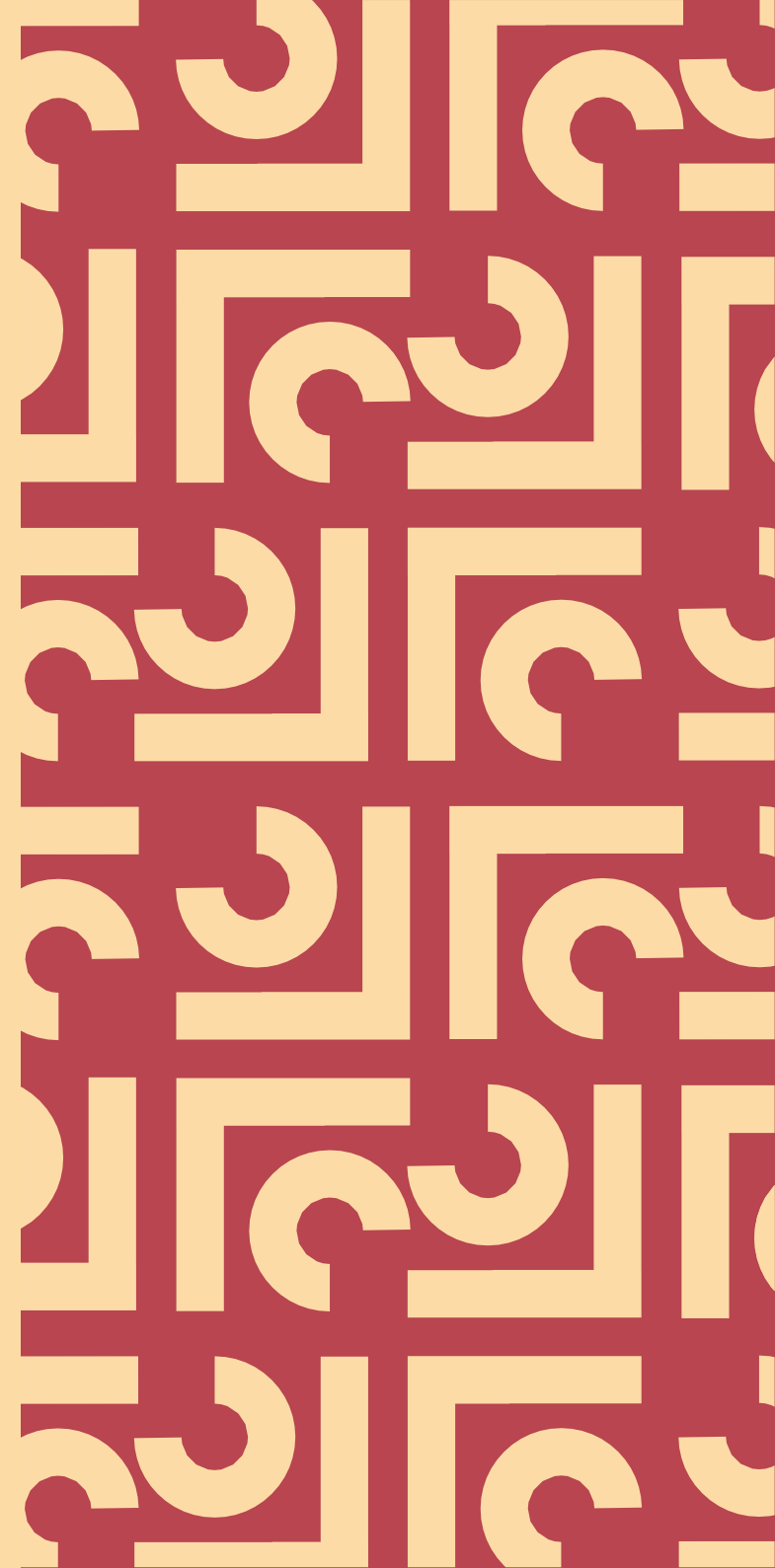


**Libraries Connected  
Yorkshire & Humber**

**Annual Report 2023-4**



## Chair's Overview

April 2023 – March 2024

I took over from Andrea Ellison as chair of Libraries Connected Yorkshire & Humber at our AGM in June 2023. Hers were 'big shoes to fill' as Andrea had achieved so much in her term as chair, which had been extended due to the pandemic. She had great energy and ambition for the network and was particularly committed to finding ways we could all benefit from working together as a consortium. Under her chairmanship we formalised our governance structure, worked with Activist to articulate our vision and priority outcomes for the network, began the journey towards a new shared LMS platform, and pooled our resources to achieve wider reach and profile through our externally funded projects.

The year since has been a period of consolidation amid the challenging context of a new wave of austerity and funding cuts facing many of our services. A significant number of changes in the membership also meant we recognised the role our network plays in supporting and developing library service leaders across the region - hence our focus on skills development and advocacy for the year ahead. The new Libraries Connected Regional Development Team has proved a great asset, working with us to develop these strands of our work. We are proud that so many of the team have roots in our region!

