



## Information for Social Change

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### Information for Social Change Number 34

Summer/ Autumn 2014

**Issue Editors:  
Paul Catherall & Martyn Lowe**

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**Information for Social Change** is an activist organisation that examines issues of censorship, freedom and ethics amongst library and information workers. It is committed to promoting alternatives to the dominant paradigms of library and information work and publishes its own journal, *Information for Social Change* freely available at <http://www.libr.org/isc>

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The ways by which information is controlled and mediated has a serious influence on the ways people think, how they communicate, what they believe is the "real world", what the limits of the permissible are. This applies equally to information that comes through the channels of the mass media, through our bookshops or through our libraries.

But we want to go further than that, documenting also the alternatives to this control, the radical and progressive channels by which truly unfettered, unmediated ideas may circulate. And further still: to encourage information workers to come together, to share ideas, to foster these alternatives – whether we are publishers, librarians, booksellers, communication workers or distributors. Whoever you are, if you are in sympathy with us, join us.

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Martyn Lowe (UK) – Founder, Librarians Within the Peace Movement

Mikael Böök (Finland) – World Social Forum activist

John Vincent (UK) – The Network: tackling social exclusion in libraries, museums, archives and galleries

Anders Ericson (Norway) – Journalist and librarian

Paul Catherall (UK) – Librarian and ISC Webmaster

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# **Information for Social Change Number 34 Summer/ Winter 2014**

## **Editorial**

**Paul Catherall / Martin Lowe**

This issue of ISC is a general issue addressing a range of concerns and trends observed across the Library, Information and associated sectors during 2014 and eclectic coverage provided by ISC contributors on topics as varied as the origin of UK Public Libraries and unusual classification systems.

This issue comes at a time of ongoing impact caused by austerity policies in Western and European nations, including severe retrenchment and closure of library services in the UK, where community activism and protest is currently trying to avert the mass closure of libraries and other community services and facilities.

Other topics included in this issue include trends in digital and online education, the development of community-led public libraries, the rise of e-books, implications for the proliferation of virtual libraries and handheld devices and current developments for the library sector in Norway.

ISC continues to attract novel and interesting articles from an international client base, however we are always keen to see more input into the work of the Editorial Board and welcome any contributions in the form of incidental papers or submissions for forthcoming issues. You can see suggested topics for future releases on the ISC Web pages

<http://libr.org/isc/forthcoming-isc-issues/>

Plans for ISC in 2014 include a potential conference in Liverpool, UK in 2015, we welcome all interested submissions for this informal sharing and networking event, please see our blog post Information for Social Change, proposed Conference 2015, Liverpool, UK: <http://libr.org/isc/information-for-social-change-proposed-conference-2015-liverpool-uk/>

Please also see our new Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Information-for-Social-Change/458756167544531>

## Contributors

**Martyn Lowe** – Martyn has been involved in many activist groups focused around the peace and ecology movements, including Greenpeace (London), & WRI (War Resisters International). He has recently been active in groups such as Kick Nuclear, Nuclear Trains Action Group, and recently formed the “Close Capenhurst” campaign. Martyn is an editorial board member of Information for Social Change. You can see Martyn's blog at <http://www.theproject.me.uk/>

**John Pateman** - has worked in public libraries for over three decades in six local authorities. John's career in public libraries began in 1978 and has spanned over 30 years. John has written many articles on aspects of social exclusion (especially social class), community development, internationalism and libraries in Cuba. He was a member of the government working group which produced *Libraries for all: social inclusion in public libraries* (1999) and of the research team which produced *Open to All' The Public Library and Social Exclusion* (2000).

**Anders Ericson** - a librarian by profession, but since 1999 a freelance journalist and consultant, on library issues and for library journals mainly. For nine years Anders was the editor of the news column of the web site of the Norwegian Library Association. Anders has been chief librarian of a small public library and librarian at two university colleges, in pedagogy and engineering; he was also a consultant at the Norwegian State Directorate for Public Libraries in Oslo for 17 years.

**Mikael Böök** - b. 1947 is a Finnish adult educationist and internet entrepreneur. In 1993-94 he took an active part in the setting up of “The Knot at the Cable”, which was the first World Wide Web-server of Helsinki City Library. His library-related publications (in Swedish) include *Nätbyggaren - undersökning av den moderna posten* [The Net Builder - An Investigation of the Modern Post] (1989) and *Biblioteksaktivisten - essäer om makt och bibliotek i informationssamhället* [The Library Activist - Essays on Political Power and the Library in the Information Society] (2013).

**Martin Ralph** – A former educator having worked across several education sectors, Martin has been a Trades Union activist for many years and is currently an officer within the Liverpool branch of the TUC (Trades Union Congress), Martin is also a branch committee member of the UCU (University and College Union) at University of Liverpool and is an activist within local movements such as Liverpool Against the Cuts (LATC). Martin

is a member of the International Socialist League. Martin also maintains strong regional and international links within the Trades Union movement and has participated in overseas anti-austerity campaigns in France, Brazil and other countries in recent years.

**Andrew Hudson** - is Assistant Librarian (Special Resources) at Canterbury Christ Church University and took an M.A.in Information and Library Management at University of Northumbria at Newcastle and took bachelors and Masters Degrees at University of Oxford.

**Paul Catherall** – Paul graduated with a BA(Hons) in English Literature and Media Studies from the North East Wales Institute of Higher Education and a MA(Dist) in Library and Information Management at John Moores University, Liverpool, he has worked in a number of educational sectors including FE and HE, within Libraries, IT and teaching roles. Paul was active in Career Development Group, Wales (CILIP group) 2002-2009 and has been a Trades Union branch committee member with UNISON and UCU (University and College Union). Paul currently works at University of Liverpool as a librarian for online degrees and is completing a PhD in the field of E-Learning, Paul’s book Delivering E-Learning is available from Woodhouse Publishing. Paul is an Editorial Board member of ISC.

**Sharon Catherall** – is currently undertaking an MPH (Masters of Public Health), focusing on issues in food poverty and inequality.

**John Vincent** - has worked in the public sector (primarily in public libraries) since the 1960s. He worked for Hertfordshire and Lambeth library services, and, most recently, for Enfield library service. Since 1999, John has been the Networker for “The Network – tackling social exclusion in libraries, museums, archives and galleries”, running training courses and conferences, producing a monthly newsletter, and working on specific projects (such as the Paul Hamlyn Foundation funded project to advocate the role that libraries play in supporting children and young people in care; and Phase 2 of “Welcome to Your Library”).

# **Information for Social Change Number 34 Summer/Autumn 2014**

## **The New Independent Norwegian "Debate Libraries"**

**Anders Ericson**

Both Swedish and Norwegian library laws are revised this year and include new, radical formulations that promote democracy through debate and exchange of opinions in the public library. The Norwegian law gives the chief librarian status as an independent editor of library debates, in line with newspaper editors.

Swedish public libraries are from 1 January 2014 supposed to "Promote the democratic development of the society by contributing to the dissemination of knowledge and freedom of opinion". The amendment to the Norwegian § 1 reads: "The public libraries should serve as an independent meeting place and forum for public dialogue and debate" (my translations from the respective originals).

I know the Norwegian process rather well as I have for 8 years covered and commented on various occurrences of "the independent public library" by means of my blog "[Biblioteket tar saka](#)" ("The Library Takes Up The Case").

The word "independent" came as a surprise to most people, except the Norwegian Library Association (NLA), which in the public consultation of the law suggested to add this word.

This time the revision was not just a confirmation of established practice. There has of course occurred debates in events in libraries, but few or no Norwegian libraries have had promotion of social development through debates as an objective.

### **The Chief Librarian as an Editor**

In May this year in Bibliotekforum, the journal of NLA, Norway's Minister of Culture confirmed that "The chief librarians themselves choose and

prioritize how they will achieve the goals of the new mission statement [...] the manager should be free to plan activities at a public library. The library management [...] will assume the role of an editor". And, she says, "I think it is important that the library brings out themes that engage citizens locally, to retain its relevance".

The law proposal was not uncontroversial. From November 2013 until the Minister of Culture made her statement, the debate raged about the chief librarian's new status, in both the professional and the general press, with editorials and some chronicles even by people outside the library community. Would the chief librarian still be overrun by the city council? Have librarians the right skills and attitude? A survey showed that the managers of smaller libraries were unsure of their new role. Surprisingly not; one still hears the rumors from the 1960's and earlier of library boards that controlled the book selection.

However, several libraries have now taken the plunge and organise debates. They experiment and gain experience. They do it so well, that at a conference in May, the chairman of Norwegian PEN, *William Nygaard* (best known as the Norwegian publisher of Rushdie's "Satanic Verses" and for having survived an assassination attempt against him in 1993), said that the library has come a long way in a short time with its own debate profile. And mayors and administrators have publicly approved the new free position of the chief librarian.

## **Government Support**

There is no complete overview of the Norwegian "debate libraries", but in April the National Library gave 12.1 million NOK (approx. 1,9 million USD or 1,1 GBP) in funding to 62 local and regional projects to develop public libraries as debate venues.

Many libraries prioritize debates on local issues, such as municipal planning, building or road projects or local environmental issues. Some debates are of national issues, such as "oil cure" (what do we do in Norway when the oil comes to an end?). Or even some global issues, as international conflicts, the climate or food policy.

Debates about municipal structure and borders are hot these days, as the new market-liberal government wants to merge municipalities on a large scale. Municipal authorities may not be very eager to take such debates, but the library is free to do it. Any protests from municipal leaders can be rejected with reference to the law and the Minister of Culture.

Some libraries collaborate with NGOs on meeting series, such as "Friends of the Earth Norway" and "The Norwegian Humanist Association". Others

choose to just make assembly rooms available to debate organisers and not organise their own debates.

“The Debate Library” can be complicated, especially for smaller libraries. In Vestfold County a number of libraries have therefore joined forces and formed “Vestfold House of Literature”. As in Nord-Trøndelag and Hardanger. County libraries often help in these processes.

## **The Houses of Literature and the Libraries**

In addition to the NLA effort to include the word “independent” in the law, two other circumstances influenced the new mission statement.

One was [the research project PLACE](#) run by Oslo University College, which showed the public library's unique potential as a cross-cultural meeting place.

The second is the creation of private local “Houses of Literature” in some large and medium cities, with or without municipal contributions. Donors and literary communities have typically taken the initiatives, but even libraries, as in the city of Bodø. The first [House of Literature in Oslo](#) in 2007, was inspired by German examples, where debates is a central ingredient.

In some cities there is a certain rivalry between the two types of institutions, and the new law paragraph probably reflects that the Ministry of Culture and national politicians are sympathetic to the library.

“Debate libraries” often prioritise controversial issues and debates that rarely or never are organised by others. Last year several serious “non-issues” or “blind spots” were revealed in two different Norwegian books on the general decline of journalism. Even in political and democratic organs this is a challenge. For example, there has been little critique in the press on Norwegian foreign aid policy, on the big state pension reform in 2010 and one the oil boom in Northern Norway. In local press the situation is even worse.

“Debate libraries” must be able to deal with conflict. In Kristiansand this winter a local immigration hostile organisation were denied library facilities for an event. The library was upheld by the politicians, but then the library invited to a broad meeting on immigration, with even the extremists in the panel. In Stavanger the library invited an open racist to a debate on the person's own conduct. Some invited debaters abstained but others lined up, and from both sides, and the local press concluded it was a good event. PEN's W. Nygaard has spoken out in favor of libraries that also invite extremes to debate, like Stavanger Public Library.

## **The "Independent Library" Elsewhere?**

With the new legal formulations the two Scandinavian countries are probably closest to meet the recommendations of [the IFLA / UNESCO Public Library Manifesto](#) of 1994: "The public library, the local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision making and cultural development of the individual and social groups".

And with the term "independent" the Norwegian law is probably the only one that meets [the IFLA Statement on Libraries and Intellectual Freedom](#): "Librarians and other professional libraries staff shall fulfill their responsibilities both to their employer and and to their users. In cases of conflict between those responsibilities, the duty towards the user shall take precedence".

But what can other countries' public libraries do when they, unlike the Norwegian ones, are not "independent" by law?

In my opinion any municipal libraries may well organise controversial debates, even debates on public demands opposed by the authorities or politicians. And then answer any reprimand with reference to the IFLA statement.

The public library of Lillehammer held ten years ago, i.e. long before the law revision, large public meetings on urban development and on rail versus new highway etc. The chief librarian reported that "some politicians and administrators were annoyed, but most people appreciated it".

