

# **INSPIRE**

# **West Midlands**

## **Report on the Demonstration Projects**

Yvonne Hamblin  
Project Officer and Research Associate  
LISU  
Loughborough University  
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## Executive Summary

The West Midlands is one of three regions in England which has been selected to explore the feasibility of supported access agreements for adult learners and aspiring learners to resources in higher education and public libraries. Building on the successful *Libraries and Learners in London (LLiL)* scheme, INSPIRE England aims to extend existing agreements to facilitate improved access.

As a first stage to INSPIRE, MLA West Midlands carried out a survey of all higher education institutions in the region. This revealed good access agreements between institutions but limited access to other institutions and members of the public.

The LLiL scheme has mapped library collections in London and this is a valuable resource for both users and library staff. In the West Midlands the research carried out for the Futures Together report will be put up on the Chrysalis web site to promote library collections held in the region. It is intended that there will be liaison with LLiL to ensure consistency with subject headings.

Three project groups were formed to carry out the demonstration projects, in Coventry, Stoke-on-Trent and Wolverhampton. The groups identified adults who would benefit from improved access to libraries. As part of the West Midlands project, procedures and training materials were developed. These were based on the LLiL procedures, but simplified to reduce barriers to library users. Following feedback from the West Midlands and North West regions, these procedures will be refined and used for the roll-out of other regional INSPIRE schemes. Briefing sessions held for library staff explained how the scheme would work in practice and addressed any issues or concerns.

Each group had a target of 20 learners to guide through the scheme. This was achieved by two of the groups, but the third experienced difficulties in monitoring the scheme as the higher education institution has an open access policy. This is a concern that will be addressed by the INSPIRE steering group and may mean that quantitative monitoring can only be done at the point of referral.

The results of the demonstration projects in the West Midlands have been evaluated against the Generic Learning Outcomes (GLOs). Two surveys were developed for the pilot to ask library users participating in the scheme about their experiences. Telephone interviews were carried out with members of library staff to obtain their views on the training materials and to determine whether or not their skills in helping users had developed. Many university staff welcomed the opportunity to work with different types of learners and public library staff appreciated the availability of another library's resources to which they could direct their users. They felt that their skills had improved as they developed an awareness of other library collections and handled different types of enquiry.

Learners using the scheme had a variety of reasons for doing so, including for a leisure activity and needing help with studies. Respondents to the survey were pleased to have access to another library and other sources of information but two expressed frustration at not being allowed to borrow materials and not having access to electronic resources. Overall reaction to the INSPIRE scheme was good with users having positive experiences.

All the pilot groups stated that one of the most beneficial outcomes of the project was the establishment of working relationships with libraries in other sectors within their area. Co-operative working included arranging visits to other libraries and the development of joint publicity materials. The pilot groups intend to incorporate these activities into their staff development and promotional programmes.

The key recommendations of the report are as follows:

- Continue to map collections in the region and raise awareness of collections and facilities through targeted promotion.
- Continue to build on co-operative working between library sectors This will benefit both library staff and learners.
- Encourage and formalise agreements with other libraries in the region.
- Encourage academic libraries to expand access and borrowing rights.
- Promote the scheme within libraries, but also outside, for example in community centres, to attract non-users and potential learners.
- Market the scheme to library staff as an extra resource to help library users and potential learners.
- Publicise directions to libraries, opening times and facilities available locally to all libraries within the scheme.
- Allow sufficient time to expand the INSPIRE scheme to the rest of the West Midlands region.
- Ensure that funding is available to manage and sustain the expansion of INSPIRE in the West Midlands.
- Incorporate briefing sessions on the INSPIRE scheme into staff training programmes, including staff induction.
- Monitor the impact of the scheme on collections and staff resources, both in terms of numbers and qualitative information.

The report recognises that promotion and targeted marketing of the scheme are important, both to staff, users and non-users of libraries. The valuable results achieved in the West Midlands will contribute to the roll-out of INSPIRE to the rest of the region and to other English regions.

## Introduction

The West Midlands is one of three regions in England which has been selected to explore the feasibility of supported access agreements for adult learners and aspiring learners to resources in higher education and public libraries. The other regions are the North West, who are also running demonstration projects, and London, who have a working scheme, *Libraries and Learners in London*<sup>1</sup>, which includes access to the British Library.

Building on the Library and Information Commission report, *Empowering the Learning Community*<sup>2</sup> and the subsequent *Inspiring Learning for All* framework<sup>3</sup>, the INSPIRE scheme aims to foster and improve co-operation between library sectors to support lifelong learning. The results of the demonstration projects in the West Midlands and the North West will contribute to the development of nationwide access and referral agreements within INSPIRE England to facilitate improved access for adult learners.

