

No-one left behind? The role of librarians in health literacy

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Connectivity

- 12.2 million people (23%) in the UK anticipated looking for cheaper Internet or mobile data plans due to rising costs
- 2.1 million people in the UK were offline

Skills

- 1.3 million adults in the UK (3%) could not complete any of the 8 foundation digital skills defined in a 2023 survey
- 4.7 million adults in the UK (9%) were unable to set up a wifi connection.



Developing a
**Minimum
Digital
Living
Standard**

Limited access to bandwidth, information and support have a long-term negative impact on people's life chances.

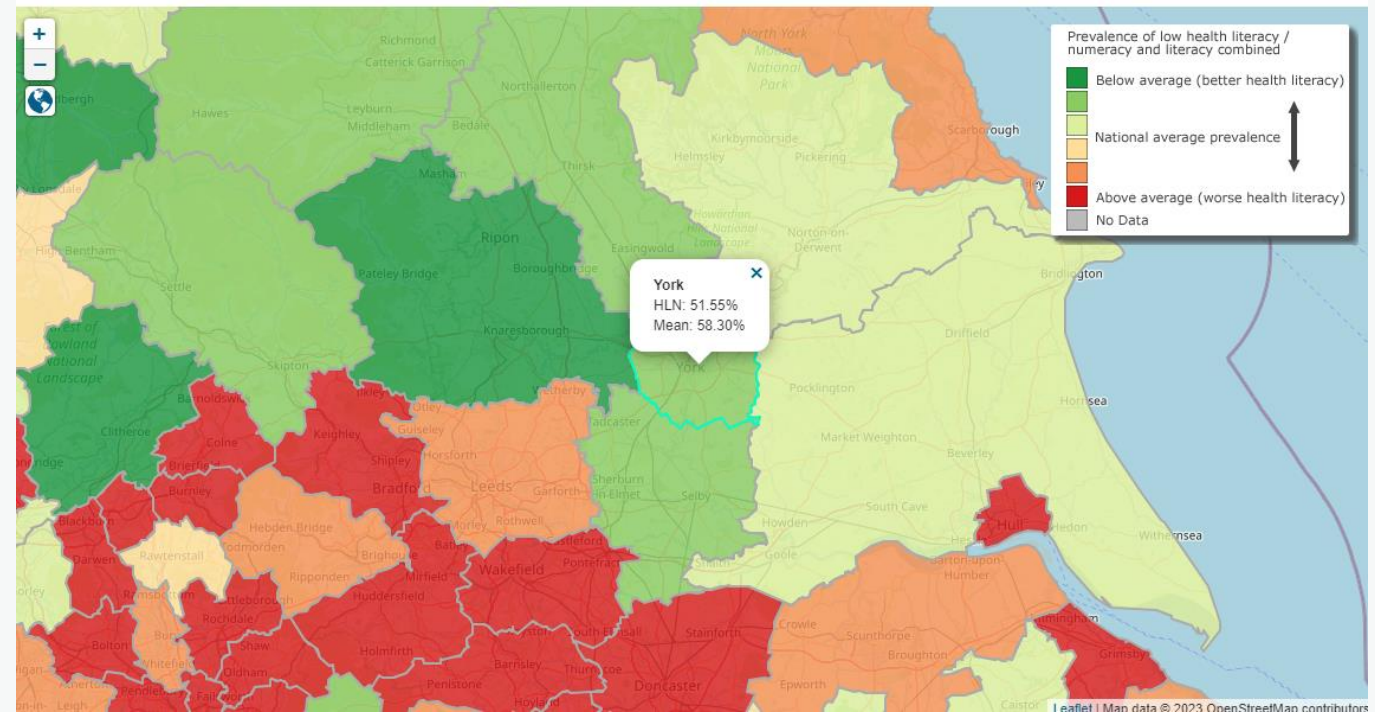
CILIP stands behind the call for a National Minimum Digital Living Standard for households with children and is working with partners to secure legislative support to ensure that nobody is left behind.
<https://mdls.org.uk/>

In York, 51.55% people struggle with health literacy (words and numbers)

This is better than the national average of 58.30%

Estimate of low health literacy in York

What does the data tell us?