## **People's Research Centre**

With that being said, I personally feel that Norwegian libraries in the past year have had an excessive focus on the physical debates. On my opinion there is a further potential in the new paragraph, especially when it comes to self publishing and dissemination of information. Even in these disciplines the law's reference to independency and the need for editors should be relevant.

Some libraries and enthusiasts among the staff may now and then publish in the form of editing Wikipedia articles. But otherwise it unfortunately appears that librarians, like many others "out there", believe that "Goggle has become so good" that the library can relax in relation to the Internet.

But ten to fifteen years ago many libraries maintained topic lists and portals. Today, few libraries have services like the resource list [Global Surveillance](#), maintained by the University Library of Oslo. Here they collect and annotate links in Norwegian and English on surveillance with emphasis on Wikileaks and Edward Snowden.

My own contribution to this has been the concept "The Library Takes up the Case" ("Biblioteket tar saka"). Eight years ago I was assigned to make a website for a library containing important information and documents about a controversial civilian airport, as the local press and local authorities did a poor job of keeping the public informed. On the [blog of the same name](#) I now try to cover also the development of the "debate library".

With such focused services, preferably in combination with blogs etc. libraries and networks of libraries should be able to play a role in current debates within and outside the local communities. Libraries can thus be "People's Research Centres", as the Swedish writer *Sven Lindqvist* put it in an interview I did with him.

The "independent library" should be a goal for all libraries and library organisations.

Whoever wants to ponder the necessity and consequences of this, should read the works of Finnish Mikael Böök (see an article by Mikael in this issue of [ISC34](#)).

# **Information for Social Change Number 34 Summer/Autumn 2014**

## **Developing a Community-Led Public Library**

**John Pateman**

In this article I will explore how public libraries can be transformed from provider-led agencies of social control (their historical role) into community-led agencies of social change (which can identify, prioritise and meet community needs). I will present a model of how this transformation can be achieved (in terms of strategy, structures, systems and culture) based on my experiences as CEO/Chief Librarian of Thunder Bay Public Library. I will describe what a Community-Led Public Library looks like. I will also explore how quantitative input and output statistics - visits and circulation - can be used as proxy indicators to measure the public library contribution to outcomes such as equality and well-being.

### **Library Users**

According to the National Reading Campaign, there are 360 million visits made to Canadian libraries and 590 million items are borrowed each year. We need to go beyond these headline figures to establish who is actually making most use of public libraries and, more importantly in the context of this paper, who is not using public libraries at all. The latest CULC (Canadian Urban Libraries Council) statistics indicate that 46% of Canadians are library users to a greater or lesser extent. Of these library users, 21% are Active Users - those with a library card who use the full range of services; 25% are Passive Users - those who visit the library on an occasional basis or use it for a specific purpose; 54% are Non Users - those who do not use the library at all.

There has been significant research into library users - the people who know us, like us and use us on a regular basis. They often look like us and share our interests, tastes and values. It is relatively easy to find out what they need (or want) because they are a captive and co-operative audience. They are happy and willing to tell us what they want (or need) so that we can make life even better for them. We spend a significant amount of our resources and capacity (probably 80%) on meeting the needs of our Active Users who sit at the centre of our dominant paradigm. We know the book borrowing and buying habits of our Active Users (power patrons and monthly users) and Passive Users (occasional users and rare users). We know that the typical socio-economic profile of a

library user is white, female, over 50 and middle class (educated). We call this very narrow homogenous demographic the 'dominant reader'.

### **Non-Users**

We know plenty about our Active Users and Passive Users, but little or nothing about our Non Users, and yet they make up the largest percentage of our local communities. Very little research has been done into who Non Users are and, critically, why they are Non Users. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many Non Users have no history of library use, often for generations. They were not taken to the library as children. They do not take their children to the library. They perceive the library as 'not for them'. These Non Users are more likely to be living in deprived areas, male, under 30, and have lower levels of qualifications, happiness and satisfaction within their lives. There is a social class dynamic to library use and non use. In England the middle class make up 37% of the population and 43% of library users; the working class make up 62% of the population and 33% of library users. There is a similar social class differential in reading habits: 62% of the middle class read daily or weekly, compared with 42% of the working class; more than a quarter of the working class (27%) never read, compared to just 13% of the middle class.

### **Community**

Another way of looking at this issue is in terms of library members, users, supporters and the community; our aim is to make these circles overlap as much as possible.

### **Needs-based**

*Open to All?* found that those who use public libraries the most often have the least needs; and those who use public libraries the least often have the greatest needs. For this paradigm to be reversed the public library must be transformed into a needs-based and community-led service. A needs-based library is predicated on the assumption that everyone has needs and each person has different needs. The needs-based philosophy is 'from each according to their ability', in terms of staff strengths (talents, skills and knowledge), 'and to each according to their needs', in terms of identifying, prioritising and meeting community needs. In order to identify needs, libraries must go much further than passive consultation and actively engage and involve all sections of the local community in the planning, design, delivery and evaluation of library services. The community is an expert in its needs. The library worker becomes an enabler, facilitator and co-producer of library services with the community. This requires a number of fundamental shifts in attitudes, behaviours and values.

The library worker is transformed from 'the sage on the stage' into 'the guide on the side'. The library is transformed from a grocery store where people shop for pre-packaged information and entertainment into a kitchen where people can find the ingredients to create their own knowledge. Library users are transformed from transactional customers into members and stakeholders. Library spaces are transformed into democratic public spaces which are truly open to all, the living rooms of the community. As Lankes has concluded: 'Bad libraries build collections, good libraries build services and great libraries build communities.'

## **Strategy**

The building blocks of a needs-based and community-led public library are strategies, structures (staff and services), systems and organisational culture. At the strategic level the public library will have a core purpose (mission and values) and an envisioned future (vision) which have human rights, social justice and social development at their core. The Strategic Plan will be developed through an inclusive process which engages all key stakeholders – councillors, board members, managers, staff, partners, active users, passive users and non users. Once agreed by all stakeholders, the Strategic Plan will drive everything that the public library does. For example, the Strategic Plan for Thunder Bay Public Library (TBPL) 2013-16 emerged from an open and transparent process with a clear focus on five key directions – Lifelong Learning, Innovation and Change, the Local Economy, Community Well Being and Personal Growth, Social Inclusion and Diversity. These strategic directions will drive the Service Plan 2014. This Plan was developed by staff and the community via a Community Action Panel (CAP), which was formed as part of the strategic planning process. The CAP members will stay with TBPL on the journey from service planning through to design, delivery and evaluation.

## **Structure**

The strategic directions will drive the staffing structure. TBPL will be restructured from a traditional service silo hierarchy into a team based matrix structure. These new structural arrangements will give staff a greater sense of purpose, autonomy and mastery. The purpose will be derived from the five strategic directions. Each member of staff will be able to relate their daily tasks to goals in the Service Plan which in turn are related to the five strategic directions. This will create a 'golden thread' linking strategic directions and Goals to group projects and individual tasks. The autonomy will be derived from giving staff greater control over task (what they do), time (when they do it), team (who they do it with), and technique (how they do it). Staff will decide which goals, projects and tasks they want to focus on and will work on these tasks in teams with staff from other parts of the service. Mastery will be derived

from matching staff strengths (talents, skills and knowledge) to positions. Staff perform better and are more motivated when they do things which they enjoy and are good at. This strengths based approach will be reflected in dynamic, online, interactive performance appraisal through Progress Reports which give positive feedback both in terms of achievement (goals) and competence (strengths).

The strategic directions will drive the service structure to ensure that TBPL has the right services, in the right places, at the right times. This will determine the size and shape of the library network (the number and location of branches, opening hours), collections (size, range, formats) and programming (community development). The strategic directions will be used as a Service Sieve. When an opportunity (project, idea, partnership, funding, other) is presented to or identified by TBPL it will be put through the Service Sieve. Each sieve represents a strategic direction. The more sieves that an opportunity can pass through will determine its priority for TBPL. If an opportunity passes through one sieve it will be a Level 1 (low) priority. If an opportunity passes through all five sieves it will be a Level 5 (high) priority. If an opportunity does not pass through any of the sieves it will not be a priority for TBPL. This will enable TBPL to say yes or no (with a strategic rationale) to new opportunities. This will facilitate the development of a realistic and achievable Service Plan.

## **Systems**

The strategic directions will drive a systems review to identify and remove or lower barriers to access. Systems (policies, procedures and processes) can passively or actively exclude. For example: inappropriate rules and regulations; charging policies which disadvantage those on low incomes; book stock policies which do not reflect the needs of the community; lack of signage in buildings or signs which make no sense to library users. These systems can create a lack of a sense of ownership and involvement by the community. In relation to the most excluded people, it is important to address the processes of exclusion rather than focusing simply on addressing the particular characteristics of excluded groups. The critical test of a system is that it is useful, usable, and desirable. If a system fails to pass this test it will be amended or scrapped.

## **Culture**

The strategic directions will drive the organisational culture, 'the way we do things around here'. These are the attitudes, behaviours and values which distinguish TBPL from all other organisations. Strategy, structures and systems can come and go but nothing really changes unless the culture is changed. Strategy, structures and systems are tangible, but culture lies 'below the water line' like the hidden part of an iceberg. Duhigg uses a water metaphor to describe culture: 'The water is habits, the unthinking choices and invisible decisions that surround us every day

– and which, just by looking at them, become visible again. Water is the most apt analogy for how a habit works. Water hollows out for itself a channel, which grows broader and deeper; and, after having ceased to flow, it resumes, when it flows again, the path traced by itself before.’ Habits and culture are difficult to change but the use of inclusive, transparent and processes to develop new strategies, structures and systems are in themselves powerful cultural change mechanisms.

### **Community-Led**

So, what does a Community-Led Public Library look like? At the core of community-led libraries is relationship building, both internally within the organisation, and externally with local communities.

### **Consultation**

Consultation can take many forms, but is often limited to the passive giving of information or the reactions of local communities to proposals which have already been developed by library experts. The community-led approach enables local residents and organisations to work in shared planning and action with the library. The highest level of engagement is a leadership model in which the community initiates and leads on issues with support from library service.

### **Needs Assessment and Research**

Consultation and engagement are the building blocks of relationship building, needs assessment and research. Community profiles and community asset mapping can establish baselines of what resources are currently available and what is required to meet community needs. These needs may range from very basic physiological requirements (food, clothing, shelter) to self actualisation (realising a person’s full potential). The community is an expert in its own needs and a library should prioritise those with the greatest needs. Library needs assessments can be co-produced by the library and community working together in partnership.

### **Library Image and Identity**

Library image and identity are significant factors in library use and non use. There are a number of barriers to be overcome, including those which are institutional (opening hours, rules and regulations), personal and social barriers (lack of basic skills, low income and poverty), environmental barriers (access, isolation, poor transport links), perceptual barriers and lack of awareness (people who do not think libraries are relevant to their lives or needs). Attempts have been made to change the image of libraries through re-branding exercises such as

Idea Stores and Discovery Centres. Libraries have also been co-located with a range of other services to break down media driven stereotypes and myths.

### **Outreach, Community Development and Partnerships**

The word library is often synonymous with a building full of books, but community-led libraries are focused more on people and relationships. Outreach is predicated on assumed needs, with programs and services designed, planned, delivered and evaluated by library experts. Community development is premised on shared resources, values and outcomes. Libraries can be transformed into living rooms of the community and democratic public spaces which are co-owned by communities.

### **Information and Communications Technology**

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is a means to an end - to meet community needs - and not an end in itself or a magic bullet which can make libraries socially inclusive. ICT has an important role to play as a tool which can be targeted at socially excluded communities to provide access to digital skills and services including e-government. There is a strong link between internet use and household income. For example, within the 16-24 age group, 88.3% of those in the top income quartile have access to wireless internet, compared to just 26.4% in the bottom quartile. The balance is reversed when it comes to use of the internet in public libraries: 16.3% of those in the wealthiest group compared to 26.8% in the poorest group. In this example it is clear how ICT can be targeted towards those with the greatest needs.

### **Materials Provision**

Materials selection has always been a political decision and has often been used as an agent of social control rather than social change. 'Reads' versus 'Needs' is an ongoing debate between those who see libraries as gatekeepers of knowledge and worthy literature and others who view them as gateways to popular culture. Community-Led libraries place more emphasis on equity than excellence and recognise that libraries exist to meet community needs rather than uphold professional standards.