## Access arrangements to university libraries in the West Midlands

As part of the roll out of the INSPIRE scheme in the West Midlands, MLA West Midlands carried out a survey in August 2003 of all 11 university libraries in the region, seven of which replied. The survey was designed to determine the existing access arrangements.

All respondents participated in UK Libraries Plus and Access West Midlands with all providing reference access, but no access to licensed e-resources. Six participated in SCOUNL Research Extra, five in SCOUNL Vacation Access Scheme and one in the Birmingham Theological Group. All respondents provided access to at least one category of user outside higher education, with one providing access to study spaces for any learner.

Four offered borrowing rights but these were often charged for. One offered internet access and another an on-line enquiry service. For the purposes of gaining access, two libraries stated that they would accept a public library membership card as proof of identity for learners outside higher education, although one of these allowed free access to all without proof. Only two respondents stated that their institution monitored levels of access by learners outside higher education. None promoted facilities for visiting learners. Respondents perceived the main issue for their institution in providing access to learners was the issue of access to electronic resources and the associated licensing agreements. Two expressed a concern that extended access may lead to an extra burden on staff and resources.

## Collection mapping

One of the successes of the *Libraries and Learners in London* scheme is 'Appendix One', a list of libraries participating in the scheme, together with a list of their special collections. In the West Midlands the Futures Together research report<sup>4</sup> identifies special library collections in the region. It is intended that this major piece of work will be made accessible on the internet through Chrysalis. The Chrysalis project aims to establish a repository to provide resources and materials to support learning, skills development and information literacy and will facilitate access to specific collections relating to the West Midlands. Further information is available on

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.londonlibraries.org.uk> (accessed 4 May 04)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.lic.gov.uk/publications/policyreports/empower/forward.html> (accessed 31/10/03)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk/> (accessed 4 May 04)

<sup>4</sup> Warren, Geoff and C. Dodd. Futures Together: accessing special collections in West Midlands Libraries and related sectors, Library and Information Commission, 2000.

the web site.<sup>5</sup> It is intended that the Chrysalis project will liaise with the London scheme to ensure that there is consistency of subject headings and search terms.

### **The demonstration projects**

For the purposes of INSPIRE West Midlands, the co-funding body, the Department of Education and Skills, required the projects to focus on ‘displaced learners’, that is, learners or potential learners who are not necessarily within the formal education system and who may benefit from access to other libraries.

The pilot projects were discussed at a meeting in December 2003 and were expected to have results which would contribute to the evaluation process by the end of April 2004, so the timescale was short.

The aims of the projects in the West Midlands were based on the aims of INSPIRE England as follows:

- To build on existing networks of successful access partnerships
- To encourage access by adult learners displaced in the educational system
- To provide opportunities and access for socially excluded individuals and groups
- To guide learners to libraries with collections and materials relevant to their needs
- To underpin workforce development by raising awareness of resources in the staff of libraries in the pilot projects and by improving their skills, knowledge and confidence in dealing with different types of learners.

### **Project Descriptions**

Whereas the project groups in the North West decided to identify and work with specific groups of ‘displaced learners’ such as asylum seekers and a group of young people, the three groups in the West Midlands identified learners in a slightly different way. As well as working with ‘partners’ (see below), they also decided to identify learners from their existing clientele; people who might benefit from improved access to other libraries.

#### **Project groups**

##### **Coventry**

- Coventry University
- Coventry City Council: Libraries and Information Services
- Coventry Health Promotions Unit

##### **Stoke-on-Trent**

- Staffordshire University
- Stoke-on-Trent City Council Libraries
- Stoke-on-Trent further education college

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.wm-libraries.org.uk/AWMLC/chrysalis.htm>

## **Wolverhampton**

- University of Wolverhampton
- City of Wolverhampton College
- Wolverhampton Adult Education Service
- Wolverhampton Library & Information Services

All three West Midlands pilot project groups submitted their project plans and identified adult learners to participate in the pilots as follows:

**Coventry.** At least 20 adult learners with information needs in three specific areas: Family Health, Art and Design, and Returning to Work. It was intended that these learners were to be identified from the partner agency, the Coventry Health Promotions Unit, as well as the public library sector. The ‘Learn and Earn’ centre were invited to participate but were unable to do so.

**Stoke-on-Trent.** At least 20 users who are “not necessarily undertaking formal learning opportunities”. Users of the public library service and the further education college were to be encouraged to access Staffordshire University library to obtain information for leisure or learning activities.

**Wolverhampton.** At least 20 adult learners, some of whom were to be identified from the existing Ticket to Find project<sup>6</sup> (which develops learning and skills) and from the UK Online centre, as well as the public library service.

Since the proposals were submitted Wolverhampton has identified students from the further education college who would benefit from access to the Arts collection at the University.

