

Information for Social Change Number 36 Summer 2016

Editorial

John Pateman / Ken Williment

Can libraries help to change the world and make it a better place and, if so, do they have the right skills and tools to achieve this task? This question is at the heart of this issue of Information for Social Change, and keeps with the theme of Libraries and Social Change.

A common strand which seems to run through all the studies into the skills required to carry out community-led and needs-based library work is that library workers need the appropriate skills, experience and knowledge to enable them to identify, prioritise and meet community needs. Experience and knowledge can be gained on the job, but the skills must be in place before the library worker attempts to engage with the community and build sustained, meaningful, relationships over time.

This need was identified in 2000 and became a recommendation of the *Open To All? The Public Library and Social Exclusion* research project: *Public libraries should urgently analyse the training needs of their staff, to ensure that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to provide the best services for socially excluded people. Training programmes to be developed for all services linking equal opportunities, anti-racism, anti-sexism, cultural and social exclusion awareness.*

Contributors

John Pateman

John Pateman was part of the Open To All? research team and he explores 'Why Do Library Workers Not Have The Skills To Meet Community Needs?' Pateman looks at some recent work in Ontario - an Environmental Scan of the Culture Sector (2016) prepared as a background document for the emerging Ontario Culture Strategy – to show that community needs and how to meet them are not embedded in LIS education and training, digital skills and leadership. As a way forward Pateman takes us back to the future with The Right 'Man' For The Job? the role of empathy in community librarianship (2008) which suggests that the traditional library worker skill set should be complimented with communication skills, listening skills, influencing relationships, reflective practice, improved confidence and assertiveness, negotiation skills, dealing with conflict.

Vivian Howard, Jenna Knorr and Elizabeth O'Brien

Pateman references some good practice at the School of Information Management at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, which offers a program on Community-Led Services. This new approach is explained in more detail by Vivian Howard, Jenna Knorr, and Elizabeth O'Brien in 'Bringing the Community-Led Service Approach to the University Classroom: A Case Study in Community-Engaged Learning'. They make some very important linkages between libraries and real world issues and challenges such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission final report

and the 2014 One Nova Scotia Commission report *Now or Never*. This makes the point that libraries are not aloof, neutral and apolitical institutions, but an integral part of the communities they serve.

The LIS module at Dalhousie has used the pioneering work of the The Working Together Project as its framework and is organized to follow the stages in community-led planning, including: developing a community-led strategy and service structure, understanding systemic barriers, developing community entry techniques, mapping community assets, building relationship and partnerships, conducting a social inclusion audit, and evaluating the success of community-led initiatives. This new way of learning has led to new thinking around communication and promotion, programming, staff training, and social workers in the library.

Ken Williment

Ken Williment was part of The Working Together Project and he considers in 'Library Schools as the Creators of Library Culture: An Opportunity for Cultural Shift?' the need for a change in organizational culture. This is critical to the success of any library which seeks to become community-led and needs-based. Williment uses a discussion with LIS students as the framework for his argument which concludes that

Presently, most library schools do not have coursework which integrate micro-level skills which allow students the ability of practically explore tools or approaches to work collaboratively with community to identify needs and generate responses to needs (in a library context). In order for community engagement to succeed it needs to remain inductive and non-prescriptive. Library schools are the first step in the acculturation process for professional librarians and without exposure to community based practices, a number of barriers will continue to exist to working with community –ranging from the use of jargon, the control of who

identifies and creates programs and services, and the changing realities of where people seek out effective answers for local information – libraries run the danger of presenting an appearance of change, without addressing the systematic and systemic cultural change which truly needs to occur.

Martin Wolske

So change needs to happen in all parts of the library organisation – from strategy and structures through to systems and culture – if the community led approach is to become embedded as the new ‘way we do things around here.’ The need for radical rather than superficial change is clear, and Martin Wolske drills down deeper into this with ‘A Radical Reconsideration of Digital Literacy’. In doing so he asks a question that is at the very heart of why Information for Social Change was created and exists:

But is it possible that we approach digital technology and literacy training and programming through dominant paradigms that keep invisible the various ways our digital technology and media are controlled and mediated so as to privilege a few over the many?

