

Suffolk Libraries

Annual Review

2013/14



Thank you to the following organisations for their support:





Chairman's introduction

Progress and potential at Suffolk Libraries

Back in 2011, changes in policy and funding led to a threat of closure to 33 of the county's libraries. This was met with expressions of horror and resistance by the public and the media, leading to a consultation which resulted in a radical, innovative way forward for the county's library service.

An interim Board was formed and its members worked with Suffolk County Council to create Suffolk's Libraries Industrial and Provident Society (Suffolk Libraries). Our member-led organisation was launched in August 2012 and we are contracted by the county council to deliver a comprehensive library service at a substantially reduced cost. All libraries have remained open and all 44 have community groups set up to support, sustain and enhance the services they provide to local people.

At last year's AGM a new Board, including myself, was elected – the start of a steep learning curve for most of us. This Board is made up of enthusiastic supporters of the library service with a wide range of professional experience.

We believe we are pioneering a successful model for a modern library service. We know we have maintained – and in some ways improved – our service to the community. And we have built on the value of our service at a time when many other counties have been unable to sustain the quality and professionalism which our staff are delivering.

The detailed feedback from our customer survey at the end of 2013 (see page 8) shows just how highly our service is valued and I have never seen such consistently glowing comments for any other organisation in any sector.

The success of this model relies on the active engagement and support of our community groups, as well as our staff. I would like to thank everyone for their support of Suffolk Libraries over the past year – the staff, my fellow Board members, our community groups, other volunteers and customers. Together I believe we can continue to develop this valued and vibrant service.

Tony Brown, Chair of Suffolk Libraries Board.

Suffolk Libraries Board Members 2013-14

Tony Brown – Chair

Sylvia Knights – Vice Chair

Anne Mallalieu – Honorary Secretary

Sue Buck

Sue Brotherwood (September 2013 to March 2014)

John Fisher (June 2014 to September 2014)

Jonathan Ogdin

Michael Roberts

Colin Rockall (June 2014 to September 2014)

Alison Wheeler (General Manager)

Suffolk Libraries

Our 2020 vision for the future

“Suffolk Libraries will transform lives through access to knowledge and resources, promote lifelong learning and strengthen communities by meeting their evolving needs.”

One of the priorities for the past year has been to develop a strategy for Suffolk’s library service which will take us forward. Our new Libraries Innovation and Development Manager, Krystal Vittles has been working with colleagues to create a strategy which will build on and enhance Suffolk Libraries’ first two years of operation and help us create a service which is modern, relevant and will make a difference to people.

This work has involved discussions with library colleagues, customers and the many partner organisations we work closely with such as local councils and health services. We have contributed to and learnt from national research into the future of libraries and carried out customer surveys. We have also embarked on a far-reaching market research project to find out what people want from a library service. This has included talking to people who don’t currently visit their local library.

Suffolk Libraries has committed to provide a diverse and wide-ranging service which offers something for everyone. This can be summarised by six key offers:

- 1 **The core offer** (library loans – books, eBooks, sound and vision, free computer access etc.)
- 2 **Enabling learning, skills and employment** – (learning courses, working to support people back into work)
- 3 **Acting as a cultural broker for the community** – (providing a range of arts activities and bringing people into contact with cultural opportunities. In July 2014 we heard that Arts Council England had awarded us just under £100,000 to build new audiences within libraries for the arts)
- 4 **Being at the centre of the community for wellbeing** – (through our Mental Health and Wellbeing Service and a range of events and partnership projects)
- 5 **Libraries as business enablers** – (working to establish business hubs within libraries which will support the established and emerging business people of Suffolk)
- 6 **Libraries as supporters of community life** – (libraries act as community hubs: places where people socialise, volunteer, access vital community services through partners and exchange information and ideas).

You will see the evidence of what we can offer in this review and our strategy for the years ahead will help us build on what has already been achieved.

▶ One of several ways we worked to find out what people wanted from the library service was holding a round table event in February 2014 which brought together a range of decision-makers from statutory services and the voluntary and cultural sectors. These discussions helped to support our emerging future vision and gave us new ideas and guidance for our work ahead.



Suffolk Libraries

The highlights of 2013-2014

2013

APR

'Grabbits' book displays

Several libraries launched 'Grabbits' book displays for Easter 2013. These easy to 'grab' and read selections of books for children and young people were very popular with nearly 3,000 books borrowed in the first few weeks and they're still on display now.



