

DIGITAL BRITAIN: AN INTERIM REPORT

Comments from the Chartered Institute of Library and information Professionals

Introduction and Executive Summary

- 1) The Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals (CILIP) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the DCMS/BERR Interim Report on “Digital Britain”. CILIP is established by Royal Charter and is the professional body for library and information professionals in the UK. It has over 21,000 members working as librarians and information professionals in all parts of the UK economy from public libraries to academic libraries, healthcare to government library and information services, the third sector and corporate sector information services, and school libraries and national and research libraries. Many, if not most, of our members fall into the category of having “Digital Economy Skills” and all have “Digital Work Skills”. We believe that our members are already addressing and working with many of the issues set out in the Interim Report and that the skills and knowledge represented within our membership, the value system underpinning our work and our reach across the UK economy put us in an excellent position to be harbingers of change and contributors to a Britain that is not only digitally enabled but also a successful knowledge economy.
- 2) We are pleased that the Interim Report describes itself as “work in progress” and admits that it is very uneven in coverage. Much of our response covers omissions as well as amplifying or commenting on actual proposals and points made in the report itself. We look forward to publication of the Final Report in the summer and hope to be actively engaged in the future debate and implementation of recommendations in the report.

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATIONS IN CILIP RESPONSE

In this response CILIP broadly welcomes the Interim Report but notes there are significant areas of omission notably to do with content. In particular it welcomes:

- The recommendation to develop plans for a Digital Service Commitment by 2012
- The recommendation to develop a Public Service Delivery Plan to ensure public services online are designed for ease of use by the widest range of citizens – we hope that this will include guidance on the design and delivery of e-services themselves and not be restricted to promoting the uptake of the relevant technology

CILIP recommends that:

- The necessary national funding is made available to enable the People's Network to become a true national network, possibly as part of JANET (Joint Academic Network)
- Public library authorities are actively discouraged from introducing charges for access to the People's Network
- A much broader understanding of content is reflected in the Final report of Digital Britain
- Key issues relating to content are addressed including the organisation and retrieval of content in a digital environment; legal deposit of non-print materials; and the preservation of digital content for future generations
- The interests of rights holders in intellectual property are balanced against the rights of users and that it is acknowledged that the principles of fair dealing and library exceptions pertain across all media platforms and should not be diminished or removed by contracts and licences for digital content
- Digital Britain specifically addresses the needs of those with disabilities and their rights to access information
- The crucial role of professional information managers is acknowledged in optimising the returns from a Digital Britain (as in central government with the Information Matters programme)

SUMMARY (cont)

- The role of libraries is recognised in teaching and promoting digital life skills. It should be an explicit aim of Digital Britain that no young person should leave education without the appropriate ICT/information literacy skills
- There should be a national training programme for public library staff to equip them to teach and promote Digital Life Skills, including Information Literacy

In addition

- CILIP would like to work with the BBC, Ofcom and others to develop a new National Media Literacy Plan, but with a broader remit to reflect Digital Life Skills
- CILIP wishes to be involved in the Digital Britain Summit in April and in future developments

- 3) The rest of our response is arranged under the headings used for the report's recommendations: Upgrading and Modernising our Digital Networks; Digital Content; Universal Connectivity; and Equipping Everybody to Benefit from a Digital Britain.

Upgrading & Modernising our Digital Networks

- 4) The discussion in the Interim Report of the technological developments that need to take place to put Britain in the forefront of digital provision is informative and welcome. It is vital that this underpinning technology, in regard both to networks and connectivity, is put into place to give Britain the necessary resources to enable its increasingly knowledge-based economy to flourish.
- 5) This cannot be a matter for the market alone. The public sector manage most of the key national networks – N3 (the NHS Network), the Government GSI network, and JANET (Joint Academic Network) for instance – and the Government needs to provide strategic leadership on their development, the policy issues relating to their operation (e.g. data-sharing), and on technological standards especially those relating to interoperability.
- 6) CILIP has particular concerns relating to the People's Network which provides broadband access to the internet at over 4000 public library

service points in the UK. Many are also UK Online Centres and all have a role in encouraging information and digital literacy amongst the public and helping to ensure that all parts of UK society can access the digital world. The People's Network was funded by the New Opportunities Lottery Fund over the period 2000-2002. As a project worth £170 million (£100 million for infrastructure including hardware and software, £50 million for content and £20 million for staff training) it achieved its objectives and was delivered on time and within budget. It has had an immense impact and widened the clientele that use public libraries¹.

