



Your Library Your Space

Westmeath County Library
& Archives Development Plan

2010-2015

Westmeath County Council, as one of the key public agencies charged with civic leadership and cultural/community development, recognises the importance of quality of life in the context of a fast changing cultural environment. The further development of the Library Service within the County is both central to providing inclusive cultural and educational opportunities and a force for improving social/cultural cohesion.

Branching Out-Future Directions is the national policy document driving the development of the public library service in Ireland. It states “The Public Library Service is socially inclusive. Individual public libraries play a very important community role as centres of knowledge, information and culture. They have the added advantage of being open to everyone, whatever their age, education or nationality”.

This six year **Library Development Plan 2010-2015** reaffirms Westmeath County Council’s commitment to the development of its Library Service. The aim of the Plan is to build upon the progress achieved to date under the two previous plans (1997-2003 and 2004-2009) at a difficult time when the Council faces into a period of economic uncertainty. This Plan outlines objectives and supporting strategies to underpin the future development of the service.

Mission Statement

“To enhance the quality of life for all our users by providing a modern library and information service which stimulates knowledge and supports lifelong learning, imagination and recreation in an inclusive and accessible manner”

This statement sums up the purpose of Westmeath County Library Service and will underpin its work over the next six years. The Library Service wishes to widen its membership base, be more responsive to citizens and become more socially inclusive.



Westmeath Library Service: A Profile

Library services are provided via a network of seven branch libraries and through the primary schools service with administrative support from Library Headquarters. Membership of the Library Service in 2009 was 14,809 and 321,482 books and materials in other media were borrowed. In 2003, before the service embarked on a sustained programme of capital development, membership was 10,250 with 211,987 items borrowed. Westmeath Library holds over 250,000 books across its branch network. It also provides a wide range of general and specialist services to its members and users, these include:-

- Fiction, non-fiction and children's book lending
- DVD's CD's and MP3's, collections of multi media items
- Audio books and large print books for visual and aurally impaired people.
- Reference collections
- Local history, genealogical and archives enquiry service.
- School service with teacher support materials available.
- Internet and e-mail service for members
- Website access to a number of major electronic reference databases and local history research resources.
- Online access to book borrowing and membership accounts.
- Access to countywide and a national request service for materials that are not available in Westmeath.
- Programme of readings, exhibitions and cultural activities throughout the branch library network for adults and children.

Achievements in Library Development 1997-2009

Over the lifetime of the previous two Development Plans the following has been achieved:-

- an increase in annual bookfund provision up to 2008 and continued maintenance of bookfund in difficult economic circumstances.
- Full computerisation of all seven branch libraries and the schools service 1998-2004
- Provision of Public Access computers at all branch libraries providing access to internet, e-mail, Microsoft office and educational databases.
- Re-launch of the Primary Schools Mobile Service in 1999 and in the period since then, up to its withdrawal in 2008 due to Department of Education grant aid cuts, 217,926 books were lent to Primary Schools throughout County Westmeath.
- Completion of a network of new libraries at:
Athlone (2004) Castlepollard (2004), Ballynacarrigy (2005), Kilbeggan (2006), Moate (2008), Mullingar (2009).
Killucan library was also relocated and refurbished in 2003.
- Public opening hours were extended at Athlone, Castlepollard, Kilbeggan, Moate and Mullingar with the opening of the new libraries with enhanced staffing provision.

Moving Forward: Strategic Plan 2010 – 2015

To guide our work and to take us forward in a planned and coherent manner we have outlined our Objectives and Strategies for the next six years. To achieve some of the Objectives in this Plan resources will be required in terms of finance and human resources to deliver on planned new library service provision.

