



# Society of Chief Librarians

## Annual Report 2015/16



# SCL Annual Report 2015/16

This report provides an overview of the Society's work during 2015/16.

Busy, challenging and productive are just some of the ways to describe SCL's activities in 2015/16. SCL continues to operate against a backdrop of constant change, both within local authorities and the wider public sector and within society as a whole.

Against that backdrop, SCL has continued to steer a careful balance between looking outwards, building and developing our partnerships whilst also supporting our internal networks – Heads of Library Services and their teams – across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Similarly, we carefully balance our contribution to national and strategic developments for libraries, such as the Libraries Taskforce, alongside supporting the development and delivery of tools and resources that support library services to embed the Universal Offers on the ground. And we balance the importance of continually striving for more innovative and engaging services whilst also recognising the importance of securing and sustaining the core library offer. In doing all this, SCL benefits from its strong regional presence; the active involvement of current library leaders who have the passion and experience of delivering library services alongside our networks and partners who help to stretch our thinking and sustain our ambition.

2015/16 was a year that saw:

- The Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) which brought continued reductions in local authority funding which inevitably will impact on reduced funding for library services. The CSR also delivered continued financial support for the Libraries Taskforce for the next 4 years. Fortunately, it did not have a dramatically negative impact on either Arts Council England or the British Library.
- New devolution deals for some parts of the country, giving new powers and responsibilities to local areas.
- Delivery of universal wi-fi coverage in libraries across the country offering the potential for libraries to build a strong digital offer for local communities. The scheme was funded by the Government and managed by Arts Council England.
- The Libraries Taskforce delivered its first year of activity. Towards the end of 2015/16, the Taskforce published *Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021* for consultation. Its aim was to address one of William Sieghart's recommendations in 2014 that a national strategy for public libraries in England be produced. 'Ambition' sets out a vision of the value and impact of public libraries as a 'national network that delivers transformation and progress for people, communities and nation'. The final version of 'Ambition' is expected to be published during the summer of 2016, following a period of consultation.

- Over £2million invested in libraries from Arts Council England through Grants for Arts. The success rate of applications was 76%, up from 73% last year and 70% the previous year. This demonstrates the increasing confidence and ability of library services to secure external funding.

Highlights from SCL's year included:

- The launch of a new Universal Offer focused on learning, which reinforced the centrality of learning in libraries and pointed to new opportunities for positioning libraries to support a more creative and dynamic learning offer with a wider range of partners.
- Revitalised partnerships with the BBC, The Reading Agency and the British Library, giving new opportunities for communities to benefit from high quality, unique content and for the library sector to gain new skills.
- Securing £720,000 from Arts Council England to enable SCL to continue to grow and develop the Universal Offers over the next 2 years. This is the largest investment SCL has ever received and demonstrates ACE's confidence in SCL's potential to deliver impact and innovation in the library sector.
- Exciting opportunities for libraries across the country to get actively involved in the celebrations of Shakespeare's 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary and to work with a dynamic range of partners including the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.
- New opportunities for libraries to participate in BBC initiatives, including Make It Digital, Weather Watchers and the Love to Read campaign.
- Securing a place on the Government Digital Services framework for the supply of Assisted Digital and Digital Inclusion services.
- New funding and a growing partnership with the Wellcome Trust which involved the secondment of an SCL member to Wellcome for 6 months to explore longer term opportunities for SCL and Wellcome to work together. Wellcome agreed to match fund Arts Council England's contribution to the health offer, which brought an additional £180,000 investment to SCL and The Reading Agency for the Reading Well Books on Prescription initiative.
- Delivery of an impressive programme of workforce development initiatives, which included:
  - supporting 30 young people across the country as library interns;
  - enabling an additional 38 library leaders to participate in SCL's digital leadership programme;
  - developing new e-learning resources to enable library services to support the rollout of Universal Credit;
  - supporting secondments of 4 library leaders to the Libraries Taskforce and the Wellcome Trust
  - Preparing for the delivery of 9 Universal Offers roadshows.

- Publishing a new piece of research into the potential for a Single Digital Presence which made a major contribution to the debate about the need for a significantly improved digital infrastructure for libraries.
- Securing the agreement of publishers through the Publishers Licensing Society (PLS) to continue the Access to Research initiative beyond the pilot, following the completion of independent evaluation the initiative, jointly commissioned by SCL and the PLS.
- The launch of the Information4Living tool and sustained work on ensuring libraries are able to maximise the potential to support the Assisted Digital/Digital Inclusion initiative.

## 1. Advocacy

SCL continues to work hard to articulate and share the contribution that libraries make to the delivery of positive outcomes within communities. During 2015/16, SCL has particularly focused its efforts on supporting and contributing to the Libraries Taskforce. SCL is represented on the Taskforce by the President. Meetings take place on a quarterly basis with regular ongoing contact with the Taskforce team on areas of shared interest between meetings. SCL contributed to the development and thinking beyond the 'Ambition' document and provided representation at a number of Taskforce convened events, including workshops considering the need for improved management information and data as well as one focused on improving the opportunities for workforce development. The Taskforce prepared a number of briefing documents for Government Ministers, to which SCL contributed information and ideas on the ways the Universal Offers can support Government priorities.

SCL worked with the Taskforce to enable the secondments of 3 library managers, which provided those individuals and their host local authorities with a much deeper insight into the development of policy and engagement with government at a national level. SCL's Communications and Advocacy Officer sits on a recently convened Taskforce group of communications leads across the sector.

SCL alone cannot claim to solve the challenges that library services and local authorities face as they deal with a continuing and prolonged period of financial austerity. It needs big ambition; strategic intent and players that can influence at national and local government levels. The Taskforce has huge potential to influence policy makers and to synthesize the respective contributions of all the major library bodies into a major force for transformation, investment and change. SCL has a major role to play in supporting the Taskforce to achieve its potential and deliver 'Ambition' as a significant platform for change within the sector.

Beyond the Taskforce, SCL's advocacy has largely focused on ensuring libraries are well placed to contribute to supporting people to get online and engage with public services digitally. Currently, 10.5 million people in the UK lack basic digital skills and many either can't or don't use digital government services independently. Central government departments have committed to embed digital inclusion in policy, programmes and services.

