According to Reporters Without Borders, this is the most accessible library in the world . . . but it exists only in Minecraft!
Welcome to Issue 22 of Access. I set out to prepare this issue determined not to mention COVID at all, since we are all, surely, fed up of hearing about it.

Yeah, right.

The truth is, that idea was never going to fly. COVID has had an effect on all of us, including PMLG. About the only aspect of regular PMLG activity which has continued (almost,) without pause since March 2020 is our newsletter, for which we are very grateful to Jacquie Widdowson. Access was just one of the casualties – 2 years is the longest period without a PMLG or BMLG Journal since 1956. This is also the longest period in the history of PMLG/PLG/BMLG without some kind of face-to-face activity or events. The simple fact is, we were all busy doing the ‘more important things in life.’

In my own case, I remember my neighbour, (who works in the transport industry,) leaning over our fence in the Summer of 2020 to chat.

(continued)
Editorial (continued)

“It must be nice, this ‘working from home’ lark,” he said, with a knowing wink – clearly assuming that this meant I was getting paid for sitting at home doing sod-all. I had to explain to him that, after nearly 20 years working in Libraries, this was, in fact, the hardest I had ever worked.

My role included:

• Arranging a small team to manage security, safety and legal compliance for all 24 of our libraries whilst they were closed.

• Over 100 frontline staff were supplied with laptops over a three-week period, allowing them to work from home, something only managers and librarians had done previously.

• Then they were trained to use Skype and Teams and placed in a “call group” to which all the individual library’s phones were diverted.

• Lists were compiled using the library management system, and over 10,000 customers aged over 70 received ‘welfare calls.’ From these, we referred people needing urgent support to Kirklees’ emergency welfare hubs; we advised 100’s of people about access to online resources and other Council services, and we arranged nearly 300 regular weekly calls to some of our lonely customers to combat Social Isolation.

• As lockdown ended, I wrote a COVID Risk Assessment, (27 pages,) which allowed our service to re-open for a limited ‘Ring and Read’ service – and over the following 14 months, that Risk Assessment went through nine different iterations, as HM Government advice changed, *(with all the training and ‘Toolbox Talks; that follow!)*

Once our libraries began reopening, I was still managing all the Health & Safety issues, but also supporting staff, colleagues and later, volunteers, through the challenges of operating very differently, yet still looking after our customers, especially the most vulnerable. Sadly, that left little time for PMLG.

Jacquie, meanwhile, as well as continuing to produce PMLG’s newsletter, also used the time, (with a little help from her partner,) to create another bouncing baby addition to her family! *(If this sounds like a glib thing to say, I don’t mean it that way – I don’t have children and I am, frankly, slightly in awe of anyone who does!)* She has also been kept very busy at work, despite maternity leave.

Our other BEM recipient, Honorary Treasurer Julie McKirdy, runs the popular and busy Thimblemill Library in Sandwell, so has been working extra-hard after COVID to bring back the extensive range of activities and events the library is so well-known for – and also saw Thimblemill awarded as the UK’s first ‘Library of Sanctuary,’ by the Cities of Sanctuary organisation.

Our Committee has seen some changes – Other opportunities and commitments meant that Hon. Secretary Saran Pope had to step down. Her quiet dedication and gentle professionalism will be much missed. However, new Committee Member Katie Ingham, *(she was Katie Hornby when she first joined Committee, but finally made an honest man out of Ash last year,)* has stepped into the role of Secretary with aplomb and efficiency.

Our other relatively recent addition, Darren Edwards bravely volunteered to serve as Vice-Chair. I say ‘bravely,’ because that means, at some point, he will have to follow Jacque and I . . . . and I don’t envy anyone having to try and clear up after us!

(Continued)
Editorial (continued)

Things are getting better:

- PMLG were represented at CILIP Conference once again this year, by Jacquie and in particular by new Committee Vice-Chair Darren Edwards. (See article on page 23)

- This issue of Access, the largest ever, includes a “special supplement,” with articles originally submitted for the ‘lost issue’ from Spring 2020 – but hopefully you will also enjoy plenty of new material in this issue, too. (You might notice a gaming slant to this issue, as well!)

- As you read this issue, on page 34 you will find details of our first post-COVID in-person Teachmeet, to be held Friday 11th November at The Greenwood Centre in Ravensthorpe, near Dewsbury. This is a high-quality CPD and networking opportunity, with some great guests and best of all – it’s FREE to CILIP Members.

Maybe I can compile the next issue without mentioning the dreaded COVID . . . but I wouldn’t bank on it!

Jon Davis, BEM, FRSI, MRI
Access Publisher,
Co-chair, Public & Mobile Libraries Group

As I was preparing this issue we learned the sad news of the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. In my younger days in military and civilian capacities, I wore Her Majesty’s Crown on my cap badge for nearly seven years, with tremendous pride and purpose. For over 40 years, Her Majesty has also been the Patron of CILIP, so even now, I still serve with that same pride. We mourn the passing of a truly wonderful lady and extend our sincere condolences to the Royal Family.

God save The King.

PMLG is recruiting!

PMLG Committee has sadly seen the departure of several active and valuable committee members, accepting new roles and other commitments, leaving for pastures new or enjoying well-earned retirements. As a result, we are inviting applications for new committee members.

Committee work is enjoyable, rewarding, instructive and can be a valuable addition to your CV. You will have the opportunity to help organise events, share knowledge and best practice, recruit sponsors and run marketing initiatives and also help to shape PMLG’s, (and possibly CILIP’s,) agenda for the future.

Your fellow committee members are experienced professionals who are happy to be asked for advice. Your only commitment is to three committee meetings per year, though more correspondence takes place by email and of course your contribution to events and other PMLG activities will be most welcome. Reasonable expenses are sometimes payable for necessary travel.

If you are interested, please submit an application, explaining why you want to join us and the personal qualities you can add to the Committee, (no more than a single side of A4, please,) to: chair.pmlg@cilip.org.uk
Alexandria Library is regarded as one of the largest and most famous libraries in the world and the modern library of Alexandria acts as a commemoration of the ancient Library of Alexandria – One of the Seven Ancient Wonders of The World.

The original Library of Alexandria was able to merge the cultural and scientific aspects of both Pharaonic and Greco civilizations; every thinker or writer of the time placed copies of all their works in the library for safe keeping making it one of the most important bibliographic landmarks. Sadly, the great library was caught in a huge fire in 48 BC which lead to the destruction of both the magnificent edifice and its collections from countless poets, historians, travellers, and scholars.
The Uncensored Library

By Jon Davis, BEM, FRSA, MRI
Access Publisher.

(I’ve been looking forward to writing this story since the beginning of the COVID pandemic – RSF’s Uncensored Library officially opened it’s doors just before Lockdown. With grateful thanks to RSF for allowing me to plagiarise their work for much of this content!)

In March 2020, just in time for World Press Freedom Day, the press freedom organisation Reporters Without Borders (RSF), created a loophole to overcome censorship by building a safe haven for press freedom. Where? Within one of the world’s most successful video games, Minecraft.

In many countries, free information is hard to access. Blogs, newspapers and websites are censored. Journalists get arrested and can be in fear for their lives. Such censorship lets many young people grow up in systems with almost no access to independent press. Their opinions become heavily influenced by governmental disinformation campaigns. Even that supposed ‘bastion’ of democracy and personal liberty, the U.S.A., recently began sliding down that slippery slope, as local Council Library and School Boards in ‘Bible Belt’ and Southern States have begun campaigns to ban books referencing Black and LGBTQ+ history.

But although the youth in these countries differ greatly, they do what young people all around the globe do: play video games. Minecraft is a favourite – one of the world’s most successful such games. Within the game, communities can build entire worlds out of blocks, and experience the freedom of an open world. In these restricted and censored countries, where websites, blogs and the free press in general are strictly limited, Minecraft is usually still accessible by everyone.

Minecraft offers unlimited freedom even in countries where there is no press freedom.

RSF used this backdoor to build “The Uncensored Library”- a library that is accessible on an open server for Minecraft players around the globe. The library is filled with “books” containing articles that were censored in their country of origin. These articles are now available again within Minecraft – hidden from government surveillance technology inside a digital game.

"We need to defend press freedom every day."

Hatice Cengiz, fiancée of Jamal Khashoggi.

"In many countries around the world, there is no free access to information. Websites are blocked, independent newspapers are banned and the press is controlled by the state. Young people grow up without being able to form their own opinions. By using Minecraft, the world’s most popular computer game, as a medium, we give them access to independent information."

Christian Mihr, Managing Director Reporters Without Borders Germany.

(Continued)
The Uncensored Library (continued)

Domed ceiling of The Uncensored Library, featuring the Flags of the World.
(All Images in this article supplied by RSF on Creative Commons 2.0 Licences.)

“Testing the Limits of Minecraft.”

Journalists from many different countries, despite having been banned, jailed, exiled and even killed – now have a place to make their voices heard again. Their articles have been republished as Minecraft books in English and the articles’ original language and are available in countries that censored their works.

The Uncensored Library was built through a collaboration with BlockWorks, an internationally acclaimed design studio and consultancy using Minecraft. The library was built over 3 months, and is made from over 12.5 million blocks. It took 24 builders from 16 different countries over 250 hours to design and create the library. The library’s main dome is nearly 300 metres wide, which would make it the second largest in the world, if it were real.

“The Uncensored Library is a bold use of Minecraft. It really encapsulates everything that is great about this game and the community it has created”

James Delaney, Managing Director BlockWorks, Architect of the Uncensored Library.

The design of the library is a neoclassical architectural style. Derived from ancient architecture, neoclassicism is a style often used in the design of public buildings around the world such as museums, galleries and libraries. It is an architectural style that is often used to represent culture and knowledge. BlockWorks used this style to design a building that represents freedom of knowledge and the power that truth has over oppressive government authorities and regimes.

Why RSF use Minecraft to reach young people:

Minecraft is one of the world’s most successful computer games, with more than 145 million active players every month. First released in 2009, Minecraft’s phenomenal success is still growing over 10 years later. The game is played around the world, attracting a wide range of ages across both sexes.

“We need to reach the next generation in order to change the future!” Nguyen Van Dai, democracy activist and blogger.

Minecraft is an open world game where players can explore an intentionally blocky, pixelated world. Here they can discover and extract raw materials, craft tools, build structures and cooperate with other players. The game’s creative mode is often described as “digital Lego” and is being used in educational environments. Part of Minecraft’s gameplay is gathering and crafting items, such as books. Minecraft books have 100 pages and can be written freely. Other players can read them but cannot change the content of the books on the server. The library is growing, with more and more books being added to overcome censorship.

(Continued)
The Uncensored Library (continued)

Examples of censored articles from five different countries and various journalists, published in Minecraft books.

Egypt:
RSF World Press Freedom Index:
163rd of 180 countries

Egypt is one of the world's biggest jailers of journalists. Most of the media is now controlled directly or indirectly by the state. More than 500 websites are blocked, and more and more people are getting arrested because of their social network posts. Inside the Uncensored Library visitors can read articles from news portal Mada Masr. Since 2013, Mada Masr has reported on corruption and security issues in a manner that is often critical of the government. It is the last professional news website that reports independently and is one of the most important sources of quality journalism in Egypt.

Since May 2017 Mada Masr has been blocked in Egypt.

Mexico:
RSF World Press Freedom Index:
144th of 180 countries

Although not at war, Mexico is one of the world's deadliest countries for journalists, surpassing even Syria. Collusion between officials and organized crime poses a grave threat to journalists' safety and cripples the judicial system at all levels. Journalists who cover sensitive political stories or organized crime are warned, threatened and often gunned down in cold blood. Inside the Uncensored Library visitors can read articles from Javier Valdez. He was a journalist and founder of the newspaper Riodoce, a weekly dedicated to crime and corruption in Sinaloa, one of Mexico's most violent states. He was also the author of several books on drug trafficking. Valdez was killed on May 23, 2017 by gunmen. He was 50 years old.

