



## **Issues paper on Libraries Supporting Scottish Publishers and Writing.**

### **Provided by the Scottish Library and Information Council**

#### **Statutory legal provision**

Public Libraries in Scotland were established in 1853. Local authority public library provision in Scotland is governed by a complex interaction of legislation, in particular the Public Libraries Consolidation Act 1887 and the Local Government (Scotland) Acts 1973 and 1994, and 2004. The previous Minister indicated in a Ministerial Statement that there was no intention to review the legislation. Local authorities have a statutory duty to secure the provision of *adequate* library facilities for all persons resident in their area.

In 2007, Glasgow City Council transferred its cultural, leisure and library services to a trust, which was challenged by Unison. The fact that the legislation was not modified to allow for this means there remains an element of doubt as regards the legality of this move.

Scottish Government has supported the development of the Public Library Quality Improvement Matrix (PLQIM), which provides an externally verified self evaluation framework that provides government, local authorities and SLIC with robust information as to whether or not local authorities are discharging their responsibilities, regardless of management structures. PLQIM is a recommended framework by Audit Scotland and Public Service Improvement Framework.

#### **Current context**

Public Libraries are alone in consistently serving 60% of Scotland's population, who borrow books, use free internet access, research, participate in community activity etc. Annual library borrowing has been at a consistent level of around 23% nationally for the past 10 years, although the number of books borrowed has fallen. This cannot be attributed to less funding alone; changing social trends and alternative uses of free time are also factors.

That said, the past 12 years have seen a 20% drop in library resources funds, excluding inflation. If combined CPI of 17% is taken into account, the library materials fund for Scotland should be increased by £12M to return to its 1997/8 levels. Library services have had to be prudent about what they spend on materials, while bearing in mind user requirements. That said, the impact of best value regimes is such that funding would likely be used quite differently were it to be restored to this level. For example, there has been a move away from purchasing multiple copies to rotating stock among groups of libraries, monitoring lending and linking back to stock selection policy.

#### **Public Library Quality Improvement Matrix**

PLQIM requires local authorities to demonstrate provision under four service quality indicators: information, community, learning and reading. There is no legislative requirement to provide Scottish material but there is growing pressure under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) to provide particular material and formats, which adds to expense. For example, visually impaired reading formats cost £80 for an equivalent to a paperback.

PLQIM makes a recommendation that the public should be entitled to "access a range of material by Scottish authors or published by Scottish publishers" and their performance is measured on how well they achieve that within their stock management policy, evidence based stock management, reading promotion/programmes for all and supporting local culture. Library services also need to reflect wider

cultural interests from within communities under racial equality legislation. Audit Scotland highlighted this in its 2008 report, *The impact of the race equality duty on council services*.

### **Procurement**

Acquisition of new materials must be a balance between meeting community needs and available budgets, and this is managed by the local authority Stock Management Policy. It is essential that the stock management policy is the framework within which the library service offers its services. It should be embedded in the day to day running of the library service. The stock management policy should reflect the key council principles and objectives and will also see stock as a service wide resource. The Library Service will endeavour to provide a comprehensive selection of stock and to get the “right items to the right person at the right place and time”. Community profiles and a technique called ‘evidence based stock management’ provide the basis for measuring the effectiveness of the Stock Management Policy. The use of evidence-based stock management is recommended in the Public Library Quality Improvement Matrix as this matches public demand, avoids duplication, sets targets for stock performance and highlights areas of potential development.

SLIC provided stock management policy guidance to local authorities in 2001 which clearly states that provision for Scottish material should be clear in selection policies but in line with best value principles, which is currently being reviewed (<http://www.slainte.org.uk/files/pdf/slic/resomgmt.pdf>). The Stock Management Policy should clearly lay out which broad categories of materials will be purchased, how they can be accessed and provision for special collections.

