will help to measure, manage and evidence the impact of social connections in public libraries in the East of England, and will feed into the national data work being done. LC have also worked with British Library to distribute a second consignment of Ukrainian books, and a Ukrainian libraries conference is being planned for January. The results of the budget survey are in, showing increased delivery costs and an expectation of a reduction in statutory funding.

6.8 **ACE**

A project manager has recently been recruited for the Libraries Accreditation scheme, starting mid-Januray 2023. This post will look at the resource needed to deliver accreditation, and how to link to the museum accreditation scheme. The basic dataset has started gathering the 2022 data, and ACE are working with TNA to update the Standard Charge document. There is ACE funding for the Coronation which LC will distribute next year.

Date and location of next meeting: Tuesday 24th January 2023,
15:00 – 17:00 Virtual Meeting.