SCL has been working for several years now, as part of the Universal Information Offer, to advocate and seek out opportunities for the work that libraries do around Assisted Digital (helping people complete government services online) and Digital Inclusion (helping people get online). This has included ongoing discussions with Government Digital Services (GDS), CAB and the Tinder Foundation and other stakeholders in the field. Specific discussions with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) this year have focused on the potential contribution of libraries to the rollout of Universal Credit and new partnerships with the Halifax and Barclays have helped to increase the capacity of libraries to respond to demand from local communities. SCL was particularly pleased this year to secure a place on the Government Digital Services framework for the supply of Assisted Digital/Digital Inclusion support to public bodies.

In addition, SCL made the following contributions during the year:

- SCL continues to sustain an ongoing dialogue with the Minister for Culture and the Digital Economy, the Right Hon Ed Vaizey. The Minister attended SCL's seminar in June 2015 and spoke at the launch of the Learning Offer in November 2015.
- SCL continues to meet with library campaigners and stakeholders. One meeting with library campaigners took place during the year and the President and President-Elect attended the 'Speak Up for Libraries' national conference in November 2015.
- Contributing to the development of the Reading Outcomes Framework, which is led by The Reading Agency with funding from the Sir Peter Sowerby Foundation. This important piece of work will enable library services to have much more robust evidence and understanding of the way in which libraries' reading offer has an impact on individuals' and communities' lives.
- Participated in Arts Council's External Advisory Group, chaired by their Deputy Chief Executive, looking at the potential impact to ACE of the Comprehensive Spending Review.
- Supported the ongoing development of the Carnegie Library Lab initiative and the selection of the second round of Carnegie Partners.
- SCL's President secured a slot on the Radio 4 Today programme to discuss young people's views of books and libraries as well as the broader issue of privacy in libraries.
- Members of SCL's Executive spoke at a large and varied number of conferences and seminars to promote the contribution of public libraries and the potential of the Universal Offers to drive innovation and transformation. These included the IFLA conference in Cape Town talking about library services for visually impaired people and the Booksellers Annual Conference.
- SCL participated in the IFLA e-books working group and contributed to European conferences in Munich and Brussels. SCL is now playing an active role in the Public Library 2020 library leaders' network, developed by the Reading and Writing Foundation with initial support from the Gates Foundation.

- SCL issued a statement in September 2015 confirming the role and importance of libraries in supporting refugees and asylum seekers and continues to engage with partners to ensure libraries can provide the support that individuals need.
- SCL contributed along with a range of other partners to National Libraries Day on 6<sup>th</sup> February. The day continues to grow in strength and take up each year and provides a moment for library staff and library users to celebrate and recognise the value of libraries in their local community. Ministers, celebrities, publishers and the public all got involved via social media and many libraries held events on the day. This year was particularly special for SCL as we worked with Arts Council England to announce new funding of £600,000 for SCL's work on the Universal Offers over the next 2 years. National Libraries Day was also the day when libraries across the Greater Manchester area announced their new initiative to offer a library card offering access to library resources across their sub-region. SCL will work with Taskforce partners to make sure that the planning for National Libraries Day in 2017 happens earlier than this year, allowing more libraries to participate in national initiatives.

SCL recognises that advocacy and promoting the outcomes that libraries deliver is an important priority for all library services and as a result, we improved our website in late 2015/16 to provide more accessible and engaging content on the work of SCL; commissioned new videos to support the Learning Offer and produced a new Universal Offers brochure and calendar. Working with ASCEL and the Libraries Taskforce, we ran a Communications and Advocacy masterclass with Campbell Storey in November 2015.

## 2. Partnerships

SCL has made huge steps in the past year to strengthen our partnerships with a number of key partners and ensure those partnerships are focused on improving the offer to local people and communities. SCL finds no shortage of partners wanting to work with public libraries; the challenge is to find sufficient time to cultivate and make the most of those partnerships.

The following section highlights our work with key partners.

### 2.1 The Reading Agency

SCL's partnership with The Reading Agency is now 12 years old and, with a new Chief Executive in post, the two organisations, together with ASCEL, took the opportunity to review our partnership and how we want to work together in the future in a joint workshop in October 2015. This confirmed the value and strength of the partnership; the commitment to the 2 shared offers (reading and health) and identified areas for future development. A new Memorandum of Understanding between the two organisations was signed in March 2016 and provides a strong framework for further development over the next 2 years.

## 2.2 Arts Council England (ACE)

Arts Council England is an important stakeholder for SCL and we have continued to work closely during the past year. ACE managed the funding for the rollout of wi-fi on behalf of the Taskforce with SCL providing informal advice and input as the approach to funding was developed. ACE's key role for SCL continues to be focused around their support for the development of the Universal Offers. On National Libraries Day, ACE announced £600,000 funding for SCL and the Universal Offers for the next 2 financial years along with an additional £120,000 funding for the health offer.

## 2.3 ASCEL

ASCEL continues to be a major delivery partner for SCL and we continue to value the day-to-day involvement of the ASCEL Chair on the SCL Executive. ASCEL's work with SCL during 2015/16 has broadened beyond the Children's Promise to include active contributions to the Health Offer through working on the recently launched Reading Well list for young people and the development of digital making for young people through the Learning Offer. ASCEL continues to grow its work on the Children's Reading Journeys and has this year developed a series of e-learning modules to support frontline staff to engage positively with children, young people and families.

## 2.4 British Library

SCL has continued to develop and strengthen its strategic partnership with The British Library. SCL meets with key BL team members bi-annually to discuss key priorities and provide updates on the Universal Offers, which allows an opportunity to continue to explore additional areas of collaboration between SCL and public libraries. SCL has participated in two workshops to develop the BL's plans to work with public libraries across the whole of the UK as part of their strategic plan, Living Knowledge. The proposition is to build on the existing regional Business and IP Centre Network to create a wider network that could include more areas of joint working and more partners across the UK. The BL also worked with SCL on our Shakespeare project.

## 2.5 Booktrust

SCL and ASCEL met with Diana Gerald, the new Chief Executive of Booktrust on many different occasions during the year and have begun to build a more strategic relationship, linked to Booktrust's key programmes, the Universal Reading Offer and the Children's Promise. We look forward to building on the relationship in 2016/17.

