

PUBLIC LIBRARY
SKILLS
STRATEGY

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Foreword

We are proud to champion the Public Library Skills Strategy 2017-2030, which encourages a new, more open and inclusive way of developing skills and professionalism in the public library workforce and one which recognises that 'leadership' happens at every level of the organisation.

The Strategy articulates a range of skills that staff and volunteers delivering public library services will need. It also outlines mechanisms for skills delivery and valuable support for employers. It will also help individuals develop their skills and plan careers; enabling them to succeed in a changing and competitive market.

We would like to thank the library leaders and information experts who worked on the development of this skills strategy; devoting their time and expertise to produce an inspiring vision of a vibrant, professional workforce, keen to equip themselves with the skills to thrive and innovate to provide effective, local services for their communities. These are crucial times for the public library sector, which is facing enormous challenges to evolve its services under financial constraints. CILIP and SCL will both play prominent roles in ensuring the eight recommendations are implemented by supporting employers and individuals to engage with communities and deliver outstanding public services guided by our ethical principles.

Kate Arnold, CILIP President
Neil MacInnes, SCL President

Vision

"The library was never finished. It was never meant to be finished"

Rolf Hapel, Director of Citizens' Services and Libraries, Aarhus, Denmark

The vision which drives this Strategy is of a future for public libraries in England as digital, creative and cultural centres of excellence - a thriving network of innovative virtual and physical civic spaces offering freely-accessible services that support reading and literacy, develop skills, foster creativity, promote and support health and wellbeing and provide a platform for community participation.

Our vision puts information and library skills and values at the heart of public service delivery. We will ensure that the expertise of our profession is recognised and valued by Local Authorities for its ability to develop and deliver quality services that meet community needs.

The key to realising this vision will be the trained library staff and volunteers that are part of their community and dedicated to meeting local needs. The public library workforce of the future will combine expert information skills and the ability to engage communities to deliver outstanding services that support and enhance the prospects of all citizens.

Executive Summary

The public library sector in England is changing – evolving and adapting to meet the changing needs of an increasingly connected society. SCL and CILIP have produced this Public Library Skills Strategy (PLSS) to ensure that this changing sector has access to the skills, competencies and capacity it needs, now and in the future.

This Strategy will guide and support the learning and development needs of the public library workforce in England, enabling us to deliver our vision of a future for public libraries as digital, creative and cultural centres of excellence.

The Strategy sets 2030 as the target date for the delivery of this vision, giving employers, learning and training providers and other key stakeholders time to re-equip and reshape the workforce, to give the lead time needed to change the entire approach to workforce development and take into account education as well as training.

The Strategy will help employers deliver quality services that meet the needs of their communities by recognising, investing in and utilising the expert skills of information, library and knowledge staff. The strategy will also help individuals to develop their skills and plan their careers so they can compete in a competitive market. It will also be used by key stakeholders to plan appropriate education, training and career development opportunities.

The Libraries Taskforce¹ committed to support the development of a Public Libraries Skills Strategy via the Libraries Deliver Action Plan². The Strategy is focused on public libraries in England, however the working group consulted with representatives from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and with experts from the wider information, library and knowledge sectors including health, school and government libraries and The British Library. This work will continue into 2018 as CILIP leads the development of a UK wide sector skills strategy.

SCL in parallel will be working on a programme of leadership and skills development aligned to their Universal Offers which describe and identify current and future countrywide library experiences.

¹<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/libraries-taskforce>

²https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/603108/Ambition_Action_Plan_December_2016.pdf

Context: The public library workforce (England)

The public library service in England has over 3,000 networked, accessible physical service points embedded in communities, schools, and hospitals alongside a comprehensive and developing online offer with a variety of digital and e-services, led and supported by a workforce of 11,000 skilled library and information experts.

The public library workforce is founded on a combination of strong professional ethics, an intrinsic customer service ethos and a commitment to improving the lives of everyone in local communities.