The development of a sustainable Scottish publishing industry has been the subject of recent debate, not least the role that Scottish public libraries should have in supporting and promoting Scottish works. The selection of Scottish material and material in Gaelic, Scots and other languages should be within the context of the community profile, public demand and the library resource allocation. SLIC has long argued that substantial, additional investment would be required to support an ‘intervention’ fund to provide copies of Scottish publishers’ materials in libraries, as local libraries are unable to buy one copy of every book published for each community library. Any unsatisfied demands would be reflected in the request and inter library loan services, which SLIC reviews within the PLQIM self evaluation process. As yet, this process has not uncovered any unsatisfied users specifically requesting Scottish material.

Since the abolition of the net book agreement, European procurement law requires services to put book supply contracts out to tender, either as a single authority or, increasingly, as consortia. Procurement law also needs to be considered to avoid issues in relation to state-aid. The library supply business has very tight margins and huge efficiency gains are unlikely to be achieved by moving to a single Scottish book contract; indeed, this is more likely to create a monopoly which could have negative ramifications. There are also real concerns that a single book contract would go to a global company and cause even greater difficulty in securing Scottish material. It is difficult to predict how a single contract might affect local Scottish booksellers or Scottish Book Source.

### **Scottish Bibliography Online**

An assumption has always been made that Scottish material has not been properly represented by such companies. In an effort to overcome this problem, when the last Scottish library book supplier went into administration, SLIC, Publishing Scotland (SPA) and Dumfries based Bibliographic Data Services (BDS), combined forces to provide library services with a tool which linked past, present and pre-publication data to enable libraries to order this Scottish material. The National Library of Scotland’s resources are also searchable through this service ( <http://cairns.lib.strath.ac.uk/CAIRNSService/ZCatSrch.cfm?uMiniID=13>).

According to SLIC research into the procurement process, library services largely use local book suppliers rather than Scottish Bibliography Online, Scottish Books On-line or Scottish Book Source to buy their stock. It is difficult to estimate the amount of Scottish material procured by libraries by looking at figures provided by one or two sources. SLIC is concerned that figures about the amount of material procured by libraries, currently in circulation, are flawed. Almost all services have a license for BDS data and therefore can download high quality catalogue records to ensure the public can readily find material through library catalogues. Catalogue records are also downloadable from the National Library of Scotland.

### **Promoting Reading**

SLIC has been actively involved in encouraging libraries to procure Scottish material with the development of the Scottish Bibliography and encouraging a pilot promotion programme in Dundee. As previously indicated, funds available for stock selection have been significantly reduced. With increased pressure for material in different formats under DDA, and the demands of human rights and racial equality legislation, these funds are even more stretched. The pilot promotion programme supported SLIC's view that the level of demand for Scottish publishers' materials was less than the perception of some publishers. Interestingly, 80% of the material in the Dundee project would have been purchased using their existing stock selection policy and procurement procedures.

Through collaboration and the Scottish Library Network it is possible to establish a joint procurement programme for Scottish material for a limited number of copies to be available across Scotland. The success of either of these options depends upon a programme of promotion of Scottish material and a wider programme of Reader Development which is nationally funded. A number of reading promotions featuring Scottish material have been successful in the past. The Scottish Writers Project in schools successfully promoted Scottish writers, supplying multiple copies to schools with promotional, interpretative and print materials; perhaps this model could usefully be revisited if appropriate funding were to be made available.

### **Now Read On**

Collaboration between a number of agencies (including Scottish Library Association and Scottish Arts Council) led to a series of five very successful annual summer reading promotions for public libraries. The campaigns always promoted a range of Scottish books and increases in issues were a welcome result. Approximately £250,000 was invested by the Scottish Arts Council and some corporate sponsorship was secured.

### **Reader Development Network and reading promotions**

The Reader Development Network is run by SLIC/CILIPS and works through trained members of staff in each library authority developing reading services locally and contributing to national promotions. The network uses a reader-centred approach which encourages active intervention to:

- increase people's confidence and enjoyment of reading
- open up reading choices
- offer opportunities for people to share their reading experience
- raise the status of reading as a creative activity

The training has also increased a range of promotional readers' days run by local authorities with visits by Scottish authors, for example Glasgow's 'Aye Write' Festival, Edinburgh's 'Festival of Scottish Writing' and West Dunbartonshire's annual 'Literature Festival'.

