

Suffolk Libraries

Annual Review 2015-16



Thank you to the following organisations for their support:



demcointeriors



Birketts



Norse



Chairman's introduction



A catalogue of excellence

As a Board, our objectives are to protect and improve the service we provide for the communities of Suffolk.

You will be aware that Suffolk Libraries has been identified as the Gold Standard for library services nationally. We are delivering more – in terms of quantity and quality of services and activities - than ever before.

Last year a total of 9,500 events and group sessions were held in our libraries, attracting 156 thousand people. These numbers do not include the interactions our frontline staff have with individual customers on a daily basis, providing a free, accessible, non-judgemental social service to our communities. For many of the most vulnerable in our communities, their library may be the only place where these social interactions take place.

We know that libraries deliver fantastic social benefits. And yet there is a feeling often represented in the national media and experienced in many other parts of the country, that the service faces inevitable managed decline, to a point where it stops delivering the social value that would justify any public investment.

The Board and management of Suffolk Libraries strongly reject this doom-laden scenario. Our position is that, given that we know how valuable our services are to existing customers, our goal must be to attract many more customers, so that these benefits can be even more widely shared.

I have headed this introduction 'A catalogue of excellence'. This phrase was used by a colleague at a Board meeting in the Spring of 2016, and I think it sums up the range and quality of achievements described in this review.

We are incredibly lucky to have so many talented and motivated people working on the frontline and at the centre of the service. When you add to this talent pool the energy, creativity and experience which our Community Groups and other volunteers contribute, it is clear that Suffolk Libraries offers phenomenal value to the communities we serve.

Tony Brown, Chair of Suffolk Libraries Board.

Suffolk Libraries Board Members 2015-16

Tony Brown – Chair

Sylvia Knights – Vice Chair

Jonathan Ogden – Honorary Secretary

Sue Buck

Anne Mallalieu

Peter Callaghan

Colin Rockall

Alison Wheeler (Chief Executive Officer and ex officio board member)

A year of Innovation

Over the year we have continued to develop and introduce innovative new services and activities.

There were several new digital library developments throughout the year. We launched the new 'Borrowbox' eAudio service and Suffolk Libraries also became one of a handful of English library services chosen to pilot a new Cloud Library eBook service launched by US based company Bibliotheca.

Suffolk Libraries customers can also now access the Zinio service which provides access to a range of popular downloadable eMagazines.

Chantry, Long Melford, Lowestoft, Mildenhall and Newmarket libraries all held Get Connected events during 2015/16 to promote digital library services to customers.

In what may have been the first scheme of its kind in the country, Halesworth Library launched a new iPad lending service to customers with the support of the Friends of Halesworth Library.

Ipswich County Library's new Enterprise + Innovation Hub has hosted several exciting events based in its makerspace known as 'The Lab'. These have included a 'Raspberry Jam' event to introduce people to the world of computing and coding using Raspberry Pi computers (see photo, right). There was also a 'Have a go' event for people to try out the 3D Printers, coding kit and digital sewing machines and a Code Club was launched for 9-11 year olds.

The launch of the new Suffolk Writes project enabled aspiring writers to submit their work and see it published as an eBook through our eLibrary.

In February 2016 Suffolk Libraries won an award at the EDGE library conference which recognised the contribution the Stradbroke Library post office has made to the local community. This is second time Suffolk Libraries has won an EDGE award (See photo on P6).

In February 2016 Ipswich Library's Northgate Room became licensed for weddings and other ceremonies.



The new iPad lending service at Halesworth Library.



Suffolk Libraries Presents... events!

Our programme of digital screenings of arts performances and exhibitions continued during the year through the 'Suffolk Libraries Presents' project which has been funded by Arts Council England and is run in partnership with Creative Arts East. Growing audiences have enjoyed screenings of performances including the Duchess of Malfi, Billy Elliott and Matthew Bourne's ballets.

There have been events at Felixstowe, Gainsborough, Hadleigh, Lowestoft and Capel St Mary libraries and in 2016 the programme has expanded to include film screenings.

