

## **North West Museums, Libraries and Archives Council**

### **Empowering the Learning Community Demonstration Projects INSPIRE**

#### **Final report: May 2004**

The INSPIRE initiative; (Information Sharing Partners in Resources for Education) aims to promote and facilitate access to library resources for adults in the UK. INSPIRE is jointly managed by SCONUL and the Society of Chief Librarians (SCL).

The key objective of the MLA North West INSPIRE project is to develop an appropriate regional framework which will support the full implementation of the INSPIRE initiative across England's Northwest, and hence deliver the Empowering the Learning Community agenda in the region.

In the North West the initiative has been piloted in Cumbria and Liverpool, through work with a number of groups of learners, particularly hard to reach groups such as refugees and asylum seekers. The aim of these case study projects has been to explore the resource requirements of these groups and to facilitate access to library resources for the benefit of the learners.

The project has delivered this objective through two phases of activity between June 2003 and May 2004. These phases are summarised below:

#### **Phase 1: Mapping of current sub regional arrangements, feasibility study and evaluation of the case studies by LISU, Loughborough University**

LISU (formerly the Library and Information Statistics Unit) at Loughborough University was commissioned by MLA Northwest to undertake research for the project.

##### **LISU's role was**

- To survey libraries in the Northwest to examine current joint access arrangements between libraries and identify barriers to full implementation across the region
- To undertake a feasibility study in order to identify models of access and referral
- To evaluate the two pilot projects in Cumbria and Liverpool
- To combine these three strands of research into a development plan for the role-out of INSPIRE

Full details of this research can be found the report produced by LISU (NW INSPIRE Report, Helen Greenwood, LISU, May 2004)

#### **Phase 2 : Demonstration Projects**

Inspire NW set up 2 pilot projects: one in Merseyside where there is already a successful existing access network in place, the other in Cumbria where there is no network and rural issues offer quite different challenges.

MLA NW established a working steering group of library staff, in both target regions, and has worked closely with them to develop the project

##### **The aims of these demonstration projects were to**

- Guide learners to libraries with collections and materials relevant to their needs by identifying what users/learners want and need from libraries in a particular area
- Encourage access and provide opportunities for learners 'displaced' in the educational system
- Underpin workforce development by building capacity and awareness of resources in the library staff
- Deliver clear benefits for users/learners which can be sustained beyond the period of project funding

## **Marketing and Staff Training**

Following on from the work with groups and focus sessions, in both Cumbria and Liverpool, each area developed new marketing materials for their joint access agreements. A staff training package has been created and delivered to the steering groups. This training will be cascaded down through the organisations to library staff, security staff and college tutors as applicable.

## **Cumbria**

A new Access Agreement has been formally set up between the members of the steering group which will allow reference access to almost all the university, health, public and college libraries in Carlisle. Partners in this agreement are: Northumbria University, University of Central Lancashire, National Health Service Trusts (North Cumbria and Morecambe Bay), St Martin's College, Cumbria Institute of the Arts, Lakes College, Carlisle College, and all Cumbria's public libraries (53 static and 7 mobile).

The access agreement has been named AddLib. Details are available on the website: [www.addlibcumbria.co.uk](http://www.addlibcumbria.co.uk)

A consultant was contracted to work with three groups of adult learners in order to carry out the pilot project aims, ensuring that the learners, as well as the libraries, benefited from their involvement. The groups of learners were linked with organisations which have learning at their heart and were keen to develop sustainable relationships with libraries: SureStart, Eden Rural Foyer and the Open University.

The following programme was designed to achieve the objectives of the consultancy:

### **Initial Library Visits**

Information gathering visits were made by the consultant to the libraries. The aim of these visits was to establish resources and facilities available in each library.

### **Pilot Groups**

Two groups of learners were identified to investigate the access agreement: Eden Rural Foyer in Penrith and SureStart in South Carlisle. Over a period of several weeks, Eden Rural Foyer and SureStart learners visited libraries which are involved in the access agreement and gave feedback about their experiences.