This question is also at the centre of community led and needs based work which assumes that the community is the expert in its own needs and that the role of the library worker is an enabler or facilitator to match the resources of the library (and critically its human resources) with the needs of the community. Library workers can share their skills and knowledge with the community who will in turn share their real world knowledge of the community. The outcome will be that the library and the community work together to co-produce the planning, design, delivery and evaluation of services. As Wolske points out:

In taking such a transformative approach, we library and information workers take a step away from the dominant neoliberal paradigm of digital technologies and digital literacies and instead take a step towards amplifying human forces working towards a more just society.

Joe Pateman

Information for Social Change always seeks to balance the theoretical with the practical and we have two excellent examples of these approaches in this issue of ISC. For an understanding of some of the concepts which underpin needs-based libraries we have Joe Pateman's 'Theoretical approaches to public libraries'. Pateman takes as his starting point the seminal 1981 article by Robert Cox who highlighted the strengths of critical theory and the shortcomings of problem solving theory in international relations. Pateman applies these two types of theories to a comparison of public libraries:

The problem solving approach underlying traditional libraries has limited the revolutionary role that libraries have historically performed in educating and empowering the working class. In the modern era of neoliberal capitalism, traditional libraries have failed in advancing human needs, democracy and the self-actualisation of the individual. The radical democratic and transformative function at the heart of public libraries can be restored by needs based libraries, which draw upon the insights of Marxist critical theory.

Traditional libraries - with their focus on active users, their hierarchical structures, their disabling systems and their social control cultures - have used the problem solving approach as their dominant paradigm. Needs-based libraries – with their focus on those with the greatest needs, their holocratic structures, their empowering systems and their social change

cultures – will use critical theory to not only interpret the communities they serve, but to change them as well.

Edgardo Civallero

And real world positive change is also the driver of Edgardo Civallero's discussion on a project entitled 'Among shelves: Librarianship for librarians. A starting project on LIS training'. This is an initiative aimed at providing LIS training to those colleagues who, for whatever reason, have not had access to it:

The project aims to create digital books and manuals, for free distribution and download and easily printable, which compile and synthesize the latest information on the most basic LIS topics: from the design and creation of a library from scratch to bookbinding and repair of documents, and from cataloging and classification and project drafting to the organization of reading programs or library management in indigenous communities. It seeks to respond to the needs of a large number of library workers (school, rural, popular, community, mobile librarians) that do not have the opportunity of professional training but would like to expand their knowledge and to build a solid foundation for their skills.

We endorse and applaud this initiative for a number of reasons. It is needs-based and will be driven by the needs of library workers and the communities they serve. It is focused on those with greatest needs, and will be piloted in Latin America, but will be transferable and applicable to library workers and communities in Africa, India and Southeastern Asia. It is international in scope (another commonality with ISC which has always looked beyond narrow and meaningless national borders to find and emulate good practice, wherever it exists in the world): contacts are being established with international institutions and programs that would like to support the initiative. And, finally, it is 'a starting project on LIS

training' which does not pretend to have all the answers but which will be something that we can all learn from. So good luck and well done Edgardo!

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Why Do Library Workers Not Have The Skills To Meet Community Needs?

John Pateman

The simple answer to this very Big Question is 'because they are Library Workers'. In other words, they are trained in all of the aspects of providing library services, but they do not have the key skills that are required to identify, prioritize and meet community needs. We need a different kind of Library Worker who has a skill set which combines traditional library skills with the ability to build sustained relationships with the community. I call this new hybrid model the Community Development Worker. In this position description there would be a 20% focus on library skills and an 80% focus on community development.

Having a good rear view mirror is always useful but we also need to look forward through the windscreen. And we need to learn from the mistakes we have made in the past. So any future Workforce Development strategy for Public Libraries must recognize the need for Community Development skills. I am talking about a fundamental transformation here and not just a modernization or greater use of technology. I am saying that we need to change the attitudes and behavior of our staff as part of a broader culture shift from a Traditional to a Community-Led and ultimately a Needs-Base paradigm.