## **Piloting of the procedures manual and training materials**

The Project Officer worked closely with the London Libraries Development Agency<sup>7</sup> to learn from their experience in establishing the Libraries and Learners in London (LLiL) access scheme. Based on the LLiL procedures, a procedures manual and training materials were developed for the purposes of the West Midlands demonstration projects, partly to facilitate the access and referral scheme at a local level, but also to be piloted for the INSPIRE England scheme.

For the purposes of the West Midlands pilot projects, the Project Officer worked with the pilot groups to ensure that the procedures would work for the front-line library staff. The training materials were also devised specifically to explain how the pilot projects would work, but it is envisaged that these, together with the procedures, will be revised and adapted in the roll-out of INSPIRE England to produce generic guidelines for the operation of the INSPIRE scheme across different regions and sectors.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://asp2.wlv.ac.uk/tickettofind/home.htm>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.llda.org.uk> (accessed 4 May 04)

## Training sessions

Following the development of procedures a training session was set up with each pilot group as follows:

- Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> March - Stoke-on-Trent, 11 people attended.
- Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> March – Wolverhampton, 8 people attended.
- Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> March – Coventry, 18 people attended.

The training consisted of a presentation on the background to INSPIRE England, a briefing on the West Midlands pilot projects and an explanation of the training materials and procedures manual. A training pack was presented to library staff. This was designed as a ‘stand-alone’ package which could be used in cascade training to other library staff. The pack consisted of:

- PowerPoint presentation - handout and on disk
- ‘Procedures for pilot projects’ manual
- ‘Training manual for pilot projects’
- Copies of statistics forms, paperwork for pilot (in the appendices of *Procedures Manual*) to be photocopied as required
- A sample leaflet for the INSPIRE West Midlands projects

(Please see *Appendices 1 and 2* for the procedures manual and training materials).

The staff who attended each session were from the participating libraries as well as from their project partners. The sessions provided an opportunity for their concerns to be addressed as well as answering questions about how the scheme would work. All staff who attended were enthusiastic about building on existing access agreements but were concerned about the short timescale of the pilot projects, which ran until the end of April 2004. It was explained that although some results were expected by this date, the scheme would continue beyond that date for the participating libraries.

Other library staff were briefed in cascading sessions as soon as possible after the training. It was intended that all staff should be informed of the scheme, and that selected staff, such as those on reception and enquiry desks should familiarise themselves in more detail with the procedures involved.

## Evaluation of procedures

As INSPIRE West Midlands will contribute to the development of the INSPIRE referral and access scheme across England, part of the evaluation of this project was to test the procedures and training materials which could be used in this roll-out. Structured telephone interviews (see *Appendix 3*) have been carried out with ten members of library staff directly involved in the pilot scheme and their views will contribute to the revision of the procedures and training.

## Collection of statistical data

The target for each pilot group was 20 referrals, so there was a requirement to collect the numbers of learners using the scheme. In the absence of electronic monitoring, statistics collection forms were created. This was a paper-based method of collecting numbers and relied on members of staff recording both an initial referral and a repeat visit. In reality only the initial referrals were counted.

## Measurement against Generic Learning Outcomes

The Generic Learning Outcomes (GLOs) for Museums, Libraries and Archives were developed for the Learning Impact Research Project conducted by the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries at the University of Leicester.<sup>8</sup>

The GLOs provide a methodology for evaluating peoples' experiences when visiting a library, museum or archive and a way in which to measure the impact of learning in the three domains. The GLOs for learners are as follows:

- Increase in knowledge and understanding
- Increase in skills
- Change in attitudes or values
- Evidence of enjoyment, inspiration and creativity
- Evidence of activity, behaviour, progression

(See the *Inspiring Learning for All* web site)<sup>9</sup>

The GLOs were used as the basis for the evaluation of the demonstration projects and a 'Benchmark Evaluation' form was created by the independent evaluator, the Carter-Small Partnership. This form was used as a starting point to devise survey questions for both users and staff in order to monitor the progress of the pilot groups against the GLOs.

Part of the evaluation of the INSPIRE West Midlands scheme was to look at the way in which improved access to libraries enhanced the experiences of the learners participating in the scheme. In order to do this two surveys were developed (see Procedures Manual *Appendix 1*). In the 'entry interview' survey, library staff asked potential learners a few questions to establish their 'status', that is, why they were seeking the information and if they were undertaking formal education. A further 'exit' survey was issued to the learner following his/her visit to the library to ask about the experience and whether or not they had found it beneficial or experienced any difficulties. The surveys were devised using the GLOs in an attempt to establish if there had been any development of skill, change in attitude or increase of knowledge.