With the aim of growing the reading audience in Scotland to read more widely and adventurously, this programme was initially funded through the Scottish Arts Council (SAC). Since SAC declined to provide continued support, SLIC and CILIPS have supported the 32 strong reader development network. A series of reading promotions has taken place over the 6-7 year period; MindsEye, Read Mor, Print Options, [www.scottishreaders.net](http://www.scottishreaders.net) (reader development website), First Novels, Read the Festival, War in Words

and, most recently, Reading Roots. The Reader Development Network acts to ensure professional retail promotion techniques are in place to promote material and support author visits, reader's days and reading groups throughout the library service.

### **Big Plus in Libraries and Learning Connections**

SLIC has worked with Learning Connections (now part of Scottish Government) over a four year period to encourage those with low literacy skills and low confidence with reading to improve their skills. The 32 public library reader development coordinators have worked with local literacy partners to develop programmes and collections within libraries to support skill's development needs. As a result of this initiative, over 200,000 suitable items were added to library collections. The current programme involves a partnership with the Scottish Poetry Library that aims to encourage and promote family reading.

### **Readership Development**

CILIP in Scotland and SLIC have led activities to increase Scottish titles in libraries and to promote Scottish literature. The post of National Readership Development Officer was created and hosted by SLIC/CILIPS, with funding from the SAC. Although this funding has now ceased, it provided the catalyst for the Reader Development Network. The Reader Development Network has already had a major impact on library professionals, enabling staff to develop and deliver reading promotions at local level using a reader-centred approach. The number of library reading groups has increased from 59 to 147 and a number of successful readers' days have been organised across Scotland.

### **Encouraging new writing**

Libraries also contribute to supporting Scottish writing in other ways. *Am Baile*, the Gaelic Village, is the Highland Council's successful bi-lingual website. It records the history, culture and heritage of the Highlands, with both records and metadata created in Gaelic and English. Am Baile is now the single largest commissioner of new Gaelic writing, over and above its role of preserving and offering access to older material. Other library services, such as East Renfrewshire libraries, are developing community websites which encourage the creation of new Scottish writing and make it available to a worldwide audience. 'Storylines' is Fife Council's initiative to publish the work of literacies learners. Other services, such as Midlothian, host writers in residence to work with local community groups and develop their skills.

### **Scots Language Resource Centre and Scottish Poetry Library**

Opening up the catalogues of specialist centres widens international access to Scottish writing. The Scots Language Resource Centre in Perth provides a rich resource and SLIC has encouraged the Centre to improve access to its holdings. In particular, SLIC has worked to ensure that its library catalogue is web-available and meets the technical standards required for inclusion in a cross-searchable platform, together with the catalogues of the National Library of Scotland and the Scottish Poetry Library (SPL), as well as public, university and other major Scottish libraries. SLIC and the SPL have a history of partnership working and are currently working on a staff development programme for Scottish public libraries. This will involve a specialist trainer coming from the USA to work with public libraries and support the staff development programme.

### **Scottish materials in schools**

CILIP in Scotland has long supported the promotion of Scottish literature in schools. The Scottish Writers project was a major initiative that encouraged secondary school pupils to read local authors. As part of the programme, which was funded by a SAC lottery award, multiple copies of 36 titles were selected and placed in every secondary school in Scotland, and public libraries also engaged in the promotion. The collection included Gaelic material and it was encouraging that there was some small demand from schools. The collection also offered spoken word copies as an alternative, thus offering additional access for visually impaired pupils. The aim of the project was to build familiarity with the work of Scottish authors and to improve the surrounding interpretative and support materials. This proved very successful, with the CD

ROM being runner-up for a BAFTA in the 'Innovation in Learning' category. The CILIP in Scotland /SLIC website SLAINTE ([www.slainte.org.uk](http://www.slainte.org.uk)) holds the Scottish Writers web content, which continues to be frequently accessed.