- 7) However it is now time to reinvest in the network but as local authorities are having to find the funding from their own budgets many are opting to introduce charges which will act as a barrier to use by the more disadvantaged sections of society. Neither is the necessary national investment forthcoming to develop the People's Network into a true digital network rather than simply a network of public service access points providing broadband access to the internet and some common services on a central website.
- 8) We recommend that:
 - a) Funding is made available through the Museums, Libraries & Archives Council (MLA) to develop and implement the idea of the People's Network becoming a proper national network. Discussions are already taking place with local authorities and representatives from public libraries about the possibility of linkage with JANET. However, whether JANET or some other network solution is preferred, a strong network capability within public libraries, underpinned by a high broadband width, is important to connect to the NHS and Government networks, to improve the accessibility of all public e-services, and to enhance the services that public libraries themselves can offer. These could include a national library ticket, improved reservation and inter-library loan facilities and more common or shared information services delivered across the national platform.
 - b) The possibility of public library services linking to the Community Broadband Network, where it exists, also needs investigating as a way of keeping and enhancing the public library's position as being at the centre of its community.
 - c) Pressure is put on those authorities charging for access to the internet, or proposing to do so, to reverse such decisions. A national investment programme in the People's Network, as described above, might provide sufficient inducement for this to happen.
- 9) We hope that the issues set out above will be addressed in the Public

¹ See for instance article in the December 2004 Library and Information Update
<http://sherpa.bl.uk/105/>

Library Modernisation Review currently being undertaken by DCMS.

Digital Content

- 10) The section on digital content is the weakest part of the Interim Report. It focuses almost entirely on broadcast content and ignores the immense wealth that the UK has in content – a “goldmine of content” as the Chief Executive of the British Library, Dame Lynne Brindley, described it at a recent meeting on Digital Britain² at Portcullis House. And the UK’s strength is not only in UK content but in content from across the world, reflecting the UK’s past history as an international power. It is important that this immense wealth should be put to use not only in stimulating and developing the UK’s knowledge economy and the prosperity and well-being of UK citizens, but also in the service of such higher ideals of serving the common cause of humanity, and promoting better understanding through the sharing of knowledge. Digital Britain is an agenda for DFID and the FCO as much as it is for BERR and DCMS.
- 11) And where is this content? It can be found:
- a) In the major collections of the UK’s National and Deposit Libraries and those of other major academic and research institutions;
 - b) From the research undertaken in the UK’s Higher Education Institutions and research centres, and that research conducted within private or corporate organisations;
 - c) In the local studies and other special collections of public library services throughout the land;
 - d) In the archives and collections of countless small societies, charities and interest groups;
 - e) In the learning materials developed by institutions and publishers to support learning at every level from pre-school to higher degree;
 - f) On the web itself in the millions of sites that have been developed by groups and individuals on every topic under the sun – both the National Archives and the British Library have programmes to archive a selection of the many UK generated websites;
 - g) From the publishing industry, including both printed and electronic information services;
 - h) And the information generated by Government and other public sector organisations in the course of their work.
- 12) Others will undoubtedly be able to add to the above list. But as a list it is daunting enough in its size and complexity. It is a sobering reflection that we probably collect and preserve less of the knowledge that we create in our modern society than our Victorian ancestors did when the predominant communications platform was the printed word and photography a modern invention.