Objectives for the Library Service

1 Provide and improve library buildings making them “accessible to all”

2 Develop as a resource for children and young people

3 Develop as a resource for Information and Lifelong Learning

4 Develop new and improve existing services for the socially excluded and marginalised

5 Become a centre for Culture and Imagination.

6 Collect and make accessible the written heritage of County Westmeath

7 Market and promote the library and its services throughout the County

8 Manage and develop the County Library as a learning organisation

9 Utilise Information and Communications Technologies



Strategies to implement each of the individual objectives:

Objective 1 **Provide and Improve Library Buildings making them accessible to all**

- Progress plans for the provision of a new library for Kinnegad.
- Seek a site for a new full-time library for Moate.
- Investigate provision of a part - time library in the Delvin/Clonmellon area of North Westmeath.
- Provide a new Library Administrative HQ and County Archive to support the development of the service.
- Ensure provision of appropriate and sufficient staffing for each new library project undertaken.
- Adopt a policy that all new branch libraries should be centrally located, have accessible shop frontage, and have adequate parking provision.
- Review the location of branch libraries within towns and villages to ensure accessibility and visibility and continue improvements in the area of access for the disabled through improved signage, ramping and layout changes where necessary.
- Co-operate and explore partnerships options with community groups and organise for service delivery in communities too small to sustain a stand alone permanent library (e.g. Housebound service/Nursing home Service).
- Ensure all new libraries include adequate space for young people and include a multi-purpose space for community cultural and educational programming.



Objective

2

Develop as a Resource for Children and Young People

- Foster and promote an interest in reading through the Summer Reading Challenge programme and other Reader Development initiatives.
- Expand children's outreach activities to develop a year round programme of events.
- Target teachers with information about services offered.
- Increase the number of school visits to library branches.
- Continue literacy support services for teachers via the branch libraries and schools service.
- Undertake co-operative initiatives with the Arts Service to enhance the experience of Arts participation for children in our libraries.
- Design spaces for young people in our libraries.
- Increase investment in books and non-book materials for children and young people.
- Pilot toy libraries including toys for children with disabilities in Athlone and Mullingar libraries in conjunction with local disability partnership.
- Develop local history education outreach programme with the primary schools which compliment the school curricula.



Objective

3

Develop as a resource for Information and Lifelong Learning

- Continue to provide a quality book lending service.
- Continue to provide and expand the range of multi-media resources.
- Specifically address literacy and reading development, general basic education and skills development in partnership with Adult Education Providers (e.g. Westmeath VEC) and provide support through library specific collections.
- Work with the County Arts Service to actively promote participation in the Arts at community level and individual level through the use of suitable library facilities for education, training and self development for all age groups.
- Establish working partnerships with schools.
- Place digitised local history materials on an expanded website.
- Provide a 24/7 service through access to electronic reference databases and increase the number of resources available via the Council website for learners.
- Provide a short training course for staff on the use and content of local history resources, delivered using internal and external expertise.



Objective

4

Develop new and improve existing services for the socially excluded and marginalised

- Work with the Community and Enterprise Department of Westmeath County Council in identifying opportunities to target specific marginalised groups.
- Undertake a survey of current membership to determine areas of potential service development.
- Investigate the feasibility of undertaking a survey of non-users to identify excluded groups and areas.
- Expand the housebound service in conjunction with Foroige and other voluntary organisations.
- Continue to organise outreach events which specifically focus on non-traditional audiences and new ethnic communities with a view to promoting active library usage amongst these groups.
- Continue to diversify book and multi-media collections to reflect different interests, abilities and backgrounds.
- Research and develop new ways of providing library services to small communities who cannot sustain a stand alone library.
- Ensure that our buildings are designed to welcome people and to offer comfortable, sufficient and appropriate space.

Objective

5

Become a Centre for Culture and Imagination

- Work with the Arts and Heritage sections of Westmeath County Council to host exhibitions and events at branch library level.
- Participate in the National Cultural Heritage Project under the auspices of An Chomhairle Leabharlanna.
- Develop collections of music in branch libraries.
- Develop collections of materials in the languages of ethnic minorities living in local communities.



Objective

6

Collect and make accessible the written heritage of County Westmeath

- Implement a rolling programme of digitisation of primary source material in the local history and archives area.
- Place appropriate digitised resources on the County Council's library website.
- Ensure a comprehensive collection of books and printed material, microfilm and other multi-media resources is in place in the Athlone and Mullingar libraries Local Studies departments for research and educational purposes.
- Provide funding through bookfund provision to enable continued acquisition of primary material relating to the County.
- Encourage donations of private collections to the Library.
- Develop a policy for the collection, storage and availability of archives under the supervision of an Archivist when one is employed by the Local Authority.