Public libraries are uniquely positioned to harness the power of technology, creativity and civic participation to deliver real, measurable impact against key local and national government agendas including:

- Business and enterprise
- Skills and employability
- Health and wellbeing
- Learning and education
- Communities

The changing face of the information profession

In 2015 CILIP published the first comprehensive cross-sector mapping of the UK information workforce³. This mapping and previous research highlight a number of key challenges and opportunities:

- An ageing workforce – 45% of the current library and information workforce will reach retirement age by 2030
- A lack of ethnic representation – 97% of the UK library and information workforce self-identify as white (compared to 88% in the population)
- A gender pay gap – the library and information workforce is 79% female and 21% male, yet 47% of top earners in the profession are men

Meeting these challenges means building a thriving workforce for the future, attracting, retaining and developing talent and sustaining the creation of high-quality jobs which make use of our broad range of skills.

Workforce development

Delivering the ambitions set out in this Strategy requires a targeted and strategic approach to workforce development, locally, nationally and within individual library services.

³<https://www.cilip.org.uk/about/projects-reviews/workforce-mapping>

If public library services are to thrive in a changing world with competing needs and priorities, local information and library services need clear workforce development plans to ensure staff meet the needs of the communities they support, supported by a national framework which brings economies of scale and collective impetus.

Our approach to developing the public library workforce of the future will be guided by the following nine aims:

1. Attracting, retaining and developing talent – the sector needs to attract the best new talent, from diverse backgrounds, to work in information and library services
2. Targeting inclusion, diversity, representation and equality – we need to ensure that the public library workforce represents and is inclusive of the full range of communities we serve, proactively targeting exclusion and inequality
3. Investing in professional skills and ethics - the public library workforce combines skills and knowledge with professional ethics; employers can be confident in the delivery of modern, relevant library services
4. Promoting leadership at every level - the sector needs to promote leadership at every level of the workforce, encouraging and supporting staff at every level to contribute to the development of services
5. An open, inclusive approach to professionalism – while public libraries continue to need access to specialist library and information skills, we will no longer assume that specialist expertise and skills are exclusively vested in the library and information professional
6. Lowering the barriers to entry – our approach to workforce development must offer multiple pathways into working in public libraries, combining both academic and non-academic routes, including apprenticeships, while continuing to support professional registration and qualifications
7. A commitment to Continuing Professional Development – we recognise the inherent professionalism offered by people joining at a variety of entry levels, with varied ambitions for their own development, and are committed to supporting lifelong learning and CPD for all public library staff
8. Valuing transferable skills – we acknowledge and celebrate the fact that people will move into and out of the public library sector, bringing with them a broad mix of skills and professional experience
9. Looking beyond the sector - we need to identify and address the information and learning needs of wider stakeholders beyond the public library sector

Maximising the impact of public libraries

Public libraries change lives, every single day. In some areas, they are thriving under effective leadership, integrated into their local authority or led by innovative governance and funding models. In other situations, they are not fulfilling their potential through lack of local recognition, inadequate funding, and competing local priorities.

The transformation of public libraries into digital, creative and cultural centres of excellence is an essential step to ensure that they continue to meet the changing demands of an increasingly connected, information-rich society. The values established in the Victorian era – impartiality, universal access to information, helping people to help themselves, a commitment to public service, learning and opportunity for all – are exactly the values to carry forward into the digital future for our libraries.

The Strategy sets out a vision of how employers can maximise the impact, relevance and sustainability of local public library services by recognising, investing in and utilising the expert skills of library, information and knowledge staff. The strategy will also help individuals to develop their skills and plan their careers so they can compete in a competitive market. It will also be used by key stakeholders to plan appropriate education, training and career development opportunities.