<http://healthliteracy.geodata.uk/>

Poor health literacy is associated with:

- an increased risk of morbidity and premature death in older adults
- reduced knowledge; reduced uptake of prevention services – immunisations and screening
- less recall and compliance with medical instructions/advice and self-care regimes

People with lower health literacy:

- are less likely to successfully manage long-term conditions
- find it more difficult to access appropriate health services
- make more use of accident and emergency services and have longer in-patient stays

“Poor health literacy is associated with poor health behaviours and outcomes. Although anyone can have low health literacy, [it] is central to health inequalities as disadvantaged or vulnerable groups, particularly those from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, disabled people, older people, and migrants and people from ethnic minority groups are most at risk. ”

A systematic review by Eichler et al (2009) estimated that, in the US, the economic cost of low health literacy amounted to 3-5% of total healthcare costs.

Applying this percentage to the NHS budget in England, the Community Health and Learning Foundation made a crude estimate that the economic cost of poor health literacy in England in 2014 was between £2.95bn and £4.92bn per year.

Local action on health inequalities Improving health literacy to reduce health inequalities Practice resource: September 2015.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7f46f240f0b6230268e865/4a_Health_Literacy-Full.pdf

Eichler K et al (2009) The costs of limited health literacy: a systematic review. *International Journal of Public Health*; 54: 5, 313-324.

Community Health and Learning Foundation (2014) *Health Literacy: The Agenda We Cannot Afford to Ignore*. CHLF.

The role of librarians



Libraries and other community centres that provide information offer neutral spaces with trusted staff.

Public libraries are digital hubs, and this is especially important in localities with low digital access and poor download speeds.

Library staff can help with health and information literacy and digital navigation.

Skills development and practical support can be embedded into a wider range of existing community assets: public libraries, local community groups, education services, community pharmacies, prison libraries.

A literature review 2021- Jan 2024 by the Knowledge Management team, NHS England found 107 UK research studies on health literacy.

The overarching aims of many of the interventions reported were to: enhance comprehension; support self-management of health conditions; facilitate effective healthcare interactions, thereby bridging health literacy gaps across communities.

Key findings:

- Librarians, and partnerships between the NHS and the public, are enhancing digital health literacy through providing online resources and digital champion roles.
- e-learning modules from e-Learning for Healthcare, and infographics from the Patient Information Forum, are raising health literacy awareness among healthcare staff.

See <https://library.hee.nhs.uk/patient-information/health-literacy-resources>



- Co-created learning resources
- Cascaded train-the-trainer training
- Trained public library staff to be health ambassadors
- Input to [2023 Annual state of the nation report](#), All Party Parliamentary Group on Digital Inclusion
- Partnering to enable communities to test approaches to improving health literacy e.g.:
 - Library-based Digital Health Hubs in Leeds: employing 0.5 WTE librarian to extend role of the hubs, develop digital champions and a learning platform.
 - Gateways to good health in York and Scarborough: public libraries as a gateway to reliable health information; upskilling public library team to run drop in health and digital literacy sessions
 - Help 4 Health in Newcastle: integrating provision of devices by Get Online Newcastle with training on health information and health Apps; developing resources for wider use.



Resources

Use and share the Health Literacy Toolkit

<https://library.nhs.uk/health-information/>

Promote easy read resources on shared decision-making between professionals and members of the public

<https://library.nhs.uk/easy-read-for-health/>

Promote Your Health Collection: <https://library.nhs.uk/yhc/>

Training

Promote the Health Literacy eLearning <https://www.e-lfh.org.uk/programmes/healthliteracy/>

Cascade the training accredited by Royal Society for Public Health, including sharing via public libraries

1. Focus on health literacy
2. Support 'Everyone, everywhere' - practical resources, and working through public libraries
3. Ensure 'No one is left behind' - encourage local targeted initiatives to address inequalities
4. Encourage trailblazers to build on learning from the pilot sites
5. Host health literacy resources on a central site accessible to health staff and the public. Interim site:
<https://www.cilip.org.uk/page/health-and-digital-res>
6. Supporting the call for a National Minimum Digital Living Standard