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<sup>8</sup> Research Centre for Museums and Galleries, The Generic Learning Outcome System: Measuring the Outcomes and Impact of Learning in Museums, Archives and Libraries. The Learning Impact Research Project (LIRP) Short Project report, Leicester University, Resource (MLA), 2002. <http://www.mla.gov.uk/action/learnacc/lirp.asp> (accessed May 2004)

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk/introduction/> (accessed May 2004)

## **Results and outcomes from the pilot projects**

Following the training sessions by the Project Officer, the three pilot groups immediately began a programme of briefing sessions for staff. Some of these were within staff meetings, others had specific training on the procedures. The project aim was to inform all staff of the INSPIRE scheme, so that if asked they would know of the scheme and who to contact for further information. Anecdotal evidence from the pilot groups suggests that all staff were informed of the existence of the scheme and that staff on the reception or enquiry desk at a library knew how to refer a potential learner.

Representatives from the partner libraries within the pilot groups met to consider how the referral scheme would work in practice. One benefit of these meetings was that co-operative working practices were established in the production of literature relating to the pilot schemes. Leaflets were produced to inform library users and potential learners in other agencies of the existence of the INSPIRE scheme. These leaflets also informed members of the public about the opening times of the libraries and directions to find them.

All the pilot groups stated that one of the most beneficial outcomes of the project was the establishment of working relationships with libraries in other sectors within their area. Although many of these existed on an informal basis previously, working together on the INSPIRE project had directly resulted in improved communication and co-operation. Visits to each other's libraries had been arranged, enabling some members of staff to view resources and, in some cases, to see the location of the library for the first time. Further exchange visits are planned and it is intended that these become an established part of induction training for staff.

### **INSPIRE events and referrals**

The target for each pilot group was to refer 20 learners to a partner library and for that learner to receive information through accessing the other library. Due to the extremely short timescale between training and the start of the scheme, these targets have been difficult to achieve. Details of individual pilots are given below but all are continuing to refer and receive learners so further results may follow. (The project plans submitted by each pilot group are in *Appendix 4*).

#### **Coventry**

Coventry Libraries and Information Service and Coventry University were unable to hold an INSPIRE event in the pilot period but are planning a joint event in Adult Learner's Week in May 2004, and will continue to identify further potential learners who may benefit from the INSPIRE scheme.

As the public library had decided to concentrate on three specific areas 'family health', 'art and design' and 'returning to work' to attract INSPIRE learners, subject guides were produced to direct users to appropriate resources. These have proved to be very useful for both library users and staff.

Coventry Public Libraries referred 22 learners to Coventry University. So far, six of those have been received at the University Library and have been provided with help to find resources and one has indicated she intends to visit soon.

Entry interviews were completed by the learners and 20 have been forwarded to LISU. All of these respondents are already members of a library, although two were not existing members of the public library. Ten are in formal education and nine are not. (One did not answer this

question). The survey asked users why they were accessing the information and responses were as follows (numbers of users who ticked this box in brackets):

- Leisure activity (5)
- Information needed for employment prospects (3)
- Wanting to improve my skills (6)
- Considering taking a course (3)
- Helping me with my studies (12)
- Wanting more detailed information than I have access to locally (10)

Unsurprisingly the highest number of enquirers were asking for information for study. Ten required more information than they had access to locally, which would indicate that another resource for information is welcome. Three were considering taking a course and three needed information for employment prospects, meeting the GLO that they have been able to use information provided by a library service for personal progression. Six stated that they were wanting to improve skills, again meeting another GLO.

The learners were asked to give brief details of the nature of their enquiry. These included 'help with studies' in a range of subjects, access to a wider variety of material, leisure activities, including art and literature, legal information and access to information for non-English speaking citizens.

Six 'exit' surveys have been received from learners who have accessed the university library. While four of these had been informed about the scheme through the public library, one had been referred from the LearnDirect centre and one had enquired after seeing a poster. Four had found information easily but two users had not found what they were looking for. One of these users commented that he was unable to find the information because he was not allowed access to the electronic resources, but he thought that the scheme was a valuable addition to resources available to the public. The other user had not been able to borrow the books he required to find the information but felt that the scheme was an excellent idea if it could be more flexible. Six respondents thought that an extension of the scheme nationally would benefit them. Comments about the scheme included:

*I think it's great to be able to access the more specialist and wider range of books at the university library when needed*

*I think resources should be shared. All libraries are funded by the taxes we pay and should be open to everyone*

*An excellent scheme which makes higher quality (sic) and variety available to myself and others*

*I think that it is a very good scheme and widens the scope of material available well*

*I have only had time for two visits to the Coventry University Library since I really took advantage of the 'Inspire' access scheme, so I have not yet been able to evaluate the full possibility it may provide.*

#### **Stoke-on-Trent**

Staffordshire University Library held an Open Day on the 21<sup>st</sup> April. This gave visitors an opportunity to see the range of Special Collections at the library. Staff were available to answer questions and to encourage visitors to use the INSPIRE scheme to access the collections.