Fig 1. CILIP/University of Salford research into the impact of public librarians

Future trends: jobs and skills in 2030

This Public Library Skills Strategy has been informed by research into the social, economic, technological, demographic and other changes likely to impact on the workforce by 2030. These include:

- Demographic change
- Growing diversity
- Income uncertainty
- Growing desire for a better work/life balance
- Changing work environments
- Converging technologies and cross-disciplinary skills
- Digitisation of production
- ICT Development and the age of big data
- Changed economic perspectives
- Shift to East Asia
- New business eco-systems
- Growing scarcity of natural resources and degradation of ecosystems
- Decreasing scope for political action due to constrained public finances

To succeed in this complex and emerging landscape, employers will increasingly need to:

- Attract resilient employees with the capacity to innovate, to collaborate and proactively support and promote change
- Attract, develop and retain world class talent
- Manage skills and talent across networks and portfolios
- Have staff who can adapt to open business models and more fluid employment arrangements
- Develop sustainable workforce opportunities and learning pathways for young people
- Develop increasing diversity in the workforce
- Support a greater range of flexible working arrangements
- Intensify collaboration with the education and training sector to access critical skills

The public librarian as public servant

The *21st Century Public Servant* report⁴ looks at the skills, values and attributes of the public sector workforce of the future. It describes the future public servant as “a municipal entrepreneur”- undertaking a wide range of roles, who will be recruited and rewarded for generic skills as well as technical expertise and who builds a career which is fluid across sectors and services. The future public library workforce shares the same challenges and opportunities outlined in the report, working in the same evolving environment.

⁴<https://21stcenturypublicservant.wordpress.com/>

Skills to meet future needs

This Public Library Skills Strategy is based on an integrated vision of the skills which public libraries will need to access in order to develop sustainable, thriving services which support and enhance the prospects of all citizens.

Our public library skills framework builds on CILIP's Professional Knowledge and Skills Base (PKSB)⁵:

