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Museums, Libraries and Archives Division

To Members of the cc Janet Evans
Empowering the
Learning Community
Steering Group

From Joanna Carpenter

Date 19 March 2002
amended 3 April

**MINUTES OF SECOND MEETING OF THE *EMPOWERING THE LEARNING
COMMUNITY* STEERING GROUP, HELD ON MONDAY 18 MARCH 2002.**

Present:

Mark Mason (Chair)	DCMS	Joanna Carpenter	DCMS
John Seymour	DfES	Julie Street	
Geoff Smith			
	Britis	Rosalie Byrne	DfES
	h Library	Josie Armitage	CHNTO
Carl Clayton	SINTO	Tom o'Leary	PRO
Mandy Barrie	DCMS	Christopher Naylor	engage
Annabel Jones	DCMS		
Linda Ashcroft	BAILER		

Welcome and Introduction/Minutes and Matters Arising

1. There were no comments on the minutes of the first meeting held on 7 November.

Update

2. Mark Mason said that he thought it was important for the steering group to be informed on what was happening in the subgroups, so that it was able to sign up to what the subgroups were doing. It was also important that there was a mechanism for updating the group regularly with progress notes and Mark proposed to do this by e-mail. He also proposed that we put agendas and minutes of meetings on the DCMS and DfES websites and invited comments. The group was happy with these proposals.

Action: DCMS and DfES to put details about Empowering on their websites.

Demonstration Projects Working Party and Funding Working Party

3. John Seymour presented to the group on the work of the Demonstration Projects and the Funding working parties he chairs. A copy of the presentation is attached.
4. In the following discussion, the difference between 'cross-domain' (libraries museums, galleries and archives) and 'cross-sectoral' (eg libraries in different sectors, such as public libraries and higher education libraries) was clarified.
5. The Demonstration Projects working party's small grants scheme (called 'Get it together' (further information attached) had had 71 bids to date. DfES and Engage were going to look at the bids on 19 March. There was some discussion on the criteria for assessing projects. Around £25,000 was available for 40-50 different projects. The aim was for the projects to be written up as case studies when finished and the case studies disseminated. The next meeting of the working party would take place on 24 April, when a draft for a wider bid document would be considered.
6. DfES had bid for more money to supplement the £100,000 available already in 2002-3. One key area of activity was to measure and assess the impact of the demonstration projects, which would be looking

at how collaboration between institutions can work.

7. DfES reported that the funding working party was going to be looking at examples of collaboration between institutions and the case for establishing funding units in each of the Single Regional Agencies. The remit of the working party and whether coordinated purchasing arrangements were going to be considered was debated. It was agreed that it would be necessary to consider access to online journals and other electronic material in this context and that the SINTO paper, which was to be discussed later in the meeting, would be relevant to this.

Training Subgroup and School Libraries Group

8. Mark Mason reported that the training subgroup had met twice to date, on 15 January and 13 March. At its first meeting the subgroup had done some brainstorming around the issues it was to consider. At its second meeting it had begun to focus more on some of these issues, primarily: training the professionals implementing the *Empowering* initiative, such as librarians, archivists, museum and gallery curators, teachers, those working in primary, secondary, tertiary, higher and further education and users themselves who would need training in how to access resources more effectively.
9. Mark reported that a number of organisations were already offering relevant training. He had found some information on a project called EduLib, which had been run by a consortium of academic institutions led by the University of Hull, and he proposed to follow this up. He was also bidding within DCMS for £20,000 project funding to evaluate research and the potential read-across to other domains/sectors.
10. The subgroup was also considering professional education and how to address professional courses - such as teachers' initial training and continuing professional development, establishing commonality across domains and where sector-specific skills were

needed. Other matters being considered were: the roles of Single Regional Agencies; training delivery through new technologies; information literacy for users; making links with SCOUNL (the Society for College, National and University Libraries). Mark was planning to engage proactively with the Teacher Training Agency (TTA). He distributed a summary of a paper commissioned by Re:source to review the literature on user learning needs. The full paper will be emailed out to the group.