Collections elsewhere in Stoke-on-Trent libraries will also be promoted. In the public sector there was unfortunately insufficient time to organise an event specifically for the pilot project and this was exacerbated by low staffing levels in March and April.

Stoke-on-Trent City Libraries have, however, an on-going programme of activities throughout the year which attract non-users of libraries, some of whom will not be in formal learning. Visitors are currently frequently referred to other libraries and organisations for information, when appropriate, and the INSPIRE scheme will now act as a formal extension of this.

It should be noted that at Staffordshire University library there is open access for reference and that it may be possible that many 'referrals' from public libraries and from the further education college are not recorded. Visitors can enter the library without making themselves known to library staff and may only identify themselves as INSPIRE referrals if they need help in finding information.

The staff involved in the pilot project have acknowledged that while they have an excellent access policy, it is difficult to monitor. They are open to monitoring referrals where this is possible, but would not want this to become a barrier to learners.

Members of the Stoke pilot group stated that one of the main benefits of the scheme has been the opportunity to meet with library staff from other institutions and to place their informal arrangements on a more formal footing. The pilot groups will continue to exchange information and are considering joint training events.

Due to the open access there has been no record of referrals through INSPIRE and therefore no completion of surveys for the project.

### **Wolverhampton**

Following a visit to the University of Wolverhampton, the college librarian from the City Of Wolverhampton College asked if she could bring two groups of art students to the university library to see the collection of art books available. The INSPIRE scheme was promoted at these events, which took place on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> April, with a total of 19 students attending, but as yet has not produced any feedback from the students. Due to the time constraints of the pilot project and the timing, which coincided with the Easter vacation, it was not possible to organise another event.

'Exit surveys' (see *Appendix 1*) were completed by all 19 students and their responses are as follows:

- All had had the terms of access to the library's services explained clearly and 17 had found the information they required. Of these, 16 had found it easy to find that information.

The students rated their experience of using the scheme with the following statements:

- I am very satisfied with the service I received through the scheme (10)
- I can now find information in the library more easily (14)
- I have been able to expand my knowledge for my leisure activities (3)

- I now feel confident enough to go on to seek out other resources from libraries (7)
- The scheme has allowed me to improve my learning skills (7)
- I have found that library resources will be valuable to me (13)
- Visiting another library has encouraged me to go on to other learning, such as college courses (2)

The experience of visiting another library proved to be successful for the art students with the majority (14) saying that their information finding skills had improved. Only one commented that: *There are too many numbers to write down what I am looking for.*

In response to the question asking if they would use more libraries if the scheme was extended, ten replied that they would. The reasons for this were given as follows:

*Because I can go to libraries which are closer*

*If there are more libraries it gives us more chance of information*

*Some libraries may not have the information I need so I have a choice of going to other libraries*

*Because the library at the college is too limited*

*Because this library may not have everything you want, so you can go somewhere that might*

*The more ways to get research the better*

*More material to use*

*Because there are many libraries in my area so it would be even easier for me*

*This is because I could find out more information on artists and more artists to link my work to*

In addition to students from the local college, the Harrison Learning Centre (HLC) at the University stated that as part of the project plan they would identify learners through the Ticket to Find scheme.<sup>10</sup> This scheme is a joint initiative between the university, the further education college, the Adult Education Service and Wolverhampton City Council. It enables adult learners to develop skills by accessing the correct information for their needs. Two learners were identified who may benefit from INSPIRE, but they have not yet taken up the opportunity to access the university library.

The HLC has also had two referrals from the public library sector, both of which have been appropriately referred. One 'entry' interview has been completed from a learner who is a graduate from Asia on a two month placement with his company, visiting Wolverhampton. He approached the public library with an enquiry about bio-informatics. He was unaware that he could use the university library and was both surprised and pleased to be allowed access. Through the INSPIRE scheme he was able to access appropriate and useful material that helped him prepare a doctoral proposal for further study at a British university. In his 'exit' survey he mentioned that he travels frequently and would find extended access to libraries in other regions a useful resource.

The HLC has produced leaflets which promote the INSPIRE scheme, one of which is a user's guide to the university library and one of which includes information about the public libraries in

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<sup>10</sup> <http://asp2.wlv.ac.uk/tickettofind/home.htm> (accessed 4 May 2004)

Wolverhampton. These have been taken by students, so it is possible that there are increased visits to the public library sector which are not being recorded as referrals. It is expected that leaflets placed in the Adult Education Service and UK Online Centres will result in more referrals.

### **Feedback from staff**

Ten telephone interviews were conducted with library staff. The number is relatively low because only the names of staff who had dealt with referrals were put forward and these were few at the time of interviewing. There is, however, further feedback from staff which includes anecdotal evidence from other staff involved in the training.