Russia:
RSF World Press Freedom Index:
149th of 180 countries

Ever since the widespread protests in 2011/12, Russia tightened their grip on journalism. Each year people are sent to jail because of their online activities, even a “like.” The state has been building the infrastructure for mass surveillance to prevent anonymous or encrypted communication. With Russia’s Sovereign Internet Law, the government is attempting to gain control over the infrastructure of the web and, if necessary, be able to cut off the Russian internet from the worldwide web.

Yulia Berezovskaia runs one of Russia’s blocked websites. She is collaborating with the Uncensored Library to republish articles from grani.ru, a news source for protest activities, politically motivated trials and civil society activism. On March 13, 2014 grani.ru was blocked by the Russian government.

Saudi Arabia:
RSF World Press Freedom Index:
172nd of 180 countries

Saudi Arabia permits no independent media. Despite his talk of reform, Mohammad bin Salman has intensified the repression since his appointment as crown prince in June 2017. The number of journalists and citizen journalists in detention has tripled since the start of 2017. Everyone censors themselves, and authorities keep Saudi journalists under close surveillance – as the case of Jamal Khashoggi illustrated.

Jamal Khashoggi was a Saudi journalist whose articles can now be read in the Uncensored Library. Khashoggi fled Saudi Arabia in September 2017 and went into self-imposed exile. Khashoggi was a sharp critic of the policies of Saudi Arabia’s crown prince. On October 2, 2018, Khashoggi was killed and dismembered inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul.

(Continued)

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Vietnam:
RSF World Press Freedom Index:
176th out of 180 countries
As Vietnam's media all follow the Communist Party's orders, the only sources of independently reported information are bloggers and citizen journalists. The level of terror has risen sharply in the past three years, with many citizen journalists being jailed or expelled.

In December 2017 the military unveiled the existence of a 10,000-strong military cyberwarfare department, which is tasked with defending the Party and targeting dissident bloggers. Inside the Uncensored Library visitors can read articles from Nguyen Van Dai. He is a Vietnamese human rights lawyer, democracy activist and blogger. In 2006 he founded the Committee for Human Rights in Vietnam, to fight for civil empowerment through legal means. In April 2018 Dai was sentenced to 15 years of prison with an additional 5 years of house arrest but was later released and exiled to Germany. His blog is blocked in Vietnam.

The Uncensored Library is accessible through Minecraft with the server adress: visit.uncensoredlibrary.com

Additional to banned articles from journalists, visitors of The Uncensored Library can find the RSF World Press Freedom Index and reports on the current press freedom situation of 180 countries in the world. (See Pages 9-10 for more information.)

"The only real way of fighting censorship is sharing and spreading what has been censored."

Yulia Berezovskaia, editor in chief of grani.ru

You can see films about The Uncensored Library at:
Main Film: https://youtu.be/EBI7-pL52GY
The Making of The Uncensored Library: https://youtu.be/JW5X9yznNjg

#TruthFindsAWay
RSF is...

... Reporters Sans Frontières, an international not-for-profit organisation operated under principles of democratic governance. Founded in 1985 in Montpellier by four journalists, RSF is at the forefront of the defence and promotion of global freedom of information. Recognised as a public interest organisation in France since 1995, RSF has consultative status with the United Nations, UNESCO, and the Council of Europe.

RSF defends the right of every human being to have access to free and reliable information sources. This right is essential to know, understand, form an opinion and take action on vital issues in full awareness, both individually and collectively.

RSF has:

- 134 correspondents around the world.
- 6 international sections (Germany, Austria, Spain, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland).
- 1 international headquarters (Paris).

We define our strategic objectives completely independently, and do not accept any financial, skills or in-kind donations that could influence our strategic and operational choices.

(The Information contained in the following graphics was correct at the time of writing – August 20th, 2020.)
The purpose of the World Press Freedom Index is to compare the level of press freedom enjoyed by journalists and media in 180 countries and territories. This comparison is based on a definition of press freedom formulated by RSF and its panel of experts when developing the new methodology to be used from 2022 onwards:

“Press freedom is defined as the ability of journalists as individuals and collectives to select, produce, and disseminate news in the public interest independent of political, economic, legal, and social interference and in the absence of threats to their physical and mental safety.”

The Press Freedom Map offers a visual overview of the scores of all the countries in the index.
Minecraft as a tool for Libraries and Literacy Recovery

By Katy Vaughan

Katy is a Library Assistant at BCP Libraires and works as part of extended children’s and social media teams. Her work includes designing and delivering children’s activities and the development of online content. Post lockdown, Katy’s work has included combining online content within library events to expand the borders of library outreach.

Introduction

In June 2022, Libraries Connected, and The Literacy Trust published a report on the role of libraries in the recovery of literacy in a post-COVID world, highlighting the unique role of libraries in literacy recovery in the UK. The report examines case studies which aim to re-engage children with reading. COVID 19, as the report suggests, restricted library services, and many provided online access and events. BCP Librariest, like many others, produced video content such as rhyme time, story-time, crafts and information/updates. When in-person services were reintroduced, BCP Libraries’ online content continued; however it was scaled back and evolved to fit around the ‘new normal.’

In May 2021, I had the idea to pilot a Minecraft Storytime video, the telling of classic stories using the popular sandbox video game, Minecraft. The first video was published on 9 June 2021, and over the next 14 months, the project evolved. BCP Libraries has published 11 Minecraft Storytime videos, a Minecraft Rhyme Time, and a Minecraft Summer Reading Challenge promotional video, with a collective view count of over 11,000.

The popularity of Minecraft and its use in storytelling and library promotion suggest that the Minecraft Storytime initiative reflects strategies outlined in the report on libraries and literacy recovery, and that Minecraft is a valuable tool not just for libraries, but for wider literacy recovery. To support this claim, I will now outline the project, its engagement, the synchronisation of video content with library activities and resources, and the potential for Minecraft as a tool for libraries and literacy recovery moving forward.

Project Outline

In May 2021, I pitched the idea to management about starting a Minecraft Storytime series on the Libraries’ YouTube playlist. The suggestion was to use classic tales due to copyright, as fairy tales are in the public domain. The ‘pilot’ was the story of the three little pigs. To produce the video, I required a ‘set’ and ‘characters.’ I decided that the best way forward was to host my own server (in creative mode) where the ‘sets’ could be built, and volunteers could be invited to build and act as characters. During the project I had a total of 3 volunteers (all are personal friends of mine). With some technical assistance, I set up the server on my PC. Firstly, I created a library which would be the centre, with the plan to expand fairy tale scenery around it. The library was also used to film an introduction. The next job was to build the little pigs’ houses. This was relatively simple, as Minecraft has hay, wood, and brick blocks. Once the houses were built, it was time to bring the story to life. This was achieved by writing the ‘script’ first, then from the text, setting out the key ‘scenes.’ We had one person play the wolf with a wolf costume or ‘skin,’ to use the technical term, and we spawned pigs in the houses. The blowing down the houses required certain pyrotechnics, which involved a player hiding underneath each house and activating TNT when directed!

(Continued)
Minecraft for Libraries and Literacy Recovery (continued)

To record the action, I used some screen recording software, Streamlabs OBS, to capture the gameplay. I went through the scenes, directing players (and mobs) to act out all the parts of the story. Once the footage was captured, I recorded the storytelling as a voiceover and then it was time to edit. For editing, I used the freeware version of DaVinci Resolve.

This model seemed to work well, and we experimented with different stories. Rapunzel was next, so we built the tower and recorded the action. The tricky part was growing the hair, but we used hay blocks being added down the tower! As the project developed, we added to the world, leaving the previous builds in place (although the pigs’ houses needed to be backed-up before using the TNT!)

Our most ambitious story was Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, as that required a few different scenes and skins, not to mention using a slow falling effect as Alice fell down the rabbit hole and summoning a killer bunny to act as the white rabbit. Some stories required a bit of lateral thinking in terms of how to portray certain scenes. For example, angling the view up to make a character appear as a giant, using an emerald as a pea, and appropriating a pink banner with a dead coral for the flamingo mallet and hedgehog in the croquet scene of Alice.

From the Storytime videos came the idea of a Minecraft rhyme time. I chose songs which would be easy to replicate in the game, such as Row, Row, Row your Boat, as I could record myself in a boat (which resulted in a lot of crashing when trying to row in 3rd person view!) We already had Old McDonald’s Farm in the server with readily spawned animals, so this was another easy choice.

(Continued)
Minecraft for Libraries and Literacy Recovery (continued)

Rhyme time sessions in libraries have been common practice for many years. These sessions include the repetition of sounds and words, which is essential for early literacy development, and prepares them for starting school. Rhyme time sessions in libraries have been common practice for many years. These sessions include the repetition of sounds and words, which is essential for early literacy development, and prepares them for starting school. The report on literacy recovery also highlights the importance of rhyme time sessions with a case study of an under 5s program at Sandwell Libraries. A Minecraft rhyme time video, therefore, can be considered an extension of this as it can be viewed by families at home. Children can recognise the songs from library sessions and can sing along whilst exploring the visuals of the video. Additionally, I used Minecraft to present our Summer Reading Challenge promotional video. One of our Literacy Officers recorded a voiceover with all the information and sent me the images to include. I then found a suitable Minecraft skin, and recorded footage in the Minecraft library and then overlaid the relevant graphics. This worked well as an engaging video to promote the challenge.

Engagement and Accessibility

All the Minecraft videos were uploaded to the BCP Council YouTube Channel and added to the ‘Our BCP Libraries’ playlist. As I have access to the account, I have access to the analytics, which on YouTube are quite detailed. As stated, the 11 Minecraft Storytime and a Rhyme-time have a collective view count of over 11,000.

The best performing video is Jack and the Beanstalk, which at the time of writing this is on 3,860 views. 3 more of the videos have over 1000 views, Alice, Three Little Pigs and Cinderella. Additionally, YouTube provides the location of viewers, which for these videos come from the USA, as well as a fair number of viewers in Australia. This shows that engagement with projects such as this has global engagement, as well as national and local participation.
Minecraft for Libraries and Literacy Recovery (continued)

The Summer Reading Challenge video was distributed to the schools in the BCP area, uploaded onto the council website, and played in schools as part of assemblies. A member of staff delivering an assembly commented that the video immediately caught the attention of the children with an audible sharp intake of breath. This highlights the popularity of Minecraft and its visibility amongst children. This is supported by the game’s statistics, showing that in 2022, Minecraft has an average of 170 million active players per month. Additionally, there was a clear increase in Minecraft players during the pandemic, with statistics showing a clear growth in player-base from 2020-2022. It is clear that video games such as Minecraft are appealing to children and young people and its use within a library context does attract attention, in this case encouraging children to join the library and take part in the Summer Reading Challenge, thus providing libraries with an engaging tool for future promotion.

It is important to note too, that Minecraft is not just a children’s game, but it is enjoyed by adults too. These Storytime videos also appeal to adult gamers as they notice how the features of the game are emphasised. For example, some of the blocks are left floating when the pigs’ houses are destroyed and the use of killer bunny for the white rabbit, are entertaining for adult players, and the videos can be described as novelty. In their report, the Literacy Trust and Libraries Connected note that it is not just children who experience literacy difficulties, but 9 million adults in the UK experience literacy issues. Libraries, therefore, play a key role in the development of literacy for all ages, and with Minecraft being popular with a diverse age range, it is an ideal tool to assist with this.

Furthermore, the report highlights the issue of accessibility of online learning, stating that 27% of children classed as ‘most financially vulnerable’ were unable to consistently access online learning at home.