Through the national Health and Wellbeing Library Offer, public libraries promote healthy living, provide self-management support and engagement opportunities for children and adults supported by welcoming spaces, effective signposting, and information to reduce health, social and economic inequalities. <https://www.librariesconnected.org.uk/universal-offers/health-wellbeing>

Staffordshire Libraries have:

- Commissioned health literacy training
- Developed a simple guide to health literacy
- Created the role Health Champion
- Health literate libraries framework



Key themes for CILIP

- Librarians, information and knowledge professionals are building the economy of the future
- Information, knowledge management and library profession at the heart of successful communities.
- We support learning, literacy and social mobility for every member of our society

We know that the support of a professional librarian, information or knowledge management practitioner can transform life chances through literacy, learning, confidence and skills.

As ethical information professionals, we have a responsibility to target the root causes of social and economic inequality and to build long-term support to help people – particularly children and young people – to escape the ‘information poverty trap’.

- Build literacy support and foster a love of reading in formal education
- Develop support for post-16 and adult education and lifelong learning
- Work with educators and regulators to improve provision
- Promote information literacy, including health literacy, as a key pillar of citizenship
- **Work together to ensure that nobody is left behind**



Source: [@NgyuenDHN](#) on Unsplash

CILIP is the only independent voice for the UK's information profession – whether you work in information, knowledge, libraries or related sectors.

We change lives by improving education, literacy and prosperity for all. We achieve this by raising standards in libraries, information and knowledge management.

We work to improve services, develop our members' expertise and champion the sector.

We are guided by our Royal Charter to develop and improve library and information services, and by being a charity to act in the public good

