## Libraries Connected Innovators Network

## National Gathering 2025

Tuesday 18 March, 10:00 – 16:00, The Studio, Birmingham

### Provisional Programme

**10:00 Arrival, Refreshments, Networking**

**10.30 Welcome, Ed Jewell, President of Libraries Connected**

**10.45 Responsible innovation with AI and machine learning in libraries:**

**examples from the British Library - Dr. Mia Ridge, Digital Curator at The British Library**

* 1. **Practical Shared Learning Session 1**

Library Speed Talks:

* Meet. Eat. Art. & Our Community – Terri Lewis, Cambridgeshire
* From NEET to Next Gen: Empowering Young Creators - Debbie Harris, Gloucestershire
* Ollerton: Then and Now – Helen Ackroyd, Inspire Culture (Notts)
* Tuned In - Anthony Hopkins, London Borough of Merton
* Transforming Sutton Council’s Libraries Offer - Kelly Sainibadwal, London Borough of Sutton

Group discussions

**12.45 Lunch**

**13.45 Practical Shared Learning Session 2**

Library Speed Talks:

* The Poetry Bus - Sajjad Ali, London Borough of Camden
* Design – Create – Repeat: Makerspace Development in Public Libraries - Simon Alexander, Vale of Glamorgan
* Retro Games Club – Nichola Fosbueary, Cambridgeshire
* Dragon Café in the City – Ovssanna Kalenderian, City of London
* Newcastle's Pop-Up Library - Dan Kinnair, Newcastle

Group discussions

**15.15 Books Unbanned - Emma Karin Eriksson, Manager of Youth Civic**

**Engagement and Expression, Brooklyn Public Library**

**15.45 Close, Helen Drakard, Membership Engagement Manager, Libraries**

**Connected**

## Guest Speakers

**Dr Mia Ridge** is the [British Library’s Digital Curator for Western Heritage Collections](https://www.bl.uk/people/experts/mia-ridge). Part of the [Digital Research team](https://www.bl.uk/digital), she provides advice and training on computational research, AI / machine learning and crowdsourcing. A Co-Investigator on [Living with Machines](https://livingwithmachines.ac.uk/) (2018-23), she co-curated the [Living with Machines exhibition](https://livingwithmachines.ac.uk/living-with-machines-exhibition/) with Leeds Museums and Galleries (2022-23).

**Emma Karin Eriksson**, is an activist-academic whose personal and professional life is driven by a commitment to social justice. She believes in people over property and profit and that libraries are a place of liberation. She is currently the Manager of Youth Civic Engagement and Expression. Visit her webpage to learn more [www.bit.ly/emmakarin](http://www.bit.ly/emmakarin)

Books Unbanned: Brooklyn Public Library founded Books Unbanned in 2022 to provide teens nationwide with unrestricted access to our entire digital collection, support their right to read what they like, and build a network of advocates nationwide to defend and expand the freedom to read. [www.BooksUnbanned.com](http://www.BooksUnbanned.com)

**The Library of Possibilities & Wonders**

Tom Jackson from RamJam and Amy Perry from West Sussex Libraries will be joining us to demo the The Library of Possibilities & Wonders where you can meet Marty the Martlet in a virtual and augmented reality experience and treasure hunt.

When West Sussex Library Service turned 100 years old in 2025, they wanted to mark the occasion with something special, something that celebrated their past whilst looking to the future. The teamed up with RamJam, who build playful, immersive experiences that connect people with stories in new ways. The library staff wanted to excite visitors, boost engagement, and make tech feel accessible to all, so RamJam helped them reimagine the library experience by designing The Library of Possibilities & Wonders a mix of VR adventures, AR treasure hunts, and digital storytelling that transforms libraries into interactive playgrounds.

## Library Speed Talks

1. **Meet. Eat. Art. & Our Community – Terri Lewis, Cambridgeshire Libraries**

Participating in the Europe Challenge, 2024 allowed the Bar Hill library team to build community integration. We facilitated opportunities for cooking and skill sharing. After a communal meal, we then offered theatre and arts activities in the library. Our aspiration was to build friendships and connections. The impact of the project was much wider reaching than we hoped. I look forward to sharing its legacy with you.

