

your
Suffolk Libraries
... expanding horizons

Suffolk Libraries Annual Review

2012/13



*Thank you to the
following organisations
for their support:*





Chairman's introduction

"I feel we can confidently state our first year has been a success thanks to the vision, imagination, hard work and countless hours of contribution of a large group of people.

"I want to pay tribute to all our staff, the community, interim Board members and Suffolk County Council who have all worked together to keep our valued library service open for business and in the best position to take on the challenges and opportunities ahead. All 44 libraries in Suffolk remain open and we are running the service with a budget of around £7million - £2million less than the service previously cost.

"It's been an exciting and challenging year which has involved a great deal of hard work. The best indication of our success is that, not only have our wide range of services been maintained, but in many cases we have improved them. For example, there have been a greater range of activities thanks to the involvement of the community and we have also begun to introduce free Wi-Fi to libraries.

"We have been building foundations for the future so that the people of Suffolk will see further improvement and a modern and relevant library service which has something to offer everyone.

"There is a new culture of increased community involvement in the library service which is new ground for everyone but we have seen some excellent innovative ideas and great support for local libraries which I'm sure will continue and develop.

"I want to pay particular tribute to Board member, Mike Readman, who remained an enthusiastic contributor throughout his long illness until the time of his death in 2013 and was among the people who inspired us."

Shona Bendix, Chair of Suffolk's Libraries Industrial and Provident Society
(August 2012 to September 2013)

Suffolk Libraries Interim Board Members –

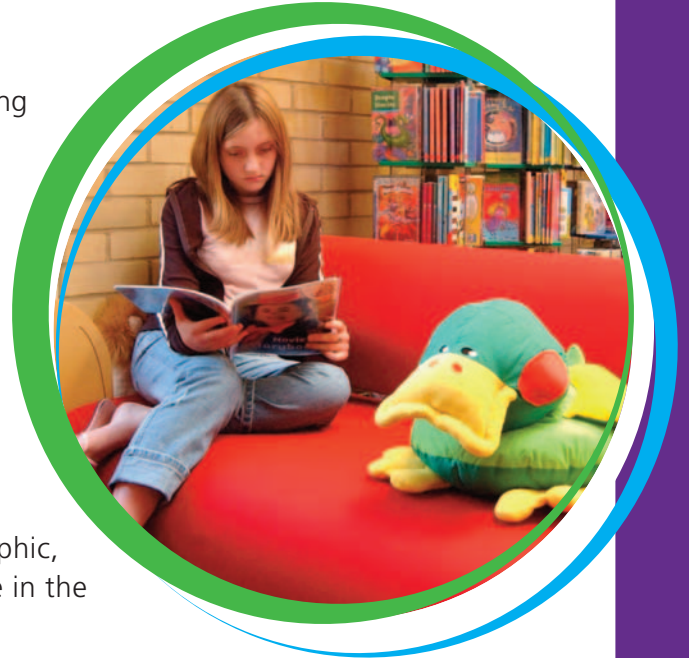
1 August 2012 to 12 September 2013:

Shona Bendix - Chair	Robert Spivey	Mike Readman
Sylvia Knights	Lynne Walker	Alison Wheeler (General Manager)
Colin Owens	Mike Hosking	

Suffolk Libraries – Our aims and vision

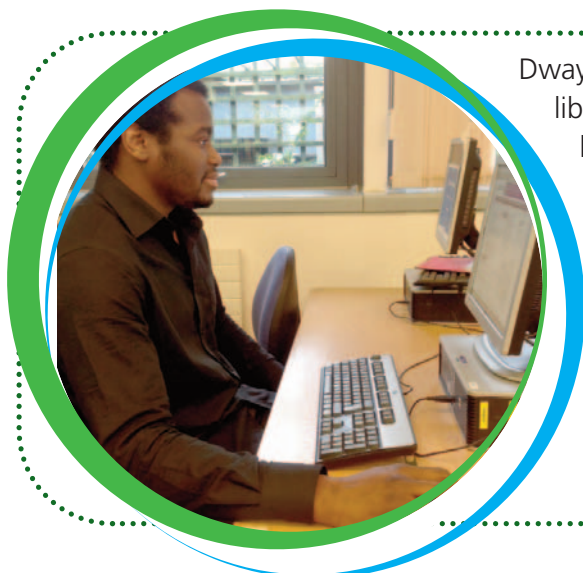
Our aims:

- To promote and enable reading, learning and the sharing of knowledge through free access to book borrowing, electronic and other information services;
- To make other educational, cultural and entertainment materials available for hire;
- To encourage access to informal adult learning, skills training and employment opportunities;
- To facilitate activities to improve well-being;
- To provide welcoming accessible environments where social inclusion and community development can safely prosper in response to changing demographic, socio-economic and educational needs of the people in the area of benefit;
- To build partnerships of shared interest between public, private and voluntary sectors at the heart of communities.