World Book Night 2013

World Book Night 2013 saw several libraries hosting special events and gifting free books to people to encourage them to read.

2013

MAY

10th birthday celebration

Suffolk's smallest library in Debenham Resource Centre celebrated its 10th birthday. There are currently plans for the library to move to larger premises during the coming year.



Visual impairments event

2013

JUN

Visual impairments event

Felixstowe Library held an information event aimed at people with visual impairments demonstrating eAudio books and large print titles. It also hosted events for the Felixstowe Book Festival.

Walking book group launched

Saxmundham launched a walking book group in June with the aim of encouraging people to explore the Suffolk countryside whilst discussing a book. Chantry Library has since launched a similar group.

Multicultural Day

Ipswich Library's Multicultural Day in June was enjoyed by hundreds of people who enjoyed dance and musical performances, Indian, Chinese and African-Caribbean food stalls, games, a fashion show, craft stalls and information displays. There was also a successful community fair at Chantry Library.

Writers' festival

Southwold Library held its first 'Slaughter' Crime Writers' festival where several renowned national and local crime authors gave a talk about their work.



Saxmundham Walking Book Group

Ipswich Library's Multicultural Day



2013

JULY

Summer Fete

Westbourne Library hosted The Broomhill Summer Fete which was organised by Westbourne Library Friends, Sherrington Road Care Home and The Broomhill Trust, bringing together these community organisations to provide a day of fun for local people.

Festival storytelling

Suffolk Libraries provided storytelling and craft activities at the Latitude Festival.



2013

AUG

Summer reading challenge

Summer reading challenge

The ever popular summer reading challenge proved to be our most successful ever in 2013 thanks to efforts of libraries and the theme of 'Creepy House' which really captured children's imagination. Over 7,700 children signed up for the challenge of reading six books during the summer with nearly 2,400 of these joining the library to take part.

2013

SEP

New library opened

In September we opened a new library! The Brandon Centre in Bury Road is a new shared building which, along with a new library, hosts several local services including Forest Heath District Council, Suffolk Police, a children's centre and pre-school.

The new Brandon Library

Voices for Gainsborough

Gainsborough Community Library and The Voices for Gainsborough Library group organised a weekend of activities for all ages in early September to show people what the library has to offer.

Stowmarket open day

Stowmarket Library held an open day on 21 September to promote the library and celebrate the refurbishment of the library courtyard by the Rotary Club of Stowmarket.

Classical music concerts

Woodbridge Library launched monthly classical music concerts organised by the Friends of Woodbridge Library in September. These have become increasingly popular and have raised hundreds of pounds through voluntary donations.

Literary festival

Lowestoft Library ran a very successful literary festival involving several local authors and a range of activities.



Lowestoft Literary Festival



2013

OCT

Westbourne Blues

Westbourne Library hosted a live blues music event which raised around £200 and even had a surprise celebrity guest when Greg Greg Kane from 80's pop band Hue and Cry turned up, after being intrigued by the idea of music in the library whilst visiting Ipswich.

World Music Festival

Ipswich County Library had hundreds of visitors at its fifth free World Music Festival with two days of performances representing the music and dance of different countries, cultures, styles and traditions.

Halloween week

Hundreds of young children and their parents also came to Ipswich Library during Halloween week for a chance to meet some exotic reptiles and enjoy related craft activities.



Get Connected

We launched our Get Connected initiative to promote our online library services and offer customers first hand advice and support in accessing them. Suffolk was one of the first library services to offer Freegal – an innovative free music download and streaming service offering access to around 3 million songs. Get Connected events also give people a chance to bring in their eReaders and other devices for a demonstration on how to access library eBooks and library Wi-Fi.



Launching Freegal and the Get Connected project

2013

NOV

Artist with a street view

Glemsford Library recreated their own street scene based on the work of the artist L S Lowry and painted by local artist David Gilbert who has provided other artwork for engaging art projects over the year.

New patron for Great Cornard

Well-known Suffolk author and historian Charlie Haylock, became a patron of Great Cornard Library along with local illustrator and children's author Rebecca Elliott whose illustration has since been used on our new children's library cards.

2013

DEC

Lighting up Stowmarket

The Friends of Stowmarket Library embraced the local Christmas lights switch on, providing craft activities for children, live music, wine and a book sale during what is traditionally the busiest night of the year in Stowmarket Town Centre.

has been worn by the Duchess of Cambridge and BBC Radio 1's Jameela Jamil.

