

Learning in Libraries



November 2009

No 6

Welcome to this issue of **Learning in Libraries**, keeping you informed about how Hertfordshire's libraries and archives are supporting **The Learning Revolution**.



In this issue: Adult Learners' Week 2009, our **Learners Champion** success at The Big Skill Awards, an update on the Six Book Challenge and **Quick Reads** reading groups, feedback on the **Enjoy to achieve** project with Traveller children and the reopening of the new Oxhey Library.

Adult Learners' Week 2009 in Hertfordshire Libraries

Kathy Warden, Lifelong Learning Development Librarian, writes ...

Adult Learners Week (ALW) is a national event which aims to encourage adults who might not have thought learning was for them, to join in, whether just for fun or to improve their skills, including job-related skills.

Libraries had a busy week with a packed timetable: **IT taster sessions** were offered in many libraries including sessions on **Family History**, and special sessions for **Silver Surfers**. We re-launched our **Job Searching on the Internet** module. We also ran **Brush up your skills** sessions aimed to help those learners who still struggle on occasion, by building their confidence and giving them an environment in which they can practise their skills knowing that support is available.

Other events which took place around the county included:

Making Memories – Hertfordshire Archives, County Hall and Welwyn Garden City Library

These events are part of the Community Archives project which is being run by HALS in libraries across the county to encourage local people to share their memories of life in the county on a new community archive website, so that stories and recollections from Hertfordshire residents can be captured and preserved. At the events staff introduce the **Herts Memories** project to visitors and help them record their memories and scan photographs on to the website. There is a display of previously collected memories to help volunteers understand the scope of the project. Refreshments are provided. As part of the process participants learn new IT skills such as inputting and scanning, and increase their knowledge of Local and Family History in Hertfordshire.

Family History Help Desk, Ware Library

This event was run in partnership with Hertfordshire Family History Society who were on hand throughout the day for people to drop in and put their family history questions to the experts. They had access to the Internet and other resources, and were able to offer in-depth support to the customers, who appreciated the help and time given to them. Queries ranged from people

wanting to know how to start researching their family tree, to more experienced researchers who were stuck on locating a particular ancestor, or how to research Irish ancestors, or how to use ancestry.com.

Savings and pensions: how they work, Hemel Hempstead Library

These talks by local resident Wyn Derbyshire, author of "Whatever makes you happy" and "Money and work: an essential guide", on how to handle your money were very well-received: *"Pensions information was very useful – didn't know much about it before."*

Trace the History of your house, Letchworth Library

This talk by Sue Flood, County Archivist, on how to trace the history of your house using resources such as title deeds, maps and census information available in HALS and local libraries, attracted a lot of interest.

Seeing spells achieving, talks by Andrew Bendefy at Watford Library

Andrew Bendefy presented strategies and techniques to support children with reading difficulties. The approach can help with dyslexia, ADD, ADHD, Autism, Aspergers Syndrome, Downs, Tourettes and APD. The target audience is parents, carers, teachers and those in education, managers and trainers, and people with specific learning difficulties such as those listed above. Many found it inspiring *"lots of strategies – light at the end of the tunnel."*

"Novel ideas" a talk by local author, Leslie Tate at Rickmansworth Library

Leslie Tate gave a talk on his experience of writing a novel and getting it published, something he has just achieved. There was a good rapport with the audience and lots of questions, which made for a lively evening.

How to start a book group, Rickmansworth Library

Emma Scott gave a talk on how to start a book group, the different types and approaches and how the library service can support book groups. Get in touch if you are planning to start a group and would like some tips for success.

Frederick Forsyth at the RaW Book Group in Watford

The RaW Book Group aims to attract members from people who need encouragement to read, to develop reading skills or to regain the reading habit. Twice a year they hold a special event to try and attract a wider audience and new members for the group. Frederick Forsyth spoke about his life and work – his love of travel and flying led him from the RAF to a job as a foreign correspondent for Reuters, BBC and as a freelancer. He then went on to write "The Day of the Jackal" which launched him into the big time. The talk was followed by a book signing for the public and the book group discussion for the 12 members of the RaW Book Group. The event was organised in partnership with West Herts College, whose catering students provided refreshments, with Watford Learning Partnership and with Waterstones who sold books at the event.

Feedback from the large (82) audience was fantastic – *"use of personal experience – how to get it, and the emphasis on research and planning, all delivered with a wonderful dry humour"*.