YouTube, although an online platform, does not require high speed internet. It can also be viewed from a smartphone or tablet, so there is no need for a computer in the home. Alternatively, public libraries provide free internet access, so users can watch in the library if they are not able to at home. We have displayed posters in our libraries promoting the videos, so users can see how to access them either in the library or at home. Additionally, as stated before, YouTube has the potential for global accessibility, so the content is not restricted to library cardholders or local residents. This publicity was shared in the library and on our social media platforms and can also be accompanied with in-library activities and resources.

In Library Activities and Resources

Examples of in library activities I have paired with this project include a poster/flyer with a link/QR code for the videos. These use imagery from the stories themselves to try and catch the attention of library users. Additionally, in December 2021, I printed a quiz for display in the children’s library. This involved a screenshot from each video placed on display and an accompanying sheet with corresponding numbers. Children had to guess the story from the picture and once completed received a small prize. This was well engaged with and we found that it was a family activity, as parents would engage with the quiz and assist their child. This is also reflected in parents playing Minecraft with their children. To have your own Minecraft account children must be 13 years and over, it is not uncommon however, for parents to set up an account and supervise younger children playing the game. This enables them to turn off certain features and moderate play. There is varying advice on age guidance for Minecraft, but the game is generally suitable for 7 and over with parental controls in place.
Minecraft for Libraries and Literacy Recovery (continued)

The videos BCP Libraries have produced reflect this age advice. When speaking to families who completed the quiz, they either commented how they watched the videos together at home or would do in the future. This shows that using Minecraft encourages family and community activity within literacy as well as individual engagement. The plan is to update the quiz with the latest stories and run it across more BCP Libraries in the future.

What is more, I am currently developing a prototype ‘graphic novel’ for The Three Little Pigs. This is just a simple leaflet using screenshots from the videos with added text. There may be a question of copyright here, but as Minecraft is the presentation tool and the resource is non-commercial and educational, there is no cause for great concern. It is comparable to using Lego in stop motion videos. The scenes are created by the user with the blocks, rather than using builds designed by the company. Minecraft encourage players to make content of the game and even allow monetisation providing the creator adds something original to the game play, which our Minecraft Storytime videos do.11 The same applies for any Minecraft imagery used in publicity and the quizzes.

I am currently working on making the world (a copy of the server) available for download. In the Minecraft library, there is a room with all the stories and command blocks to teleport players. Its release will involve a video with a server tour and a tutorial on how to do this. Once downloaded, users can play in the world as they wish, for example they could act out the stories, make new scenes, and even modify the builds if they wish. In addition to this, there are plans to create a pack with the following: instructions on how to download the world, all the skins used, links to all the builds/scenes and transcripts of the stories/rhyme sheet.

This way children can refer to the stories to read and act them out. The pack will also encourage children to borrow books from the library and recreate it in Minecraft, either a scene or the whole story. This can be any story as it will be created privately by the families, rather than published on a YouTube channel. We will also encourage children to share their experience of playing the world, either with the existing scenery or things they have added. In addition to this, I intend to create a book display at Bournemouth Library when the pack is released. This will not only include books about Minecraft, or the classic stories used, but other adaptations of fairy tales, which there are many, especially in the early reader and picture book collections. An example of this would be How the Library (not the Prince) Saved Rapunzel by Wendy Meddour, or Fairy Tale Science by Sarah Albee. There will be a reading lists of recommended books, both physical copies and digital versions from our digital supplier. This will encourage further reading and exploration of the library resources using the Minecraft videos to encourage further literacy development.

Scene from Aladdin.
(All images in this article supplied by Katy Vaughan.) (Continued)
Future Development

There is certainly scope for further use of Minecraft as a tool in libraries and for future literacy recovery. This could take the form of adaptations of the BCP Libraries project, where other library services create their own Minecraft Storytime videos. There is certainly opportunity for larger scale projects. For example, library services can create their own realms online and host sessions for children and teens to create scenes from stories. This would require some funding and careful safeguarding measures. Minecraft clubs already exist in some library services. Suffolk Libraries run various Minecraft activities in their libraries as well as publish Minecraft videos during the first lockdown in 2020, where they built a library.12

For library services with limited funding or minimal technical equipment, there are still ways in which Minecraft can be used. These include displays using Minecraft imagery, Minecraft books, or even Minecraft based crafts. These can be anything from models to pixel art, such as the activity run by Charminster Library in March 2022.13

It is also important to note that Minecraft have an education edition with content mapped to the national curriculum.14 This is aimed at educators, but is also a useful tool for librarians, especially regarding the literacy aspects. Finally, the Literacy Recovery Report presented 4 themes for public libraries’ response: targeted, holistic, sustained, and local.15 Using Minecraft in libraries supports this framework. It can be targeted specifically to literacy development and can be integrated into the holistic services which libraries already provide, such as Storytimes and rhyme times. It has the potential to be used as part of long-term reading schemes and literacy promotion, as well as encouraging local, national, and global communities to engage with content and resources. Therefore, Minecraft is a useful tool for libraries’ response to literacy recovery. Minecraft can provide the building blocks for learning and reader development in accessible and enjoyable ways, not just for library users, but also for staff and volunteers.

Special thanks to the volunteers involved in this project for assistance with building, acting, pyrotechnics and tech support.
References (Click anything orange for the link)

1. Libraries Connected and The Literacy Trust, ‘Public Libraries and Literacy Recovery’ (June 2022.)
2. For more information on the specifics of Minecraft: LINK
3. Streamlabs is a free live streaming and screen recording app.
4. DaVinci Resolve is produced by Blackmagic Design.
5. In Minecraft a nether portal takes you to the underworld, but it created a nice visual link from the library to the story.
6. The full benefits of rhyme time sessions in libraries and the supporting data can be found on the Booktrust website.
11. Full Minecraft branding and user guidelines can be found on the official Minecraft site.

Minecraft for Libraries and Literacy Recovery (continued)

References (Continued) (Click anything orange for the link)

12. These videos can be viewed on the Suffolk Libraries YouTube Channel.
13. Charminster Library is a BCP Branch Library. For more information see their Facebook Page.
14. More information on Minecraft Education Edition can be found on the Minecraft Website.

All Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Libraries Minecraft videos can be found on their YouTube Playlist.

Katy Vaughan can be contacted at: katy.vaughan@bcpcouncil.gov.uk
Click anywhere on the poster to follow the link!
International Games Month

By Darren Edwards
Darren works for Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Libraries and is the UK Co-Ordinator for International Games Month. He is Vice-Chair of the Committee of PMLG.

International Games Month is an initiative run by volunteers from around the world to reconnect communities through their libraries around the educational, recreational, and social value of all types of games. IGM is organised by the American Library Association Games and Gaming Roundtable in partnership with the Australian Library and Information Association, Associazione Italiana Biblioteche, CILIP Public and Mobile Libraries Group and Nordic Games Week.

A Quick History

In 2007 two American librarians, Scott Nicholson and Jenny Levine¹ had the idea to set a world record for the number of people playing the same game, Ticket to Ride, at libraries around the world. The complexities of authenticating with Guinness World Records meant the attempt never happened but instead the first National Games Day was run in US libraries. Within a few years libraries outside the USA began participating and in 2012 the event was rebranded as International Games Day @ Your Library. This rebranding was in part due to the efforts of Phil Minchin, an Australian consultant on games and library strategy.

As well as advocating for the initiative to be broadened to a global audience, Phil spent several years editing the Games Day blog and organised the Global Gossip Game. Global Gossip Game was a game in which a message was passed between library users and libraries around the world. Phil ran the game from 2012 to 2015, managing to pass messages across all seven continents including Antarctica. The largest of the games, in 2015, had over 1000 participants from 84 libraries across 11 countries (2013 and 2014 managed 17 countries though a lower number of participants).

As well as the Global Gossip Game, a second event with global participants was run by Ann Arbor libraries in 2014 and 2015. The Minecraft Hunger Games pitched libraries against each in competitive Minecraft games to find a winning tribute. In 2014 94 libraries took part across America, Australia, and Europe with Providence Community Library eventually arising as the victor, in 2015 the title was taken by Stadtbücherei Münster in Germany.

¹ Scott Nicholson is now Professor of Game Design and Development at Wilfrid Laurier University and Jenny Levine is Director of Advocacy, Connections, and Engagement for ALA Core: Leadership, Infrastructure, Futures.
**International Games Month (continued)**

2015 was the most successful International Games Day @ Your Library with 2157 libraries taking part across 35 countries. In 2017, to open the initiative to a wider variety of libraries, International Games Day @Your Library was expanded to become International Games Week. At the end of 2019 Diane Robson, Media Librarian at the University of North Texas, stepped down as chair of IGW after a decade in the role. The committee knew that IGW 2020 would be very different, and it was... just not for the reason we expected!

**UK Participation**

UK libraries have been taking part in the initiative even before the rebranding to become International Games Day, with the first two libraries to join being Perton and Smethwick libraries in 2011. For several years only a handful of UK libraries took part, I was introduced to the initiative in 2013 when we ran an event at Bournemouth Library with our newly formed gaming club. In 2014 I began to help with organising the initiative, becoming the UK’s representative on the International Games Day committee. In 2014 around 30 libraries were taking part and by 2017 this had increased to over 100.

Whilst participation has been primarily within public libraries there have been several libraries from schools, universities, hospitals, and even military bases. The British Library has regularly participated, hosting Word Play a festival of writerly games for International Games Day in 2016 and AdventureX, the UK’s only festival dedicated to narrative digital games, in 2018 and 2019. AdventureX was due to return to the library for this year’s International Games Month, unfortunately fire damage at the library’s conference centre has meant they are looking for an alternative venue.

PMLG has informally supported this initiative for many years, promoting through our newsletter and at our conferences. In 2019 we co-hosted the 2nd Game Library Camp at Leeds Central Library with delegates and presenters coming from across the UK to share the experiences in using games in libraries in a variety of sectors. This year PMLG has partnered with ALA Games and Gaming Round Table to officially support International Games Month here in the UK.

(Continued)
International Games Month (continued)

International Games Month 2022

On this 15th Anniversary of the first National Games Day in the US, International Games Week has been expanded to become International Games Month.

IGM has the most flexible of entry requirements, you must host some sort of game-related activity in or around your library, during November. That’s all! The games can be videogames, tabletop games, social games, party games, traditional folk games, whatever you think will work for your individual library and community.

You can find all the details to join this year’s initiative at: games.ala.org/international-games-month/

This year we are launching the International Games Month Game Jam as a new global event for the initiative. Game Jams are events in which individuals or groups design a game connected to a theme in a set time period. The themes for the inaugural IGM Game Jam are:

“The Connections We Make Through Reading”
& “Happy Anniversary”

The jam is aimed as a framework from which you can arrange your own games creation events and encourage the creativity of your library users. More information on how the jam works can be found at:

itch.io/jam/international-games-month

Games Designer Showcase.
(All images in this article © - supplied by Darren Edwards.)
After waiting around for a while, it became clear that we were, in fact, waiting in front of the wrong doors and if we had moved 20m to the left would have been able enter the library all along. Once inside we were directed to the top floor for drinks and nibbles. Liverpool Central Library is an amazing building, fully refurbished a decade ago with a central atrium and open plan floors connected to three listed buildings - the William Brown Library, the Picton Reading Room and Hornby Library, all built in the classical style between 1860 and 1906. The building houses an extensive lending library, British Library Business and IP Centre, local studies collections and archive, music sets alongside meeting suites and exhibition spaces. The library is well worth a visit if you are in Liverpool, in fact if you are a library lover (and why would you be reading this if you aren’t) it is worth visiting Liverpool to see the library.

**Thursday 6th July**

**Darren**

After an all you can eat Jury’s Inn breakfast it was time to head to the conference centre and set up the PMLG stand. Being very organised, I definitely had all our badges, sweets, and quiz forms ready to go [I did not]. A few hastily created badges later [yes, I hauled a badge maker all the way from Poole to Liverpool] and after a quick trip to Tesco Express, we were almost ready to go.

