

Update for M25 Consortium
01 03

for information

London's Museums, Archives and Libraries and the Resource agenda

The debate around the Resource agenda at national and regional level continues to evolve and develop, both in terms of progress and complexity.

Nationally:

Anna Southall, new Chief Exec, has now started, and it is clear that a certain degree of minor re-shaping is taking place in advance of perhaps much wider restructuring. Resource's "failure" to obtain adequate funding for Renaissance in the Regions is undoubtedly causing a re-focussing of efforts, and this, together with the announcement that Matthew Evans will retire as Chair later this year, sets the scene for a re-appraisal of both purpose and priorities.

The relationship between Resource and DCMS continues to be interesting.

Whilst Resource clearly leads in terms of archives and museums at a national level, there continues to be a lack of clarity over the relationship between DCMS and Resource about public libraries. A clearer specification for Resource from DCMS is now being evolved and Resource is expected to be asked to undertake a sizeable chunk of the work from the new DCMS Framework for Public libraries. However, it is clear that DCMS views its relationship to Resource on libraries in a different light to that which has emerged for museums and archives.

Resource still has no really effective relationship with DfES.

In terms of impact on libraries, Resource have recently appointed the long awaited Senior Libraries Advisor post, expected to bring a degree of focus to the library agenda that has been somewhat lacking.

In other aspects, Resource is as effective as ever, particularly with regard to both ICT Development and Learning and Access.

Chris Batt's Team have been excellent in supporting a range of London ICT developments, and are always willing to act as key partners. Sue Wilkinson's Team in learning and Access are equally accessible and effective in all they do.

The key development in train at the moment is WILIP, exploring the relationship between different library sectors and the services they can offer to a variety of audiences. This is potentially a very exciting piece of work that will crystallise a sizeable number of disparate aspirations. Discussions and interviews for the first phase of WILIP are in train now, guided by Sue Howley in Resource, and the M25 have been brought to Sue's attention as key stakeholders.

Geoff Warren continues to build the Regional links for Resource as well as acting as a sounding board for a range of discussions around issues such as the roll out of INSPIRE (the national version of Libraries & Learners in London).

Regionally:

There is a huge amount of work going on regionally. Below is a brief re-cap of progress.

Structure of regional agency

Debates continue as to the future of the Regional Agency for London.

It is increasingly clear that there are different "variations on a theme" emerging in each of the Regions in terms of their "solution" for a Regional Agency. These range from the fully integrated, generic agency that the North East has developed, through to the very lean regional Agency in the East Midlands that consists of a Chief Exec, a Learning and Access Team and a p.a. that then works with the existing single domain bodies. There is no single blue print emerging, and it is interesting that Resource have moved away quite sharply from their previous insistence on the "one model - our model" approach of old. This is a useful development in the sense that every Region can respond as appropriately as possible. But it does leave a complex picture.

However, progress is being made:

- There is now a draft constitution in existence
- Agreement has been reached about the process for recruiting a new Chief Executive

- All sides are agreed that some form of “single domain” focus needs to continue (but no agreement about how this might be made real)
- A small group of reps from the Boards of LARC, LMA and LLDA is meeting regularly to agree developments.

The debates that currently rage in London are mirrored elsewhere – it is undoubtedly better to take a little time to get it right now than end up with an ill-fitting compromise that creates more problems than it resolves.

Work plan

Away from the debates about strategy and structures, much excellent work is now being delivered via the LMAL Business Plan, and new Plan is being created that should see London continue as one of the most successful Regions. The plan will have a £1.4million price tag attached. Jemima Johnstone, Strategic Development Officer, continues to lead this process and is an invaluable asset to the work LMAL does.

For fuller versions of the LMAL work plan, take a look at www.lmal.org.uk

Other key development include:

- Learning and Access Team – Sophie Perkins started as the Team Leader for the LAT in October. Since starting, Sophie has refined the Learning and Access Team’s Business Plan, made a very significant number of contacts across London, and recruited a member of her Team, Carol Dixon (a librarian from HE). Further team members will be recruited in the next few months. Sophie and her team are based with and managed by the LLDA on behalf of LMAL.
- ICT – a draft ICT Strategy for LMAL has been created and will be circulated very shortly. For libraries, this closely mirrors the ICT Strategy that the LLDA, ALCL and M25 (through Brendan Casey) have drafted jointly.

