ANNUAL REPORT 2018
2019
BRINGING IDEAS, IMAGINATION, INFORMATION, KNOWLEDGE AND CREATIVITY TO PEOPLE’S LIVES AND COMMUNITIES
I am delighted to introduce our Annual Report for 2018/19 in my position as Chair of the Board of Trustees for Libraries Unlimited. This has been another important year in the growth and prosperity of the charity, as we have extended our reach and impact, and continue to trial new ideas and initiatives as one of the country’s leading library services. It is with huge thanks to our Board of Trustees, our network of brilliant Friends Groups, our ever-committed volunteers and talented and enthusiastic staff, that libraries across Devon and Torbay have achieved so much this past year.

My thanks also go to our supportive commissioners at Devon County Council and Torbay Council, to our funders at Arts Council England and those who donate to support us, all of whom play a vital part in ensuring that libraries continue to play a transformative role within their communities. I joined the Board in December 2018 having worked closely with the team over the previous years, and I am more excited now than ever about the future of this fantastic charity.

We have been through a number of important changes over the past few months, which I believe will make this charity even stronger and more resilient in the long term. We have also been able to introduce and develop a number of new strategies, policies and programmes that set us in good stead for the future. We said goodbye to our founding Chief Executive, Ciara Eastell, at the end of this financial year, and therefore have her to thank for her inspiring leadership, particularly in those transformative years moving from local government to Libraries Unlimited. I am very grateful to Joanne Launder, Head of Service Delivery, who temporarily took the helm until our new Chief Executive, Alex Kittow, was able to join us in June. It has been a privilege to work with Joanne and it is great to now be working alongside Alex and I genuinely believe that we are entering an exciting period for Libraries Unlimited.

We had several Trustees who stepped down during the past 12 months: my predecessor, Julie Dent as well as Janet Fisher, Ann Draisey, Steve Wallwork and David Lockwood. I would like to thank them for their vital commitment to the charity. We welcome two new trustees to the Board: George Lossius and Sarah O’Brien, who bring with them a wealth of experience, and I am very grateful already for their commitment to this organisation.

We still have changes and challenges in the years ahead as we look to renegotiate our contract with Devon County Council and explore more ways to ensure the future viability of our charity. There is no doubt in my mind that we will continue to need to innovate and evolve in order to meet the needs of our customers and communities over the coming years. We will need to remain focussed on our long-term strategy and our vision for libraries of the future to ensure that people still see libraries as the vital community hubs that they are. I look forward to working with Alex, the Board and you all during this next exciting chapter.

Once again, thank you for your ongoing commitment and dedication to the success of Libraries Unlimited.

Professor William Harvey
Chair of the Board of Trustees for Libraries Unlimited
Looking back over the activities and achievements from the year 2018/19, it’s clear that Libraries Unlimited has come a long way in its first three years. This Annual Report is a great opportunity to celebrate all that has been achieved so far, by a team of highly motivated, dedicated and talented staff. I congratulate everyone involved for everything that has been delivered.

This year was special for several reasons, largely as it was the first year that Torbay Libraries came under our management and has also seen our first year of activity as an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation. Both of these opportunities have allowed us to reach and engage with thousands more people across the county and invite them into our welcoming and vibrant spaces.

Our charity has continued to support thousands of people and have a positive impact on the lives of many amongst our communities. From job seekers, entrepreneurs and new families to refugees, business people and rough sleepers, I’ve seen a huge variety of people enjoying and utilising what our libraries have to offer, and I hope that we can continue to embrace a diverse customer base over the coming years.

I joined as Chief Executive in June 2019, and I have been amazed by everyone’s commitment to libraries. There is clearly huge appetite amongst staff, Friends Groups and Trustees for growth, diversification and development, and I’m honoured to be the person to drive the charity forward as we look for new and exciting ways to deliver our mission and core purposes.

The future, for me, looks incredibly bright, and the Board of Trustees and Leadership Team are working on our strategy for the next 10 years. In the more immediate future, we will continue to make improvements to our IT infrastructure and support systems, as well as looking at new opportunities to increase our revenue.