Knitting surgery, Borehamwood Library

This event offered an opportunity to meet fellow knitters and get advice from an expert tutor to help untangle problems, learn a new stitch or crack the knitting codes in a pattern. *"Really enjoyed it as a new mum, to get out and meet new people... I wanted to learn to knit to make clothes for my little one."*



Baby Rhyme Times at Stevenage and Watford libraries

Special Baby rhyme times were organised at the above libraries aimed at helping parents and carers learn new rhymes to enjoy with their children. This has a beneficial effect on developing language skills and reading for the children and parenting skills for the adults. The sessions at Stevenage and Watford were at the weekend to enable fathers to attend with their families. This was greatly welcomed: *“Really enjoyed having something to do on a Sunday”, “appreciated having an event Dads could attend”*.

Liz Green – Learner’s Champion

Andrew Bignell, Head of Information Services and Lifelong Learning writes...

Congratulations to Liz Green, Learning Support Officer for Watford and Three Rivers, who was named Learner’s Champion 2009 at the Hertfordshire Big Skill award ceremony in Stevenage in June.

Run by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in partnership with BBC Three Counties Radio, the Big Skill Awards recognise and reward people who have improved their lives or the lives of others through learning.

Liz was awarded the prize in recognition of her exceptional work with learners who have specific requirements due to disability, basic skills needs or poor experiences of education. Her empathy with individual learners and her flexibility in adapting her taster sessions to meet particular needs have contributed greatly to the learners’ confidence and self-esteem and helped them to achieve beyond their expectations. The award is not only a personal achievement for Liz, but a welcome recognition of the contribution that libraries can make to informal learning.



Supporting our learners

We ask that all our staff support learners however they present in the library and the following example shows how we can help:

Helen* has been visiting the library since July 2008. She meets her tutor there three times a week and they use the teenage section for study and also use the public PCs to work. Helen lacked confidence and was very shy. She had problems with leaving her home (agoraphobia). When she first started using the library her tutor acted as an intermediary and spoke to the staff if she needed any help. However, over the past few months she has become more confident and now comes to the enquiry desk herself if she needs help. She carried out a survey on television viewing with the library staff earlier in the year and has started voluntary work at the local hospice. She also signed up for the Six Book Challenge. Her tutor commented that this increase in confidence has come from the great welcome she has received from the staff at the library. (*Name has been changed to protect learner.)

If other tutors are interested in using their local library in this way, please speak to the local Library Manager, so that we will be able to support your work.

The 2009 Six Book Challenge in Hertfordshire libraries

Fiona McDonald, Lifelong Learning Development Librarian, writes...

The Six Book Challenge invited adult literacy learners to read six books and to record their achievements in a reading diary. Library staff helped participants choose books and offered encouragement and incentives.

The Challenge was delivered by libraries working in partnership with organisations who work with emergent readers.

This was the second time the Challenge had been run in Hertfordshire and it appealed to the library service for several reasons:

- ◆ It encourages literacy learners to read for pleasure
- ◆ It introduces learners to libraries and all they have to offer
- ◆ It inspires learners to talk about their reading experiences
- ◆ It enables libraries to collect evidence from learners in the form of book reviews and a Challenge evaluation
- ◆ It strengthens partnerships with local learning providers

Key staff were trained and cascaded the training out to districts. To obtain feedback from learners we asked for permission to photocopy their book reviews and evaluations. We offered a reward for each book read. The Challenge was promoted to local learning providers and publicity was distributed county-wide.

A total of 41 people signed up for the Challenge in libraries across Hertfordshire (compared to 25 in 2008); 14 men and 27 women. Most were between the ages of 25 and 55. This age and gender split is in line with national trends. A total of 37 of the 41 participants were from one or more minority target group (90%).

14 people completed the Challenge and were entered into the prize draw. Most reviews were for titles suitable for emergent readers and almost all the reviews were very positive about the books:

"I enjoyed this book, and you can really be taken into the book."

"A mystery story book that I finished reading through without wanting to put it down as wanted to read what next, and what happened in the end."

Any tutors or learning providers wishing to find out more about the Challenge in Hertfordshire and how their learners can enter in 2010: please contact your local Lifelong Learning Librarian or Lifelong Learning Development Librarian, Fiona McDonald. More information at <http://www.sixbookchallenge.org.uk/>

Quick Reads Reading Groups

Kathy Warden, Lifelong Learning Development Librarian writes...

As a result of the Transformation Funding awarded to the Local Learning Partnerships we have joined forces with some of the local partnerships to set up **Quick Reads** Reading Groups for emergent and lapsed readers. If anyone is interested in setting up such a group, or joining one, contact your local Lifelong Learning Librarian, or Fiona or myself for more details.