There was generally positive feedback from all library staff involved in the pilot projects and from the partner organisations in relation to INSPIRE. Successful access agreements already exist in the West Midlands and it was felt that the INSPIRE scheme would formalise and build on these agreements as well as extending access for learners. The scheme allowed the libraries in the area to improve their working relationships and to establish guides to each other's collections. It was thought that this 'awareness raising' of resources held elsewhere was an important outcome of the project and would be a valuable staff tool to help enquirers.

Co-operative working throughout the project has resulted in many of the participating libraries devising guides to their libraries, which are being placed in the other libraries in the West Midlands. The guides include information about collections, as well as opening times, directions and access and will play an important role in promoting libraries to users.

As all of the training sessions were held at the university libraries, this was used as an opportunity for visiting staff from public and college libraries to be given a guided tour. This was reported by those staff who attended to be extremely worthwhile, as not only were they able to see the building but also the collections held. Return visits by university library staff to public libraries are planned, and it is intended that these visits will become a part of on-going staff training.

### **Staff skills**

Library staff were asked if they considered that INSPIRE users required more or less or the same help as other users. This question was posed to determine if the staff felt that they needed different skills or needed to use their existing skills more. The majority answered that the users referred through INSPIRE required the same help that they would give to other users. Library staff felt that they always gave as much help as the user needed for every enquiry. Two respondents had found that the user required more help in using the university library catalogue.

When asked if the experience of helping INSPIRE learners had developed their own awareness of the needs of different types of learner, six of those who had direct contact with learners said yes. Two stated that they were aware already, but others, although they felt they had a general awareness, felt that the level at which to respond varied. Members of the public perhaps required more explanation or wanted information for a different purpose than a student and the INSPIRE experience had helped them appreciate this.

Library staff were also asked if the experience had enhanced their own skills in advising learners. Four replied that it had; one had developed a greater knowledge of the resources in the public library sector and another in the university library.

In response to the question: “Do you have any evidence that the ‘learners’ have developed or improved their information finding skills during the course of the pilot scheme?”, of those who had, this was mostly anecdotal. One member of staff reported enthusiasm from the users referred and another that the experience of visiting another library was beneficial. One had felt that there was a general reluctance from the learners to find information for themselves, although this seems to have been only the experience of this staff member.

#### **Extension of the INSPIRE scheme**

The enthusiasm for the INSPIRE scheme was endorsed by the responses to the following statements. Interviewees were asked to state how they felt about extending the scheme to other libraries in the area and to other regions.

- I think that this is a positive development and will help learners and researchers

All ten respondents said yes to this. Comments included:

*It is an extension of what libraries already do*

*It will raise awareness of the resources available*

*It will enable people who may not have the confidence normally to go into another library, to access that library for information.*

- I think that it is good to encourage learning and acquirement of skills

All ten respondents were positive about this statement.

- I have concerns about staffing levels

This question and the one following were asked because some of the larger institutions in the *Libraries and Learners in London* scheme had expressed concern about large numbers of additional users. In reality this has not happened and for the majority of the interviewees this was not expected to be a problem. Three respondents from public libraries said that they did have concerns but this may be due to concerns in this sector anyway. Other comments on this statement included:

*Not a problem if staff are fully briefed. We already have schemes running*

*Public libraries are used to this*

*It takes time to fill in the form so would prefer this to be streamlined*

*Not really as the (university library) help desk is staffed at all times*

*We are used to dealing with members of the public (FE college)*

*May have a problem if people are referred in the evening (university)*

- I have concerns about the impact on our collections

*Difficult to say what impact there would be on borrowing. For reference, differs from public libraries because large number of copies. If referred from other HE institutions may have different expectations of borrowing*

*Would sign up as an external borrower (FE college). HE library would provide reference only*

*Yes, have concerns that there are a lot of access schemes where people can borrow for nothing and even if using resources for reference only, they are still taking them away from fee-paying students*

*No concerns but would like to extend to borrowing rights*

*No, the referrals from public libraries have been appropriate*

*Yes, to some extent. If collection development managed properly, it should be OK (public)*

*Yes, could be an excuse for public libraries not to review their own collections (public)*

Other comments included:

*Should be extended to other HE institutions*

*Generally very positive about extended access (public), although may have problems with other sectors*

*As soon as extended the better*

*Extra access would be very useful for university students*

*Good idea to try this in other regions. Useful to develop links with other libraries in the area.*

*Good to open up access to resources*

Interviewees were asked about the benefits of having information available about collections in other libraries. The responses to this were as follows:

*From staff point of view, it will enable libraries to promote their specialist collections. Useful if, for example, knew where local studies information was held*

*Good resource tool*

*Really useful. Increases potential for sharing information*

*Very useful. Public libraries need to access special collections*

*Provides a basis for appropriate referrals to other libraries. Will increase customer satisfaction*

*Beneficial but may be frustrating if cannot borrow. May have implications for Inter-Library Loans*

*For library staff and users*

When asked whether they would prefer the information about collections to be available in hard copy or web based, five stated both and five preferred web based only. The main reason given for a web based resource was that it would be easier to update and it would be more accessible.

