

Working Paper 3

Public Libraries and Social Class

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Abstract

The paper argues that there is an intrinsic link between social exclusion and social class, that social exclusion is endemic to capitalism, and that the class system pervades every aspect of society, including library usage. After reviewing different models of social stratification, the paper identifies three main classes, the capitalist class, the middle class and the working class. The focus is on the latter groups. It is argued that, because capitalism is the root cause of social exclusion and class, social exclusion policies, such as promoting employment, ignore the causes of poverty and inequalities. This means that 'solutions' are short-term and ineffective. It is further argued that libraries themselves are a means of social control and are therefore alien to working class life and rejected by working class people. The paper then examines the literature to support this hypothesis. The paper concludes by identifying various barriers to action being taken, and makes recommendations for plans to overcome these barriers (April, 1999).

Public Libraries and Social Class

"The socially excluded are not just suffering from material poverty but are all too typically isolated from the social and civic networks that enable people to live successfully in - and contribute to - modern society. We are determined to ensure that our society does not become divided into information haves and have-nots. Those who are socially disadvantaged, those with disabilities and those who otherwise cannot participate in education and training in the normal way must not be excluded from the information revolution that is upon us...Public libraries must more and more take their place as street corner universities, providing real opportunities for everyone regardless of their place in society"

This statement by Arts Minister Alan Howarth (1998), announcing extra Lottery funding for public libraries, raises a number of issues : who are the socially excluded, why are they excluded, and what determines their "place in society" ? This paper argues that there is an intrinsic link between social exclusion and social class, that social exclusion is endemic to capitalism, and that the class system pervades every aspect of society, including library usage.

Exclusion

According to Miller (1998), the socially excluded "means groups who suffer direct and indirect discrimination, such as black and minority ethnic groups, people with physical disabilities and those who suffer mental ill health. Larger sections of the population - such as children and young people, older people and women - can also find themselves subject to multiple disadvantage and therefore excluded. Exclusion can also affect localities : rural areas with little access to employment and services ; areas that have suffered major industrial decline ; some housing estates on the perimeters of cities ; and some parts of the inner city. By focussing on exclusion one draws attention to the need to identify specific groups and areas, to target services towards them and to enable those who are excluded to help themselves."

This definition is flawed in three respects : it suggests that social exclusion can be tackled by targeting particular groups and areas ; it does not recognise that social exclusion is endemic to capitalist society - it seeks to treat the symptoms, rather than the causes ; it does not recognise that class (itself a product of capitalism) is an issue.

This omission is typical of many policy statements. The Library Association's Equal Opportunities statement, for example, "recognises that in our society groups and individuals have been and continue to be discriminated against on the grounds of race, colour, creed, ethnic or national origin, disabilities, age, sex, sexual orientation and marital status." There is no mention of discrimination on the grounds of social class.

Yet, as Adonis and Pollard (1997) point out, "virtually all modern social analysis - whether by Whitehall, the media, academics or market researchers - divides people by class, sex or age, often by all three". Why is the library world so reluctant to follow this trend ? Issues of class are as relevant and important to the library community as they are to society at large. Hill (1996) found that 81 per cent of people believe there is a class struggle in this country compared with 66 per cent 15 years ago. Travis (1998) revealed that 68 per cent of people think that Britain is class ridden, while only 21% consider it classless. But what exactly is meant by "class" ?

Class

As Adonis and Pollard (1997) have said, "Ever since Marx, the word class has been heavily loaded. Occupation and family are generally taken as the starting point. From families and jobs flow the patterns of income, values, advantage and social behaviour which go to make up classes". This approach has led to the development of two class gradings : the six class A, B, C1, C2, D, E hierarchy used by market researchers ; and a replacement scheme introduced recently by New Labour.

The six socio-economic classes according to the system drawn up by the Registrar General for the 1911 Census are : A - upper middle class ; B - middle class ; C1 - lower middle class ; C2 - skilled working class ; D - semi skilled and unskilled working class ; E - residual and those at lowest levels of subsistence.

