



## *Kay Poustie Scholarship*

*Keeping library services relevant*

# **Literacy Links**

## **Collaborative Approaches to Adult and Family Literacy**

A study tour to investigate community based programs that support adult and family literacy through targeted strategies and collaborative partnerships

### ***2014 Kay Poustie Scholarship Report***

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## Literacy Links: Collaborative Approaches to Adult & Family Literacy.

*A study tour to investigate community based programs that support adult and family literacy through targeted strategies and collaborative partnerships*

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*Visiting San Francisco Public Library*

## Executive Summary

The United Nations holds literacy as a fundamental human right and the challenge of improving literacy across the generations is a common issue across the globe. The ability to read and write underpins learning, expands potential and raises self-esteem in individuals of all ages, yet in Western Australia 47.3% of working age adults have a literacy level that is insufficient to meet the demands of everyday life and work and over 24% of five year old children starting school are developmentally vulnerable or at risk in their language and cognitive skills.

The Kay Poustie Scholarship enabled me to extend my knowledge to examine some best practice literacy initiatives in a variety of international contexts to gain a deeper understanding of literacy challenges and issues; identify factors that assist the development of successful collaborative initiatives; strategies for state-wide implementation and to explore the role libraries take in supporting literacy. The work of leading organisations such as *National Literacy Trust* and *Reading Agency* in the UK; *Centre for Family Literacy* and *Decoda Literacy Solutions* in Canada and libraries in New York and San Francisco, were particularly relevant as they collaborate with Government and partner agencies to increase awareness of literacy in raising community aspirations and educational outcomes. It is interesting to note that the leading literacy and reading organisations visited are all not-for-profit charities.

Taking a collaborative or “collective impact” approach requires key stakeholders to come together to develop a common agenda, with agreed priorities, strategies and measures for action. The most effective collaborative models were those where there was a central agency providing support to a local level coordinator who led and drove the process with the community: for example the *Middlesbrough Community Literacy Hubs* and on a larger scale *Alberta’s Family Literacy Regional Network* and *British Columbia’s Community Literacy Program*. Collaboration enables shared planning, expertise and resources; reduces duplication; offers better return on investment; and increases chances of success and sustainability. This report gives an overview of the collaborative models investigated. All are flexible, scalable models that have been implemented at a local level, applying similar frameworks for development.

Low literacy is often a generational issue. In the UK, Canada and the United States, there has been a significant shift in policy to focus on families in order to influence future outcomes for children. Family learning is inter-generational learning and encompasses all foundation skills, aiming to support parent/carers so they can assist their children’s early development. Informal family learning strategies are considered important, relevant approaches to providing adult basic education with literacy organisations accessing government funding for these programs. The *Centre for Family Literacy* in Alberta and *Sheffield’s Lifelong Learning & Skills Family Learning* use an extensive range of family learning courses designed to help parents/carers to improve their reading, writing and numeracy skills together with their children.

Common to all was the move away from a ‘buildings based’ approach to a more flexible model centred on outreach to improve service provision. Community based initiatives provide the opportunity to package and implement targeted programs that best meet the needs of the local people of all ages. Society Chief Librarians has developed strategies to support and sustain library services for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, articulated in a set of *Universal Offers* covering four areas of service providing a flexible framework with key messages for creating partnerships, programs and resources at the local level. There is a growing recognition that libraries are well placed to work with literacy providers and they are working to improve their capacity to become local leaders in community literacy activities. The Edmonton and Vancouver public libraries have been using community engagement processes to identify ways they can provide services for regular library patrons, be more inclusive for people who don’t see the library has anything to offer them and to better assist low-income communities. The examples of adult literacy programs provided in New York and San Francisco libraries, share a common feature of small group or one-on-one volunteer tutoring for reading and writing and these models would be applicable for Western Australia.

To tackle the challenge of intergenerational low literacy in Western Australia there is a need to take a new approach that is sustainable over a long period of time. It needs leadership, commitment and long term investment from all sectors at all levels -public, private and volunteer. The State Library has commenced a process to develop a Literacy Framework for Western Australia applying the collective impact methodology to identify goals, principles and priorities for action. The collaborative models described in this report will inform the work in this project.

***“The more that you read, the more things you will know.  
The more that you learn, the more places you'll go.”***

*I Can Read With My Eyes Shut! Dr. Seuss*

## **1. Introduction**

Reading, learning and going places was at the heart of my study tour. From a personal perspective as I travelled to places to learn how reading and literacy was being supported, to considering the many people who struggle with literacy and the urgent need for change to assist them to learn to read and write and thereby achieve their own personal goals and aspirations.

The subject of my research project was to investigate a selection of international community based programs supporting adult and family literacy through targeted strategies and collaborative partnerships. Examining best practice literacy initiatives I hoped to gain a deeper understanding of literacy challenges and issues; identify factors that assist the development of a successful collaborative initiative; and strategies for state-wide implementation. I also wanted to explore the role libraries play in supporting literacy in a variety of international contexts.

Four weeks, three countries and eighteen semi-structured interviews with staff from national literacy organisations, selected libraries and learning centres formed my itinerary in London, the North of England, the Canadian provinces of Alberta and British Columbia, San Francisco, Queens and The Bronx in New York.

Arranging my tour destinations and appointments was a natural extension several years of learning and research with the State Library of WA, as I explored how the universal challenge of improving literacy is being tackled in other parts of the English speaking world. Ultimately selection was based on identifying libraries and literacy organisations where collaboration with other partner agencies has been an essential component of developing literacy initiatives. A particular focus was also those with a national or state-wide reach as these were deemed as having greater relevance to Western Australian communities.

While it is possible to learn much from publicly available online reports, journal articles and research papers, having the opportunity to meet with people who have designed and implemented literacy campaigns and programs was invaluable. Everyone was generous with their time and knowledge, providing me with their personal insights that can't always be communicated in a research paper. Follow up desk based research on my return also helped to extend my knowledge.

### ***1.1 A Global Issue***

The United Nations holds literacy as a fundamental human right and the challenge of improving literacy across the generations is a common issue in each country I visited. In Western Australia 47.3% of working age adults have a literacy level that is insufficient to meet the demands of everyday life and work. 15% can't read newspapers; follow a recipe; make sense of timetables or understand instructions on a medicine bottle. Almost 32% struggle to develop new skills and knowledge as their workplace

changes<sup>1</sup>. Low literacy levels in the workplace are a significant issue for 75% of Australian employers<sup>2</sup>. Over 24% of five year old children starting school in WA are developmentally vulnerable or at risk in their language and cognitive skills and of these 12% are below the 10% percentile and considered to be seriously vulnerable to a lifetime of unemployment or low paid work. These children's futures have been decided before they even start school.

There are many factors that contribute to the statistics and reasons why individuals struggle with literacy but it is universally acknowledged that the ability to read and write underpins learning, expands potential and raises self-esteem in individuals of all ages. The value of sharing books and reading to children from birth is accepted as a significant factor in developing confident lifelong readers which in turn, contributes to educational achievement, productivity in the workplace and builds stronger, more resilient communities.

Research indicates it takes approximately one hundred and fifty hours of tuition for an adult to improve their literacy by one level<sup>3</sup>. If that adult is also a parent they will need more support if they are to assist their children's early literacy development before they start school. Raising the literacy levels of an individual and the wider community takes time – therefore it is necessary to implement strategies and actions that will bring about long term, generational change. My observations were of literacy programs that were varied and with no obvious 'one size fits all' model being implemented but rather had areas of commonality in delivery of adult literacy programs and the development of community based literacy networks.

Reading and research into how adult literacy learning is being delivered elsewhere identified agencies and/or local governments that were providing best practice literacy programs. This paper highlights some best practice approaches to adult and family literacy and discusses some of the factors that have ensured their success and sustainability.



*Canada Water Library*

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2014). *Programme for the international assessment of adult competencies, Australia 2011-12*. Canberra.

<sup>2</sup> Australian Industry Group (2010). *National workforce literacy project*. Sydney.

<sup>3</sup> Porter, K.E., Cuban, S., Comings, J.P., and Chase, V. (2005). *One day I will make it: a study of adult student persistence in library literacy programs*. National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy. Retrieved from [www.ncsall.net/fileadmin/resources/research/lilaa\\_oneday\\_rb.pdf](http://www.ncsall.net/fileadmin/resources/research/lilaa_oneday_rb.pdf)

## 1.2 Policy and Funding

I found that a significant factor common in all situations was national and/or state government priority placed on raising literacy levels. Legislative recognition of the issue is reflected in government funded programs with an emphasis on developing skills for employment (as is the Australian Government's Skills For Education and Employment – SEE initiative) however informal learning is also considered as an important and relevant approach to adult basic education enabling government funding to be used for adult and family literacy and learning programs. This flowed to local and city governments who identified the most disadvantaged communities in their jurisdictions and made targeted funding available to provide literacy programs.

It is interesting to note that the leading literacy and reading organisations I visited in the United Kingdom, the *National Literacy Trust* and *The Reading Agency* and in Canada, the *Centre for Family Literacy* and *Decoda Literacy Solutions* are all not-for-profit charities. They share a focussed commitment to literacy by developing strategic partnerships with trusts, foundations, individual givers, national, state and local governments and agencies to access funding and deliver programs. Each of these agencies has evolved over several decades to build their reputations and gain recognition across sectors to leverage funding to support literacy campaigns and initiatives.



**Catching up on the news - Morecombe Library, Lancashire**

The United Kingdom Government made a substantial investment in the early 2000s to develop basic skills with its *Skills for Life* strategy. While funding from Central Government has been drastically reduced across the board in recent years, this focus on adult basic education provided a catalyst for some local councils to develop their own literacy and learning policies with a number of local literacy initiatives proving so successful they have since been adopted nationally. One such example is the City of Rochdale's *Literacy Champions* strategy from the *Literacy Changes Lives: Rochdale Borough Literacy Policy* which will be discussed in more detail later.

In all countries studied, as it in Australia there is a strong emphasis is on improving literacy skills for work recognising that people with higher literacy are more likely to be employed, earn more and need less social assistance. However there was a significant difference in how funds were used with more being directed to informal learning and particularly family learning initiatives, rather than to accredited literacy, language and numeracy (LLN) courses.

