



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



Welsh Libraries

Annual Review 2016

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Foreword

The opening of a book is the start of an adventure – an adventure into worlds of make believe, or into the real world around us. 2016 was the Year of Adventure and I was pleased to see libraries engage with this theme in inventive and stimulating ways such as the Reading Daringly challenge run by north Wales public libraries.

As in previous years, 2016 continued to be difficult for public services, and libraries in all sectors were no exception to the financial challenges placed upon them. However, I'm pleased that in general usage of libraries remained strong, particularly digital services. They are much-loved community services. The Welsh Government has continued to invest in and support library services and our Welsh Public Library Standards provide a framework not only for service providers but also for the public to know what they can expect from their library service. I am committed to ensuring that local authorities continue to deliver a "comprehensive and efficient" high quality public library service for the benefit of everyone.

In 2016 I issued a culture statement for Wales, *Light Springs through the Dark: A Vision for Culture in Wales* which outlines the excellent cultural landscape that we have at present in Wales, as well as

highlighting opportunities for the future. It sets out how culture contributes to the Welsh Government's programme for 2016-21, and libraries feature in this contribution. Libraries play an important role in encouraging more people to engage with culture and in creating a society that promotes and protects culture and heritage. They contribute towards all seven goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act and are vital for sustainable communities and promoting pathways for personal empowerment.

Looking ahead, I know that libraries will continue to deliver services which directly improve people's lives, whatever their life circumstances. The financial challenge is unlikely to recede in the near future, so we need to ensure that we have the most efficient and sustainable library services. As ever, I am grateful for all those who work in libraries across Wales for all that they do to deliver hugely valued and respected library services to the people of Wales.

Ken Skates, AM

Cabinet Secretary for
Economy and Infrastructure



Introduction

Libraries in 2016 continued to deliver and develop services which helped people achieve their goals, or improved their lives in some way. For example, Torfaen County Borough Council's library service became the first one in Wales to be awarded Dementia Friendly status. All library staff are 'dementia friends' and the library service offers specific activities such as Read-to-Me sessions at home, and special book collections aimed at people with memory loss. Other public library services in Wales have followed this example and have become dementia friendly services too.

Libraries also catered for the young generation, and 2016 marked 100 years since the birth of Roald Dahl, who was born in Cardiff. There were many Roald Dahl activities and events throughout libraries, including 'Find the Giant Peach' competition for under 12s in public libraries, the Big Friendly Read Summer Reading Challenge, Cardiff's City of the Unexpected weekend in September, and a Roald Dahl tea party and creative writing workshops for children in the National Library of Wales.

Partnership working remained an important component of library services and through the Museums, Archives and Libraries Division (MALD) of the Welsh Government, a number of library projects were supported

including Community Learning Libraries Programme grants for modernisation and co-location of public library services. The six were: Bala, Brecon, Haverfordwest, Holywell, Rhydycar and Splott (Cardiff).

In March 2016 the then Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism launched the innovative National Digital Library for Wales. As a result of partnership working between the Welsh Government, the National Library of Wales and Welsh public libraries, all public library members in Wales are able to access a free digital library service. The service includes online newspapers, e-books, e-zines and e-audio books as well as a range of online reference resources. The National Digital Library is available via the Libraries Wales website.

These achievements, and many others, were made with libraries balancing differing views and needs while often managing reduced budgets, and in this process some new community managed libraries have been established following transfers from local authorities.

The continued dedication of library staff, library supporters and library users means that all people from Wales can still benefit from library services.