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Alex Kittow, Chief Executive
Annual Report: Key Statistics 2018/19

- £8,573,000 turnover
- 11,058 events attended by 200,515
- 347 number of communities served by Mobile Library
- 443 Mobile Library total number of stops
- 3,276,630 total number of visits to our libraries
- 372,354 total wi-fi hours
- 111,389 total eBook downloads
- 101,756 total large print loans
- 153,603 attended children’s and young people’s events
- 89,175 children and young people members
- 74,877 total media loans (DVDs, CDs, Language Courses)
- 214,882 hours of PC use
- 500 total volunteers
- 28,557 total volunteer hours
- 153,919 active users
- 620 people served through Home Library Service
- 59,277 number of digital magazine users
- 153,603 attended children’s and young people’s events
- 101,756 total large print loans
- 54,254 digital magazine downloads
- 4,008 number of digital magazine users
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**CALENDAR OF THE YEAR 2018-2019**

**APRIL 2018**
1st
We officially became one of the first charity Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisations (NPO)

2nd
Libraries Unlimited took on the running of Torbay Libraries on behalf of Torbay Council

16th
The Libraries Unlimited team, stakeholders and special guests gathered to mark the 2nd birthday of Libraries Unlimited

MAY 2018
1st
A new artwork, *The White Stag* by local artist Woody Fox, was installed at Barnstaple library

2nd
A new partnership Work Club launched at Bideford Library, offering people support and advice to get back into work

21st-27th
Dementia Friends sessions were held in Cullompton Library alongside the Cullompton Dementia Alliance

26th
Exmouth Festival came to Exmouth Library offering author talks, workshops and children’s craft activities in collaboration with the Exeter Authors Association

**JUNE 2018**
7th
Libraries Unlimited hosted workshops at the Libraries Connected Conference, sharing our learning from the Unlimited Potential Project with other library services and organisations across the country

11th
Head of Service Delivery, Joanne Launder, and Service Delivery Manager, Tabitha Witherick, spoke at the Next Library Conference in Berlin

13th-14th
We hosted three sessions with our Friends Groups to get their input and ideas on the future of our charity

16th
Local author Claire Barker officially opened the newly refurbished children’s library in Braunton. The refurbishment was

17th
Exeter Library Centre Manager, Emily Macaulay, was named runner-up in the 2018 Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals’ Diversity Award

18th
We hosted a session to bring Torbay Friends together with Libraries Unlimited leadership Team and local staff to get to know each other and share ideas

19th
Libraries Connected Chief Executive, Isobel Harter, visited Exeter Library to find out more about our work over the past few years

**JULY 2018**
7th
We launched a new Book Club in partnership with BBC Radio Devon. The first book was *Still Alice* by Lisa Genova to connect with the theme of dementia and dementia awareness

8th
Darren Henley, Chief Executive of Arts Council England, visited Barnstaple and Ilfracombe libraries to hear about the arts and cultural offerings within our libraries

7th
Crediton Library organised a new literary festival in the library, it proved hugely successful and welcomed hundreds of local people, authors and partners

21st
As part of its Refuges Week, Exeter library invited young refugees to the library to enjoy all of the services on offer and make new connections

28th
Service Delivery Manager, Frances Toft, spoke at the Brilliant Things Conference to share our *Fun Palace* project with the Cornwall Museums Partnership

June
Exeter Library hosted the University of Exeter Grand Challenges event in the FabLab, welcoming lots of students to get hands-on with our digital making equipment

**JULY 2018**
2nd
Our brand new library opened in Topsham within the new community hub, Nancy Potter House, offering the community a bright, modern and welcoming new library to enjoy

5th
Our team headed to London to host our second Unlimited Value Action Research Summit to discuss and share the findings from our research project into the value of public libraries

**AUGUST 2018**
Aug
In August a number of our libraries updated our Riddle Room Project, helping to fight period poverty by becoming donation points for people to give unwanted sanitary products that can be collected by women and girls in need

Aug
Seaton Library started a six week programme of Drink Wise Age Well workshops, promoting positive health and wellbeing for over 50s

**SEPTEMBER 2018**
11th
Head of Service Delivery, Joanne Launder, and Service Delivery Manager, Tabitha Witherick, spoke at the Next Library Conference in Berlin

13-14th
We hosted three sessions with our Friends Groups to get their input and ideas on the future of our charity

13-18th
Exeter Library hosted White Glove Experiences, giving people exclusive access to Exeter Library’s treasures from the stacks

**OCTOBER 2018**
6th-7th
31 libraries hosted Fun Palaces, with 4,500 people joining together to try hands-on arts, science, sports, craft and tech activities in libraries

9th
16th To celebrate Libraries Week, all libraries held a coffee morning and fundraising event, inviting new and existing customers to come and enjoy the delights of their local library

12th-14th
WCW: Women of the World Festival took place in 3 venues in Exeter including Exeter Library. The event is a celebration of the achievements of women and girls to place to discuss challenges and inequalities

17th
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We appointed a new Chair of our Board of Trustees, Professor William Harvey, who takes on the role following our previous Chair, Julia Dent CBE

