



The SWRLS offer

The South Western Regional Library Service aims to support and provide added value to libraries in the activities they are currently undertaking, and aspire to offer, to benefit their users.

The SWRLS offer covers five main areas:

- Networking
- Training/workforce development
- Interlibrary loans
- Grants
- Strategic partnerships

The role of SWRLS Director underpins these areas of work and provides a resource to support bids and research that is of benefit to member libraries.

Networking

This includes brokering of services, access to key contacts, support and expertise, information exchange and advice. The members' section of the recently redeveloped SWRLS web site will facilitate this. Examples of how this can work:

- An Art Librarian from the University of Gloucestershire helped to assess the Art collection at Gloucestershire Public Libraries.
- Information provided by one of SWRLS health library members inspired colleagues at Gloucestershire Public Libraries to make contact with their local health library service and reinvigorate the relationship with them.
- The SWRLS Director has been working with the University of Exeter in order to undertake a project with a Heritage research student to identify hidden collections throughout the region the outputs of which will be made available to SWRLS members.
- A member at Plymouth College of Art is writing a strategic report looking at the specialist academic sector and has found expertise from colleagues within SWRLS to be highly valuable for this endeavour.
- Librarians at Bristol Libraries and the University of the West of England are scoping a project to map useful resources throughout the city to support people working in small and medium enterprises.

Training/workforce development

A number of training events will be offered, each year, with reduced fees for members. Care will be taken to identify locations suitable for SWRLS members to travel with relative ease. Ideas for training events are garnered through members' suggestions. Examples of recent events and their impact:

- *Overcoming Invisible Barriers* – This event was offered in May 2016. Bristol Public Libraries sent two of their development Officers, Gloucestershire Public Libraries sent four staff, the University of the West of England sent one of their Disability and Enquiry Support Librarians. Plymouth College of Art found it particularly useful in helping to understand the changes in Disabled Students' Allowances in higher education. Other comments indicated that the course was effective in raising awareness and that it offered practical advice. Various attendees have subsequently used the resources mentioned to increase their knowledge base, to check and improve the readability of publicity material and to make their libraries more user-friendly and accessible.
- *Gadget Day* – This event was jointly sponsored by SWRLS and the CILIP South West Members Network, in autumn 2016, and offered in two locations within the South West in order to maximise attendance. It provided the opportunity for colleagues to bring expertise in use of equipment and software to share with others. This facilitated learning about cost effective strategies to help libraries in providing services to their users.

Grants

Access to the SWRLS grant scheme, for projects and individual training/development opportunities. Examples of previous projects supported:

- Bridgwater and Taunton College used grant funding to work with Somerset Libraries to develop Conversation Cafes to help improve literacy skills and employability for local residents speaking English as a foreign language. The cafes helped increase the confidence of people taking part such that they found it easier to make friends and thereby felt more integrated into the local community.
- South Gloucestershire Libraries and the University of the West of England, Bristol, used grant project funding to establish an "Open Doors" project. The outcome is that members of all Bristol and South Gloucestershire public libraries and all UWE, Bristol academic libraries can use their own membership cards to access each other's libraries without the need for complex joining procedures. This has helped to break down barriers and to provide access to both print and online collections and is a model that could be replicated in other towns and cities using the learning gained in the project.
- Each year SWRLS sponsors a colleague from a member library to attend the Forum for Interlending conference, which further enables networking and knowledge of interlending practices that can be brought back and shared with the SWRLS membership.
- SWRLS has provided funding for the Performing Arts Review, led by Somerset Libraries, and which will benefit all SWRLS libraries with music and performing arts collections.

Interlibrary loans

All SWRLS member libraries are asked to lend resources to each other within a policy framework that takes account of workload and where charges are not applied. Member libraries are encouraged to use the whole region's libraries to borrow stock and not focus demand on just a few libraries. Equally, member libraries are entitled to cap the number of items lent within any one year. This will eliminate the need for central complex counting and accounting mechanisms and means that the SWRLS subscription will not be affected by net lending or borrowing.

- Inter-library loans will be extended from books only to include journal articles and other items, as appropriate and will include scanning and electronic dispatch of both, where possible.
- SWRLS will establish guidelines for interlending of online materials in order to add further value to this offer.
- Undertaking ILLs in such a way is vastly cheaper than CONARLS or British Library options.

Strategic partnerships

SWRLS has worked closely with Literature Works over the past 4 years to develop the Reading Passport scheme, which has significantly contributed to reader development within the region.

- The Reading Passport has tied the region to national events, e.g. the Rugby World Cup in 2015, and has promoted authors from the South West through its alliance with the Royal Literary Fund. There were 277 displays held in libraries and nearly 30,000 Passports were distributed, including over 10,000 from non-library venues. Evaluation is currently taking place for the 2016 reading passport (Book to the Future) which featured books that are both written and set in each of the decades from the 1920s in order to celebrate the diversity of literature available to readers.
- Events linked to the Reading Passport, and funded by SWRLS and Literature Works, have included poetry readings and authors discussing their inspiration and working practices.
- SWRLS members are currently working with Literature Works on a strategic touring bid that aims to bring more such events into areas of the South West that do not regularly benefit from such cultural events. This will include further education libraries as well as public libraries.

Indeed, the role of SWRLS as a cross sector organisation has proved a value-added element in funding bids to the Arts Council. Bournemouth Library Service has just been awarded £136,846 from the Arts Council's Libraries Opportunities for Everyone Innovation Fund. This has been achieved in partnership with five local authorities, Literature Works, The Reader and SWRLS. The project will focus on shared reading activities, a programme of cultural and creative events, a digital app (a new approach to the Reading Passport) and online resources to address disadvantage in literacy and digital skills.

Subscription rates

In order to support SWRLS' activities an annual subscription is charged. Having reviewed the current subscriptions, and taken into account feedback from members through the SWRLS fundamental review, a new approach is proposed which is a simple subscription rate, not linked net lending or borrowing of materials.

Public libraries - £5 per 1,000 population

HE libraries - £350

FE / government / health libraries - £120

School libraries (and other small organisations) - £50