

**IFLA PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDING COMMITTEE
MEETING ON 2/8 AUGUST 2003, BERLIN, GERMANY**

**UK PUBLIC LIBRARY COUNTRY REPORT
COMPILED BY JOHN LAKE, BARBICAN LIBRARY, CORPORATION OF
LONDON, UK**

Framework for Public Libraries: Libraries, Learning and Information in the Next Decade

The long awaited strategy for public libraries over the next 10 years was published by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport in February 2003 and has been greeted with a mixed reception by the profession.

The strategy sets out three central priorities for libraries:

- To promote reading and learning for everyone, regardless of income and background
- To encourage access to digital skills and services, and
- To take a positive role in tackling social exclusion in communities

While the 59 page document provides information and examples of how it sees the strategy being developed it has attracted criticism from some public library leaders who were expecting a more dynamic and inspiring vision for libraries to aspire to and from CILIP which has stated that it lacks detail on core funding, development planning and performance measurement. Others in the profession welcomed the report in that it acknowledges the vital role public libraries have to play in society and the need for their active and innovative development. However, a change in Ministerial responsibilities in June has left the question mark of whether this strategy will continue to be supported in the future.

For more information visit

http://www.culture.gov.uk/global/publications/archive_2003/framework_future.htm

**Overdue: How to Create a Modern Public Library Service report by Demos
Commissioned by the Laser Foundation**

This independent report has attracted much media attention because of its highly critical stance on public libraries and library leadership in the UK. It indicates that the public library service in the UK is in terminal decline and will continue to deteriorate unless it is given a complete overhaul at leadership level and in terms of funding. It draws on the Audit Commission report *Due for Renewal* (2002) for its evidence of declining use (- 17% in ten years) and numbers of active users (down 23 % in 3 years) alongside a burgeoning book trade where book sales have risen by 25% in the same period. The report highlights the problems of a service funded by one Department of the Government (Office of the Deputy

Prime Minister) and administered by another (Department of Culture, Media & Sport) and it proposes the creation of a National Library Development Agency.

For more information visit <http://www.demos.co.uk/media/page264.aspx>

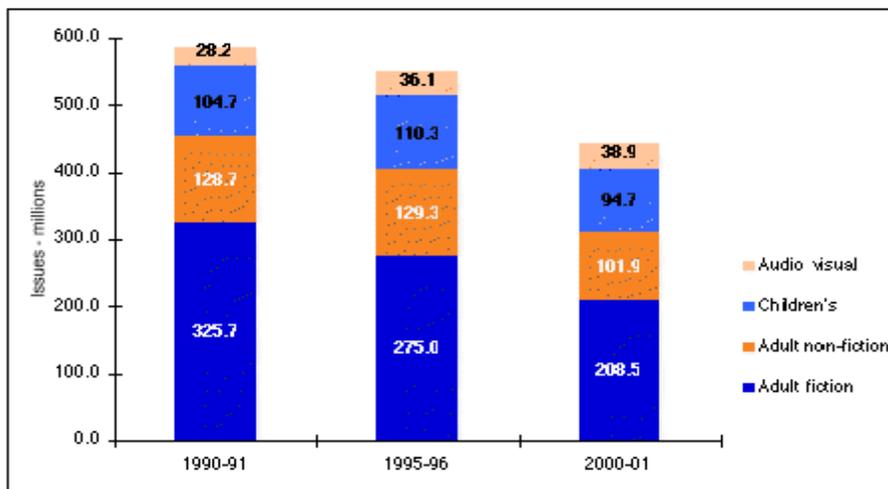
People's Network – Continuing Progress

Now that the infrastructure exists with over 30,000 terminals in over 4,000 libraries the next task to promote and extend the Peoples Network has begun. Libraries are being encouraged to become UK Online Learning centres with funding support from the New Opportunities Fund, use of the network for reader development purposes (see more details under the Reading Agency promotions below), further training support and the availability of *NOF digitize* which supports the digitization of significant collections in libraries.