The new classes according to the system drawn up by the Office for National Statistics and Economic and Social Research Council for the 2001 Census

are : 1 - Higher managerial and professional occupations ; 1.1 - Employers and managers in larger organisations ; 1.2 - High professionals ; 2 - Lower managerial and professional occupations ; 3 - Intermediate occupations ; 4 - Small employers and own account workers ; 5 - Lower supervisory, craft and related occupations ; 6 - Semi-routine occupations ; 7 - Routine occupations

Librarians have been upgraded in this new scheme from "technical" or "associate professional" (class B in the previous scheme) to "professional"(class 1 in the new scheme). In both cases, librarians are classified as middle class. This has a major impact on public library policy and practice. The service is predominantly run by middle class people for middle class users. Services and stock are influenced by middle class attitudes and values. This can present a major barrier to library use by working class people (Pateman, 1996), Black communities (Morrison and Roach, 1998) and the "undeserving poor" (Black and Muddiman, 1997).

The new class scheme has dropped the terms "middle class" and "working class". As Valley (1998) says, "the essential demarcation of the population into classes that Marx would happily have embraced - professional and plebeian, white collar and manual, skilled and unskilled - has remained unchanged, until now". This view of Marx is not quite correct, but the new scheme does mark a major shift in the government's attitude to class. New Labour think that a new classification scheme can replace the class system, just as social exclusion has replaced poverty, racism, deprivation and disadvantage (Pilger, 1998).

For the purposes of this working paper, class is defined in terms of Marx and Engels (1967; originally published 1848), as interpreted by the British Road to Socialism (1994), which identified three main classes.

The capitalist class comprises the owners and controllers of the means of production, distribution and exchange - the factories, banks, shops, land etc. and their agents.

The middle class includes middle grade management, small businesses, professional sections and the middle ranks of the state apparatus who act to a considerable extent as agents of the capitalist class, but the degree to which they exercise control over the means of production is often limited, and their income is derived mainly from selling their labour power for a salary.

The working class includes the great majority of the population, who sell their labour power, their capacity to work, in return for a wage or salary, and who work under the direction of the owners of the means of production and their agents.

The capitalist class is only a small fraction of the population and so this paper concentrates on the working class and the middle class. What is the connection between social exclusion and class - the simple answer is poverty. As Miller (1998) has discovered, not all socially

excluded people are poor, and not all poor people are socially excluded, but most poor people are socially excluded, and vice versa.

Class background has always been strongly associated with risk of poverty : "Despite the impact of the 1990s recession on some middle class areas of employment, poverty is basically a working class phenomenon" (LGMB, 1995). There is a direct link between social exclusion and class. This does not mean that all working class people are socially excluded. But it is likely that those who are socially excluded are also working class. This is not to say that some middle class people, such as women, lesbians and black people, cannot be socially excluded as well. The fact that these groups can also be socially excluded indicates that exclusion and class have a common root cause : capitalism.

Capitalism

Levitas (1996) argues that the causes of poverty and inequality are not a feature of the government's social exclusion framework which does not recognise that social divisions are endemic to capitalism : "Social exclusion completely erases from view the inequality between those owning the bulk of productive property and the working population, as well as obscuring the inequalities among workers."

Social exclusion policies are framed within the parameters of the capitalist system. This system is based on the majority of people selling their labour, and so great onus is placed on paid employment : if people have jobs then they can be integrated into society. The level of pay they receive and their integration into the social system as well as the economic system are secondary issues. As Levitas (1996) has noted, "civil society has been collapsed into the market". The integral features of a capitalist economy - such as racism, poverty and inequality - have been obscured by the focus of social exclusion on the socially excluded rather than on the capitalist system.

Levitas (1996) concludes by saying that "society is...more than a market" and that social exclusion "focuses attention on exclusions from labour market positions, while ignoring other processes of, for example, racial exclusion. The term social inclusion presumes that inclusion is beneficial but even if women, ethnic minorities and disabled people achieve equal opportunities within the labour market, it will still be the case that what integration means is participation in a capitalist economy driven by profit and based upon exploitation".