² see BL press release at: <http://www.bl.uk/news/2009/pressrelease20090121.html>

- 13) The enormity of it all presents a new set of strategic issues where a national lead and perspective will be important. Such issues include:
- a) The need to consider the semantic infrastructure as well as the technical infrastructure (described in the previous section on networks). Without the organisation of content within the digital environment nothing is findable – standards are needed for knowledge organisation and on issues such as the exchange of data or the interoperability between taxonomies, vocabularies, classifications and subject heading schemes. Librarians and information professionals have an important role to play in the construction and maintenance of the semantic infrastructure and in the navigation of the environment;
 - b) The effectiveness of Legal Deposit and in particular the effectiveness of the recent Legal Deposit Act (2003) enabling non-print materials to be collected on national deposit;
 - c) Decisions as to which parts of the printed heritage to digitise and how that programme can be funded;
 - d) Preservation issues relating to historic material in printed or manuscript form and modern content that was “born digital”. For instance digital material requires appropriate hardware and software to read which itself might become redundant. The Domesday project sponsored by the BBC is a well-known example where the technology needed to read the discs is no longer readily available³;
 - e) The position of intellectual property rights and other moral and ethical considerations relating to the creation, publishing and dissemination and storing of information;
 - f) As with broadcasting the new business models that will emerge and how this will impact on all those involved in the information chain;
 - g) Workforce development issues, notably those skills and knowledge sets that will be required to create, store, find, adapt and make information accessible to users at a time, place and in a form convenient to them and to provide them with the necessary skills to undertake most searches and evaluation themselves.
- 14) The Interim Report also focuses on the role of the enforcement of intellectual property rights in encouraging creativity and innovation in a Digital Britain. In the view of CILIP the points made in the report are partial and don't attach sufficient importance to the rights of users which are equally important in fostering an environment that encourages creativity and innovation.
- 15) CILIP is a founding member of the Library & Archives Copyright Alliance (LACA)⁴ which brings together the UK's major professional organisations

³ See for instance this update on the Domesday Project:
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/technology/2534391.stm>

⁴ For information on LACA see: <http://www.cilip.org.uk/policyadvocacy/copyright>

and experts representing the library, information and archives communities, to advocate the rights of users within intellectual property legislation and its implementation. It espouses an even-handed approach where the interests of rightsholders and users are balanced to create an environment which benefits not only the principle interests involved but society as a whole. The detailed views of LACA have been set out in their response to the questions posed recently by the Intellectual Property Office (IPO) in “The Future: Developing a Copyright Agenda for 21st Century”, plus its responses to the European Commission Green Paper on “Copyright in the Knowledge Economy” (November 2008) and to the IPO’s post-Gowers consultation “Taking Forward the Gowers Review of Intellectual Property: proposed Changes to Copyright Exceptions” (April 2008). These responses are fully endorsed by CILIP and constitute the latest iteration of our position.

- 16) In general terms CILIP, in common with LACA, is concerned about the erosion of user rights and the diminution of the public domain. The fair dealing and library exception provisions embodied in the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act (1988) and the Information Society Directive of the EU (2001/29/EC) are being undermined by the licences offered for content in the digital environment. The statutory exceptions and limitations are provisions that should be sustained across all media platforms and formats. However in the UK, unlike Ireland, Belgium and Portugal, contracts and licenses are allowed to take precedence over the statutory copyright exceptions and limitations. TPMS (Technical Protection Measures) which enforce the licences also often undermine such rights and interfere with the preservation of digital content. It is important that the benefits of fair dealing and library exceptions are recognised in that they help:
- a) Support learning;
 - b) Support research;
 - c) Enable participation in the governance of the UK;
 - d) Help address disadvantage generally and the digital divide in particular;
 - e) Provide stimulation for creativity and innovation;
 - f) Enable people with disabilities to access content ⁵;
 - g) If the proposals of the Gowers Review are fully implemented concerning digital preservation, and multiple copying and migration of content to different formats to that end, they will also fully enable preservation of digital content to enhance our cultural heritage
- 17) CILIP therefore hopes that the final report will be more balanced in its approach to intellectual property. However CILIP also acknowledges that

⁵ The Copyright (Visually Impaired Persons) Act 2003 was important in allowing format shifting as a means of making content accessible to visually impaired people. However its provisions need extending to people with other forms of disability, such as dyslexia, and include electronic content as well as printed textual material. See RNIB guidance on the Act at: <http://www.cilip.org.uk/policyadvocacy/copyright/advice/cvip.htm>

issues of wilful infringement on a commercial scale or for criminal purposes should be tackled and that libraries have an important role in promoting responsible behaviour in regard to intellectual property.