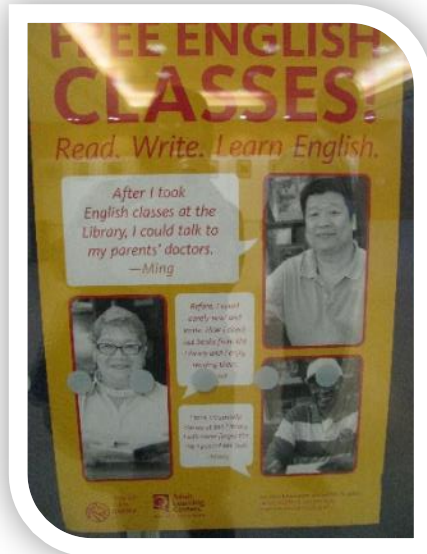
For example, the Sheffield City Council Lifelong Learning & Skills (Family Learning) has been able to apply for funding from the UK Government Skills Funding Agency. This funding was used to target adults without qualifications, and to develop an extensive range of family learning courses designed to help parents/carers to improve their foundation skills of reading, writing and numeracy.



**Sheffield Family Learning**



Most recently in the UK and emerging from the National Literacy Forum held in 2013, 19 organisations (including the National Literacy Trust, The Reading Agency, Arts Council, Book Trust, The Publishers Association and others) have developed the *Vision for Literacy 2025*, which recommends “...Pathways to Literacy, where sustained policy consensus is required” for all children born in 2014 to have the literacy skills they need to succeed through to the end of high school. The Coalition has campaigned to secure cross party commitment to the “...vision of a more literate nation”<sup>4</sup> and aligned the *Vision for Literacy* with another major campaign from the Save the Children Fund *Read On. Get On.* and the goals of The Fair Education Alliance.



**The Bronx Adult Literacy Centre poster**

In the United States, President Obama’s Administration has brought in a *Workforce and Innovation and Opportunity Act* to provide funding for job training programs which also support adult education and family literacy programs. In addition State Governors are required to develop policies and programs to support workforce development with specific services for veterans. In New York the Mayor’s Office funds and coordinates the *New York City Adult Literacy Initiative*, a system of literacy providers and community based organisations (Dept. of Youth & Community Development) offering programs in adult basic education for people over 16 years of age. Both the Queens Library and New York Public Library have successfully applied for Federal and City funding to run their adult literacy programs. The *California Libraries Literacy Services* are similarly funded.

Canada has been a leader in the literacy field for many decades with international literacy statistics data collection based on Canadian models. The Canadian Government’s Office of Literacy and Essential Skills provides a national focus on literacy issues, and most Provinces fund literacy and reading initiatives and campaigns, for example *Literacy Alberta* is funded by the Canadian Government, working with individuals, communities and workplaces to support literacy.

National events and campaigns, such as *National Family Literacy Day* on 27 January put literacy at the forefront in Canada. Developed by *ABC Life Literacy Canada* (a not for profit organisation) the day of celebration aims to encourage families to spend 15 minutes a day enjoying a learning activity together. Libraries, communities and service organisations use these events and initiatives to promote literacy at the local level.

Other initiatives from *ABC Life Literacy Canada* are:

- *LEARN* a national literacy campaign with an online portal for Canadians to find information about where they can get literacy support;
- *Good Reads* books written for less confident readers; and
- *Life Literacy Month* in September celebrating literacy and lifelong learning.



**Promotional poster Edmonton Public Library**

<sup>4</sup> National Literacy Forum (2014). *Vision for literacy 2015*. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1tS4x7x> 3 November 2014

The Government of Alberta's *Living Literacy: a literacy framework for Alberta's next generation economy* "...provides a framework for action that coordinates the efforts of the Government of Alberta and partners to improve literacy levels for Albertans so they can improve their quality of life and achieve their full potential." <sup>5</sup> It was developed after an extensive consultation process involving participants from across Canada and aligns with the Canadian Government's Office of Literacy and Essential Skills mandate. The framework provides a vision for literacy which supports the application of funding to achieve agreed outcomes from partner organisations.

In British Columbia, the Ministry of Education set the "... goal of becoming North America's most literate jurisdiction" with a Provincial literacy action plan *ReadNow BC 2007 – 2011*. Decoda Literacy Solutions (formerly Literacy BC and the literacy department of 2010 Legacies Now) continues this work with community based action plans and the development, in consultation with industry, community, employment, aboriginal and immigrant representatives of a *Workforce Literacy & Essential Skills Plan*.

For organisations and communities wanting to make significant and long term change to literacy levels, it is fundamental to align programs and applications for funding to national, state and local government policies and priorities. Differences in the provision and administration of literacy funding in each country make it difficult to go into great detail in this discussion paper however, it was evident that for literacy organisations and charities, it was essential to have a focussed and strategic approach to accessing funding from a range of government departments, agencies, business and private donors.

### **1.3 Family Learning and Literacy**

There is a wealth of evidence from national and international studies that shows a significant connection between family literacy practices and adult literacy<sup>6</sup>. The research also indicates that parental involvement is vital to a child's success at school and that one of the most effective ways of achieving this is through targeted strategies and resources that are designed to support shared reading between parents and children.



**Morecombe Library, Lancashire**

In the UK, Canada and the United States, there has been a significant shift in policy to focus on families in order to influence future outcomes for children. The benefits for parents and children from family learning initiatives are wider than just improving literacy, language and numeracy. Research from the UK demonstrates that family learning initiatives also help develop a culture of learning in the family; build parent's confidence and this in turn improves parenting practices and family relationships<sup>7</sup>. In Western Australia the recent establishment of Child Parent Centres by the Education Department is aiming to achieve similar outcomes.

Family learning is inter-generational learning and encompasses all foundation skills (learning, language and cognitive development). It aims to support parent/carers so

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<sup>5</sup> Government of Alberta (2008). *Living Literacy: a literacy framework for Alberta's next generation economy*. Edmonton.

<sup>6</sup> Hopkins, L., Green, J. & Brooks, F. (2013). Books, bytes and brains: the implications of new knowledge for children's early literacy learning. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood* 38(1). Retrieved from [www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/australian\\_journal\\_of\\_early\\_childhood.html](http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/australian_journal_of_early_childhood.html)

<sup>7</sup> Thomas, M (2014). *Community learning and families*. Leicester, NIACE. (p.10)



they can assist their children's foundation skills development and involves parents in learning – either about their children or with them. Family literacy programs fall within family learning using an integrated approach for adults to improve their own literacy and language skills alongside their children, which they then put into practice at home. Parents learn age appropriate activities to share with their children while at the same time developing their own literacy skills.

My research identified four different models for delivering family learning programs targeted at adults wanting to improve their reading, writing and/or English speaking skills:

1. Parents and children learning together with play based or school related activities
2. Parents and children – learn separately and then get together to put what they've learnt into practice
3. Classes for adults [parents/carers] with childcare available.
4. Classes for adults only [parents/carers] on topics of interest – no childcare



*Rhymes That Bind session, Edmonton*

Centres providing family learning have developed courses which are linked to wide ranging topics with literacy, language and/or numeracy embedded.

Courses are designed so that parents/carers gain the knowledge needed to create learning-rich home environments and prepare children for school. Common topics include: health & wellbeing; personal development and citizenship. Fun is considered to be an essential ingredient.

Workshops are organised for parents to learn more about the school system so they are better able to support their children as they enter and progress formal education – talking to teachers, understanding curriculum

To further support families, the family learning centres developed partnerships with other council, community or service organisations. These collaborations ensured two-way communication between service providers to improve outcomes for parents and their children through:

- referral for parent/carer to other community support services
- recruitment – support services refer to family learning program

## **2. Collaborative Approaches for Collective Impact**

“Collaborate don't compete...” was a phrase mentioned on a number of occasions during interviews, reflecting the recognition that raising literacy requires a whole community commitment. Taking a collaborative or “collective impact” approach means bringing together key stakeholders: national and local organisations and services, community groups, businesses, educational institutions with a common agenda, strategies and priorities for action. Collaboration enables shared planning, expertise and resources; reduces duplication; offers better return on investment; and increases chances of success and sustainability.

Community based initiatives provide the opportunity to implement targeted programs that best serve the needs of the local people. There is also the goal to build community capacity to support the local community in their efforts to develop sustainable programs for long term benefit.



A critical component of the collaborative or networked models examined is the coordination needed to manage the elements required to make operate effectively – from gathering data and working with stakeholders, to marketing and program delivery – all the while ensuring the community they serve is involved in the planning and activities generated. The collaborative approaches that were most effective were those where there was a central agency (Driver) providing support to a local level coordinator (Co-driver) who led and drove the process with the community.

Generally the strategic coordinated community based approaches to improving literacy included:

- A literacy campaign to promote & raise awareness of the issue and
- The development of programs to support adults to improve their reading and writing

Awareness campaigns go some way to changing public perceptions and encourage people who struggle with reading and writing to do something about it (if they are motivated). Therefore it is vital that there are appropriate programs in place which suit the needs of individual literacy learners, and for those when returning to formal education may not be a suitable option.

People are often surprised at the figures associated with low literacy in Australia and assume that our education system would have improved the statistics. The underlying issues around poor literacy are complex, interconnected and often intergenerational. There are many people, including Aboriginal Australians, who are good English speakers but who want to improve their reading and writing or newcomers that need to learn English and the social norms of their new country. Different ways of learning are required depending on a learner’s motivation and previous life experiences.

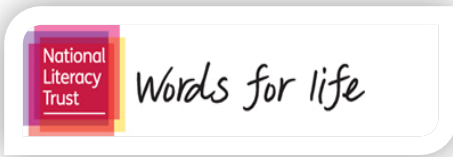
A range of strategies for teaching literacy to adults were offered in all the organisations visited. These included: one-to-one tutoring; group classes; informal conversation classes; early literacy programs; family learning courses; and sometimes a combination of one or more of these options. Informal non-formal learning options were available, often providing a pathway to accredited courses.

This report uses a case study format to give an overview of the collaborative models I investigated. All are flexible, scalable models that have been implemented at a local level, applying similar frameworks for development. Evidence and evaluation shows they have proven effective in achieving outcomes of changing lives for the community, families and individuals.