These events were just a part of the busy and diverse calendar of events throughout the year:

Suffolk Libraries announced 7 November 2015 as Freegal Day – an opportunity to showcase its free digital music service with all libraries playing some of the music available. Freegal Day also coincided with what was our most notable live music event to date when acclaimed Americana band Police Dog Hogan performed at Ipswich County Library to an audience of 230 people.

This was followed by a performance by Mr B the Gentleman Rhymer - the world's leading exponent of 'chap-hop' – later in the year which was attended by 225 people.

Ipswich County Library's annual Multicultural Day returned with a dazzling array of performances including bagpipes, Bollywood dance, panpipes, a dragon dance workshop, polish songs, recorder music and tribal belly dance.



Felixstowe Library was once again the venue for the children's events for the Felixstowe Book Festival and also hosted three workshops for writers.

Southwold Library ran its successful Slaughter in Southwold crime writers' festival for the third time with a packed programme including Nicci French and Simon Brett. The Friends of Lowestoft Library also ran a literary festival in the library.

Kessingland Library held an open mic night which was open to all poets, storytellers and singer/songwriters.

Hadleigh Library hosted a free music and art event in celebration of Suffolk African History Month.



Police Dog Hogan performing at Ipswich County Library.

Suffolk Libraries

The highlights of 2015-2016

April 2015

■ A mystery book display at **Rosehill Library** encouraged customers to pick a 'mystery' book wrapped in paper to entice readers into discovering a new author or genre. This idea was then also used at Ipswich County Library (see photo below).



■ Several libraries took part in **World Book Night** with events including author visits, readings, family events and Lowestoft Library hosted a Harry Potter themed event with a chance for visitors to meet some real owls.

May 2015

■ **Kesgrave Library** changed its opening hours and is now open for an extra hour every week.

■ **Bury St Edmunds and Ipswich County libraries** both held magical events for children in May with a magic and balloon modelling show at Bury and magic workshops in Ipswich.

■ Several libraries again took part in the regional **Brave New Reads reading programme** which featured a list of books and a series of related events aimed at readers looking for something different.

June 2015

■ **Leiston Library** celebrated an extensive refurbishment and redecoration with new carpets and shelving thanks to funding from Leiston Sizewell Community Benefit Fund and the Enabling Communities Fund.



The refurbished children's area at Leiston Library.

■ **The Friends of Brandon Library** funded and hosted two free workshops provided by the local 'Music and Arts project' on how to make music.

■ **Framlingham Library** was given a special facsimile copy of the Magna Carta and hosted a LiberTea event to mark the town's link with the signing of the Magna Carta 800 years ago.

■ **Chantry Library** held a weekend of events with a Family Fun Day and Community Day to show people what the library and other local organisations have to offer.

Chantry Library also launched new activities for young people during the year.



July 2015

■ **Westbourne Library** officially changed its name to Broomhill Library after a proposal by the library's Friends group was approved.

■ Suffolk born US entrepreneur Bill Moorier made a generous donation of \$10,000 to **Stowmarket Library** to fund new flexible moveable shelving. Mr Moorier said: "Stowmarket Library was a kind of a sanctuary for me growing up – a safe place where I didn't need to worry and could lose myself in reading. I am very happy to be able to give something back."

■ To mark this year's Summer Reading Challenge theme, **Mildenhall Library** hosted a record breaking storytelling session with the Official Skald (Chief Storyteller) of Suffolk. Beccles Library also challenged children to attempt some of the more wacky world records including sorting as many jelly beans as possible with chopsticks.

■ **Bury St Edmunds Library** celebrated 150 years since the publication of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland by providing a free fun day of themed activities in the Abbey Gardens.

August 2015

■ **Stradbroke Library** amended its opening hours and began opening on Monday afternoons to allow for an extra mail collection due to the popularity of its new post office.

■ **Halesworth Library** welcomed best-selling children's writer and illustrator and Children's Laureate, Chris Riddell who added one of his trademark doodles to the wall of the library. (See pictures right and below)



Chris Riddell, who added one of his trademark doodles to the wall of the library.