Universal Connectivity

- 18) CILIP welcomes the proposal to develop a digital Universal Service Commitment to be effective from 2012. Although we accept the likely outcome will initially be for a commitment to 2Mb's bandwidth delivered by a mixture of fixed and mobile, wired and wireless means, nevertheless we suggest that key information providers – notably public libraries – should provide access to higher bandwidth capabilities of 40-50 Mbs. This reinforces the points we made in paragraphs 6-8 of this response about the urgent requirement to invest properly in the People's Network and ensure it remains free to access at the point of use. Public libraries, and indeed libraries more generally, have a reputation for impartiality, openness and support that make them ideal agencies for providing access to Digital Britain.
- 19) The Interim Report makes a number of useful points about the increasing provision of e-services, especially those provided by the public sector. Once again the public library service should be enabled to provide access points to these public e-services so that all parts of the population are empowered to participate fully in society, enjoy their rights and influence the services they receive and express opinion on issues of political concern. The public library service is already engaging in the Book and Choose facility in the NHS and is in discussion with NHS Choices as to how it can promote that service through public libraries. Partnership working is also strong with the BBC in addressing issues such as adult literacy and numeracy or the challenges of mental health⁶.
- 20) The above are but small illustrations of a transformation that is starting to take place in the way public services are delivered. Libraries are also involved in other networks providing users with the advice and support they need in accessing digital information – for instance in the extended schools programme and in supporting Sure Start Children Centres which are to be given a statutory basis. These networks and co-located services also provide an important information resource on the usage of such services and the difficulties and successes of people in using them. As such they will be an important barometer as to how inclusive Digital Britain really is.
- 21) A final point on universal connectivity. If Digital Britain is to be truly inclusive then it is important that all services are designed with inclusivity in mind. This too should be seen as a strategic issue and all digital

⁶ See for instance the RAW (Read More and Write More) Campaign -

<http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/vitallink/RaW.html>

Or the Headroom project at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/headroom/newsandevents/libraries.shtml>

services should conform to the best standards such as the W3C Web Accessibility Standards – we applaud the government’s work in promoting these standards across its own websites⁷. We also reiterate the point about extending the provisions of the Copyright (Visually Impaired Persons) Act 2003 to cover other disabilities and include the digital world as well as the print world.

- 22) CILIP welcomes the commitment to align the Digital Britain project with DCLG’s Digital Inclusion programme. It agrees that the proposals for a Digital Inclusion Champion in the DCLG consultation (supported by an expert group) are also relevant to promoting the take-up of digital technologies and the e-services provided on them. Similarly all libraries, including those public libraries which are online centres, play an essential role as advocates of a digital future and are able to provide the support and advice that more reluctant people will need to gain the confidence necessary to use the technology effectively. We also welcome the recommendation of a Public Service Delivery Plan but hope this is not only limited to encouraging the uptake of the relevant technology but also includes leadership and guidance on designing and delivering inclusive e-services.
- 23) We address issues to do with skills in Digital Britain in the next section.

Equipping Everyone to Benefit from Digital Britain

- 24) The Interim report identifies three levels of digital skills – digital economy skills, digital work skills and digital life skills. It would be helpful to have a fuller description of these levels of skills in the Final Report. All three should form part of a national digital skills strategy underpinning the development of a skilled information workforce. This is an essential prerequisite of ensuring that Digital Britain is able to exploit the immense knowledge resources it has for the nation’s economic prosperity and the general well-being of its citizens.
- 25) At the level of digital economic skills we draw attention to the growing attention given to the need for effective management of information in the public sector, especially necessary to restore public confidence in the security and ethical handling of such information. There are a number of important initiatives taking place that need to be monitored and shared more widely across the public sector – a potential leadership role for government.
- 26) These include the “Information Matters”⁸ programme within central government driven by the Knowledge Council with Cabinet Office

⁷ For details on the W3C Web accessibility Initiative see: <http://www.w3.org/WAI/>