## **2.1 Case Study: Middlesbrough Literacy Hubs (National Literacy Trust, UK)**

The *National Literacy Trust* (NLT) is a leading authority delivering innovative literacy programming and activities in the UK. Since the early 1990s the charity has been working with local governments to develop strategies to improve literacy with much of their work focusing on families and children.

Research and evaluation of projects is an essential part of their operations with the evidence and findings being used to influence policy and practice. Over the decades the NLT has developed a wide range of national campaigns and programs building a reputation that enables leveraging of government funding and corporate support. Their reputation and quality of research into literacy and reading issues has also influenced similar programs beyond the UK.



I had the opportunity to learn more about a recent collaborative innovation, *Community Literacy Hubs* in Middlesbrough, with the NLT Manager of the Literacy Hub project and the local Middlesbrough Hub coordinator. Middlesbrough is one of the most deprived areas in Britain. In 2010 the NLT was approached by the CEO from the Middlesbrough City Council who wanted to bring about “change on an industrial scale” and recognised that literacy

was basic to raising community aspirations. Additional research by NLT also identified that about 75% of people working in frontline services encounter people with literacy issues and that about half of them didn’t do anything about it because they didn’t know what they could do, or where to refer people. Drawing on a decade of research and experience the Hub model was developed with the key purpose to change knowledge, behaviours and attitudes around literacy to raise attainment levels. Working collaboratively with community partners and organisations NLT developed a coordinated model to target individuals, families and communities who need literacy support the most.

Grant funding has been sourced to establish three literacy hubs over three years. The Middlesbrough Hub was launched in 2012, followed by Bradford and Peterborough in 2014. About eighty organisations within the County have been brought together in a multi-agency approach for long term change. Funding provides a full time Hub Manager (coordinator) and support within the NLT for one day/week each of hub liaison, research and policy, media and communications and a full time corporate and fundraising manager. Partners generally provide in-kind support and advocacy while local media partners support the broad literacy and reading campaigns.

The strategies implemented to meet the outcomes of the project included literacy awareness training for all local government staff and community networks and advocacy through the literacy campaign and marketing.

Packaging programs for the *Literacy Hubs* has been critical to achieving the project outcomes. While an awareness campaign aims to motivate the community to get involved, it also needs to be backed up with programs that can be accessed when they are motivated to improve their literacy skills. The Middlesbrough Literacy Hub Manager has been able to draw on and adapt established, flexible programs from NLT and *The Reading Agency* to ensure there are a range of engaging and proven mechanisms to improve literacy in the area. Specific funding was obtained for the *Premier League Reading Stars* reading intervention aimed at children and young people who are struggling with reading or who don’t read for pleasure. Inspired to get back to



**Media Promotion - Middlesbrough Literacy Hub**

reading by footballers from Middlesbrough FC, this program has had a dramatic effect on participating students, particular boys and their fathers. *Reading Stars* is also complemented with the *Young Readers Program* targeted at highly disadvantaged areas for greatest impact. *Words for Work* is a schools based intervention to support young people's literacy through a partnership between schools and businesses. Volunteers from companies are partnered with a local high-school to motivate, address and develop students' literacy skills for employment. This is done in workshops that explore speaking and listening skills. This program is being trialled with upper primary school students within the Middlesbrough Literacy Hub.

Research has shown adults with family responsibilities are often more motivated to improve their own literacy skills to help their children become better prepared for school. *Early Words Together* is a family engagement program that supports parents/carers to improve their home learning and literacy practices by working with trained community volunteers who visit the families weekly and provide one-on-one support. *Literacy Champions* is a community volunteering program aimed at building parent's confidence and ability to support their children's early literacy and language development. Linking *Early Words Together* with *Literacy Champions* connects families with children aged two to five years who would benefit from additional support and referral, to other local services and agencies.



*The Reading Agency* is a vital link in the Literacy Hub network as an organisation that runs creative programs in partnership with public libraries, inspiring and supporting people to be confident readers. The Agency has developed a range of national schemes for all ages used by libraries across the UK. Two programs being used in Middlesbrough to engage the community in reading are the *Summer Reading Challenge* delivered by public libraries and schools to prevent the 'dip in reading levels' over the summer holidays and the *Six Book Challenge* an adaptation for adults to build their reading confidence and literacy skills. *The Six Book Challenge* runs annually from January to June and is supported by libraries working with specific target groups, prisons, colleges, housing associations and community services in communities where literacy is low.

Year one of the model involved identifying and working with lead partners and stakeholders to examine local issues affecting low literacy. Specific literacy issues were prioritised and new approaches to meet local need were put in place. Funding was sourced and staff appointed. A local media campaign to raise awareness was launched to motivate people to get involved. Priorities were identified to address the intergenerational history of low education and lost skills are in early literacy; learning to read and write; promoting the enjoyment of reading and building literacy skills for work and home. Year two will use the findings and recommendations from evaluation of the first year to develop an overarching literacy strategy and actions with the purpose of securing further funding to engage a wide range of partners from the community and public sector. The strategy will embed literacy awareness and practices in all Council policies.

While the local Middlesbrough Libraries participate in the Literacy Hub network the Middlesbrough Literacy Hub Manager commented that there is a need to increase the library's capacity to take a greater leadership role in local literacy activities. She felt that the library wasn't taking full advantage of the project and could do more to contribute, such as using library data to identify areas where membership is lowest and to target these communities to deliver more user-friendly library activities. The NLT plans to work with the libraries to assist them with gathering, matching and analysing relevant data sets.



## 2.2 Case Study: Literacy Champions (Rochdale Borough Council, UK)

Located in the North West of England, Rochdale is one of 10 Boroughs that make up the Greater Manchester area. In 2006 the Borough of Rochdale adopted a literacy policy [Literacy Changes Lives: Rochdale Borough Literacy Policy](#). Two years in development, it outlines priorities, strategies and actions to provide focus and bring together (“join up”) services and agencies with a common goal. It recognised the importance of a literate community that enables everyone to contribute to the development of individuals and the Borough. A *Literacy Entitlement Steering Group* made up of key stakeholders from schools, skills providers, employers, the volunteer sector, libraries and learners developed an action plan including establishing a *Literacy Network* to further facilitate collaboration.



Rochdale Library

A different approach to address local literacy issues was developed when it became apparent that traditional learning strategies weren't having much impact on improving literacy outcomes. Helen Chicot the Rochdale Skills & Employment Manager, coordinated focus groups with people living in the housing estates - people who felt they didn't have much of a future. These

discussions helped Rochdale staff to learn more about what the community really wanted to support them, and led to the development of *Literacy Champions* project. Conversations with residents identified the characteristics, attitudes and personal experiences volunteer tutors would need in order to relate to individuals in the community. It became evident that the people in the focus groups in fact the ones who would make the best 'community champions'.

Building community capacity was an integral part of the initiative. *Volunteer Literacy Champions* were provided with extensive training in partnership with Edge Hill University, to gain knowledge for referral to local services and peer support to build confidence when talking to service professional providers. In some cases the volunteers required support to improve their own literacy skills. Taking a holistic approach to supporting individuals and getting support services to work together benefits the whole community. The aim is to make sure no-one falls through the cracks again. *Literacy Champions* provide one-on-one support and 'hand holding' for learners for about six weeks but learners are ultimately responsible for their own learning. Professional service providers offer additional support for *Literacy Champions* but aren't there to impose or 'take over' when they are working with individuals. Volunteering enables the *Literacy Champions* to improve their own skills as they receive further training to lead, build trust with individuals and give them confidence to 'make dreams happen'.



Rochdale Literacy Champions lanyards





*Talk English* [www.talk-english.co.uk](http://www.talk-english.co.uk) is another community driven program operating in North West England (including in Rochdale) using volunteer peer tutors to support people with low levels of English and help them to improve their language skills, access services and become more involved in their community. An innovative promotion “*Talk English Here*” by local businesses and public services to encourages clients to practice their English speaking skills in real life situations with a ‘sympathetic listener’. Training is available for staff and business who display a “*Talk English Here*” sticker in their window.

Collaboration and partnerships with local community and national agencies, including The National Literacy Trust, has enabled funding to be sourced from Department of Education, National Institute for Continuing Education (NIACE), Skills Funding Agency’s Community Learning Innovation Fund, and local businesses. Communication between partners and networks is supported with regular information sharing workshops for volunteers (“Champion Chats”) and conferences for providers.

I asked Helen Chicot what she thought were some of the challenges the *Literacy Champions* project had to manage. She suggested that volunteers sometimes have their own personal issues which may need to be managed and supported. Cultivating an attitude of ‘give and take’ from service professionals and volunteers needs understanding and a spirit of reciprocity for the benefit of all and to manage differences between communities and personalities. However the program is making a difference and changing lives leading to it being recognised as best practice by the *National Literacy Trust* who have adopted it for a national *Literacy Champions* initiative.

### **2.3 Case Study: Family Learning - Sheffield Lifelong Learning Skills & Communities (UK)**

Sheffield is England’s fourth biggest city, with a population of almost 600,000. Despite some major redevelopment there remains a generational issue around low levels of education and the City has several areas of significant disadvantage. The Council is committed to working with public, private, voluntary, community and faith sectors to achieve its vision to become a city where people want to ‘...live, learn, work, invest and visit’.<sup>8</sup>

The City of Sheffield has developed the *Every Sheffield Child Articulate and Literate* (ESCAL); a city-wide policy and strategy that outlines its commitment and aims to break the generational cycle of low literacy by getting the whole community involved in improving reading, writing, speaking, listening and communication (including ICT) abilities for children and their families. To achieve these outcomes the City Council offers a wide range of educational opportunities for the wider community including informal adult learning where people can identify their needs and access training to ensure they have the necessary *Skills for Life* in reading, writing, maths, English and information technology. Accredited courses in English and maths are provided through colleges and other educational providers.

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<sup>8</sup> Sheffield City Council (2011), *Standing up for Sheffield: Corporate Plan 2011 – 2104*.

### *Sheffield Family Learning – ‘Learning Together for Life’*

Sheffield Family Learning (SFL) is a key strategy providing targeted non-accredited, informal learning programs for adults with children aged from 0 – 12 years to improve their literacy abilities. Programs were originally delivered in libraries but were moved to schools to increase connection with parents who may not use other support services. Some courses are still run in libraries.