Libraries 2016 **Key Statistics**

46
%

of people in Wales use their library



Over **10 million** books borrowed from public libraries in Wales

Around **3/4**

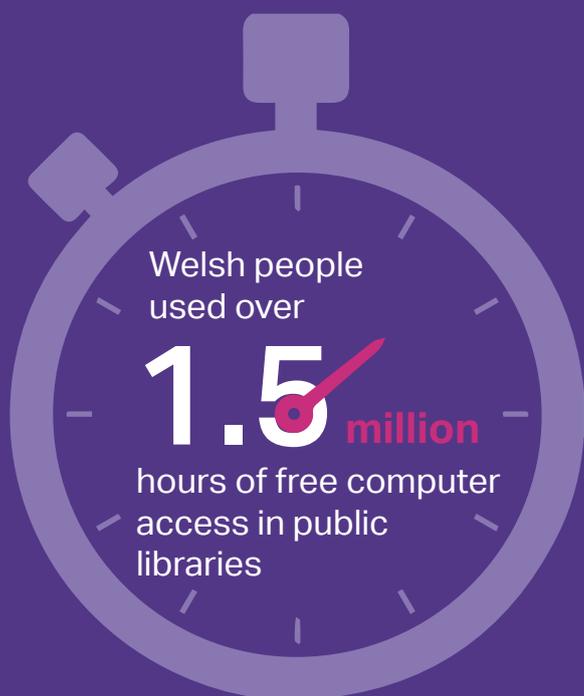
of people in Wales say libraries are important for their community



Over **3.7 million** enquiries answered by Welsh public library staff



51
% of young people aged 15 – 24 in Wales use their library



Sources:

CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) (2016) Public Library Actuals 2015-16
Carnegie Trust UK (2017) Shining a Light: Welsh data about attitudes to and use of public libraries 2011-2016

Case study 1

Health and well-being, social inclusion and digital skills

Gloria* has suffered with poor mental health since young adulthood. She has always found reading helps her condition by relaxing, distracting and taking her mind off her worries. Gloria said: "Reading has always been the constant in my life, through all the ups and downs. I am totally reliant on the library service, I can't afford to buy books and my local library can get any books I want free of charge."

Four years ago Gloria suffered a family tragedy and she spiralled into depression. "I was put on a waiting list for counselling, but in the meantime the only place that made me feel better was the library. I thought of the library staff as my counsellors! Just walking in through the doors of the library helps me feel better; it's a haven and sanctuary. The staff are unique in their customer service, always giving me time to talk and asking how I am. The library helps me start my day in a positive manner, I always leave smiling, I just find it so uplifting, I want to be there all the time!".

Library staff encouraged Gloria to participate in library activities, and these have also helped improve her mental health. She joined the weekly Knit and Natter group and said:

"I feel really proud that I am now able to crochet again, and, I have made new friends. One member of the group also suffers with anxiety, so I have been able to support her. Another member is a fluent Welsh speaker, and this has inspired me to take up Welsh again, every week I practise with her. This group really lifts my mood and makes me feel so much better."

Gloria also attends the weekly 'Digital Friends' group, an IT support group for older people. She has learnt how to use social media and has got in touch with friends of the family member who died, which has helped her cope with her bereavement. She is now a confident IT user and said: "Learning how to surf the internet has opened my life up. I can search for any information and last week I learnt how to change my gas and electricity suppliers and I couldn't believe how much money I saved, the library saves me money all the time".

*Not her real name



Public libraries

The published Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) statistics on public library usage for 2015-16 reflect the changes taking place in local government finance, and changes in society. Despite a very small dip of 1.6% in physical visits to libraries, they remain an important resource for people in Wales with over 13.4 million visits made to Welsh public libraries in 2015-16. This is the equivalent of 10 times the average annual number of visitors to the Principality Stadium for example. The small fall in books borrowed was off-set by a 5% increase in audio-visual downloads and issues. In part this may be due to the co-ordinated national digital library service and was the largest increase across the nations of the UK.

A significant milestone was reached in August 2016 when six north Wales public library services went live with a new shared public library management system. This system is an important step forward in collaborative working between Welsh public library services. By sharing a single system, library services are able to achieve significant cost savings in comparison to procuring and running separate systems. In addition a shared system offers a number of benefits to library customers, including seamless downloads of e-resources and access to a wider range of library material to borrow. The system is now being rolled out across Wales. The project was shortlisted for a prestigious GO Award for collaboration in October 2016.