Christmas in Clare

Festive drawings by Alicia Broad at Clare Library were made into Christmas cards and sold at the library.

Jewellery boost

Imogen Sheeran, mother of singer songwriter Ed Sheeran, held a sale of her unique handmade jewellery with a percentage of takings donated to the library. Her jewellery

Young tenant rewarded

20 year old Leon Porter who has been a volunteer at Gainsborough Community Library for the past five years won Ipswich Borough Council's Young Tenant of the Year Award.



New Year New You

Bury St Edmunds Library kicked off the year with a week of 'New Year New You' health and wellbeing events. This was followed up by a month of 'Friensuary' befriending events in February and the creation of a 'book tree' in March.

New opening hours

Bungay Community Library changed and increased its opening hours following consultation with local people led by the library's community group. Framlingham and Wickham Market Libraries also increased their opening hours during the year thanks to the support of their community groups.

Poetry by Heart

Talented students from across Suffolk took part in the county final of the national 'Poetry by Heart' poetry reading competition which was held at Ipswich Library for the second year.



Award winning

We were delighted to be awarded the digital award for our Get Connected project at the EDGE libraries conference in Edinburgh.

EDGE Award



National Libraries Day

Suffolk Libraries got involved with National Libraries Day with a range of events and activities to show people what their local library has to offer. These ranged from having a blind date with a book in Woodbridge, Get Connected events in Brandon and Haverhill, and a fun 'Queen's Knickers' competition for children to decorate Elmswell Library.

National Libraries Day at Elmswell Library



Stamp of approval for new post office

We heard in February that Post Office Ltd had approved our application to run a new post office in Stradbroke Library. The post office is due to open in October 2014 and could be the first post office in the country to be run by a library service.



New look children's library

Bungay Library reopened its children's library with a fresh and more colourful new look thanks to funding from The Friends of Bungay Community Library, the proceeds from a performance by poet and library patron Luke Wright and locality funding from County Councillor David Ritchie.

Arts awards

Eight young people received their Bronze Arts Award at Lowestoft Library after taking part in various arts activities and workshops at the library - the first time Suffolk Libraries has hosted an arts award.

Bronze Arts Awards at Lowestoft Library



Fantastic feedback

Suffolk Libraries carried out a customer survey in November and December. This was designed to take a snapshot of how our customers felt about the service after a few years of significant change. Over 1,500 people took part and the results were very positive:

- ***92% of people said library staff were excellent or very good***
- ***When asked if they had noticed any difference in the library service over the past year, 53.8% said it was about the same, 39.4% said it had got better and only 6.8% felt it had got worse.***
- ***86% said the choice of books in the library was good, very good or excellent***
- ***Nearly 60% of people said they visited their library at least once a week and 28% visited once a month.***



Engaging with young readers

Westbourne Library worked with Springfield Infant and Nursery School to get as many pupils as possible signed up to the library. Over 100 children signed up and two groups came along to the library in November to receive their new library cards and take a look round.

Mildenhall Library also worked with local primary schools in March 2014 and arranged for a storyteller to spend some time with classes visiting the library.

This is a great way of raising awareness amongst young people and getting them using the library at an early age. It also helps us to connect with their families.

Working together

As well as Brandon Library moving to the Brandon Centre, other libraries are working closely alongside local organisations to provide shared services.

Suffolk Coastal District Council now provide their Tourist Information Centre and customer services from Woodbridge Library. In early February Waveney District Council also began sharing a joint customer service facility at Beccles Library.

Haverhill Library have been working closely all year with St Nicholas Hospice who are now based at the Burton Centre next to the library.

Schools Library Service

The Suffolk Schools Library Service provides training and support for school libraries and loans specialist resources to support classroom work. The service again organised the Book Mastermind event in 2014 with support from the Suffolk Book League. The competition involved around 30 schools competing to find the county's best-read pupils who had to answer a range of literary and general knowledge questions.

Home Library Service

In early 2014 we launched a recruitment campaign for new volunteers for our Home Library Service with the backing of Mavis and Bernard from Ipswich who have been volunteering together for years. Bernard says: "It feels good to brighten someone's day and once they get to know you they look forward to your visits and share their stories with you. If we've lightened up their life it's what it's all about."



Mobile libraries

Our mobile library service continues to provide a lifeline for many people living in rural Suffolk. (You can see some impressive statistics about the service on page 10).