Funding for Sheffield’s *Family Learning* programs comes from various sources, including the *Skills Funding Agency*, and is targeted at adults with no qualifications to improve their reading, writing and numeracy skills. As well as increasing these foundation skills, family learning courses are designed to help parents/carers understand the curriculum (from birth to 12 years). In effect funding allocated for adult learning is being used to provide an extensive range of family learning courses. All programs aim to help adults build their confidence, improve English, maths, speaking and listening abilities, and learn practical ways ‘...to support their children through the challenges of growing up’ and at school. The majority of courses are for parents/carers learning together with their children (aged 0 – 12 years) however some, usually accredited, are for the adults on their own. ‘Free, fun and friendly’ are key components – it shouldn’t feel like learning and benefits the whole family.



**Sheffield Family Learning Mascot**



**Setting up the Sparkle Den**

The Family Learning team (FL Team) is made up of four staff and 18 sessional tutors. There are five specialist delivery teams who work with community organisations, Children’s Centres and schools to deliver the courses which are provided free of charge. Childcare is also available if appropriate. Family Learning courses are coordinated centrally with a twelve month schedule. In Term Three each year, briefing meetings are provided to all schools in the district to promote the programs. Most schools have a teacher with responsibility for family learning and in partnership with the community determine which programs would best suit their needs and with scheduling. The FL Team handle registrations and other paperwork at an enrolment session.

In 2014, Sheffield Family Learning<sup>9</sup> had 53 planned courses on offer for parents/carers and families and had over 3000 participants. Course content uses a broad range of topics to teach foundation skills – reading, writing, maths, ICT (computers), problem solving, speaking and listening. Some examples are:

- *Baby Chatter Matters* - an early English course for parents/carers focussing on learning how to help their baby or toddler develop talking and listening skills. (0 – 3 years)
- *Families Love Books* – an early literacy course (0 – 3 years)
- *Count Me In, 123* – a fun practical early maths course (0 – 3 years)

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<sup>9</sup> Sheffield City Council (2014). *Family Learning course guide*.

- *Creative Computers* – a fun computer course learning how to create a CD of photos & sounds (3 – 11 years)
- *Computer Matters* – adult accredited course for awareness of ICT in schools while developing own computer skills (children of all ages)

All teaching and learning resources are supplied by Sheffield Family Learning – from pencils to data projectors. Where possible, participants are able to keep the games, construction kits and writing kits issued during their course. All adult participants are assisted to develop their own individual learning plan – “Learning Journey” – and these are used to measure an individual’s achievements and success through the course. The learning plans are an informal and non-threatening way for the Family Learning team to gather data for reporting and evaluation required for ongoing funding applications.

A report into community learning by the *National Institute for Continuing Adult Education* estimates a return on investment of £7.58 for every £1.00 spent on family learning by Sheffield City Council. The report also found that family learning can increase the overall level of children’s development by up to 15% for those from disadvantaged groups<sup>10</sup>.

#### **2.4 Case Study: Centre for Family Literacy (Edmonton, Canada)**

A highlight of my study tour was spending two days with the *Centre for Family Literacy* based in Edmonton. Recognised for its innovative literacy programs and services the *Centre for Family Literacy* (CFL) supports adults and families across the Province of Alberta. It supports and encourages communities to increase local access to literacy learning through collaboration and partnerships with many other organizations. All the staff at the Centre were enthusiastic about their work as they shared the amazing work they undertake to support literacy in Alberta.



*On the C.O.W bus*

The Centre’s evidenced based approach to development and delivery of literacy programs puts families first. It began in 1980 as the first volunteer tutor program for adults and introduced family literacy programs in 1993 to help parents support their children’s literacy development. In 1998 it became the *Centre for Family Literacy* and took on the new provincial mandate for provision of family literacy training, information, promotion, resources and research. The Centre provides programs for thousands of adults and children each year and professional development and training for literacy practitioners.

Adult literacy is still an important aspect of literacy development for the CFL through its *Adult Tutor Program*. This program provides trained volunteers who can work individually with adults over 18 who can speak and understand English. With funding from *Literacy Alberta*, over 100 tutors provide one-on-one tutoring sessions (two or four hours/week) for at least six months. Small group workshops (8 – 12 participants) provide students with opportunities to meet with each other and feel they ‘are not alone’ as they improve their reading and writing. The workshops include a *Learners Club* held monthly with topics determined by the students; a weekly daytime *Book Club* providing advanced reading and writing practice and visits to other locations; and weekly *Conversation Classes* which are tutor facilitated. While

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<sup>10</sup> Thomas, M. (2014). *Community learning and families*. Leicester, NIACE. (p.10)

the *Adult Tutor Program* is an informal literacy initiative, the CFL collaborates with other adult literacy providers to ensure there are pathways to further learning for students.



*Rhymes That Bind at a nursing home*

Over the decades a suite of family literacy outreach programs have been developed by the CFL to support parents as their child's first teacher. Programs are presented in ten week blocks using everyday activities to create learning opportunities with activities, songs and rhymes as learning resources that can be easily replicated in the home. All the programs are for parents giving explicit messages about reading, language and cognitive development to help their children. Some programs are similar to the *Better Beginnings* rhyme-time and story-time models available at public libraries throughout Western Australia. *Rhymes That Bind* is for parents/carers with children up to two years with *Multicultural Rhymes That Bind* being a bi-lingual version for families who speak languages other than English. *Books for Babies* is a course for parents with babies up to 12 months and gives information & activities for sharing books. *Learn Together, Grow Together* is literacy development for parents with children starting school to build their confidence when

talking to teachers and helping with their child's homework. *3,2,1, Fun! (Numbers count)* is a new numeracy program being piloted in schools for parents with toddlers assisting with preparation for school. Programs are always delivered in partnership with community groups in places wherever there is a need, including schools, community centres, aged residential homes and churches.

*Workplace Family Literacy Project* was a two year research project undertaken by CFL with funding from the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills to look at the feasibility of family literacy in the workplace to build foundation literacy and numeracy skills for adults. Following extensive research, consultation with businesses and a pilot program, a model was developed and produced guides (*Helping Families Learn is Everyone's Business*) for businesses and practitioners to implement the program<sup>11</sup>. The project found that there is some way to go to raise awareness of the link between family literacy and adult basic skills and requires a long term commitment, including financial, from a business. Literacy providers also found it difficult to find businesses who were willing to be partners and implement the program. Nevertheless the pilot programs did demonstrate that family literacy programs are effective when delivered in the workplace and the Centre continues to raise awareness with businesses of its impact.



*3,2,1 Fun (early childhood maths activity) in a school*

<sup>11</sup> Centre for Family Literacy (2010). *Helping Families Learn is Everyone's Business: a practitioner's guide to family literacy in the workplace*. Edmonton, Centre for Family Literacy.



Alberta covers an area of almost 662,000 square kilometres with a population of over 4.1 million people. The area between Edmonton, the capital and Calgary is the more densely populated area, but, as with

Western Australia there are regional and small remote towns scattered across the Province. To ensure all Albertans have access to family literacy services, a special initiative from the CFL are the two fully equipped C.O.W busses - *Classroom On Wheels* and *Alberta Prairie Classroom on Wheels*. The *Alberta Prairie C.O.W.* travels to remote towns, across the Province delivering the family literacy message, usually visiting one town in the morning and moving to another in the afternoon. Both busses are fitted out with spaces to hold *Rhymes That Bind*, story times, parent information sessions and interactive activities. Visits are planned twelve months in advance enabling communities to promote visits by the *Prairie C.O.W.* bus as a special event creating anticipation amongst families and schools. The other *C.O.W.* bus services metropolitan Edmonton travelling to neighbourhood locations which don't have easy access to a library. The metro bus includes a small library collection of children's books. Locations are determined in consultation with community services. CFL staff drive the bus and set up for sessions that are held over eight weeks at the same time each week, each session runs for about two hours. Families can drop in anytime to spend time on activities with their children and borrow books.



*Classroom On Wheels - COW Bus*

The *Family Literacy Regional Network* enables the CFL to offer training to family literacy workers close to where they live and work.<sup>12</sup> Seven regions across the Province have been established to support the delivery of family literacy in regional areas including visits by the *Alberta Prairie C.O.W.* Coordinators provide a regional contact point for liaison with schools, community organisations and services to ensure the local community is involved in planning and selection of programs to support parents' literacy and learning needs. The CFL provides ongoing communication, training and program support and acts as a resource to access the Family Literacy Initiative Fund (FLIF) in their designated region. Together the CFL and regional coordinators organise and facilitate meetings and networking sessions to provide links between organisations delivering family literacy programs and other agencies who want to.

To assist further assist collaboration on literacy initiatives the *Edmonton Literacy Coalition* brings together organisations that work together to raise awareness of literacy issues in Alberta. The *Centre for Family Literacy*, *Edmonton Community Adult Learning Association*, *Edmonton Public Library*, *Learning Centre Literacy Association*, *Yellowhead Tribal College* and *Frontier College* have developed a common agenda for action (awareness), branding and leadership and support each other's programs and campaigns.

<sup>12</sup> Centre for Family Literacy website [www.famlit.ca](http://www.famlit.ca)



Overall collaboration between the many literacy providers in Alberta has been effective in offering a wide range of options for people to get support with literacy.

### **2.5 Case study: Decoda Literacy Solutions (British Columbia, Canada)**

*Decoda Literacy Solutions* (formerly Literacy BC and the literacy department of 2010 Legacies Now) is the only province-wide literacy organization in British Columbia (BC). Providing resources, training and funds, Decoda supports community-based literacy programs and initiatives in over 400 communities across B.C. Decoda supports children and families, youth, adults, Aboriginal and immigrant communities, in an effort to build strong individuals, strong families and strong communities.<sup>13</sup> *Decoda* is a not-for-profit organisation funded by corporate partners, government and individual donors.

As a lead literacy organisation in British Columbia *Decoda* has responsibility for coordinating the Province-wide *Community Literacy Program* – a model for developing partnerships and gaining community participation around literacy and learning. Adopting a community development approach, a network of 102 task groups has been established across the Province. Each *Community Task Group* is



made up of representatives from libraries, employment agencies, schools, colleges, literacy providers, community groups and organisations with a single focus of working together to raise literacy levels for their local area.