### **Staffing, Recruitment, Training and Education**

Community-led libraries put people first which means that great care must be taken in selecting the right 'man' for the job. Empathy and social skills are more important than technical library qualifications. Staff training and development should focus on developing a portfolio of community development skills: communication skills; listening skills;

influencing relationships; reflective practice; improved confidence and assertiveness; negotiation skills; dealing with conflict. The community-led library worker skill set should include a blend of personal attributes and behaviours (values and ethics), generic skills (including community engagement), core library and information skills (reading, learning and information literacy) and specific leadership and management skills (finance, HR and performance management).

### **Mainstreaming and Resourcing**

Community-led must be mainstreamed as a strategic priority so that it drives all aspects of library service – structures, systems and culture. This will in turn inform the allocation and redirection of resources. Community-led services must be internally funded, long term and sustainable and not project based or reliant on grants and external resources.

### **Impact**

A needs-based and community-led library service is designed to identify, prioritise and meet community needs. But how do we know when we have met a community need? We can start by asking the simple question 'How will you know and how will we know that the library is having a positive impact on your quality of life?' Creating meaningful impact and outcome measures can be challenging and it is often difficult to distinguish between cause and effect. For example, what, if any, is the relationship between library use, equality and well-being? And, if there is a relationship, do public libraries make people feel more equal and improve their well-being; or are people who feel more equal and who have a greater sense of well-being more likely to use the library? Library statistics such as visits and circulation have traditionally been used to measure the volume of inputs and outputs that libraries produce. But these statistics could also be used as proxy indicators for measuring the library contribution to impacts and outcomes such as equality and well-being. These metrics may indicate contribution, not attribution. In other words, they measure whether the library is one of the causes of improvements in the lives of library users, not whether (or how much) the library is directly or solely responsible.

### **Equality**

One of the most detailed studies on inequality was carried out by Wilkinson and Pickett. They analysed a wide range of comparable data from 23 countries and found that almost everything is affected not by how wealthy a society is, but how equal it is. Societies with a bigger gap between rich and poor are bad for everyone in them – including the well off. There is a startling correlation between income equality and a whole

range of issues including happiness, physical health, mental health, drug abuse, education, imprisonment, obesity, social mobility, trust and community life, violence, teenage births and child well-being. Finland, Sweden and Denmark are among the top five most equal countries, while Canada is mid table in 12<sup>th</sup> place.

Wilson and Pickett did not study public library use but this was considered by Fuegi & Jennings who analysed library statistics in 32 countries. In terms of library visits Finland, Sweden and Denmark are among the top four highest performing countries and Canada is mid table in 17<sup>th</sup> place. This suggests that there may be a relationship between income equality and library visits. If public libraries are contributing to the creation of more equal societies, the challenge is to identify that contribution and evaluate it. If we can understand and measure the public library contribution we can make it a strategic priority and align our structures, systems and cultures with this priority. This will create a benefit to society by making it more equal, and a benefit to the library by increasing its use. Conversely, as levels of inequality increase, levels of library use tend to decrease. For example, in the UK income inequality has increased by 32% and library use has fallen by 16%. As the gap between those at the top and those at the bottom continues to grow, it is important to recognise that societies with greater inequality are shown to have worse health and well being outcomes.

## **Well-being**

There are many definitions of well-being. The *Canadian Index of Well-being* has adopted the following as its working definition: 'The presence of the highest possible quality of life in its full breadth of expression focused on but not necessarily exclusive to: good living standards, robust health, a sustainable environment, vital communities, an educated populace, balanced time use, high levels of democratic participation, and access to and participation in leisure and culture.' The *Your Better Life Index* provides international comparisons of well-being across 34 OECD countries. Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Canada are among the top 5 countries in terms of life satisfaction. These countries are also in the top 5 with regards to library circulation. Does this indicate a relationship between well-being and library circulation? We already know that on average people who read have better physical health, empathy and mental health. Frequent readers are more likely to be satisfied with life, happier and more successful. Reading for as little as six minutes can reduce stress by 60%, slow down the heart beat, ease muscle tension and alter your state of mind. Reading is also good for others. For example, readers are more likely to help non-profit organisations: 82% of readers donate goods or money (compared to 66% of non-readers); 42% of readers volunteer (compared to 25% of non-readers).

## Value

A recent government sponsored study in the UK has found a significant association between frequent library use and reported well-being. Using libraries frequently was valued at \$2446 per person per year, or \$203 per person per month. This was higher than sport participation and arts engagement.

The *Canadian Index of Well-being* has reported a number of trends in terms of leisure and cultural participation. Even though between 45 and 60% of Canadians report participating in social leisure activities on a typical day, participation overall has declined in recent years, especially among females. Participation in arts and culture activities is comparatively lower, but has remained fairly stable. The average number of hours spent volunteering for culture and recreation organisations has declined; however, the time volunteering for these organisations as a percentage of all volunteering activity has dropped dramatically, from 32% to 22%, and the decline is most pronounced among Canadians who are 25 to 34 years of age. What do these trends mean for public libraries? And what are the local trends where you work?

## Ontario

In my province the *How are Ontarians Really Doing?* research reported that overall well-being increased by 7.3% between 1994-2010, which was just below the national average of 7.5%. There was a mixed picture across the eight domains of well-being: education +36.0%; community vitality +15.4%; living standards +6.4%; healthy populations +5.6%; democratic engagement +1.7%; time use +1.1%; environment -1.9%. According to the report 'The largest negative trend in Ontario, a 5.9% drop in leisure and culture, has Ontarians asking "where have all the good times gone?" While less severe than the national decline of -7.8% for all of Canada, the trend deserves attention. Ontarians, especially women, are socialising less and spending less time engaged in arts and culture. Overall, volunteering in arts and culture, attending performances, and spending are all down significantly in Ontario. Historically, people have fiercely protected the time and money they spend on their free time pursuits. Seen across all income levels, this dip goes beyond belt tightening due to the recession. All these factors erode elements of health and community connection, and reduce the sense of who we are as people.'

The report also suggests a number of positive ways forward, including: reduce income inequality; focus on the community as a place for social innovation and change; enhance access to public spaces, leisure and culture opportunities for all citizens. This is where the community-led library can play an important role. If the public library is embedded in the community it can be the ideal place to build co-operation among

stakeholders, to break down the silos between domains, and to experiment with social innovation. The community level is where meeting compelling challenges head on and customising new ways to address them may have the most, and fastest, impact on well being. Co-operation and co-production can lead to social change and help build community vitality. Our communities are also the best places to build relationships and to rekindle participation in leisure and culture. Participating in culture is social in nature, bringing people into regular contact with others who share similar interests and values. These connections help to build social capital – trusting relationships, stronger ties to the community, and greater understanding of the diverse groups within the community. They also contribute to individual enrichment, particularly among individuals who are marginalised or disadvantaged.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, needs-based and community-led public libraries have strategies, structures, systems and cultures which enable them to identify, prioritise and meet community needs. Needs are identified through relationship building and community development. Needs are prioritised to focus on those with the greatest needs. Needs are met via a mix of universal and targeted services (proportional universalism) that are planned, designed, delivered and evaluated in partnership with local communities. By meeting individual and community needs the library can contribute to wider outcomes such as equality and well-being. These contributions can be measured by using proxy indicators - visits and circulation – to determine the impact of public libraries on these outcomes. By understanding and evaluating these contributions, public libraries can demonstrate their role as agents of positive social change.

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## **Information for Social Change Number 34 Summer/Autumn 2014**

### **The library in your pocket: the nemesis of the public library?**

**Andrew Hudson**

Public libraries have three basic functions: information, education and recreation. They are arguably also provided by the Internet however the Internet is not free unless it is accessed at a public library in a library authority that doesn't charge for Internet access.

Because information can be provided through the Internet, library authorities have often reduced expenditure on reference materials including items such as telephone and post code directories on the grounds that the material is available on the Internet. This is effectively restricting access in that the user usually has to register as a library member, which may charge for access to the Internet or in some cases charge people who have registered as visitors. Before this development it was possible to enter a library and obtain information freely.

By providing the information online, cash strapped library authorities have found a way of circumventing the Libraries Art Galleries and Museums Act and effectively brought in a knowledge tax.

When the 1964 Libraries, Art, Galleries and Museums Act was passed (which defined free core services) the Internet did not exist. The Act covered books - with other materials not being regarded as a core service, with the result that library authorities were free to charge for audiovisual materials.

Whilst it can be argued that DVDs, CDs and other AV materials are additional extras, the Internet performs the core functions of a public library providing information, education and recreation, and in some ways has resulted in a return to a gatekeeper role for libraries through the provision of terminals.

It has been questioned if libraries have a future in the Internet age; it is also arguable that the Internet also offers a future for libraries, but will new developments in technology ultimately render libraries obsolete? In 1966 Arthur C. Clarke predicted "pocket libraries" by 1999.<sup>1</sup> The advent

of the m-library in which information can be obtained through a hand held mobile phone suggests that the pocket library has arrived roughly 10 years after Clarke's predicted date. <sup>2</sup>

So far these developments have largely been in academic libraries and they may well be limited to more affluent users, although the use of smartphones is growing and may be rendering some of the functions of the reference library obsolete.

One current UK political party recently endorsed a policy paper that expressed concern that "it would be very regrettable to allow IT to become something available only to those with the necessary means. Our society already suffers from too many entrenched inequalities. IT has the potential to reduce or even eliminate some of those, but the government must take an enabling stance."

However as a solution the paper proposed: "Firstly it is imperative move away from what is currently an implicit government bias In favour of the PC as the main citizen user interface. Increasingly, other tools are being used to access Internet facilities. The Government should make a priority the inclusion of digital communication capability for the estimated 10 million citizens still excluded from the economic, social and democratic advantages of the IT environment. In terms of Government savings and increased economic activity investment in this area would likely produce an economic dividend."

The policy paper also stated: "Mobile phone penetration is close to 100% and is greatest In Social Class E. We therefore recommend that the government make appropriate public services available online and accessible by an average retail mobile phone. This may mean, in some cases, trimmed down versions of websites with richer content." The paper also made mention of the role of public access terminals in public libraries and proposal for making basic Internet access a free core service. <sup>3</sup>

When I spent a spell doing wildlife research on a game reserve in South Africa there was someone from a nearby village training to be a guide who thought there was a library in his village but hadn't used it, obtaining most of his information on from the web. It may be that in parts of the 'Third World' the transition toward an m-library may arrive without the intermediate stage of the public library. However for much of the world public libraries exist and are an important source of information. It may be that in the long term the m-library will become the main source of information.

Currently however, the m-library has a long way to go before it encroaches on the public library but if it does replace the informational and educational role of libraries then the public library will be on the road towards charging; I should add privatisation to this trend but this has

already begun with organisations such as John Laing plc now moving into libraries in some authorities.

Michelle Obama has described Internet access as one of the universal rights. If that is the case then libraries should be providing access the Internet without charging. Some library authorities already do.

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# Information for Social Change Number 34 Summer/Autumn 2014

## Just For Fun or How to Classify the Same

**Martyn Lowe**

Librarians classify knowledge with the use of numerical or alphabetical systems, but some knowledge cannot be classified that way.

Just how do you classify many of the same kind of items, with all their variations in shape, style, and colour? Never mind the different materials they are made from, or just who manufactured them.

Yet people have been doing so for many a century, and coming up with some very practical solutions to this question.

### **Places to Shop**

There used to be a button show on Brewer St. in Soho. This was way back in the late 1960s. You could go in there and buy every type of buttons:- Plastic, metal, enamel, or bone. They all came in different sizes, and were displayed attached to the manufactures cards. The type style & design of these cards took one back to an earlier are.

Wander along Tower Street, Covent Garden, and you will come upon a company called Beadworks. Here you will find every type of bead you can think of in order to decorate yourself and your clothing.

<http://www.beadworks.co.uk/>

A short walk from there is James Smith & Son in New Oxford Street. This is an shop which sells Umbrellas and Walking Sticks. It has been doing so since 1830. Even if you never go in to the shop, then the building and the window display are well worth viewing. They sell every type of Umbrella you might imagine, together with seat sticks, and wooden animal heads for your umbrella. You can even buy both drinking and corkscrew sticks.

<http://www.james-smith.co.uk/index.cfm>

Parallel to Piccadilly you will find Jermyn Street.

This is a street which is famous for its traditional shirt shops.

These don't come cheap, but you know the old saying:

' You get what you pay for.'

Now imagine working in these places, and the kind of specialist knowledge you would need to do so.

Then start to think about the different ways in which each of these shops classify just what they sell.

### **The Clouds Above**

Of course such specialist classification systems are not confined to the retail trade.