For more information visit <http://www.peoplesnetwork.gov.uk/>

Public Library Use in the UK – 2002 figures

Lending 2000-01



Staff, opening etc.

	2000-01	1995-96
No. of authorities	208	167
Professional librarians per 10,000 population	1.09	1.17
Total staff per 10,000 population	4.48	4.60
Service points open for 45 hours or more	731	738
Service points open 30-44 hours	1,522	1,623
Service points open 10-29 hours	1,694	1,693
Service points open <10 hours	220	365
Mobile service points	656	694
Population per service point	12,962	11,485
Total service point hours per week	141,586	147,070

Use 2000-01

Total population 59,753,500

Registered borrowers 34,657,030

	Totals (000s)	Per member	Per head of population
Bookstock	118,745	3.43	1.99
Books acquired	11,042	0.32	0.18
Annual book issues	405,612	11.70	6.79
Audio-visual acquired	1,384	0.04	0.02
Audio-visual issues p.a.	38,936	1.12	0.65
Total items on loan	26,851	0.77	0.45
Enquiries handled p.a.	58,236	1.68	0.97
Visits p.a.	323,932	9.35	5.42
Net revenue expenditure (£1000 sterling)	791,641	22.84	13.25

Materials bought (£1000 sterling)	106,532	3.07	1.78
		2000-01	1995-96
Average cost per book acquired (£ sterling)		8.22	9.38
Average books allowed out		11	9
Average permitted loan (weeks)		3.2	3.3
Average duration of loan (days)		22	22

For more information <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/dils/lisu/lisuhp.html>

Public Lending Right Review Report – December 2002

A quinquennial review of the provision of payments to authors for their work borrowed through public libraries concluded that the scheme established in 1979 was working well and should be continued without any radical revisions to it. Amongst the recommendations for future action are the extension of the numbers of libraries sampled, with the possibility of “whole authority” sampling; automatic inclusion of authors and works on publication; inclusion of reference, online and spoken work recordings (but not e-books at this stage). Future developments will be to consider the ways and means of including other types of publicly funded libraries (e.g. schools libraries) and to extend the scheme beyond the European Economic Area based on reciprocity only.

For more information visit <http://www.plr.uk.com/>

Books Connect: The Reading Partnership

Reading promotion has continued to take a front line in public libraries in the UK and the formation of The Reading Partnership, a library development agency funded by the [Arts Council of England](#) and endorsed by the Society of Chief Librarians and CILIP in 2002. The agency focuses on public libraries’ work with adult readers, and supports library advocacy, research and partnership development. Projects in 2003 include the promotion of the *W H Smith Award* via online voting in libraries, supporting a *World Book Day Online Festival* in March 2003, assisting with the promotion of the *BBC Big Read* to select the people of Britain’s favourite book with major media coverage and TV documentaries during 2003 and *The Reading Maze*, a nationwide summer reading scheme for children.

For more information visit <http://www.readingagency.org.uk/>

Comprehensive Performance Assessment

In England, the Local Government White Paper **Strong Local Government - Quality Public Services** detailed the introduction of comprehensive performance assessment (CPA) for local authorities. In December 2002 the Audit Commission provided a judgement on the quality of local services delivered by every council, whether they will improve, and how well the council is run by categorizing them as excellent, good, fair, weak or poor. The judgements are intended as a stimulus for improvement although it remains to be seen how they affect the level of government support through the rate support grant.

For more information visit <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/>

Anglo Scandinavian Public Libraries Conference in Exeter, UK– May 2003

This tri-annual conference had the theme of *Libraries, Learning and Life* and drew on the lifelong learning experiences of librarians from Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Norway and the UK to explore how strategies can be developed in the future and how to provide support to front-line library and information workers. The Conference was held over 4 days and was followed by a tour of new public libraries in the UK ending up with the Millennium Library in Norwich. In addition the Conference celebrated its 50th anniversary with a lively birthday party. A Conference report will be published later this year by CILIP.

For more information visit <http://www.cilip.org.uk/news/2003/160503.html>

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