Byrne (1997) takes this one step further when he says that the solution to social exclusion "must involve a challenge to capitalism ... efforts at tangential modification cannot work. It is system change or status quo". The status quo is based on paternalistic, short-term approaches to exclusion. It is based on an assumption that the "powers that be" (middle class) know best and that the aim is to improve the material situation of working class people, without fundamentally changing the balance of wealth and power (so that everyone continues to maintain their "place in society").

Short term solutions

Failure to identify and tackle the root cause of social exclusion has led to a range of "solutions" which are inappropriate and ineffective. According to many policy makers, including the European Commission (1994), the cause of social exclusion is not the fundamental nature of capitalism (which never gets discussed) but "contemporary economic and social conditions", which "tend to exclude some groups from the cycle of opportunities". Social exclusion focusses on the needs of these "special groups" through specific programmes and one-off funding initiatives.

An example of this is the government's plan to use "part of the £400m extra Lottery money from the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) to back projects which will give the socially disadvantaged equal access to the new University for Industry and the National Grid for Learning" (Howarth, 1998).

This approach is flawed for two main reasons. First, if 60% of the population are working class then at least 60% of resources should be spent on their needs. In other words, the majority of mainstream funding should be targetted at the working class, including that section which is socially excluded. In practice, most core funding is directed at the middle class, while the socially excluded are left to rely on special funding. To take the above example, this would require mainstream funding of the University for Industry and the National Grid for Learning to make sure that these initiatives were available to all working class communities.

Most anti poverty strategies within local authorities have only limited budgets allocated to them. These budgets are generally only agreed on an annual basis, with no guarantee of the maintenance of current levels of support into the future. As the Local Government Management Board (1995) have noted, "strategic planning of anti poverty activity into the long term future is constrained by this context - and this is likely to remain the case unless the relationship is reversed : that is, the broader process of budget allocation can be brought itself within the anti-poverty strategy, so that all resource commitments can be re-assessed against long term strategic commitments of the latter kind".

The second problem with NOF type projects is that they are top down and paternalistic. They involve unequal partnerships between the community and agencies such as local authorities who lead the agenda and control the resources and power. These arrangements can actually hinder community development, as demonstrated by Mayo (1997) in her study of partnerships for regeneration and community development : "partnerships can be disempowering for communities and especially for the most disadvantaged and socially excluded groups within communities."

Programmes funded by the Lottery and other schemes can create the situation where local areas are forced to compete against each other for limited resources and comply with an externally imposed agenda which is based on market led approaches. These programmes are

often not understood by the socially excluded and do not deliver what they require. Mayo (1997) gives a graphic example from a City Challenge programme : "As one local person commented : "So you get these things through the door 'We offer people the chance to do a CV' - what the fuck is a CV?...and how is it going to get me a job ?".

Mayo (1997) suggests that these communities would be better off "putting their time and energies into collective efforts to address the underlying causes of their problems and to press for alternative strategies for community renewal, developed democratically on the basis of equal opportunities from the bottom up".

Another consequence of the introduction of schemes like City Challenge is that they have obliged local government to think in terms of targeting programmes and resources, and to engage in competitive bidding for those resources. As LMGB (1995) have noted, "while it might be argued that this has given a sharper focus to local programmes, it may at the same time run counter to strategic approaches to anti poverty work at a local level...(and)...involves local authorities in the (frequently) unproductive use of considerable resources".

Control

The paternalistic approach to working class communities includes a large element of social control. When public libraries were established in the nineteenth century, one of the aims of their founders was to control and channel the attitude and behaviour of working class people. This agenda was overt and is well documented.

Corrigan and Gillespie (1978) cite in evidence the speeches made at public library opening ceremonies. Gladstone declared that "many public libraries and museums have been formed that have turned the people from Alehouses and Socialism." When Dickens said that libraries would teach the working classes "that capital and labour are not opposed" it is clear that they were to become a weapon in the class struggle.