## 2.6 BBC

SCL and the BBC have worked closely together this build our relationship. We signed a new Memorandum of Understanding towards the end of 2015/16 which aims to provide a more strategic framework for the relationship and give a focus to a small number of agreed priorities for the partnership each year. This year we worked particularly closely on the BBC's Make It

Digital initiative and on shaping the BBC's emerging plans for a year of reading in 2016, now called 'Love to Read'. During 2015/16, the BBC rolled out its Microbits initiatives to schools and SCL plans to support libraries to make best use of Microbits during the coming year.

## 2.7 Carnegie UK Trust

SCL continues to value its partnership with the Carnegie Trust. SCL's President has been an advisor to Carnegie on both rounds of the Carnegie Library Lab programme. Carnegie has again provided financial support to enable SCL to feature international speakers and at the SCL seminar in 2016 we are delighted to be welcoming Carnegie's Chief Executive for the first time.

## 2.8 Booksellers Association (BA)

SCL's partnership with the Booksellers Association has strengthened during the previous 12 months. Along with The Reading Agency we now meet quarterly and have identified a number of areas where we are able to work constructively together.

The BA has been an active member of the Celebrating Shakespeare steering group and they have ensured that Booksellers have a voice within the plans and activities. They also nominated a representative from the Pickled Pepper Bookshop who was part of the panel that selected titles for the Reading Well 'Shelf Help' collection for young people.

Going forward we are working together to explore how public libraries can more effectively support World Book Day in 2017 and ensure that we each promote and encourage reading for pleasure.

## 2.9 Other SCL partners

Other partners SCL has worked with this year include:

- Local Government Association, who remain a key partner for SCL on the Libraries Taskforce
- Creative Society on the delivery of the internship programme
- Halifax, Barclays and Tinder on digital inclusion initiatives
- RNIB who continue to modernise their reading offer for visually impaired people and who this year removed their charges for their Talking Books service as part of the celebrations of their 80<sup>th</sup> birthday.
- The Publishers Licensing Society on the Access to Research initiative
- A range of partners involved in the Read On Get On initiative.
- A very wide range of new partners brought on board to support the Learning Offer, including NESTA, Code Club, Coderdojo and Raspberry Pi Foundation
- The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) with whom we worked on National Libraries Day
- A range of partners, including the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, involved in our Shakespeare project



## 3. Transformation

### 3.1 Universal Reading Offer (led by Janene Cox)

The Universal Reading Offer is a shared offer which has been developed and led in partnership with The Reading Agency.

It has been a very positive year for the Universal Reading Offer. We have used this year to review our work to date and to plan for the future and this has happened at a time when reading for pleasure and the importance of reading has become the focus of a number of national campaigns.

As part of this process and to ensure that the Universal Reading Offer continues to develop and inform those national campaigns and initiatives, the Universal Reading Offer team have developed an advocacy power point presentation. This can be used by the sector to evidence the importance of the libraries reading offer and the benefits of reading for pleasure for society, communities and individuals. The intention is to use this at a national and local level to make the case for libraries and for investment in our reading for pleasure programmes.

SCL continues to support the Reading Agency with its innovative and collaborative project to develop an outcomes framework for reading for pleasure which can be used to evaluate reading programmes across the sector.

This framework is being developed with a wide range of partners including SCL, ASCEL, ACE, CILIP, Book Trust and NLT; it has also generated considerable European interest. The Reading Agency has been consulting widely on the proposed outcomes framework. A series of workshops have been held across the UK and over 200 people have attended these. OPM has been commissioned to develop the framework and the supporting toolkit and the next stage of the work will be completed by September 2016. Once this is in place there will be a shared framework which we can all use to measure the impact of our work around reading for pleasure and well-being.

During 2016 SCL has become a key partner within the BBC'S 'Get Reading' Campaign, which has recently been renamed as 'Love to Read'. This is a campaign to encourage reading for pleasure, and was launched in partnership with key reading agencies, charities and libraries.

SCL have agreed that to support three key spikes within this campaign:

- Shakespeare Weekend- which libraries made a huge contribution towards through our 'Celebrating Shakespeare' project which has been funded via Arts Council England.
- Awesome Authors- through our engagement with the 2016 Summer Reading Challenge 'The Big Friendly Read'
- #Lovetoread Weekend- 5-6<sup>th</sup> November 2016

Libraries' programme of activity for the #Lovetoread weekend will be agreed during July 2016. There is also the opportunity for libraries and our reading groups to become involved in the 'Books that Made Britain' campaign and again we will be considering activity during July. Following the success of Shakespeare Week in March 2016 we are considering building this into the calendar as another key activity spike.

SCL is also a partner in the Save the Children Read On, Get On (RoGo) campaign. During 2015 public libraries all supported the 'read for 10 minutes with your child campaign' via social media and storytelling, rhyme times and reading activity all took place within libraries to support this. It was a simple and straightforward message which all libraries could endorse and celebrate.

As part of the partnership we are also supporting the development of a reading strategy, which is still in the early stages of development, and importantly we are a part of the Reading for Pleasure sub-group which is being chaired by The Reading Agency. The Publishers Association, ASCEL and BookTrust are all part of this group. We are currently in the process of agreeing an activity plan for 2018 which will build on the BBC's year of reading and the learning which has come from this for the offer.

Through the Universal Reading Offer we are also exploring with partners including the Reading Agency, The National Literacy Trust, ASCEL, Arts Council and Booktrust generating an 'elevator pitch' for libraries and reading for pleasure, behind which there is an evidence bank which libraries, partners and stakeholders can all access.

Support for the key reading spikes within the Universal Offer calendar continues to be strong across libraries – particularly for World Book Night which took place in April 2016; the Summer Reading Challenge and continued engagement with Bookstart.

This year has seen the publication of the first external evaluation of World Book Night. Over 5,000 people were involved in the research. 98% of respondents were pleased to receive their books and just weeks after World Book Night 80% reported that they had enjoyed or were enjoying it. This finding was even stronger for low-frequency readers: 85% of respondents who read less than once a month or never read had enjoyed or were enjoying reading their book. 32% of those who read less than once a month or never read said that they had borrowed books from their library since World Book Night - a testimony to the work which libraries put into organising events on the night and to the shared messaging we have developed to encourage people to use their library.