**Jacquie**

By the time I swanned in, on the morning of the first day of conference, Darren had already set-up the PMLG stand, with the exception of the naked wall standing stark behind him. A quick begging trip to the reception desk later, I pinned our freshly printed Public Libraries picture quiz to the felt boards provided and we were all set, just in time to rush into the main hall for the first Keynote speaker . . .

(Continued)
CILIP Conference 2022 (Continued)

Darren

The first keynote was by Sayf Al Ashqar, Secretary-General of the Libraries at the University of Mosul, Iraq. Sayf spoke of the tragic destruction of the library at the University of Mosul by ISIS in 2014. The library was one of the invading forces’ first targets as they sought to control the people of Iraq through the destruction of their collective knowledge. Prior to its looting and burning the library held one of the most important collections of rare books and ancient manuscripts in the middle east. After the city was liberated, Sayf began the process of rebuilding the library and its collections. Despite limited resources and a global pandemic, the library reopened in February this year as a vibrant modern library and symbol of hope for the people of Mosul.

For the first parallel session of the conference, I attended the panel on Open Knowledge and Open Science. Unfortunately, the speaker on open data was unable to attend which meant the session was exclusively on open access publishing in higher education. As a current LIS student, it was very interesting, but there wasn’t much of practical use for those of us working in public libraries. The increasing movement towards open publishing in academia does, however, provide opportunities for increased access to research via public libraries. We have already seen this to a limited extent via Access to Research, (A2R,) but this trend is likely to expand these opportunities even further.

Jacquie

It is often said by the longer serving team members in public libraries, that the pendulum swings eternal and that our resources and offers get built-up and torn-down, just to get built-up and torn-down again. For me Sayf Al Ashqar’s moving presentation spoke, not only to the intense value placed on the knowledge and culture that libraries provide access to, but also to the resilience of libraries.

We work hard to create opportunities, but we also have a track record of bouncing back from crisis too, when things get broken.

For the first breakout session, I hot-footed over to Dr Beth Montague-Hellen’s ‘Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – Practical Advice for the workspace’. Not exactly what I was expecting, but an interesting and interactive session nonetheless. We attempted some practical thought exercises during which we explored where we have the power to exact change; what makes you feel like you “fit in” and what makes you feel like you don’t (representation and voice came through as major themes here); and looked at event audience composition and outcomes. A couple of useful take-homes for me, included a breakdown of the distinction between ‘diversity’ and ‘inclusion’ (‘diversity’ means you get everyone in; ‘inclusion’ means making them feel welcome when they are there) and some advice for panel chairs: “Take the first question from a woman [a minority representative] – it’s been shown to encourage more women [minorities] to ask questions”.

Darren

After lunch I headed to the session on intellectual freedom in libraries, with panellists from the higher education, school and public library sectors. The initial findings from CILIP’s survey on intellectual freedom reported a quarter of respondents have been asked to censor material in their library and less than half of those were able to effectively counter these requests. In the US there has been a considerable increase in the number of campaigns to ban books over the past years along with a backlash against decolonisation efforts. Though in the UK we are yet to see such widespread attacks on information, the so called “culture wars” and “war on woke” pose a risk to the concept of intellectual freedom.

(Continued)
The thread running through each of the panellists' talks was that libraries and library workers need to be prepared for, not scared by challenges. As a sector we need to be ready for an escalation in attacks on intellectual freedom. More information on CILIP's consultation can be found at: www.cilip.org.uk/page/intellectualfreedom

And it all resonated remarkably well with the core principles and ethos of public library lending...: Up-to-date climate change information; Community environmental opportunities, such as growing hubs; Community activism; Showcase technology and greener solutions; Platform environmental topic literature; Climate Reading Groups; High quality nature writing - promotes empathy that mobilises behaviour changes; and Supporting children's wellbeing by sharing facts that confront the anxiety they are reported as feeling about climate change. There is so much that we are already doing and can look to do here that will lead he way for local authorities and communities. Exciting stuff.

Darren

My final session for the day was another focussed on higher education, this time on decolonisation. Decolonization is something that is infrequently discussed in the public library sector but as the custodian of a local studies collection that is distinctly lacking in diversity, it is something that I have been thinking about for a while. Though decolonisation has been like a red rag to a bull for certain sections of the media, the concept of critically appraising collections for unconscious (and conscious) bias is arguably a core part of librarianship. Arguments over whether libraries are, or even should be, neutral will continue long beyond this year's conference, but that our collections should reflect the diversity of our communities and their histories is hard to argue against.

Jacquie

Following some invaluable lunchtime networking, I went to learn about the Green Libraries Manifesto. A very realistic and viable 7-point pledge could see public libraries aligning behind a clearly communicable advocacy message that sites us at the front-line of environmental sustainability – I am sold. The session went on to explore some practical tips and considerations for getting involved, with an extremely interesting case study from the British Library.

Be part of the Green Libraries Network

Working together for people and planet

www.cilip.org.uk/GreenLibraries #GreenLibraries
CILIP Conference 2022 (Continued)

**Jacquie (continued)**

Some fascinating conversations ensued with multi-sectoral perspectives and people from all career points, from students to heads. I was left with the overarching feeling that; a) change is ubiquitous and; b) making spaces and places to listen to new viewpoints is a simple but powerful learning tool. Launching into conversation without knowing people's backgrounds really added to the freedom people felt to share their opinions and I, for one, certainly valued the diverse outlooks represented – even if some of them very much challenged my own beliefs. Having views challenged (uncomfortable though it might be) is an everyday part of personal development and something we arguably need to cultivate more of in modern society, given the ubiquity of social media style echo chambers. And after all, what else is conference for if not for opening your eyes and mind to new ways of working...?

**Darren**

After the end of formal conference sessions, I went back to my hotel to attend the monthly virtual International Games Week committee meeting, which slotted into the convenient gap until the evening reception at the Museum of Liverpool. The museum was just along the Royal Albert Dock from the conference venue, and I thought I'd better pop along to, ahem, “continue networking”. I managed to escape before anyone tried to get me to join in the Macarena, though I did manage one or two glasses of red and many discussions about the state of public libraries in the UK.

**Jacquie**

"Help the next one up” – that was one of the key messages I got from the inspiring and charismatic Krystal Vittles, as she talked her way through her varied and impressive career.
The final session of the conference for me was the workshop on library design led by Ayub Kahn MBE, Service Manager (Universal Services), Warwickshire County Council. During the workshop we discussed the trends in library design such as the requirement for flexible spaces and the need to have inclusive spaces that create a sense of belonging. We also discussed the challenges in library design from meeting the competing demands of diverse user groups to making sure the voices or library professionals are heard when working with architects and designers.

With that my first ever CILIP conference was over, and I made the long trip back to Poole. It was great to meet students and lecturers from my MA and make new connections with colleagues from libraries all over the UK. There were many interesting and information packed sessions to reflect on, learn from and act on in my own work.

(Sadly, I picked up an unwelcome present and after conference spent a week recovering from the dreaded double red lines on a lateral flow test)
Holiday Activity & Food (HAF)

Introduction
By Jacquie Widdowson
Co-Chair, PMLG, & Senior Library Officer
Oldham Libraries

Food Provision Through Libraries
With high levels of deprivation in the borough, Oldham Council was an early adopter for the delivery of food offers during the school holidays. In the early days the initiative was known as the Holiday Hunger project, but it was quickly decided that this was a stigmatising moniker. In later incarnations the programme has become more centralised, with Oldham receiving a demographics-proportionate allocation of funds from the Department of Education for its Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme, (Click on image below for Link.)

The library service first got involved in the winter of 2018, when it was realised that safe, warm, family-friendly venues are hard to come by during the Christmas closures. Since then, we have been providing meals to children across the borough for every major holiday period to date (Easter, Summer, Christmas). The hoops and challenges of delivering the food programme have evolved significantly over time, from the first Risk Assessments to the data heavy returns required under the current administration, but our objectives have been consistent throughout.

We take a targeted universalism approach, offering the food and activities to everyone who attends the sessions, not just the Free School Meal eligible cohort stipulated by the DfE. We achieve this through match-funding our programming resources to the funds being provided for the HAF. There are two main reasons why this open-door approach has characterised our operations: Firstly, as advocates of a “poverty proof” library service, we never want any child to feel singled out and shamed by their socio-economic circumstances. Secondly, there is a (growing) number of people who live just above the “poverty” line, who will also be struggling to feed the whole family and/or to offer quality and enriching experiences for the little ones – and we are determined to make sure our provision extends to these people also. The library service is uniquely placed in being able to take this approach, as most of the other HAF providers – who are variously out-of-school clubs, small franchises, charitable organisations, and so on - have not got the resources/capacity to open their offers up in this way. For this reason, we have received a lot of attention and praise from partner organisations who support children and families’ wellbeing, as they are delighted to be able to signpost liberally to our catered events. This, in turn, strengthens our relationship with our health offer partners and highlights the relevance of public libraries as a key component in the social infrastructure that supports the wellbeing of a community.

(Continued)
Bringing food into the library has been a change management challenge that has seen us, once again, break the barriers of expectation about what libraries “do”. Both colleagues and the public have had to adjust to the idea of hot food being “allowed” in our main library spaces. As with all change management, the key to this successful transition has been high levels of staff consultation and involvement. Our colleagues believe in the value of this programme. We have worked together to agree steps to control the hazards and challenges of food waste. And we invite and respond to feedback after every single holiday provision period – constantly updating proceedings in response. As a result, we have collectively had the privilege of feeding thousands of families and made a real difference to the wellbeing of Oldham’s residents.

Photo-Essay
By Farrah Ashraf
Library Development Officer
Oldham Libraries

Holiday Activity and Food (HAF)
Oldham Libraries have once again delivered a jam-packed program of summer activities where we have provided hot food for all our families including families with children who receive free school meals. This initiative aims to provide free activities and food to families to help ensure families can continue to provide hot meals for their children even when they are not in school. This summer as part of our Gadgeteers Summer Reading Challenge activities Oldham Libraries have delivered over 1500 meals to families across Oldham at our 12 libraries.
2.00pm: Our session begins as soon as the children arrive, the brilliant Rappaman aka Donavan Christopher is with us today to share his raps and poetry with the children and inspire them to write their own!

3.00pm: The children work with Rappaman to come up with their own raps and share them with the rest of the group - lots of creativity and laughter.

3.30pm: Our lovely delivery driver arrives with today's hot meals. The meals arrive in insulated packaging to keep them nice and warm for our families.

(Continued)
4.00pm: Tea is served! The children and families have a choice of Mild Chicken Curry or our vegan option of Tomato Pasta Bake. Both are delicious plus we also have plenty of fresh fruit.

5.00pm: Our bellies are full and now it's time for some craft.

5.00pm: (Cont.) Today we're making peg dolls. The children take their time to decorate their pegs... they look fab!
6.00pm: We're all done. The children leave with all their goodies from the session and any spare food is taken away by our families for them to enjoy at home.

6.00pm: It's been a lovely day and we handed out 40 meals to families.

6.00pm: Another successful Oldham Libraries HAF event!
Torton design and build a range of mobile libraries to suit all needs.
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If you need to talk about going mobile - contact Richard Jones on 01952 612648 or email richard@torton.com
PMLG Teachmeet 2022 – Partnerships

The PMLG Teachmeet 2022 will be held on Friday November 11th at:
The Greenwood Centre, Huddersfield Road, Ravensthorpe, Dewsbury, WF13 3JR.

Teachmeets offer a thoughtful programme of speakers and workshops on a theme of value to Library Professionals at all levels. They also offer an invaluable networking opportunity and count towards your CPD. Teachmeet includes refreshments and a buffet lunch, (sponsored by Lorensbergs,) and is completely free to CILIP members. (£30 for non-members.)

