INSPIRE: a proposal for its future development

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INSPIRE - a proposal for its future development

Background
Inspire is a project that has been established in support of “Libraries in working together to improve access to information and learning for all”. Participating libraries are committed to supporting learning in their local areas and to ensuring they provide an open route to the information and library users are seeking, wherever it may be found. It was instituted in 2004 under the energetic leadership of Mary Heaney (formerly Director of Learning Centres at the University of Wolverhampton and now Director of Services at Manchester Metropolitan University) and Andrew Green (then Head of Libraries & Information Services, Coventry City Council and now Head of Library and Heritage Service, Wandsworth Council). Mary resigned her role with Inspire in 2006 and was replaced by Philip Payne, Librarian, Birkbeck College; Sally Curry is its Inspire National Partnerships Manager.

Funding
Funding was provided by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, the Museums Libraries and Archives Council, the British Library, SCONUL, and the Society of Chief Librarians. Inspire is also supported by the Committee on Library Cooperation in Ireland (COLICO), the National Library of Scotland, the National Library of Wales, the Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals, and the Colleges of Further & Higher Education.

From vision to reality
Two pilot schemes were run in 2004 and these were followed by a two year programme of ‘inspired’ libraries to libraries from all sectors across the whole of England. There are now over 3300 Inspire libraries throughout England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Inspire libraries include public, higher education and national libraries plus further education libraries, health-related libraries and a wide range of specialist libraries. Together they provide an extraordinarily rich and varied resource of information on every subject from Accounting to Zoology, the process facilitating access to the universal collection of knowledge - and they are open all the time.

- Extended existing networks of successful access partnerships and added new ones to create a single national access route to information, irrespective of geography.
- Ensured that learners can have access to the most appropriate learning materials irrespective of the status of the learner or the location of the materials.
- Provided greater opportunities and access for socially excluded individuals and groups.

Through this work, Inspire has fulfilled key aspects of the Museums Libraries and Archives Council's Framework for the Future 2017 vision which had as one of its objectives that any member of a public library can also access materials held in higher education (HE) and further education (FE) libraries. The programme also relates directly to many government initiatives on widening participation, lifelong learning and social inclusion.

The future
Inspire is a wonderful resource that has an important role in supporting education, employability, enterprise and employment. More specifically Inspire has a role in supporting life long learning, CPD, the public library service, the HEFCE shared services agenda, widening participation programmes, community development and much more. Individually many libraries and information services are modest in size – but collectively there is a remarkable resource of great diversity and richness. Some of the ideas we are discussing include a national Inspire card, a national virtual library and study facilities to help adults in the area.

Nevertheless our funding is gradually being depleted and a formal funding arrangement is now urgently required.

Findit
To make access to this information easier, the Findit website was created as part of the Inspire programme. The website is one of the central pillars of the Inspire programme to support learners and allow anyone to identify, quickly and easily –
- which libraries hold resources on specific subjects
- where these libraries are
- what the terms are for access to those resources.
Inspire is effectively creating a distributed national library available to everyone.

Some of the library co-operative schemes linked to Inspire:
- Access Salford
- Access to Learning Libraries and Information in Northamptonshire
- ADLIB-Cumbria
- Inspire Northeast
- Libraries Access Sunderland Scheme
- Libraries and Information East Midlands
- Libraries and Learning
- Milton Keynes, Learning City Libraries Network
- South Yorkshire Access to a Libraries for Learning/Inclusion
- Kirklees and Calderdale

Local activity
The WELCOMES17 Scheme: improving access to libraries in Kirklees and Calderdale
The WELCOMES17 scheme facilitates access by the general public to a wide range of library and information services across the Kirklees and Calderdale areas. Its membership includes the following: University of Huddersfield
- Kirklees Libraries
- Kirklees College - Huddersfield
- Kirklees College – Dewsbury
- Calderdale and Kirklees Countryside
- Huddersfield New College
- Greenhead College
- Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Trust
- Calderdale College
- Calderdale Libraries
- Public Health Resource Centre (Dewsbury Hospital)
- Public Health Resource Centre (Calderdale PCT)

The WELCOMES17 scheme website provides information on organisations across Kirklees and Calderdale that offer information, library and study facilities to help adults in the area. In order to maintain the quality of this service WELCOMES17 members have all signed up to a set of standards.
Further information can be obtained by consulting the website at http://welcomes.hud.ac.uk/ or emailing the project coordinators: Andrew Walsh or Stephen Kee at welcome@hud.ac.uk.

Goverance
Inspire has two Directors who are also members of the Management Board viz.,
- Philip Payne, Librarian, Birkbeck College (nominated by SCONUL)
- Andrew Green, former Head of Libraries & Information Services, Coventry City Council and now Head of Library and Heritage Service, Wandsworth Council (nominated by the Society of Chief Librarians).

They are supported by a Management Board representing the interests of all the funders and a wide range of libraries in the UK and its membership includes:
- Inspire Support, Sally Curry, Robinson Library, University of Newcastle upon Tyne
- British Library, Stephen Kenna, Manager Regional & Library Programmes
- Devolved Administrations and SCQRI, Chris Pinder, Director of Learning and Information Services, Napier University
- Northern Ireland & LUSCRO (Inspire), Elaine Urquhart, Assistant Director, University of Ulster, COLICO Chair
- Libraries and Information East Midlands and The Combined Regions (TCR), Lynn Hodgkins, Regional Librarian, LEM
- National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, Richard Crab
- Society of Chief Librarians, Martin Burton, Head of Libraries & Information Services, South Gloucestershire
- Society of College, National and University Libraries, John Lancaster, Director of Computing & Library Services, University of Huddersfield
- South West Regional Library Service (SWRLS) and TCR, Lyme Osborne, Director SWRLS

Funding
Inspire’s 2004 pilot projects were funded by the Department for Education and Skills (DFES) in co-operation with the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). The 2004-6 Inspire Programme was funded by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, the National Libraries Advisory Group (sponsored by the BL, CIPD, MLA Council), and through the DCSM Action Plan supporting Framework for the Futures, the public library strategy in 2013. At the end of 2006, the MLA and other sponsors allowed the Inspire Directors to continue to use remaining funds to further enhance access to information and learning.

The Society of Chief Librarians
The Society of College, National and University Libraries

The Society of College, National and University Libraries

To find out more visit: http://www.sconul.ac.uk