### **Celebrating Shakespeare 2016 (lead by Ayub Khan)**

In January 2016, Arts Council England awarded a grant of £95,500, to SCL towards library celebrations to mark Shakespeare's 400th anniversary. The project, which builds on a successful pilot project in 2015, aimed to introduce younger children to Shakespeare in a fun way, to

interest teenagers in a playwright who was arguably the rapper of his day, and encourage adults to revisit his works with a fresh eye.

SCL worked with a number of high-profile partners to ensure maximum reach and impact: the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Association of Children's and Education Librarians, The Reading Agency, Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, BBC Learning, Booksellers' Association, British Library and Royal Shakespeare Company. The Celebrating Shakespeare 2016 steering group is chaired by SCL National Executive member Ayub Khan.

There are three main parts to the library programme: Shakespeare Week in March saw a threefold increase in activity/engagement on last year. Anniversary Saturday in April was a mass selfie/social media event involving hundreds of libraries and bookshops across England - which generated thousands of tweets. Arts-based events and activities will continue through the Summer and Autumn. Funding has been allocated to the nine English SCL regional groups enabling them to commission artists, writers and performers to work on their Shakespeare celebrations. A separate, national allocation will fund Shakespeare-related arts projects in prisons.

### 3.2 Universal Digital Offer (led by Nick Stopforth & Ayub Khan)

Ayub Khan took over as the SCL lead on the Digital Offer part-way through the year. The Digital Offer had already made significant progress - for example: Digital skills training had been provided to more than 14,000 frontline staff. Discount deals for a wide range of online subscriptions had been negotiated nationally (via Jisc) - with big savings. Free public wi-fi was widely available across the library network by the end of March 2016.

#### **Digital Leadership training**

Following a successful pilot in 2015, the digital leadership training programme was extended, with two more cohorts in Manchester and London. A total of 38 senior library staff and emerging leaders completed the 10-week courses ending in December 2015 and March 2016 respectively. The training was delivered by Shared Intelligence and funded by a £22,000 grant from Arts Council England.

The ambitions of the programme were to help individual participants develop leadership skills and gain an enhanced understanding of the nature and role of digital technologies, and to have a network impact by strengthening and mobilising relationships among library leaders and emerging leaders. The programme also aimed to contribute to positive real-world changes in the delivery, quality, and sustainability of public library services.

Feedback from participants was very positive - in terms of the impact of the course and inspiring them to take action in ways they might not have done otherwise. The courses were oversubscribed and the possibility of additional cohorts is under discussion for 2016/17.

### **Innovation Network (led by Neil MacInnes)**

SCL's aim in this project, funded by Arts Council England, was to design, within a 12-16 week timescale, an ongoing methodology for SCL to create, share, and stimulate innovation, and develop leadership in the public library sector. SCL wanted this project to produce an 'innovation platform' to fulfil its mission of leading and managing public libraries and advocating for continuous improvement. SCL wanted this platform, to stimulate a growing number of individuals to begin behaving as a network.

Having completed the initial piece of scoping work with Shared Intelligence, SCL will use 2016/17 to grow the network. In designing a platform for sharing best practice and innovation, it will be important to ensure that there is both the technological input (software/platform that is used) and the human input (the stories and community that bring the information to life).

### **Partnerships with Halifax and Barclays**

During the past year SCL has worked in partnership with two High Street banks. These collaborative projects were designed to assist libraries in offering digital support to people in terms of the provision of free wi-fi and basic IT skills training.

The two-year *BT And Barclays Wi-Fi in Communities* project launched in March 2015 with the aim of providing free wi-fi and hands-on digital support at 57 libraries and 13 community centres in deprived areas of England - with a further 10 sites to follow. 'Digital Eagles' - specially-trained members of Barclays staff - would provide free technology advice at the 80 locations. Effectively the project overlapped Libraries Taskforce funding to extend free wi-fi across the public library network - now largely achieved.

In January 2016 more than 2,000 Halifax staff-members pledged to become 'Digital Champions' supporting library IT taster sessions. The Halifax's aim was to support SCL in helping people to gain or improve basic skills such as getting online, sending emails, connecting with their families via the internet, or using social media for the first time. At the launch in January, SCL described this as a landmark project - the first of its kind in the country - and the Halifax said it was great to have such a tangible way to give back to the community and support local people.

### **Single library digital presence (SLDP)**

In 2015 BiblioCommons were commissioned by SCL, with funding from Arts Council England, to research the potential for a single digital presence for libraries. Their report, *Essential Digital Infrastructure for Public Libraries in England: A plan for moving forward*, was published by SCL in January 2016. SCL worked with the British Library to host a major engagement workshop for library partners and stakeholders to consider the early findings of BiblioCommons' research.

BiblioCommons found that current IT systems were outdated and fragmented and noted how frustrating this is for library customers (and potential customers) and highlighted the barriers it

put in the way of collaboration and sharing resources across the sector. The BiblioCommons report argues for a single, standards-based digital platform and co-production of services involving library authorities and staff, national and local partners, and end-users.

Given the Taskforce priorities around digital enablement, SCL is now working with the Taskforce and other partners to take forward the potential for developing the single digital presence. The Ambition document highlights the need for a more joined-up approach to the use of digital tools and innovative technologies, and has identified SLDP as one of four main areas for future development.

### 3.3 Universal Information Offer (led by Bev Rice & Jayne Wilkins)

#### **Workforce Development Digital Skills Training Programme**

The SCL Information Offer team with Arts Council England support have worked with Learning Pool to move the previously designed modules over to a new more flexible platform called Adapt. The modules have been kept basically the same, updated where necessary and checked by the regional offer leads.

A sixth module has been devised, designed and uploaded giving all library staff access to information on Universal Credit, how it works and links to help support colleagues to signpost our customers. All modules went live at the beginning of February 2016 and the regional offer leads are talking to their staff regionally to ensure good take up of the new module and the refreshed modules. The Learning Pool year was renegotiated to run February 2016 to February 2017, giving a full year and the opportunity for at least 10,000 colleagues to access the training.

SCL was proud to receive the Learning Pool Return on Investment award in October 2015 for our work in the previous year on the digital skills programme of e-learning.

