



Minutes

English Public Libraries Stakeholder Working Group (EPL)

Date	Tuesday 9 th November
Time	14:00 – 16:00
Location	Virtual Meeting

Present:	Sue Williamson	Director, Libraries, Arts Council England (ACE) (Chair)
	Jenna Birley	Governance and Business Support Officer, Libraries, ACE (Minutes)
	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:	Prof. Steven Broomhead	Chief Executive, Warrington Borough Council
Guests:	Maja Maricevic	British Library
	David McMenemy	University of Strathclyde
	Emma Noyce	Hampshire County Council
	Elaine Robinson	University of Strathclyde

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

1.1 Sue Williamson welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 There were no interests to declare.

3. ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

3.1 Sue Williamson introduced this item and gave an overview of the Arts Council's progress on this topic to date.

3.2 Maja Maricevic provided an update on work of the British Library. Maja informed EPL that the British Library is working towards net-zero emissions and have received funding to make their buildings greener.

3.3 Maja noted that a priority for the British Library around climate change is to enable better dialogue on the subject across the library profession and with library audiences. It was also noted that there is an interconnection between climate action and social inequality.

3.4 Maja informed EPL that her team were working to connect the scientific community and their expertise with local communities to support the conversations being had about climate change.

3.5 Nick Poole commented on the importance of forming a cohesive sector response to climate change. He noted that libraries need to position themselves as part of a sustainable future and advocated for a sector-wide commitment to a clear role for library services.

3.6 Nick suggested several outcomes library services could work towards achieving, such as committing to net-zero emissions, measuring and improving use of resources, and identifying climate champions within the sector to advocate on its behalf.

3.7 Isobel Hunter informed EPL that Libraries Connected will be looking at how libraries engage with their communities regarding conversations about climate change. It is part of Libraries Connected's ambition for library services to be active participants in the climate change conversation and actions, rather than passive. It was also noted that it was appropriate to plan a sector response to climate change now for full implementation in two to three years.

3.8 Sue Williamson informed EPL about work the Arts Council have been doing in partnership with environmental advice charity Julie's Bicycle. She would circulate Arts Council's next environmental report when

Action

Sue
Williamson

available. She also noted the work of the Fullbright scholar, The Reading Agency's Reading Sparks programme and the availability of National Lottery Project Grants for targeted project work.

- 3.9 Sue also asked EPL to note that Research Libraries UK had approached her regarding climate action and were keen to work with EPL and the rest of the libraries sector on this.
- 3.10 Emma Noyce provided an update on Hampshire's action on climate change. They were working to promote libraries as a resource for information on the conversation about climate change. It was noted that some of the most successful engagements with their communities about climate change has been when they have provided practical information to users, such as how to reduce their energy bills or how to adapt cooking habits.
- 3.11 Hampshire have also sought new partnerships and are working to become eco-community hubs. Emma noted that challenge to the library sector on this is how to implement these interventions nationally while retaining the ability to target specific communities where particular actions may be more relevant.
- 3.12 Isobel Hunter asked EPL to note the upcoming Engaging Libraries Report being done in collaboration with Carnegie which may have some relevant points to consider in this context.
- 3.13 EPL discussed what the LGA could do to help library services in these conversations. It was felt that ensuring library services are included in Local Authority conversations and sharing best practice through the LGA networks would be helpful.
- 3.14 EPL discussed next steps in developing a collective plan of action on climate change. Members wanted to look at the forthcoming proposals and/or recommendations from the Julie's Bicycle/Arts Council Environmental report, as well as the theory of change document shared by Nick Poole to formulate a plan to cover the next few years. It was proposed to develop the initial plan collaboratively and submit to the Arts Council by December 2021.

4. FINANCIAL RESILIENCE UPDATE

- 4.1 Nick Poole provided an update on CILIP's financial resilience project. The initial conversations and desk research had been completed, as well as two workshops with a third one being added.
- 4.2 Nick went through several funding scenarios and discussed what is a realistic outcome for library funding over the next five to seven years. He described a focus of the work will be how the sector better

**Sue
Williamson /
Nick Poole /
Liz White**

anticipates and adapts to changes in funding circumstances in the future.

