City and County Librarians Section [CCLS hereafter] of the Library Association of Ireland

**Chairman’s Report for 2014 as submitted at the Section’s AGM,**

**on 3rd October 2014 in Limerick**

The following Officers were elected at the 2013 AGM in Sligo, Co. Sligo on 4th October 2013.

* Chairman : Ciaran Mangan, Meath County Council
* Vice-Chairman : Josephine Brady, Cavan County Council
* Hon-Secretary : Catherine Elliott, Monaghan County Council
* Hon-Treasurer: Brendan Martin, Wicklow County Council.

Following the resignation of the Officers in December, the following were elected at an EGM held on 30th January 2014

* Chairman : Fionnuala Hanrahan, Wexford County Council
* Vice-Chairman : Bernadette Fennell, Louth County Council
* Hon-Secretary : Mary Stuart, Offaly County Council
* Hon-Treasurer: Brendan Martin, Wicklow County Council.

Since the 2013 AGM, the Section has met on seven occasions as follows – 23rd October & 6th December 2013, and in 2014 on 30th January, 11th March, 13th March, 11th April, & 12th June.

Business during the year was dominated by

1. the roll out of the national public library development plan, *Opportunities for All[[1]](#footnote-1)*, [ O4A hereafter] and by
2. a revision of the Section’s role and its working relationships.

In the latter case a special meeting, held on 13th March, created a revised governance document which was agreed by the Section in June and then forwarded to the Association’s Council for approval at its meeting on 19th of that month.

Throughout 2012 & 2013, Section members had engaged actively in developing the 3rd nationalpublic library development plan, *Opportunities for All,* which was launched on 19th December 2013. Briefing meetings on aspects of the plan & its rollout were held in association with CCLS meetings on 23rd October, on 6th December 2013, 11th March and on 12th June 2014. The Section also convened, at the invitation of the LGMA, on 28th April to discuss the Right to Read campaign[[2]](#footnote-2) and on 5th September for an update on developments in the proposed national library management system [hereafter LMS] and to discuss & agree a minimum national offer in relations to public library services to primary schools.

In June, the Chairman represented the Section at the UK Society of Chief Librarians annual conference in Warwick and contributed to a workshop on the *Opportunities for All Plan,* from a Chief Librarian’s perspective.

Section members continue to be very active within the management structure of the 2013 – 2017 Plan. Contributors to various committees are as follow

* **Library Development Committee** - Margaret Hayes, Dublin City Council; Fionnuala Hanrahan, Wexford County Council
* **National Advisory Forum for Public Libraries** - Donal Tinney, Sligo County Council & Ciaran Mangan, Meath County Council
* **Library Management System Implementation Committee** [July – September]- Margaret Hayes, Dublin City Libraries; Mary Stuart, Offaly County Council & Jane Cantwell, Waterford City & County Council
* **Library Management System Governance Board** - Margaret Hayes, Dublin City Libraries; Kieran Swords, South Dublin County Council; Mairead Owens, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council; Mary Stuart, Offaly County Council & Tommy O’Connor, Kerry County Council
* **Strategic Working Group on Shared Services** [to December 2013] - Fionnuala Hanrahan, Wexford County Council, Damien Brady, Limerick County Council; Donal Tinney, Sligo County Council
* **Shared Services Workforce Planning Committees** [February & March] - Fionnuala Hanrahan, Wexford County Council, Damien Brady, Limerick County Council; Donal Tinney, Sligo County Council
* **Shared Services Implementation Working Group** [April to date] - Fionnuala Hanrahan, Wexford County Council, Damien Brady, Limerick County Council; Donal Tinney, Sligo County Council
* **Business & Employment Working Group**– Austin Vaughan, Mayo County Council; Richie Farrell, Roscommon County Council; Marian Higgins, Kildare County Council; Kieran Swords, South Dublin County Council; Jane Cantwell, Waterford County Council [Chairman]; Mary Stuart, Offaly County Council; Bernadette Fennell, Louth County Council
* **Core Services, Branding and Promotion Working Group** – Austin Vaughan [Chairman], Mayo County Council; Helen Walsh, Clare County Council; Tommy O’Connor, Kerry County Council; Ciaran Mangan, Meath County Council; Josephine Coyne, Carlow County Council
* **Literacy & Reading Development Working Group** – Eileen Burgess, Donegal County Council [Chairman]; Ciaran Mangan, Meath County Council; Helen Walsh, Clare County Council; Mary Stuart, Offaly County Council
* **Public Library Services to Schools Working Group** - Brendan Martin, Wicklow County Council [Chairman], Mary Stuart, Offaly County Council; Damien Brady, Limerick County Council
* **National Child Safeguarding & Vulnerable Adults Steering Group -** Mary Stuart, Offaly County Council
* **Child Safeguarding Training & Communications Sub-group -** Mary Stuart, Offaly County Council

Four Working Groups, yet to meet, are [1] Community Engagement & Local Authority Services Working Group, [2] Capital Programme Working Group, [3] Library Programming Working Group & [4] Workforce Development Working Group.

The *Opportunities for All* Plan intends the most radical change in public library services delivery since the foundation of the State. It addresses unevenness of service provision countrywide through determination of guidelines & service benchmarks & through development of shared services management models. The latter cross local government boundaries and /or library functions, to create a minimum national offer in core service areas and to support visibility & coherence across national or multi-authority initiatives. The management framework includes countrywide, regional and cross authority service delivery models.