Stradbroke Library manager Maureen John receiving the award won by the library's post office project at the EDGE library conference (see page 3).

September 2015

■ **Glemsford and Thurston libraries** both changed their opening hours with Glemsford increasing its opening times by two hours and Thurston retaining the same number of overall hours but opening on two days where it was previously closed.

■ **Woodbridge Library** held a local history fair as part of Heritage Open Days which celebrate historic buildings.

■ **Capel St Mary Library** marked the 30th anniversary of its opening.





The Friends of Elmswell Library celebrated a successful fundraising campaign.

October 2015

■ **Glemsford Library** joined in with Star Wars Reads Day, providing a Jedi Training Academy with a local karate teacher. Chantry, Lowestoft, Gainsborough, Woodbridge, Brandon and Mildenhall libraries also held Star Wars themed events.

■ Best-selling crime author of the Agatha Raisin and Hamish Macbeth books, M.C. Beaton visited **Haverhill Library** after it won a national competition for the best M.C. Beaton-themed display.

■ Halloween saw **Gainsborough Library** hosting an 'All about Owls' event with the Suffolk Wildlife Trust and Ipswich Library running its annual Creepy Crawlies event.

November 2015

■ Refurbishment work at **Lavenham Library** was completed ready for the library to be involved in Lavenham Literary Festival.

■ The bestselling author of Captain Corelli's Mandolin and Bungay resident Louis de Bernières gave a talk at **Bungay Library** about his new bestselling new book 'The Dust That Falls from Dreams'.

■ At **Great Cornard Library**, the baby of the Friends group's treasurer received his first library card when just a few days old. (see photo)

December 2015

■ **Aldeburgh Library** ran a festive craft session enabling children to make their own Christmas Minions and the library also launched a new Minecraft club.

January 2016

■ **Hadleigh Library** changed its opening hours meaning the library is now open an additional 30 minutes per week.

■ The Friends of **Elmswell Library** celebrated a successful fundraising and development project after over £15,000 was raised to decorate the library, install new furniture and make improvements to the children and young people's areas.

February 2016

■ **Haverhill Library** launched a new chat group aimed at people for whom English is a second language.

■ Hundreds of children enjoyed events in libraries for the second **Harry Potter Book Night**.



A year of reading, literacy and learning

Suffolk Libraries launched its Year of Reading campaign in February 2016, building on the successful work to increase literacy in schools by our new Literacy Ambassador and embracing an impressive year-long calendar of events, initiatives and projects.

During the year our Literacy Ambassador visited 17 schools and spoke to 3,200 pupils. He also ran digital roadshows in Lowestoft, Aldeburgh and Ipswich for school pupils, enabling them to have a go at building a Kano computer, trying out 3D printers and doing some coding.

The theme for the Summer Reading Challenge in 2015 was 'Record Breakers' which was very apt as Suffolk Libraries once again broke records with over 8,200 children signing up. It was also a record-breaking year for the number of young volunteers helping out with around 200 giving up 2,000 hours during the holidays.

In September 2015 our service to schools was relaunched as the Literacy, Books and Reading Team for Schools. The new service focuses on improving literacy, through promoting reading for pleasure and supporting the curriculum using specialist knowledge about books.

In 2015 Suffolk Libraries was chosen as one of only 20 library services to receive £2,000 from the Department for Education to set up new Chatterbooks reading clubs as part of a government drive to get more Key Stage 2 pupils reading regularly. This project has already had some great feedback from schools we are working with.

The Literacy, Books and Reading Team for Schools also held the popular Book Mastermind event to find the county's best-read pupils with Axel Scheffler, creator of the illustrations for the Gruffalo books and children's author Philip Ardagh, the guests of honour.

In November, Suffolk Libraries supported the addition of a new National Learning offer to those already available from libraries. The new National Universal Learning Offer 'Code Green' represents a detailed Digital Making Toolkit, a how-to guide to give customers hands-on experience in computer programming (coding), designing and making 3D objects, building robots, creating apps and many other creative activities for all ages.