### **Focus Groups**

Three Focus Groups were conducted with learners from Eden Rural Foyer, SureStart and Open University.

### **Questionnaires**

Pilot Group participants completed questionnaires at the first and final pilot group sessions. Open University Students completed one questionnaire.

### **Sustainability Meetings**

Meetings between library staff, pilot group participants, staff from SureStart, the Open University and Eden Foyer, the consultant and MLA NW were arranged to discuss future partnership working.

### **Sure Start and Eden Foyer findings**

The consultants report provides the findings from these activities and recommendations which have been instrumental in directing the AddLib development and marketing (Cumbria Pilot Groups Report, Sue Mason, April 2004).

Prior to the library visits, only half the group were regular public library users and that was mainly on their children's behalf. None of them used libraries for their studies: two bought

all the books they needed for their course, despite being on benefits, because they weren't familiar with libraries.

A selection of their responses:

Of the public libraries:

*"I'm going to come here all the time now to get kids' videos out."*

*"I learnt a couple of things- that I can use the internet for free and that there is a shelf of recently returned books"*

*"There's more stuff than I thought there would be."*

*"I am going to visit Penrith library to look up books on childcare. I will feel comfortable going in but I will get distracted as soon as I go in because I will think, oh videos."*

Of the Higher and Further Education libraries:

*"It's made me aware that there are more libraries than Harraby and Carlisle libraries. I didn't know there were more libraries that anyone could use. If you had a topic that you wanted to totally focus on you could get more information"*

*"I didn't know that the University libraries were there. I certainly didn't know how to use them. I probably still won't but at least I know I can."*

Of the catalogue systems:

*"Dead simple. Anyone could use it."*

Of the buildings:

*"I felt welcome because it was open plan and big and had a café right next to it."*

*"The building was like an art sculpture. I liked the big windows with view."*

*"It was warm and welcoming"*

Of the staff:

*"I expected the staff to be typical librarians but they were normal people. I thought they'd all be standoffish."*

But the groups felt there were many barriers, real or perceived, against them using libraries.

*"It's weird when it's an actual college. People stare at you because you're not part of the school."*

At the end of the project, participants assessed their attitudes, views and progress.

- Four people now said that they get the information for their course from their local public library.
- All of the participants had learnt how to use a library catalogue.
- One of the participants said that the visits had helped her with her NVQ in Communication Studies.
- Five out of the eight participants said that they had changed their view about libraries.
- Seven of the learners said that they would use libraries.
- Two of the SureStart group said that they would use academic libraries in the future.

*"I would feel comfortable going in there on my own now"*

*"I have bought all my books. In the future I wouldn't go out and spend money on books. I would borrow them."*

*"I am reading books which are not sci-fi or fantasy because I have looked at different sections of the library."*

There were some other outcomes from this project which were very pleasing:

- One of the learners was trained in web design by the addlib designer and has used this experience to write the Foyer website
- Three people used the internet for the first time during the project.

- Three people had changed their mind and now wanted to enter Further Education.

The **Open University** student discussion group looked at their current library use to support their course and their knowledge of library resources available to them. They all found sufficient resources through the public libraries and OU web resources but were unaware that health and academic libraries were also a potential resource and were keen to explore the on-line catalogues in future.

As a result of the focus group several suggestions were made as to how libraries could raise awareness with this group, including providing library induction sessions at the start of the course. One student suggested that wireless Broadband access would be useful to students from rural areas to download documents on to a laptop.

### **Key Recommendations of the Cumbria Pilot Groups**

During the course of the pilot groups, a wealth of suggestions was made about how libraries in Cumbria could be made more accessible for learners. These ideas have fed into library practice and also the Development Plan (LISU, see below).

#### **1. Encourage Users Through the Doors**

The majority of the pilot group members said that they would not have gone into academic institutions alone. HE and FE libraries should look at ways of encouraging individuals and groups to enter their libraries.