The basis of all cultures is language and so we need to change the language if we are going to shift the culture. This means new Job Titles

and Position Descriptions. It means that we should abandon old labels like Adult, Children's and Reference and replace them with new brands such as Lifelong Learning, Inclusion and Diversity. It means repositioning the Library and the Library Worker within the wider environment of Community Development and Social Change. So let's take a look at some attempts to shift the Public Library culture through Workforce Development - two from the UK (transformation) and another from Canada (modernisation).

Environmental Scan of the Culture Sector

My Canadian example of modernisation comes from a report published in Ontario. An *Environmental Scan of the Culture Sector* (2016) was prepared for the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport by Communications MDR. This Ontario Culture Strategy Background Document identified the need to invest in the Cultural Sector Workforce and looked at some good practice in education and training, digital skills and leadership.

Investing in the culture sector workforce

Investing in the culture sector workforce, whether business, technical, or creative professionals, ensures that they have access to skills they need to innovate, seize business opportunities, and design and deliver digital products and services to the public.

The Ontario Arts Council's strategic plan prioritizes strengthening skills, capacity building, and sharing knowledge among Ontario's artists and arts organizations. Objectives include ensuring that artists and other arts professionals have access to learning opportunities and convening, connecting, and promoting collaboration within the arts community.

Education and training

Several Canadian jurisdictions have culture policies to encourage careers in the culture sector, strengthen the sector's competitiveness, and build future demand for cultural goods.

New Brunswick cites increased recognition and support for artists as one of the key goals of its policy, to be achieved by identifying, supporting, and promoting professional development through education and training opportunities for professional artists.

BC Creative Futures is an education, arts engagement, and professional skills training strategy aimed at strengthening the province's creative economy. The strategy supports the province-wide BC Jobs Plan and aims to develop the next generation of creative leaders. It focuses on programing for young people, post-secondary programs, scholarship programs, and co-op placements to promote young professionals working in BC's creative businesses.

Digital skills

Developing digital skills allows creative individuals and companies to seize new business and creative opportunities. Australia's creative industry strategy recognizes the importance of creative and digital skills in creating a more innovative workforce and provides three national initiatives designed to improve digital skills in the sector. The Workforce Innovation Program supports digital skills development through creative industry associations.

Scotland has recently released its skills investment plan for the creative industries. The plan recognizes the importance of developing skills in entrepreneurship, communication, and leadership. The plan also

acknowledges the growing demand for “digital skills in relation to design capability, use of technology to support creative storytelling, and in business practice.” In describing the role of digital and computing skills in driving the creative sector, the plan notes that digital skills are relevant for new entrants to the creative workforce. Senior managers also need a solid understanding of the commercial opportunities afforded by digital exploitation, including how to plan for and execute digital strategies.

Leadership

Leadership and succession planning continue to be an important issue in the culture sector. For example, in Arts Council England’s strategic framework for the arts, a key priority is to increase arts leadership skills to enhance leaders’ understanding of their communities, ability to work creatively with a wide range of people, and understanding of the potential of digital technologies. The framework specifies skills development, collaborative working, and knowledge-sharing as priority areas for action.

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Saskatchewan’s strategic plan focuses on ensuring that the culture sector has the business skills to succeed commercially. The plan emphasizes building organizational capacity in leadership, human and financial resources, infrastructure, and strategic plans.

In 2013, the Ontario Museum Association (OMA) launched the museum **succession** project to enable organizational capacity-building, enhance governance models, encourage career and professional development, and support planning for sustainability and leadership. A key component of the program provides training and resources to help museum professionals develop skills to meet the challenges facing the sector and ensure smooth leadership transition.

Within the arts community, some arts funding organizations and private foundations are creating tools and online resources to help arts groups plan for new leadership. For example, in the US, the National Arts Strategies Foundation provides training and online resources to support leadership development in the arts, and the National Alliance of Media Arts and Culture, which developed the long-standing Leadership Institute, relaunched it in 2015 as the Creative Leadership Lab in a partnership with the Sundance Film Institute.'