Details & Booking form on the PMLG Website!
# PMLG Teachmeet 2022 ‘Partnerships'

Friday 11th November at The Greenwood Centre, Huddersfield Rd, Ravensthorpe, Dewsbury WF13 3JR.

Booking form available on [PMLG Website](#), free to members, £30 others.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>09:00 – 09:40</td>
<td>Registration, sponsors and networking opportunities</td>
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| 09:40 – 09:50 | Welcome to Kirklees  
**Richard Parry** – Strategic Director for Adults & Health, Kirklees Council                                                                 |
| 09:50 – 10:00 | Introduction  
**Nick Poole** – CILIP Chief Executive Officer                                                                                         |
| 10:00 – 10:40 | Strategic Partnerships – how they work and how they influence national policy and ambitions.  
| 10:40 – 11:20 | Working together to deliver on the Council’s priorities.  
**Patrick Boosey** & Colleagues from The Wellness Service                                                                                  |
| 11:20 – 11:45 | Break for Refreshments                                                                                                                   |
| 11:45 – 12:30 | Workshops:  
**Helen Pratt** – Greater Manchester Health & Social Care Partnership                                                                     |
| 12:30 – 14:15 | Lunch – Sponsored by [Lorensbergs](#) and including gaming/networking opportunities from Darren Edwards!                                  |
| 14:15 – 15:00 | Workshops:  
**Ambreen Aziz & Mazhar Iqbal** - (Kirklees Libraries) Engaging Diverse Communities Workshop  
| 15:00 – 15:20 | Break – Refreshments sponsored by ...                                                                                                   |
| 15:20 – 16:00 | Build a Business – The GM Libraries partnership  
**Vickie Varley** – Senior Library Officer, Oldham Libraries                                                                               |
| 16:00 – 16:15 | Wrap up session ... and ‘Chief Facilitator for Enthusiasm!’  
**Nick Poole** – CILIP Chief Executive Officer                                                                                           |
Richard Parry: Welcome to Kirklees
( Strategic Director for Adults & Health – Kirklees Council)
Richard fell by accident into the world of public health, care and support, after completing university and with a background starting as a care worker for people with learning disabilities. Originally from Lancashire, he worked at Hampshire County Council in a range of roles before joining Cumbria County Council in 2006 as Head of Service for Disability and Mental Health. Richard joined Kirklees in January 2015.

Nick Poole: Master of Ceremonies
Nick is the Chief Executive of CILIP, where he is responsible for developing and implementing the organisation's Strategic Plan and championing the interests of the library, information and knowledge management profession. Prior to working at CILIP, Nick was CEO of the Collections Trust and has held roles in the public and financial services sectors.

Kathryn Harrison: Strategic Partnerships
Kathryn is Development Manager for Libraries and Information Services in Wakefield. Kathryn chaired the Yorkshire and Humber Libraries Connected group for three years and was also the former chair of Libraries Connected's Information offer. Kathryn currently serves as Treasurer of Libraries Connected.

Patrick Boosey: Wellness Service Lead
Patrick leads the Kirklees Wellness Service. The role of the Service is to

Darren Edwards: Lunchtime Gaming
Darren has been interested in games for as long as he can remember. He started combining the two in 2013 and has been the UK coordinator for the American Library Association initiative International Games Month since 2015. Darren is a Specialist Services Librarian with BCP Council, and Vice-Chair of PMLG.
Lyndsey Wroe: Local Community Hubs
Lyndsey is the Mirfield Community Hub Coordinator for Kirklees Council and works with Paul Jones. Mirfield Community Hub serves as a model for linking Council Services, Community Groups, Health Services and local people to deliver joined-up services and support for the people of Mirfield.

Paul Jones: Local Community Hubs
Paul Jones is a Community Hub Coordinator for Kirklees Children & Families Service. In that role, he works closely with Lyndsey Wroe to deliver community-based services through the Mirfield Community Hub. He and Lyndsey will be running a workshop on multi-service hub working as a model for achieving the best outcomes for our residents.

Helen Pratt: NHS Greater Manchester Integrated Care
Helen joined Dementia United in 2019, which is Greater Manchester’s (GM) programme aiming to make GM the best place to live for those affected by dementia. Helen has 20 plus years of working in the NHS as a registered mental health nurse. Helen has a strong clinical background working in liaison services in hospitals and community mental health services across GM. She is also a part-time lecturer for student nurses.

Ambreen Aziz: Librarian Kirklees Libraries
Ambreen joined Kirklees Libraries at the height of the pandemic in 2019, but despite this rather inauspicious start, successfully completed our first ever CILIP-Accredited Apprenticeship for Libraries, Information & Archive Services Assistant (Level 3.) In fact, Ambreen was so successful, she already has a job with us as a Librarian!

Maz Iqbal: Librarian Kirklees Libraries
Maz Iqbal, at the other end of the spectrum, is one of Kirklees’ longest-serving librarians. He and Ambreen will be giving a workshop on hard-to-reach communities. Libraries can be the “Heineken” of Council Services, reaching the communities that some other services can’t, such as teens, asylum-seekers, minority ethnic communities, the elderly, etc.

Yvonne Morris: Programme Manager CILIP
Yvonne is a Chartered Librarian, with a strong interest in the development of professional policy in the library, information and cultural heritage sectors, and in professional ethics. As part of the CILIP team working on the Green Libraries Partnership, Yvonne will deliver a workshop about getting your library involved.
PMLG Teachmeet 2022 - Partnerships
Facilitator Profiles & Event Information

Vickie Varley: Build a Business – The GM Libraries Partnership
Vickie is a Senior Library Officer for Oldham Libraries – she is lead on the Greater Manchester library partnership business support programme, with a particular focus on new start-ups. She is also Oldham lead for the Libraries of Sanctuary Project.

Greenwood Centre
The Greenwood Centre is a modern Library & Community Centre, co-located with a medical centre in a small park in Ravensthorpe. It lies on the main A644 between the M62 at Brighouse and Dewsbury. The railway station is a five-minute walk along Calder Rd. There is a small car park on Netherfield Rd, on-street parking or, (for customers,) in the Shopping Centre opposite.

Lunch Sponsors:

Talking of Partnerships - Lorensbergs have long been collaborators with PMLG, having previously supported PMLG Conference, the PMLG Librarian of the Year Awards and Teachmeets. Philippa Bryant, of Lorensbergs, also worked with Brent Libraries to provide well-received workshops at PMLG Conference 2019 at Canada Water. We are keen to offer as many as we can of our CPD opportunities like Teachmeets free to members, but that would be impossible without the support of commercial sponsors like Lorensbergs.

Lorensbergs works closely with libraries to provide software that improves access to services and resources, with the market-leading PC booking and print management solution, ‘Netloan.’ Find out more using the link below:

This year Lorensbergs are sponsoring the luncheon at Teachmeet – please try and find time to chat to Netloan Account Manager Joanna Slade or her colleagues if you can.

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Libraries offer support and inspiration to all who walk through their doors. As a close partner and ally since 2001, Lorensbergs remains dedicated in supporting your work.
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The Nick Poole Column

I wanted to begin this column for PMLG Access by paying testament to CILIP members, library staff and leaders in public libraries who have done so much in recent years to support your communities through the turbulence of COVID and, more recently, the cost-of-living crisis.

The phrase ‘challenging times’ has become so familiar that it almost seems redundant. With the economic after-shock of the ‘mini-Budget’ still ringing in our ears, it seems likely that these challenges are destined to be with us for some time to come.

But in times like these, I often find it most informative to look away from the sound and fury of the national press and towards the grassroots reality in towns and villages across the country. And there, I think, a different story is emerging.

For example, I recently had the opportunity of speaking at the AGM of Suffolk Libraries, the Industrial and Provident Society which runs public library services in Suffolk. The CEO Bruce Leeke presented a summary of their achievements over the year – story after story of real impact on real people’s lives.

In one example, a library user called Kate said: “Libraries provide a place to meet other people, not just to take your books out, find information and newspapers. They’re comfortable places, warm places. The librarians are really knowledgeable and friendly, especially in the village libraries.”

It was a reminder of the simple truth that every day, public librarians and library workers help millions of people to improve their lives. It is vitally important to me that CILIP is there for the public library workforce – the people who make such a difference in communities across all four nations - as we are in other sectors.

An association for all library workers

Starting next year, we are aiming to make CILIP more accessible, relevant and useful to frontline library staff than ever before.

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The Nick Poole Column (continued)

We want to reach out to front-desk staff, library workers, volunteers and others involved in the running of library services and show them not only that there is a place for them in our community, but that we can make a real difference in their daily work.

We have been delighted to welcome 40-60 new members to CILIP each month through 2022, bringing new insight and energy to our professional community. However, too few of these are frontline staff in public libraries and I am determined to change this.

In this article, I want to explore some of the ways in which we think that CILIP can work better for the people who make public and mobile libraries what they are. I look forward to hearing your views and to working with PMLG to make it happen.

Welcome to Libraries – induction pack

Thanks to funding from the Arts Council England, CILIP and Libraries Connected will shortly be launching a new 'Welcome to Libraries' induction pack for new staff entering public library life for the first time.

The pack, which will be available digitally and in (limited) print is full of simple, practical information to help new staff orientate themselves in the library sector. It includes 'day in the life' insights into the work of public library staff and leaders as well as links to free training and other support materials.

Working with Libraries Connected and Heads of Service our aim is to get the induction pack into the hands of everyone that works in the public library sector – ensuring that they feel connected to the amazing work that libraries do.

Training, CPD and apprenticeships in public libraries

Since 2020, CILIP has been working with GLL to provide on-the-ground practical skills training to public library workers. This programme has enabled us both to learn about the skills needs of frontline staff and to develop a suite of training modules and resources focused on practical activities including customer service, programme development and management – all linked back to the Professional Knowledge and Skills Base (PKSB).

We want to take this further and are now in discussion with two other Library Authorities about becoming a direct training provider for their staff – a fantastic opportunity to translate the value of our skills standards into simple, practical tools for library workers.

Alongside this important work, our Apprenticeships programme is growing rapidly, with more than 80 library apprentices enrolled for the Level 3 Library, Archive and Information Services Apprenticeship in 2022.
The Workforce Mapping 2.0 survey has now concluded, with thousands of responses from CILIP members and non-members across the UK. We are currently working with the Local Government Association’s Research Unit to analyse the data, which will give us a comprehensive update on the original 2015 mapping.

The focus of this mapping is on (a) understanding the scale, composition and demographics of the library workforce, (b) understanding the impact of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion initiatives across the sector and (c) identifying future skills needs for library staff. We anticipate being able to publish the findings in full before the end of the year.

The Green Libraries Partnership (http://www.cilip.org.uk/greenlibraries) has gone from strength-to-strength and now includes a Green Libraries Fund which has provided small and micro-grants to public libraries across England to improve their environmental sustainability. We are currently working with a range of partners to grow the fund, which will be available to more libraries in 2023.

A public library leadership group

Regular readers will know that CILIP has actively been growing our ‘Employer Partner Scheme’ (previously ‘Organisational Membership’) and I am delighted to confirm that we now have more than 30 Public Library Authorities as members (comprising nearly 20% of the overall membership!).

This has allowed us to establish a new group the ‘Leading Innovation for Public Libraries Network’, which brings together Heads of Service from these Authorities to help shape and develop our work.

The result is that we are in a much stronger position to fine-tune the Association’s work to the real needs of public library staff and CILIP members in public libraries.

Added-value projects

Our busy Programmes Team has developed a really exciting portfolio of projects designed to make a real impact for public libraries across the UK.
We need your help!

I hope this article gives you a sense of how committed we are to ushering a new relevance and impact for frontline staff in public libraries. We know this is an ambition we share with the fantastic PMLG Committee.