Deeside library held a celebration event in March 2016 with the then Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism to mark over 100 modernised libraries across Wales as a result of Welsh Government Community Learning Libraries grant funding. In April 2016 a further six libraries were awarded funding, taking the total invested since the start of the Fund to over £15 million.

Public libraries have continued to encourage and promote reading for pleasure to children

in Wales. Following phased implementation over two years, the Every Child A Library Member scheme (ECALM) was delivered in all 22 local authority areas during 2016. The scheme automatically enrolls Year 4 primary school children as members of their local library. This complements other literacy schemes such as the Summer Reading Challenge and the Welsh Government's Education Begins at Home campaign.

In 2016 there was a Roald Dahl theme to the Summer Reading Challenge as it was the centenary of his birth. The Big Friendly Read was a theme which enthused library staff and children, and over 39,000 children took part in Wales with a completion rate of 58%. For the second year, youth volunteers were part of the Challenge and over 135 young people (aged 12 to 24) volunteered in public libraries over the summer.

Many libraries used the Year of Adventure to promote the adventures possible through reading books. The October #LoveLibraries campaign tied into this, alongside the Reading Daringly year which was created and run by the six public library services in north Wales.

In light of reduced budgets, several library services underwent review and consultations on their future services in 2016. The outcome of these consultations will be seen in 2017, and MALD continues to monitor the impact of any service changes via the Welsh Public Library Standards.

Performance against the Welsh Public Library Standards for 2015-16 was assessed during 2016. As expected, revenue expenditure has declined across library services compared to 2015 and the difficult funding situation facing local authorities continues to pose a major challenge to provision and performance in many authorities. However, despite the decrease in some aspects of usage, satisfaction levels remain high, library membership is slowly growing, and there has been an increase in

attendance at events and informal training sessions in libraries.

Overall, library services are providing the public with excellent facilities and services. There are some authorities where the service remains strong, and other authorities where recent restructuring requires time to

be bedded in before conclusions on change can be drawn. The impact of library services however, remains strong, and despite declining budgets, public libraries continue to provide essential services to people and communities, and are often a “lifeline” for the Welsh public.



Case study 2

Social inclusion, volunteering and support into work

Anna* is 20 and has been out of work for some months. She lives at home, and helps to look after her nephew who has Downs Syndrome. One of the main barriers to Anna finding employment has been her social anxiety, which affects her self-esteem and confidence.

The local library service and Job Centre Plus have been working together to improve partnership working and regular appointments between the JCP work coach and JCP customers are held in the library. JCP customers have access to the full range of library services and have made use of the self-help books and accessed the online magazines, helping to improve their job searches. The JCP work coach said: "Without exception, feedback from JCP customers has been extremely positive. The informal and relaxed environment of the library has helped build a better relationship between the work coaches and customers." By being in the library the JCP work coach has also encountered other service providers using the library space and was able to secure employment for two of her customers.

Anna met her JCP work coach in the library and joined the library for the first time. She was soon browsing and downloading free magazines to increase her knowledge and skills.

Anna has always wanted to work with children, and began to volunteer as a helper during library story time, adding value to the sessions by helping the storyteller and entertaining the children.

Anna said: "Having the opportunity to work as part of a group in the library environment has made it much easier for me to deal with other social situations and interact with people. Working with young children is something I have always wanted to do. By helping at the story times, I can learn at the same time and it's a great addition to my CV".

Her work coach is delighted with her progress: "Since attending the library I have seen a vast improvement in Anna's confidence, motivation and enthusiasm for work, to such an extent she was able to deliver a presentation to other customers about her journey. She has gone on to complete a work experience placement and obtained an excellent work reference. She is looking forward to volunteering within the library which will be the first step in achieving her 'dream' job, working with children."