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31 libraries hosted Fun Palaces, with 4,500 people joining together to try hands-on arts, science, sports, craft and tech activities in libraries

7th
Exeter Library was named as a winner of the Exeter Living Civic Award, jointly with CoLab

9th
Harry Potter Night was a huge success for another year, with special events at Exeter, Sidmouth, Crediton, Barnstaple and lots of other libraries

13th
Thanks to the Friends of Uffculme Library, the first Library Extra sessions were launched, increasing opening hours by 33% each week

15th
A number of our libraries collaborated with Julian House to offer a clothing rail within libraries where the public could drop off unwanted clothing and enabling the homeless community help themselves to suitable clothes to keep them warm during the winter months

16th
Our Board of Trustees spent a day together to share experiences and ideas and plan for the future

18th
Friends Groups and Library Supervisors from Devon and Torbay were invited to Exeter to meet our new Chair, Will Harvey, and the Board

**DECEMBER 2018**
1st
We appointed a new Chair of our Board of Trustees, Professor William Harvey, who takes on the role following our previous Chair, Julie Dent CBE

2nd
South Molton Library celebrated its 10th Anniversary of being located in the Amory Centre in the heart of the buzzing market town

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**FEBRUARY 2019**
1st
Barnstaple Library became host to the Reliabulous Sounds installation by Dreadnought South West, exploring one hundred years of women’s activism in the South West, with the artwork then moving to Exeter Library

3rd
Bideford Library hosted a screening of *Billy the Kid* as part of our new Evolve programme of events and activities

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Artistic Liz Johnson and technologist Kyle Hirani hosted *The Lost Librarian* workshops at Exeter, St Thomas and Topsham libraries inviting the public to help design the interactive puzzle

16th
Local author Claire Barker officially opened the newly refurbished children’s library in Braunton. The refurbishment was made possible thanks to a legacy donation and extra support from the Friends of Braunton Library

**MARCH 2019**
1st
Exeter Library hosted a sell-out event with well-known comedian Arthur Smith – *Laughs, Stories, a Song and a Poem*

4th
Barnstaple, Exeter and Paignton libraries joined the fight against hygiene poverty as they became official beauty spots and we started a new partnership with fellow Nesta New Radical, Beauty Banks

7th
Exeter Library was named as a winner of the Exeter Living Civic Award, jointly with CoLab

9th
Paignton Library hosted a Science Hour for children as part of Science Week, attended by over 70 people!

11th-13th
We held regional Friends meetings across the county, attended by 40 Friends Groups from Devon and Torbay and their library supervisors

16th
Chair of Arts Council England, Sir Nick Serota, visited Exeter Library to meet the team and hear about our Arts Council England funded events and activities

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Library customers love a diverse range of books. Our chart below shows the five most popular titles across the entire county, and on the opposite page, a breakdown of the most popular titles loaned at each library.

ADULT FICTION Top 5

1. *The Midnight Line* by Lee Child
2. *A Delicate Truth* by John le Carré
3. *The Respectable Trade* by Philippa Gregory
4. *Night School* by Lee Child
5. *Cast Iron 6* by Peter May

ADULT NON-FICTION Top 5

1. *Booth, Tony; Dyson, Mark* *Build Your Own Home* (Brydon Lecture Series 14)
2. *Neville, Julia* *Exeter And The Trams, 1882-1931* (Plymouth Streamline Book 19)
3. *Berger, Sarah* *Queen Elizabeth II: Her Life In Our Times* (Brydon Lecture Series 17)
4. *Seierstad, Asne* *The Bookseller Of Kabul* (Plymouth Streamline Book 18)
5. *Lodge, David* *C STRING* : The World's Most Famous Prison V.I.

JUNIOR Top 5

1. *Noughts & Crosses* by Malorie Blackman
2. *Knitbone Pepper (2): The Last Circus Tiger* by Claire Barker
3. *Elmer And Butterfly* by David McKee
4. *Tabby McTat* by Donaldson, Julia
5. *Sharing A Shell* by Donaldson, Julia

Other popular titles loaned at each library.
Why we do what we do

At Libraries Unlimited we’re committed to improving and transforming people’s lives. We aim to make a positive difference to the communities that we serve, and we do this through the delivery of our six core purposes:

PROMOTING AND ENCOURAGING A LOVE OF READING
The Summer Reading Challenge is one of the most important children’s activities we deliver each year. It really helps to keep children reading throughout the holidays, ensuring they keep their reading skills on track. It also helps to promote a love and joy of reading from an early age.