Starting from the beginning of 2023, we will actively be promoting CILIP membership for new and frontline staff working in public libraries. We know that a lot of our new members come to us via word-of-mouth and recommendations in the workplace, so I will need to ask you for your support in helping to get the word out.

For the time being, I will close with a quote from Bruce Leeke in Suffolk, speaking at their AGM: “The power of public libraries isn’t just in the stories people borrow from us. It’s in the stories we help them to write for themselves.”

And, as always, please do keep your comments, suggestions, ideas and questions coming by emailing me at: nick.poole@cilip.org.uk

The Nick Poole Column (continued)

The CILIP/NHS Health Education England Digital Health Literacy Pilot Fund has provided financial support for 8 library services to work with local healthcare trusts on joint initiatives focused on improving people’s ability to engage with health information. These pilots are already demonstrating the power of libraries and healthcare colleagues to make a real difference to people’s health and wellbeing online.

National advocacy

Alongside all of this work, CILIP is working hard to advocate for the interests of our members in public libraries. In addition to recent pieces in the national press, we are now actively working with a range of political stakeholders to encourage them to include pro-library policies in future manifesto commitments.

CILIP will be representing our members in the forthcoming Sanderson Review of Public Libraries, and we will shortly be meeting with the new Minister for Libraries, Stuart Andrew MP (Pudsey, CON) to set out our ambitions for a healthy and more sustainable future for our world-leading public libraries.

Stuart Andrew MP
(Official House of Commons Portrait)
For all those people trying to strip libraries of “bad” books:

“Censorship reflects a society’s lack of confidence in itself.”
Justice Potter Stewart

“One cannot, and must not, try to erase the past, merely because it doesn’t fit with one’s perception of the present”
Golda Meir

“The case against censoring anything is absolute: nothing can have so bad an effect, in the long run, as censorship itself.”
Katherine Whitehorn

“Every banned book enlightens the world.”
Ralph Waldo Emerson

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Please get in touch if you have any ideas for articles or you would like to contribute. E-mail us at pmlgaccess@gmail.com with your thoughts and we can provide more information and guidelines for authors. You can also keep in touch with what’s going on by following PMLG on Twitter: @CILIPPMLG

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ACCESS is created using Microsoft PowerPoint for fast design and pagination, then saved as a PDF for distribution.  
Typeface: Headings: Raleway Semi-Bold  
Body text: Lato Medium
Even the Famous Lion Statues of New York Public Library wore masks to promote COVID-safety. (Image: ©New York Public Library, with kind permission.)

Page S2: Brief Editorial – Jacque Widdowson
Page S16: My journey from Music Therapy to Public Libraries by Katie Wallis.
Jacquie wrote the following statement in September 2020, for a planned issue of ACCESS which never materialised. COVID threw us all off balance and has, perhaps, changed us forever. It is worth noting also, that those lost library visits, loans, events, etc., Jacquie describes have not all returned, even now.

Over 300,000 visits, 150,000 loans, 80,000 PC sessions, and 1900 community events. These are sensible estimates (based on previous years’ totals) for the statistical impact of library closures and reductions to date during the Covid-19 pandemic, within my library service. However, behind these numbers are real people with stories to tell and real-world challenges to overcome. Our libraries offer social infrastructure and support systems that cannot be replaced by online offers alone. Think for a moment about the new parents struggling under the life-changing juggernaut of parenthood that have missed out on the peer support, professional advice and simple headspace provided by our various baby groups. Of the people living with long-term conditions, such as arthritis or dementia, that have been cut off from the social groups they regularly attend at the library – suddenly isolated and left to overcome physical and mental challenges, above and beyond those brought about by the pandemic, with only remote and sporadic contact from their network.

Not to mention the hundreds of digitally excluded people, who use library PC terminals to maintain their families finances, manage work commitments, or even keep in contact with loved ones in other locations around the world, who have been thrown into complete disarray and anxiety by their exclusion from this invaluable tool, that so many of us take for granted.

Public libraries have risen to the challenge of transposing skills, advice, books, reading, performances, crafts and even social gatherings onto our online platforms. And this is to be applauded and celebrated indeed. But in our hearts we know that this is no substitute for real-world library experiences: for the profound and lasting sense of community and belonging that comes from actually being with people who share experiences with you; for the uncomplicated, mindful and relaxing environment of browsing physical shelves of books; for the supported use of computers, in a space where you can concentrate and feel confident that you can ask for advice if you get stuck on something; even for a quiet space to study or read, away from the stresses and, sometimes overcrowded, environment of home life. Yes, the libraries digital offer brings a world of opportunities that we should embrace and build upon (and the last six months has seen some truly inspiring developments in this field), but we must never let people forget how much we miss out on whilst our library doors remain closed, or our services remain limited. To the people we serve, our libraries really matter... something that numbers alone, just cannot convey.

The following articles were all written before COVID, but never made it to publication – until now. We believe they have retained relevancy, despite the delay in publication.
CILIP Conference 2019
University Place, Manchester

Two different views from PMLG Bursary winners.
(These articles were written in November 2019)

1. Emily Horsey

Emily has worked in public libraries for the past 8 years for two different authorities and currently works for Thurrock libraries as a Senior Library and Information Worker

It was my first time attending the CILIP conference, I was excited to meet other professionals and take back ideas which would benefit my library service. I am also studying for my MA in Library and Information Services Management through the University of Sheffield distance learning so it gave me an opportunity to meet some of the people on my course and see how some of the things I had studied over the last year are applied in practice. I travelled up to Manchester on the Tuesday before the conference, Manchester seemed like the perfect place to hold a library conference with its strong cultural scene and beautiful historic libraries as well as a fantastic central library.

My first thought when entering the conference on Wednesday was that it was quite overwhelming as there were lots of people and stands, I soon settled in after collecting my delegate bag and having a wander round the stands before the first keynote speech began. After a brief welcome by Nick Poole, Kriti Sharma gave a fascinating keynote speech on artificial intelligence, insightful and funny Kriti explained the issues with AI when our bias can influence it but also how it can be such a positive thing in enhancing the customer experience and that we shouldn’t look at it as taking jobs but rather as creating more skilled jobs.

There were 4 other keynotes over the course of the conference including Liz Jolly Chief Librarian at the British Library with an inspiring talk about her experiences building her career, and Hong-Anh Nyguen who gave a thought provoking talk on diversity. Nyguen highlighted the lack of diversity in the library and information profession and explained that to change the unfair bias and lack of diversity first diversity has to be monitored. She emphasised that everyone is responsible, not just those in charge and just caring about equality is not enough, we should all be doing something about it.

There were so many talks to choose from on a wide variety of topics, I decided to attend the digital innovation talk first as it is an area we could benefit from developing in our service. There were 3 great speakers but the one that really stood out for me was from Olly Hellis, a Digital Development Officer from Somerset libraries in his talk about the Glass Box Taunton. This was an innovative approach of creating a community space with lots of new technology and attracting business to use it as well. The thing I took away most from this was the importance of partnerships and building relationships with businesses.

I then attended the innovation in public libraries talk. I was really impressed by the talk by Amy Hearn, a Digital Innovation Officer from Leeds libraries. She explained the 100% digital Leeds which is a digital inclusion project to show people the benefits of going digital and giving them the skills to do so, closing the divide between those who can use technology and those who can’t. The project also targets digitally excluded groups such as disability groups encouraging them to include digital training and lends them tablets to help them do so. The project brought in funding from Leeds council and a variety of sources totalling 1 million due to its success and return on £1 investment was estimated at £15 due to the cost savings of people being able to use more digital services.

(Continued)
This was a truly impressive project with visible benefits to its community. Kirklees libraries explained their projects in engaging school age children within the library. One of the projects which was particularly interesting was the 2 day workshops where youths usually from vulnerable backgrounds wrote their own poems or raps then recorded them with local artists. The impact of the project was really positive and gave young people the opportunity to express themselves.

The leaders network had some very interesting short talks. Emily Wheeler from Leeds university put forward some interesting ideas regarding peer observation and how this can help staff to develop professionally and build relationships.

I thought about how this could be applied within my own workplace setting with staff understanding other teams work both in the library and other departments within the council providing opportunities to develop knowledge and skills and build relationships. Liz Weighell from Hampshire libraries gave some useful advice for careers in libraries. The tips I took away from the talk was to take opportunities when they arise, learn how you react to change to help you manage it, ensure jobs fit within your core beliefs and are worthwhile and to do something that brings you joy even if it is not technically part of your job role. Some other tips I took away from the leaders network were to build resilience in how we approach change, do things we are passionate about and ensure your mental wellbeing is looked after.

In the Impact and influence talk Anthony Hopkins from London Borough of Brent talked about manoeuvring in a difficult political landscape for libraries worth to be recognised and organised so levels of service can be maintained despite financial restrictions. He spoke of how staff are there to empower people and mentioned that staff are all Citizens Advice Bureau trained which I thought was useful additional training to have. He gave advice on building influence; by understanding who the key decision makers and how to approach them, being adaptive and able to build up relationships and by making everyone feel included in decisions. Kay Grieves from the University of Sunderland talked about how they had changed the way they feedback about the University’s library service. She talked about humanizing the feedback focusing on the story of how their service has helped someone and what it would be like if that service wasn’t there rather than just looking at user figures. She explained how this helped people understand the importance of the library service and how it impacts the learning at the University. I saw how this kind of feedback could work really well within public libraries.
There were so many stalls at the conference, it was great to go and chat to special interest groups and suppliers and discuss the services they provide. The evening drinks reception took place after the first day of the conference in the Museum of Science and Industry. It was a very interesting venue and a great evening. It gave me a chance to chat with a variety of people in a relaxed setting and the librarian bingo encouraged me to approach new people and find out a bit about them, although it was very hard to find someone who was going on the early morning run the next day! Overall I really enjoyed the two days at the CILIP conference. I met lots of fantastic people and attended some really interesting talks. I think I developed my knowledge of libraries significantly during those two days and have taken lots of good ideas back to my library service which we can hopefully implement in the future.

2. Jo McKenna-Aspell

The unstructured ramblings of an old(ish) library school student attending CILIP Conference 2019 in receipt of the PMLG bursary.

Jo is a student at the University of Sheffield's Information School, preparing a PhD proposal on public libraries, which led to her applying for this bursary.

I suppose I’ve used this subheadline as a warning of sorts...

When, as a very lucky bursary winner, I was asked to write an article to sum up my experiences of CILIP's 2019 conference for PMLG’s Access, I thought I would tackle it traditionally and chronologically by taking the reader on a journey session by session. A logical and systematic approach.

Then I opened my conference notebook...

Wow. Conference-me was neither logical nor systematic. My notes are all over the place and reflect the fact that much of the conference content resonated with me on both a personal and professional level. I am a (shhh) year old MA student who has left teaching and embarked on a second career in library and information services (LIS). So, if you fancy an emotional and slightly loquacious take on what it’s like to attend CILIP Conference as a first-time delegate and LIS newbie, read on. Equally, if that puts you off, I won’t be offended.

PhD and public library goodness

One of the main reasons I applied for the PMLG bursary was the focus of my PhD proposal. I’m hoping to continue my studies at the University of Sheffield's Information School, under the supervision of the inspirational Dr. Briony Birdi.

(Continued)
CILIP Conference 2019 (continued)

At this early proposal stage, I don’t want to give away too many details but the remit covers public libraries, perceptions and legislation.

There was a great deal of information and knowledge at conference that tugged on the thread I intend to pull with this research and which served as a reminder of all the good public libraries do for their communities.

Liz Jolly, Chief Librarian at the British Library, discussed the theme of librarianship and identity. Each delegate will have taken away different concepts from her address which looked back on her impressive career. I was interested in her take on what she considers the enduring values of the profession, influenced by the work of Michael Gorman1: stewardship, service, intellectual freedom, privacy, rationalism, equity of access, democracy, commitment to literacy and learning.