Wellard (1935) developed this theme : "in establishing public libraries, the reformers were putting a patch over the sores rather than treating the causes of them". In other words, public libraries were one of the social reforms which released the pressure on capitalism and prevented the overthrow of the system.

Munford (1955) stated that public libraries were "established by some enthusiastic members of the upper class" to create "a free-trading, tranquil and temperate people". Public libraries were "a distraction from the public houses" and were targeted at "the morals, literary taste and religion of the people".

Hatt (1963) went further by saying that the reformers who established public libraries justified the cost "in terms of the cut in police expenditure which would result from the sobriety of an educated public". In other words, public libraries were seen as an alternative method of policing the community and forestalling social change.

Public libraries as agents of social control have also been identified by Adonis and Pollard (1997) : the Victorians and Edwardians "established municipal museums and libraries...in an explicit attempt by legislators and town worthies to offer an improving alternative to working class amusements such as drinking".

Kelly (1977) notes that the Libraries Act of 1850 was intended not just "for the cultivation of (working class) minds, and the refinement of their tastes in science and art", but also "to head off drunkenness". At the same time, the provision of services which the worthies themselves most valued was extended. This was the start of the process by which public libraries became predominantly middle class institutions.

When Tynemouth Library opened in 1869, for example, of its members there were 49 ship owners, but no seamen or boatmen although they constituted 22% of the town's employed population. Only 22 out of 1,326 domestic servants were members and a mere 57 out of 912 tailors.

Public libraries, along with museums, parks, street lights and major new roads (many of which ran directly to the local barracks) were part of the same social control network as state schools. The following comment, quoted by Corrigan and Gillespie (1978), could equally be applied to public libraries : "School is in origin quite alien to working class life. It does not grow from that life. It is not our school. The government forced them on us. School in working class life expresses nothing of that life. It is an institution clapped on from above".

Hoggart (1958) agreed : "schooling has taught the population to read but has imparted no sense of appreciation of literature or the arts, and has failed to give the ordinary man (sic) the wish - or the ability - to go on with any form of self education".

Kelman (1992) concluded : "The official educational system has never provided working class people with their education. That's not its purpose. Its purpose is of course the opposite, its designed not to educate. The "self taught" school exists in spite of the official one. The official educational system is part and parcel of the British state, a very crucial part of it. It's the first stage in a lifetime process of state propaganda and disinformation".

A survey of more than 2000 pupils in Nottinghamshire concluded that educational attainment reflects the social class background of the pupils. Using a points system based on GCSE grades, the pupils of parents with manual jobs averaged 18.5 points ; those from clerical backgrounds averaged 29.2 ; and those from a professional background averaged 41.7 points (Sociology Update, 1993). Schools, then, are part of the problem rather than the solution : and the same applies to libraries.

Class and the Public Library

Having identified the link between social exclusion, class and capitalism and the paternalistic role of libraries as agents of social control, the rest of this working paper examines the

literature to support this hypothesis. There is plenty of evidence to suggest that, while public libraries are used by all social classes, they are a predominantly middle class institution.

Hales (1889) wanted to know "why working men and especially the working men of London do not make more use of public libraries". One of the reasons he put forward was that "working men are very shy and do not like to intrude themselves amongst persons who do not belong to the same class as themselves". Wellard (1935) noted that "the working classes...use their leisure in other ways than reading...the library is the working classes' "last resource" for recreation". Wellard (1937) also commented on "the lukewarm feeling and very great coldness" with which working class people regarded public libraries.

Groombridge (1964) found that persons in non-manual occupations and from the middle class tend to make above average use of public libraries. Usherwood (1970) felt that "the middle class public librarian needs to look very carefully into the real readership potential of working class areas". Kay (1970) noted that "working class mothers with toddlers often need help to feel welcome" in libraries and, "if there is a trend towards better library provision in middle class areas, where demand is higher, then positive discrimination is needed for the inner city areas."