In 2018, the theme was Mischief Makers, inspired by the Beano’s 80th anniversary. 11,147 children across our 50 libraries in Devon and 1,089 children across the four libraries in Torbay took part.

More children in Devon completed the challenge than EVER BEFORE!

“It liked it when I got to the end of the whole challenge, it felt amazing and I was so, so happy.”
Sam, 10, Chudleigh

“It got me back into reading and enjoying it. I love my medal. Thank you.”
Chloe, 7, Paignton

We issued 1,877,465 books and 227,849 eBooks, audiobooks and eAudiobooks to our 153,919 active users. Our digital offering has seen dramatic growth, the number of eBook downloads in Devon Libraries increased by a whopping 20,000 - taking the total downloads to 98,882, plus 12,617 in Torbay!

We distribute FREE Bookstart Baby and Treasure Packs for children and their parents to enjoy. Devon Libraries sent out 5,000 Baby Packs through Registrars and 5,500 Treasure Packs through pre-schools. Torbay Libraries sent out 800 Baby Packs and 1,600 Treasure Packs through Health Visitors. For some children, it’s their first experience of using the library and for others it’s a reminder that their local library is there for them.

We delivered 10 Bookstart Corner courses this year, enabling parents and children to play together and learn about the importance of books, rhymes, puppets and mark making in the early years. 117 Bookstart Corner packs were given out.

“The sessions have been beneficial to my son’s confidence and mixing with others. He likes the group songs and stories. Thank you.” Bookstart Corner attendee

Chulmleigh Library is a dual-purpose library, so as well as serving the local community the library is also part of Chulmleigh Academy Trust. Chulmleigh Community College, a school for 11 to 16 year olds, is set in the heart of rural Devon. Our library is within the grounds of the College.

Over the last few years, Chulmleigh Library has built a huge stock of teenage fiction, which are well read by the students. All 493 students in Years 7 to 10 take part in the Accelerated Reader programme, which is administered by our library, and has proved highly successful for the College.

This year, College students borrowed an amazing 11,926 books from our library and read an incredible 443,396,752 words! This shows the passion for reading that our teenagers have, which should encourage them to become lifelong readers and library customers.

89,175 children and young people are members of our libraries

“Numbers for our Bounce and Rhyme group have continued to increase. I understand that this is due to the closing of children’s centre’s provision of free group sessions. We are now the only group in town that is free to attend.”

Libraries go above and beyond to ensure communities have access to a whole range of information and often work in partnerships to provide free drop-in sessions or clinics on legal advice, online banking, business support, caring for animals and much more.

We launched a brand new Work Club in Bideford Library this year in partnership with a number of organisations. So far we’ve supported 191 people to get back into work, access benefits or help them to find the right services.

“On Friday he came back to tell us he had got a job!”

A man came in on Tuesday and had no computer experience at all but had been sent to the library to search for jobs. We showed him how to log on to our computers, helped him with a search and he applied for 3 jobs. On Wednesday he came in again as he had been contacted by one of the jobs he had applied for and had just had an interview. On Friday he came back to tell us he had got a job!”

Our libraries continue to provide people with day to day support in using IT equipment, printing, scanning, completing online forms and setting up email accounts. We also run gadget sessions and IT training in partnership with others. Every day, our staff go above and beyond to help people within their communities, often providing people with an important lifeline when they are feeling vulnerable.

“A new family just moved to the village and joined our toddler Bounce and Rhyme sessions. They thanked us for helping them to make friends and for signposting other places they could go to integrate more fully into the community.”
Exeter FabLab and the Pelican Project successfully applied to the Wellcome Centre for Cultures and Environments of Health at the University of Exeter with researcher Georgie Tarling, to provide workshops for young people with significant additional needs and to carry out research about how this could work in a digital making space. The FabLab ran a series of sessions with different users from the Pelican Project, trialling new methods of delivery and learning how these sessions could be adapted for wider use in the future.

“As someone who came to the first and last session I was very encouraged and proud to see what the group had achieved. There were many creative and innovative ideas that the young people had obviously invested a lot of time and energy into.” Karen Huxtable, Senior Supervisor

INSPIRING PEOPLE TO LEARN, IMAGINE, CREATE, SUCCEED AND REALISE THEIR POTENTIAL

Our two FabLabs and Business and Intellectual Property (IP) Centres in Barnstaple and Exeter libraries continue to offer people the chance to learn new or develop existing skills. In Exeter and Barnstaple Business and IP Centres, 285 people attended a total of 50 activities. These included 1:1s, workshops/talks and other events including Start-up Day. Our FabLabs hosted 44 events and activities, attended by 297 people, including 3D printing and making sessions, craft events and bespoke workshops.