#### **2. Establish Local Links**

Pilot group members said that they would be unlikely to travel far to use libraries and also that they did not have the confidence to go into libraries alone. Libraries could forge links with local community groups, adult education centres, residents' groups in the areas where the libraries are located.

#### **3. Create User Friendly Library Systems**

Good signs and clear information were highlighted as ways of facilitating access.

#### **4. Nurture a Sense of Belonging**

In order to encourage learners to access and continue to access libraries and their facilities they made suggestions as to how libraries could be welcoming, for example, have information, signs and procedures aimed at and welcoming visitors and increase staff awareness of AddLib and of the resources available in each library - through training, special partnerships, staff inter-library visits and joint working.

#### **5. Key Role for Public Libraries**

Half of the learners in the pilot groups did not use public libraries prior to their involvement in the Inspire project. All of them said that they would use or would consider using them in the future. None of the learners had used academic libraries and the majority said that they were unlikely to use HE and FE libraries at the end of the project. In order to encourage more community learners to access HE and FE libraries, a "stepping stone" approach, whereby learners are encouraged to use public libraries first, would be a possibility. Public libraries could then act as a conduit to academic libraries where appropriate. It was recommended that public libraries could target individual groups such as SureStart and consult them about their specific needs.

#### **6. Partnership Working between libraries**

A co-ordinated approach between libraries is necessary to ensure that learners in Cumbria can access the vast range of resources available in the libraries in Cumbria. The continuation of the AddLib Steering Committee and the joint website should facilitate this.

### **Marketing of AddLib**

The marketing of the new AddLib Cumbria agreement actively took on board the suggestions made by all three groups. A website has been set up and a bright, informative

leaflet has been widely distributed to all the libraries, Connexions, doctors and dentists, Citizens Advice Bureaus, Community Centres and Job Centre Plus. Our aim has been to try to reach those out of formal education and encourage people back into learning.

AddLib was launched on Saturday 22 May 2004, Adult Learners Week, in Carlisle public library with a display and specially designed gifts: AddLib cotton bags, pens, pencils and bookmarks. Library visitors expressed great interest in the scheme.

## **Liverpool**

The Liverpool Libraries Together Partnership was established in 1991 (and reviewed in 1998) between the public library service, Hope University, John Moore's University, Liverpool University, Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts and Liverpool Community College. Although the access agreement is well used and numbers can be monitored, the views of the users have never been assessed. Therefore the library staff were very interested that this project should explore how the Agreement currently benefits their students and how it could be enhanced to increase the benefits.

A consultant from John Moore's University School of Business Studies was contracted to work with 3 groups of 'learners' to investigate the effectiveness of the partnership, its marketing and explore their library use and requirements. This was done by running one-off focus group sessions.

The three groups chosen by the steering group were:

- Existing students from the libraries in the partnership
- Open University students
- Asylum seekers and refugees

The public library is keen to develop a sustained relationship with LASAR (Liverpool Asylum Seekers and Refugee support network) and the Kensington Renewal Project. The results of the focus group will be used to plan a strategy for implementing ESOL provision in the public libraries of Liverpool.

### **Existing students**

Liverpool colleges and universities are all fairly centrally situated and the students freely use whichever library they find most conducive for their studying, and not necessarily their own library. When questioned about what are the deciding factors location, opening hours, resources, peace and quiet and sufficient study space came out as being the most important.

Students are given a library induction session in their first week at University and are informed about the Liverpool Partnership. There are also displays and leaflets in each library. Despite this, none of the students who attended the focus group were aware of the Partnership. Their suggestions that repeat library inductions take place at a later stage in their University career, (for example, before they start their dissertation), and that academic staff are made more aware of the Partnership, have been taken on board by the steering group.

The group also made several positive and useful comments about the marketing which has informed the design of a new leaflet and poster produced as a result of this project.