The new **Quick Reads** to be published for World Book Day, 4 March 2010, have been ordered for all our libraries – they include titles by such well known authors as Andy McNab, Cathy Kelly and Alison Weir. Alvin Hall, TV finance guru, has written ‘Money Magic’ which might help the people whose stories are told in another ‘Quick Read’ “We won the lottery”. Log on to www.quickreads.org.uk for more details. Your learners will be able to borrow them from their local library in March, along with all the other **Quick Reads**.

Enjoy to Achieve

Llinos Thomas, County Local Studies Librarian writes...

On 22 September and 15 October Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies, in partnership with the Achievement of Refugee and Traveller Team and HAFLS, held an event aimed at Traveller children. Five children who have all been nominated as Learning Champions and part of the **Enjoy to Achieve Project** were invited to share their memories of life as a Traveller in Hertfordshire on a new heritage lottery funded website, Herts Memories www.hertsmemories.org.uk. The students contributed memories and their own photographs to the site which are now available online.



Charlie P wrote an article entitled “A Showman’s Life.” *‘These old photographs are old memories of my family. Most of the people in these photos are still alive but not all. It was the 1940s, my Mum’s side of the family are showmen in the showman’s guild; we are related to the family who started the guild.*

I was born into a showman’s family. It is really different to live our way instead of living in a house. I live with my family in a mobile home in Bricket Wood. My Nan travelled a lot with the fair when she was a child. My family does not “travel” around so much, we stay in Hertfordshire mostly but we work on the fetes.’

The visit also gave the students an opportunity to see the historic resources that are held in the archive. They particularly enjoyed the tour and seeing and touching the old documents. The fact that their photographs were being used to create a virtual archive collection and were a precious historical resource gave them a sense of real pride in their heritage.

Library ICT Taster Sessions support digital inclusion

Andrew Bignell, Head of Information Services and Lifelong Learning writes...

The final figures for the academic year 2008/09 show that Libraries and HALS delivered **2528** computer taster sessions during the year to **1564** individual learners. This represents a 9.7% increase on last year, and exceeds the target of 1350 learners.

- ◆ 44% learners were male
- ◆ 69% learners were aged 60 or over
- ◆ 9.3% learners had a disability or learning difficulty
- ◆ 10.3% learners were from ethnic groups other than ‘white British’

Taster sessions were delivered in 40 libraries during the course of the year, covering *Getting Started with computers, Internet searching, E-Mail, Word Processing, Family History on the Internet, and Job Searching.*

New Oxhey Library opens

Beverley Small, Project Implementation Manager, writes...

The new Oxhey Library opened its doors to the public on Saturday 5 September 2009. The building has been extended, refurbished and improved in a high profile project, financed by the Big Lottery Fund, to provide a 'state of the art' community library and an upgraded venue for services to the local community. Over 800 people visited the new library on the day it opened.



The Library was officially opened on 26 October by County Councillor Keith Emsall, Executive Member for Community Safety and Culture, with an appearance by comic poet, John Hegley, who also performed with local double bass player, Keith Moore, at a very successful event for the public that evening.

Children's Fun Day



A fun day was had by all on Saturday 26 September to launch new children's activities at the Library. Throughout the day there were visits from Bookstart Bear and a Bookstart Bear Hunt, Baby Rhyme Time, Stories and Rhymes and Children's Centre activities for little ones.

There were presentations of certificates and medals for all those children who completed the Quest Seekers Summer Reading Challenge this year with help from children's author, Sue Hampton.

Many children went away with a balloon model and still more found out about their new Homework Club from the Youth Connexions advisers who were on hand to answer questions.

There was also an opportunity for children to leave memories of Oxhey for the time capsule.

Other activities now taking place at Oxhey

- ◆ West Herts College and ASCEND are running their computer courses
- ◆ Youth Connexions offer weekly advice sessions for young people
- ◆ The Volunteer Centre advisor does a weekly drop-in session
- ◆ ASCEND Job Club on Fridays offers advice on job searching and CVs
- ◆ ASCEND outreach worker drops in weekly on Thursday mornings
- ◆ Homework Club with Youth Connexions for Years 7+ is now running on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays
- ◆ Homework Link with ESCOs for Years 6 and 7 is now running on Wednesdays
- ◆ Book groups for all ages



Learning in Libraries is edited by Lifelong Learning Development Librarians Fiona McDonald and Kathy Warden. The next issue will appear in the spring.

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