There is something deeply satisfying and powerful in drawing together a unified view of public librarianship in the UK. I am new to the LIS world and some may consider my views naïve... but my own reading has led me to discover different bodies with varied and, dare I say it, conflicting dogma of what libraries and their staff do for and with the public: Arts Council England, The Libraries Taskforce, DCMS, Libraries Connected and even CILIP. Is it time, as Liz implied, to remember that we have a distinct and common role? She asserted that we facilitate, we don’t simply support.

Whilst I didn’t enjoy her question about the master’s degree route into librarianship, and whether it has been unhealthily fetishised, I recognise my discomfort relates to my own status as an MA student. I applaud her reflective approach to asking tricky questions and to being “open and transparent rather than closed and exclusive.”

The last comment I recorded from Liz’s presentation, in my new, fancy conference notebook: “We need to stop pretending to be neutral as a profession.”3 I couldn’t agree more. We’re not neutral; all our actions are small p political and a great number of them are POLITICAL.

Which allows me to neatly, and almost logically, segue into the session titled Innovation in public libraries. The work of Manchester Central Library and Archives+, presented by Larysa Bolton and Neil MacInnes, documents and celebrates LGBT+ history in the North West region. It is gloriously political, emotional and historically important: “We’re here, we’re queer. Manchester’s LGBT+ story is never going back underground.”4 The collection’s narrative predates the 1950s and the archiving is being handled with empathy and tact, in collaboration with the local council. The project has even helped other organisations to catalogue their own collections.

Amy Hearn presented 100% Digital Leeds: digital inclusion matters and I was blown away by the multi-organisation approach of the project and its far reaching impact for those living in Leeds. I love the mantra of removing barriers to accessing information and digital content. Not only is the project delivering digital access and technology to individuals, it’s also helping other community groups by loaning them devices so that they can trial their use, prove their benefits and then use this evidence to apply for bids to purchase their own. Obviously, the digital foundation of the project is of paramount importance but the magic, I think, lies in their collaborative approach; like Liz Jolly said, it’s an open and transparent model.

Similarly, the work at Kirklees to engage vulnerable teens and young adults through the power of rap and music is creative and fun but it’s also political.

(Continued)
Kirstie Wilson's presentation, Creative engagement in library services development, clearly demonstrated that the project has helped to re-engage some of the most marginalised young people in the library's locale as well as raising the profile of the library through partnerships with schools and the University of Huddersfield.

Equality, diversity and INCLUSION in the world of LIS

I work at an FE college with multiple sites and libraries. I am the only LGBT+ member of the library team and I am unaware of anyone else who is out across campus. My fantastic, motivational and empathetic boss, the site librarian, is the only person of colour in the team and on campus. We often joke, in that unamused way that marginalised people do, that we tick many of the employment equality “boxes” between us.

My boss and I have spent much time over the last year trying to better understand one another’s intersectional, lived experiences and endeavouring to apply that learning to the students we support. For instance, I identify as a gay, working class woman whose childhood was framed by social welfare and Section 28. We are both acutely aware that our experiences are not a catch-all reflection of those who are forced, or choose, to share our labels. Would I say there is a problem in our workplace with how those who are other are treated? That’s a difficult conversation. But, aye, there’s the rub... I’d say the conversation is absent. There is silence. She and I are beginning to start that dialogue. I could write about how the weight of that responsibility shouldn’t always fall onto our shoulders but I’d rather talk about how delighted I was to learn that CILIP Conference 2019 was offering a number of opportunities to explore equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in LIS.

I hate mornings but I over-caffeinated myself so that I could attend the breakfast seminar, BAME Network: what it means to be an ally. I thought Shirley Yearwood-Jackman, chair of the network’s steering group, was an incisive and motivational speaker, from whom I learn a great deal. Who are allies? They’re not just people who don’t act with prejudice; this ambivalence and lack of racist output is insufficient. An ally actively promotes rights, individually and institutionally. An ally takes responsibility for learning about themselves and their own privilege. An ally seeks to learn about the lived experience of marginalised groups, rather than putting the onus on those groups to educate. An ally reflects, seeks knowledge and takes action. Shirley also warned that preaching to the converted doesn’t mean you are reaching out more widely; in our LIS settings, we need to start the conversation and build in on a foundation of empathy. Racist and prejudiced ideas and perceptions do not appear from nowhere. People have rationalised their beliefs and actions, underpinned by a historical legacy.

Hong-Anh Nguyen’s keynote address, Questioning diversity, was equally illuminating and echoed many of the insightful points addressed by the BAME Network breakfast session. She cautioned that equality and diversity strategies often pay lip service to the idea of diversity but they are shallow. A strategy is not synonymous with action and it won’t achieve anything on its own. Organisations may know they have a problem without understanding its scope. Institutionally, we should be asking:

- Why do we do things in a certain way?
- Can it be done more inclusively?
- Can we celebrate others?

(Continued)
Following her clear and inclusive message, imbued by her own lived experiences, I was horrified when one delegate chose to use the questions from the floor as an opportunity to interrogate Hong-Anh on her choice of Twitter handle. It is a play on words involving Dewey - we all know about his abhorrent, abusive actions.\(^5\) What I can’t understand, nor will I probably articulate it very clearly, is why someone would choose to spotlight that, in front of a primarily white delegation, when Hong-Anh had been invited to speak on inclusion? Because we all recognise inclusion is an issue in the LIS world. She had generously drawn on and shared her own experiences, individually and within her organisation. Was it to undermine her? To wrestle back some power? To accuse her of letting down the sisterhood? To score some mundane points? It left me feeling frustrated...

Following this address, Hong-Anh went on to chair Diversity in the profession, with four panellists: Binni Brynolf, Natasha S. Chowdory, Heena Karavadra and Tom Peach. I won’t be discussing what was said, directly, as the session obeyed the Chatham House rules. It was billed as an opportunity to hear, understand and value the lived experiences of LIS professionals from under-represented groups. Quite literally a chance to enact the promise we had made to the BAME Network in the earlier breakfast session to educate ourselves and to listen. I am grateful to this group. It is a raw, emotional and painful process to explain your experiences in a world and profession that sees you as other. Yet again, it transpired that a delegate did not respect or understand the nature of the session - not my story to tell – but I do find myself wishing that some of CILIP’s most senior people had been present and had stayed to check on the panellists.

If the difference between diversity and inclusion is moving from visibility to the embedded inclusion of people at all levels or from liberal, well-meaning kindness to radical, active inclusion… I feel that CILIP may have paused at diversity.

I MET ONJALI Q RAUF AND SHE HUGGED ME. Yes, I have been fan-girling about this ever since. It was fantastic to listen to the panel of Diversity, books and reading, including Dr Melanie Ramdarshan Bold, Sharmilla Beezmostun, Olivia Danso, Sita Bramachari, Peter Kalu and Onjali Q Rauf (I may have mentioned her already). The work by BookTrust to improve the under-representation of books written and illustrated by people of colour form the UK was inspiring and alarming: “Over the last 11 years, fewer than 2% of all authors and/or illustrators of children's books published in the UK were British people of colour.”\(^6\) What happens to young people in Britain when they don’t see themselves represented in the literature they’re reading? What happens to their aspirations for further education, higher education or careers in the creative arts?

The panel stressed that the role librarians play in connecting children and young people to books created by people of colour cannot be understated. In his keynote address, preceding this panel, Patrick Lambe argued that books and collections have shape, tell stories, change minds, take people on journeys and capture diversity. His call to arms: when a society is in crisis, attend to the margins; the centre is well able to look after itself.\(^7\)

**Speed dating and AI**

Conference also allowed me to broaden my understanding of LIS related fields of which I have no experience and little comprehension!  

(Continued)
CILIP Conference 2019 (continued)

For instance, I thoroughly enjoyed the Knowledge and Information Management round table discussion, chaired by Alison Wheeler, as an opportunity to meet professionals with very varied roles. As a library student, it reminded me of the scope of opportunity out there when I'm ready to leave academia and join the workforce again. The speed dating approach was genius as it meant delegates met different people and chose which fields they wanted to explore; in my case, managing upwards and maximising the value of spend on content.

The opening address from Kriti Sharma was dazzling: Can Artificial Intelligence create a fairer world? I'd never thought about the fact that household AI devices are given female voices and the implications of that: Alexa, Siri, Google Home. I know algorithms exist that mean Amazon pushes adverts at me depending on my Facebook content (I find it disconcerting) and that I receive different news notifications to the others in my household because of my click history... but I didn't know the extent to which bias and stereotyping is embedded into the design of these algorithms. For example, it affects the jobs and education opportunities you’re shown online. It literally helps to hold the glass ceiling in place.

Kriti is positive it can change. Not by signing up to do the right thing but by making it a part of the DNA: designing algorithms and AI which are human-centric rather than focussed on sales, click ads and digital addiction. After all, "When the robots take over, we want them to be nice!" 8

Surprise bonus

As someone who never wins anything, not only did I secure the fabulous PMLG bursary, I also won something else at conference. Whist other (I might argue, less fortunate) delegates won books, vouchers, Kindles and iPads, I was the ultimate winner... The Design Concept are the UK office of Lammhults Library Design (@designconceptuk) and, living up to their brand, they had a gorgeous stand at the conference where you could win a canary yellow elephant. It was love at first sight and I had to get him. Delegates were challenged to name the elephant and the best name transformed into ownership. Twirly is named after a keynote address by Liz McGettigan (@lizmgettigan) at CoLRIC conference earlier this year. She declared that those in the LIS world should “turn whispers into roars;” and, so, Twirly was born.

(Continued)
CILIP Conference 2019 (continued)

Now what?

Leaving conference, I was buzzing and felt equally angry and re-energised. I wanted to discard the passive-sofa-moaning (you know, where you watch the news, rage at the TV but do nothing) and turn my thoughts into actions by heeding the rallying cries of all the speakers and panellists I’d been privileged to hear. Below is a list of conscious actions I’ve undertaken because of my experiences and learnings at conference.

- I’ve signed up to join CILIP’s BAME Network as an ally and passed on the details to my boss.
- I’ve added a series of pins to my lanyard (and my boss’ lanyard) that demonstrate we are allies. We’re hoping our students and staff ask us what they mean or why we’re wearing them so we can start the dialogue.
- I worked hard to diversify our fiction collection last year, with non-existent funds! Moving forward, I am committed to continue with this, mindful of BookTrust’s statistics on British book creators of colour. I will also continue the impassioned dialogue, with my organisation, about the power of keywording fiction so that it is visible.
- I’ve re-arranged our fiction / reading for pleasure collection to enable a half-terminy surfacing of stock related to a theme. The first theme, celebrating difference, ties into September’s International Day of Peace. The books are written by authors or feature characters from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and cultural heritage. As the year progresses, we will use the display to highlight equality, diversity and inclusion in different ways.

- I’ve connected with Onjali Q Rauf to explore the potential of an author visit for our students, either with herself or with someone who writes books for our students’ age ranges. I’m looking forward to bringing the outside world into the campus and giving our students the opportunity to hear other people’s experiences.
- I’ve created a display focussed on International Day of Peace, including the UN’s sustainable development goals. They’ve turned them into achievable actions for individuals, so I’ve added these to the display and challenged our students and staff to think about which they will pledge to undertake.
- I’ve spoken to everyone I know about the lessons I’ve learned from conference – regardless of their level of interest!
- I’ve started to call out micro-aggressions, both those I receive (this month: *who is the husband and wears the trousers?)* and those I see others receive (a shopper pushing a stranger’s occupied wheelchair so that he could reach a shelf). In the case of the latter, I always seek the receiver’s express permission because I don’t want to disempower anyone.
- I’ve signed up to volunteer at my local foodbank and start on the 5th August.

I know that I will get things wrong and in trying, I could very well offend the people I’m trying to include. I need to be receptive to criticism and I must reflect on what I learn. As Shirley Yearwood-Jackman argued, many people fear that questioning the status quo will reflect poorly on themselves; I won’t allow my worry of getting it wrong to transform into cowardice or inaction.