Our libraries give people the chance to get involved, meet new people and learn new skills by volunteering at the library. This year, for the Summer Reading Challenge, we had support from 193 young volunteers aged between 14-19 who helped with the smooth running of the Challenge and spent time talking to those taking part about the books they had read.

We also have hundreds of people that volunteer throughout the year, helping us to run specific clubs and groups, keeping our FabLabs ticking over or helping the library to stay open for even longer. We had over 500 volunteers who contributed a massive 28,557 hours to supporting us across our 54 libraries and four mobile libraries this year, and we couldn’t have achieved what we have this year without them!

Our libraries are often considered community hubs, helping to bring people together to share new experiences and connect with and learn from others within their community. We have numerous clubs and groups that get together either within our spaces or sometimes using our resources to get together elsewhere. This year, we had over 300 reading groups that regularly come together to share their views and opinions on their latest read. We also have lots of book groups, knitting, sewing and craft clubs, IT groups and Code Clubs and Lego Clubs where young people come together. This year we became host to a Death Café, a safe and welcoming space for people to come together and talk openly about death and dying.

“A parent told us they had been apprehensive about their son attending Lego Club. He has hypertension in his fingers, so they were worried Lego Club would be too difficult for him. However, he has enjoyed coming and today was his most intricate build to date. She was really pleased at how he has become more skilled with his fingers and puts it all down to his attending Lego Club.”

Katie Blackmore volunteers at South Molton Library in North Devon, running a weekly wellbeing group called Better Together. Katie, who lives with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS) and Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME), decided to get involved with the local library when she had to leave her job at the NHS. Katie said: “The staff at the library have been so welcoming and made me feel part of the team. I’ve been invited to many quiz nights and other social events. I also enjoy helping the community and meeting new people.”

Katie runs the group at the library every Thursday, bringing people together in a relaxed and welcoming environment to make new friends, share personal experiences and discuss wellbeing and other life circumstances.

Katie says her role at the library has helped her significantly, and she enjoys being able to give back to the local community. “It has improved my life by being able to meet people in a safe and friendly environment. Running the group has restored my confidence and given me pleasure in being able to help others.”

28,557 hours given by volunteers across our libraries

3,276,630 visits

OFFERING A WELCOMING SPACE TO MEET, SOCIALISE, LEARN AND ENJOY NEW EXPERIENCES

Our libraries are a welcoming space for anyone to enjoy and relax in, and in 2018/19 we welcomed 3,276,630 visits across our libraries. This includes people coming in to loan books, using our cafes, attending events, joining a reading group, meeting friends or just coming in to sit and enjoy their surroundings.

“A young customer who is living in a supported living scheme but is sometimes not allowed to go back there during the day because of anger issues, told us he sees the library as his refuge, somewhere he can chill out and listen to music so that he can get his head together again.”
Our events programme continues to grow year on year, and so does event attendance. In 2018/19 our libraries held over 11,000 events attended by 200,515 people from teens and tots to adults. The diversity of our events programme continues to evolve and grow and we’re always looking for new ideas to explore and welcome new people into our spaces.

Councillor Roger Croad, Devon County Council’s Cabinet Member for Libraries, said: “This is great news for the service and great news for library users in the Topsham area. The new building, which Devon County Council has helped pay for, is an excellent venue for the library service; right in the heart of the community alongside a range of other public services.”

We were thrilled to open a brand-new library in Topsham this year. The new library is located in Nancy Potter House, a multipurpose community hub, built by The Exe Valley League of Friends. The facility offers a wide range of services and activities for the local community, including our contemporary new library, a café, day room, wet rooms and laundry as well as conference, training, exercise and treatment rooms for hire for business and private functions. The library has been kitted out with exciting new books and resources, a colourful children’s area, new IT equipment and will host a range of events and activities for people of all ages.

A local child has been coming to the library for several years with her grandfather. She initially came to Bounce and Rhyme sessions and has since moved on to borrowing books and DVDs, craft events and our community cinema. She is a selective mute and speaks only occasionally at home and not at all at school. She has always been greeted on arrival by cheerful and welcoming staff who have got to know her well. Recently, she responded to the familiar voice of a long-term member of staff by replying to her greeting. Everyone was amazed and grandfather remarked that this was the first speech she had ever used in the library and almost ever in a public place.