4.3 Nick would provide further updates on the project as it progressed.

5. EVERYLIBRARY

5.1 Due to time constraints, this item was moved offline for decision.

5.2 EPL were asked to provide comments on the options outlined in the paper directly to Nick Poole.

6. E-LENDING UPDATE

(David McMenemy and Elaine Robinson joined the meeting)

6.1 David introduced a piece of research he and his colleagues at the University of Strathclyde had recently conducted regarding e-lending and physical book loans in public libraries during the Covid-19 pandemic. One of the aims of the research was to assess the effects of the restrictions on access to physical books had had on users.

6.2 A principle finding of this research was that e-loans did not replace or make up for physical loans during the pandemic and this was the case throughout UK services. David agreed to send his presentation of initial findings to EPL for information.

6.3 EPL welcomed this research and felt it complemented the informal data gathering Libraries Connected had conducted throughout the pandemic. They also noted that, though the overall trend of physical loans not being supplanted by electronic ones was UK wide, there was likely to be a significant disparity between library services in relation to the costs of providing their digital services which would have impacted these figures.

6.4 Members queried whether the research team had been able to ascertain the impact on access to library services more generally, particularly if there would usually have been a necessity to visit a branch in person to access a service. David informed EPL that they had not been able to assess this at this point, but research was ongoing. They were soon to release a supplementary survey which will be able to ask questions about barriers to digital access

6.5 Similarly, EPL queried whether the figures represented physical book borrowers transferring to electronic books, or whether it was new users. The research team hoped to gather more information on this with their follow-up survey.

**Jenna
Birley**

All

**David
McMenemy**

6.6 EPL noted the cost of e-titles, the choice available and the impression that this often limited choice gives to the library user of the service are key challenges to e-lending and borrowing. There also remains the problem of digital service users being able to fully engage with all elements of the physical library offer.

(David McMenemy and Elaine Robinson left the meeting)

7. DATA DISCUSSION

7.1 Nick Poole began discussions on this item. He briefed EPL on points about data raised by Libraries Hacked which had prompted several queries offline about library data collection and accessibility.

7.2 It was noted that some of the points raised by Libraries Hacked would be addressed by the ongoing development of a library assessment strategy.

7.3 Sophie Lancaster informed EPL that a follow-up meeting was planned with Libraries Hacked, Libraries Connected and the Arts Council to explore what may be possible in terms of data collection and availability, building on work already being undertaken by the Arts Council on the basic data set.

7.4 It was noted that a universal dataset was also part of the Single Digital Presence project. Sophie agreed to liaise with the team at the British Library as these conversations developed.

7.5 EPL members discussed the problem that there is not one organisation who currently has ownership of library data development. This would need to be addressed in the future and the capacity of such an organisation to do this would have to be considered.

7.6 Lauren Lucas informed EPL that she was due to meet with other LGA colleagues to find out what data they hold and collect regarding library services. She agreed to feedback any relevant discussions to the group.

7.7 EPL agreed that the development of data discussions should remain as a standing item on their meeting agendas.

8. LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT TEAM WORKPLAN

8.1 Sophie Lancaster introduced this item and asked EPL to confirm it was an accurate note of work progress to date.

8.2 As part of the development of this body of ongoing work, Sophie asked EPL members to consider the format and frequency of their future

**Sophie
Lancaster**

**Lauren
Lucas**

**Jenna
Birley**

All

meetings. She asked them to consider whether shorter, more frequent, meetings focussed on a specific piece of work would be preferable and asked they come back to her outside of the meeting with their thoughts on this.

All

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 9.1 Lauren Lucas informed EPL that the LGA had conducted their survey of Heads of Service for Culture and Leisure but intended to do a follow-up one to gain more responses.
- 9.2 Nick Poole provided an update on CILIP's workforce mapping project. This was to encompass a broad workforce overview, trends amongst the workforce, pay and progression as well as a deep dive into equality, diversity and inclusion.

Date and location of next meeting: Tuesday 11th January 2022, 14:00 – 16:00, Virtual Meeting