Luckham (1971) found that public libraries, like schools, could never become working class institutions since they purveyed a middle class culture and were staffed by public servants with professional status or aspirations. Jordan (1972) conjectured that "As a middle class professional, the librarian may prefer to work with his (sic) own kind and find it more rewarding". His solutions to this bias were : "take into account the attitudes and social backgrounds of staff" ; consider the "speech and communication problems in the staff / reader relationship" ; and staff training.

For Devereux (1972) the answer lay in the library's "involvement with people and the community on as wide a front as possible". The public library "must be reader centred, and must reflect in as many ways as possible the abilities, interests and aspirations of the community". It was "important in working class areas for people to feel "its for me". This sentiment was echoed by Harvey (1973) : "public libraries are still too highbrow - they do not appeal to the ordinary man (sic)...the public library must attempt to serve all the people in its community". This would require "a well trained staff, genuinely interested in people and...user-orientated services."

Taylor and Johnson (1973) observed that "no particular group or class is in a numerical majority among library users, who are drawn almost evenly from all occupational groups and social classes, although not necessarily in proportion to their representation in the population". Halliwell (1975) asked "When and by whom was it decided that public libraries should cater primarily for the middle classes ? Is it that librarians are basically middle class or is it that the middle class provides the most influential members of our community and so we must appease and please that section of the community ?"

According to the Department of Education and Science (1978) "the middle class, who make up less than a fifth of the population, account for almost 50% of library membership". As Usherwood (1981) said, "for too many ordinary working people the public library appears as

an irrelevant middle class institution". England (1992) looked at the phenomenon of what he called "the middle class regular library user". He found that 46% of regular library users were middle class, yet this group only made up 38% of the population. The working class, on the other hand, who were the majority of the population (62%) only constituted 54% of regular library users.

The same trend was detected by Research International (1993) who commented that a high percentage of regular library borrowers were from social class groups AB/C1, whilst the comparable figures were much lower for C2/DE. The level of non-use by this latter group was also very high. Comedia (1994) concluded that "the library audience as a whole has a wide social base and is more successful than other cultural institutions in attracting use across social class, but users tend to reflect a middle class basis". England (1994) confirmed this in his study of the AB borrower.

Creaser and Sumsion (1995) reported a link between deprivation and library performance. Book issues and library visits are increased in affluent areas. But authorities with a relatively high proportion of adults receiving income support have fewer books on loan. "This may indicate that the poorest in society do not see libraries as relevant to them." When actual performance is compared with expected performance, London Boroughs such as Sutton and Kensington and Chelsea are performing 25% better than expected while the figure for Westminster and Wandsworth is 50%. Haringey and Hackney, however, are performing 25% worse than expected and Brent, Lambeth and Newham are 35% under par.

Book Marketing Limited (1995) found that ownership of a library ticket increased with social class. 72% of ABs had a library ticket as did 66% of C1s. But only 52% of C2s had a ticket and this figure fell to 47% for DEs. England and Sumsion (1995) discovered 54% of library users from class AB and 59% of C1s used a public library at least once a month, but only 42% of class C2 and 44% of DE's made the same journey. The proportion of non-users amongst the working class was also high, especially among DEs - and this trend was more marked in 1995 than in 1989. Middle class users were more likely to borrow non-fiction books, use the reservation service and take advantage of non-borrowing library facilities.

Aslib (1995) found "substantial numbers of users" in each of these socio-economic groups "although there is a higher proportion in the AB and C1 categories", which was not in proportion to the population as a whole. For example, group AB represent 15% of the population but 41% of this group are frequent library users ; group DE, on the other hand, represent 31% of the population but only 26.5% of this group are frequent library users.

The Library Association (1995) advised local authority councillors that "there are members of all socio-economic groups amongst public library users, and with a slight bias to those in the top three groupings, usage is broadly proportionate to the presence of these groups in the population as a whole.

The General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland (1995) indicated that people would prefer the experience of using the library service to be a more inclusive and enjoyable one.