#### **Assisted Digital & Digital Inclusion**

During the year, Government Digital Services (GDS) has undertaken a tendering exercise to identify potential suppliers of Assisted Digital (AD) and Digital Inclusion (DI) in the UK. The resulting Framework will allow publicly funded organisations to source services from suppliers through a mini-competition process.

SCL saw a real opportunity for libraries to provide services and receive funding under the framework, subject to successful awards of contract under the mini-competitions.

The Libraries Taskforce and ACE provided funding for support from consultants to work with SCL to consider the framework requirements and to develop a tender representing delivery by all library services. The bidding organisation would be SCL with the collective support of all library services in England and also Northern Ireland and Wales.

Information has been disseminated via SCL through the regions and also from the Taskforce directly to Chief Executives throughout this process.

Work is underway to understand and implement the operational requirements that will be needed for SCL to be a supplier, including a Memorandum of Understanding with each library authority/provider and capacity to manage any resulting contracts. Confirmation that SCL's bid has been successful was a good end to the year.

### **Information4living**

The web tool for staff and public containing locally sourced life essential information was launched to staff in late November 2015 after all services were asked to add links from their locality. A report on usage and recommendations for changes, best used subject areas and updates will be completed in May 2016. This will be reviewed and information cascaded. Members of the regional offer leads have volunteered to look at content in a particular subject area for currency and relevance and make changes where necessary following previously agreed guidelines.

### **3.4 Universal Health Offer (led by Julie Spencer)**

The Universal Health Offer has played a key role in positioning libraries as important community health hubs with the power to make a significant contribution to the health and well-being of local communities. Reading Well Books on Prescription continues to grow in reach, scope and impact as a key driver of this offer. The programme, now available in 97% of public library authorities, is delivered in partnership with The Reading Agency funded by Arts Council England and an important new partnership with the Wellcome Trust.

In a very successful first two years, the scheme has reached 445,000 people. The books are flying off the shelves. In 2014/15 library issues of titles on the adult mental health list have increased by 100% while those on the dementia list have increased by 346%. The scheme works within clinical guidelines and has been endorsed by leading health agencies and mental health professionals as a helpful community-based health service. It has helped to build important new local partnerships for libraries with 80% of authorities now working with local authority public health partners on its delivery. It has also delivered significant benefit to local people with ninety per cent of respondents in a recent survey saying that the book they had borrowed from the Reading Well Books on Prescription common mental health core list had been helpful and while 85% reporting that it had made them feel more confident about managing their symptoms.

During the year, we undertook all the preparatory work on the new Reading Well for young people launch ahead of a launch planned for early 2016/17. The scheme supported by ASCEL and developed with young people's mental health experts by profession and experience provides shelf help from public libraries for 13-18 year olds through a book list of 35 titles

covering common mental health experiences such as anxiety, depression, stress and eating disorders as well as difficult life experiences such as exam pressures and bullying. The books range from self-help and psycho-education, memoirs, graphic novels and fiction.

Reading Well for young people is based on a best practice co-production model. We worked with YoungMinds Mental Health charity to work with young people with lived experience to select books, agree messaging and design materials. Alongside existing health partners such as the Royal College of Psychiatrists, Royal College of GPs, Royal College of Nursing, the British Psychological Society and NHS England, Reading Well for young people has also embedded new partnerships with the Mental Health Foundation and Public Health England.

The profile of the public library health offer has been high at external stakeholder conference and events. We have presented at key conferences such as Dementia Congress, the British Psychological Society's annual conference and the Local Government Association's Annual Public Health Conference as well as had stalls at a number of national health and primary care events.

To build best practice in library delivery of the health offer, we have also launched a new online training module for frontline library staff as part of SCL's wider workforce development programme.

Our thanks go to Debbie Hicks and the staff at The Reading Agency for their continued dedication and effort to promote, develop and coordinate the health offer. The support they provide is instrumental to the success of our partnership and delivery. Equally we are grateful to the SCL Health Group for their continued enthusiasm and endorsement for the health offer. This group provide the vital link in terms of communication and practical feedback to and from the regions in order to make the offer truly universal.

### 3.5 Universal Learning Offer (led by Alison Wheeler)

Initial work to scope a new Universal Offer focused on learning was undertaken in 2014/15 and this year has focused on launching and rolling out the new offer. A new Learning Offer group has been established and has met throughout the year to plan and deliver an ambitious work plan with an energetic pace. The group secured sign up to the new offer from over 90% of library services.

The Learning Offer has focused in its first year on piloting the use of MOOCs in eight library services; on developing new digital making opportunities and building partnerships with a wide range of learning partners.

By the time of the launch on 5 November, there were eight MOOCs pilots underway; the Lightbulb Moments films were finished; the Code Green guide was published online on the SCL website with an ambitious and successful launch held in Camden, attended by the Minister, the

Chief Executive of ACE, Controller of Make It Digital at the BBC and a number of other partner organisations. As ever, the most compelling part of the launch was hearing the testimonies from learners themselves about the role their local library had played in supporting their learning.

Since the launch, the Learning Offer group has undertaken intense partnership development work with the BBC on Weather Watchers and on Micro: bits. Both of these have contributed to a more strategic relationship with the BBC and shown the value of libraries as a partner. We have also built better and stronger relationships with Code Club, the Raspberry Pi foundation, Apps for Good, and NESTA throughout the year and they have all been supportive players in the events we have held.

Working with the Publishers Licensing Society and the Arts Council, SCL commissioned Shared Intelligence to carry out some research on the value, reach and the impact of Access to Research. This two year pilot has now been extended indefinitely thanks to the excellent work done with the research and the efforts of a previous SCL member, Irene Campbell.

The success of our Code Green publication reinforced for us the need to give more library services hands on learning opportunities to explore the inspiring world of digital making for themselves. On 1 March 2016, we presented Cracking the Code which had over sixty library services represented and an exhilarating day of show, try and tell at Clapham library in Lambeth. A film is in preparation for launch on May 2016 to show library services who weren't able to come what they could do and how to use the BBC Micro: bit which has now been launched in schools.

The MOOC pilots were evaluated early in 2016 and a guide for supporting MOOCS in library services was published in March 2016 on the SCL website.

