

# DIGGING DEEP TO TRANSFORM CHURCH STREET LIBRARY

## PROJECT UPDATE

### 29 February 2008

#### Westminster Libraries engaging Arabic users

Westminster City Council estimates that one in twenty (5%) of Westminster residents are Arabic. Data relating to country of origin, language spoken and religion indicates that the Arabic population of Church Street is higher than 5%. Despite these figures Westminster Libraries have observed low levels of library usage amongst the local Arab population.

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رتسنمتسو  
'Meeting Arabic needs at Westminster Libraries'

Westminster Libraries commissioned a study in November 2007 to identify the perception of libraries among Westminster's Arabic population and to try and understand why usage is low.

The study observed that participants often had a traditional view of what libraries are for: quiet places of study and reading. However, there was considerable evidence that the Arab community also perceived libraries as places to learn English and gain computing skills.

Arabic library felt that there is little on offer in libraries in Arabic for Arabic people, predominantly, the Arabic community use libraries for factual books, newspapers and magazines, learning for children, the internet and CDs. Anecdotally, Novel reading features less prominently.

This information will now be used to help provide services from all Westminster Libraries to meet the needs of the Arabic community. This will include

- Increased provision of Arabic Stock (involving the local Arabic community)
- Identification of funding for an Arabic outreach worker
- Increase in purchase of a bigger selection of Arabic newspapers
- Greater awareness of Arabic culture
- Greater engagement with community and voluntary sector partners who have strong relations with the Arabic community
- Encouragement of volunteering in the Arabic community to help and advise Arabic speakers.
- Ensuring Arabic community events become part of events programming within libraries.

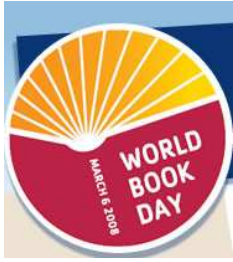
Westminster Libraries currently purchase Arabic stock through shop buys with Arabic speaking staff and volunteers, about 60% of which is fiction; 30% non fiction and 10% Children's titles. Dual-language titles are also bought these consist mostly of abbreviated classics: e.g. Church Street currently holds copies of David Copperfield and Three Men and Boat. Copies of Quran, Hadith and other religious titles are also bought regularly. Church Street Library also purchase 2 Arabic newspapers (Al Hayat and Al-Ahram). Through creation of greater links with the local community a wider range of Arabic books, DVDs and CDs will be purchased.

#### Big Lottery planning update

The first of the plans required by the Big Lottery has now been submitted in draft form for comment. The **Capital Delivery Plan** outlines a description of the proposed building works, breakdown of construction costs, programme for the capital project and details the project management strategy and procedures.

Atkins the Council's Surveyors, who have prepared the plan, estimate the building work at Church Street Library will take 40 weeks. During the building work a temporary library facility will be provided elsewhere in Church Street. Any suggestions for alternative locations should be sent to Iona Cairns at [icairns@westminster.gov.uk](mailto:icairns@westminster.gov.uk)

## World Book Day



World Book Day is a worldwide celebration of books and reading, and is marked in over 100 countries around the globe. It is one of the most important dates in the public library year. This year World Book Day falls on **Thursday 6th March**.

Church Street Library is celebrating with a number of events aimed at adults, children and toddlers. Jenny Mitchell from Inner Vision will be providing a creative reading workshop at 10.30am for pre-school children and their carers. Children will receive a World Book Day book token which can be exchanged in shops for a special £1 book.

Jenny will also be running a creative reading event for older adults during lunchtime and at 5pm there will be a pirate-themed event for children aged 5 - 12, where children can dress up as pirates, listen to a story, hunt for treasure and make their own pirate hat.

## Community and Stakeholder consultation

The first stage of the resident and organisation consultation is swinging into action.....

During half-term week, Church Street's Young Advisors were out and about in the library and at youth venues finding out the views of children and young people. So far the views of 25 young people have been surveyed with more to be done.

From Saturday 1st March the Paddington Development Trust's team of Community Researchers will be out in the neighbourhood surveying adult residents. They'll be using a questionnaire and want to reach both library users and non-users. Local people can also fill these questionnaires out themselves - they can be picked up at either the Library or the Neighbourhood Centre.

In addition, organisations and services delivering locally will be asked to contribute their ideas on the library refurbishment. A questionnaire for organisations – both statutory and community – will be circulated widely from 3<sup>rd</sup> March.

There'll also be a two stakeholder focus groups for organisations to discuss the project in more detail. Dates and venues are currently being confirmed. Contact Julie Mallett [contact details below] if you are interested in coming along.

If you, your members, organisation or service area have ideas about how to make the best of this great opportunity to refurbish the library, please make sure you let us know your views.

You can contact Julie Mallett at Church Street Neighbourhood Management on [jmallett@westminster.gov.uk](mailto:jmallett@westminster.gov.uk) about getting involved or phone 020 7641 6633.

For further details on the transformation of Church Street Library please contact

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