Analysis

This is an environmental scan of the cultural sector and so it is not specific to public libraries. It is also necessarily high level and broad brush. It seeks to identify good practice rather than make suggestions or recommendations. It is 'Show and Tell' rather than 'This is what you need to do.' But my major criticism is that it very light on content and doesn't really suggest anything new or different. There is nothing here that is going to shift the Public Library culture of comfort and complacency.

I also have a problem with the big focus on Digital Skills, as if this is going to be the silver bullet or panacea that will solve all of our problems and make us fully socially inclusive over night. Don't get me wrong, I understand the important role that technology can play in supporting and delivering library services – but it can only ever be a means to an end and not an end in itself. It is easier, and far more comfortable, to install a new piece of technology than to challenge and shift staff attitudes and behaviors.

I was also disappointed to find that community needs are mostly absent from this environmental scan. They do get picked up under Leadership - 'to increase arts leadership skills to enhance leaders' understanding of

their communities' – but as Karl Marx once famously pointed out, understanding society is not enough – we must also seek to change it.

Open To All? The Public Library and Social Exclusion

While I was less than inspired by the *Environmental Scan of the Culture Sector*, I also found it very typical of many other reports which have been produced since *Open To All? The Public Library and Social Exclusion* was published in 2000. The UK, in particular, has churned out a plethora of reports looking at what public libraries do and how they need to change – but few of their recommendations, no matter how limited in scope, have been taken forward. The biggest change to Public Libraries in the UK has been driven by the Economic Base rather than the Superstructure (Strategy, Structures, Systems). The unwillingness and inability to change has led to mass library closures and hundreds of Library Worker layoffs in the UK. The Traditional transactional model has been swept away by the winds of Neo Liberal ideology, masked behind an austerity agenda. Public Libraries which embraced the *Open to All?* recommendations and began the journey of developing a Needs Based Library are those which have best weathered the storm.

So what did *Open to All?* have to say about staffing, recruitment and training? Suggestions for transformational change in Workforce Development were embedded across the *Open to All?* recommendations (from Needs Assessment and Research to Outreach, Community Development and Partnerships), but there were also some specific ways forward identified:

Public libraries need to reassess their recruitment and selection policies (including reassessing the requirement for qualifications in librarianship) in order to attract more staff into the workforce from socially excluded backgrounds.

Public libraries should urgently analyse the training needs of their staff, to ensure that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to provide the best services for socially excluded people. Training programmes to be developed for all services linking equal opportunities, anti-racism, anti-sexism, cultural and social exclusion awareness.

Public libraries should adopt positive action programmes so that the library workforce incorporates socially excluded people more equitably than at present. All library authorities should aim to develop recruitment and selection statements outlining how this will be achieved.

Public libraries should challenge staff and organisational attitudes, behaviour, values and culture through staff development and training and a competency-based approach to staff recruitment and appraisal.

Library authorities should change their staffing structures to bring them in line with their social exclusion strategies. This will require new job titles, job descriptions, person profiles and competencies which recognise the importance of outreach and should lead on service delivery to the socially excluded.

Schools of Information and Library Studies (SILS) should review their recruitment base to ensure that people from 'non-traditional' backgrounds are brought into library work.

SILS need to urgently reassess their course content in conjunction with public libraries. Courses should incorporate core modules which cover social exclusion issues, such as the causes of social exclusion, information poverty and equal opportunities.

Analysis

I think that these recommendations have stood the test of time and are as relevant today as when they were written 16 years ago. I like the way that #2 broadens out the training base to encompass issues such as anti-racism and anti-sexism. This is important in communities like mine where racism is a big issue. I also like #3 because I have seen how positive recruitment can have a big impact on staff attitudes and behaviour. #5 is also important because structures should always be aligned with strategies and systems.

It is also important to point out that the *Open to All?* recommendations were stepping stones on the never ending journey towards the development of a Needs Based library, which is the ultimate extension of what we in Canada call a Community Led library. This term is used in a very different context in the UK where 'community led' means replacing paid library workers with unpaid community volunteers.

I would also commend another UK report which looked specifically at the role of empathy in community librarianship.

The Right 'Man' For The Job?