All of these can be found at <http://goscl.com/universal-offers/learning-offer/>

The Learning Offer has been very ably supported this year by Katie Pekacar, who was employed by SCL to provide project management support for the offer.

### 3.6 Six Steps/Share the Vision (led by Mark Freeman)

Share the Vision has continued to establish its links with the new team in Peterborough at RNIB and there have been significant changes to the way the organisation delivers its library services which have offered us new opportunities in partnership. The National Library Service for RNIB is now free to all registered blind and partially sighted people with a newly developed Overdrive download service. These are exciting times and there are many opportunities for Share the Vision to develop in terms of services we can offer through our Six Steps promise.

Throughout 2015-2016 STV has been working on updating resources, developing a new training and updating the Six Steps Promise. Thanks to Arts Council funding, we have been able to



employ the services of John Vincent to help us to adjust and update the Six Steps and to produce new marketing materials which have been launched through the SCL Roadshow programme, and thanks to funding from Scotland and from Wales will subsequently also be launched through their respective public library agencies.

Lottie Newmeir-Porter has been working as Share the Vision's intern, hosted by Brighton and Hove Libraries. She has taken on a range of tasks for us including the updating of our Reading Sight web resource, the development of a manual to help us sustain the web page beyond her contract and also in assisting Helen Leech, who has been developing our web based training module. We have been really grateful for Lottie's support in helping out with day to day work and we funded, through Share the Vision, a further six months of contracted work beyond her initial internship.

In August 2015, funded by CILIP and the John Campbell Trust, Mark Freeman attended the IFLA Conference in Cape Town representing Share the Vision to participate in a World Café style session looking at breaking boundaries between services both in the public and third sectors. The session was attended by over 300 people and it was good to be amongst professional colleagues from all over the world who shared enthusiasm for the work we all do.

### 3.7 Children's Promise (led by Sarah Mears for ASCEL)

In 2015-2016 ASCEL has focused on three areas

- Developing elements of the Children and Young People's Promise and Children's Library Journeys
- Participating in the development of the Universal Offers
- Workforce Development

Our projects over the past year have been shaped by the vision statements in the Children's Promise and the stages of the Children's Library Journey.

ASCEL sit on the Health Offer Group and were delighted to be involved in the development of the new Reading Well for young people programme. We also participated in the development of the new Learning Offer, contributed to Code Green and provided information to inform the school engagement strategy. ASCEL is represented on the Six Steps Promise and Reading Offer Groups. We supported SCL's Celebrating Shakespeare 2016 Grants for the Arts project and the Reading Outcomes Framework project. ASCEL committee members also presented the Children's Promise at the regional universal offer roadshows.

In autumn 2015, with SCL and the Libraries Taskforce, we jointly funded a half day event for library leaders with Cam Storey focused on marketing services and developing media messages. ASCEL delivered a very well-received annual conference in November 2015 – "Life Changing Libraries supporting the health, well-being and inclusion of children and young people". We

sponsored 1 place at this conference for library staff with leadership potential. Outcomes from the conference included the proposal to develop the autism friendly libraries film. We have also launched a four-module e-learning package to support those working in children's library services. Content for the modules was developed by a team from ASCEL, The Reading Agency and the Youth Libraries Group and we are very grateful for the work they all contributed.

In March we held a consultation workshop for library staff and partners to articulate the offer for parents-to-be, the first stage of the library journey. This will be worked up over the next couple of months. This project initiated new partnerships with the language charity ICAN and Best Beginnings –an organisation supporting young parents through digital engagement. ASCEL are also working with SOLUS who have created a library app to support Year 6 - Year 7 transition. We will be promoting the app through the School Library Association and School Librarians Group and we are recruiting a group of school librarians for deeper testing and evaluation. We are particularly delighted to have built a partnership with Dimensions-UK – a charity that supports people with autism and their families. Together we have created an autism friendly libraries training film and support materials to be launched at the SCL seminar in June 2016.

## 4. Workforce Development

### 4.1 SCL Seminar 4<sup>th</sup> - 5th June 2015

This year's seminar was titled 'Digital Landscapes - the future for libraries' and focused on the future of libraries and library services following the release of the Sieghart Review and with the continuing development of technology in our lives in mind. It examined how public libraries have already developed using the framework of the Society of Chief Librarians' Universal Offers and looked at the ways in which the digital age is transforming not only the delivery of library services, but the society in which we live and the people who work, and will work in our services.

The seminar was attended by 153 delegates; 97 attended as full delegates staying overnight and 56 attended as day delegates. Colleagues from Art Council England, LGA, Carnegie Trust, DCMS, The Reading Agency, RNIB, British Library, Future Learn and ASCEL also joined the event.

On day one delegates focused on the changes libraries will be facing in the next four years, hearing from Polly Toynbee, Guardian columnist & social commentator; Darren Henley, Chief Executive, Arts Council England and Pat Ritchie, CEO, Newcastle City Council. Ed Vaizey, Minister for Culture and the Digital Economy also attended and answered people's questions and Nita Clarke gave a very well received talk about keeping our workforce engaged as we move through change.

On day two the focus moved to digital with Catherine Howe, Chief Executive, Public-i giving a talk about 'Digital Tribes', Kathy Settle, CEO of The Leadership for Libraries Taskforce talking about the priorities for the Libraries Taskforce, Daniel Fujiwara, Director, Simetrica, talking about

research undertaken for Arts Council England into the economic impact of libraries and Matthew Cain, MTM London and Emma House, Director for Publisher Relations, the Publishers Association revealing the results of the E-lending pilots.

There were also a series of workshops looking at digital developments for people with visual impairments, programming, intergenerational digital, trends in e-learning, wi-fi funding for public libraries, routes into libraries and the digital platform research commissioned by SCL. Finally the seminar finished with international speaker, Erik Boekesteijn, DOKLAB, the Science and Innovation Department at DOK, the Library Concept Center in Delft, who gave a very lively presentation about his perspective on digital.