Our vision:

- Suffolk Libraries is a new and independent organisation which delivers public library services which help people read, learn, get information and connect with others in their local communities;
- We have welcoming and committed staff and volunteers who are dedicated to helping people find the services they need;
- Our service is about expanding horizons and giving people a voice in how our services will be delivered now and in the future.



Dwayne was unemployed and used to visit the library to look for work as it was the only place he could get access to the internet. He now has a job after using the library's internet access to complete an application form and assessment tests.

Dwayne said: ***"It's all thanks to the library. It would have been near impossible to get a job without it!"***

The Suffolk Libraries story

On Thursday 1 August 2012, Suffolk's public library services transferred to Suffolk's Libraries Industrial and Provident Society Ltd (Suffolk Libraries).

Suffolk Libraries is an independent and charitable organisation set up following an extensive consultation regarding the future of the county's libraries which generated widespread and passionate support from the people of Suffolk.

Some libraries were under real threat of closure due to the financial constraints experienced by the county council. By transferring the service to Suffolk Libraries and restructuring it, we have been able to keep all 44 libraries open with the same opening hours (a few have actually increased!) and, in doing so, provide a service which costs around £2million less.

Suffolk Libraries has a long term contract with the county council to run Suffolk's library service. This includes mobile libraries, the Schools Library Service, prison libraries and the Home Library Service.

Marion Harvey



This long term contract gives us the stability to plan for the future and the new charitable status of the library service means we are able to seek additional funding from the community and other sources to support its running and development.

It was important that the transition was as seamless as possible for the benefit of staff and customers. Before the transfer to Suffolk Libraries over 100 staff took part in focus groups so we could address any concerns they had and gather their ideas about how to develop the library service.

Marion Harvey, Manager of Ipswich County Library, says: "Staff and customers didn't notice the changeover as programmes and events were all going on as usual.

The added bonus is that we all get to have a 'Friends group' which adds extra benefits to the existing library service and provides support to all of the staff. We have already worked with our group on two brilliant events - Poetry by Heart and the World Book Night 40 winks session. I'm looking forward to more!"

After a two year recruitment freeze, once the service transferred to us we were able to fill some frontline staffing gaps and after an extensive recruitment exercise between November 2012 and February 2013, over 40 new staff joined Suffolk Libraries.

In July 2013 we had over 450 employees including part-time and relief staff.

Julie Wheeler started working for Suffolk Libraries in February 2013:

"Although I've only been here just over six months it feels like longer (in a good way) as I feel like part of the team!"



Our members

Engagement with the local community has been a vital part of our strategy as we have worked towards supporting each library to develop its own Community Group or 'Friends' Group'.

We initially worked to support several 'pilot' project groups linked to Bungay, Eye, Stradbroke, Debenham, Aldeburgh, Sudbury, Thurston and Wickham Market libraries to help them become established and apply for membership of Suffolk Libraries.

At the end of 2012/13 Suffolk Libraries had nine members (this rose to 36 by September 2013).

Suffolk Libraries held regular community group network meetings throughout the year to discuss progress and issues such as fundraising and organising events. Supplemented by regular email updates, these events have helped us to support the developing community groups and share the successes they have already seen.

Throughout the year there were some particularly innovative projects which were led by the local community groups:

- In Wickham Market volunteers began providing computer support and assisted self-service to enable the library to open for additional hours.
- In Aldeburgh the Friends group took a lead in consulting with customers about how the library could best serve the community. As a result there was a change to the opening hours and a range of learning and development opportunities for adult learners and young people was developed.
- The Friends of Glemsford Library Group was formed in March 2011 and became the first official member of Suffolk Libraries in November 2012. The Friends Group has been very positive and proactive with its support for the library, pulling together the resources to redecorate it and helping with library events.
- Halesworth Library is selling jewellery created by Imogen Sheeran and her son who is singer songwriter Ed Sheeran. This has so far raised nearly £200. Bungay are one of many libraries also raising money by selling items such as jewellery, jute bags and crafts.
- The Friends of Thurston Library organised a fundraising meal at Thurston Community Centre which was attended by 60 people and raised £1,150 to support the library. Thurston Library also held a successful book sale which raised £300 and many libraries have held similar events with donated books such as the Ipswich 'Book Mountain' event.
- Ipswich Library have also had two successful clothes swaps to raise money. All these additional events also attract new people and introduce the library as a place for people to meet and make new friends.
- One of the members of the Stowmarket Friends Group owns the Little Wellington Pub in the town and held a race night which raised £520 for the library.

