

Training Days – Reader Development and Online Databases.

Aberdeenshire Library and Information Service have successfully delivered training in Reader Development and also the use of the NOF funded online resources, with a total of 148 staff (over 4 days) receiving a half-day training session on each.

There was a need for staff training to effectively cascade the ideas and strategies that professional staff had developed from the 'Opening the Book' training. Branch Staff also required training in the use of online resources as the user statistics had been low and it was considered necessary to raise staff awareness and understanding of the databases. Staff required dedicated time, with the support of trainers, to learn how to use the resources effectively. Headquarter library assistant staff were also offered and took up the training opportunities as it informed them of some of the work of branches and helped to put some of their work into context. The linking of the Reader Development training with the Online Resources training signifies the balance there should be between both, and demonstrates that staff are keen to get back to talking about books after years of focus on ICT.

The Reader Development training involved the launch of a toolkit developed by the Reader Development Working Group that includes book promotional ideas developed from the 'Opening the Book' training. The Toolkits are to be used at branches to give staff suggested strategies for promoting books and to inspire them to develop their own ideas. Any successful ideas they develop can be fed back to the working group for further development of the kit and sharing with other branches. Opportunities were given during the session to try out some of the toolkit ideas and for planning how they could be used in practice. Feedback from the training day has been very positive with staff enthusiastic to implement the ideas at their branches.

The Online Resources training sessions involved hands-on training in the use of Kompass, KnowUK, Encyclopaedia Britannica and Newsbank. The trainers developed materials for the sessions with the dual purpose of training staff and also to be self-instructional for use by members of the public. The staff were therefore developing skills in using the databases and also testing the suitability of the user guides for use by their clients. The feedback confirmed that a large proportion of staff had not been using the databases prior to the training day. Staff commented on the benefits of having the time to explore and use the databases, that they felt more confident about using the resources themselves and would now promote their use more to members of the public.

The training days themselves were enjoyable for the trainers as well as the branch and HQ staff from the point of view of being able to get to know colleagues and to share ideas, and this is especially important in a library service that covers a large geographical area and where the opportunities to get together with colleagues are rare.

Dorothy Thomson (Adult Non-Fiction librarian) and Lesley Masson (Adult Fiction Librarian) ran the Reader Development session, and Liz Lloyd (Information Literacy Librarian) and Alison Bruce (Information Services Librarian) ran the Online Resources session. For further information contact Aberdeenshire Library and Information Service alis@aberdeenshire.gov.uk