At a local level, in summer 2014 Limerick City & Limerick County Council combined, as did Waterford City & Waterford County Council also; library services united as part of that process. Other local authority shared services, involving libraries alone, propose uniting the services of [1] Cork city and Cork county, [2] Leitrim, Roscommon and Sligo, [3] Longford and Westmeath, [4] Cavan and Monaghan [5] Carlow and Kilkenny, [6] Laois and Offaly - thereby reducing the number of public library organisations to 23, all serving a minimum population of 100,000.

In service delivery areas, a single LMS shared by all public library service has been selected for installation countrywide over 3 years. It is associated with universal membership, free access & libraries open “more”. A renewed focus on literacy, the public library contribution to business and enterprise, civil society & community engagement will drive and illustrate the impact of the core management change envisioned.

While Section members may relish the challenge offered through the Plan, the extent of the change & the management & leadership demands it will make is not to be underestimated. The Section is encouraged by the level of engagement of the City & County Managers’ Association and the Local Government Management Agency as well as by the Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government. Over a period when library services have managed increased public expectations and more diverse demand despite reduced budgets impacting on availability of information resources, depreciating building infrastructure, aging to obsolete technology, staff shortages including shortages at professional and technical levels, the rollout of the Plan is audacious in its ambition.

Currently 12 / 30 chief librarian posts are vacant: most posts have been vacant for several years. Action on this critical inadequacy and on the supports requirement necessary to deliver the Plan dominated the Sections motions at the Association’s AGM in March. All were approved and impacted on the work of the Section throughout the year.

Library leaders are progressive and will lead. The initiatives of *Opportunities for All* can be achieved only with commitment and identifiable support from parent local authorities and from central government. Many local authorities, however impoverished, need to prioritise resources to their library services & to meet the benchmarks as set, as a minimum. Benefits from new management structures will be undermined if resource support remains uneven and if realistic minimum spends are not applied to all areas of delivery – marketing, staffing, infrastructure, information resources & programming. Local Authority CEOs and public representatives will need to support change wholeheartedly. A major investment is required: the capacity provided within 2015 Budgets will tell a tale. While the Section is committed to the full delivery of the Plan, its success is dependant particularly on continuing, determined leadership from central and local government senior management & public representatives.

Supporting professional development for members, Limerick City & County Librarian, Damien Brady, led the design & delivery of the autumn seminar, held in Limerick on 2nd & 3rd October on the theme of managing the transition to new service models. Content addressed

* recent, local authority-wide, experience across Limerick city and county & Waterford city and county from a CEO and from Chief Librarian perspectives,
* a review of the national LMS project,
* an update on the proposed operation of the libraries shared services model, across Cork city and Cork county councils, Leitrim, Roscommon & Sligo county councils, Cavan and Monaghan county councils, Carlow & Kilkenny county councils, Longford & Westmeath county councils, Laois & Offaly County Councils, & a review of the regional management framework,
* reports on the achievements of various Working Groups.

Critically, the programme also included a detailed interactive investigation in relation to the effective management strategies required to embed resilience and flexibility in public library organisations and to further support chief librarians’ leadership & negotiation skills. A compelling element of the programme was the half-day workshop on change management, offered by Dave Mullins of Elix –IRR, the company that had guided the two Limerick Councils to unity. Mullin’s proposition was that fundamentally libraries offer a platform that curates the relationship between information and users and that access to scarce resources is at the heart of the offer of libraries throughout the centuries. Success, he said, depended on the imperatives of 1. being present, 2. being relevant, 3. being ahead, 4.predicting customer needs, 5. earning the right to be recommended and 6. making scale matter.

Mullin’s focus sought to define the target model and then the operating model that would deliver the service required. In break-out sessions participants applied a change management model, based on four interlocking elements [supply, demand, enablement and ownership] to the Shared Services proposal impacting on the 13 library organisations listed in the O4A Plan. The resulting document is intended as a starting point for support within the Section and for advocacy to senior management.

This was a high-energy seminar, visionary, practical, participatory and very relevant. Its success was a testament to the energy and commitment of all contributors, to the hospitality of Limerick County Council and the planning and delivery skills of its public library staff.

In more general areas of development, Bernie Fennell, County Librarian Louth County Council, chaired the Library Ireland Week 2014 committee. Section officers contributed to development of a library award within the Bord Gais Eireann annual suite of awards for books and related areas.

Two colleagues, Georgina Byrne, County Librarian – South Dublin County Council and Josephine Brady, County Librarian – Cavan County Council, retired during the year.

I would like to acknowledge the support of all colleagues & particularly the other members of the CCLS Committee and to note the co-operation of the staff of Libraries Development, Local Government Management Agency, in progressing the work of the Section over the past term. Achievement has been considerable despite the severe resource constraints under which everyone is managing.

Fionnuala Hanrahan

Chairman

City & County Librarians Section of the Library Association of Ireland

30th September 2014

1. **Opportunities for All: the public library as a catalyst for economic, social and cultural development: a strategy for public libraries 2013 – 2017.** Dublin. Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government, 2013. [ISBN: 978 0 9927947 0 5] [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. **Right to Read Campaign: supporting literacy in the local authority**. Dublin. Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government, 2013. [ISBN: 978 0 9927947 2 9] [↑](#footnote-ref-2)