1. **From NEET to Next Gen: Empowering Young Creators – Debbie Harris, Gloucestershire Libraries**

How can we empower young people who are not in education, employment, or training to thrive in the digital creative industries? This speed talk explores how Gloucestershire Libraries’ National Portfolio Organisation project is transforming futures through dynamic digital bootcamps. By collaborating with industry experts, we provide hands-on training, mentorship, and inspiration to help young creatives develop real-world skills and forge career pathways in design, media, animation, podcasting and beyond. Discover how this innovative program is breaking barriers, unlocking talent, and shaping the next generation of digital creators.

1. **Ollerton: Then and Now – Helen Ackroyd, Inspire: Culture, Learning and Libraries**

Heritage and arts coming together is an easy to run 5k project that reaches all ages of the community and adds back to our collections. Ollerton:  Then and Now has a project model that can be repeated by any service looking to seek small funding pots. A whistle stop run through of what we are doing and how to do it yourself.

1. **Tuned In – Merton Libraries**

Tuned In launched in 2019 and is a project which aims to combat some of the issues of loneliness in the London Borough of Merton. Tuned In works with acclaimed musician, performer and writer Jah Wobble (aka John Wardle), who facilitates musical jam sessions every Monday at Merton Arts Space, Wimbledon library. The sessions share and develop musical skills and build knowledge, as well as helping individuals build social connections and friendship groups. They create an environment for people from all walks of life to come together and enjoy mutual support. The project targets men, particularly those in the age group 50+, where loneliness is at its highest but is open and accessible to all.

1. **Transforming Sutton Council’s Libraries Offer – Kelly Sainibadwal, Sutton Libraries**

Sutton's Library Service introduced self-access technology and in Sutton this means that library buildings are open to the public with no staff on site. The first response, as you can imagine, prior to rollout were concerns regarding safety and whilst we've worked hard to address these, the opportunity for Sutton has been to increase access for communities to use our library spaces. You can hear more about how we engaged and developed our spaces for communities, using self access technology.

1. **The Poetry Bus – Sajjad Ali, Camden Libraries**

The Poetry Bus was set up in the London Borough of Camden as a way of connecting residents with literature and their local libraries. This talk will explore the background of the project, how the sessions worked, and what can be further developed for the future of the Poetry Bus.

1. **Design – Create – Repeat: Makerspace Development in Public Libraries - Simon Alexander, Vale of Glamorgan Libraries**

A look back at the past three years in Vale of Glamorgan Libraries where we've been developing two Makerspace sites and launching our new mobile service. These spaces have become hubs of creativity, innovation, and learning, offering community members access to cutting-edge technology and collaborative opportunities. We will highlight our challenges, successes, and the profound benefits our Makerspaces have brought to the library service and the communities we serve.

1. **Retro Games Club – Nichola Fosbueary, Cambridgeshire Libraries**

Retro Games Club was created to attract new users into our Library space, the club started as an idea that has grown, an idea that we gained funding to run and local Volunteers to facilitate. This short talk will tell you all about why you should and how you can set up this type of club, listing all the amazing benefits that come along with it. Taking the idea of sentimentality and using this to attract adults to engage in a forgotten interest.

1. **Dragon Café in the City - Ovssanna Kalenderian, City of London Libraries**

Dragon Café in the City, a collaboration between Mental Fight Club and Shoe Lane Library which is one of Barbican & Community Libraries. Is a fortnightly programme of events for those who wish to release the pressure, break the stress cycle, and build resilience.

1. **Newcastle's Pop-Up Library – Dan Kinnair, Newcastle Libraries**

From concept to roll-out, the story behind our new, citywide branch library. I’ll discuss why we made the decision to move one of our branch libraries from a fixed location and how this led to the idea and funding application to create a mini library for use in a range of settings. I’ll cover the benefits to having this available to our service and detail the elements that we though were important when creating the pop-up concept.

## Share your highlights on social media #LibrariesInnovate