In general, the staff who contributed to the telephone interview process were positive about extending access to learners. The feeling that “this is what libraries do anyway” is at the basis of their enthusiasm. A scheme which offers members of the public a wider choice of resources has raised only slight concerns about collection management and staffing.

#### **Other feedback on INSPIRE**

A final question to interviewees was to ask them for any general comments on the INSPIRE scheme. These included:

*Excellent scheme. Positive contribution to lifelong learning. (Suggest) widen publicity of scheme to non-library venues such as community centres*

*I feel very positive about the scheme*

*Staffordshire are fortunate to have open access so there hasn't been much achieved in terms of numbers. However, feel very enthusiastic about the scheme and we have been working together on information about each other's libraries and collections*

*Wish had had more time for the pilot. However, useful because relationships formed between public libraries and university libraries. Struggled with attracting 'displaced learners' through the scheme because had to rely partly on outside organisation to promote and advertise scheme. Difficult to get paperwork completed within time scale*

*Scheme will make larger libraries more accessible and approachable*

*Worthwhile project*

*Lifelong learning is a good concept which this scheme will facilitate*

*Response to scheme higher than expected.*

#### **Feedback on training materials**

Part of the remit for the INSPIRE West Midlands pilot project was to create training materials and procedures which could be delivered to the pilot groups so that staff were confident in running the pilots. As the experiences of the staff involved in the West Midlands pilots will contribute to the development of procedures and training for the INSPIRE England scheme, staff were asked during the telephone interviews for their views.

Respondents all found that the training they had received was at the right level and was sufficient for their needs. A few would have liked more time within the pilot scheme to organise further cascade training. Enquiry desk staff were briefed and none reported any difficulties in running the scheme.

#### **Feedback on procedures manual**

At first glance library staff felt that the procedures manual contained too much paperwork, but when each library extracted the relevant forms for their use, it was generally thought to be suitable for the pilot. One university library and one public library have condensed the manual into a single sheet of instructions for ease of use for staff, so these will be looked at when revising the procedures for INSPIRE England. One of these took the form of a flow chart. Photocopying forms in different colours for easy identification was also thought to be useful.

To collect the number of referrals, each library was required to complete a statistical return. This was problematic where open access exists, as in Staffordshire, and will have to be investigated further in the roll-out of INSPIRE England. Many libraries are familiar with counting visitors and enquiries manually, but electronic monitoring would be more accurate, and the feasibility of this will be considered as the scheme is developed.

The 'Letter of Introduction' and the 'passport card' were thought to be useful for an introduction into another library, in particular for entry into a university library, which one member of staff felt might be intimidating for some visitors. Another interviewee commented that it would give the card bearer some confidence. The pilot card was thought to be too flimsy and a plastic card

was preferred. One respondent would like to see photographs on the card. Many libraries already telephone ahead when referring users to another library and it was felt that this should still be done wherever possible. It was suggested that this may act as an introduction instead of a card.

The INSPIRE leaflet created for the pilot was adapted locally by two libraries. It was felt that any development of a national leaflet should consider the need for local information to be included and that a template which could be completed locally might be a preferred option. There was also a comment that the leaflet should be made simpler with bulleted points, although it is necessary to have a balance between too much information and not enough.

In general, it was thought that a leaflet was useful to add to any explanation by staff and to be available to pick up in the library and in other venues.

## **Sustainability**

The pilot projects have demonstrated that the INSPIRE referral and access scheme is an important addition to the services which libraries provide. For the success of this scheme to continue in the West Midlands it is necessary to have a sustainability strategy. Although this will be discussed in detail with MLA West Midlands, the opportunity to discuss it with representatives from all three West Midlands pilot groups arose at a joint meeting in February. It is suggested that the following actions would be necessary to enable the referral scheme to continue:

- On-going co-operation and communication between higher education institutions and library authorities. This will involve communication about access arrangements, directions to library buildings, opening hours, contact details and ensuring there is a supply of leaflets from the 'partner' organisation.
- Approaches to be made to other higher education institutions in the area to suggest improved access and referral arrangements.
- Long-term publicity and marketing of the scheme. This would include publicity within libraries, but also extended to non-library venues, such as community centres and Adult Education centres.
- Staff training. On-going training in 'customer care', the Disability Discrimination Act and cultural diversity, as well as specific training on the Inspire scheme. Although staff training on customer care is part of library services already, library staff should be encouraged to refresh their training if necessary in order to be prepared to deal with enquiries from different types of learner.
- Culture change to promote more open access to learning resources. This may involve a change in staff attitudes which could be addressed by training.
- To consider the possibility of long-term impact on staff resources, where it is identified that staff are required to provide greater assistance to adult learners, especially in academic libraries.
- A continuation of the mapping of library collections and this resource to be made available in a 'user friendly' way for public and staff use.