Evaluation of the seminar was extremely positive. These comments from delegates show the kind of feedback that was received,

*“Seminars and conferences such as this often help you to lift your head up out of the day job, to look at the what else it happening around which then enables you to re-evaluate what you're doing, how and why you're doing it. In turn that can only lead to improvements in my own service as well as giving me space and time to think about various issues and projects.”*

*“The chance to hear at first hand from key figures like Ed Vaizey, Darren Henley and Kathy Settle. The chance to hear about challenging ideas from outside the library world. The chance to network with colleagues and share experience.”*

## 4.2 Masterclasses

On 15th April 2015 at West Bridgford Library working with Nottinghamshire Libraries SCL ran a day seminar looking at alternative operating models for public libraries in England. The day was attended by 40 people and those sharing their experiences included library leaders from Cambridgeshire, Warwickshire, York, Suffolk and Oxfordshire. The Cabinet Office also attended and gave their insight into mutualisation, a representative from Chalfont St Giles Community Library shared his experience of running a community library and Paul Blanter talk about the role of the Libraries Taskforce.

A masterclass on communicating the positive impact of Libraries and Library services took place on 6th November 2015 in London and was jointly funded by SCL, ASCEL and the Libraries Taskforce. The half-day session was attended by 30 library staff from across England and was led by Campbell Storey. The workshop was specifically designed for library professionals and aimed to improve speeches, presentations, pitches and interviews.

## 4.3 Library Internships

In June 2014 SCL identified the potential to work in partnership with The Creative Society to secure some funding from Arts Council England's Creative Employment Programme to partially fund a number of internships in libraries across England.

SCL's aim was to:

- Create internships in Libraries across England.
- Targeted at 18 -24 year old graduates and non-graduates
- Act as a pilot for developing an entry route which attracts more young people into the Library sector
- Tie in with existing campaigns and workforce development training other organisations are providing across England

By December 2015 30 interns had been recruited by 18 different library services.

Library services who took part were keen to encourage more young people to pursue a career in libraries and SCL's evaluation showed that in most cases there were positive outcomes for both the library service and the library intern with a number of interns being offered further employment within the library service.

Some comments from library services,

*"Our intern is one of our most capable members of staff and her continued employment in the service has proved invaluable".*

*"We have had 2 Library Interns, both with excellent communication skills and an eagerness to learn new skills and take advantage of opportunities. As staff capacity is increasingly reduced, Library Interns have had the time to update areas of library work from stock work, reading group brochures, library website, IT work sheets and more."*

Some comments from interns,

*"My apprenticeship with Bolton libraries has changed my life, for the better and opened up so many possibilities."*

*"I've really enjoyed the time I've spent here, learning a lot of new interesting things almost every day which kept things fresh. The staff that work at Buxton Library are all very nice people, it was a pleasure working with them all, even the customers that come here are very friendly and I seldom came across any issues. I enjoyed all aspects of the jobs I was given, from shelving, doing the holds list, receiving transits, to being out on the Mobile. All in all I can say in confidence that this was an excellent opportunity and I feel very lucky to have experienced working for Derbyshire county council and Buxton Library. I would be happy to do it again."*

#### 4.4 Universal Offer roadshows

In the latter part of 2015/16, SCL members planned an ambitious programme of 9 regional roadshows for delivery in the early part of 2016/17. The aim was to increase awareness amongst library staff of the Universal Offers and how to use them at a local level to improve the quality and consistency of services on offer.

## 4.5 Secondments

SCL worked with the Libraries Taskforce to support the secondment of 3 library colleagues into the Taskforce with funding from Arts Council England. The three secondees: Sharon Kirkpatrick from Dorset Libraries, Darren Smart from West Sussex Libraries and Sue Wills from Poole Libraries all had a positive experience and found it a significant professional development experience. In addition to the Taskforce secondments, Andy Wakefield from Wakefield MDC spent six months representing SCL on secondment at the Wellcome Trust, the global charitable foundation committed to improving health. The purpose of this secondment was to scope out the current landscape where the priorities of the two organisations overlapped in order to identify mutually beneficial future joint working opportunities. The resulting report articulates a broad vision where public libraries would become aspirational and inspirational spaces to explore health, wellbeing and the human condition. The report includes a two stage action plan and Wellcome is in discussions with SCL around the detail of how to take this forward in the coming months.

## 5. SCL Wales and Northern Ireland

### 5.1 Wales

A separate report from SCL Wales will be circulated.

### 5.2 Libraries NI

For Libraries NI 2015/16, in addition to being a period of service delivery, development and some retrenchment, was characterised by preparations for a period of immense change following the Assembly elections in May 2016. This will lead, not only to a new Executive, a new Minister, a new Assembly and a new Programme for Government, but also a major restructuring of Government Departments with a reduction from 12 to 9 departments. Libraries NI will be an arm's length body of a new and massive Department for Communities as opposed to the current Department for Culture, Arts and Leisure where Libraries NI is the largest arm's length body within a small department. The new department presents opportunities as it will also contain a number of organisations and functions with which Libraries NI is already collaborating and others where there are obvious synergies e.g. the Employment Service, Urban Regeneration, Debt Advice Service, various equality and social inclusion functions, Social Security Agency and Local Government.

Libraries NI has been recognised in two recent pieces of legislation. Community Planning, already well-established in some parts of the UK, began in April 2015 in Northern Ireland. The process involves Councils working with communities and partners to develop and implement a shared vision for their areas. Libraries NI is pleased to have been designated as a statutory partner in this process in recent legislation alongside health, education, housing, the police etc.

In addition, the Rural Needs Bill (2016) has named Libraries NI as one of the bodies required by law to undertake rural proofing of its policies and developments.

Libraries NI faced an initial budget cut of 7.5% in 2015/16, a smaller cut than most other arm's length bodies received, as the Minister, with support from the Executive, gave Libraries NI 'a measure of protection' on condition that no libraries would close. This cut was delivered though a 5% reduction in opening hours, following public consultation on an opening hours policy and proposals which received almost 4,000 responses.

Three rural libraries re-opened in 2015/16 following capital works. Moira Library has been replaced with a new building on the same site, Fintona Library has been refurbished and Carnlough Library has been refurbished and extended. Libraries NI continues to work towards a major redevelopment of Belfast Central Library.