⁸ See the Information Matters report at: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/services/publications/information-matters-strategy.pdf>

endorsement. In the NHS there is the move towards an evidence-based service advocated by Lord Darzi in his “High Quality Care: NHS Next Stage Review Final Report” (and also in a report by Peter Hill specifically on NHS libraries). As a result NHS Evidence (including the former National Library for Health)⁹ is being established within the National Institute for Clinical Excellence. Both these initiatives focus on the need for a professional information workforce and CILIP hopes to work in support of them, alongside other professional bodies within the broader information world, to help deliver on the desired outcomes. Our members already have many of the skills required but such is the nature of the change, and the convergence of information specialisms, that workforce development must be a key ingredient of both programmes. Similar initiatives are taking place in local government stimulated by IDeA (Improvement & Development Agency for Local Government).

- 27) In terms of Digital Work Skills the national occupational standards developed by E-Skills and Lifelong Learning UK (The Library, Information & Archives National Occupational Standards have just been revised) can form the base of more general qualifications for non-specialists. It is also here where the information literacy training provided by many school, FE and university library staff will be important as a basis for the future work life of pupils and students. Effective employer engagement programmes are now an important part of Further and Higher Education provision and incorporating the development of digital work skills into that agenda should be possible.
- 28) In looking at Digital Life Skills, it is important to address the potential confusion that might arise because of the number of differing literacies that feature in official and professional reports - Information Literacy, Media Literacy and Digital Literacy have all been used. Suggested definitions are given in the note below¹⁰. There are clearly overlaps but Information Literacy adds a further essential dimension of evaluating information and helping people understand their ethical responsibility in how they use information. It is an essential part of life long learning and digital citizenship. Without such skills citizens run the risk of being excluded and disenfranchised from day to day life. Being able to gain access to digital material is only the beginning and a combination of all

⁹ For the Darzi report see http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_085825

For the Hill report see <http://www.library.nhs.uk/aboutnlh/review>

¹⁰ **CILIP defines Information Literacy** as ‘knowing when and why you need information, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner’.

Ofcom defines Media Literacy as ‘the ability to access, understand and create communications in a variety of contexts’.

The New Zealand government define Digital Literacy as ‘the ability to use digital technology, communication tools or networks to locate, evaluate, use and create information.’

the literacies is required. A sensible solution would be for Digital Life Skills as conceived in the Interim Report to encompass Information, Digital and Media literacies under one banner.

- 29) In our response to DCLG's consultation on "Delivering Digital Inclusion" we suggested that a top priority should be to ensure that no young person leaves education without appropriate ICT/information literacy skills and that a start should be made by encouraging all schools to adopt a whole-school policy on Information Literacy with the school librarian taking the lead. The ability of library staff to teach and promote information literacy skills is reasonably widespread in educational institutions but much more sparse in public libraries. CILIP's Information Literacy Subgroup has been piloting an Information Literacy programme for enquiry staff in Bradford City Libraries and will be extending this to Newcastle City Libraries.
- 30) However investment in a proper national training programme for public library staff in promoting and teaching digital life skills (including information literacy) would reap substantial benefits by ensuring that the additional support needed by those otherwise unable to access information effectively was available in every library. The last time there was a national training programme for public library staff it formed part of the implementation of the People's Network and enabled all public library staff to gain the ECDL (European Computer Driving Licence) and was an outstanding success. This now needs refreshing and extending to teaching and promoting digital life skills to members of the public.
- 31) It is disappointing that only the BBC and Ofcom have been suggested in developing a National Media Literacy Plan (Digital Britain p 13). This is an area in which librarians from all sectors (Public, School, Further & Higher Education and Commercial Sector) are able to provide expertise. CILIP would like to be actively involved in this exercise.

Conclusion

- 32) CILIP welcomes this consultation document as it contains much of value and much else that stimulates and provokes discussion. We trust our comments will prove informative and useful. We confirm CILIP's desire to engage positively with this agenda and wish to attend the Digital Britain Summit in April and to be included in future initiatives and consultations.

33) If you want any further information about this response, then please contact:

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