Look above your head and day dream with you head in the cloud.

It's a old idea.

Yet it was only with the publication of the Essay on the Modification of Clouds by Luke Howard (28 November 1772 – 21 March 1864) in 1803 that such a cloud classification system came in to being.

Now it's so easy to look at a cloud, and with a few clicks of the mouse find a photo which shows kind it is.

<http://www.clouds-online.com/>

### **The Smiles We Make**

How we look at and then describe people is always interesting to see or read about.

You can learn a lot about this by visiting the National Portrait Gallery.

<http://www.npg.org.uk/>

They classify Photographers & paintings represented in the Collection by the Sitters, Artists, Photographers, and Subjects.

[www.npg.org.uk/collections.php](http://www.npg.org.uk/collections.php)

Lets say that you want to find the portraits they hold of Bruce Kent, then this is what you would find: -

<http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/person/mp59315/bruce-kent>

The Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery in Washington DC. does exactly the same.

<http://www.npg.si.edu/>

While the Clown Egg Register records the various unique ways in which clowns paint their faces.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/lukestephenson/sets/72157606703952187/>

## **The Steps We Take**

Dance Notation is another specialist area of work.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dance\\_notation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dance_notation)

A good example of this is the Sergeyev Collection.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sergeyev\\_Collection](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sergeyev_Collection)

Another one is the Ballet Notations of The Royal Ballet which is held in Royal Opera House, Covent Garden.

<http://www.rohcollections.org.uk/CollectionChoreo.aspx>

## **Fascination**

On course every trade has it own set of classifications, technical descriptions, and technical jargon.

Here is a selection of webpages which illustrate this point, and which constantly fascinate me.

UPPER & LOWER CASE (U&lc)

<http://www.design-bookshelf.com/Type/Ulc.html>

The Pen Museum

<http://www.penroom.co.uk/>

The Pen Shop - Leadenhall Market

<http://www.allinlondon.co.uk/directory/1223/41168.php>

&

Pub Furniture.

<http://pubfurniture.net/index.html>

### **Now Just You Try This**

I've always thought that any classification system should be based upon just what one is trying to sort out.

Sometimes you can't be taught these things.

You just have to do it.

Now just try this as an exercise: -

Sort out a pile of legal and financial papers in another language than your own,

or

tidy up a large box of different types of electrical plugs, sockets, and cables.

I've done both and really enjoyed doing so.

# Information for Social Change Number 34 Summer/Autumn 2014

## Comment on the Origins of Librarianship, the Public Library & Current Trends

**Paul Catherall**

The origin of librarianship is closely entwined with that of public libraries. In the UK, the history of public libraries began in the late 15<sup>th</sup> Century with early clerical libraries made accessible for public use, an example of these libraries included the Kalendaries library of Bristol (Storer, 1814), opened in 1464:

*"By far the most interesting part of the establishment of the Kalendaries was their library, which was accessible to all the citizens. The liberality, indeed, of its regulations in this particular... It was ordered that on festival days, two hours before nine and for two hours after, free access should be granted to all who were disposed to read or to consult the books contained in the library. ...The books which the library contained are represented to have related principally to Saxon antiquities, history and law..."*

(Corry, 1816)

Other notable publicly accessible libraries included the Norwich City Library, established 1608 (Stoker, 1980), the Bodleian Library of Oxford, established 1653 (Craster, 1952) and the Zaluski library (Poland) established in 1747 (Witt, 2005).

Many of these early libraries were based around a model of private membership and tended to offer reference works derived from academic or scholarly patronage.

Whilst some of these libraries were funded via individual subscription others also relied on the investment of shares with the library by members (proprietary libraries) or on annual subscriptions.

Many of these early libraries were also 'Learned Societies' (James, 1976), offering materials focused on specialist academic, scientific or other specialist fields within those circles or networks of individuals working or prolific within an associated industry or discipline.

Perhaps the earliest true Public Library offering public access to materials included the Chetham's Library of Manchester (Powell, 1990), founded in 1653, and established principally to further the education of grammar school boys.

One of the biggest changes seen in libraries during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century was the trend toward lending – this was in contrast to enclosed or restricted access by privileged individuals or custodians (Rothiot, n.d.). Increased access was also characterised by transition toward public access by paid subscription, with almost 300 subscription libraries being founded in England by the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century (Raven, 2006).

The 'Circulating Libraries' of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century also offered a broader range of literature beyond academic or scholarly materials and periodicals, offering reading material drawn from the increasing popular genre of the novel and dramatic productions (Hamlyn, 1946).

Two of the most important developments in the evolution of public libraries in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century included the Museums Act of 1845, establishing the principle of public libraries funded via taxation and operated by public institutions (Foley, 2000) and the Public Libraries Act of 1850, establishing free libraries for the public across boroughs of the United Kingdom (Max, 1984).

These acts were in many respects a direct outcome of radical dissent evidenced across the UK during this period, particularly following the activities of the Chartist Movement, which had sought to improve the general pay and conditions of working people, improve access to the electoral franchise and improve access to education. Similar progress in the development of public libraries was seen in the United States with the founding of many thousands of libraries due to the philanthropist funding of Andrew Carnegie (Bobinski, 1968).

The development of public libraries in the UK continued following the establishment of County Councils in 1888 (Dunbabin, 1965), this Act also established county-level libraries, reflecting the current local library structures of the UK.

Public libraries, like specialist or academic libraries have seen dramatic change over the last three decades, with increasing digitisation, adoption of electronic OPACs (Online Public Access Catalogues) and transition toward Web based platforms and systems, these changes have also occurred in parallel with increasing Information Technology literacy amongst the wider public and rise of mobile technologies and patterns of access.

Digital and Web based information, whilst increasingly prevalent and often supplanting print resources such as older reference, newspaper or records remains problematic for certain groups of users, including the elderly, some users with access, visual or motor issues and those without reliable or affordable access to technology or Internet subscriptions.

The potential benefits of digital libraries have also presented unprecedented opportunities for widening participation and democratisation of information, global access to library catalogues and opportunities for sharing and re-use of resources via Open Access collections - including access to scholarly and educational content in global regions facing resourcing difficulties.

Public Libraries in the UK have also been characterised in recent years by increasing retrenchment and closure, following decades of under-investment and the recent austerity agenda following the 2008 recession, with around 200 UK public libraries having been reported closed in some capacity between 2011 and 2012:

“Some 201 libraries, including mobile vans, closed in 2011-12, a marked increase on the 146 that closed the year before, according to the annual survey by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. The closures, which accounted for around five per cent of the total number of libraries, came as the survey disclosed further cuts to budgets. Library income fell by six per cent to £87 million last year while spending on libraries was expected to decline by a further four per cent this year. The number of staff also fell by eight per cent, double last year's figure, although there was a similar increase in the number of volunteers.”

(Rowley, 2012)

According to the Public Libraries News web site, some 491 public libraries are reported to have closed in the UK in recent years (Public Libraries News, 2014).

It remains to be seen how the Public Library will adapt further during the current climate of economic austerity and within an ongoing trend for increasingly digital and online service provision. It is evident however, that public libraries enjoy ongoing support for their diverse educational, informational and recreational services across all age groups - as seen during recent popular campaigns by local community groups and pressure groups such as 38 Degrees in the UK.

It is also clear that the Public Library enjoys a special place in the mindset of the wider public, undoubtedly deriving from the educational experience of many generations from the past to present.

Public Library services remain an important element in our public infrastructure. We should not forget that these services were rooted in the struggles of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> C. Labour movement, deriving from a wider social struggle for social justice and the meritocratic state, nor take these services for granted in the face of an ongoing threat by the emergent Neoliberal and Neoconservative politics of our time, which continues to threaten these cherished public services.

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# **Information for Social Change Number 34 Summer/Autumn 2014**

## **Critical Perspectives on E-Learning II**

**Paul Catherall**

In an article I wrote some years back, 'Critical Perspectives in E-Learning', I provided a critical commentary on E-Learning in the context of UK government advocacy for digital literacy, a demand-led role for Higher Education and emergent lifelong or flexible learning for an increasingly dynamic employment market:

"In recent years, the post-statutory UK education sectors have seen dramatic change in policy and focus, largely driven by the education policies of the New Labour government elected in 1997. This government's vision for education has cited a combination of widening access to post-statutory education and training and use of emerging technologies to achieve these aims. Reports such as the Dearing Report (1997), The Learning Age (1998) and 21st Century Skills Realising Our Potential (2003) presented both industry and the education sectors with a number of goals focused on improving educational standards as a vehicle to strengthen the UK economy."

(Catherall, 2006, p.153)

Some commentators, such as Cullen (2001) have questioned government emphases on the use of ICT as a driver for post-statutory education, questioning the likely uptake of academic delivery via learning technologies outwith demographic groups typically able to access ICT literacy:

"Where people in business or professional occupations acquire skills as part of their employment, manual workers and the unemployed are less likely to be exposed to such opportunities..."

(Cullen, 2001, p.314)

The universality of networked access may also be questioned when considering recent government advocacy for ICT uptake and ICT investment within Higher Education, this situation remains particularly true for the elderly and school leavers where class-based education remains the primary mode of educational delivery. This is often described as the 'digital divide' (Cullen, 2001, p.312):

"Additionally, the VLE does rely on internet access and this is still not universally available to all members of the public. Despite the impact of the People's Network on public libraries, many individuals such as the disabled or elderly may be unable to use Web based resources for accessibility reasons. Additionally international students from developing countries may have no experience of Web browser software. It should also not be assumed that all school-leavers will be comfortable studying through the medium of the Web, with class-based instruction still the prevalent form of teaching in statutory education."

(Catherall, 2006, p.156)

In addition to questions on universal access, the deployment of educational technologies is also inherently reliant upon prevalence and compliance with a variety of standards, allowing for development of Web sites, data-driven applications and interactive content for use across a range of Web browsers and devices.

Challenges for the implementation of standards for learning technologies include disparities between Web site HTML/ XHTML scripting, programmatic Web content and Web browsers.

The problem of digital standards compliance has exacerbated with the proliferation of client-side Web technologies alongside proliferation of Web clients and networked devices; indeed, the development of complex CMS and VLE platforms for Web authoring and emergence of online learning have largely removed the remit for skilled Web development and usability auditing from most university IT departments; Mesbah and Prasad (2011) comment on the ongoing challenges following the shift toward more interactive and dynamic applications represented by Web 2.0:

"However, in their bid to be inclusive and render websites that do not adhere to these standards (e.g., legacy websites) web browsers typically implement their own extensions to the web standards and in doing so discover in their behavior. The explosive growth in the number of browsers and client-side environments has only exacerbated this issue. In addition, modern, dynamic web applications execute an increasingly bigger fraction of their functionality in the client-tier i.e., within the end-

user's web browser, thus further amplifying differences in observed behaviour.”

(Mesbah and Prasad, 2011, p.2)

In addition to basic HTML/XHTML and Web browser functionality and standards compliance, there remains a significant accessibility and usability challenge for new and emerging models of Web based platforms and instructional-design based resources. The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) provide a highly codified framework for the development of Web-based content and thematic guidelines for configuration of layout and interactive elements (Catherall, 2007, 104), however, the advent of increasingly complex and demanding Web content, shifting beyond strict HTML/XHTML markup and utilizing a broad range of Flash, JavaScript, AJAX and other technologies presents greater potential for access problems than in the past, both for disabled users - such as individuals with low vision or motor difficulties - and for general usability. In his paper, 'Accessibility of emerging rich web technologies: web 2.0 and the semantic web', Cooper comments:

“Because Web 2.0 is an emergent phenomenon rather than a specific technology or set of technologies, there is no single designer or responsible authority that ensures that the technologies and practices support accessibility. Market forces must influence this. While the work done by accessibility advocates to date has greatly increased awareness of accessibility, the voice of the community is not loud enough. Because of the fast pace of technological innovation, and because the accessibility challenges of Web 2.0 can block the very people who need most to engage in dialog to influence its form. Therefore accessibility is an important challenge.”

(Cooper, 2007, p.1)

One emergent area of concern for standards development comprises the development of the SCORM specifications for learning objects, allowing for development, sharing and re-use of packaged learning materials for use in compatible platforms; whilst SCORM presents a novel and flexible solution for obtaining deployable content via learning repositories, it should be noted that SCORM specifications are by no means a unified entity, but consist of many diverse sub-modules and specialist frameworks, e.g. for assessment and storage of quiz submission attempts. Singh and Reed (2002) question the emergent nature of learning object specifications and suggest educators should query the status of SCORM compliance when evaluating commercial learning platforms:

“Ask your suppliers where they stand on specifications. Do they support them politically? Do they participate in the specifications group? Have they baked this support into their own products, or is it really just lip-service? Nothing will encourage the suppliers to adopt standards faster than customer demand.”