*Not her real name



Academic and special libraries

The nine universities of Wales, together with the NHS libraries in Wales and the National Library of Wales now share the same library management system and discovery interface. The final institutions went live with Ex-Libris Alma and Primo in August 2016. The implementation took just one year in total and the new system provides a platform for building deeper and wider collaboration and for further work in opening up and sharing collections for the benefit of all.

To celebrate, the Welsh Higher Education Libraries Forum, the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals Wales (CILIP Wales), and the Society of Chief Librarians Wales held a "Celebrating Library Cooperation" event in the Senedd in September 2016 to mark both the new public and academic library management systems. Julie James AM, Minister for Skills and Science, spoke at the event and said "I'm really pleased to be able to celebrate your collaboration and innovation in Welsh libraries and I'm proud that the Welsh Government has supported both of these partnership projects."

The annual CILIP Wales conference was held in Swansea in 2016 on the theme of "Share, Inspire, Lead". Library staff from all sectors attended, and celebrated the winner of the Welsh Librarian of the Year Award 2016, Dylan Hughes, now retired but formerly Leisure and Libraries Manager at Wrexham Library and Information Service.

There were a number of library refurbishments in universities in 2016, but less good news was the fire which started overnight in the library of the Gower College Swansea Tycoch campus and destroyed the library in October. But other colleges have kindly stepped in to help and an interim facility has been set up.

Engaging with the public has been an important goal for libraries in 2016. The National Library of Wales won the

national "Archive Volunteering Award" for 2016 for its volunteering scheme 'Helping us to Achieve'. The scheme has involved wide community collaboration and support and a diverse range of volunteers. As well as helping the Library achieve its objectives, the Scheme has also benefited individuals, with around 20% of the volunteers moving on to paid employment.

The National Library of Wales also took part in the national "Takeover Day" on 10 November. On Takeover Day, children staffed the desk in the Reading Room; fetched, sorted and stamped items from the collections for readers; undertook conservation on items; acted as guides in the exhibitions, and even helped security staff monitoring the control room. Takeover Day, run by the Kids in Museums charity and supported by the Welsh Government as part of their Fusion programme, was held in museums, castles, historic homes, libraries and archives throughout Wales. Actor Michael Sheen, Patron of Kids in Museums, said, 'Takeover Day gives hundreds of young people... the chance to do something new [and] for their voices to be heard.'

Reaching new audiences through digital means continued with the outreach work of the Wikipedian in Residence in the National Library of Wales, Jason Evans. A number of edit-a-thons were held in Aberystwyth and other locations in Wales, to increase and improve the content about Wales on Wikipedia, as well as projects on open linked data and sharing digital images.

National Library of Wales images have been added to over a thousand Wikipedia articles which have been viewed millions of times, bringing worldwide exposure to the National Library and its collections.



Case study 3

Saving money, health and well-being, advice and support, older people

Mrs D had visited the library on several occasions during Macmillan information health and well-being drop-in sessions, as her husband was suffering from cancer. They were finding it very difficult to cope financially as their household income was very low. Mr D was not receiving any treatment at the time, and they had previously applied for a grant from Macmillan. They found it very difficult to heat the house, as their central heating system was very old and not efficient.

Through discussions with the Macmillan Information Service Coordinator (MISC), who runs sessions in the library, it emerged that neither Mr nor Mrs D were receiving Attendance Allowance, a benefit for disabled people aged 65 or over who need help with personal care. They were referred to the pension service to each apply for the allowance and for pension credit. They were also given advice and information to enquire about help with their household heating.

As a result of the additional information and referrals, Mr and Mrs D were able to increase their weekly household income by £350 in total. They also discovered they were eligible for other assistance schemes and have had a new boiler and new radiators installed in their property, all for free.

Mrs D said: "I cannot believe the huge increase in income we've had, and the huge difference this will make to our lives. We were always worried about switching the heating on, but now we do not have to worry about it. The support we've received from the Macmillan coordinator and the library has been huge, and I don't think she realises how grateful we are for her support."

Without the library offering the Macmillan Information coordinator, this couple's story might have been very different.

Slide into a book...