## 6. REFLECTION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

2015/16 has proved a busy and demanding year for SCL. There is no doubt that library services face enormous challenges in an increasingly austere financial environment and it is often very challenging for library leaders to make the case for continued investment in libraries against such a challenging backdrop for all services. However, SCL's work in the past year shows that valuable progress can still be made, new partnerships forged and new funding secured in these challenging times.

The Universal Offers continue to provide the framework through which SCL organises its programme of work. Introduced in 2013, the Offers continue to evolve in response to changing needs. A dynamic programme of work, led by hugely committed Exec members, keep the Offers fresh and our partnerships to support them constantly evolving. The concept of the Universal Offers came from Nicky Parker when she was SCL President. In 2013, Janene Cox introduced the Offers to the sector, carefully crafting the underpinning narrative that helped the sector and our partners to understand the power and potential of the Offers to bring a previously disparate and fragmented customer offer across 151 different authorities in England into a coherent and joined up offer. During my Presidency, I hope I've been able to take the Offers to the next stage, growing the strategic partnerships that underpin them and bringing additional funding which will ensure the offers have even greater impact on library services in the future. I've no doubt that Neil MacInnes as the incoming President will develop the offers still further over the next 2 years.

SCL could not have achieved what it has without the help and support of SCL colleagues across the country. Firstly I would like to highlight the work of the Universal Offer and Promise leads:

- Health – Julie Spencer (Bolton)
- Reading – Janene Cox (Staffordshire)
- Learning – Alison Wheeler (Suffolk)

- Information – Bev Rice (Leeds) with Jayne Wilkins (Dudley) lead on the Assisted Digital/Digital Inclusion side of the offer
- Digital – Nick Stopforth (Doncaster) for the first half of the year and Ayub Khan (Warwickshire) for the second half of the year
- Children’s Promise – Sarah Mears (Essex)
- Six Steps – Mark Freeman (Stockton)

The offer leads put an incredible amount of work into developing and leading the Offers, which often eats into their personal time and I, on your behalf, thank them for their significant contribution over the past year. We say goodbye to Bev Rice and Jayne Wilkins who are leaving their own library authorities and will therefore no longer be members of SCL. Together, Bev and Jayne have led the work on SCL’s Assisted Digital and Digital Inclusion tender. We wish them well for the future and thank them for their huge contribution to SCL this year. Alison Wheeler will be handing over the reins to Julie Griffiths from Halton, who will take on the lead role for the Learning Offer in 2016/17. Alison has kindly agreed to stay on Executive as a co-opted member for another year to support SCL’s wider programme of work and we look forward to benefitting from her continued energy and skills on Executive. Thanks to Nick Stopforth who handed over the digital baton to Ayub Khan during the year and who now steps down from SCL Executive.

Thanks are also due to:

- To the Regional Chairs, who play such a crucial role in ensuring key messages from SCL Executive are shared with colleagues across the regions
- To Simon May for his ongoing role and contribution as SCL’s Treasurer
- To library colleagues involved in the Universal Offer working groups for contributing to their ongoing development and ensuring they are embedded within their regions
- Our colleagues in Northern Ireland and Wales, who generously contribute, wherever they can, their own experiences of developing library services in the home countries.
- To the Executive, as a whole, who work hard on your behalf to develop the Offers and the organisation as a whole
- To everyone who has represented SCL, responded to requests for information and/or comment and engaged in its work throughout the year
- To member local authorities for their co-operation in releasing officers at all levels to undertake work on behalf of SCL
- To Arts Council England for their continued financial support for the Universal Offers
- Suppliers and contractors, including BiblioCommons, Learning Pool, Westhill Commercial, Shared Intelligence, Ethan Ohs and Katie Pekacar. Together, they helped SCL move forward with the Universal Offers and provided a valuable external perspective which stretched our thinking.
- Our partners, particularly ASCEL, the British Library, the BBC, The Reading Agency, Wellcome, with whom we have made huge progress in the past year.

I am very grateful to SCL colleagues who have supported me throughout my Presidency. As I reflect on the past two years, I am very proud of what SCL has achieved. As well as the many concrete achievements highlighted in this and last year's Annual Report, there are also the more intangible benefits of SCL's work in supporting colleagues leading library services at a time of significant change. In my day job in Devon, I have spent much of the past 2 years setting up a new, independent organisation to deliver library services in the county. Whilst combining the Presidency and a major transformation project has at times been challenging, I have learned a huge amount from my experience of being involved as SCL President. The old adage of 'you get out what you put in' has never been truer and I feel my efforts in leading SCL have paid dividends in my own professional learning and development. Thanks to all colleagues and partners for their kindness and personal support for me throughout my Presidency.

My personal thanks to Neil MacInnes for supporting me in his role as President-Elect. I'm sure Neil will be a very effective and energetic President. Thanks are also due to Elizabeth Elford for so ably supporting SCL's communications and advocacy work this past year and to Helen Drakard. SCL couldn't have achieved what it has during the past year without Helen's calm, efficient and proactive support.

## 7. Looking forward

With £720,000 funding from ACE in place for the next 2 years, SCL is now able to undertake medium and long term planning, particularly considering how to ensure SCL can sustain and potentially increase its impact on the sector. We will be using some of the ACE funding to undertake an organisational review in the early part of 2016/17. This will help us identify the most effective operating and governance model for the future.

Beyond our own structures, we can look forward to:

- The publication of 'Ambition' over the summer. We hope it provides the catalyst needed to engage policy makers at central and local government in a new and ambitious dialogue about the valuable contribution libraries make to the lives of local communities.
- An exciting year of reading with the Summer Reading Challenge focusing on the Dahl centenary and the BBC's Love to Read campaign. To maximise this fantastic opportunity, SCL will develop a training package for our library workforce which helps them promote and encourage reading for pleasure
- Participating in the provision of Assisted Digital and Digital Inclusion services via the Government Digital Services framework contract. Helping people engage with Government services remains an important part of libraries' work and this contract should provide welcome opportunities for libraries to secure income to reflect the cost of this support
- The development of a new Universal Offer focused on libraries' important role in fostering culture in local communities.



- Developing the Innovation Network to enable library leaders and practitioners across the country to share best practice and drive innovation in their own library services. In parallel, we will continue to work alongside the Taskforce to secure investment in a much needed improved digital infrastructure for libraries.

Ciara Eastell

President, SCL - May 2016