*Literacy Outreach Coordinators* (LOC) coordinate and facilitate the *Community Task Group* to guide the development of community literacy plans which set the course for work for over a year. A LOC works to build and

strengthen partnerships, support the planned actions and manage finances. The LOC positions are funded by the BC Government and are critical to the stewardship and effectiveness of a local task group, including providing input into the Ministry of Education's requirements for district literacy plans. Community engagement is an essential part of the community literacy planning process and ensures it meets local needs with appropriate and achievable goals and actions. Libraries are key in the development of a local task group as well as community organisations or services that work with people who need literacy support, particularly when working with adults who don't use schools or libraries.

Each community will be different but the *Community Literacy Program* model enables the planning of events and the strategic and targeted delivery of programs by the partners in the task group. Adult literacy programs for good English speakers and speakers of languages other than English, range from one-on-one with a volunteer tutor, community based events, to accredited courses from literacy providers and colleges. Through being aware of the strengths of each organisation people can be referred to appropriate services and programs. Partners support and promote each other's services and activities. An important role for the LOC is maintaining communication links between partners and keeping everyone motivated and on track.

Decoda provides ongoing program and resource development to support LOCs, literacy practitioners and local communities. Working with parents to support early childhood development and family literacy is again acknowledged as essential and young people, seniors and Aboriginal groups are part of the wider community literacy planning. The Decoda website provides a portal with access to high quality

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<sup>13</sup> Decoda Literacy Solutions website <http://decoda.ca/about-us/>

promotional materials and resources for literacy teachers, practitioners, librarians, community organisations, volunteer tutors and parents. Annual training for LOCs includes facilitation skills, information sharing opportunities and webinars



*PALS (Parents as Literacy Supporters)* is Decoda’s family literacy and learning program for early learning practitioners, community organisations working with parents/carers of preschool and kindergarten aged children. The evidenced based model supports adults in learning how they can support their children’s early development to be better prepared for school. The program is designed to be flexible and culturally responsive: *IPALS* (for immigrant communities) can be facilitated in other languages as well as English and also for Aboriginal communities (*APALS*) and First Nations families. Guides, lesson plans and other resources are on the Decoda website.

In 2013 Decoda and the *Canadian Literacy and Learning Network* hosted a forum to develop a Workforce Literacy and Essential Skills strategy and priorities for action. The Forum included senior public, private and not-for-profit leaders who learned about the impact of low adult literacy and to contribute to solutions for addressing the issue. The discussions informed to the development of *A British Columbia Literacy and Essential Skills Plan* which aims to support collaborative efforts and aligns with government goals to ensure the Province has a literacy workforce for the future.

In 2014 Decoda initiated the *Literacy is Life* awareness campaign and announced their *Literacy Manifesto* inviting people to sign up and show their support for literacy and learning in BC. Decoda and its community network also support and promote the various Canadian literacy awareness campaigns mentioned earlier in the report.



*Decoda Literacy Manifesto*

### 3. Literacy and the Role of Libraries

Public libraries have long been a major provider of the ‘reading experience’ offering opportunities for people to experiment with reading with access to free reading materials and playing a unique role in developing reading and literacy skills for people across the age spectrum. As this report highlights the role libraries take in supporting adult and family literacy varies from country to country. In England and Canada libraries provide similar services to those in Western Australia with early literacy being a major focus. Literacy based activities are targeted at parents/carers with children in the early years before they start school and then through school based programs for the later years. All of the libraries I visited had engaging activities available for children and families – from storytimes sessions, reading groups, to holiday and homework sessions. Most had built relationships with schools in their area with some having a service agreement to provide project materials and collection support to teachers.

While generally librarians are not trained to be literacy tutors, they have a role in supporting literacy by using their knowledge of reading, matching readers to books and encouraging people to read more for

pleasure. Support needs to be available to assist new readers to learn what it means to be a reader, how a reader behaves and the sense of inclusion that comes with being amongst a community of readers. The libraries I visited were actively involved in their communities and worked closely with other sections of their Council to engage with the community, particularly with families. There is also a growing recognition that libraries are well placed to work with literacy providers to explore ways that reading for pleasure can be incorporated into supporting their learners.

### **3.1 Case Study: Society of Chief Librarians, Reading Agency and Public Libraries (UK)**

The *Society of Chief Librarians* (SCL) is made up of the heads of public library services in every local authority in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The Society advocates and works in partnership with both government and other agencies to strategically develop library services. A key strategy of the Society to support and sustain library services for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century are the *Universal Offers* developed after extensive market research in partnership with *The Reading Agency* and the *Arts Council*.<sup>14</sup> The Offers cover four areas of service providing a flexible framework with key messages for creating partnerships, programs and resources at the local level.

1. *Reading Offer*: develop, deliver and promote reading services.
2. *Information Offer*: helping people access information online for skills and knowledge in life-critical areas.
3. *Digital Offer*: development of digital services, skills and access that underpin 21st century library services.
4. *Health Offer*: expresses the public library contribution to the health and well-being of local communities.

There is also a Learning Offer which is currently in development for 2015.



*The Hive - Worcester*

The Chief Librarians I interviewed in Canada Water (Southwark, London), Lancashire, Newcastle and Durham encouraged me to learn more about the *Universal Offers* as it was evident that this collaborative, united, planned approach had been an important strategy for public libraries in managing reduced funding through reducing duplication of services, focussing on services that will enhance community capacity and providing individuals with the essential skills they need to access information and meet their aspirations. Heads of library services are also using the *Universal Offers* to ensure that staff have the right skills to work with their communities and meet the provisions of the offers. As funding was being reduced, library workers were being required to be more flexible and adaptable themselves. I commonly heard the phrase “everybody does everything”, including storytime, digital and information literacy workshops. The introduction of self-check-in/out facilities has allowed more staff time for program delivery.

#### *The Reading Agency*

I spent an inspirational morning with Sue Wilkinson, CEO of *The Reading Agency* and Genevieve Clark, Program Manager for the *Six Book Challenge*. *The Reading Agency*, a charity, runs a range of ‘national schemes’ to help people feel inspired and confident about reading and works to increase the awareness of the role libraries, bringing together a wide range of partners from the public, private and volunteer sectors to influence Government and extend the reach of their activities: 4200 public, school, prison libraries; Society of Chief Librarians; publishers and others (e.g. Arts Council; British council; National

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<sup>14</sup> Society of Chief Librarians www <http://www.goscl.com/universal-offers/>

Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) Quick Reads; unionlearn). "Because everything changes when we read" is The Agency's tagline and evaluation of their programs reflects the power of reading for pleasure has on changing lives. Research reports commissioned by the Reading Agency have achieved international acknowledgment that helping an individual to become a confident reader improves literacy. Developing a close relationship and support for public libraries has enabled The Agency to adapt successful local initiatives and to scale them up to make them available nationally.

The *Six Book Challenge* has become the flagship program for adults modelled on another Agency initiative for children, the annual *Summer Reading Challenge*. Targeted at less confident readers, the *Six Book Challenge* runs for six months each year getting readers to select six items to read and keep a record in a diary enabling them to practice their skills, build vocabulary, reading stamina and develop a reading habit. The program is particularly popular with literacy providers working with English as Additional Language (EAL) learners and this practical scheme has been used by public libraries to collaborate with prisons, colleges and workplaces. In 2014 over 40,000 people signed up to participate with about 50% completing the program. The Reading Agency has built on the success of the *Six Book Challenge* since it became a national program in 2008, promoting it through established networks, media and also building relationships at the highest levels such as with trade unions. To encourage more people to read an online portal has been created called *Reading Groups for Everyone* where anyone can find information about book clubs/reading groups in their area. Writers and publishers recognise the value of libraries in promoting reading for pleasure with several well-known authors taking on the role of *Reading Ambassadors*.



The *Reading Well* initiative is also aimed at adults and is integral to achieving outcomes from the Society of Chief Librarians 'Health Offer'. It consists of two strands - *Books On Prescription* and *Mood Boosting Books*. Available to all libraries *Books on Prescription* is a national scheme that helps people to understand and manage their health and wellbeing using self-help reading. Books have been selected by experts and are recommended by GPs, other health professionals or self-referral on topics such as anxiety, depression and dementia with libraries being endorsed as safe, trusted and non-stigmatised places. *Mood Boosting Books* is the second strand of the *Reading Well* programme and is a national promotion of uplifting novels, non-fiction and poetry selected by readers.

A key factor for libraries resulting in the successful delivery of *Reading Agency* programs is the provision of a complete set of tools and resources for libraries to use to engage with their community. The Agency coordinates training, promotional collateral, merchandise, marketing, reporting and collation of evaluation data and production of comprehensive research reports on the impact of the programs. Whether targeted at adults or children, the programs are community based initiatives that support individuals and families with low literacy, mental health problems or who are



*Health & Wellbeing display - Newcastle Library*



disengaged with reading, and to build community capacity for libraries, volunteers and partners who learn new skills and become active community participants.

When I asked the CEO about the challenges facing the *Reading Agency* she explained that reading is changing, with audiences increasingly looking for enhanced and integrated digital reading offers as well as the more traditional paper-based and in person experiences. Children and young people are reading less and using technology more but research reinforces the need for high quality reading programmes and the societal benefits which will come from bringing them together, leading to adults using their skills to read with their families.



[www.goscl.com/universal-offers/about-universal-offers/](http://www.goscl.com/universal-offers/about-universal-offers/)

As I visited different libraries on my travels I was able to see how they were implementing the SCL Universal Offers and *Reading Agency* programs and assisting people to enhance their reading, writing, digital, information and financial literacy skills. Most libraries provide informal learning programs integrating the offers often in partnership with local community learning providers, groups or educational institutions

**Reading Offer:** Providing exciting and engaging programs remains a core service for public libraries and is met by the offer of reading groups for all ages, reading challenges, promotions and author events. I discovered a number of special

high profile reading events such as: *Lancashire Reads* and Durham’s Book Festival *Big Read* (Wind in the Willows) – adults all reading the same book. Durham Libraries has a service delivery agreement with HM Prison Durham and use the relationship to run the *Six Book Challenge* with inmates.

**Information Offer:** Aligning with significant national events such as *Adult Learners Week*, *World Health Day* and *National Careers Week* provides the focus for promoting the role libraries have in supporting people essential life skills such as job seeking, personal or financial information, accessing government information online and to support people to be more independent and take more responsibility to manage their long term needs. Newcastle Library has a Business & IP Centre and is a regional centre for the British Library’s *Enterprising Libraries* network supporting local businesses and using their role as community hubs to spark economic growth.

