

# Future Libraries

## Product Forge Brief October 2016

### Introduction

Public libraries in Scotland have an established track record in offering digital access and supporting digital inclusion across our communities. Since PCs and free internet access were introduced back in 2000, libraries have been developing their digital offer in line with advances in technology and user demand.

The publication just over a year ago of *Ambition & Opportunity*, Scotland's first ever national strategy for public libraries, has meant the digital drive is now gathering pace. Connectivity is still a major part of the library offer and almost all libraries in Scotland are WiFi enabled. This is an important measure for supporting equality of opportunity and a key delivery linchpin for the Scottish Government's digital strategy.

However, library services are also a source of trusted support in navigating the digital landscape and have become key players in the area of Digital Skills Development. Libraries offer classes on a range of new technologies and online services, device demos and social media workshops.

In the past month, all library services across Scotland have introduced 3D printers to open up opportunities for digital creativity and drive enterprise options across our communities. Some libraries have already established makerspaces – spaces within libraries which encourage creative design and development. Many combine 3D printers with other tech such as digital cutters and electronic knitting machines, creating innovative community hubs.

In the coming months, libraries will also be introducing coding clubs for young people as part of a SLiC led Digital Xtra funded project. This exciting new development will improve the skills and confidence of public library staff, enabling them to contribute more fully to digital skills development in their communities. Digital innovation is at the heart of *Ambition & Opportunity*, underpinning much of what libraries do to deliver excellent public services and promote literacy and learning, social and economic wellbeing, and culture and creativity.

Over the course of this weekend, we want to harness the creativity of Scotland's digital developers to shape the future of our nation's libraries.

**#FutureLibPF**

  
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## Market Opportunities

Ambition and Opportunity: A Strategy for Public Libraries in Scotland 2015-2020 will guide the work of public libraries in Scotland in the coming years. The strategy is presented around six strategic aims which capture the main areas of work for libraries. Broad and varied market opportunities exist across all six aims and some examples are outlined below.

### 1. Reading, Literacy and Learning

#### Overview

Libraries are actively involved in supporting a number of Scottish Government reading initiatives creating a 'reading journey' from birth through to secondary school (Book Bug, Read, Write, Count and the First Minister's Reading Challenge). Alongside this, SLIC recently supported the roll-out of 'Appiness', a programme in which library staff promote high quality educational apps to children and their parents/carers. There is potential for a library-based app, web service or game which could support young people and/or parents and carers to fully engage with these government initiatives, and library services more generally.

#### Opportunity size

The immediate market (linked to the Scottish Government initiatives) would be children aged 0-12 across Scotland and their parents/carers. Libraries, schools and youth work services would also be target markets. A broader library-based service (not linked to the Scottish Government initiatives) may appeal to the global library market.

#### Barriers to entry

Although all libraries support the above named initiatives, they will do so quite differently across the 32 library services in Scotland. It may be challenging to develop a one-size-fits-all approach. Library services will also have tendering processes which may apply.

#### Political factors

Reading programmes have strong political support at present and the First Minister has included an initiative to introduce automatic library membership from birth - Every Child a Library Member - in her programme for government.

#### Economic factors

Budgets are tight in the public sector and considerable savings will have to be made across local government in the coming years.

<b>Social factors</b>	Virtual visits to online library services have increased by 16% over the past 5 years pointing to a growing demand and expectation for digital library services.
<b>Technological factors</b>	Many libraries already have apps, although the functionality can be rather limited. Data on the use/uptake of these is not collected at national level.
<b>Assumptions</b>	<p>Library data could be made available in an appropriate format to support service development.</p> <p>The Scottish Government would be receptive to services being developed around the above mentioned brands.</p>

## 2. Digital Inclusion

One of the main proposals in Ambition & Opportunity is to develop Scotland-wide digital access resources. Libraries subscribe to a number of digital resources including ebooks, emagazines, eaudio services, and a range of online reference services, such as encyclopaedias. Many libraries also have their own digitised collections. All of these are accessible from individual library websites - there is no single access point to these resources. SLIC has undertaken some work previously in developing national platforms and supports Find a Book <http://www.findabook.org/>.

As part of the national strategy, a single library card covering the whole of Scotland has been recommended. This has been highlighted as a priority in the First Minister's Programme for Government.

## 3. Economic Wellbeing

A key recommendation is to test and replicate a model of public libraries providing co-working spaces for small businesses. Makerspaces and other appropriate technology/devices will play a big part in this but, if enterprise and start-ups become a core part of library business, what other types of services will we need to build into our offer?

#### 4. Social Wellbeing

Public libraries are community hubs offering a range of services to support health and social wellbeing. Libraries are responsive to their communities and deliver services according to local needs. In order to tailor services to communities more effectively, it would be useful for libraries to have access to relevant demographic datasets. This would prove helpful in planning and delivering services at local level and be a valuable performance monitoring and reporting tool at national level. A good example of this exists in the US.

<http://digitalinclusion.umd.edu/content/interactive-map>.

#### 5. Culture & Creativity

The strategy has proposed libraries could pilot a collaborative venture to provide access to eBooks from Scottish publishers. No platform exists to support this at present although libraries do offer eBooks and eAudio titles via external providers. ELending is currently a small part of library book issues, due in part to licensing models which limit the availability of titles. There are ongoing discussions between libraries and publishers across Europe to improve the situation. A small scale Scottish pilot may contribute to this work.

#### 6. Excellent Public Services

A common digital platform, combining all digital output from libraries, is advised under this strategic aim. Another key aspect is implementing a learning and development programme for all library staff. SLIC currently hosts a Training in New Technologies learning platform via Moodle offering support in a range of devices and web services. Other examples of digital skills support for library staff include the Code Green Digital Making Kit

<http://goscl.com/codegreen/>.