2015 was another record-breaking year for the Summer Reading Challenge in Suffolk.



A visit to Bungay Library by St Edmunds Primary School.



Suffolk Libraries organised a visit by author Katy Birchall to several Ipswich libraries. Photo reproduced courtesy of the East Anglian Daily Times.



New Chapters

Suffolk Libraries' Mental Health and Wellbeing Information Service



NewChapters

Mental Health & Wellbeing
Information Service

This year we have been working to develop and raise the profile of our Mental Health and Wellbeing Information Service, which has recently been relaunched as the 'New Chapters' service with our new Co-ordinator Sarah Lungley.

In April 2015 the service worked with Volunteering Matters on a project to film people in Ipswich County Library talking about what makes them happy. The project followed Action for Happiness workshops and was funded by Suffolk Community Foundation, with the end result an uplifting series of short films entitled 'Take Five' which can be viewed on YouTube.



The Suffolk Family Carers bus visited libraries as part of Warm Handover roadshows.

Libraries across Suffolk hosted 'Warm Handover' information roadshows during the summer of 2015 with visits from The Suffolk Family Carers bus. Suffolk Libraries and Suffolk Family Carers are both part of the Suffolk Information Partnership where local statutory and voluntary organisations have pledged to work more closely together to help customers looking for information or support.

The Open Space group at Ipswich County Library was developed by Suffolk Libraries working in partnership with Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust and Julian Support to give people a relaxed and informal opportunity to talk about their mental health or any subject they wish. The idea has been a great success with 25-30 people (and even over 50 one week) now attending and the group has even begun to organise other activities and days out in the community.

Towards the end of 2015-16 Suffolk Libraries submitted a successful proposal to Mental Health Commissioners for increased funding for the service. This is resulting in new projects which are being piloted in 2016-17 including rolling out new Open Space groups in Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill Library.

The additional funding is also helping to launch another new group which will work with Suffolk Refugee Support to help improve refugee women's access to support and advice. Other new projects may include new groups for men's mental health, improving employability for those living with mental health and LGBT groups.



*Sarah Lungley,
Mental Health
and Wellbeing
Co-ordinator.*

FACTS & FIGURES 15/16



During the year there were nearly **156,000** attendances at the activities on offer across Suffolk's libraries.

There were over **62,000** attendances by children and their families to regular activities for under fives in libraries.



Suffolk Libraries has **140,000** active library users.



Suffolk Libraries has over **10,000 eBooks** available



Suffolk's three **mobile libraries** issued **102,712** items in 2015/16, visiting 200 villages and 475 individual stops every four weeks.



CUSTOMER SURVEY

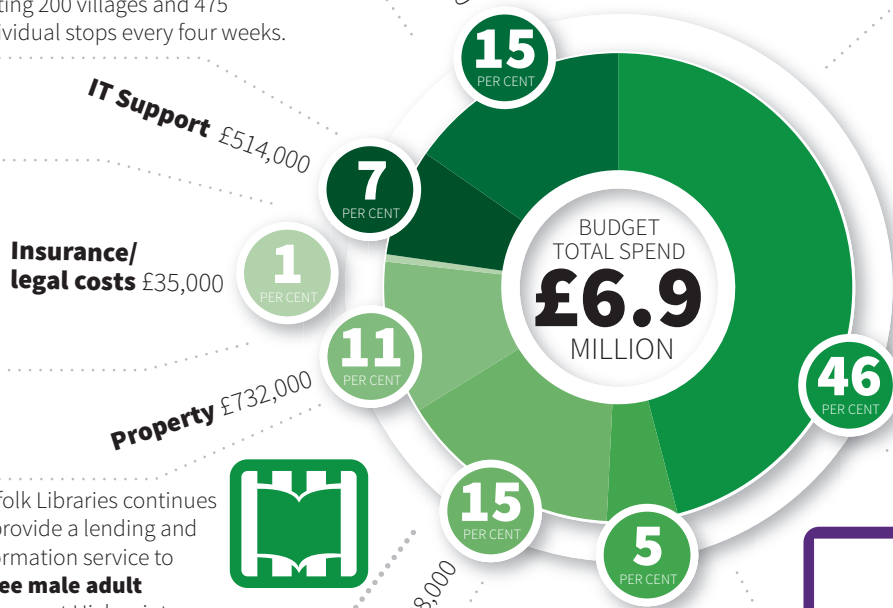
Suffolk Libraries launched its second countywide customer survey towards the end of 2015. The survey was completed by over 1,700 people and provided some great feedback about the service:



93% rated the **library layout, facilities and environment** as excellent, very good or good



Suffolk Libraries also carried out a staff survey in 2015 and **93%** of staff said they were proud to work for the library service, and **94%** said they felt they made a valuable contribution to the community.



98% said the **helpfulness of staff** is excellent, very good or good



89% said new **library computers and wi-fi** are excellent, very good or good

Frontline staff £3,183,000



89% said the **eLibrary** selection is excellent, very good or good

Suffolk Libraries continues to provide a lending and information service to **three male adult prisons** at Highpoint, Hollesley Bay and Warren Hill.



Support Services £1,068,000

91% said the **choice of books and information** is excellent, very good or good



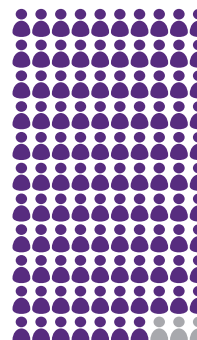
93% rated library **opening hours** as excellent, very good or good



The Home Library Service takes books to **1,356** older and disabled people in their own homes and has 260 volunteers



93% said **activities and events** were excellent, very good or good



97% of our customers told us they thought the service had got better or was about the same since Suffolk Libraries took over.

Chief Executive's Message

Suffolk Libraries is now four years old. We have created something special in Suffolk and we are a shining example of what a successful and well used community library service should be. In every corner of Suffolk there is something happening at a library – usually something inventive, quirky or inspiring.

This review only gives you a taste of the well supported and impressive cultural events and our lively programme of activities for children, families and older people. Our libraries are a centre for community celebration, learning and knowledge. They are places that bring people together and provide experiences and services which can make a real difference to their lives.



Each year we seem to achieve more momentum, raise our profile and become a closer-knit organisation as we meet each challenge that we face.

Looking ahead to our future priorities, we want to ensure that Suffolk Libraries will continue to be a responsive, relevant, resilient and sustainable provider of the county's library services.

We want to develop a better understanding of the library experience for all those who use and need our services and reach out to those who currently don't use them.

2016 is Suffolk Libraries' 'Year of Reading'. We will continue to develop and strengthen our reading and literacy offer with support for local and national reading initiatives all over the county.

The role and voice of our Community Groups will become ever more significant as they play such an important part in representing and championing the needs of their communities and their local library.

Online services and enabling technology will be increasingly important and our desire to innovate and develop new things will help us to remain resilient and forward-looking. For example, we are currently developing a new self-service offer for customers and increasing the use of the cloud for library content.

Nothing about Suffolk Libraries ever stands still and we know there will be more challenges ahead. I am confident that by all of us working together – our leadership team, Board, staff, Community Groups and volunteers – we are up to these challenges.

It is only fitting to end this review by giving thanks to the many people who make what we do possible – our brilliant staff, the tremendously supportive Community Groups and all our other volunteers.

Alison Wheeler, Chief Executive.

“ *Each year we seem to achieve more momentum, raise our profile and become a closer-knit organisation...* ”

Suffolk Libraries

Some customer comments:

“Excellent service, staff all very helpful in every way not only with books.”

“Suffolk Libraries are wonderful. Keep up the good work!”

“My use of the library overall has improved in the last two years for my needs - thank you.”

“I really enjoy using my local library. I have been using them since I was little and found them invaluable. The extra stuff you can now do e.g. computers, eBooks etc is brilliant.”



Suffolk Libraries

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