

Editorial

Welcome to the Winter 2007 edition of Information For Social Change. The theme of this issue is Social Exclusion and the editors are John Vincent and John Pateman.

As Head of Libraries in Lambeth, John Vincent was an early pioneer of Community Librarianship and Outreach. John now leads the work of The Network which is committed to tackling social exclusion via libraries, museums, archives and cultural and heritage organisations.

John Pateman is Head of Libraries, Learning and Inclusion at Lincolnshire County Council. Lincolnshire libraries won the Libraries Change Lives Award for services to migrant workers in 2005.

Both editors have written and spoken extensively on issues relating to libraries and social exclusion. They co-authored two chapters for the *British Librarianship and Information Work* series (Ashgate 2006 and 2007): 'From Equal Opportunities to Tackling Social Exclusion' (1991-2000); and 'From Social Inclusion to Community Cohesion' (2001-05).

Both editors are recognised experts in the field of social exclusion in terms of theory, practice and staff development. In this issue of ISC they consider questions such as -

What is social exclusion and how is it different to social inclusion, community cohesion and social justice?

What is the relevance of social exclusion to library services?

Are socially inclusive library services necessary in order to meet the needs of the socially excluded?

The keynote article by John Vincent '**Social Exclusion – where is it going?**' gives a comprehensive overview of the current situation in public libraries in the UK with regard to tackling social exclusion. John asks, why isn't this way of working universal and what on earth can we do? He also gives some bigger picture ideas.

Developing a Needs Based Library Service by John Pateman is one of three articles in this issue which was written in 2005 for a planned ISC book. Although this book did not happen, the ideas contained in these articles are still relevant today. John defines a Needs Based Service in terms of 'From each according to their ability (staff), to each according to their needs (community).'

The second article written in 2005 is John Vincent's '**He didn't have to say he was gay': attitudes to lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgendered**

people. John looks at the damaging legacy of Clause 28 and what successful library provision for LGBT should look like.

John Pateman's article on **Public Libraries and the Digital Divide** is a very topical overview of digital exclusion as it affects both consumers and citizens. The People's Network was meant to help close this divide but charges for access, internet filtering and out of date equipment and software are preventing this from happening.

Both editors were involved in the seminal research project *Open to All? Public Libraries and Social Exclusion* (MLA, 2000). This research challenged the myth that public libraries were really open to all people. Andrew Hudson asks a similar question in his article **Are We All Being Served?** His findings are that public libraries are still significantly underused by some social and ethnic groups.

To continue the tradition of including international perspectives in each issue of ISC, there are articles on Cuba and Canada. **Reading Orwell in Havana** is the third article written in 2005, when John Pateman went to Cuba to carry out his research into the availability of the works of Orwell and other 'banned authors' in Cuban libraries.

The final article is **Library Services for Newcomers to Canada: Embracing Cultural Diversity** by Kendra Bender. The author is a student in the MLIS program at the School of Library and Information Studies at the University of Alberta. This prize winning article concludes that 'the library community must continue to embrace cultural diversity and strive to equitably meet the needs of multi ethnic populations.'

And that is what this issue of ISC is all about – why and how public libraries should embrace cultural diversity and equitably meet the needs of their communities.

John Vincent

John Pateman