(Singh and Reed, 2002, p.65)

Pedagogic and academic objections to E-Learning generally refer to the inflexibility or rigidity of systems which can limit or impose an instructional design model; Norm Friesen comments on the imposition of the linear and passive instructional design model on technology facilitated learning, indicating disparity between the aims of instructional design as a facilitator of military education and the aims of education in wider society:

“The end result of this approach is to understand training and the technologies that support it as a means of "engineering" and maximizing the performance of the human components of a larger system. The performance of these human components can then be fine-tuned and optimized in a manner similar to the way their mechanical and electronic counterparts are maintained and refined.”

(Friesen, 2003, p.59)

Musa (2003, p1.), Dobbs (2000, p.84) and Fetherston (2001) point out the often overlooked issue of pedagogy or theories of learning and teaching when evaluating, designing or deploying learning facilitated technology:

“There are many web sites that contain learning material, but which seem to be simply transferring traditional course material directly to electronic format without considering the pedagogical principles involved...”

(Musa, 2003, p.1)

Fetherston (2001) further describes the “transmissive”, linear and content-driven nature of E-Learning prevalent in the current educational sector, suggesting educational providers must embed constructivist and participative approaches to learning within technology facilitated learning:

“Transmissive approaches place the student in the position of being a passive receiver of knowledge. There is usually little emphasis on their own conceptions or the active participation of students in their acquisition of knowledge. Results of these cultural transmission approaches are well documented in a number of learning areas.”

(Fetherston, 2001, p.28)

Additionally, E-Learning and technology facilitated learning is frequently associated with encroachment by commercialization and private equity interests, often in context to learning systems suppliers such as VLE vendors or corporations specialising in the delivery or other support for E-Learning provision. Nixon and Helms (2002) comment on the uptake of alternative corporate providers for education during the early 2000s:

“Corporate universities are not new, but have experienced tremendous growth during the last ten years. Predictions are that corporate universities will outnumber traditional colleges and universities within the next ten years ... Corporate universities exist in government settings and include the Internal Revenue Service, the City of Tempe’s Learning Center and NASA’s Marshall Space Flight Center.”

(Nixon and Helms, 2002)

In conclusion, we are certainly at a point of intersection at the present time between the use of blended learning as a relatively complementary approach to traditional teaching methods and the use of purely online teaching via the virtual learning environment model of e-learning in a distance-based context; the perspectives listed in this article outline some of the pedagogic, operational and technical issues which are arising at the present time for online education. The rise of corporate, blended and hybrid models of learning via digital content continues to present challenges and opportunities for the education and information sectors, but also raises ongoing questions for academic practitioners and library professionals servicing these needs.

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# Information for Social Change Number 34 Summer/Autumn 2014

## Definitions of E-Learning

**Paul Catherall**

Recent years have seen the proliferation of terminology and jargon to describe the use of computer-based technology to facilitate learning and teaching. For some commentators writing from a critical pedagogic perspective such as Preston and Cuthell (2012) or Kress and Pachler (2007), the question is asked if E-Learning is no more than jargon describing technology without reference to educational processes, in this sense, e-learning is synonymous with other recent jargon such as 'mobile learning' or 'virtual learning' (Preston and Cuthell, 2012, p.19).

**Web Based Learning** is defined generally as a means of delivering an educational experience via the World Wide Web (McKimm, Jollie and Cantillon, 2003, p.870). The early years of the World Wide Web provided an opportunity to deliver mostly textual educational resources, but later images, video, interactive Flash animated resources, 3D modelling and other resources; the Web browser pioneered by Tim Berners-Lee provided the foundation for more complex Web based platforms during the early 2000s such as WebCT, Moodle, Blackboard and others.

**Online Learning** can be seen to usually refer to the deployment of Web-based platforms for teaching and learning (Musa and Wood, 2003); whilst this phrase is used almost as often as E-Learning, this term is also often used to distinguish between mixed models of technology facilitated class-based learning and purely online, remote or distance-based learning - typically facilitated via the VLE or related platforms.

**Synchronous Learning** refers to the use of communications occurring whilst all participants are online/ mutually accessible; examples of synchronous learning include real-time text-based chat, digital/ satellite videoconferencing or Webcasting - (streaming video via the World Wide Web or within Webinars for combined video/ discussion). Barriers to synchronous learning can include poor bandwidth in some world regions, limiting access to video or difficulties supporting more complex proprietary applications, e.g. where a Run Time Environment such as the Java platform must also be installed for tools or features to function.

**Asynchronous Learning** refers to collaborative or communication-based activities between participants separated by time; asynchronous applications include online discussion forums, email, Wikis (collaborative documentation systems), instructor feedback, or educational collaboration via blogging or online video blogging (vlogs).

**Virtual Learning** refers to principles of virtualisation in educational delivery (Stonebreaker and Hazeltine, 2004), encompassing the broad spectrum of interactions permissible via Web and other Internet technologies. Virtual learning is most often used to emphasise the classless VLE or otherwise systemised learning environment, where traditional class-based interactions and behaviours have a mirrored or replicated online equivalence.

**M-Learning** refers to the use of mobile devices, particularly hybrid or multi-functional cell phones such as the popular Blackberry or more recent Apple derived 'smartphone' touchpad phones; use of mobile devices within an Online- or E-Learning context is usually referred to as 'M-Learning'. Whilst M-Learning represents a novel paradigm for remote learning, it can be observed that the practice of M-Learning can be largely dependent on issues such as the mobile-device proficiency of the user and limitations surrounding the design, usability and technical compliance of applications such as the VLE within the mobile interface.

**Ubiquitous Learning** typically refers the use of mobile devices, laptops or 'notebook' computers carried conveniently with the student for use in libraries or when using public facilities such as the rail network; the increasing ability of users to access ICT and networked applications in an ubiquitous context has prompted what has been described synonymously as 'anytime learning' (Bonarini, 1997, p.281), 'internet time' learning (Cross, J. 2004, p.103), 'on-demand learning' (Acharya and Sundararaj, 2011) or 'ubiquitous learning' (Boyinbode and Akintola, 2008, p.401).

Synonymous with 'ubiquitous learning', we also sometimes encounter the term '**on-demand learning**' (Trondsen and Vickery, 1997), stressing perhaps the increasingly challenging needs and expectations of students operating within the virtual or online sphere, facilitated by mobile devices and ubiquitous access to networked resources. For Trondsen and Vickery - writing in a corporate training context (Trondsen, and Vickery, 1997, p.1).

Terms such as **TTEL** (Technology Enhanced Learning), **CBT** (Computer Based training) and **CAL** (Computer Aided Learning) had previously been used to describe self-led, linear progression style learning models (James, 1987, p.11), typically operated on a desktop PC or bespoke terminal in specialist industries; these terms have become somewhat obsolete in recent years and have been superseded by technologies such as OERs/RLOs – described in following pages.

**Blended learning** is most commonly defined as a combination or mix of class-based and virtual or online facilitated learning, where E-Learning infrastructure enhances or supports the learning experience. In 'Preparing for Blended e-Learning' (2013), Littlejohn and Pegler define Blended Learning as an holistic approach to use of technology facilitated learning for on-campus and off-campus participation via a variety of multimedia and interactive learning experiences (Littlejohn and Pegler, 2013, p.9).

**Distributed Learning** is used to define the wide range of electronic platforms, Web based learning tools and print based learning experiences encountered by students within the experience of learning via technology. The term 'distributed' has been included with some deliberation in the working title of this research project, emphasising the diverse range of platforms and experiences encountered by the participant group. The paradigm of 'distributed learning' is most clearly illustrated by Kochtanek and Hein in their paper 'Creating and nurturing distributed learning environments' (2000).

The terms '**Instructional Design**' or '**Learning Design**' are terms most often applied to the developmental process for creation of linear, modular (and sometimes interactive) learning experiences or 'courseware' and for interactive educational resources such as **Open Educational Resources** (see following pages); the sometimes disparate relationship between systems and pedagogic or experiential processes in learning design is discussed in a JISC sponsored report by Sandy Britain published in 2004 (Britain, 2004, p.3).

The advent of '**social media**' or '**Social Networks**' such as Facebook, Twitter, BeBo and MySpace during the early 2000s – providing unified portals for social interaction, news syndication, blogging and micro-blogging (short messaging intended to provide incidental commentary), would come to influence the development of E-Learning throughout the later 2000s, resulting in the absorption of many of these features within major VLE platforms such as Moodle or Blackboard (Dabbagh and Kitsantas, 2012, p.3).

The '**Web 2.0**' label for a more interactive and personalised Web experience popularised by Tim O'Reilly (2005) quickly led to a proliferation of similar jargon, such as '**Library 2.0**' (Maness, 2006) to describe a trend away from static content delivery towards a more interactive user experience.

O'Reilly described the interactive and interconnected nature of Web 2.0 in contrast to older Web and print media, including the emergence of wikis, blogs, media sharing portals such as Flickr.com, file sharing such as Napster, syndicated news content via RSS and the use of social 'tagging' to provide ratings, recommendation or commentary (*'folksonomies' deriving from 'taxonomy' based content structures or indexing*) (O'Reilly, 2005, p.2).

Closely related to concepts of Ubiquitous Learning, the terms Self-Led, **Self-Regulated** and **Personal Learning** are also sometimes applied to a highly autonomous, participatory model for student engagement with technology facilitated learning. Dabbagh and Kitsantas (2012) describe the increasing hybridisation of formal and informal learning spaces, facilitated via institutional learning platforms and student-led construction of learning via social networks, personal research and peer collaboration (Dabbagh and Kitsantas, 2012, p.1).

The terms **RLO (Reusable Learning Object)**, **OER (Open Educational Resource)** or simply **Learning Objects** refer to sharable and re-usable media created by instructional designers or educators for wider sharing, dissemination and re-purposing by other practitioners - often shared via portals such as JORUM (<http://www.jorum.ac.uk/>) and may also refer to a wide range of media, including images, video, Flash animations, HTML 5.0 interactive Web content or other forms of educational resource.

However, the terms RLO or OER most often refer to objects created according to formal schematic standards such as SCORM (Sharable Content Object Reference Model) – a US government derived ADL (Advanced Distributed Learning) project (<http://www.adlnet.org/scorm>) to provide a formalised framework for sharable and re-purposed learning materials. Similarly, the IMS standard - referring to the IMS Global corporation for learning objects (<http://www.imsglobal.org/>) provides a similar XML-based schematic model for learning objects.

Additionally, the OER or RLO model has become closely associated with Open Access (OA) and formalised OA licensing via models such as Creative Commons (<http://creativecommons.org>), allowing for a range of licenses based on sharing, reuse or commercial usability, e.g. 'CC BY NC ND' would require attribution (BY), non-commercial use only (NC) and would not allow derivative versions to be created (ND); this type of licensing has become increasingly prevalent and popular across a range of re-usable and sharable media, with support for this scheme in the Wiki Commons/ Wikimedia project ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikimedia\\_Commons](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikimedia_Commons)) and the Google search engine.

The term **MOOC (Massively Open Online Course)** has been coined to refer to E-Learning provision which has been made accessible to a wider audience beyond the immediate student population within a local institution; the provision of a MOOC can occur by simply making Web content or learning systems accessible publicly via the World Wide Web or by allowing for public online registration or application processes. The FutureLearn project, created by Open University has led the development of a structured portal to MOOCs developed by individual HEI providers (<https://www.futurelearn.com>).

The **VLE (Virtual Learning Environment)** model for delivery of E-Learning (also sometimes called LMS - Learning Management System) has become increasingly prolific since the early 2000s, becoming almost synonymous with E-Learning; similarly, the **MLE (Managed Learning Environment)** model for provision of a unified portal (and associated institutional procedures and processes for an holistic learning environment) is also debated in greater detail elsewhere in this thesis. The MLE has become largely synonymous with E-learning in recent times.

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# Information for Social Change Number 34 Summer/Autumn 2014

## E-Books and Education, some Reflections

**Paul Catherall**

### **Introduction**

Recent years have seen a proliferation in 'smart phone' and ebook reader devices, such as the *iLiad*, *Nook* and *Sony Reader*. Most recently the Amazon Kindle has taken a leading share in the individual user E-Book market (coupled with the launch of the Kindle online book store on Amazon to purchase e-books in the proprietary Kindle format). Parallel to these developments is the growth in E-Book collection systems for the education sector, such as Ebrary, MyILibrary and others, where academic titles are made available by publishers through these third party providers. E-Books are also being produced outside the commercial world, by private individuals and within the education sector, often within private or open systems on the WWW.

