

Managing the Transition to New Service Models

Annual seminar of County & City Librarians Section, Limerick, 2nd & 3rd October 2014¹⁵

Designed to prepare Chief Librarians for the new management models required to deliver the Plan,¹⁶ the seminar examined best practice already applied to several local government environments and interrogated the lessons learned for their relevance to new service models proposed for the public library sector. Three keynote speakers gave their experiences of transition.

¹⁵ Readers should consult article pp 11–16 for context to this report.

¹⁶ *Opportunities for All; the public library as a catalyst for economic, social and cultural development.* (referred to throughout as O4A)

The unification of Limerick City and Limerick County councils was outlined by Chief Executive (CE hereafter), Conn Murray. He described the challenges that had faced Limerick city and the opportunity within central government policy¹⁷ to position the local authority as the lead organisation supplying stability, connectivity and leadership to more specialist agencies as well as creating an environment supporting enterprise and active citizenship. He emphasised the importance of pace, quick wins and soft gains. Change management led by CE was supported by a specialist company. It involved total review of practice and process that put the citizen at the centre of all activity, and sought new models of governance supported by three new

¹⁷ *Putting People First*

management units: (1) change management, (2) marketing and (3) innovation as well as a dedicated CRM.

Jane Cantwell (Waterford County Librarian) and Damien Brady (Limerick City & County Librarian) offered complementary papers on the unification of two library services within the four parent councils. Cantwell outlined the history in Waterford and provided a checklist of areas and items that required address. This will be invaluable for library services combining in the future. Specifically, she quantified the workloads involved in combining two Library Systems and two Bookstores and the range of tasks and changes flowing from these. In March 2012, Limerick's Library Services created a Service Unit Plan that was approved by management and became the Operating Model. It addressed key issues: (1) staffing, (2) policies, processes & procedures, (3) SWOT, (4) agreement on methodology to address issues, (5) vision for outcomes & public service offer, (6) problem solving, (7) service locations, (8) contribution to parent organisation. Brady outlined the journey to achieve five design outcomes: (1) a single Library HQ, (2) aligned policies and procedures, (3) merged Library Management Systems and IT, merged bookstore, merged Local Studies Services. His advice was to focus on outcomes, to empower staff, to move staff early and thereby break down barriers, to highlight quick wins to maintain momentum and to accept less than perfect solutions.

The three papers highlighted the importance of leadership and management support for those library services that are expected to unite under the O4A Plan, where the remaining structure of the two or three local authorities involved in each case continues as is. It was clear that the success or failure of the new management models for public library services delivery will depend on the quality of support that must be offered by the CE and senior managements.

Tom Coughlan (County Clare CE and Chair of Libraries Development, Local Government Management Agency LGMA), gave an update and overview of the new models for the public library sector. He noted that a document, *Managing the Delivery of Effective Library Services*, was being finalised for

submission to the Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government (DECLG). Chief Librarians had been consulted on the document throughout 2013 and 2014 so its overall content was known; the primary purpose of the paper was to offer context.

The report covers reorganisation, manpower planning, new structures for shared services and for regional overview as well as templates for agreements and new understandings. Donal Enright (Principal Officer, DECLG) hoped to have the document approved quickly and distributed as government policy for implementation locally, as soon as possible.

As an example of a shared service with countrywide reach, Margaret Hayes (Dublin City Librarian) and Brendan Teeling (Deputy Dublin City Librarian) updated delegates on the first national Library Management System, the contract for which was signed in September for delivery within a 5 year period. The communications process was outlined and services were urged (a) to submit data so the System could be designed most effectively and (b) to cleanse stock and membership databases in preparation for transfer.

Driving the implementation of O4A, Working Groups have been developing and delivering Action Plans for a range of service areas. The creation of universal messages is fundamental for public services offers countrywide.

Austin Vaughan (Mayo) reported on the *Core Services* initiative. New Service indicators of (1) visits and (2) activities have been identified for application countrywide via the DECLG; standards and benchmarks are being reviewed. Critically the Group is defining core services which, with universal membership, will be offered to all as free services. Areas being considered include lending, services for children, business, access to reading, e-access.

The *Public Library Services to Schools* Working Group reported a quick win. Brendan Martin (Wicklow) outlined an initial focus on primary schools and following agreement at a recent CCLS meeting, the minimum offer from public library services to primary schools has been agreed. Following a launch in November, the Department of Education & Skills will issue a circular to all schools.

Mary Stuart (Offaly) reported that the *Open Libraries* offer was on target for testing in selected libraries in counties Offaly and Sligo from November for a 12 month period. She and Donal Tinney (Sligo) outlined the preparations undertaken in areas including RFID and buildings' refinement, insurance, security, categories of membership for whom access is offered, Health and Safety, risk assessment and the induction process required for library patrons. The supervisory regime and associated costs were also discussed.

Two Working Groups on *Literacy and Business Enterprise & Employment* are feeding two more inclusive Task Forces which include Chief Librarians and national players as well as local government Chief Executives. The *Literacy Working Group* reviewed responses to a ground-clearing survey and was identifying three offers which could be branded and offered countrywide. Chairperson Eileen Burgess (Donegal) mentioned that a summer reading challenge could be one and e-learning another. She noted the variety across the quantity and range of literacy initiatives offered by libraries and the capacity for shared resources such as reading lists and programming elements.

Reporting on the *Business Enterprise & Employment Working Group*, Jane Cantwell (Waterford) indicated that it also reviewed survey results and was sub-dividing action into three elements:

- i. Employment & Career Development,
- ii. Business Enterprise
- iii. Cultural Tourism. She stressed the importance of a library offer in its own right as well as supporting other agencies.

Annette Kelly (LGMA) issued an offer to include the library contribution into two forthcoming Action Plans, from the Department of Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation, on (a) Jobs & (b) Enterprise.

Bernadette Fennell (Louth) encouraged participants to engage with the business theme of Library Ireland Week 2014 to generate publicity locally for existing provision.

A powerful element of the programme was the half-day workshop on change management, offered by Dave Mullins of Elix-IRR. His proposition was that fundamentally libraries offer a platform that curates the relationship between information and users and that access to scarce resources is at the heart of the offer of libraries throughout the centuries. Success depends on the imperatives of

1. Being present
2. Being relevant
3. Being ahead
4. Predicting customer needs
5. Earning the right to be recommended and
6. Making scale matter.

Mullin's focus sought to define the offer to users (the target model) and then the operating model that would deliver the service required. In break-out sessions participants applied a change management model, based on four interlocking elements (supply, demand, enablement and ownership) to the Shared Services proposal impacting on the 13 library organisations listed in the O4A Plan. The resulting document is intended as a starting point for support within the Section and for advocacy to senior management.

This was a high-energy seminar, visionary, practical, participatory and very relevant. Its success was a testament to the energy and commitment of all contributors, to the hospitality of Limerick County Council and the planning and delivery skills of its public library staff.

Documentation from presentations is available on the County & City Librarians Section element of the Association's website, <https://libraryassociation.ie/groups-sections/county-and-city-librarians-section-ccls>.

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