

What does the 2011 Budget mean for library and information services?

A reaction from the Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals

Overview

Overall, the budget is unlikely to have much impact on library and information services; most of funding decisions regarding public expenditure having already made in the Comprehensive Spending Review.

There are interesting proposals in the Budget relating to education and training that may bring benefits to Further Education Colleges and Universities, but whether libraries will see any of the benefit of these resources is open to some doubt.

The Government has aimed to create a more educated workforce and was committed to funding 24 University technical colleges, Mr Osborne stated. This was more than the 12 colleges expected. The Government also plans to fund 100,000 work experience places for unemployed young people. A further 40,000 apprenticeships would be funded, with 10,000 reserved for high-skilled training. In total, there would be 250,000 more places over the next four years.

CILIP advocates the value of librarians and information professionals, and the services they provide in a wide range of sectors. Our views on the situation facing a range of sectors are set out below.

CILIP's views on the current situation

Public Libraries

CILIP welcomes the withdrawal of many closure proposals and that many Councils are undertaking a rethink of their library provision. Examples where this has happened includes Doncaster, Somerset, Oxfordshire, Isle of Wight and Hounslow. However, we are still awaiting the outcomes of many library proposals and will need to monitor closure decisions that have been deferred. Cuts will still need to be made and this could mean cuts to opening hours, resources funds and professional staff.

CILIP hopes that the various legal [challenges against local authorities and the Secretary of State for Culture](#) will make actual nature of the law clearer. It is hoped that the challenges will give the statutes relating to the 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act more teeth rather than reveal its weakness.

The challenges against local authorities are designed to find out if they will still be able to provide the statutory "comprehensive and efficient public library service". Examples include Somerset, Gloucestershire and Lewisham.

The challenges against the Secretary of State for Culture include seeing if he is exercising his responsibility to ensure that public library authorities are providing a "comprehensive and efficient service".

Despite the withdrawals and legal challenges:

- Councils are still looking to reduce public library budgets by 20-30% over next 3-4 years.
- Up to 523 libraries and/or mobiles (12% of all UK libraries) might be closed or taken outside public library sector.¹
- 4,000-6,000 library staff jobs are at risk.

Our main concerns are:

- Hoped for savings from branch closures will simply be made elsewhere in the library service. Reductions in opening hours and the book fund will fairly quickly be reflected in a poorer service and reduced usage. Over the past five years expenditure on books has decreased from 9.1% to

¹ Public Libraries News website <http://publiclibrariesnews.blogspot.com/> accessed 21 March 2011

7.5%.² Additions to book stock per 1,000 of the UK population are down from 206 in 2008-2009 to 191 in 2009-2010. Additions to audio, visual and electronic resources are also down from 1,281 per 1,000 of the population to 1,237³ over the same period.

- We are particularly concerned that specialist staff will be lost, and skills and capacity reduced in areas such as local studies, Schools Library Services, reading development and promotion. In 2009-2010 the number of library staff decreased by 3.5% whilst volunteers increased by over 10%.

Schools Library Services

Schools Library Services are run by local authorities, normally through the public library service. They are an essential support service to schools providing rotating stock, project loans, reading promotional activities, advice and consultancy on school library management.

Primary schools, normally unable to employ a librarian, are especially reliant on its services. Many of these services operate on a buy-back principle but schools are finding it difficult to commit to this discretionary spend from their budgets.

A recent [Times Educational Supplement Survey](#) suggest 31 local authorities in England no longer provide a Schools Library Service – Birmingham, Kent, Cambridgeshire, Southwark have recently withdrawn services or proposed their withdrawal.

School libraries

Despite a “protected” budget many schools are feeling the pinch. CILIP is starting to receive stories of schools downgrading their library service, often by no longer employing a specialist librarian but leaving the library to be run by an administrative assistant – occasionally by closing it or by greatly restricting opening hours. This and related cuts to the Schools Library Services sit badly with Michael Gove’s recent challenge for every child to read 50 books a year.

University libraries

The full impact of [changes to University funding](#) have yet to become fully clear. It is widely expected that 2012/13 will be the crunch year, as this is when higher student fees kick in, but Universities will be preparing for this in the year before. There will also be an 8.2% cut to Teaching Fund, administered by [Higher Education Funding Council](#) – England, in 2011/12 itself that will inevitably feed through to libraries.

Over the next few months mergers and perhaps closures of some institutions are predicted. In common with all other public sector bodies they will be searching for “efficiency savings” and looking to see how library services could be provided more economically. CILIP will be working with other bodies in scoping this and setting out the value provided by University libraries.

Health and Government libraries

CILIP has similar worries in healthcare, impacted by the massive structural changes proposed in the NHS White paper and incorporated into the Health & Social Care Bill, and in Government libraries.

National libraries

The [British Library](#) and [National library of Wales](#) both have tough savings to find; 15% over 4 years and 11.7% in 2011 respectively from their revenue budgets. Generally capital budgets have been cut by greater amounts (30-50%) than revenue budgets.

Guy Daines, Director of Policy & Advocacy, CILIP
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² CIPFA, 2010, *Public library statistics 2009-10 estimates and 2008-09 actuals*

³ CIPFA, 2011, *Public library statistics 2010-11 estimates and 2009-10 actuals*