GUIDING AND SUPPORTING PEOPLE TO EXPLORE AND CONNECT TO THE WIDER WORLD

Our offer isn’t restricted to our physical spaces. We provide people with a whole range of digital opportunities and resources to help and inspire them in their everyday lives. This year, we saw 57,203 eAudiobooks downloaded across the county, as well as 111,369 eBook downloads. We introduced eMagazines for our Torbay Libraries customers for the first time this year and 55,254 eMagazines were downloaded! Our digital screening programme included four events at Exeter Library as part of the British Library’s Living Knowledge Network offering screenings to connect our local audiences with others across the country.

WiFi continues to grow in popularity across our libraries and allows people to use their own devices to explore and connect to the wider world. This year people across the county used 372,354 WiFi hours in our libraries. In addition, we still offer access to computers and a total of 214,882 computer hours were recorded across our libraries in 2018/19.

“A customer who has been supported using the internet for a number of weeks by a library volunteer is now able to check and send his own emails, send in his meter readings and other tasks with minimal supervision. He is extremely grateful to the volunteer for their help and support.”

“The mobile library has a brilliant selection of books and the staff are always very friendly and helpful.”

Our mobile library service underwent a public consultation this year to establish who uses the service and what they value about it. The public told us that they think this service is essential and it helps many rural and isolated people and communities to access reading material that they otherwise wouldn’t be able to get. This year the mobile libraries made 443 stops in 347 communities.

“The mobile libraries are vitally important, especially for people who are isolated and lonely. The service doesn’t just provide a book borrowing service, it provides vital human contact for people who wouldn’t otherwise have it. I look forward to every time the library stops where I live, they have a brilliant selection of books and the staff are always very friendly and helpful.”

2018/2019 was the last year that we delivered the library service across Devon’s three prisons, Her Majesty’s Prison (HMP) Dartmoor, HMP Exeter and HMP Channings Wood. During the year, 4,481 members loaned 39,378 items from our libraries. We worked with the Royal Voluntary Service in Devon and Torquay and Preston Rotary Clubs and Brixham Does Care in Torbay to provide a Home Library Service to customers who are isolated and often housebound, so that they can still enjoy the wonderful world of books and storytelling. This year 620 people used this service, staying connected and informed.

“Staff Conference in September 2018, recognising the difference they have made to the lives of thousands of prisoners.

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“What an absolutel lifesaver it is having books to read whilst being housebound and confined to a wheelchair: the selection of books which you provide for me I cannot thank you enough. My eyesight is gradually deteriorating and the large print enables me to thoroughly enjoy the books which you get for me from all over Devon.

“There is a saying that a book can provide a ticket for you to travel the world and I solve crimes, look after animals, read how people spend their lives and achieve certain things, gain different slants of historical events which I hadn’t thought of and transports me to different parts of the world.”

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“There is a saying that a book can provide a ticket for you to travel the world and I solve crimes, look after animals, read how people spend their lives and achieve certain things, gain different slants of historical events which I hadn’t thought of and transports me to different parts of the world.”

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SUPPORTING THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES

Each year we host our Active Life Active Mind initiative, designed to support people in managing their own health and wellbeing. During January 2019 all of our libraries in Devon and Torbay organised and hosted 255 events and activities offering people of all ages the chance to exercise their mind, body and soul. Over 1,100 people attended the events and libraries worked with over 100 partners to deliver a wide range of activity from yoga, health talks and walks.

“Having enrolled for regular classes following the taster session, I continue to benefit from them and the assisted homework. The ‘banter’ at the classes is enjoyable; the leader makes considerate allowance for my damaged left knee, in return for which I try not to tease those attendees who are weaker than me on the mathematical alertness exercises!” A ‘Move It or Lose It’ attendee.

Each year, we stock these books in our libraries and people can borrow them for free.

“Reading Well Books on Prescription helps people to understand and manage their health and wellbeing using self-help reading. The books are chosen by health experts and people living with the conditions covered.

The mother of a teenage daughter who suffers from depression and anxiety asked about a book and I recommended the Mood Boosting and Shelf Help Reading Well collections.”

Our staff constantly go above and beyond for their local communities, and they love getting involved in local and national initiatives to help those in need. This year, Exeter, Barnstaple and Paignton libraries became ‘beauty spots’ as part of the national Beauty Banks initiative, allowing people to donate any unwanted beauty and hygiene products to libraries. These are collected by other local organisations who distribute to those in need. Several libraries, including Exeter, Barnstaple, Seaton, Sidmouth and Newton Abbott hosted clothing rails, where the public could donate unwanted winter clothing for the homeless community to collect as needed, and lots of our libraries joined the Red Box Project, specifically designed to help young women who can’t afford hygiene and sanitary products.