Richard Fawcett,
Chairman of the
Friends of Thurston Library:

The structure and purpose of Suffolk Libraries has encouraged community involvement and given an opportunity for people to show tangible support for the library as a hub at the heart of the community.



Bungay Library Community Group and patrons



Friends of Glemsford Library

A year at Su

2013

FEB

Suffolk has The EDGE

In February 2013 the 'Club 4 Teenz' youth project at Gainsborough Community Library was shortlisted for an award under the 'social' category at the EDGE 2013 Conference in Edinburgh for library and information services.



Celebrating diversity

Ipswich Library's Multicultural Day and World Music Day events have become key dates for the local community, bringing people from different cultures and backgrounds together in the library to enjoy celebrations of music, dancing and culture. In June 2012 nearly 2,500 visitors came along to enjoy the multicultural day and around 2,500 people enjoyed the two World Music Day events in October.



2012

JUN

2012

OCT

ALL YEAR

2012
2013

Activities for children and families

National statistics show that regular visits to libraries make a notable difference to children's literacy skills and educational prospects. A child who visits the library every month from age three to five is two and a half months ahead of a five year old who did not visit the library as often. So it is vital that we continue to provide engaging and popular activities for children.

Our activities are enjoyed by nearly 800 children every week with a range of sessions to help familiarise children with the library and provide lots of practice in phonic discrimination, rhythm and the pleasure of sharing books.

One of the major national programmes we take part in is the Reading Agency's Summer Reading Challenge which is the single most successful campaign in getting children to sign up as new library users. In 2012 6,564 children took part in the challenge and 3,781 completed the challenge by reading six books. Initial figures for Summer 2013 indicated that even more children had taken part this year.



ffolk Libraries

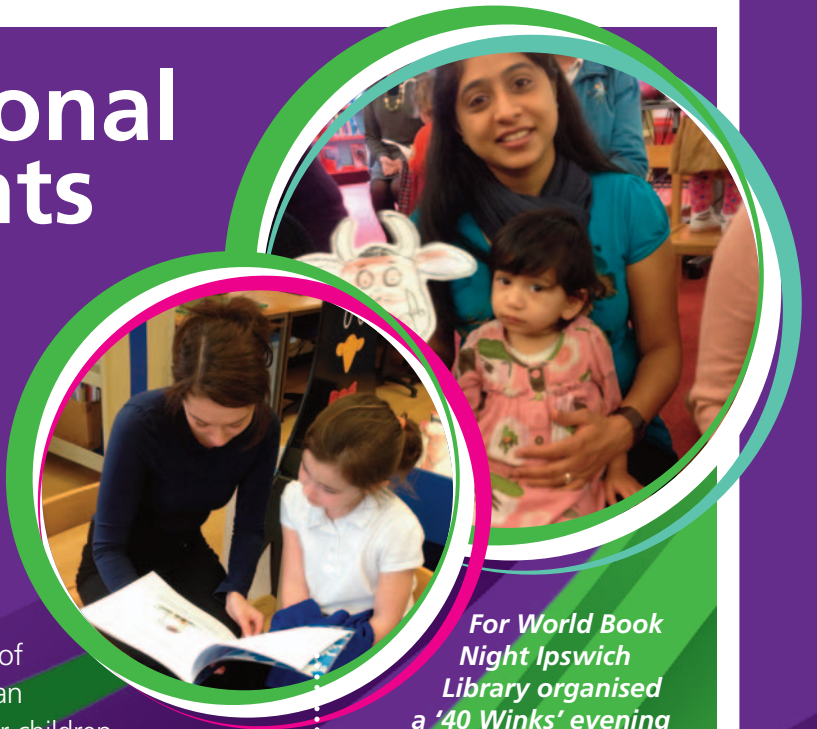


National events

It's important to mark key events in the library calendar and in 2013 we celebrated National Libraries Day in February, World Book Day in March and World Book Night in April.

We are always keen to support these days as they are a great opportunity to take advantage of national campaigns to promote libraries and reading.

Across the library service there were a wide range of events to mark these national days including human library events, fun storytelling and craft sessions for children, author presentations, treasure hunts, book sales and fancy dress.



For World Book Night Ipswich Library organised a '40 Winks' evening of storytelling with the manager dressing in pyjamas to encourage people to relax and enjoy.



In February some library staff reported people came in with greetings of "Happy National Libraries Day!"



Beat the Winter Blues

One of our projects is the Mental Health and Wellbeing service, led by David Grimmer. David is involved in organising a series of events and initiatives designed to deliver a vital health and wellbeing signposting service to everyone who visits the county's libraries.

The Beat the Winter Blues Campaign involved a month of special events in March 2013 designed to keep people active, informed and engaged through a time of year which many people with a mental health issue find tough. This involved gentle exercise sessions, presentations and information on healthy eating and where to get help.