*'logo needs to appear much more not just on leaflets but on libraries!'*

*'should be instantly appealing'*

*'good because detailed – do not lose that'*

*'uninteresting buildings what are they?'*

*'simple cartoon would be better – make people pick it up'*

### **Open University Students**

The Open University have a base and part time staff member at Liverpool Central Library. The students, on the whole, only used the resources at the Central Library (LPL).

*'I like using LPL because it is so beautiful'  
'I enjoy LPL atmosphere to get on with work, no distractions, helpful staff and quiet'*

The OU participants almost all work from course outlines and books, and pointed out that Central library has their books 'in the box' so they do not have to go looking for them. Few of the focus group who knew they could use the university libraries, had not heard of the Liverpool Partnership, but were very interested in the possibilities. The main barriers to them using the other (academic) libraries in Liverpool were: not knowing where the libraries were and what resources were available. Staff training and improved marketing of the Liverpool Partnership, including design and production of a new leaflet will address these findings.

This group also had many useful suggestions as to the marketing of the Partnership.

*'Why cannot LT:LLP get their logo and concept printed in the football program?  
Thousands would see it then?'*  
*'Campaign rather than produce gimmicks'*  
*'Send it out with the Council tax bill'*  
*'We would like to see this going out to everyone'*  
*'It would be better to make sure that tutors know so they can cascade the information to the learners'*  
*Suggested that the Partnership should be much more obvious in the displays in Central and other libraries*  
*'Get it into waiting rooms at Doctors, stations and the NHS in hospitals, etc, so people pick it up and see it'*

#### Asylum Seekers and Refugees

Liverpool is home for between 2,500 and 3,000 asylum seekers and refugees at present. For the focus sessions three different groups of people, mainly from the Congo and China, were asked if they would like to take part. The groups were Sure Start mothers, ESOL learners and the Congolese Association of Liverpool. These groups all have community connections with academic organisations in the Liverpool Partnership, although the main developments, as a result of this project, will be with public libraries. Research has shown that for non-library users, public libraries often act as a stepping-stone to HE and FE involvement.

Of the people involved in the focus groups, ages ranged from 15 to 40+ and time resident in Liverpool ranged from 3 weeks to 3 years. As a result, we cannot make many generalisations about these groups as familiarity with Liverpool and experiences are so varied. However, for many, their potential use of libraries was limited due to language barriers.

#### **Sure Start mothers**

For this group (who were mainly Chinese) there are major limiting factors for participants in using any libraries:

- looking after young children
- language

It was revealing to note that most had visited libraries, but not all had managed to get library cards because they had not been able to take the right evidence. On investigation this was due to lack of English and the word 'utility' was not understood. Furthermore, their husbands are not around in library hours to accompany them, and most things are in the husband's name, not the wife's.

They were all keen to use the library, particularly their local one where there is a part-time Chinese librarian and childcare provision once a week – unfortunately this clashes with their ESOL class and therefore they cannot take advantage of the facility.

They made several suggestions as to how libraries could improve provision for their needs:

- more Chinese books and dual language books stocked locally
- children's books in Chinese so they don't lose their language
- more community information in Chinese
- information about when the Chinese librarian is available in their local library
- introductory tours of the library and introduction to computers (with childcare provision)

### **ESOL learners and the Congolese Association of Liverpool**

A majority of these two groups were either students in Liverpool or had been professionals in their country of origin. Some had been resident in this country for a very short period and language was a major barrier to library use and confidence in general. However, as their language skills progressed they felt that being able to use the facilities of the HE and FE libraries would be a great advantage to their progress.

These groups were, on the whole, library users, for both study and relaxation. They had several suggestions as to how provision could be improved for them, again language proving to be the main barrier especially when it comes to finding resources for relaxation. The predominant language of these groups was French.

