

## CILIP AGM 2016

### Libraries changes lives awards 2016

#### 1) Libraries changes lives awards 2016

Every year, CILIP awards a library/information service with this prestigious award for really making a difference in their communities. It's gloomily predictable how many people who don't work in libraries are prone to ask "So what are libraries actually **doing** nowadays? Aren't they all closed?" The 30 library/information services that submitted their projects to the awards panel are a most defiant answer to that question! The three shortlisted services were all mentioned at the AGM, with a video proposal for each being screened at Leeds City Museum.

The first was for Norfolk County Council library and information services: health libraries initiative who turned out to be the eventual winners of the award.

Norfolk public health and library services are working together to deliver key health messages. In that inimitable way that only libraries can, the service doesn't just deliver the messages, it also delivers lots of imaginative fun in the form of luncheon clubs bringing local people together, children's hula-hoop and similar sport competitions and a - perhaps most intriguing of all - a special smoothie-making bike where pedalling away furiously brings a delicious fruity treat!

Renfrewshire library services have adapted a mobile library van into a "Skoobmobile" - Scoobs are colourful friendly monsters who use the library services in different ways and the children certainly get the chance to copy their little monsters too, with age-appropriate story time sessions, I pads where tales of derring-do come to life (dinosaurs regularly roam the Skoobmobile!), tables that can be set out for arts and crafts projects whilst at the same time, parents can get friendly advice from a group of experts, scheduled to travel around with the Skoobmobile as well. Prior to the Skoobmobile, the "Big friendly read" child-friendly Summer reading challenge was rarely taken up by local "monsters". Now, there have been queues of them itching waiting to sign up!

Sefton library services run a "Lost voices" campaign, capturing the stories of people with dementia both for their friends and family and to collect a precious bank of memories both for students wanting colourful primary sources of local people's lives and to use in memory boxes/recollection sessions for other people with dementia in the future. The project has really helped to connect people across the generations. One young man who had hitherto only seen an "old man in a chair at the nursing home", learned - through the memory sessions - all about the young man who was on the front lines in Palestine during the second world war and for the very first time he was able to connect and share experiences with his grandfather. Sefton public libraries has shown how versatile library services are - being a community venue, offering activities, advice, home visits for dementia patients, conducting memory walks and creating this invaluable oral history archive for generations to come: and who says that libraries don't change lives?

## **CILIP AGM 2016 British Library Business and Intellectual Property Service**

Neil Infield, the Manager of the British Library Business and Intellectual Property Service gave us a fascinating history of this re-launched and revitalised service, celebrating its 10th birthday this year.

Taking a leaf out of the “lean approach to management” textbook was the first task of the new service - and this meant listening to and testing out ideas. Listening in particular was crucial for the first stages. In the past, the British library was seen as the “Library of last resort” - you only went there if you were absolutely desperate! The initial top priority to get people understanding that the service was open to anyone and everyone, who wanted to carry out business research, be they academically, personally or indeed commercially motivated

Now, business people will tell you that the best ideas are often adaptations of things that have actually been done before. Steve Jobs famously quoted Picasso’s saying “*Good artists copy, great artists steal*” (or did he just steal that saying?!) Certainly, when he attempted to sue Microsoft for stealing the Graphical User Interface concept that made his mouse pointing device such a joy to use, he must have been aware that he too allegedly stole that idea from the Xerox Corporation several years before! So it was that the British Library stole their idea for a Business and Intellectual Property Service directly from the New York Public Library Business Service, a service which took its business stock out of its fusty old library building to a new commercial location.

The British Library enacted their expression of lean management techniques right from the start, asking commercial companies what they really wanted from a commercial library service. They genuinely wanted to know and they implemented as many things as they could as soon as possible. The British Library already had a modern central building, good business information and top quality business databases but they remained a “well-kept secret” for the few - hence that early priority towards publicity. However, commercial companies needed much more than this. To begin with, they needed a helpful and friendly enquiry service, hands-on training for database users (something we also implement in my current workplace) but also - crucially - advice on how to develop new business ideas. Day after day, enquiry librarians would be asked “Can I talk to you about my business plan?” and - true to lean management techniques - if someone keeps asking you something you can’t deliver, then it’s high time you learn to deliver it! This involved a really big step; every member of the enquiry service trained to be a business advisor.

There was a great deal of trepidation about this, but in reality being a business advisor isn’t about becoming an expert in all things business; it is much more about listening and really understanding people’s needs, asking probing questions to get more detail and then signposting to the right information resources at the right time. You might see this as an extension of the traditional “reference interview” in library enquiry services but these one-hour sessions often provided some genuine insights into the personal struggles of business people needing advice, and these powerful stories gave enquiry service staff an additional motivation towards providing assistance that was specifically targeted to their user’s needs.

Of course, the enquiry staff could not provide every possible service that business people might ask about during an advice session, so - by collecting all the kinds of enquiries that weren't within current capacity - library staff were able to organise workshops with a series of partners to provide specialist advice on things like business coaching, public relations and patenting inventions. Today, they have a wonderfully diverse resource of individuals happy to provide free advice for budding entrepreneurs in the capital.

What was needed now was proper promotion - not just any old promotion but promotion by business people for business people. The British Library held evening events where successful entrepreneurs talked about how they had harnessed their ideas to create great business strategies. Lots of famous (and infamous) business people were prevailed upon to speak for free, including (on no less than two occasions, Sir Alan Sugar) A series of successful advertising campaigns, including a wonderful advertisement with a bathtub backed up this expertise. Over 500,000 people have used the service with 12,500 taking advantage of the free advice sessions, but the British Library was keen to help provide this invaluable advice across the country. Today, they are working towards a national network (currently there are 20 libraries in the network mostly based in public libraries in key cities).

To this end, Ben Cleverly, the senior librarian manager of Leeds Central Library's Business and Intellectual Property Centre briefly introduced our local Business and Intellectual Property Centre at Leeds Central Library, re-launched in 2014. The service runs regular free "enterprise clubs" each week and bigger events sometimes tied in the Libraries Library, where British Library workshops are screened and Leeds viewers can "tweet" questions to the business leaders in London directly. They also provide specialist Intellectual Property advice and run outreach sessions across the district.