### **Background**

The technology to create and disseminate E-Books has been around since the rise of the Internet in the 1970s, early electronic texts were often seen in plain text and available via Gopher and other network channels prior to the World Wide Web. One of the earliest successful E-Book resources was Project Gutenberg (<http://www.gutenberg.org>), established in 1971 at the University of Illinois network, providing texts in a variety of file formats, with more recent formats reflecting new document technologies and applications. Other similar E-text projects are available on the Internet, in a variety of languages, including a French language service, *l'Association des Bibliophiles Universels / The Association of Universal Booklovers* (<http://abu.cnam.fr>), *British History Online* (<http://www.british-history.ac.uk>) and the *European Library* (<http://www.theeuropeanlibrary.org>).

### **Copyright and Intellectual Property (IP)**

The dissemination of E-Books has always been subject to Copyright and Intellectual Property (IP), ensuring that most works, unless declared free

from normal copyright restrictions would be restricted from open dissemination on the Internet. The arrival of the Creative Commons organisation has helped to reduce the ambiguity faced by authors and users wishing to disseminate texts freely online, allowing authors to define their works under the various CC licenses, including:

- Attribution (CC-BY)
- Attribution Share Alike (CC-BY-SA)
- Attribution No Derivatives (CC-BY-ND)
- Attribution Non-Commercial (CC-BY-NC)
- Attribution Non-Commercial Share Alike (CC-BY-NC-SA)
- Attribution Non-Commercial No Derivatives (CC-BY-NC-ND)

These licenses are explained by their respective codes:

- Attribution (BY): requiring attribution to the original author
- Share Alike (SA): allowing derivative works under the same or a similar license (later or jurisdiction version).
- Non-Commercial (NC), requiring the work is not used for commercial purposes.
- No Derivative Works (ND): allowing only the original work, without derivatives.

<http://creativecommons.org/about/licenses/>

In addition to E-Books disseminated by authors under schemes such as Project Gutenberg, the Creative Commons license has also been adopted within the Open Source computer software community, and in other spheres such as musical works and educators wishing to disseminate online learning materials such as presentations, course texts and interactive learning objects.

## **Google Books**

Within the public arena of the World Wide Web, we have also seen the recent rise in prominence of Google Books (<http://books.google.com>), a sub-set of the Google suite of Web search tools, also linked to the Google Scholar academic search system used increasingly within the education sectors. Google Books offers preview content (often missing certain pages or chapters) of commercial texts which are restricted by copyright and publisher's license, but also includes Creative-Commons derived works and works which have lapsed copyright status (also a major source of E-Books area in Project Gutenberg).

Google Books resources cannot usually be downloaded, unless this has been allowed by the publisher or author and most commercial texts must be read online within the Google Web interface, requiring the user to

remain online whilst reading. Google has been subject to several legal proceedings as a result of scanning, then disseminating electronic copies of commercial texts, with the main controversy involving disagreement by European publishers over an earlier US settlement with publishers groups. The current position by Google is the use of a settlement resolution Web site, allowing authors and publishers around the world to register for royalty-style payments from Google.

In response to controversies over Google Books, the French Premier Nicolas Sarkozy has promised to develop a multi-billion Euro collection for European textual heritage

(<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/google/6811462/Sarkozy-fights-Google-over-classic-books.html>).

## **Wikis and the Democratic Web**

Another perhaps less obvious source of E-Books are represented by Wikis (*often described as part of the new more democratic and interactive "Web 2.0" environment*) containing encyclopaedic type resources which are increasingly competing with traditional reference works. The most obvious and successful of these is Wikipedia (<http://www.wikipedia>) which describes itself as '*a free, web-based, collaborative, multilingual encyclopedia project supported by the non-profit Wikimedia Foundation*' (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia>). The democratic and collaborative nature of Wikis have drawn controversy over the authority and quality of information submitted by voluntary editors, however, these systems are becoming more accepted by the academic community as an inevitable starting point for user reference.

## **Research Repositories**

The academic and education sectors have also begun to invest in another source of E-texts, namely research repositories or archives. Research archives are usually secure text publishing systems locally hosted on University or other organisational servers, textual materials are then added by associated academic staff, researchers and students (often including 'pre-print' versions of scholarly chapters or articles due for publication as copyrighted works). Research archives can then be made available online for public access, often citing an open access license such as Creative Commons. In addition to many Universities and other organisations providing their research works online for public access, we have also recently seen the emergence of repository hubs, such as arXiv (<http://arxiv.org>), Cogprints (<http://cogprints.org>) and others, joining thousands of individual repository systems within a single interface. These systems have grown from initially small University projects to become a viable open academic source for researchers and students.

## Commercial E-Books

Despite the growth in democratic and open access E-texts on the Internet, there remains a substantial commercial market for E-Books, including the individual user market, recently characterised by the Kindle E-Books handset and store on Amazon.com, and also characterised by large E-Book publishers/ providers such as Ebrary, Mylibrary, Springer, Morgan and Claypool and others. These secure systems are often used within the education sector to provide bulk subscriptions for E-Books to University or college users. Most of these systems require the user to search individual collections for E-Books by keyword, then download the text in PDF or similar format, or in some cases to read the E-Book online within the Web interface provided. Some of these systems have restrictions on downloading or printing texts, requiring the user to remain online whilst reading the book.

## Conclusion

Clearly the E-Book market is still dominated by commercial issues, such as Intellectual Property and the profit motive of book sellers and authors. However the rise of the World Wide Web, increasing IT literacy and access to usable applications for publishing, via Blogs, Wikis and other channels, both privately and within organisations are presenting new opportunities for publishing outside the traditional boundaries of publishers and commercial channels. Private individuals, academics, librarians and private individuals can contribute to democratic textual information on the Web and access an increasingly important body of literature from these diverse sources.

However, there remain important questions to be considered regarding E-Books and the increasing democratisation of literature. We could argue that the authority of texts traditionally regulated by peer-review processes in the publishing industry is now less certain than in the past. A wide demographic spectrum, including young people are now able to make their contribution to democratic information sources, one could argue that this process may bring a lack of experience or academic judgement to collaborative writing. Sources such as Wikipedia are routinely edited over with material which can be arguably inaccurate, biased or pejorative, a process which requires constant democratic debate within Wikipedia's editorial discussion pages and use of strict citation rules, to ensure accuracy and reliability of information.

Access to E-Books provided with DRM (Digital Rights Management) features, such as restrictions on downloading or printing can also have accessibility implications for disable users relying on screen reading, Braille or other adaptive software which may have problems with DRM features. These kind of commercial texts can also present difficulties for

users with lower bandwidth or less sophisticated computer systems, where DRM software relies on recent versions of the Windows, Apple Macintosh and other Operating Systems or Web Browsers. Recent E-Book reader devices, such as the Kindle have also exhibited restrictions related to use of proprietary formats and ability to transfer purchased books between devices and computer systems.

Clearly the E-Book market is an area of activity in a state of flux at the moment, and we are seeing Internet technologies exploited for democratic, commercial and educational imperatives. Commercial providers have struggled to adapt their business models to the Internet, with many publishers unwilling to publish texts in electronic format; however, use of DRM has seen the commercial E-Book market grow in recent years. It remains to be seen how far the domain of E-Books will remain a diverse array of approaches, formats and systems, or if some ubiquitous model will emerge for the dissemination and display of E-Books.

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# **Information for Social Change Number 34 Summer/Autumn 2014**

## **Liverpool City Libraries Update**

**Paul Catherall / Martin Ralph**

In a dramatic move following months of community action by local residents, trades unions and library activists, the planned closure of 11 public libraries within the city of Liverpool (UK) has been averted.

A recent campaign to save the libraries included rallies held across the city, many public protests and calls of support from a wide range of organizations and community groups, including a petition of 20,000 signatures.

This decision also followed a letter by more than 500 writers, artists, song writers and creative personalities - including the Poet Laureate, Carol Ann Duffy calling for the reversal of the planned closures. The joint statement by these authors and creative professionals highlighted the devastation which would ensue for families and children dependant on these services for educational, informational and recreational facilities:

“The loss would devastate Liverpool – it’s a massacre, and at the expense of the children of Liverpool most of all... With recent figures showing that one in three children does not own a book, it seems to us terrifying that even the chance of borrowing a book is about to be taken away from many Liverpool children.” (2)

In a statement by Joe Anderson, Labour mayor of the city, the reversal is described as the result of alternative plans to keep the facilities open, including questionable use of volunteer groups to operate the Libraries:

“So far, viable proposals have been received for seven of the eleven libraries and we are continuing to plan the future of the remainder. There may have to be changes to the way these libraries are run, with changed opening hours for example, but the proposals are an exciting mixture of ideas with local community organisations and voluntary groups joining up to form new partnerships with Liverpool City Council.” (1)

The planned closure of the Liverpool public libraries parallels the ongoing threat to public libraries across the UK as a result of national and local council cuts to community services, particularly evident since the late 2000s. According to the Public Libraries News web site, some 491 public libraries are reported to have closed in the UK in recent years:

“Since 1st April 2014: 165 static libraries have been put under threat of closure/passing to volunteers. 8 mobile libraries under threat. 1 new library opened. 3 refurbishments over £50k, 10 libraries (2 static and 8 mobile) libraries closed, 9 libraries passed to volunteers. 1 entirely new volunteer-run library. 491 libraries (411 buildings and 80 mobiles) are currently reported as either likely to be closed or passed to volunteers or have been closed/left council control.” (3)

Martin Ralph, member of the Liverpool TUC (Trades Union Congress) and committee member of the University of Liverpool UCU branch (University and College Union) has affirmed the impact of the recent community campaign and national campaigns to save the local libraries in Liverpool and other community facilities, citing the role of community activism, including the *Old Swan Against the Cuts* and *Liverpool Against the Cuts* community groups:

“Never in recent times have attempts to build something new have been so wide. Those who want to defend services and jobs will have to build from below in the unions and in the communities. This is the only road in which to construct a defence and a fight back.” (4)

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## **Information for Social Change Number 34 Summer/Autumn 2014**

### **Not Train but Waste Flask Spotting - A Campaigning Book Review**

**Martyn Lowe**

Ball, M.G. British Railway Atlas. Ian Allan Publishing 4th Edition - August 2014. ISBN - 978 0 7110 3803 5
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#### **I really like train spotters**

I really like Train Spotters, for without the various publications they read & contribute towards, then many of us would be a less effective campaigners.

This is particularly so when it come to proposed changes to the railways as our major form of public transport.

They also track just what the various companies get up to, and where their trains have been seen.

#### **Direct Rail Services**

My own interest in railways comes from campaigning upon the nukiller waste trains which go from the reactor sites up to Cumbria. The company which carries this highly radioactive waste is DRS - Direct Rail Services. In this respect I work with the Nuclear Trains Action Group (NTAG).

For more information on this see: -  
<http://www.nonucleartrains.org.uk/>

A lot of this information about DRS can be found in the Railway Magazine which I read every month.

<http://www.railwaymagazine.co.uk/>

Yet in order to fully understand the extent of the problem, then one needs both timetable and map.

There are 8 routes which these waste trains use that I have listed upon my blog, together with other information about DRS, and how to find the times they pass through various stations.

See: -

<http://www.theproject.me.uk/?cat=43>

What I really wanted to do was look at these radioactive waste train routes upon a map.

### **On the map**

Way back in the era of British Rail you could find such a train map, but none of the privatised rail companies produce them.

Thus the British Railway Atlas is a very welcome campaigning tool.

This pocket book has 55 map pages, which cover all the railways in the UK and Ireland.

It then lists all the stations in Ireland, followed by all the stations in Britain, and their map references.

What's very useful is the way it gives both passenger & freight line information.

Thus one can clearly see how waste coming from Sizewell and Dungeness start out upon a freight lines.

While the waste from Torness & Hinkley starts its journey upon the public highway.

I might not be a train spotter, but this is one train spotters book which you will find me using from now on.

# **Information for Social Change Number 34 Summer/Autumn 2014**

## **The development of an original theory of “Improvised Learning”**

**Paul Catherall**

During approximately 2005-2012 I embarked on a PhD project/ thesis, comprising research into the use of Web-based learning technologies at a Higher Education Institute (HEI) in North Wales (The North East Wales Institute of Higher Education, NEWI) later known as Glyndŵr University.