- |                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Signposting</li> </ul>                            | Airports have in several languages can libraries do so please? They felt publicity for the libraries and their use is very poor                                                             |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leaflets</li> </ul>                               | They are available in Chinese, why not French?                                                                                                                                              |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty in gaining borrowing rights</li> </ul> | Do not know how to use a library yet<br>Do not all have required pieces of paper to obtain library card                                                                                     |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study space</li> </ul>                            | The students find their local college library rowdy                                                                                                                                         |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stock</li> </ul>                                  | No French resources in Kensington (their local library) and not much in Central. They like to have books in French for relaxation not study<br>No newspapers or journals in French anywhere |

The findings from these three groups of refugees and asylum seekers will direct future developments of the public libraries, particularly in their provision for ethnic minorities of Liverpool.

### **Development Plan for INSPIRE Northwest, LISU**

LISU has produced a development plan for MLA NW which deals with recommendations for enabling and promoting access to libraries, and is based on the key findings of the survey of libraries in the North West, feasibility study and information collected during the evaluation of case studies. This plan, along with evaluation of the West Midlands pilot, will inform the development of INSPIRE England.

The key priorities for the development of INSPIRE are

- A user-centred approach.

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) emphasises the need to put learners first, and a user focus should be paramount in the development of INSPIRE. The work with groups of learners during this project has emphasised that assumptions should not be made about the needs and preferences of learners. It is important to recognise that INSPIRE can benefit learners in many ways, which might not necessarily include access to academic libraries.

- Targeted marketing for learners

Learners must be made more aware of the library resources available to them, but the findings of the pilot project highlight that this needs to go beyond promotional leaflets available in libraries. Libraries should be encouraged to conduct a needs analysis of their market for INSPIRE, from which to develop appropriate marketing and support services for the initiative. It is important to identify who the market comprises, what their needs are and how libraries and the INSPIRE initiative can respond to them.

- Partnership working

INSPIRE would benefit from developing partnerships with a range of organisations. The Cumbria pilot has demonstrated that successful work with community organisations and initial meetings with asylum seekers and refugee groups, in Liverpool, have proved successful. As the consultant's report (Ashcroft, 2004) points out, there are highly educated people in these groups who are feeling lost and unable to find sufficient study materials in the libraries to which they are currently being directed. NW INSPIRE could extend its reach to displaced learners by forging links with more community organisations, especially those that facilitate learning.

- Encouraging staff to take ownership of the initiative

The success of INSPIRE will be largely dependent on the library staff involved. It is essential to establish a sense of ownership of the initiative and to encourage buy-in by library colleagues. Front-line staff need to be engaged with the INSPIRE initiative, if they are to view it in a positive light and promote it to learners.

- On-going information for library staff

More information about INSPIRE needs to be made available to library staff. Research for this report has indicated that the library community are very interested in the initiative, but it is currently difficult to find out details of what it is about, what it will mean for libraries and learners and how it will work with the existing network of access arrangements.

- On-going evaluation of the initiative

Comprehensive evaluation needs to be built into the roll-out of INSPIRE, so that the initiative can be reviewed and developed over time.

- Public Library focus

Local public libraries are the first port of call for many learners, especially those outside the formal education system. Furthermore, distance has been found to be a key barrier to using libraries. INSPIRE could benefit from developing the key role of public libraries, both in terms of encouraging learners through the doors, and referring more learners to information in other libraries.

- Adopting a consistent approach

INSPIRE aims to create more straightforward and seamless access to learning resources, to benefit learners and service providers alike. INSPIRE England will operate countrywide, but it is envisaged that roll-out will be through the regions. In order to try to streamline access to resources for learners, the development plan suggests that INSPIRE may want to identify a set of criteria for access arrangements which could help to achieve a more consistent, straightforward approach. However, it should be ensured that the model developed for INSPIRE is sufficiently flexible to take into account the range of contexts in which libraries are operating, both organisational and geographical.

- Using the Inspiring Learning for All framework to develop INSPIRE

The core principles of INSPIRE are closely related to the Inspiring Learning for All framework. The framework should be used to support the development of INSPIRE, and to evaluate the learning outcomes for learners and the staff involved.

For further information about the Northwest INSPIRE pilot project, please contact either Jane Fletcher or Heather Tipler, Learning and Access Officers, MLA NW.