Book Marketing Limited (1997) discovered that, while more than 60% of adults use public libraries, this figure increases to 75% for social grade C1 and 84% for ABs. Working class people are less likely to use libraries : 61% of C2s and just 55% of DEs. BML also discovered class differences in the way that libraries were used. Middle class people made greater use of additional (non book-borrowing) library facilities, for example. As Harris (1997) has noted, libraries are based in the community but they are not community based.

Children from wealthy homes use libraries and borrow library books far more frequently than their less privileged counterparts, according to the most comprehensive study of children's reading habits in 25 years. Almost 80% of children from social group A, the most privileged group, said that they regularly borrowed library books, compared to 65% from social groups D and E. "Such kids don't see libraries as a place for them" (Coles, 1999)

There is plenty of evidence to suggest, therefore, that libraries are used in disproportionate numbers by different social classes. This evidence has always been gathered, however, as a by-product of broader, sometimes unrelated studies. There has been very little dedicated research into library use and social class.

Research

There is a need for more research into library use and social class. This need was revealed by the Pluse and Prytherch (1996) review and survey of research undertaken by, or relating to, public libraries. A database of research was compiled and accessed using a list of keywords. This list included "social role" but made no reference to social class.

The Public Libraries Research Group (1997) developed a medium term programme for strategic public library research. This programme was designed to assess "the value and impact" of public libraries, which includes "supporting the community". But social class was not identified as a specific research area.

The Library and Information Commission Research Committee (1997) also considered the "impact and value of LIS" and asked "what are the social and economic impacts of public libraries and other information services on the community ?". But in seeking to answer this question the subject of social class was not considered.

The social impact of public libraries programme brought together a range of research initiatives. Kerslake and Kinnell (1997) reviewed the literature; Linley and Usherwood (1998) carried out a social audit study ; Proctor, Usherwood and Sobczyk (1996) investigated the effect of library closures in Sheffield ; Roach and Morrison (1998) looked at ethnic diversity, citizenship and public libraries ; Matarasso (1997) analysed good practice in community involvement in public libraries ; McKrell (1997) examined the extent of community involvement in public libraries ; and Harris (1997) researched community perceptions of the social role of public libraries. None of these studies, nor Matarasso's (1998) summary of them, specifically addressed the issue of social class.

Summary

This paper argues that there are intrinsic links between social exclusion and social class. Most socially excluded people are working class, and this is an inevitable consequence of capitalism. The unequal distribution of power and resources under capitalism creates social exclusion, usually in terms of material wealth. But social exclusion is not only caused by inequalities of income. Having an income does not guarantee social inclusion. Some groups and individuals (such as lesbians, women, and black people) can be materially well off, but socially excluded. Their exclusion is also a consequence of the capitalist tendency to divide and rule via racism, sexism, homophobia and other forms of discrimination.

Until the cause of social exclusion - capitalism - is recognised and identified, all attempts to deal with social exclusion can only hope to alleviate the problem rather than eradicate it. This failure to recognise the root cause of social exclusion has led to the development of short term approaches which tend to be paternalistic, top down and difficult to sustain. These short term approaches rely on cash-limited, non mainstream funding which has to be competed for. This tends to divide communities and cause them to waste time chasing funding to fit somebody else's agenda. Such schemes represent powerful control mechanisms.

Social control has been at the heart of the public library movement for nearly 150 years. Although altruism played its part, the primary aim of public libraries was to control the thinking and leisure habits of working class communities. Such control was needed at a time when the working class in other societies were challenging the status quo. Rather than risk a revolution, the ruling class introduced a number of social reforms, including public libraries, to take the pressure off the system. The strategy worked, but the tactic failed with regard to public libraries which became increasingly the preserve of middle class people.

Working class people rejected public libraries in the same way they felt that state education was not for them. As the middle class ethos took over public library staffing, planning, services and management, this led to the alienation of other groups. This paper contains a whole wealth of evidence which chronicles this development. Other Working Papers will explore the effect of this development on particular communities, including women, black people and lesbians.

