

CyMAL Marketing Innovation Awards 2013

Kids take over the library

No unaccompanied adults allowed!

1. Introduction and Overview

Flintshire Library and Information Service are seeking to market library services to children more effectively.

The traditional model of a Children's Book Festival, where a sequence of class visits from local schools might be invited to meet an author, has limitations. Class visits are an easy target for library services, given that the schools can supply a captive audience. However the enforced nature of the children's attendance can be counter productive and in some cases actively deter future library use. The library can suffer from being too firmly identified as an establishment activity.

A more innovative concept attracting children outside of school hours was required. For one day, in half term, a busy town library was given over entirely to children.

A range of activities were provided, within the library, linked by a children only core library service - no unaccompanied adults were permitted into the library.

2. Summary of project

Core library services to children proceeded through out the day, with children working behind the issue desk, shelving books and helping other children with enquiries (under staff supervision). Adults were able to borrow from a limited range of books displayed in the foyer, but not permitted to enter the main building. The enquiry service to adults, the PCs, photocopiers and other peripheral facilities were not available. Within this framework a number of specific events targeting different age groups were provided, including

Ciaran Murtagh – a rising name in children's literature Ciaran is a writer and actor. He also writes TV shows and has recently been involved with scripting The Slammer, The Legend of Dick and Dom, Scoop, Hotel Trubble, Casper's Scare School, The 4 O'Clock Club, Diddy Movies, Mr Bloom's Nursery and Planet Ajay. He regularly appears in TV shows for CBBC and can be seen in all four series of The Slammer.

James Bazley - James has a diploma in Circus Skills and Physical Theatre. James has made numerous T.V. appearances on Blue Peter, Hollyoaks, Don't tell the bride and taught the nation to juggle live on CBeebies.

Creepy Crawlies – a wildlife roadshow featuring insects, small animals, etc

Mr Magico Magic Show – Established local family entertainer (and former reference librarian).

Punch and Judy – Long running traditional puppet show featuring heavily on the piers and promenades of north Wales.

Balloon manipulation sessions – available throughout the day

Rhymetimes and story sessions – stories, rhymes and songs in a number sessions running throughout the day and delivered by the Flintshire Library Rhymetime Team.

The above sessions ran concurrently throughout the day, targeting differing age groups, so that older and younger siblings could participate in at the same time. There were also a wide range of supporting activities including Treasure Hunts, quizzes and puzzles that children could engage in between sessions.

Children and families were encouraged to spend the whole of the day (or a significant part of it) in the library and so an area of the library was identified as the picnic table.

4. Target audience

The overall target group for the day was ages 0 -14, but within that each event had its own target group to ensure cross demographic appeal.

Ciaran Murtagh;	9 – 13 years	Punch and Judy;	3 – 5 years
James Bazley;	9 – 13 years	Storytimes;	2 – 4 years
Creepy Crawlies;	6 – 10 years	Rhymetimes;	0 – 2 years
Mr Magico Magic Show;	6 – 10 years		

5. Partnerships

The Library Service is developing new links with the Leisure Service as part of the recent Council restructure, which placed the two services within the same Section. Leisure Services provided prizes for competitions (including 10 Pin Bowling passes, Skateboarding Passes Spa Treatments for adults, etc) and displayed posters and fliers promoting the event.

The North East Wales Schools Library Service was invaluable in marketing the event to schools.

6. Originality

We believe this to be an entirely original project, requiring a considerable innovation.

It was vital that the headline activity reflected our core interest; literacy and wider reading. However, the success of the project depended upon there being a wide variety of other activities around the author to appeal to the varied target audiences and their widely differing interests. Under 5s are very different to 12 year olds. Libraries have decades of experience in contracting authors and poets, but identifying and procuring appropriate performers, bearing in mind their various audience appeal and reputation, for such a new event was challenging.

Children were excited to serve other children and their parents / carers, stepping over the barrier of the counter and looking at the library experience from a completely different perspective.

Substantial planning was required to accommodate the competing demands of the various concurrent activities. There was a delicate balance that needed to be achieved to address the differing physical (use of space, health and safety, impact of noise, animals, etc) requirements of each performer / activity, within

the confines of the library. This not only included the actual room used, but also accommodating the large queues and addressing the crowd control issues.

The Head of Service required a detailed and considered proposal before authorising the event, particularly addressing the impact upon the regular customers, who would not be able to make use of the facilities during the day.