I have often said that the question mark in *Open to All?* is the most significant part of the title of this ground breaking research project. Up until this point most Library Workers assumed (dangerous word) that Public Libraries were truly Open to All. That there were no barriers to access and that we just had to open the Library doors and people would chose to come through them or not. *Open to All?* completely destroyed this myth and made Open to All a question rather than a statement. *Open to All?* also had a deep and significant impact on all subsequent Public Library research in the UK. A case in point is *The Right 'Man' For The Job?*

the role of empathy in community librarianship (2008) which also has a question mark in the title.

It was generally agreed that Library Workers had all the skills they needed to do their jobs. They could catalogue and classify books, provide services, manage collections and develop programs. Their job was to run the library as effectively and efficiently as possible. What the community needed and wanted was not their concern. They knew best. They were the experts. They were certainly not Social Workers or Community Development Workers. That was somebody else's job. *The Right 'Man' For The Job?* challenged these assumptions and asked the critical question - what skills do Library Workers require to meet community needs? And what is the role and importance of empathy, in particular, within this dynamic?

The researchers found that, not only did many Library Workers not have the right skill set to meet community needs, but they had no interest or understanding in issues such as social exclusion, diversity and other key demographic drivers within the communities that their libraries were based in. The report found that radical changes were required in staff training and development and made recommendations relating to Knowledge, Skills and Empathy:

Knowledge

The priority for public library managers within a staff training capacity is to address the apparent gap amongst staff in knowledge and understanding of social inclusion policy and political drivers. Staff at all levels working within services and projects that are responsive to such drivers should be fully informed of relevant external and political influences, and given the opportunity to question and discuss them

further, and thus fully engage with the reasons for particular service developments and initiatives.

Similarly, greater effort should be made to provide *relevant* training and information on groups affected by social exclusion, in an attempt to significantly raise levels of awareness and cultural sensitivity amongst all staff.

Staff need the intellectual time and space to fully engage with and consider these issues, so the 'away day' method may be appropriate, particularly in reducing the risk of staff feeling additional pressure in having to absorb new information in their day-to-day work environment, and subsequently form a negative perception of inclusive approaches as 'add-on' responsibilities.

This needs to be carefully planned and scheduled into all new projects and service developments as an important part of the process, particularly in overcoming the ever-present 'lack of time and money' barrier.

Skills

Research participants have defined the skills required to work in socially inclusive services as 'advanced customer care' skills, and many public library authorities are already providing valuable training in this area. Again this should be prioritised within project and service development plans.

The concept of advanced customer care could be broken down as such:

Communication skills

Listening skills

Influencing relationships

Reflective practice
 Improved confidence and assertiveness
 Negotiation skills
 Dealing with conflict.

Can empathy be taught?

It would be fair to conclude that it would be difficult to 'teach empathy', to train staff to develop an emotional response that is informed and influenced by personality, belief systems and other individual characteristics. However, the development of certain empathic skills can be encouraged by providing public library staff with the right knowledge and circumstantial information, involving them in decision-making processes, and facilitating the development of appropriate skills.

As a result of such interventions, staff can be enabled to show higher levels of empathy towards members of all communities, provided that they are willing – and have some natural capacity – to do so. This is a significant finding in supporting library staff at all levels to communicate with library users from all cultural backgrounds and, in the longer term, to deliver a more effective service.

As such, the future recruitment of the right 'man' for the job will be intrinsic to the effectiveness of public libraries' contribution to the social inclusion agenda, and should be an absolute priority for the future of community librarianship.

Analysis

I applaud these recommendations because they are placed within a context of holistic cultural change. Staff cannot and should not be expected to change radically overnight. It is not realistic to expect that

someone goes to bed as a Library Worker and wakes up, fully formed and equipped, as a Community Development Worker. Staff need to be given time to learn and adjust, to de-program and re-program. But it also needs to be made clear that they should be willing and able to do so.

The starting point is to build their Knowledge and awareness of concepts such as social exclusion, diversity and community needs. They then need to be given the time and space to embed this Knowledge and awareness into their everyday work so that they own it and see it as integral to what they do and not some kind of add-on or luxury which they will get round to after completing all their essential duties.

