

GO:infoMK Project summary

Can I buy a picture of my village as it was 30 years ago? Where can I find something on sustainable development for children? Are there any libraries of religious books in Milton Keynes? Where can I listen to memories about canal life? Can I use local university libraries to research for my new business?

Answers to these and other questions will easily be found online or in local libraries and learning centres as a result of this project. Learners will also have access to a much wider network of books and information in Milton Keynes to stimulate their interests and meet their learning needs through a seamless cross-sectoral access pathway which starts at their local libraries. Supporting GO:infoMK a wealth of staff development opportunities will be initiated including work shadowing for the information and library workforce to raise awareness of the collections and access arrangements. So, in addition to 15,000 formal adult learners, many more other adults and nearly 300 information and library workforce will benefit, together with their families and communities, employers and employees, from opportunities to develop skills and knowledge initiated by exploring information and collections held locally and made available by GO:infoMK.

Project Detail

This project will build on the mapping project of library and information collections in Milton Keynes funded by the South East Museum, Library and Archive Council (SEMLAC) and undertaken in 2003. The key element is the development of an online searchable database to promote access to the libraries and information collections currently identified and to incorporate others that might engage with the aims of the project. This part of the proposal is may be based on the 'Tap into Bath' project. This is a unique pilot project that explores setting up an online searchable database of library, archive and other collections in a small geographical area for the learning community, together with documentation which will enable collaborative networks in other communities to replicate the initiative. Tap into Bath was initiated by the Bath Area Libraries Initiative and managed by the University of Bath working with UKOLN. A seminar to share information about this project will take place on 11 October with an open invitation to project partners, their staff and other interested parties in the community to attend. Alternatively INSPIRE England proposes a national web access database and this development will also be explored when more information is available

The second major objective will be to establish a mechanism to enable learners to access these collections by utilising public libraries at the heart of local communities to refer learners to other more academic or specialized libraries and collections. This part of the proposal is based on the INSPIRE initiative to facilitate access between libraries in public and higher education sectors meeting strategic drivers such as widening participation, social inclusion and resource sharing. The concept behind INSPIRE is managed referral based on appropriate pathways. The national roll out of INSPIRE is planned for 2005 and aims to sign up local library networks and partners to 'kitemark' access schemes to the INSPIRE criteria.

The project will also connect with e-learning providers to expand community involvement in the third objective. These providers will include various UK Online centres which are based in voluntary and community organizations. Examples are The Woughton Skills Ladder project which is based in Woughton Ward and has one of the highest deprivation indices in England. UK Online centres which are based in the adult education service and Milton Keynes College will also be involved. Publicity and support will also be offered through VOICE, which is a Milton Keynes based forum for voluntary and community organisations, who are involved in training. Through this network of organisations the resources and facilities of the MKLCLN libraries and other collections identified will be made available to over 15,000 formal learners.

The fourth objective is to provide a considerable wealth of staff development opportunities to the teachers, tutors and trainers of adult learners as supporting this proposal will be a staff development and training programme to build library and information skills, cross domain relationships and enable knowledge transfer. A national training programme for INSPIRE will be available next year and the project will incorporate this as appropriate. Part of this proposal will be to extend an earlier pilot work shadowing scheme carried out in 2002 by MKLCLN to a wider cross-domain workforce. This will be supported by an existing series of monthly seminars jointly organized by The Open University Library and MKLCLN to share information about new developments and research in the library and information field. The first seminar, which supports this proposal, on the 'Tap into Bath' project is already arranged for October, one on INSPIRE is being organised for November or December and one on 'Inspiring Learning For All' is planned in January.

The proposal includes some research into ICT network opportunities to establish the technological developments which might be feasible. Initially this will focus on the redesign and redevelopment of the current MKLCLN website followed development of the database including the UKOLN templates. The project manager will also liaise with the INSPIRE National Partnerships Manager and the Regional INSPIRE Operational Group to ensure that all developments meet the national INSPIRE parameters and GO:infoMK gains the INSPIRE 'kitemark' .

This project will benefit people who live, work or study in Milton Keynes and will initially be limited to collections and libraries held in the borough. The proposal will ensure that information about the wealth of small collections is available ready for the adult learner to explore and utilize. As Milton Keynes is a relatively small community, contacts are already established with museums, archives and other cultural organizations and they will be kept informed and brought into activities as appropriate. In the future the database and access arrangements can be extended into North Buckinghamshire and surrounding areas.

The project will run from January 2005 to September 2005 with a preparatory period of 3 months before January 2005 to allow for recruitment, set up, seminars etc. Costings for the proposal include a fee for a short term project officer post to undertake the work shown in the project plan. Part of their role will be to make recommendations for other innovative activities which will utilize the rich and diverse collections held locally,

respond to strategic agendas and benefit the local community. Other costs will be travel, promotion and publicity, major event costs and other services which may need to be bought in.

Partners in this project with MKLCLN are SEMLAC and the Milton Keynes Economy and Learning Partnership (MKELP).

The future development of MKLCLN will be informed by the GO:infoMK so initiatives such as simultaneous access to multiple library catalogues, resource sharing, developing an e-books collection locally, joint licensing etc may emerge from this initial collaboration.

Milton Keynes learning City Libraries Network (MKLCLN)

The MKLCLN was launched in 2001 to allow and encourage the use of all major libraries in the Milton Keynes area by everyone who lives, works or studies in Milton Keynes.

Milton Keynes Learning City Library Network represents –

- Milton Keynes public library

- Milton Keynes College library

- Milton Keynes General NHS Trust library

- The libraries of the University of Buckingham, De Montfort University, Cranfield University and The Open University

A website www.mklclibraries.org was set up and a promotional leaflet printed and distributed. Over the last three years this has enabled hundreds of local people to access other libraries particularly the university libraries which operate open access policies.

In 2002 a work shadowing scheme was run during Adult Learners Week and staff at all levels across the 7 libraries were offered the opportunity to shadow other staff. This was very successful and 20 staff participated which raised understanding of the different library sub-domains and embedded the Network concept at all levels with the partner libraries.

In 2003 a small project was funded by SEMLAC to map library and information collections in Milton Keynes. This identified 47 potential collections and requested information about subject covered, location, opening hours, availability and facilities on a pro forma. 28 collections responded and this information is currently being added to the web site.

Josephine Burt

30 November 2004