7. Promotional Activities

- Staff engaged with the local schools, speaking to every child within the library catchment area. Each child was presented with their own personal invitation to attend.
- Leisure Centres in Flintshire prominently displayed posters and fliers advertising the event.
- Library webpage
- Council Infonet
- The Chester Chronicle reported upon the event;
- During the *Summer Reading Challenge* a drawing competition was held in all Flintshire libraries, promoting the event and linking the two promotions, feeding off the enormous success of the long running SRC and **ensuring continuity of marketing.**

8. Attendance

We estimate that the total attendance for the day was *in excess of 800*. The visitor count on the day was 887, and this was supported by the perception of staff at the event. Average daily visits are 400.

Attendees at each activity were:

Circus Skills	151	Rhymetimes	52
Magic Show	100	Storytime	31
Creepy Crawlies	130	Punch & Judy	25
Ciaran Murtagh	50	Magic show	20

*Numbers of **children** only. Adults not included*

9. Feedback

A great deal of positive feedback was received on the day, not all of which could be recorded, due to the pressure of numbers. Many people said that they hadn't been to the library before, or had not been for quite some time. Several people suggested that this had altered their perspective of what a library is (more open and welcoming). Many people hoped that it would become a regular event. Specific comments recorded on the day included:

Adults

- 'Amazing, such a simple plan, but a brilliant one! Three children aged 3-10 totally engrossed in all entertainment! Well done Flint Library'
- 'My child has had a fabulous time today, it is a fantastic idea that is free and enjoyable.'
- 'I think today was a big success and my two little girls enjoyed it very much, lots of things for older and younger children, would definitely come again.'
- Kids taking over the Library was an excellent idea. The children really enjoyed the activities, it was great to have such a variety of things going on.
- 'Kids had a fantastic time, they had plenty to do. Think it was a great idea and looking forward to it again next year'

Children

- 'It is well good, with all the things there was loads to do. It made us smile. Thanks'
- "Cool!"
- "This is brill, I've been here all day"

Staff

- I have never seen quite so many happy and excited children in a library.
- It was a great deal of hard work, but we pulled it off.

Wider community

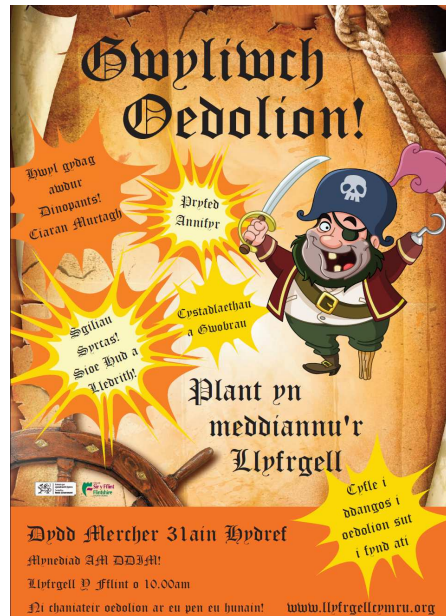
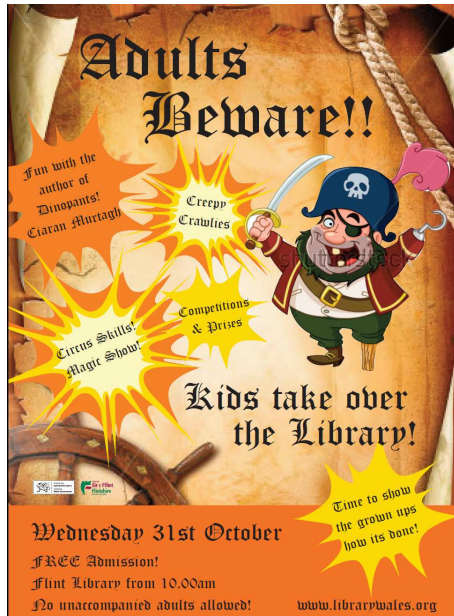
- Sorry, we have run out of sausage rolls and pasties. There is something going on in the library"

10. Sustainability of the project

The next annual *Kids take over the library* is already being developed, and a number of other neighbouring authorities are considering copying our innovation and have asked for information and advice about the event. In Flintshire the venue will change annually, to ensure the event is as accessible as possible, and that all libraries, communities and children can benefit.

11. Conclusion

The success of the event, as evidenced by the large number of children/parents/carers who turned up on the day, reflects the strength of our targeted marketing and promotion and will enable us to incorporate the event in our annual programme.



Carol Guy and Gareth Edwards 12/12/12