David's work was recognised at the Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust's awards ceremony in July 2012 where he won the Outstanding Community Contribution to the Trust Award.



Our library services



Mobile Libraries

Suffolk's mobile library service offers access to the library service for people living in rural Suffolk.

Suffolk's mobile libraries make 475 stops across the county and visit over 200 villages and hamlets. People are often surprised by the range of services available from the mobile libraries. They stock a wide selection of books and sound and vision loans. People can join the library service on the mobile and request books from the wider Suffolk Library stock.

When Suffolk Libraries took over the service there was already a contractual arrangement with the county council to reduce the number of mobile library vehicles. The main change has been changing the frequency of visits from two-weekly to four-weekly but we have countered this by allowing people to borrow more books and for longer.

From a regular user:

"The mobile library is a godsend – we'd be lost without it."



Prison Library Service

Suffolk Libraries also provide a full library service in all prisons in Suffolk. This is funded by the Home Office and based in prisons and young offender institutions at Highpoint, Blundeston, Hollesley Bay and Warren Hill.



Home Library Service

Our Home Library Service provides a lifeline to hundreds of older or disabled people in the county who cannot get to their nearest library.

In 2013 we brought the service back under the management of Suffolk Libraries, having previously been run by WRVS. The service now has 240 volunteers delivering library books to around 1,300 people in Suffolk.

Two of our volunteers deliver books to residents at a care home in Ipswich and provide books for their regular reading group. The care home's Activities Co-ordinator says:

"You can see the benefit of the visits to our residents. The interaction with regular visitors helps them to build a relationship."



Suffolk Libraries also provides other volunteering opportunities to people who assist with running activities in libraries including the Summer Reading Challenge and fundraising events.



Schools Library Service

The Suffolk Schools Library Service helps schools get the most from their libraries by providing training and support. The service also loans high quality and specialist books, topic boxes and artefacts to schools to support classroom work and can provide lists of recommended books.

One of the highlights for the service was the Book Mastermind competition which involved pupils from 30 schools competing against each other to show their knowledge of books. The final took place in March 2013 with a presentation by children's author Anthony McGowan.



Facts and figures

1 million

44

Our 44 libraries receive around 3.5 million visits every year.

There are over 1 million items in the Suffolk Libraries catalogue including books, audio books, DVDs, eBooks, games and CDs.

475

Our mobile libraries visit 475 stops across the county, visiting over 200 villages and hamlets.

750

We have over 750 volunteers who help us run the Home Library Service, Summer Reading Challenge and give up their time to our community groups.



We estimate that these volunteers contributed 82,400 hours of service in the last year.

82,400

Property
11%

Insurance/
legal costs

0.5%

IT Support

15%

Supplies

7%

Support
Services

6.5%

Book stock

13%

£7 million

Frontline staff

47%

Suffolk Libraries is operating with a budget of around £7million. This is around £2million less than the service cost before the transfer.

This chart shows how our budget was spent in 2012/13

Suffolk Libraries – the future

**Alison Wheeler,
General Manager of
Suffolk Libraries.**



“While this annual review looks back at our first year it also looks ahead at new ideas and initiatives.

“Visits to libraries have remained fairly constant thanks to a wide range of community engagement and activities. The borrowing of physical books continues to be affected by the changing habits of people and the new ways of accessing books and reading materials.

“We have seen a shift towards eBooks and the number of free books being downloaded from the Suffolk Library catalogue is increasing significantly every year. In March 2013 we also signed up to a new eAudio book catalogue, expanding the range available to people in Suffolk.

“Ensuring what we offer people remains relevant and in line with the way people want to access books is a vital part of our plans for the future. This doesn’t mean the physical book is in decline – we still lend millions of books every year! We just need to make sure we continue to develop a modern and relevant library service that offers something to everyone and adapts to modern reading habits.

“Where else can you go where you can access the internet for free without having to buy something? The library is a vital resource for people on low incomes and is the only place some people can get online and search for a job.

“With this in mind we are looking to improve the IT provision in libraries by upgrading our computers and rolling out Wi-Fi. The preparation work for this was well underway in 2012/13 and by August 2013 ten libraries were able to offer Wi-Fi to their customers.

“Over the next year we will be working to engage more with customers (and people who don’t use the library) to find out what they want from their library service. We also need to carry on working to ensure the library service is run as efficiently as possible in a challenging financial environment.

In a time of concern for library services across the country we can be positive about the future and be proud of what a well-loved, diverse and essential service we have in Suffolk.

“In a time of concern for library services across the country we can be proud of what a well-loved, diverse and essential service we have in Suffolk.

“This gives us a strong foundation on which to build and by working together we can be positive about the future.”

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