In September 2013 we added a new stop at Wattisham Airbase and in February 2014 the Gramophones theatre company visited several mobile library stops in West Suffolk, entertaining customers and sharing stories with them. This was part of a project by Creative Arts East.

Towards the end of the year we launched a customer survey on the mobile library service which is giving us some very useful feedback on how vital the service is to people.

- ***"The staff are very helpful and choose for me because I am partially sighted."***
- ***"Staff always helpful, libraries are essential in villages, especially ones not on bus routes."***

Mental Health and Wellbeing Service

Through the work of our Mental Health and Wellbeing coordinator David Grimmer, we continue to put people in touch with support and information to help improve their health. This is done through signposting our customers to the relevant support organisations and by working with voluntary and statutory organisations to provide a range of events in libraries.

Feedback from an organisation: "Many people have said to me that they had no idea the extent and range of the direction and support that is already being provided by Suffolk Libraries for people with mental health issues."

Libraries ran a range of activities for Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Month in October 2013 including a yoga taster session in Ipswich and Suffolk Libraries also took part in the 'Sowing the Seeds of Wellbeing' festival at Jimmy's Farm in Wherstead.

In May 2013 Suffolk Libraries supported the NHS campaign to get more people to sign up to the Organ Donor Register and worked with Macmillan Cancer Support to provide a new collection of books for people affected by cancer. We also worked with the Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust and Alzheimer's Society to support Dementia Awareness Week.



Facts and figures

This chart shows how our budget was spent in 2013/14

700
THOUSAND
VISITS

We had over 700,000 visits to our website in 2013-14

There are around 350 public computers across Suffolk's libraries

350
PUBLIC
COMPUTERS

2
MILES OF
SHELVES

All the new stock added to the library catalogue in 2013-14 would fill a library shelf two miles long!

Over 40,000 eBooks were borrowed from Suffolk Libraries last year.

40
THOUSAND
eBooks

Mobile libraries

31
THOUSAND
Miles

In 2013-2014 Suffolk's mobile libraries covered a total of 30,926 miles.

Our mobiles visit over 200 villages and 475 individual stops.

475
STOPS

90
THOUSAND
Loans

Our mobile libraries issued 90,000 books and other loans last year.

Supplies
6.3%

Property
8.5%

Support Services
13%

IT Support
11.6%

Book stock
16%

Insurance/
legal costs
0.6%

Frontline staff
44%

In 2013/14 Suffolk Libraries was operating with a budget of around £7million. This was around £2million less than the service cost before the transfer.



Suffolk Libraries – the future

Alison Wheeler, General Manager of Suffolk Libraries

Looking back at our year there have been so many successes and highlights we have found it difficult to squeeze them all into this review!

We approach our second AGM with all 44 library community groups in membership of Suffolk's Libraries Industrial & Provident Society. This is a great achievement and it feels good to be going forward as an even sturdier organisation, strengthened by community energy, passion and tangible grassroots support.

Most of our libraries now have free Wi-Fi available for customers and we plan to provide it everywhere by the end of the year. We have also started the long awaited roll-out of new public computers which will improve the experience of the people who rely on them to research for information, look for jobs, get help with homework and match people up with exciting reading choices.

This year we have transferred our payroll, HR and some IT services to new systems which save us money and are quicker for our staff to use.

We still lend millions of printed books and it looks as if our children's book lending is actually on the increase and the Summer Reading Challenge in 2014 has again proved very popular. We now provide an increasing number of downloads for our customers to enjoy words, music and ideas online.

Our staff deserve special praise. They are at the heart of what we do and the customer survey results show how appreciated they are. Therefore, we were pleased to be able to launch a new pay and reward scheme this year which recognises the contribution they make.

It's clear that people across the country have noticed what has been achieved here. We're constantly talking to other library services, both about how we can learn from them and what we can offer them from our own experiences. We were also very pleased to be able to contribute to William Sieghart's independent review of public library services in England.

I want to use this opportunity to thank everyone who has made a contribution to Suffolk Libraries. We've all come through a lot together and it's clear how big a part of the community our libraries are and how cherished they are.

Our staff deserve special praise. They are at the heart of what we do and the customer survey results show how appreciated they are.



Suffolk Libraries



"I love my visits to the library. It is a wonderful library and the staff are so friendly and welcoming, always willing to help."

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Libraries in Suffolk



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