

Open to All? The Public Library and Social Exclusion

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English abstract

Open to All? reports the findings of an 18 month research project, "Public Library Policy and Social Exclusion", based at Leeds Metropolitan University and conducted in partnership with the London Borough of Merton (Libraries), Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information Services, and John Vincent, an independent consultant. Volume 1 provides an overview of the study and its main conclusions and recommendations. It reviews the context of social exclusion and the nature of the problems facing public libraries and other public institutions. The record of the public library in tackling disadvantage is critically assessed and the weaknesses of a predominantly "voluntary" approach to exclusion based on access are highlighted. The findings of a survey of contemporary public library services and of eight case studies of public library authorities are then reported. These suggest that although public libraries are currently modernising their services, this modernisation is unlikely to refocus the public library on excluded communities and social groups. The project concludes that to do this, and to become more than superficially "open to all", the public library will need to transform itself into a far more proactive, educative and interventionist public institution, with a concern for social justice at its core. The suggested elements of this transformation are detailed in a penultimate chapter, which highlights good practice, and in specific project recommendations which conclude the study.

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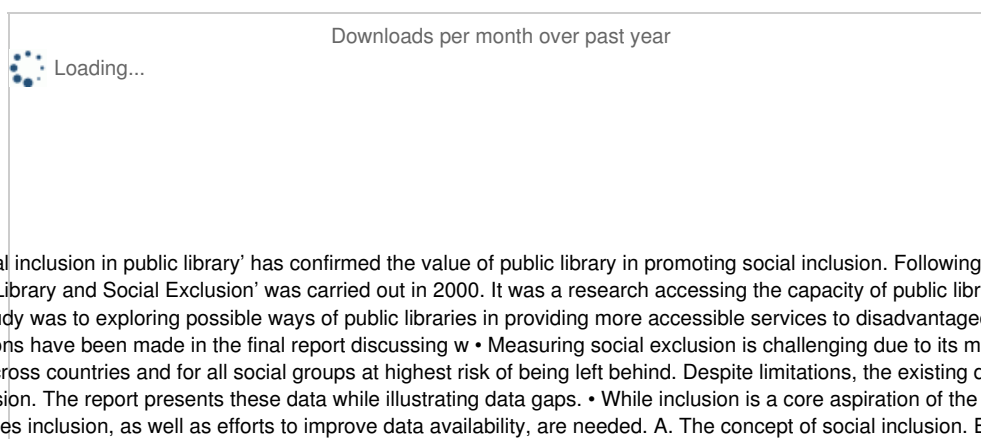
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The report 'Libraries for all: social inclusion in public library' has confirmed the value of public library in promoting social inclusion. Following this publication, a large-scale study 'Open for All? The Public Library and Social Exclusion' was carried out in 2000. It was a research accessing the capacity of public library in facilitating social inclusion. The purpose of the study was to exploring possible ways of public libraries in providing more accessible services to disadvantaged groups in the society. Many suggestions and recommendations have been made in the final report discussing w • Measuring social exclusion is challenging due to its multidimensional nature and the lack of standard data sources across countries and for all social groups at highest risk of being left behind. Despite limitations, the existing data allow for a meaningful analysis of key aspects of exclusion. The report presents these data while illustrating data gaps. • While inclusion is a core aspiration of the 2030 Agenda, conceptual and analytical work on what constitutes inclusion, as well as efforts to improve data availability, are needed. A. The concept of social inclusion. Enshrined in the 2030 A

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