If these suggestions are adopted as strategic steps towards sustainability of the scheme, the aims and objectives of INSPIRE West Midlands will be met.

## Conclusions

The pilot schemes in the West Midlands have provided a successful beginning to the INSPIRE referral and access scheme in the region. Although two of the pilot groups have not met their numerical targets of 20 learners being referred to other libraries because of the short timescale and staff leave, there have been other results. There has been obvious enthusiasm from the staff involved for the concept of opening up library resources to a wider audience. Library staff like to be able to respond fully to enquiries to provide the best service possible to their customers and the INSPIRE scheme offers another choice if the resources in their own library do not provide sufficient information. Staff skills are being expanded through the experience of dealing with a variety of learners requiring differing levels of information to their regular users.

Staff have welcomed the opportunities provided for co-operative working with other library services. Working relationships have been developed and improved. In parts of the West Midlands, good access arrangements exist already and the INSPIRE scheme has enabled libraries to formalise these agreements and work together to publicise their co-operation. The opportunity to work with community groups has also been welcomed, although it is unfortunate that the timescale of the project has prevented these relationships from being developed to their full potential.

Promotion of the scheme has enabled libraries involved to produce leaflets which give information about INSPIRE as well as about their own library facilities and directional information. Staff knowledge of resources and collections held by other libraries has been improved through the pilot scheme and this will develop as the mapping process continues for INSPIRE England.

There were some concerns that there was too much paperwork in the pilot scheme and this was a barrier for staff and could be a potential barrier to library users. These concerns will be addressed in the development of procedures and training materials for the roll-out of INSPIRE to the West Midlands and to other regions and a more streamlined version produced.

Monitoring of the scheme was necessary to fulfil the criteria for funding, but this has raised problems, especially in the Stoke-on-Trent pilot, where there is open access to the university library. The necessity to count the numbers of referrals will pose further challenges as the scheme expands to involve more institutions with open access policies. It will be important, however, to measure the impact of the scheme in order to promote INSPIRE to other institutions and regions. The performance of the scheme will also have to continue to be monitored in terms of quality and the advantages it provides to learners. This may take the form of a survey, as in the pilot scheme, but may be carried out as a sampling exercise. There is also the possibility of devising a 'postcard' for learners to complete to let libraries know their experience of using INSPIRE.

The timescale of the pilot projects has led to a few problems in meeting the targets. Time was spent at the beginning of the project developing procedures in consultation with the pilot groups, and this took longer than anticipated. The briefing of all staff was an important part of the pilot but again took time. When the scheme finally started in mid-March there remained little time for learners to be identified and introduced to the scheme. The lesson to be learned from the pilot projects in the West Midlands is that sufficient time should be built in to the roll-out of the scheme to ensure that all staff are briefed and publicity is produced and distributed, before the start of the scheme.

Although the late start of the pilot scheme has meant that relatively few people have been referred so far, the surveys returned to date have shown that learners have found the scheme to be useful. There is a clear benefit in extending access to collections and providing opportunities through the scheme. It is also important to realise that many university students and non-users of libraries are not aware of the information resources and internet facilities the public library service now offers. The promotion of the public library service will lead to an increase in visitor numbers. Likewise some university libraries now offer public access computers and this is also a service which could be publicised.

Many academic libraries offer reference only access but from the few comments on the survey forms, some learners expect to have borrowing rights. This may be an area for discussion as the INSPIRE scheme expands.

## Recommendations

- Continue to map collections in the region and raise awareness of collections and facilities through targeted promotion.
- Continue to build on co-operative working between library sectors This will benefit both library staff and learners.
- Encourage and formalise agreements with other libraries in the region.
- Encourage academic libraries to expand access and borrowing rights.
- Promote the scheme within libraries, but also outside, for example in community centres, to attract non-users and potential learners.
- Market the scheme to library staff as an extra resource to help library users and potential learners.
- Publicise directions to libraries, opening times and facilities available locally to all libraries within the scheme.
- Allow sufficient time to expand the INSPIRE scheme to the rest of the West Midlands region.
- Ensure that funding is available to manage and sustain the expansion of INSPIRE in the West Midlands.
- Incorporate briefing sessions on the INSPIRE scheme into staff training programmes, including staff induction.
- Monitor the impact of the scheme on collections and staff resources, both in terms of numbers and qualitative information.