A grandparent came to collect sanitary products for her granddaughters. She said, “This is wonderful, my granddaughters can’t afford sanitary products and were too embarrassed to come and collect some. I’m going to tell them how discreet and easy the process is.”

Our Friends Groups and volunteers continue to make a positive contribution to libraries up and down the county. In February, Uffculme Friends Group were able to support the library in extending its opening hours by running ‘Library Extra’ sessions. Opening hours increased by 33% each week, allowing even more people to make use of the services on offer.

Our Friends Groups and volunteers continue to make a positive contribution to libraries up and down the county. In November 2018, The Friends of Totnes Library welcomed British TV executive and former Chair of Arts Council England, Sir Peter Bazalgette, at their regular Desert Island Books event at Totnes Library. Sir Peter was asked to name the 10 books he would take if he was stranded on a desert island. He attracted a big crowd at the library and spoke positively about the work and impact of libraries generally.

We welcomed several new Trustees to our Board this year, including William Harvey as our Chair at the Board of Trustees, as well as Tom Glanville, Andrew Prince and Tabitha Witherick. The Board have helped to steer us through another successful year and we’re always incredibly grateful for their commitment.

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Spotlight on Evolve

Our first year as an Arts Council England funded National Portfolio Organisation has been a busy one as we set out on our journey of introducing exciting new events and artworks into our libraries.

Our activities included our Carnegie UK Trust supported Library Jam where staff from across libraries came together to explore new ways of thinking about their service and offer, with talks from leading minds including Dr Dominic Smith (Society of Chief Librarians) and Emma McFarland (National Gallery). We also held our ‘My Library’ hackathon, run in collaboration with CEDA and acclaimed artist Sue Austin. This brought together disabled and non-disabled artists and thinkers to explore ways to make libraries more accessible through arts and technology and culminated in 2 new commissions.

Throughout the year we have built exciting new partnerships with Knowle West Media Centre, CEDA, Royal Albert Memorial Museum (RAMM), Lancaster University, The Space, DYS Space, Atlantic Youth Creative Hub (AYCH), Digital Theatre and Creative Live.

Our plans for next year are bigger and bolder as we look to continue investing in new and imaginative artworks that will help bring stories and libraries to life. We will be hosting more live screenings, gaming workshops, Virtual Reality (VR) spaces, author events and much more! Find out more at librariesevolve.org.uk

“This event has inspired me to join the library for the first time since I left school over 30 years ago. Fantastic. Inspiring.”

Top cartoonist and award-winning comic artist Tony Husband ran sold-out workshops in Exeter and Barnstaple libraries, getting people of all ages working their magic and designing locally themed comic strips.

We also commissioned two new interactive artworks inspired by our rare book collections and local studies resources in Bideford and Barnstaple. Ferny Combes by artists Clare Petherick and Jay Kerry shone a light on Bideford’s rare Chope collection and A Meeting Point by Marcus Comaschi and Oskar Schortz created an interactive, playable tome stone in Barnstaple.

Throughout Easter families and teens from across Exeter took part in The Lost Librarian, a new puzzle trail made up of 22 mechanical book puzzles across Exeter, St Thomas and Topsham libraries. This project is going back into a development phase so that we can ensure libraries across the county have the opportunity to host this exciting and engaging puzzle.

EnchanTales, a new artwork bringing together community curated books and conductive technology, enjoyed over 1,000 visitors in Barnstaple and Bideford libraries. We hosted three digital theatre screenings in Bideford Library, including Billy The Kid, which also involved a library kickabout! Also in Bideford, we launched a new zine library and hosted a special zine workshop for the local community.

Our new visually impaired accessible Listening Booth launched in Exeter Library, designed by artist Hugh McCann in collaboration with young people from Knowle West Media Centre. It’s been a popular addition to the library and we believe it has lots of potential over the coming years.

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Hidden away behind the bookshelves are a team of highly experienced and professional staff who make sure our libraries are well-stocked. They are also responsible for keeping stock moving around the county and ensuring reservations get to the right library for our customers to collect.

The Libraries Unlimited Stock Team, comprising 13 experienced members of staff, is responsible for processing orders for over 35,000 new stock items annually, as purchased by the Stock Managers. The team research their choices and then place the orders and send adult and junior books, DVDs, and audio sets out to libraries. New stock reaching library shelves is balanced with the old stock removed by library staff and more than 92,000 “surplus” stock items are returned to Stock Team each year. The team then decide whether to reallocate or withdraw and dispose of the items depending on their popularity and condition.