In addition, Matthew Fitt of Itchy Coe Press has stimulated interest in reading in Scots with groups of younger pupils and the Braw initiative offers further promotion of Scottish material to the young. These types of promotion require substantial investment but offer considerable returns with respect to sustained impact. It is important that suitable books and other resources in Scots continue to be commissioned to provide fresh and engaging materials for young people.

It is worth noting, however, that the current level of investment by schools for school library materials is £3.10 per pupil - an average of less than £2500 available for a school of 800 pupils. SLIC carries out an annual survey on school library provision but the level of returns from schools is patchy and SLIC is currently considering using Freedom of Information legislation to elicit information from schools.

There is already high demand and expectation that school libraries should have Scottish non-fiction materials, and school librarians make assiduous efforts to pursue stock development in this area. However, the overall provision of Scottish materials from publishers at upper primary/lower secondary level is extremely limited. Any strategic development for Scottish materials would benefit from liaison with publishers to support and encourage the development of a much greater range of resources. This would enable school libraries and librarians to provide even more information to pupils, across age groups and reading ability levels, ensuring that they can contribute to Scotland's future.

Live Literature Scotland is funded by the SAC and distributes support for author visits to schools. This is a popular scheme but there are concerns about its management, mostly because it is oversubscribed.

### **Scottish Collections Policy**

SLIC and the National Library of Scotland have been working for a number of years on developing a national strategy for the collection and disposal of Scottish materials. This aims to make the best use of scarce funds and harness the potential of the distributed network of libraries. Libraries aim to collect the works of their own local authors and make these available to other services. The system aims for comprehensive coverage, avoiding duplication. NLS, SLIC, Scottish Confederation of University and Research Libraries and the Heads of Public Library Services have recently agreed an outline framework to take this forward.

### **Shared Services and collaboration**

SLIC recognises that collaboration and co-operation is necessary for library services to continue to offer a range of material to the user that provides best value and user choice. SLIC, with partners, has developed a range of national collaborative services with this in mind. Scotland's Information is the umbrella for a range of services, allowing users to search Scotland's library catalogues with one search, browse Scottish collections of particular interest and find out how to get to, or contact, local libraries, archives or museums. The Scotland's Information platform is under development and could be developed further to have broader appeal with a modest funding input.

The National Entitlement Card will provide a unique opportunity to have a single card that can be used across Scotland. Enhancements to the national catalogue search could enable users to request any book held in Scotland online, regardless of local authority boundaries. Collaborative procurement across authorities, using a national system of evidence based stock management, could release funding to be spent differently. It is estimated that, with non-fiction alone, local authorities could realise some £50k of saving by applying different techniques in procurement.

SLIC continues to work with Publishing Scotland, currently exploring mechanisms for getting feedback to publishers on the Reading Roots material, the possibility of a Scottish e-books promotion and programme, as well as arranging further events for library staff.

### **Possible Ways forward**

There is already much work taking place in libraries to support and promote writing by Scottish authors and about Scotland. This work provides access to resources, ensures the building of appropriate collections to support communities and preserves our literary heritage. Scotland has a small indigenous publishing industry that promotes the output of Scottish-based publishers, but many of Scotland's preeminent authors choose to be published by international publishing companies. It may be the case that local library services' views about promoting Scottish writers and Scottish literature might not be shared by the Scottish publishing industry. Therefore, there needs to be a definition of what is meant by Scottish writing. At present, there is no firm evidence that public library services are not fulfilling their obligations in this respect. There may be some question marks over the provision within school libraries, where budgets can be prohibitively low. Further study and analysis would, however, be required before embarking on a course of intervention. SLIC is currently in discussion with relevant partner organisations to decide how this might be best achieved.