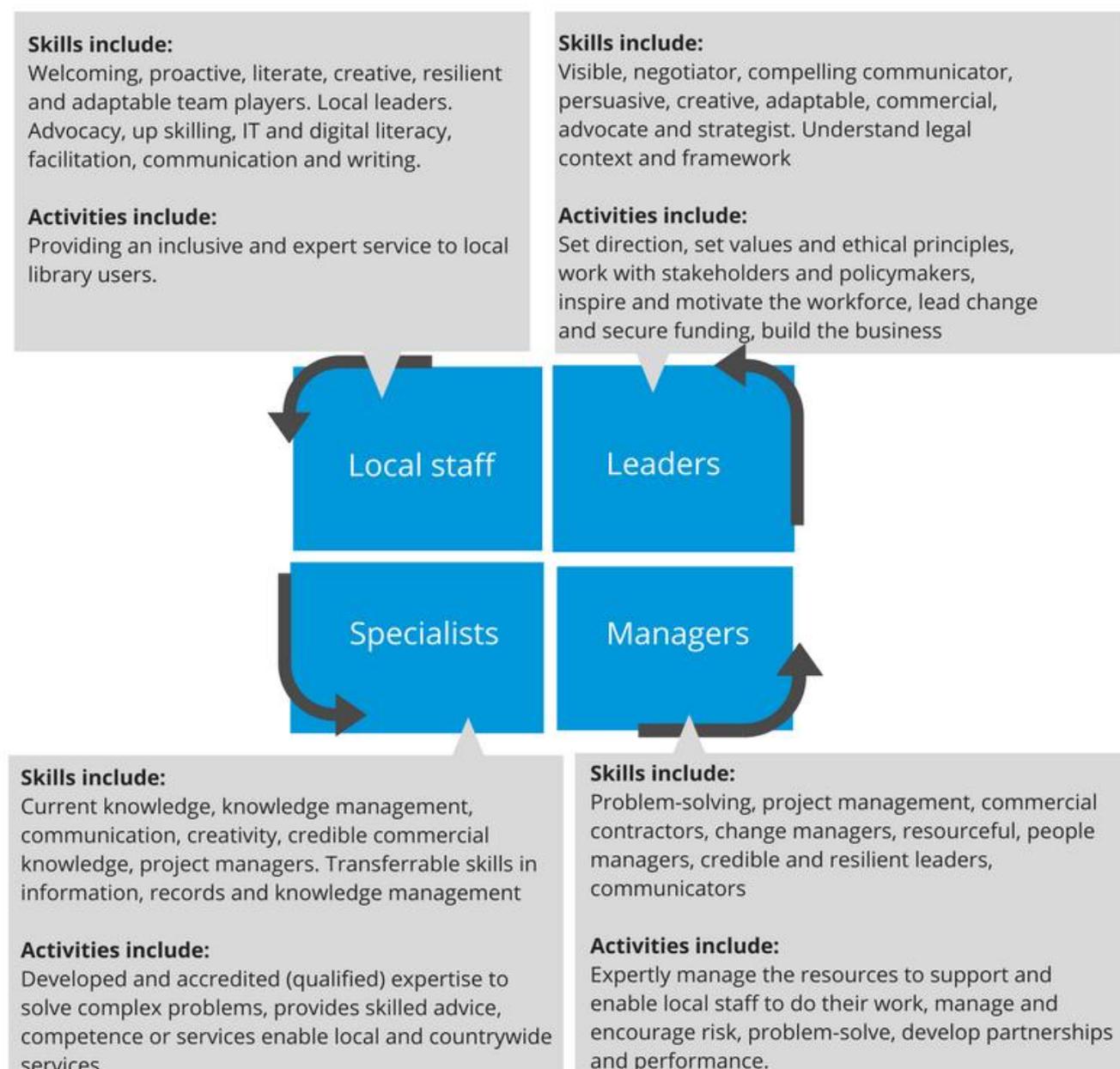


Fig 2. SCL/CLIP Public Library Skills Framework

⁵<https://www.cilip.org.uk/professional-knowledge-skills-base>

Recommendations

Working with the wider library and information sector, CILIP and SCL have set out a number of recommendations for implementation which will ensure that the aims of this Strategy are achieved.

Our recommendations are structured around our ambitions for workforce development. These recommendations are subject to funding and support from a wide range of sector partners and agencies.

Aim 1: Attracting, retaining and developing talent

Recommendation 1.1: A national advocacy campaign celebrating the workforce

A national campaign will provide two major benefits to workforce development in the sector: it will advocate the skills of the sector to a wider audience, creating recognition and greater understanding of the role played by information and library experts and it will attract the interest of a new generation of people who have grown up in a digital world, to aspire to join the workforce.

Recommendation 1.2: Development of an employer engagement plan

SCL and CILIP will work with employers to highlight and demonstrate the benefit of CPD programmes, supported by materials aimed at employers, using a research and evidence base, to inform and guide and support library and information roles in their organisations.

Aim 2: Targeting inclusion, diversity, representation and equality

Recommendation 2.1: A diversity and equality plan for the sector

CILIP is working with its Ethics Committee to develop a diversity and equality plan for the library and information profession, with the aim of celebrating diversity, inclusion, equalities and representation.

Aim 3: Investing in professional skills and ethics

Recommendation 3.1: Revisiting the role of professional ethics in public libraries

CILIP has launched an eighteen-month ethics review, with the aim of revising the Ethical Principles of librarianship and ensuring that ethics are a living part of professional practice. CILIP and SCL will work together to re-state the role of professional ethics in public libraries.

Aim 4: Promoting leadership at every level

Recommendation 4.1: Develop a public libraries leadership programme

CILIP and SCL will work together to create and implement a public libraries leadership programme, helping talented staff grow into roles of influence. SCL are to take the lead on initiating a programme of sector development to stimulate and encourage leadership at every level for the next fifteen years and beyond. CILIP and SCL will work together to identify a means of identifying and developing future leaders.

Aim 5: An open, inclusive approach to professionalism

Recommendation 5.1: Changing the way we think about 'professionalism'

CILIP is adopting a new, more open and inclusive approach which recognises and celebrates 'professionalism' as an attitude which people bring to their work, and reflects this in professional registration and chartership. CILIP and SCL will work together to promote this new way of thinking about professionalism in the public library workforce.