Christine May

# Membership & Skills Development

During the year there have been a number of changes in membership: Andrea Ellison retired as Chief Librarian for Leeds and Past Chair of LCYH in December 2023, and Colin Brabazon retired as Libraries Manager for North Lincolnshire at the end of May 2024. Hazel Smith (North Yorkshire) and Stephanie Shaw (Kirklees) were both confirmed permanent in their Head of Service roles, we welcomed Richard Hart as the service representative from Leeds and Emma Wilkinson as the new Libraries Development Manager for North Lincs.

It's great to see the next generation of library leaders coming forward; the high turnover of Heads of Service over the past 2 years has placed increased emphasis on our work to share and develop skills – learning from the experience of both older and newer members alike.

A sub-group of members (Kevin Hadfield, Christine May, Steph Shaw and Hilary Coulson) took on the task of planning activities to support skills sharing and development across the network. This began with a skills survey of all members, collecting information about strengths, skills gaps and priorities for development, which we are now working to address. This started with a knowledge sharing session in July on the different models of community managed libraries across the region. The session was very well attended and received lots of positive feedback; Libraries Connected has asked for the session to be repeated for a wider audience.

# Consortium Working

Our key project is the work to procure a new framework contract for a fully integrated, shared Library Management System. Having agreed that Doncaster (Nick Stopforth) would lead this project and to use regional funds to employ a Project Manager, Helen Lydiatt was appointed in October 2023 in that role. Great progress has been made since then, with mapping of contractual timelines and key issues for decision, soft market testing and a very valuable Discovery Day in Doncaster in March with 6 potential suppliers. A draft specification has also now been developed working with our Practitioner Group.

Now at a stage where we are ready to commence the procurement stage, this project has the potential to revolutionize how we work together in a much deeper way, helping to achieve our strategic aims of:

- improving our customers' experience of libraries by innovating and identifying new opportunities to work together.
- delivering value for money for our communities through the economies of scale we are able to generate for our members.
- all library services being able to draw on the skills and expertise they need from staff across the consortium.
- everyone understanding the impact we make and the value of libraries to our communities.



# Advocacy & Marketing

Another priority in our Annual Strategic Plan is advocacy and marketing on behalf of the whole network. The Regional Development Team has been extremely helpful and supportive in helping us to refine our objectives and priorities in relation to this work.

A sub-group of members (Sarah Garbacz, Nick Stopforth, Kevin Hadfield, Christine May) worked with the Tabitha Witherick and Nick Partridge to refine priorities and as a result it was agreed to focus on regional and sub-regional advocacy with organisations that have money and influence such as combined authorities, health partnerships, other cultural organisations and businesses etc., given the increasing need to advocate for libraries at the highest level and to secure external funding.

This would mirror at regional level the advocacy work that Libraries Connected does at national level. The network has agreed to use our £10k Combined Regions allocation to support this work, and we are now at the stage of looking to commission the work.

# Projects and funding success

Across our region there has been a high level of success in obtaining external funding and participation in national projects:

- **Libraries Improvement Fund:** 9 library services across the region gained funding in this third and final round of LIF: Barnsley, Bradford, Doncaster, East Riding, Hull, Kirklees, North Lincs, Wakefield and York.
- **Know Your Neighbourhood:** Barnsley, Doncaster, Hull and Wakefield all had projects funded by this programme.
- **Culture Nature:** Bradford and Doncaster received funding for projects as part of this pilot programme.

## Stock consortium

During the year the stock contracts for the Yorkshire Book Consortium were re-tendered, a major exercise led by Zoe Oxley (Rotherham) supported by David Duffy (Calderdale) chair of YBC. Claire Pickering (Wakefield) and reps from the North West region were also part of assessment team. New contracts are now in place for all 15 LCYH member authorities for the supply of adults' and children's stock. Plans are in hand for using the Peters' social value funding, pooled for the region, to fund an author tour for the region, to be planned by regional ASCEL members.

## Final comments

With the re-setting of our strategic plans and priorities over the past year, I am so grateful to a wide range of colleagues from across the region and our new RDT colleagues for sharing in the workload of planning and delivering our activities over the past year and taking on new roles as required, it's a real collective effort. LCYH has strong foundations and is a great support during the current challenging times. I'm so pleased Nick Stopforth has now joined the Steering Group as Chair Elect and look forward to a busy year ahead as we deliver on our Strategic Plan. LCYH has a great reputation nationally as a forward looking and high achieving region, and I am determined to continue to build on our strengths during the rest of my time as chair.

# LIBRARIES CONNECTED YORKSHIRE & HUMBER



**423**

LIBRARY BUILDINGS



**971**

FULL TIME EQUIVALENT  
PAID STAFF



**9,999,967**  
TOTAL VISITORS PER  
YEAR



**1,240,350**  
CURRENT MEMBERS



**2,768,408**  
TOTAL DIGITAL  
ISSUES



**9,213,711**  
TOTAL PHYSICAL  
ISSUES