Debates around this agenda move fast, but ALCL should reassured that M25 involvement via the LLDA Board and representation at key meetings is always sought.

Project WiLL

Deborah Raddon (deborah.raddon@llda.org.uk) continues to make excellent progress with Project WiLL – designed to allow public library users to search seamlessly across all 33 public library service catalogues.

WiLL is being developed to ensure that future collaboration with HE, FE, BL etc is possible and is an essential link in the chain to realising the aim of creating a single distributed resource for London's Libraries – albeit a tightly managed one.

Libraries & Learners in London

Reprints of all literature associated with LLiL have been done.

The documentation will be revised during January – if you require any changes or indeed have any comments, please send them to susanb@clayworthsj.demon.co.uk asap and by January 31st at the latest.

LLiL continues to operate successfully with no real glitches. It is very much appreciated by those accessing the scheme.

Numbers using it are small, as was predicted, partly because the overhauled documentation that maps and documents specific collections is allowing public librarians to refer users to other public libraries in a much more systematic than was previously the case.

Efforts to roll out LLiL (as INSPIRE) continue through SCONUL, BL and society of Chief Librarians.

Further Education Network

A tentative FE network has now been created in London.

Working with the Learning and Skills Development Agency and the excellent Manager of South Thames College (Suba Ramakrishnan), an executive of FE reps has been created and is now beginning to input into wider developments.

This grouping is essential because FE, though very strapped for cash, has done some magnificent work in some areas that are highly relevant to other sectors, such as Virtual Learning Environments. And with the Governments thoughts increasingly focussed on seamless access to learning, having an effective body to work with for FE is highly desirable.

LLDA Development Manager

Fiona O'Brien has been appointed a Development Manager for the LLDA. Fiona has a wealth of experience in academic libraries and latterly at the BBC, where she managed very successful campaigns such as Webwise.

LLDA Conference

The LLDA conference scheduled for the 13th December was postponed because the new framework for public libraries from the DCMS has been delayed. However, the DCMS are now confident it will emerge by mid-February at the latest, so the conference has been scheduled for:

February 28th at Ironmongers Hall near the Barbican.

The draft programme is as follows and there are, as always, three free places available to all boroughs.

Frameworks and opportunities: a new future for public libraries

9.30	Tea	
9.45	Welcome	Cllr Lyn Brown
10	DCMS Framework	Baroness Blackstone
10.45	Audit Commission Developments	Neal Hounsell?
11.15	Tea	
11.45	Developments and wider context	CLOA
12.10	Lessons from other library sectors	Mary Davies, UEL & M25
12.30	Discussion	Cllr Lyn Brown
1	Lunch	

Booking forms and publicity will be available shortly.

GLA's Cultural Strategy

The long-awaited cultural strategy from the GLA is now due for publication on 4th Feb. A series of launch events is now being planned.

Bid to LASER Foundation for Find it in London

As M25 members are aware, a bid was submitted to the LASER Foundation to

- ❖ Allow further progress to be made on Find it in London;
- ❖ Ensure the linkages in technologies are developed between FiiL and WiLL.

No further information from the LASER Foundation has been received in connection with the bid, though a decision must be due soon.

Learning and Skills Councils

Very little real progress is being made with the 5 London LSCs (the only notable success has been a £1million grant to set up Basic Skills Centres in 2 London Borough Library Services, co-ordinarted by the LLDA).

At a meeting just before the Christmas with the CEOs of the LSCs, they acknowledged that they still have much to do to breakdown the barriers between learning providers, and particularly to encourage community-based learning institutions.

Further meetings have been set and some of the very good links between HE, FE and public libraries have been brought to their attention as models for seamless access to learning.