The problem is obvious, but what can be done about it ? There are several major stumbling blocks to action :

1. without a class based analysis of social exclusion, it is much more difficult to tackle the root cause, capitalism. Indeed, at a time when the contradictions of capitalism are becoming increasingly evident, there are those who are trying to argue that so-called "pure" capitalism no longer exists and that we are now experiencing "post capitalism", "gangster capitalism" or even "informational capitalism". These may exist but they are merely variations of the main theme, as analysed by Marx, which contends that capitalism is based on exploitation and oppression by the owners of the means of production.

2. social class is a taboo subject and it is difficult to get people to talk about it. From John Major's assertion that "we are all classless now" to Tony Blair's aim of making us all middle class, it is clear that the political agenda is to eradicate class (hence the new social classification scheme which does not mention working and middle class). Ironically, it is also Blair's social exclusion policies which have enabled this research to take place. Others try to deal with class by using new terms such as the "underclass" and the "superclass". These are diversions from the fact that the Marxist definition of societies into ruling, middle and working classes, and the balance of power and wealth between them, has not changed since it was first analysed in 1848.

3. social class is not viewed as being relevant by many senior public library managers and staff. Class is seen as being "political" while the library profession must stay "neutral". This explains the craven attitude of many library managers during the Thatcher years when the thrust of her policies was to redirect wealth from the poor to the rich. The Tory agenda for libraries was adopted, along with a whole new language and approach to service delivery based on managerialism and income generation. While managers focussed on the 3 Es of economy, efficiency and effectiveness, the other 2 Es of equality and equity were forgotten.

4. public library staff are part of the problem rather than the solution. With the exception of some notable individuals and authorities, the service is managed and operated by middle class people who share their middle class values with middle class library users. This makes the system self-perpetuating and has marginalised all previous attempts to tackle social exclusion, such as community librarianship. Public libraries have institutionalised classism, which is a reflection of a societal problem, in the same way that institutionalised racism has been recognised in the police force.

While these obstacles are large, they can be overcome. What is needed is a fundamental shift in attitudes, behaviour and values within the public library service. This will require cultural and organisational change which is notoriously difficult and takes time. The recommendations laid out below are necessary steps in this process.

Recommendations

It is recommended that public library authorities :

1. produce and implement long-term strategies for tackling social exclusion. These strategies will involve : targeting priority need ; secure funding ; advocacy and innovation ; monitoring and evaluation

2. adopt the five I's of involvement when dealing with working class communities and the socially excluded : information (maximum public access to as much information as possible) ; independence (community access to independent specialist advice) ; initiative (community groups to develop their own agendas, pro-actively) ; influence (communities to influence decision making) ; implementation (communities to participate in implementation, monitoring and supervision)

3. support communities in developing their own policy analyses :

"Communities would then be better placed to play an active role in setting the agenda and pressing for the wider policy changes required, if partnerships are to meet social needs as defined from the bottom up, rather than responding to the requirements of market led agendas determined from the top down" (Mayo, 1997).

4. develop meaningful partnerships between libraries and working class / socially excluded communities. Partnerships should be based on common objectives, shared resources, openness about power and dedicated staff.

Partnerships should focus on : process as well as social exclusion ; sharing of power and policy ; diversity across sectors with a commitment to social exclusion ; non-tokenistic involvement of people experiencing exclusion ; speaking out against social injustice, together and separately.

"Partnership that is an open, honest, targeted, outcome related process can and does make a distinctive contribution to combatting poverty and social exclusion" (Thornton, 1996)

5. provide adequate continuing education and training, via :

- appropriate staff training and awareness programmes
- education and training in community development for local councillors, to see it as a positive challenge, rather than a potential threat
- relevant training opportunities for the socially excluded

6. recruit staff who reflect the socio economic profile of the local community

7. bring the process of budget allocation within the social exclusion strategy. In other words, mainstream social exclusion by putting this issue at the heart of the budget setting process.

8. include social class in equal opportunity, anti poverty, social exclusion and other policies.

9. review rules, procedures and charging policies to ensure that these do not create barriers to tackling social exclusion.

10. carry out or commission research into the use and non-use of libraries by social class. This research should include studies of societies and services that are more socially inclusive in other parts of the world..

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