This project became focused around the Grounded Theory methodology and emerged as an original Grounded Theory of ‘Improvised Learning’ demonstrating the most prevalent challenges, strategies and behaviours of students undertaking Higher Education programmes in a campus-based, low-contact teaching environment. The participant group were typically undertaking accredited professional programmes (usually related to a profession such as nursing or accounting).

The students engaged in ‘Blended Learning’ i.e. study on-campus alongside use of learning technologies such as a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). The research project used Grounded Theory as a holistic methodology to investigate the experience of students in this study context. The main data collection phase consisted of informal individual or group discussions held in classes, open plan Library areas or IT Labs.

The research project arose as a proposal to examine the field of ‘E-Learning’ – broadly representing the use of emergent World Wide Web based interfaces to information and learning applications, however it became evident a more defined focus would be required to define a suitable research question or activity within this broad field; a solution presented itself in the form of the Grounded Theory methodology, a sociology-derived approach based around interrogation of participant responses for identifying participant group concerns.

Some of the features of the methodology used included:

- Codes and Categories – the terms ‘Code’, ‘Category’, ‘Variable’ and sometimes ‘Indices’ are used fairly interchangeably in Grounded Theory literature; a Code usually refers to a new and unique way of explaining a process, concern or other aspect of participant behaviour; whilst this Code may comprise the same data and properties as a Category, the latter refers more specifically to an emergent or original Code as an aggregated or refined entity with many dependant codes or categories.
- The ‘Substantive’ phase of Grounded Theory refers to coding and category development across the ‘Open’ coding phase, i.e. the initial allocation of Codes to the body of source data or indicators, ‘Open’ codes can then be compared, refined and developed further into more developed ‘Substantive Codes’; however, it is possible for codes at this stage to be termed ‘Substantive Codes’ or ‘Descriptive Codes’, the former merely refers to the entire early (largely descriptive and pre-conceptual) phase of coding and category generation, whilst the term ‘Descriptive Code’ refers to a code which has been particularly determined to provide a narrative account of behaviours, processes or concerns.
- ‘Theoretical Codes’ or ‘Theoretical Categories’ refer to codes which have been developed to a conceptual level, providing a theoretical understanding of behaviours, these codes stand largely in contrast to Descriptive Codes (and to the Substantive coding process to develop Open and further developed descriptive codes as mentioned above).

Some of the observable characteristics which lend toward a Core Category of “Improvised Learning” include the following commonly observed properties evidenced in data:

- Improvisation would appear to be reflected in self-led behaviours which seek to resolve a wide array of challenges, barriers or limitations in the blended learning, social, environmental context, in this sense, adaptation, experimentation and similar resolving activities could be said to represent “improvisation”.
- Improvisation could either represent a longitudinal form of improvisation, e.g. illustrated by regular use of an alternative means of obtaining digital rather than physical reading materials in a remote or low contact context, or could represent immediate or ad-hoc improvisation, it should be pointed out that whilst there was some indication of ad hoc improvisation, e.g. relating anecdotal, particular events that has been encountered, such as dissatisfaction with the induction process and need to become familiar with search

tools e.g. "Would have preferred more induction/training in the use of the Emerald database, they felt they had to train themselves". Most data indicated improvisation of the longitudinal form, with repeated behavioural patterns suggested, e.g. in Memo comment ID 9, session 2: "Starting point for study/research is usually Google, did not feel there were enough adequate Library databases to support this subject area".

- Improvisation is at least partly concurrent with self-led behaviours, such as being self-managed, self-regulated, self-motivated, self-skilled and other similar self-reliant behaviours visible in the data; the individual is often resolving challenges, technical problems or study needs individually, usually without external or formal support, in some cases this involves approaching family members or friends for support e.g. in Memo comment ID 240, session 44: "Student may find development of skills in IT or study difficult, Student may consult the WWW or friends to gain information or workarounds, Finds it easier to develop skills independently rather than wait for support via email or in person, Finds self led approach to skills development essential due to inadequate support".
- Improvisation is usually unplanned, individuals are faced with the need to identify just-in-time resources, support networks, online information, physical facilities, referencing help or achieve other academic or personal study aims, e.g. Memo comment ID 255, Session 46: "Some difficulties accessing PCs in the Library, mainly studies in the evening", or Memo ID 261, session 47: "Some links are provided in the VLE but often needs to visit the Library, navigate to the database and search this separately, sometimes being directed to additional 3rd party databases, Web sites or legislation".
- Improvisation is usually not facilitated by the educational institution, in some cases, students may utilise resources via another online or physical source such as use of workplace access to digital content or databases. In the broadest sense, improvisation is self-led and may be a spontaneous or learned pattern or strategy which overcomes the present challenge, but has been accomplished outwith formal or institutional processes or systems.
- Improvisation can occur to supplement or enhance study, group work or access to electronic information sources; individuals may exploit the WWW to obtain a greater range of online information or may use informal systems such as social networks to collaborate with peers, for example in Memo comment ID 293, session 52: "Has used Facebook to connect with other students and develop shared

group projects”.

- Improvisation can provide a substitute to a formally required resource or can allow for replacement of a required resource or environment with one which is accessible, such as the use of social networks to interact with peers remotely (see above) or use of Web base sources to obtain materials when these were not provided in the VLE, for example in Memo comment ID 365, session 65: “Already have some knowledge of legislation, regulations etc. Would be good to have access to the same Web sites/ materials in Blackboard used for work purposes, some students may not be aware of these sources and finds they often assist students”.
- Improvisation may represent a means of coping with stressful and difficult personal circumstances including reduction, simplification or minimalisation of study overheads, this could include use of file sharing to achieve group work, thus avoiding travel to meet peers at the place of study.

The Core Category “Improvised Learning” can be said to represent an attempt to refine or encompass what has been identified as a combination of “passive” participant data, representing highly descriptive-focused Codes such as processes, challenge or barriers, alongside “active” and “aspirational” Codes represented by improvisatory strategies, techniques or other behaviours which include adapting, substituting, supplementing, physicalising, virtualising or avoiding.

Improvisation concerns strategies to access on-demand support, resource location or learning needs such as use of support networks within the social or family sphere, exploitation of University based or other local services such as local libraries or improvisation such as use of WWW search engines to locate e-resources or supplement formal databases for literature searching.

Exploitation and innovation emerged as a highly important strategy and process for literature searching due to perceived problems using databases and platforms provided within the Library. Innovation can be seen to complement and include all existing theoretical categories and particularly the following Developed and High Level Theoretical Categories: *Motivational adaption and improvisation via Online Learning, Adaptive Virtualisation of Learning; Self-regulated engagement; On-Demand Exploitation/ Improvisation; Navigating diverse platforms, equipment or locations.*

The theory of “Improvised Learning” could be shown to illustrate the conceptual processes inherent in its original setting, where this theory lends toward an original interpretation of institutionally managed Blended Learning in the HE environment, however the theory can also be shown to reflect transcendental qualities which could equally appeal to a wide range of sectors, businesses or other areas of human activity where learning and acquisition of knowledge or skills is practiced.

In conclusion, it can be seen that the theory “Improvised Learning” complements a wide range of established theoretical perspectives, suggesting wide application on a conceptual level, either as a means of understanding learning styles, for understanding social and collaborative learning, or as a means to explore the defined fields of E-Learning, Blended Learning or Online Learning.

The Core Category “Improvised Learning” emerged as an holistic, generalised theory of learning; to this extent, the theory and its variables can be seen to widely reflect the qualities of a transcending Grounded Theory, with a continuum of narrative and conceptual analysis on the challenges, concerns, strategies, processes and other behaviours which constitute a general theory of participation in a modern educational environment characterised by both physical, digital and online component behaviours.

# Information for Social Change Number 34 Summer/Autumn 2014

## Library activism - what it ought to become

**Mikael Böök**

### **1**

My Norwegian friend Anders Ericson, who is a librarian and a journalist, has minted an expression that summarizes a good deal of what I mean with library activism. It says that *The Library Takes Up The Case* (LTC), or *Bibliotekket tar saka* (BTS), in Norwegian.

Anders no doubt had some particular cases in mind. One such case which he thought that the librarians should take up was the transformation of a defunct military airfield in Rygge, near Moss, where Anders lives, into a third airport for the growing civilian air traffic to and from the Norwegian capital, Oslo.

Inevitably, some people in the region gladly supported while others vehemently opposed this plan. So what would the staff of the public libraries of Moss, Rygge and other nearby towns do in this situation?

Would they just continue to do their usual job and let the heated discussion and politicized decision-making about the Rygge airport have their own course? Or would they take up the case?

When do librarians take up the case? And why should they? And how can they?

For Anders Ericson and some of the librarians whom he inspired, *documentation* was one of the key concepts. The *websites* of the libraries was another important thing. Taking up the case, therefore, meant

documenting it and providing an information service to the public via the World Wide Web. What the librarians would do was, in other words, to co-operate and compete with the news media and, in particular, the local and national press.

The librarians would, for instance, do things that the media left undone. A good example was the original, old, written contract between the military and the Norwegian state. This was retrieved and saved for reference on the website of the library. Because, the librarians strove to produce the most complete, unbiased and lasting documentation of the case.

Why? Well, in order to give a handshake for more democracy.<sup>1</sup>

## 2

I first met Anders Ericson during the conference “Trading in Knowledge? - The World Trade Organisation and Libraries” at Cambridge in March 2005. The question of how the WTO and its General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) affect the libraries was indeed another case to be taken up by librarians, albeit, in a way, a more traditional case, which fitted well into the concept of “lobbying for libraries” of the conference organisers.<sup>2</sup>

A year before, I had arranged a workshop on “Democratisation of information” with Indian librarians during the World Social Forum (WSF) in Mumbai.<sup>3</sup> Botswanan university librarian Kay Raseroka, who at the time

1 See the English version of the blog of the LTC-project, <<https://sites.google.com/site/edufdaoduf/librarycase>>.

2 The conference was organised by the European Bureau of Library, Information and Documentation Associations (EBLIDA) in cooperation with the UK Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL). Toby Bainton’s report from the workshop is found at <[https://web.archive.org/web/20060512193009/http://www.eblida.org/eblida/meetings/events/GATSConference\\_Cambridge\\_Report\\_April05.pdf](https://web.archive.org/web/20060512193009/http://www.eblida.org/eblida/meetings/events/GATSConference_Cambridge_Report_April05.pdf)>.

3 The WSF in Mumbai, India, January 2004, was the fourth in a series that started in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 2001, and has continued to this day. It is one of world’s biggest and most important gatherings of non-governmental organisations and social movements, ever. The most recent WSF event was held in Tunis in

was IFLA chair, had delivered the workshop's keynote speech, in which she summoned all librarians to attend and document the WSF events, and to put the information from there on display in their libraries. Now this was an attempt at what I would call *global* library activism!

During the WSF in Nairobi 2007, we - "we" being some seventy East African library professionals and a smaller group of European and American social activists - tried as best we could follow up the message from Mumbai. Among other things, we started a Wiki server which is still up and running, and waiting for input from librarians and activists.

Needless to say, action "at the global level" is hard to organise and still more difficult to continue. Which brings me close enough to the heart of the matter: library activism signifies the combination of the most stable institution that our species has created (the library) with something that is, if not always volatile and ephemeral, at least temporary and cyclical in nature (the social activism).

### 3

The Sisyphean labour of combining the library with the activism, concerns the local as well as the global levels of human activities. And yet there is still another difficult "level" that needs to be taken into consideration: the political level.

The library is, after all, a highly political institution. By consequence, the librarians are a heavy professional group, politically - as important, I would say, as the judges and law professionals, who have been assigned their own branch of government in the Montesquieuan division between the Legislative, Executive and Judicial Powers. (I leave out the priests

February–March 2013. About the library-related workshop at the WSF in Mumbai 2004, see my article "Librarians and the World Social Forum, unite!" in Information for Social Change 19, <<http://www.libr.org/isc/articles/19-Book-1.html>>.

from my comparison, because their influence on life is nowadays supposed to be separate from the political sphere.)

The reason why it is necessary to consider the library as a political category, and to think of the librarians as a kind of statesmen (and stateswomen!) has to do with the information. Certainly, there are many other professionals that deal with the information and are of great political importance, such as journalists, teachers, scientists, philosophers and computer hackers. At the end of the day, however, the librarians carry the greatest political responsibility, because of their fundamental role in the organisation and preservation of the information. And politics is, mostly, about information (or disinformation), that is, when/if politics does not degenerate into civil war, international war, or nuclear war.

