

**Report of the ASCEL Chair**

**November 2014 –November 2015**

This year the work of ASCEL has been focused heavily around the Universal Offers, in particular reading, learning and health. We’ve also been working to firmly embed the Children’s Promise and Library journeys as part of the suite of offers and are continuing our focus on workforce development, and we are delighted to be providing two sponsored conference places again this year.

**Children’s Promise and Children’s Library Journeys**

In the spring of 2015 we redesigned the [Children’s Promise](http://www.ascel.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/public/ASCEL%20Children%27s%20Promise%20%28May%202015%29.pdf) . The vision statements have become key to the shape of the promise. There are now 6 vision statements which reflect the significance of new digital activity and the role of libraries in supporting health and wellbeing, alongside great reading opportunities, inclusion and access.

The Promise now incorporates Children’s Library Journeys. ASCEL obtained Arts Council England funding last year to conduct research into the key interaction points, children should have with libraries as they grow and their needs change. Laura Crossley an Arts Researcher was commissioned to undertake the work and the resulting Children’s Library Journeys [report](http://www.ascel.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/public/Children%27s%20Library%20Journeys%20report%20%20April%202015.pdf) was published in April 2015, following Consultation with ASCEL and partners.

We have invited all authorities to sign up to The Children’s Promise, we’ve currently achieved a sign up of 90%

We’ve also redeveloped the library [self- assessment tool](http://www.ascel.org.uk/whats-new) to reflect the new vision statements–all available via The ASCEL website <http://www.ascel.org.uk/>

**School Library Service**

We are conducting a new Red Amber Green State of SLSs and we are supporting The Reading Agency as they Work with School Library Services on developing the DfE’s Reading Group work with SLS’s. We were delighted to see the London-wide SLS website <https://schoolslibraryserviceslondon.wordpress.com/> being launched earlier in the year.

**ASCEL Current Projects**

Workforce Development E: Learning Package

A team of ASCEL members and partners from the Youth Libraries Group and The Reading Agency are working together on a four-module e:learning project for those working in children’s libraries. The project will be a basic introduction to children’s libraries for new staff or stuff unfamiliar with this area of work. This idea stemmed from the future forward discussion we had at last year’s conference. It is funded by Arts Council England and should be ready by April 2016

Children’s Library Journeys

Arts Council England has also funded a small pilot project to look at how we support the primary/secondary transition. We are working with SOLUS to develop a pilot app which will include fun challenges that link the public library, the school library and the young person.

**ASCEL supporting the Universal Offers**

Universal Learning Offer

The brand new learning offer was launched on 5th November. As part of the offer Katie Pekacar was commissioned to develop a guide for libraries developing coding clubs and other digital activities. This was also a need identified by ASCEL members at the future forward session at last year’s conference. Code Green is the resulting guide

Universal Health Offer

This year ASCEL has been working with The Reading Agency and partners on a new Young People’s Mental Health offer. The book selection for the offer has been completed with representation from The Reading Agency, ASCEL, public libraries, health professionals and young people and the list should be launched in March 2015.

Universal Reading Offer

The profile of reading for pleasure and literacy have both been significantly heightened this year and ASCEL have been involved in both elements. ASCEL are represented alongside The Society of Chief Librarians in the Read On Get On Coalition.

We are also participating in the group developing The Reading Outcomes Framework – initiated by The Reading Agency with funding from The Sowerby Foundation. The aim of this work is to develop a framework that everyone involved in Reading for Pleasure for adults and children can use, developing a shared understanding of the impact of reading for pleasure

ASCEL are also contributing to work being led by Arts Council England to look at shared messages around reading within the cultural landscape, both in terms of literacy and reading for pleasure.

**Response to consultations**

In the past year, ASCEL has responded to the Independent Review of Public Libraries report by William Sieghart, BBC Charter consultation in partnership with The Reading Agency and The Society of Chief Librarians and the Prevent Strategy in partnership with SCL

**Partnerships**

Society of Chief Librarians

We continue to work closely with SCL. Recently we have published a joint press release confirming libraries’ welcome for refugees and asylum seekers and all those new into the country. We have also jointly funded a day with Cam Storey – Communicating the Positive Image of Libraries and ASCEL contributed to the Intern development Day in July. We also worked together on last year’s “Shakespeare Lives” Grants for the Arts Bid.

The Reading Agency

We are currently working with The Reading Agency on a number of projects including the SRC and Reading Hack and colleagues from TRA have been attending ASCEL regional meetings during the autumn to brief every one of the development of the programme. In October ASCEL, SCL and TRA met together to agree a Memorandum of Understanding to ensure the strength of the partnership is maintained and further developed.

Booktrust

We were delighted to meet with the new CEO Diana Gerald and Diana is contributing to the new workforce development package

**New Website and Twitter**

ASCEL’s new website was launched in February this year. We are still developing it and encourage everyone to feed in views about what is useful. We are putting as much information as possible in the public area of the website so that we can link to it via our Twitter feed to promote the work of ASCEL. We are grateful to all those who Tweet and will always try to retweet information about regional ASCEL activity.

**Regional activity**

We continue to encourage regional co-operation between ASCEL and SCL and urge Regional ASCEL to feed your regional workplans and meeting dates to Sarah Gregory to include on the website. ASCEL funds regional £500 regional ASCEL development grants– there is an application form on the members area of the website

**Committee Participation**

ASCEL are represented on the following national committees and groups

* SCL Exec
* SRC Strategy Group
* Youth Libraries Board
* Children’s Reading Partners
* Universal Health Offer Group
* BBC Libraries Partnership
* Books and Reading Group
* Universal Learning Offer
* Share the Vision
* Read On Get On
* Reading Outcomes Framework
* Arts Council England
* EmpathyLab
* Children’s Plus

*Sarah Mears, ASCEL Chair, November 2015*