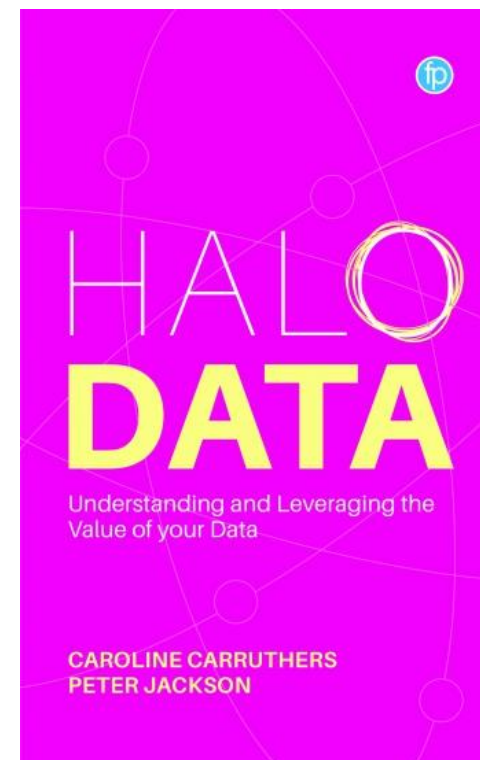
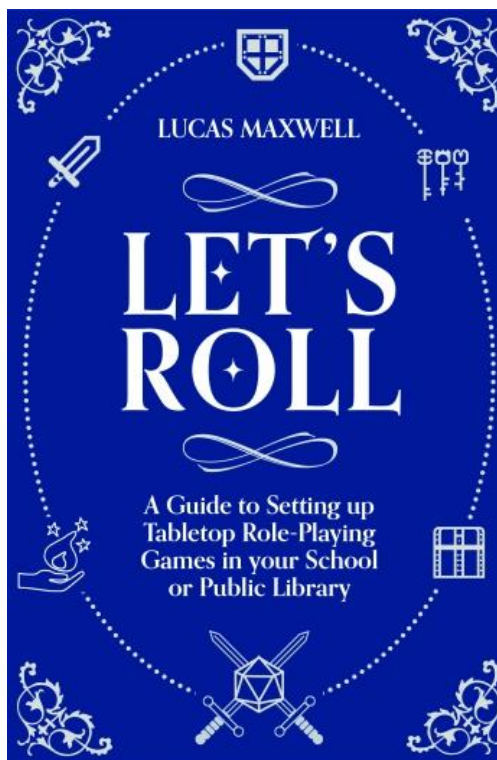
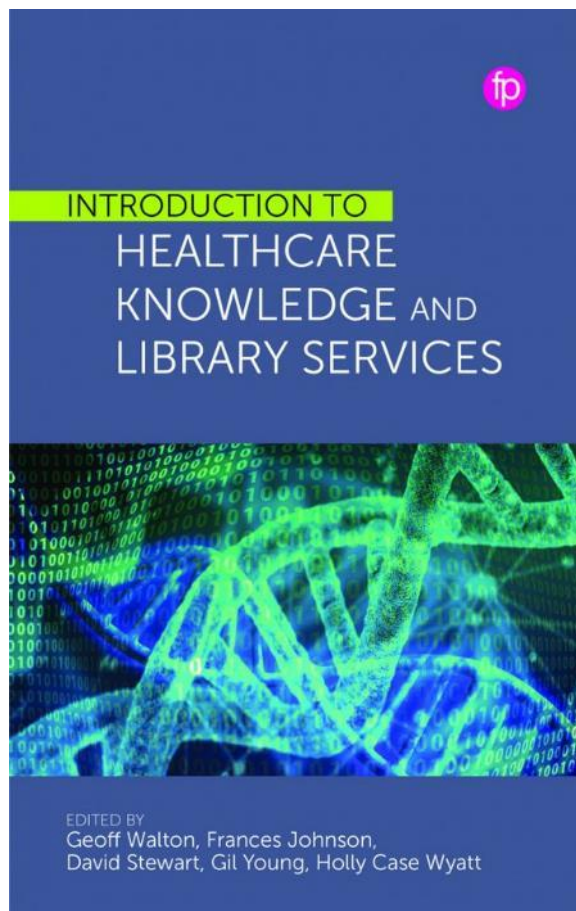
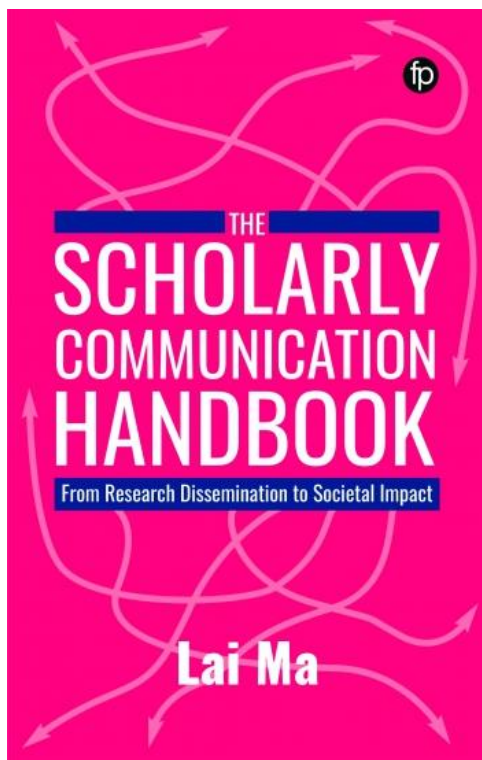
We stand for and actively champion the values that unite our profession: social justice, intellectual freedom and evidence-based practice



CILIP

The library
and information
association

Sharing ideas, experience and expertise



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

Promote the geodata to help ICBs target interventions to address health inequalities:

<https://healthliteracy.geodata.uk/>

Raise awareness of NHS staff :

eLearning: <https://www.e-lfh.org.uk/programmes/healthliteracy/>

Toolkit of resources to simplify and improve communications: <https://library.nhs.uk/health-information/>

Signpost the public to high-quality health information:

Easy Reads for better conversations: <https://library.nhs.uk/easy-read-for-health/>

Share Your Health Collection: <https://library.nhs.uk/yhc/>

Use the evidence: the briefing, and the NHS Knowledge and Library Services <https://library.nhs.uk/>

Strengthen and broker local partnerships

Keep an eye out for new resources

Call to action

Librarians are agents of positive change and innovation within our communities.

Let's continue be ambitious, think creatively and build collaborative partnerships that can deliver lasting impact for service users so that no-one is left behind.

If you're inspired to join our CILIP community and make a real difference, visit <http://www.cilip.org.uk/join>



**Join today and be
part of your profession.
Scan our QR code.**

Or visit: <http://www.cilip.org.uk/join>



Thank you