#### **4**

My thoughts about library activism have lead me to a highly political conclusion: the famous Montesquieuan triad needs amendment, because the political constitution of society (our basic law) lacks an informational state power, which I would like to call "the library power", or governance by the librarians. Sometimes, the press (or the media) are called "The Fourth Estate", and if your read Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) who wrote much on the subject, you will recognize the parallel.

The library is universal, in contrast to the three traditional branches of government, which are only national. Library power, too, has to be universal. The spread of the internet, which is the most recent extension of the age-old institution, the library, spells the end of the Westphalian system of national states (since 1648), or at least its decisive modification. Henceforward, national states and empires will be checked and balanced by the new informational power.

#### **5**

Some days ago (on 31 August, 2014) an unusual and inspiring event took place here in Helsinki. It was a long and varied musical concert with

internationally acclaimed stars such as Barbara Hendricks and some one hundred more or less famous artists, gathered together for this happening by Finnish violinist-conductor Jan Söderblom. It was a long awaited manifestation of what George F. Bowerman once called “the sympathetic world spirit” in his address to the Annual Conference of the American Library Association 1915.<sup>4</sup> It was called WE AGREE TO DISAGREE, and it was a peace concert, and thereby the musicians set a good example of activism for the librarians. You may see and listen to the concert via the libr... I mean, the internet. Here: <http://www.weagreeetodisagree.net/>.

4 See Bowerman: “How Far Should the Library Aid the Peace Movement and Similar Propaganda?”, in Litwin, R. (Ed.): *Library Daylight. Tracings of Modern Librarianship, 1874-1922* (Library Juice Press, Duluth 2006) pp. 173-180.

# **Information for Social Change Number 34 Summer/Autumn 2014**

## **The Rise of Food Banks in the UK and Implications for Society, Information and Education**

**Paul Catherall, Sharon Catherall and John Vincent**

In recent years, the phrase 'Food Bank' has become prolific across UK media via newspaper, television and radio; these facilities supposedly represent a charitable form of food provision for citizens struggling in adverse economic conditions.

The Food bank phenomenon has its origins in the soup kitchens of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century (Burnett, 2013) where wide-scale poverty, unemployment and malnourishment were particularly pronounced following the onset of mass production and urbanisation of the industrial revolution (Jenson, 1993).

The provision of basic meals for struggling individuals by church, charity and other voluntary societies has remained a feature of developed societies until the present day, playing a significant role during the Great Depression of the 1930s (Glasser, 2010) and in more recent times, such as the global 2007-8 recession (Levy, 2009).

It can also be seen that charitable food provision featured heavily during the US economic recession of the 1980s, with a high volume of Food Banks established during the Regan administration (Dando, 2012 and Poppendieck, 1999).

The phrase 'Food Bank' is perhaps applied more properly to food warehouse or storage facilities acting as intermediaries to other charitable dispensaries. More recent Food Bank distribution centres also offer food parcels lasting several days. The first modern charitable facility of this kind was founded in Arizona, USA by John van Hengel in 1967 (Daponte and Bade, 2006).

In the UK, the Trussell Trust has risen to recent prominence as a major Food Bank organiser and distributor, operating only a few local Food Banks before the 2007 recession but now operating over 250 nationwide (Trussell Trust, 2014). In a 2012 news article by the Sky news Web site,

the opening of Food Banks in the UK is cited as a "rate of one every four days" (Sky, 2012).

According to the Trussell Trust Web site, over one million people received emergency food between 2013-14, representing a 200% increase from the previous year (Trussell Trust, 2014). A 2013 report by Oxfam and Church Action on Poverty has also indicated that the Food Banks operated by these bodies provided help to almost 400,000 people in a 12 month period (Cooper, 2013).

In recent years we have also seen advocacy and financial support for Food Banks from official sources such as local councils, with some UK job centres distributing vouchers for access to Trussell Trust Food Banks (Kelly, 2011); further links between the Trussell Trust and UK Conservative party are described in an article by Opendemocracynet:

"At the time this article was published, its chairman was Conservative Party councillor and Mayor of Worthing, Neil Atkins."

(Kelly, 2011)

Opendemocracynet elaborates on links between its partner organisation the Shaftesbury Partnership and other organisations associated with the recent Big Society agenda of the Conservative/ Liberal Democrat Government:

"The current chairman, Chris Mould, a member of the Labour Party, splits his time between the Trussell Trust and the Shaftesbury Partnership. ... Co-founder of the Shaftesbury Partnership was Nat Wei, a former McKinsey consultant experienced in both venture philanthropy and venture capital who was appointed the Government's Chief Adviser on Big Society in May 2010 and made a life peer."

(Kelly, 2011)

It is also apparent that the crisis loans system previously issued by Department of Work and Pensions officers via jobcentres for individuals struggling to buy essentials such as food in emergency circumstances has been abolished, instead, this money is being streamed toward Food Bank infrastructure:

"While researching crisis loans I stumbled across a coalition government consultation paper issued in February 2011 stating the government's intention to abolish the social fund, and instead give the money, un-ring-fenced, to English Councils who could refer people to community schemes (citing the Trussell Trust Food Parcel Service) rather than giving people crisis loans... ...in 2010/2011 ..."2,697,000" were given out. ...The government was advising councils not to give crisis loans, as the DWP currently do, but instead to send perhaps 2.6 million families, each year, to their friends at the Trussell Trust with vouchers for a 3 day family food parcel containing no fresh meat, no fresh milk, no fresh bread or

vegetables." (Kelly, 2011)

The Church of England has also been shown to have considerable links with the Trussell Trust:

"... the Trussell Trust going around the country courting churches to set up food banks for which the churches pay the Trussell Trust £1500 in set-up fees plus a "small annual donation" (value unstated) and must use the Trussell Trust Branding." (Kelly, 2011)

Many commercial outlets and supermarkets are now also engaged in cooperation with Food Banks in the UK, providing collection points for the donation of food and supply of food via the FareShare food distribution charity (FareShare, 2014), much of the food is surplus or approaching end of shelf life:

"All of it is fresh or well within its sell-by date; most was destined for landfill until rescued by FareShare, a charity and social enterprise that wrestles with one of the UK's guiltiest secrets: each year an estimated 3m tonnes of food, much of it fit for human consumption, is wasted." (Butler, 2012)

Recent Food Bank cooperation with public libraries is also evident in the Wigan and Derby regions, where a local social enterprise company operating libraries, the Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust has established a partnership with The Brick's Food Bank:

"Kim Collins, customer service manager for WLCT, which manages the Library Service on behalf of the Council, said: 'The Brick has been doing some outreach work with homeless people from the libraries for some time now.'" (Wigan Today, 2013)

The regional Derbyshire council has also provided direct financial support to Food Banks:

"Earlier this year local food banks benefitted from a share of £126,000 county council funding to help them cope with increased demand. Nineteen of the county's 22 food banks applied and were awarded grants...." (Derbyshire County Council, 2014)

The advent of Food Banks presents many unsettling questions concerning social justice, the fair provision of welfare services, especially for the most vulnerable individuals in our society and the role of ideology and social engineering as reflected by organisations closely associated with the Trussell Trust such as the Shaftesbury Partnership, with links to other 'Big Society' agendas such as Free Schools.

The use of Food Banks in cooperation with Libraries also highlights a deepening role for local public services such as libraries implementing the ethically questionable transformation of welfare and support services represented by Food Banks.

It can also be argued that bodies such as Libraries are playing a positive role in attempting to support local communities via Food Banks. Devonshire libraries have begun issuing library cards and books for adults and children via Food Bank distribution. In a response to a recent request for information from John Vincent about the role of libraries and Food Banks, Devon libraries commented that:

“I have sent out batches of Bookstart picture books to be given out to families using foodbanks, along with blank library cards to encourage joining the local library. This was undertaken in Barnstaple, Bideford, South Molton, Exeter, Ivybridge, Dartmouth over the summer ... More recently, I have sent books for gifting through food banks in Axminster, Honiton, Newton Abbot and Tiverton. I think that Newton Abbot are intending to discuss with their food bank the possibility of continuing book donations.”  
(Vincent, 2014)

It is clear that the rapid rise of Food Bank provision, infrastructure and organisation is largely derived from the Trussell Trust in the UK, an organisation operated by prominent figured active within the socio-economic policy of the 1997 New Labour and the 2010 Conservative/ Liberal Democrat Coalition Governments, this organisation extends to advocacy and development of Food Banks with partner organisations such as the Church of England.

It is also apparent that Food Banks have been subject to a range of recent endorsement and financial support from official agencies in the UK for many years. We should ask ourselves why the Coalition and New Labour administrations have supported the Food Bank model so enthusiastically, whilst at the same time implementing wide-scale and far reaching deprecation of social justice in the UK.

In this regard we can cite continuous reactionary New Labour / Coalition policies since the late 1990s largely excluding the devolved spheres of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, including abolition of virtually all post statutory educational funding - from the FE educational maintenance allowance (EMA) for young people, introduction of University fees, now up to 9,000 per annum (and loss of associated undergraduate grants), virtual closure of childcare and SureStart in many areas, closure of job centres, slashing all forms of welfare provision and disability income support, the 'under-occupancy penalty' (Bedroom tax), transformation of unemployment support toward 'workfare' schemes forcing individuals to work for sub-minimum wage and many other punitive reforms to social justice in recent years.

It is clear that the Food Bank model tallies well with the ideological position of these recent Neoliberal and Neoconservative administrations, with retrenchment of social justice and welfare at the expense of the most vulnerable, disabled, elderly and young in our society.

The dramatic rise of Food Banks is no accident, but demonstrates the antipathy of the Neoliberal political milieu for genuine models of social justice, fair access to welfare provision and meritocratic educational and employment support provided as a public service, rather than as perverse profit making channels sold to the highest corporate tender.

We should also consider the impact of Food Bank reliance on families, children and young people; the recent media attention on childhood nutrition and issue of universally accessible healthy school meals illustrates the importance of food as an important aspect for education and personal development, this is no less true for children than teenagers, young adults and the wider public.

The obstruction or removal of fair and balanced social justice mechanisms such as the EMA for young people in Further Education and corresponding rise of Food Bank use surely presents a dangerous threat to personal and educational development for these individuals. To this extent, the rise of Food Banks and deprecation of normative social justice and welfare models are complementary elements - in a wider attack by the Neoliberal political Right against the most vulnerable groups in our society.

This ongoing trend suggests a desire to further disestablish the meritocratic state, as seen in the virtual deregulation of basic statutory education systems such as the National Curriculum and imposition of unregulated Academies and Free Schools.

The transfer of funds for normative social spending, such as the schools maintenance budget toward private equity and Free Schools parallels the transfer of similar state spending away from individual financial help for housing or family support toward the 18thC model of the soup kitchen.

We can conclude that Food Banks represent a beacon or indicator for growing and deepening inequality, where differences of income between rich and poor has grown to a point where some people are simply unable to pay for their own food. According to the Trussell Trust, many recipients of food in the UK are working families and some third of all food recipients in 2013 were children (Trussell Trust, 2013, pp.4-5).

We see increased poverty in our society as a consequence of low pay, deprecation of aforementioned social and meritocratic infrastructure and growing price of food, transport, energy and other costs, often

exacerbated by the fiscal outcomes of an increasingly deregulated and liberalised economy & infrastructure. In the UK the richest 10% sector of the population now own 850 times the wealth of the poorest 10% (The Independent, 2014).

Giving free food may reduce starvation but it does not stop the reasons people have no money to buy food in the first place. There is an urgent need for a solution that will improve life for everyone including those at the top and bottom of our social strata – more equal incomes will lead to a more equal society.

Food Banks may be perceived in positive terms as a form of popular social philanthropy, however, in reality this phenomenon represents an ideological trend for the wider breakup of our social infrastructure and ethical models for social justice, toward a model based on the lowest denominator for survival and abolition of all meritocratic and social norms.

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# Information for Social Change Number 34 Summer/Autumn 2014

## Stalking Grounds

**Paul Catherall**

The grasses are actually lawns  
not blowing in the wind like rushes,  
the cats sense their dismay:  
tawny hue and jet, one minute sporting -  
each with the articulate delineation of  
the toy maker;  
the next, alighting with a precarious leap,  
gnarled branches – hidden by the splayed leaves  
of a forest canopy.  
Darkness has fallen,  
and the moist earth of the forest humus  
is replete with victims.  
The cats glance at their escaped prey,  
their stealth has been inbred out of them.