**Digital Offer:** All libraries provide free internet access and/or wifi for library members and offer digital and technology workshops, ranging from drop-in taster sessions, basic computer skills, online shopping, social networking to digital photography skills.

**Health Offer:** All libraries had displays promoting health and wellbeing with *Books On Prescription* and *Mood Boosting Books* collateral. Newcastle upon Tyne libraries had an extensive collection of books and information; the Lancashire libraries have set up *Dementia Friends* in partnership with the Alzheimer’s Association;



**Computer Space - Lancaster Library**



Durham Libraries have *Health Zones* in each of its branch libraries with a focus on mental health offering a 'Mood Diary' to go with the recommended books. Library programs of events with talks by local health providers and Council services complimented the self-help reading resources.

There has been much in the news about library closures throughout the UK so it was interesting to get direct insight from some chief librarians and discuss how they are re-imagining their services to deal with significant funding cuts from the Central UK Government – in some cases up to 50% across the board. I was able to appreciate the work being done by public libraries to stay relevant and consult with their communities to ensure they continued to have access to quality library services

### **3.2 Case Study: Literacy & Two Western Canadian Libraries**

My travels took me to Alberta and British Columbia to examine more closely the Province-wide networks that have been established to tackle literacy issues. The *Centre for Family Literacy* and *Decoda Literacy Solutions* are the backbone organisations working with public, private and volunteer sectors towards breaking the intergeneration cycle of low literacy with libraries also key partners. Canadian libraries have been using community engagement processes to identify ways they can provide services for regular library patrons, be more inclusive for people who don't see the library has anything to offer them and to better assist low-income communities.

#### *Vancouver Public Library*

Vancouver Public Library (VPL) and its twenty-one branch libraries serve the metropolitan mainland region. VPL was one of four library systems to first pilot a community engagement approach to build relationships and partnerships with other organisations and groups to better understand how libraries could better serve their communities. The 'community-led' model has since been implemented across the country.

Library representatives participate in local Community Task Groups under the *Community Literacy Program* coordinated by Decoda Literacy Solutions enabling them to provide spaces and programs that best meet community needs and interests.



**Information Point - Vancouver Public Library**



**Event Program - Vancouver Public library**

The role the library takes can include providing a venue for workshops or trained staff to deliver outreach programs. The *Urban Library Settlement Partnership (ULSP)* of ten metro Vancouver library services. *New to BC* is a web portal with information to support libraries to be better able to assist people new arrivals to British Columbia. The ULSP offers outreach opportunities to link with people who provide services to immigrants, connect them to library programs and ensure collections reflect the interests of the community. Targeted services for Aboriginal people and families include an *Aboriginal Storyteller in Residence* who works on a personal project which can be shared with the Aboriginal and wider community. Links with a community college have helped the library engage with Aboriginal elders and young people to access and develop the

library's collections. They also contribute to celebrations and ceremonies to acknowledge the First Nations People.



Vancouver Public Library

Adult basic education and literacy in Vancouver is provided by community colleges and community based volunteers used for one-on-one tutoring. Libraries being venues for tutors and students to meet and students are encouraged to join. Conversation classes are available for practicing speaking English and a wide range of technology sessions are offered. *Tech Café* drop-in sessions give one-on-one training in accessing online resources and patrons can make a 30 minute appointment with a librarian to be learn more about searching research databases. *Career and Job Search Tours* - another partnership drop-in workshop to help people find resources to help them find a job or start up a small business. The *SFU Writer's Studio Writing Consults* (with Simon Fraser University) provides free one-on-one 45 minute appointments for people who want an 'expert opinion' on their writing. These are just a small sample of targeted learning workshops available in Vancouver libraries.

#### Edmonton Public Library

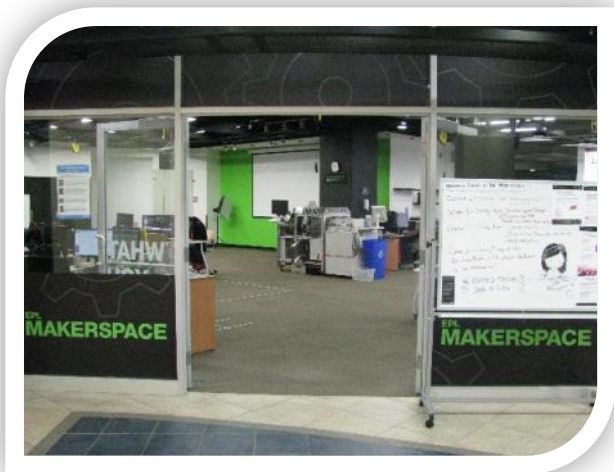
When I met Louise Reimer, EPL Director of Library Services she was understandably excited as Edmonton Public Library (EPL) was the winner of the *2014 Library of the Year* award by the American Library Association. EPL was the first library outside the United States to receive the award which is given to a library that demonstrates exemplary community service; creativity and innovation in program delivery; increase in library usage and creating programs that can be copied by other libraries.

Since 2006 EPL has been transforming libraries and services when it introduced a '*Community-Led Service Philosophy*' into its business plan. This approach requires the building of relationships with community organisations, government agencies and volunteer groups involving individual representatives with the '...common goal of removing barriers to library service.'<sup>15</sup> It impacts and guides library staff at all levels, service delivery, program development and community partnerships to achieve and measure outcomes. EPL has appointed a Community Librarian who spends up to 70% of their time outside the library developing and maintaining relationships with partners and raising awareness of library services. There are also three social workers on staff.



Celebrating @ Edmonton Public Library

<sup>15</sup> Edmonton Public Library (2010). *Community-led service philosophy toolkit*. Edmonton. [www.epl.ca/sites/default/files/pdf/CommunityLedServicePhilosophyToolkit.pdf](http://www.epl.ca/sites/default/files/pdf/CommunityLedServicePhilosophyToolkit.pdf)



**Edmonton Public Library new "Maker Space"**

Developing community partnerships has enabled EPL to target people who weren't using the library and find ways to better support people with 'nowhere else to go'. This proactive collaborative, community development model has been a deliberate strategy to make all EPL libraries truly accessible to everyone in the community – something that is often talked about but isn't always the reality. It has changed the work culture in the organisation, enhanced facility and service development and influenced the wider community. In the last 12 months EPL has built or renovated two libraries with two more new branch libraries due to open in late 2015. A 'Maker Space' has been established at the main Stanley A. Miller Library.

Creativity and innovation in program development means that there is an extensive selection of learning opportunities in EPL's 17 branch libraries. Programs are matched to community need, so not every program is offered in every library. The exception is the range of early literacy programs for families – *Baby Lapsit*, *Books for Babies*, *Family Storytime* and *Sign, Sing, Laugh and Learn* – assisting parents as a child's first teacher. Spaces and programs for older children and teens are in each library complimented by special events such as a *Minecraft Club* and other gaming activities. Computer skills - *Tech Help @EPL* - and information literacy are provided by library staff at one-on-one drop in sessions or small group classes. Specialist information sessions, English conversation classes, health and wellness workshops are presented in partnership with community agencies. Book clubs, author talks and movie screenings promote reading for pleasure.

### **3.3 Adult Literacy and Libraries – A United States Perspective**

The adult literacy investigation trail also led me to visit libraries in New York City, San Francisco and Oakland, California. There are many examples of adult literacy programs being provided by libraries in the United State of America. A variety of models operate in different jurisdictions, however a common feature of programming is the provision of small group or one-on-one volunteer tutoring for reading and writing complimented by library literacy staff providing outreach and support services.

Each year The *Library of Congress Centre for the Book Literacy Awards Best Practices* features finalists that have demonstrated exemplary strategic programs 'addressing illiteracy, aliteracy or both' in the United States and internationally. Adult literacy and reading programs from organisations I visited have been selected as best practice examples, including the *Queens Library Literacy Zones* (2013) and the *California Library Literacy Services* (2014).

### **3.4 Case Study: Public Libraries in New York – Queens and The Bronx (NYPL)**

New York is made up of five Boroughs served by three independent library systems: NYPL - New York Public Library (88 neighbourhood libraries in Manhattan and Staten Island); Queens Libraries (62 libraries) and Brooklyn (58 libraries). In contrast to the United Kingdom, each library system provides adult literacy programs for beginning readers and writers and English classes for speakers of other languages (ESOL).

New York has the highest population of any city in America that is made up people from all corners of the globe. Such an ethnically diverse population has seen the City of New York making a significant investment in supporting the literacy needs of its community. In addition there are many English speaking people with limited literacy who require learning programs to improve their ability to be active participants in their community and enhance their personal well-being. Literacy programs are funded by the Mayor's Office, the Departments of Youth and Community Development and Education and supplemented by State and Federal grants. The NYC library systems apply for this funding to provide community based literacy programs suited to individuals and families in their areas.

Coordinated by the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), the *New York City Adult Literacy Initiative* (NYCALI) is a system of literacy-providing agencies, including community-based organizations, which offer programs in adult basic education, ESOL and basic education in the Native Language in New York City. Learning and support services are provided to anyone over the age of 16 who is not enrolled or required to be enrolled in school and who is unable to speak, read and/or write the English language well enough to participate in education or training programs conducted in English. Funding is provided to community based organisations to deliver literacy programs and the DYCD provides a portal for locating reading and writing courses. NYPL and Queens Library are part of NYCALI.

Another city-wide initiative from the NY Mayor's Office of Adult Education is *We are New York Community Leadership Project*<sup>16</sup> an interactive online English language learning program. Using stories from everyday situations (e.g. parenting, hospital visits and school), the program is based on a TV series designed to help people practice their English. Written by The City University of New York learners can hear the stories spoken at a slower pace and with subtitles. Companion study guides, videos, activities and teaching resources have been produced in the different languages spoken in NYC so students can read and listen in own language as well as English. *We are New York* is used by all literacy providers in the City and elsewhere.