Objective

7

Market and promote the library and its services throughout the County

- Target new families with information about services.
- Enhance and develop the library website via Westmeath County Council's web presence.
- Establish and maintain regular news links with the local papers to promote and publicise events.
- Produce modern, quality printed promotional literature listing services, opening hours, events etc.
- Ensure that external direction and signage adequately highlights each library service point.
- Commission a programme of non-user market research.
- Investigate the feasibility, including legal aspects, of providing on-line application for membership.



Objective

8

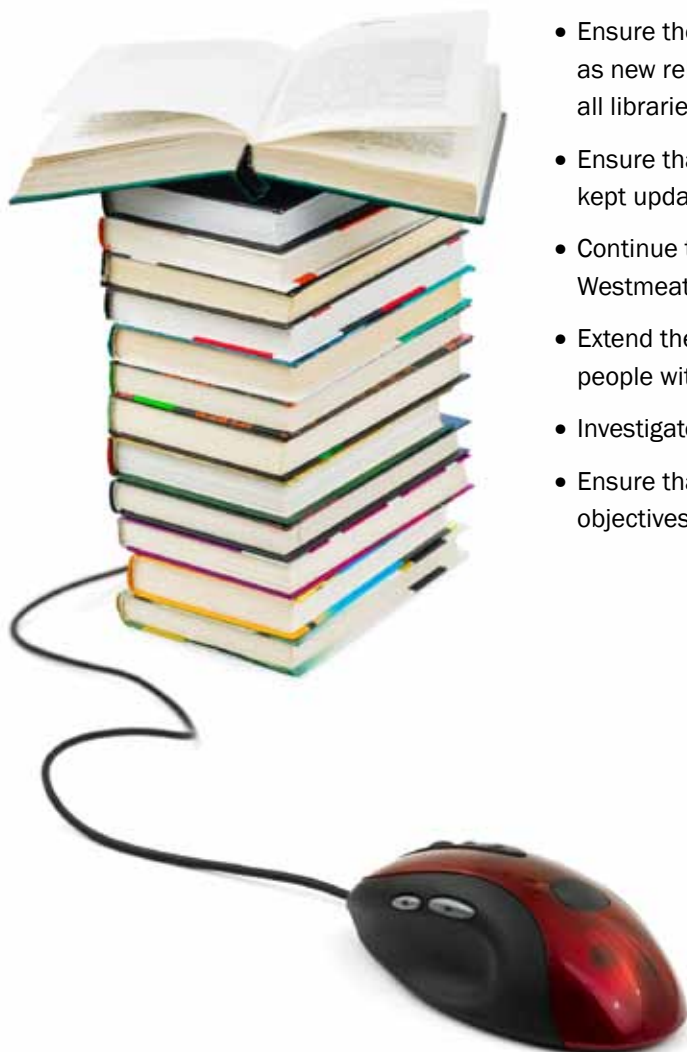
Manage and develop the County Library as a learning organisation

- Ensure ongoing implementation of PMDS in the Library Service.
- Establish an opportunity for annual feedback and consultative meetings with all staff.
- Use electronic media especially the Library Management System 'Horizon' to feed management information to all branch libraries,
- Maintain regular budget information and monitor expenditure.
- Source and provide library specific training and identify training needs via the PMDS process.

Objective

9

Utilise Information and Communications Technologies



- Ensure the Library Management System is continually updated as new releases are provided and that it is rolled out promptly to all libraries.
- Ensure that the public computers at all library service points are kept updated.
- Continue to develop web related services in conjunction with Westmeath County Council's IT Department.
- Extend the range of software available to users including for people with disabilities.
- Investigate the provision of an e-books service
- Ensure that all investment in technology is proofed against our objectives of user needs, inclusion and accessibility.

Monitoring and Review of the Development Plan

The Plan will be reviewed annually over its six year period with the actions to be undertaken decided upon each year. The success of the Plan will also be measured by its achievement in meeting the Government's national performance indicators for libraries in addition to any local indicators that may be developed during the lifetime of the Plan. The Library Service will continue to monitor the service indicators and adjust services to achieve targets. It will consult with user groups and participate in any proposed national surveys to enhance Library Service provision.

For the success of the Plan it will be necessary for Westmeath County Council to invest further in staff resources, staff development and capital development in the context of any new libraries to be undertaken during the lifetime of the Plan. The Library Service requires the continued commitment and support of Westmeath County Council to provide a quality service to its customers.



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