Aim 6: Lowering the barriers to entry

Recommendation 6.1: Reviewing existing pathways into the profession

Creation of a working group co-chaired by CILIP and SCL to review existing pathways and qualifications, and make recommendations for the development of occupational standards (including apprenticeships) with supporting qualifications and pathways. Jointly owned, this would take on some of the functions and duties of a sector skills council for the library and information workforce, exploring whether the workforce can adapt and develop to respond to changing situations and new opportunities

Aim 7: A commitment to Continuing Professional Development

Recommendation 7.1: Shared approaches to CPD for public library staff and volunteers

CILIP and SCL will explore a shared approach to the promotion of learning and development opportunities for staff via a shared learning platform.

Aim 8: Valuing transferable skills

Recommendation 8.1: A UK-wide job shadowing scheme

Explore the potential and the logistics of a UK wide job shadowing scheme to support the movement of information and library experts between the sectors and exploit transferable skills.

Recommendation 8.2: Celebrating and profiling diverse career paths

CILIP and SCL will work together to celebrate and showcase people who have developed successful careers worked in different parts of the library and information sector, promoting transferable skills and career planning.

Next steps – What does success look like?

Short term (1 year)

- Recommendations agreed, lead identified for each, supported by the Libraries Taskforce
- Identification of resources needed to deliver recommendations
- Greater visibility of staff roles- recognising the benefit of their skills (for example through Council news items, employee awards etc)

Medium term (2-4 years)

- Emerging menu of opportunities and pathways for staff, helping to develop their skills, progress and validate their learning
- Emerging evidence of the impact of advocacy with employers and stakeholders on the value of investing in progression
- Moving towards a vibrant and competitive job market
- Transferable skills across the profession, and the wider cultural / heritage sector

Long term (5 years +)

- Successful evaluation and review of the framework
- Established menu of pathways and opportunities
- Evidence of a diverse and respected workforce
- Sector is able to recruit more people with the right skills and aptitudes
- Emergence of leaders from within the library workforce
- Retention of talent
- Greater investment in skills and learning
- Increased job mobility between other sector

Appendix

In summer 2016 The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) and The Society of Chief Librarians (SCL) agreed to work together on a joint Public Library Skills Strategy, with support from the Leadership for Libraries Taskforce. The aim was to create a coordinated approach to the development of the public library workforce which will inform the learning and development offer that Local Authorities provide to their councillors and senior officers, library workforce and volunteers. A further aim of the strategy was to recommend actions for CILIP, SCL, Local Authorities, individuals and other key stakeholders to take forward.

The Libraries Taskforce committed to a workforce development strategy as part of its Action Plan supporting *Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021*⁶, published in December 2016. It was agreed that CILIP and SCL were the right organisations to lead and develop this because of their respective and ongoing roles in leadership, delivery and professional development.

CILIP and SCL joint lead the development of the strategy with the help of a working group made up of library practitioners from across England, the working group included frontline, specialist and senior staff as well as student representation, with support from CILIP staff who have a key role in workforce development. Although this strategy covers public library skills in England, the working group consulted with experts in the profession from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and with experts from the wider information, library and knowledge sectors including health, school and government libraries and The British Library. This work will continue into 2018 as CILIP develops a UK wide Sector Skills Strategy.

The working group met during six workshops to explore area of interest that would lead to a strategy that could guide employers to help:

- Promote leadership at every level of the workforce
- Enable the delivery of outstanding customer service
- Explore continuing professional development and training for all library staff
- Attract and retain the best talent
- Understand and plan for the learning and development needs of key stakeholders
- Understand and plan for the learning and development needs of volunteers

In addition to the strategy planning workshops, members of the working group extended the discussions to the wider workforce across the UK via a series of four sector forum events organised by the Libraries Taskforce.

⁶<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/libraries-deliver-ambition-for-public-libraries-in-england-2016-to-2021>