This Knowledge and awareness can then be used to inform the Skills which they require to meet community needs. While I do not agree with the transactional language of 'advanced customer care' and would prefer 'relationship building', I fully endorse the suggested tool kit, particularly Listening Skills, Influencing Relationships and Reflective Practice. The full skill set should be taught at Library School and then reinforced and given a local flavour on the job.

Can empathy be taught? is another interesting question. Workforce Training and Development can only go some way towards building empathy – maybe 20% with the remaining 80% being determined by the character and personality of the individual member of staff. Nature and Nurture plays into this debate. Some people seem to be naturally more empathetic than others. Background and upbringing are also important. Someone who was fortunate enough to be born into a nice, stable, middle class family, with all the advantages and entitlements which that confers, may not readily or automatically be able to understand why someone cannot bring their books back to the library on time or why they make such a big deal about a 25 cent fine. The ability to stand in other people's shoes and see the world through other people's eyes is the most critical

requirement of developing a Community Led and ultimately a Needs Based Public Library. But there is some good work going on in this area.

Federation of Ontario Public Libraries ran a webinar on 'Learning to Read Each Other: the Empathy Toy in Ontario's Libraries' The premise is that reading fiction increases empathy and this provides another tool to build community and understanding. 'Already in schools, offices, maker spaces and libraries across 43 countries, this award winning communication tool helps players aged 6-99 practice a variety of challenging skills related to collaboration, creative dialogue and problem-solving. You will meet Twenty One Toys, the Toronto-based social enterprise behind the Empathy Toy, and will discover specific applications for the Toy in both student programming and staff professional development.'

Our Library Schools are also starting to step up to the plate when it comes to giving their students the tools they need to work in Community Led libraries. The School of Information Management at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia offers a program on Community-Led Services. The learning objectives include:

To consider various ethical, professional, and pragmatic issues related to serving particular community groups

To examine the role of the library in furthering societal goals and empowering individuals and groups within the community

To identify and assess the diverse needs of identifiable community groups in order to determine appropriate library service

And the University of British Columbia School of Library, Archival and Information Studies offers a program on Community-Led Libraries which aims:

To expose students to an intellectual and practical understanding of Community-Led principles and approaches, including the theoretical work that supports these principles

To investigate and evaluate how Community-Led principles and approaches are infused through new and developing library thinking and practice

To interpret and demonstrate the value of Community-Led principles and approaches for building inclusiveness, citizenship and democracy by libraries for the communities they serve

However, as this brief review has demonstrated, we still have a long way to go before we can say that Library Workers have all the skills required to meet community needs. Significant changes must be made to the curricula at Library Schools and to the Workforce Development programs at Public Libraries to keep in stride with the spreading Community Led movement. We need ongoing waves of new model Library Workers who can continue the never ending journey towards a Needs Based Library.

References

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Bringing the Community-Led Service Approach to the University Classroom:

A Case Study in Community-Engaged Learning

Vivian Howard, Jenna Knorr and Elizabeth O'Brien

Why is such a course particularly relevant and timely?

The community-led approach to outreach is an emerging model being adopted by Canadian library systems. For public libraries especially, this service model can help libraries to become even more inclusive and welcoming for patrons of all kinds. By accommodating for the needs of all library users and adapting programming, collections, and more to the communities in which public libraries operate, the public library can continue to re-assert itself as a relevant and essential resource.

The Working Together Project explicitly encouraged schools of library and information studies to develop classes focusing on community-led approaches¹. However, several key factors in the external environment

¹ Halifax Public Libraries (along with Vancouver Public Library, Regina Public Library, and Toronto Public Library) was one of the original sites of the Working Together Project which ran from 2004-2008. The goals of this project were to use a community-led approach to building relationships with socially excluded groups and to identify systemic barriers to library use. Although this project concluded in 2008, the community-led approach continues to have a profound influence on service delivery in many public library systems, including Halifax Public Libraries, which has implemented two key positions: a Community Engagement Manager and a Director of Community Development as part of the senior management team to continue the library's commitment to community engaged services.

make the development of a class such as Community-Led Services particularly relevant and timely. Globally, over 25,000 Syrian refugees will be settling in Canada in the coming months. These newcomers will need a place in the community to access information, to borrow books in English and Arabic, to research employment opportunities, to practice their English conversation and reading skills, and to meet others. The public library often fulfils this role and community-led strategies will be particularly beneficial in forging connections with this new population, which will have some unique needs and interests.