Action: DCMS to email out the full 'User Learning Needs Critical Literature Review' paper

11. Mark Mason reported on the progress of the School Libraries Group, led by DfES, which has been considering the recommendation in the original *Empowering the Learning Community* report that the Government should consider making provision of school library and information services a statutory responsibility. The group had concluded that it was not necessary or desirable to make school library provision statutory. It was looking at what levers existed for improving school library provision. It had commissioned a report into the benefits of school libraries which had concluded that they were a good thing but that it was not clear why. The group had decided not to commission further research into why, since their benefits had been established. The group's view was that school libraries were important particularly for disadvantaged or vulnerable groups and it was aiming to develop further proposals targeting that group. It was suggested that it was important to measure what you did rather than do what you could measure, although in this context monitoring and evaluation of the demonstration projects, for example, would be important.

Public Libraries Review

12. Mandy Barrie from DCMS spoke about the public libraries strategy being developed by DCMS at Baroness Blackstone's instigation. She had been struck by the wide variations in library standards between different local authorities and wanted to

make all libraries as good as the best. A strategic framework was being developed that would be outcomes based and focused on the needs of end users. This would feed into new guidance for annual library plans and discussions are underway with the Audit Commission to consider how the inspection process might be strengthened.

13. Baroness Blackstone had hosted a series of seminars to seek views on the way forward. Four key themes for the strategy had emerged from these seminars: better educational services; new on-line delivery of services; the library as a centre for community engagement; and new skills for library staff. Work was continuing with consultants being appointed to carry out desk research, look at international best practice, and undertake cost-benefit analysis of options. It would be useful to be able to use demo projects to try out some ideas. It was expected that a key document would be published in the autumn.
14. The group asked when this was going to be made public. Mandy said that Peter Beauchamp's team at DCMS would be writing in April to Local Authorities about the next round of annual library plans and would be informing them of this work. It would be good for members of the steering group to be involved in workshops in May and June to get the Empowering message into the agenda of the work.
15. The group asked how this fitted in with the 'New Library Agenda' which was the last 'vision' for public libraries the Government had published. Mandy Barrie said that the 'New Library Agenda' had been about IT and had resulted in Lottery money being given for installing IT infrastructure in libraries. The question now was what to do with the infrastructure that was in place.

Public access to electronic resources in academic libraries

16. Carl Clayton spoke on his paper (attached) which identified barriers to the learner trying to access

resources. They were: access to academic libraries' computer networks; JANET (Joint Academic NETWORK) connection policy; databases licences; ICT capacity; and other wider issues. The main questions were how to make funding 'follow the learner' and open up access to resources.

17. In response, comments included that it was important that the public library network developed a strategy for providing access to electronic content. Much specialist electronic content would not be relevant to the general public and could be more cost-effectively provided by walk-in access to an academic library. Public libraries however had to be able to demonstrate that they were considering seriously the provision of electronic material of more general interest. The need for libraries in different sectors to be aware of what material other libraries held in order to be able to direct users to resources was emphasised, but that problems arose because each institution had to look to the needs of its own users first.
18. There was discussion around the suggestion that access to material held electronically gave opportunities for distance learning. It was felt that the division of information into 'of general interest' and 'of specialist interest' by libraries could result in additional barriers for the user in gaining access to some information, although it was cost prohibitive to have universal access in all public libraries because of the cost of publishers' licences.

Next steps/future activity

19. It was agreed that DCMS and DfES would put *Empowering the Learning Community* papers on their websites by the end of April. DCMS might have to put a link to the DfES website on its site rather than the papers, since its site was being relaunched soon after May and it was unlikely to be worthwhile making large changes to the old site for a short time period. It was agreed that John and Mark would produce a discussion paper, on the focus for future activity, for the next meeting.

Any Other Business and Date of Next Meeting

20. Resource offered to invite 'The People's Network' to give a presentation to the steering group.
21. The next meeting will take place at 12.30pm on Tuesday 25 June. Lunch will be available from 12 noon.

Action: Julie Street to invite 'The People's Network' to give a presentation at the next meeting.

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