Alongside the specialist knowledge provided by the Stock Managers in selecting new books and weeding and replenishing libraries, our Cataloguer ensures the public library catalogue and our library management system accurately match the stock so it can be found and tracked. The Stock Managers also look after our online catalogue of eBooks, eAudiobooks and eMagazines to make sure our readers have all the latest titles.

The courier vans distribute our books around the county, loading and unloading at a small distribution bay in Exeter Library, with between 60 and 200 crates packed with books arriving each day for sorting and onward travel. We have a detailed delivery schedule for each library so we know how and when we can get our books moving the fastest!

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3,600 titles are requested by readers each year. We also lend our own stock to other library authorities in return. The team carry out regular shelf checks to make sure stock is all where it’s supposed to be, and supply our music CD reservations.

The team supply nearly 400 Reading Groups with a set of 10 books each month, matching the titles to those specifically requested by each group, and finding large print and audio copies where necessary. Another area of focus is the music and playsets service, supplying orchestral and vocal scores that are used for local performances, thus contributing to culture and wellbeing all around the county, and compiling our Bookstart Packs to be sent out to Devon Registrars. Our libraries wouldn’t operate without the hard work and organisation of our dedicated team of staff, who are absolutely pivotal to the smooth running of our service.

“...We have a detailed delivery schedule for each library so we know how and when we can get our books moving the fastest!”
We will be looking at gaining a better understanding of how we can better utilise our spaces, not only to generate income that will enable us to continue providing library services that are free at the point of access, but also developing complimentary services for people and communities that want more from their library.

We will be looking at the ways in which we can maximise the use of our assets, including our buildings, our stock and our staff. With 54 locations across the county, we know that we could be doing more to invite and engage with local communities, and we will spend time focussing on the things that we can do better in order to continue providing a great quality service. We also want to make our stock work harder. Using the expertise of our Stock Team, we want to see more stock making its way around the county and into the homes of people who want it.

We will continue to focus on our key initiatives – the Summer Reading Challenge, Libraries Week, Active Life Active Mind and Fun Palaces, but we will also be looking at new opportunities. We’ll be continuing with IT improvements, enhancing our buildings, trialling new events and activities and welcoming millions of people through our doors each year.

It’s set to be an exciting few years, and we look forward to welcoming you on our journey as we continue to lead the sector in the delivery of innovative and life changing library services.

What the future holds

As we move into our fourth year of operation, we have a lot to look forward to. We’ll be planning our strategy and business plan for the next 10 years, taking into consideration the need to diversify our income streams to ensure we are a financially viable charity for the long-term.

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Financial Report

Where our money comes from

£8,574,000

- Contract with DCC/Torbay/Prisons £7,384,000 (86%)
- External Grant Income £275,000 (3%)
- Library Fees and Charges £404,000 (5%)
- Room Hire Income £346,000 (4%)
- Other Income £165,000 (2%)

How we spend our money

£8,436,000

- Staffing Related £5,855,000 (69%)
- Premises £1,646,000 (12%)
- Transport £154,000 (7%)
- Equipment and Services £368,000 (4%)
- Business Support £813,000 (10%)

Note:
(1) Spending on new stock resources for libraries is excluded from the above. Libraries Unlimited manages these budgets under an Agency agreement with Devon County Council and Torbay Council, and expenditure is disclosed within the Local Authority’s accounts.
(2) Expenditure analysis excludes capital spending. To view a full set of our accounts, please visit librariesunlimited.org.uk

Libraries Unlimited is responsible for running:

• Prison Library Services for HMP Exeter, HMP Channings Wood and HMP Dartmoor.

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Libraries Unlimited Board of Trustees 2019:

• Professor William Harvey, Chair of the Board of Trustees
• Alex Kittow, Ex Officio Trustee
• Tom Glanville, Independent Trustee
• George Lossius, Independent Trustee
• Emily Macaulay, Staff Trustee
• Sarah O’Brien, Independent Trustee
• Andrew Prince, Community Trustee
• Sue Simmons, Community Trustee
• Richard Watts, Independent Trustee
• Tabitha Witherick, Staff Trustee
• Morgen Witzel, Independent Trustee

With special thanks to Trustees who stood down during the year:

• Julie Dent CBE
• Ciara Eastell OBE
• Ann Draisey
• Janet Fisher
• David Lockwood
• Steve Wallwork

THANK YOU

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It’s been another successful year and we couldn’t have achieved it without the help, support and commitment of our staff, volunteers, Friends Groups, Trustees, suppliers, partners, collaborators, commissioners, funders, landlords and tenants.