Nationally, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission final report makes several calls to action related to improving education for Indigenous communities in Canada. Community-led approaches can be an important strategy for public libraries to serve the needs of Indigenous users by developing relationships with community leaders and collaborating on the development of programs and services that serve the unique needs and interests of this user group.

Locally, the 2014 One Nova Scotia Commission report *Now or Never* outlines a variety of strategies designed to change the economic future of the province in the next ten years. Many of these strategies relate to the creation of a greater culture of diversity, inclusiveness, and mutual respect, to make newcomers feel more welcome in our communities. Public libraries can play a strong role in creating welcoming communities for immigrants, refugees, and international students through the adoption of community-led approaches.

Dalhousie's School of Information Management: Revise or Retire an Elective

The School of Information Management (SIM) at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada has listed INFO 6500 Users and Services

among its elective offerings for many years, although the course has not been taught since 2008. A decision had to be made to retire this class and remove it from the elective listings or to revise and re-offer it.

Members of the community services team at Halifax Public Libraries were invited to a curriculum meeting to discuss the future of this class and the positive decision was made to re-offer the class after it was revised to reflect a focus on the community-led approach to service development.

Users and Services becomes Community-Led Services

How has Users and Services changed in the transition to Community-Led Services? The original Users and Services emphasized traditional outreach approaches of taking library programs and services into the community rather than community-led approaches (See Campbell 2005/6). Back in 2006, I wrote an article for a theme issue of *Feliciter* (the journal of the Canadian Library Association) devoted to *Libraries, Lifelong Learning, and Outreach*, reflecting on Users and Services, which was an innovative class at the time.² Although the focus of this article was on traditional outreach strategies, it began by raising some key questions, which still resonate today: “How can future practitioners be encouraged to think of ways to anticipate and respond to the needs of their communities? And how can they be encouraged to identify and overcome barriers to use?” (p. 249)

These questions continue to be at the heart of the newly revised Community-Led Services course, which integrates a list of topics and

² The article, entitled “Encouraging awareness of outreach in MLIS programs” was co-authored with Monique Woroniak, a graduate of Dalhousie University’s MLIS program who completed Users and Services in 2006 and went on the career in Winnipeg Public Library where she is the library’s liaison with the Indigenous community, maintains the library’s webpage for Indigenous resources (<http://guides.wpl.winnipeg.ca/aboriginalservices>) and, outside of her library role, has developed Groundwork For Change (<http://www.groundworkforchange.org/>), a website designed to provide non-Indigenous Canadians access to information about current and historical Indigenous issues and to build relationships with the Indigenous community.

readings developed by The Working Together Project as its framework and is organized to follow the stages in community-led planning, including:

- developing a community-led strategy and service structure
- understanding systemic barriers
- developing community entry techniques
- mapping community assets
- building relationship and partnerships
- conducting a social inclusion audit
- evaluating the success of community-led initiatives.

This class explicitly discusses the community engagement spectrum, and differentiates between traditional outreach (taking library services or programs into the community) and community development (partnering with the community to develop services and programs that are relevant and useful to them), with the overall focus most definitely on the latter. The brief course description for Community-Led Services now reads:

A basic goal of library service is that it be designed to meet the needs and interests of users. For any information organization to function effectively and usefully, there must be a match between the services offered and the needs of the users themselves. A community development approach, as applied in the Community-Led Library Service Model, provides this comprehensive foundation in the philosophy, challenges, and practical application of inclusive library and information services, with particular attention to the needs of socially excluded community members.