#### *Why Libraries?*

I was interested to find out why libraries were taking a leading role in literacy provision in the City and posed this question to the literacy directors at Queens Library and The Bronx (NYPL). Both directors answered with more or less the same reasons. Libraries in New York are acknowledged as safe and trusted places in the community. People are already regular library users coming in to read newspapers or books in their own language. Other referral services – legal and social – are available in the buildings which means people are used to going to the library for assistance and are familiar with staff who can promote English classes to patrons. In some cases there are no other options available for people to improve their English or to learn to



*Queens Library Van*

<sup>16</sup> *We Are New York* website [www.nyc.gov/html/weareny/html/home/home.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/weareny/html/home/home.shtml)



read and write. New York’s “Life changing library services” provide opportunities, spaces and technology for lifelong learning for school students, job seekers, immigrants and families.

While every New York library supports literacy with a range of services, programs resources and collections to meet the English and other language needs of their community – from early childhood through to the senior years, specialised adult literacy centres have been established in locations of highest need. The siting of an adult literacy centre is seen as critical, with 99% of courses based in libraries within easy walking distance or by public transport.

### *Queens Adult Learning Centres*

I visited two Queens Library locations with *Adult Learning Centres*: Central Library in Jamaica and Ravenswood (Long Island City).

*Adult Learning Centres* (ALC) are the flagship literacy centres within Queens Libraries. 25% of Queens’ residents don’t speak English and so foundation skills (reading, writing, numeracy, speaking & listening) are the key focus. In order to support their diverse community, several targeted learning programs and services are available in seven locations. The literacy services and classes are targeted at:

1. English speaking adults who want to improve their reading, writing, etc. with Veterans given specific support (mandated by Federal legislation)
2. Non-English speaking residents – need to learn to speak, understand & write English, Classes for: Beginners | Intermediate | Advanced)

In 2014 over 5,000 people took a course at a Queens Library This figure represents unique places - that is it doesn’t count students enrolled in several classes.



*Adult Learning Centres* are designed for adults to be able to access specialised tutoring in small groups and centre facilities which include computers, furniture and resources that can be used for self-paced study. The Centre Manager coordinates a team of full and part time (qualified) teaching staff. Tutors are always on hand to help students with volunteers assisting with one-on-one and group tutoring. Courses include informal and accredited programs that develop a love of learning and assist as a pathway to further education. Demand for places in courses is greater than can be met and a lottery system is used to select successful applicants.



My observation was that many of the adult basic education (ABE) programs provided through Queens Libraries would be equivalent to Certificate of General Adult Education (I – IV) qualifications provided by Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) and TAFEs in Western Australia. Pre-High School Equivalency (HSE) classes assist adults gain the qualifications they may have missed by leaving school early or for other reasons. In WA these are provided by RTOs and senior colleges.

*Queens Library Adult Learning Centres*



**Ravenswood Adult Literacy Centre - Queens**

*New Americans Program* collaborates with ethnic community groups to assess local needs, link residents with existing neighbourhood and system-wide library services, and create new services. This targeted approach integrates all Queens' literacy programs through community outreach, information sessions and a community arts program. Lectures and workshops are provided in the main community languages (Spanish, Russian, Arabic, and Chinese). A *Coping Skills Program* is designed to help new residents to adjust to living in their new country and includes free *Citizenship Classes*. Queens Libraries also provide a *Young Adults Literacy Program* designed specifically for under 18s to assist them with high school qualifications, or skills for employment.

Booklists and community information is published in the most widely used community languages.

The *Family Learning Centre* (FLC) at Ravenswood Library targets parent/carers wanting to improve their literacy skills by providing child care (Child Watch) while the adults learn. Located near public housing Ravenswood was identified as an area of high need. FLC programming is initially for ESOL parents/carers (speaking & listening) as a pathway to other adult learning courses. Structured classes are teacher led and backed up with one-to-one sessions for learners. Parenting workshops cover topics such as accessing school, information on attending parent/teacher meetings and supporting children's learning at home. A full time case management staff member assists family literacy participants with accessing other resources and referral to community support services. Structured ESOL activities are provided for children in Child Watch). Semi-structured *Homework Help* sessions are designed for adults and children to work together – the only programs that offer this level of family learning.

One of the most interesting programs from Queens Libraries is the establishment of *Universal Pre-Kindergarten* classes (UPK) a new initiative being implemented by City of New York Schools for pre-school children aged four<sup>17</sup> to provide free, formal, early learning programs to prepare children for school. Childcare is expensive in New York and early learning programs are generally out of reach for low-income families. Queens Libraries successfully applied for status as a Community Based Organisation so it could apply for funding from this program and refurbished two libraries to create early learning 'classrooms' with outdoor spaces. Specialist teaching staff and assistants have been employed to run the children's learning activities.

I was curious to find out why the Queens Library was setting up an early learning centre. Mr Dio Gica, Director of Learning & Literacy, explained that Queens Libraries are known as a long term provider of informal learning and the decision to set up *Universal Pre-Kindergarten* classes was a logical extension to their community services. The selected libraries are located in low income areas where parents are high library uses which make it easy to capitalise on parents already attending *Toddler Time* sessions and for parents to be able to link into other adult learning offered by Queens Libraries. This makes them an ideal provider of such a service.

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<sup>17</sup> Barack, L. (2014). *Queens Library to offer PreK classes in Fall 2015*. School Library Journal, August, 11 2014 [www.slj.com/2014/08/standards/when-the-library-becomes-a-school-queens-library-to-open-pre-k-class-in-fall/#](http://www.slj.com/2014/08/standards/when-the-library-becomes-a-school-queens-library-to-open-pre-k-class-in-fall/#)

*Bronx Centre for Reading & Writing – New York Public Library*

New York Public Library (NYPL) has a tradition of providing education to the community to build community capacity and opportunity for all New Yorkers. English instruction and literacy programs were originally contracted out but the library took over the services in 2012, providing almost 8,000 ‘seats’ in 2014 (some people take more than one class – so estimated about 4,000 – 5,000 individuals)

The Bronx Library Centre was opened in its current location in 2006 and is open 7 days a week. Services are spread over six floors providing local residents with access to a vast range of resources in an environmentally sustainable designed building, including a 150 seat auditorium. The building has ‘exclusive spaces’ for teens only and an entire floor for children and families. An extensive calendar of events are provided and are designed to ‘...engage, stimulate and educate...’ – e.g. music, gaming, study, films screening and homework help. Specialised services located on the fifth floor are careers counselling and a social worker providing the “Single Stop” service twice a week. The collections reflect the local community with a large collection of Spanish language books for all ages.



*The Bronx Public Library*

The *Bronx Centre for Reading and Writing* is one of seven NYPL adult learning centres providing informal literacy classes for adults over the age of 16. A further thirty two libraries provide English conversation classes (Bronx 16). Centre facilities are similar to those in Queens with computers and resources for students and tutors available at all times. Classes (20 – 25 students) are offered on weekdays, evenings and Saturday mornings and are teacher led with small group tutoring (3 – 6 students) provided by volunteers. NYPL literacy centres don’t offer any accredited courses or high-school qualifications.

Introductory sessions are held in the auditorium with intake advisors leading the presentations outlining expectations and ‘What it takes to learn’. Performance and role plays are used to demonstrate what happens at interviews for registrations. Classes are in high demand with about 1500 students enrolling in each ten week cycle and there is an expectation that students coming to the centres are committed and ready to study. Intake advisors follow up with if students are absent to identify if there are other factors preventing attendance and places are re-allocated if they miss more than one class per month. If necessary students can be referred to the social support services available elsewhere in the library. Every student gets a library card and an introduction to the library to give them access to printing and online resources.



*NYPL Promotional Poster*





**Bronx Centre for Reading and Writing**

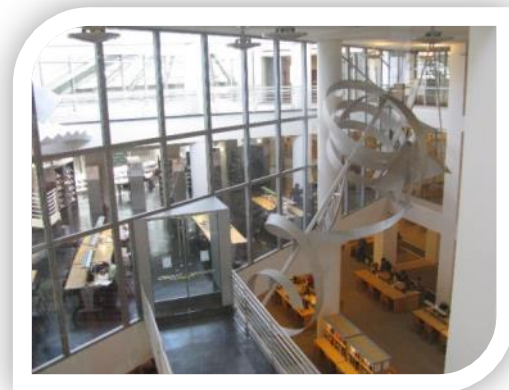
As is commonly the case when teaching adult basic education and foundation skills, courses are delivered around everyday topics, including computer, health and financial literacy. *Read for Life* teaches health literacy to adults to build confidence when talking to doctors & health professionals.<sup>18</sup> The NYPL offers more than 80 different classes through its *Tech Connect* digital literacy program (ranging from e-mail basics to online banking and finding a job) with some offered in Spanish, Chinese, and other languages. In addition, special training labs have been set up at six libraries. Various city-wide reading programs and campaigns run by the NYPL are integrated into literacy classes so students can participate.

The models used by New York libraries to raise literacy levels are obviously well supported by the community, however there are still many challenges for the directors of literacy centres. Demand for classes exceeds supply and regular applications for funding are a requirement to ensure the libraries can maintain services. Space required for classrooms, computers, resources and staff work areas meant over-crowding for students and expenditure on library refurbishment to expand the number of centres. The innovative approach to providing early learning classes at Queens Libraries shows that sometimes it is important to think outside of traditional early literacy approaches to provide community services.

### **3.5 Case Study: California Library Literacy Services - San Francisco and Oakland**

*California Library Literacy Services* (CLLS) is a state-wide program to ‘...enable Californian’s of all ages to achieve their literacy goals and use library services effectively’. Provided in 500 locations in 97 library systems, programs include: an *Adult Literacy Service*; *English Language and Literacy Intensive*; and *Mobile Library Literacy Services*. The California State Library administers funding from the State of California to each library system which is in turn used to leverage local funding to sustain the programs – about 5.00USD from local networks for every 1.00USD from the State<sup>19</sup>. Local coalitions and networks are the strength of CLLS with some library managers fundraising from local partners (matching funding from the State) to support staffing or working with local community based organisation to deliver literacy programs.

I visited the San Francisco Public Library (SFPL) and Oakland Public Library to find out more about how they provide adult literacy programs within the



**San Francisco Public Library**

<sup>18</sup> Read for Life [www.nypl.org/blog/2012/03/21/resources-teaching-health-literacy-adults](http://www.nypl.org/blog/2012/03/21/resources-teaching-health-literacy-adults)

<sup>19</sup> California State Library (2014). *Annual report to the Legislature on California Library Literacy Services*. Sacramento, California. [libraryliteracy.org/docs/ReportToLeg-2014.pdf](http://libraryliteracy.org/docs/ReportToLeg-2014.pdf)



CLLS. While they operate as separate library systems with programs to suit the needs of their immediate communities, opportunities are available for staff to network and share information and resources.