(Continued)
CILIP Conference 2019 (continued)

References

(And, yes, I'm combining Harvard APA 6th with end notes... the horror!)

3. Ibid.
From Music Therapy to Libraries!
(Or “Why a Library Assistant decided to swap her Accordion for Books!”)

By Katie Wallis.
This article was written in December 2019
Since writing this article, Katie has secured a role as a Careers Adviser and Professional Services Consultant at C+K Careers - and she has just become a new mum!

It was halfway through my university studies in 2011, when I had a call from Library Manager Kathryn Parry trying to persuade me to come and work at Cleckheaton Library over the summer. I’d been working as a dinner-lady for the Council, which translates to ‘lunchtime supervisor’ for the politically correct. A temporary job vacancy had come up for a Customer Service Officer in the library service. You could only apply if you were already employed within the Council, which delightfully ruled out every other student looking for hours over the summer holidays, and there weren’t many people working in part-time Council jobs which would fit with library shifts… apart from those working as dinner-ladies for three hours a week.

Obviously, they were overwhelmed with applications, what with all those dinner-ladies who couldn’t wait to work in a library, so I was lucky to get the job. I’d just been offered work at Sainsbury’s and was about to choose that because it had more hours! “The library will be better for your CV,” warned Kathryn. To this day, I am thankful I listened. Not only has it been fantastic for that CV, it has ended up being the best fit for my skills as well as a career choice I am truly passionate about.

However, it took me almost a decade to realise that the type of work I was best suited to was what I was already doing. Alongside my library role, I researched and considered every possible career, including midwifery, nursing, social work and at one absolute detour of a point, buying a set of decks with the aim of becoming a DJ! After lengthy consideration, I decided to try to bring together my love of music and people by training as a music therapist. Music therapy had been on the cards, (one of my ‘career dreams,’) since the age of 14. A safe bet, surely?

Survival as a music therapist did in fact last longer than my plans to be the next Ibiza resident DJ. After five years in music therapy, I feel grateful for the learning opportunities this training provided as well as the time spent making music with some fantastic clients. Ironically, it was music therapy that took me full circle, back to the libraries.

As part of my freelance work in dementia care, I’d contacted the librarians to offer music therapy as a potential collaboration with their bibliotherapy work. Both professions have a lot to offer in terms of their community provision, which links closely with objectives such as reducing individual isolation and bringing groups of people together. The library service had been running multi-sensory storytelling sessions in several dementia care homes accross Kirkles as one of their outreach projects, so they were keen for us to work together.

Bibliotherapy meets music therapy

Bibliotherapy involves the use of fiction and poetry to support and increase positive outcomes for people with mental health and wellbeing issues. It includes interactive activities that can be used to engage with a person regardless of their cognitive abilities or concentration levels.
The aims of bibliotherapy and music therapy are one and the same. Both work towards:

• Alleviating symptoms of anxiety
• Increasing self esteem
• Improving social skills and concentration
• Reducing isolation
• Enabling people living with a communication-limiting condition to show their unique personality and abilities

I worked closely with two fantastic librarians to plan and deliver a musical-sensory storytelling session within a dementia care home in Huddersfield. The story was based on Shakespeare’s ‘A Midsummer Night’s Dream,’ and included a variety of sensory props which connected closely to parts of the story that the librarians had cleverly adapted for clients living with dementia.

I accompanied the storytelling with musical flurries, providing auditory detail to the interactive performance and adapting my response to how the group members were reacting. The librarians did the same, choosing to give each individual a longer time to explore each prop where necessary. Props had a clear link with the story and their presence allowed each participant to interact and add to the performance in their own way, such as feeling the smooth texture of a small wooden heart which symbolised the romance depicted in the story.

Coupled with the music, the sensory story provided a safe, communicative space for individuals who, due to their condition, were often in an isolated situation. The story was interspersed with well-known songs which connected to the story, to which most of the group remembered the lyrics. This memory recall for musical lyrics is something which has always fascinated me about using music in dementia care.

After seeing the fantastic work of the librarians, I felt inspired to return to libraries. I’d also taken a significant amount of time to reflect on my abilities and what sort of work I really enjoyed. Although music therapy had been fantastic, I found that I missed library work and the information-related customer service interaction this role entails. Before long, I’d decided to leave music therapy behind to re-embark on the library journey, returning to the customer service officer role and making plans to study for an MA in Library and Information Services Management with the University of Sheffield.
From Music Therapy to Libraries! (continued)

Transferrable skills where you'd least expect them...

It's not only bibliotherapy where my skills as a music therapist have connected with the library role. So much of the customer service officer job is improvisatory in the same way as music therapy. You're constantly looking for those resources which will benefit your customer the most and in many ways I feel I can give so much more to the customers now, than when I had an accordion hung from my shoulders and was trying to accompany a client playing the Last Post on a broken trombone. That's not to say music therapy cannot transform lives. There are some truly wonderful music therapists out there who really do bring out the very best in their client's abilities, providing a solid musical base upon which they can shine.

As with music therapy, the library service caters to the individual enquiry. There is no problem too large and we use listening and our information literacy to solve it. The desktop keyboard is my new piano. Each customer has a unique story to tell and no day is ever the same. You just don't know what sort of enquiry you're going to get and that's what I love about the job. Whether you're helping a customer check a map to find a location they are due to visit or showing someone how to access their Gmail account after they have lost their password, the work feels meaningful and genuinely helpful to people.

One of my most recent memorable enquiries was from a customer who had in fact got locked out of his Gmail account due to forgetting his password. He'd come over from New Zealand and had been in another country in the meantime, providing administrative support in recovery aid for a flood disaster, having to come to the UK due to conditions becoming too dangerous where he'd been working.

He wasn't able to speak as he'd somehow lost his speaking device for his tracheostomy. He didn't have a phone and he wanted to let his wife know that he'd safely arrived in the UK. I sat with him and asked him questions, to which he wrote his responses on paper, until we figured out that the best solution would be to set him up with a new account so he could email his wife. It turned out he had throat cancer and he was trying to live his days to the full as he didn't know how long he had left. He had tears in his eyes as he thanked me for helping him and wrote on a piece of paper that it had been so hard for him not being able to talk to anyone.

This isn't music therapy, but in some ways communication and interaction with library clients sometimes feels like a kind of bizarre improvisational sonata. In October Huddersfield Library held a fantastic event for “Get it Loud in Libraries,” so we can even say that libraries are literally musical. There are ups and downs to the job, quiet periods where there are fewer enquiries and intense moments, such as a potentially dangerous situation with several customers wielding baseball bats and police arriving shortly thereafter. (True story!)

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From Music Therapy to Libraries! (continued)

Right now, I’m working in the careers library at Greenhead College in Huddersfield, testing out the academic route. It’s safe to say that this is considerably different from the public library experience, with much more of a focus on information and specific educational support than the community outreach of the customer service officer role. If Kirklees Libraries ever advertise for a full-time, permanent position, I may even return for what is likely to be the fifth time... sans accordion!

Image Credit: Katie Wallis

Libraries of Sanctuary

By Vickie Varley.
Vickie is a Library Development Officer for Oldham Libraries and leads on the Libraries of Sanctuary Project. This article was written in September 2020.

In 2019, Oldham Libraries, along with Manchester Libraries and Bolton Library and Museum Service, were awarded Controlling Migration funding to establish nine Libraries of Sanctuary across the three boroughs, employing the principles of the City of Sanctuary movement in key wards. Our aim is to provide an enhanced library service offer to new and transient communities to help build their confidence, self-esteem and resilience through social mixing and engagement in activities, supported by a staff training and volunteer programme.

Community Engagement

We worked with Oldham Council’s Emerging Communities team to identify Oldham, Chadderton and Northmoor Libraries as those serving the highest concentrations of migrant communities. Library Development Officers attended lunches for refugees and asylum seekers at local places of worship, made contact with schools, held information days in libraries in partnership with the Emerging Communities team, and spent time in the libraries talking to residents to find out what events they would like to attend.

Funding was allocated to establish and expand weekly English conversation groups at the three libraries; these were loosely based on “Learning Circles” from the BBC which we had been running successfully for several years, on a rather smaller scale, (englishmyway.co.uk/learning-circles)
Libraries of Sanctuary (continued)

We held monthly events aimed at new communities and planned a series of welcome events. Our monthly events included bilingual story walks, zine making and digital workshops. These events were open to everyone, but promotion was targeted at our new communities.

The result was a popular, engaging events programme attended by a range of communities, that demonstrated the power of libraries as places of learning, engagement and community cohesion.

Volunteering

The programme was particularly popular at one of our smallest libraries, Northmoor. Situated in one of Oldham’s most deprived wards, Northmoor Library is a small but much-loved library on a busy main road, where residents had expressed an interest in supporting the development of a more diverse programme of events and activities.

Attendance at the conversation classes was so high that we had to recruit extra volunteers to support it. One volunteer, Babek Saboonchi, who had previously attended the sessions as a learner, told us, “…teaching in Northmoor was a very good experience for me to meet other nationalities and get familiar with other foreigner’s English accents.”

Babek went on to say, “Also, I had this chance to have more communication around their culture and traditions and know how to improve our social relations with other nationalities and residents”. And as more volunteers expressed an interest in supporting conversation classes, we used the funding to create a toolkit for running informal conversation classes in libraries.

Local Partnerships

Gardening became a popular topic of conversation and common ground for many of the learners, who had been keen gardeners in their home countries but found themselves with little outside space of their own in Oldham. We decided to turn a small patch of wasteland next to the library into a community garden and secured funding from Oldham Council to achieve this.

A local food distribution charity heard about the Libraries of Sanctuary programme and asked if they could use the library as a food distribution centre. This was a lifeline for many of our library users who were able to take home fresh fruit and vegetables to their families and enjoy cakes and treats in the library. We ran simple craft sessions so that people could take part in an activity while sharing food and conversation.

The nearby school, Northmoor Academy, asked if they could bring their newly arrived children into the library to take part in the activities too. Library Development Officers programmed and ran fun, engaging sessions with the children including digital and science activities designed to encourage chat and discussions. The children took away information on the wider library service to share with their families. Quite often parents would accompany the school group.

Conversation classes sessions were well attended, and new people joined every week. The enthusiasm for informal sessions led to library staff delivering additional ESOL classes for new parents in the library.
Outcomes

- Having established good relationships with the community we felt able to change the way we purchased stock for the library, whose borrowing patterns weren’t well matched to the traditional supplier selection model.
- We moved to a model of purchasing on request, supported by free reservations from stock at the other libraries and we purchased additional dual language titles.
- We also removed some little used stock and replaced the shelving with new furniture that worked well for the activities that were taking place, and to provide a space where people can exchange experiences and make contacts in a welcoming atmosphere.
- One of the project's strengths was its informal approach. There was no pressure on participants to book or commit to any sessions, word of mouth was fundamental in reaching residents and many attendees brought family and friends along to sessions.
- Bureaucratic hurdles were removed and there was no requirement for people to provide their personal details or fill in registration forms to join the library or access services.
- Staff from the three libraries received training from Manchester City of Sanctuary in applying their principles.
- Positive relationships were built with the nearby schools as we were able to offer a programme that reflected their own priorities around setting families into the area.

Whilst Northmoor Library currently remains closed due to the physical challenges of introducing covid safety measures at that site, and social activities have been scaled back during the pandemic, we are exploring ways to engage with these communities again; developing digital resources, exploring an online learning circles group and sharing learning from our European partners as part of our Building Bridges project, funded by ACE/CILIP. We recognise though, that many of these communities and participants are unlikely to be able to engage digitally therefore the need for neutral, safe and community-based library spaces will continue to prove vital to re-engage with those that need these services the most.