One of the features of the community-led approach is that it takes time: time to build relationships, time to develop partnerships, time to plan and deliver programs and services. In the space of a 12-week university

semester, it is impossible to simulate this approach perfectly in a single class, but we have tried to create assignments that will give students realistic experiences working with the community-led approach and using the *Community-Led Libraries Toolkit*. These assignments include:

- Reporting on a user experience exercise in which students visit a library in the company of a non-user and ask the non-user to verbalize their observations as they explore the exterior and interior physical space, with the goal of identifying the library's strengths and potential barriers to use;
- Creating a community asset map and conducting an informational interview with a community service provider;
- Creating a profile of the information needs and information seeking behaviour of an underserved user group;
- Conducting a social inclusion audit of a library of their choice, assessing the extent to which the library intentionally seeks to serve a traditionally underserved user group.

Throughout the term, students will also be engaged in weekly online discussions, sharing their observations and experiences with their classmates.

Piloting the class

In winter 2016, two students, Jenna Knorr and Elizabeth O'Brien, MLIS students in Dalhousie's School of Information Management, "piloted" the class as an independent study option. Their goal was to gain both theoretical and practical experience in the Community-Led Library Service Model. They familiarized themselves with the philosophy, rationale, concepts, and practices that form the foundation of inclusive, community-led service through an in-depth literature review, and then, through consultation with the Community Engagement Manager at Halifax Public

Libraries, decided to focus on developing a project to determine how Shelter Nova Scotia's clients use, or don't use, the public library in Halifax, and how the library can better serve them. At this point, Shelter Nova Scotia and Halifax Public Libraries had not developed a relationship or collaborated on any initiatives, and Halifax Public Libraries identified this organization as one they were interested in working with. Shelter Nova Scotia is an organization devoted to providing housing to those experiencing temporary homelessness as well as supportive housing for people transitioning from shelter to community living (see <http://www.shelternovascotia.com/>). Jenna and Elizabeth's project forms an interesting case study of community engaged learning.

Initiating the project

Jenna and Elizabeth's first step in defining the needs of Shelter Nova Scotia clients was to meet with a senior staff member to create an asset map outlining the Shelter's existing resources and to identify any concerns with regard to how the residents of Shelter Nova Scotia use the public libraries in Halifax. Their goal was to identify any barriers that residents may experience when using the library in order to inform Halifax Public Libraries of any restrictive policies or practices that they may currently have in place. Through this conversation, it was determined that the best means of data collection would be to conduct paper surveys with the clients of Shelter Nova Scotia.

In consultation with the Shelter Nova Scotia administrators, Jenna and Elizabeth decided to host programs in two of Shelter Nova Scotia's locations, Barry House and Herring Cove Apartments. These two residences represent very different demographics: Barry House is an emergency shelter for women and children, with room for 20 people and an average of 17 clients a night. The house is located in the North End, close to the Halifax North Memorial Branch of Halifax Public Libraries.

Herring Cove Apartments is the newest Shelter Nova Scotia facility, located just outside of the peninsula, close to the Captain William Spry Library. It is a small apartment building, currently with eight residents but with room for up to 12, that offers long-term independent living facilities for men.

NSPIRG funding

Jenna and Elizabeth applied for funding from the Nova Scotia Public Interest Research Group (NSPIRG) in January 2016. NSPIRG is a student-funded organization at Dalhousie University that provides funding for original research on social and environmental issues that address inequalities, promote awareness, and foster social change. In February 2016, they received \$450 from NSPIRG. The funding allowed them to provide food at their events and to pay honoraria to the authors who did readings.

Two successful Shelter Nova Scotia events

Both events were held in the early evening and were structured in similar ways. Jenna and Elizabeth started the program with an introduction to their project, then a local author (Carol Bruneau at Barry House and Steve Vernon at the Herring Cove Apartments) gave a short reading. Both authors received an enthusiastic response and their presentations definitely helped to make the events more relaxed and engaging. Following the readings, Halifax Public Libraries' Community Engagement Manager and a staff member from the closest Halifax Public Libraries branch chatted about the library and what programs and services are currently available. They also brought along card registration forms and two residents signed up for cards on the spot. Finally, the consent forms and surveys were distributed, and Jenna, Elizabeth, and the library staff