#### *San Francisco Public Library – Project Read*

Luis Herrera, City Librarian, described San Francisco as a “tale of two cities” with the area changing as staff from major Silicon Valley companies move into the city, higher rents forcing low income people into outlying areas and an increase in the number of homeless people in the city. Library services are being redefined along with the need for opportunities for informal learning and literacy. The SFPL commitment to literacy and learning is highlighted with the recent opening of *The Bridge at Main* a state of the art literacy and learning centre located on the fifth floor of the Main Library building. ‘The Bridge’ includes a technology lab and special collections to support the services delivered.



***Bridge at The Main Literacy Centre San Francisco Public Library - under construction***

*Project Read* is the adult literacy program of San Francisco Public Library system (Main Library and 27 neighbourhood libraries) and has been in operation for 30 years. *Project Read* provides free small group workshops and on-on-one tutoring for basic literacy skills for English speaking adults. SFPL works in partnership with not-for-profit groups and other city agencies to recruit learners and tutors. Specialist literacy programs such as financial literacy and civic/voting clinics are provided in collaboration with other agencies. An Outreach Coordinator, who has been through the program, has the role of ‘literacy champion’ which includes going into the community and raise awareness of literacy programs, identifying and creatively overcoming barriers for participation generally using his own experiences to connect and engage with people who need help the most. Learners are supported to develop their own literacy goals to direct their learning depending on need.

Built into SFPL’s programming for emerging readers are special monthly events. *Wednesday Night Readers Book Club* is for learners and tutors focussing on reading for pleasure using audio and print copies of a book to prepare for discussion. *Family Literacy* is also a special part of *Project Read* aiming to build a home learning environment and build confidence to read to children to help them get ready for school. Workshops are for learners with children under five years of age where they can learn together, enjoy some food, read and share children’s books and participate in literacy based activities with their children.

#### *Oakland Public Library – Second Start*

Oakland County is on the other side of San Francisco Bay with a Main Library and 16 neighbourhood libraries. The Oakland Library has been providing library based adult literacy programs since 1984 receives funding from the CLLS but is a separate program from SFPL. *Second Start* program is for adults who need support to reach their individual learning goals providing free one-on-one tutoring, participate in online learning in the computer lab and join small group sessions which concentrate on reading, maths, spelling and book discussion groups. Outreach is an essential part of the work of the Oakland *Second Start* team to connect with agencies and raise awareness of the support available for adults to improve their basic skills.

Programs for learners participating in *Second Start* are similar to those available at SFPL. Specific workshops are held to support people with low literacy to learn about their voting rights and understand the various pieces of State legislation they are required to vote on. Not-for-profit organisations provide speakers – not aligned to candidates or a political party – to educate learners in plain and simple English. *Lawyers in the Library*, social workers and tax help drop-in sessions are also available to learners with priority given to seniors. Monthly Family Learning support parents with young children and encourage families to participate in the mainstream family programs held throughout the County. The Oakland Library has earned a reputation as a trusted community place where people know they can go for information and help.



*Oakland Public Library*

Adult literacy programs in New York, San Francisco and Oakland all rely on volunteers to provide one-on-one tutoring for their students. This style of learning when combined with structured informal learning appears to be a ‘tried and tested’ approach. Training for volunteers is provided by the libraries, generally 15 – 30 hours, with ongoing on-the-job support from literacy centre managers and teachers. Tutors are asked to make a minimum of a six month commitment before they commence training and meet their student one or twice a week for one to two hours per session. Teaching and learning materials are provided by the literacy centre.

#### **4. Observations and Future Opportunities**

To tackle the challenge of intergenerational low literacy in Western Australia we need to take a new approach that is sustainable over a long period of time. It needs leadership, commitment and long term investment from all sectors at all levels -public, private and volunteer. The State Library has commenced a process to develop a Literacy Framework for Western Australia applying the collective impact methodology to identify goals, principles and priorities for action. The collaborative models described in this report will inform the work in this process.

With this comprehensive report I have endeavoured to share the information I gathered during the course of the study tour. As mentioned at the outset I hoped to gain a deeper understanding of literacy challenges and issues; identify factors for that assist the development of a successful initiative; and strategies for state-wide implementation.

The case studies outlined in my report have been developed on similar models or frameworks with differences in their implementation reflecting the nature of community-led initiatives. Throughout each interview and discussion common issues and factors for success emerged. These are summarised below.

##### *Challenges and issues:*

- Literacy is an intergenerational issue.
- Literacy is everyone’s business.
- Breaking the inter-generational cycle of low literacy takes time, requires legislative recognition, long term commitment and funding to implement campaigns and programs to bring about systemic community change.

- Social and cultural change is needed to attack prejudices, change attitudes, behaviours and remove barriers that effect an individual's motivation and participation to improve their literacy.
- It's not enough to set goals and make a commitment to action. There is a need to make them happen – not just hope they will happen.
- Raising awareness of the role libraries can take to support literacy and reading in a changing environment.
- Encouraging library staff to engage with their local community and establish partnerships to reach people who aren't using their library and extend the reach of programs.
- Linking up services to extend and facilitate the reach into communities where there is low participation in literacy activities.
- Accessing ongoing funding and working with annual grant application processes and changes in government priorities.
- High demand for literacy programs exceeds the ability of many organisations to provide enough classes and opportunities for their community, particularly in the United States.

### ***Common factors to effective collaborative literacy programs for collective impact***

#### *Policy and funding*

- Development of literacy policies, strategies and/or frameworks which are included in planning to ensure a wider community impact.
- Alignment of initiatives to local, state and national policies.
- Gaining Government acknowledgment that changing and improving literacy is a long-term commitment.
- Innovative use of Government funding to develop family literacy and learning programs.
- Recognition of the importance and value of informal learning and one-on-one volunteer tutoring in literacy learning.
- Creation of coalitions/networks across sectors of organisations, professional and community services to develop a common agenda, advocate and establish priorities and a strategic framework that supports individuals and communities to improve literacy.
- Taking a holistic approach to supporting individuals with support services working together will bring about greater benefits to all.
- Taking a whole of Council approach to recognising that literacy is relevant for everyone, everywhere across the local authority.

#### *Campaigns and Programs*

- Awareness campaigns should be targeted at the whole community - individuals, families, schools, business, government services, community agencies.
- Campaigns need to be backed-up with literacy programs and activities that can be easily accessed when an individual or community is motivated to improve their literacy skills.
- Community-led programs and initiatives, where adult learners are consulted and included, will have greater impact and success in achieving outcomes.
- Family learning initiatives are an essential component supporting adult literacy and are proven to be particularly effective to reach adults who don't use other community services.
- Blending one-on-one and small group adult literacy is the most common informal learning approach for literacy learning.
- Develop programs that are flexible and adaptable to a wide range of community needs.
- Involve the wider community, individuals and families who need literacy support in the planning of appropriate programs.

- Family learning initiatives are an essential component supporting adult literacy and can be particularly effective to reach adults who don't use other community services.
- Outreach is critical to program delivery and is achieved by moving away from a 'buildings-based' to community-based approach.

#### *Attracting and maintaining partnerships*

- Communication, communication, communication.
- 'Sell the need' – raise awareness and continually demonstrate how low literacy impacts on everyone, every day.
- Undertake evaluation and comprehensive research on the impact of programs to use as an effective tool to use to build reputations and provide leverage for ongoing funding.
- Ensure partners know and feel that the role they have in supporting literacy is essential and valued.
- Use established regional networks and create literacy outreach coordinator positions (Driver) to be a central contact point and to provide a link between partner organisations (Co-Drivers) to facilitate program delivery and provide ongoing support.
- Develop mechanisms for dealing with staffing changes during the implementation of a long-term initiative.
- Keep program evaluation and reporting as simple as possible.

#### *Strategies for state-wide implementation*

- Centralised administration for development and delivery of:
  - Program resources – print & online
  - Merchandising and marketing.
  - Collation of reporting & evidence for evaluation
  - Training for staff and volunteers
- Establish a network of metropolitan and regional centres with outreach coordinators to build and strengthen partnerships, support planned actions and manage finances
- Develop programs that are flexible and adaptable in a wide-range of contexts
- Develop community led initiatives – particularly for working with target groups with low literacy
- Build community capacity for libraries, volunteers and partners to learn new skills and be active community participants.
- Comprehensive research reports on impact of programs

#### *Training, Professional Development and Volunteers*

- Develop on-going continual professional development and training programs for those working in the multiple agencies to share key messages and resources.
- A centralised approach to coordination, design and delivery of training ensures quality control for program delivery.
- Establish networks of good practice for practitioners and volunteers.
- Provide volunteer tutors with regular opportunities for information sharing and professional learning.



### ***Further opportunities***

Examples of the adult literacy programs outlined in this report are applicable to Western Australia and could be implemented in WA libraries as they use a similar one-on-one volunteer tutor model for literacy learning as that provided by Read Write Now in WA. The main difference between the overseas models and Read Write Now is how libraries are used as places for literacy tutors and students to meet. In the overseas models there is usually a dedicated space with resources and collections for literacy tutors and students to undertake their work but also for small group class instruction and workshops. While this model might not suit everyone – there is still a huge stigma around someone admitting they struggle with literacy – it could be worth investigating the feasibility of a pilot with local WA libraries, working in partnership with Read Write Now volunteer tutors and community agencies to recruit learners.

Other activities for further investigation include:

- Collaborating across sectors with not-for-profit organisations to access government funding allocated to foundation employment skills for use in informal family learning initiatives.
- Developing a version of the Society of Chief Librarians *Universal Offers* for Western Australian public libraries.
- A *Literacy Champions* program in collaboration with libraries (LGAs) – community based volunteers ready to support learners at a time in their lives (trigger) when they want to improve their literacy abilities
- Establish *Learners Clubs* in libraries to provide opportunities for literacy students to meet and participate in reading and writing workshops.
- Establish communities of practice, online and face-to-face, for library staff and volunteer literacy tutors to share information and for professional learning.
- Identify a reading and literacy program for less confident adult readers, modelled on the *Six Book Challenge* that can be made available state-wide.

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