

## *Library Ireland Week*

### *My Library Exchange to Celbridge Library*



On a sunny February morning, I had the pleasure of going to Celbridge Public Library as part of an exchange organised through the Library Ireland Week Job-Swop Scheme. Working in Maynooth University (MU) Library, it was really good to gain an insight into the public library. I was one of three MU library assistants who swopped with colleagues in the local Kildare libraries. As a user of public libraries, this provided a real insight to the myriad of work the staff undertake on a daily basis.

The sense of community is very much part of Celbridge Library and with nearly 6,000 registered users, it is a very popular place. Users register for 3 years free of charge and all services are free. Meabh, the person I was doing the exchange with, described the facilities offered within the library and outlined the many events happening throughout the year. This was really useful as we now have a large number of events, many of them open to the public, in MU library.

The Celbridge library has a series of performance indicators that must be met and footfall is of increasing importance to justify funding. The library is open to the public for 5 half days with the exception of Thursday when it is open from 1-8pm. Unfortunately, possibly because the Library is just open one evening per week, the adult user population has decreased. When the Library is closed to the public, the staff are involved in administrative duties. Celbridge Library is in the unique position in that they buy their own books unlike other county libraries. They use IES based in Leixlip and O'Mahony's in Limerick.

### **Children's Section**

Children are very much at the heart of the library with many events held for them throughout the year. Story packs are provided which include books and cuddly toys. They have a new project "Play to Read" which they hope to promote to pre-schools to encourage children to read. They stock audiobooks, DVD's and CD's for children and have hosted visiting children's authors, which has proved very popular, in fact more popular than adult authors.



### **Schools**

I was delighted to hear of the strong relationship Celbridge Library has built up with the local schools. Different classes come in on Tuesday's to work on school projects. They also provide school packs – numerous copies of a particular book and classes can come to the library and watch the film of the book in the Open Space upstairs. They hope to increase the amount of schools involved and build on current relationships. I found this particularly interesting. MU Library is also involved in a school library project, providing information literacy training to students in two secondary schools with a third to be added in March.

### **Assistive Technology**

The library runs a course called Touch Type Read and Spell, specifically aimed at children with dyslexia. This course runs over 2 years and is free of charge. Children work through the modules, with library staff assisting them in the initial setup. Another wonderful facility in my opinion, is the catalogue of Assistive Technology aids/toys for children. Parents/teachers/assistants can order the tool of choice, borrow it, and if it is useful, they may decide to buy it. This is an excellent service as these products are expensive. They also stock online language courses and Britannica Encyclopedia which is divided into 3 separate age groups - 5-11, 11-18 and 18+. They have ebooks, magazines and elearning courses, all of which are free to the public.



### Events/Open Space

The open space upstairs holds 70 people and is mostly used for classes including TEFL classes and showing movies to the school children. It has also been used to host artwork and musical events as the acoustics are excellent. It is a wonderful space that staff would like to see used more. They also have a small meeting room that hosts a Citizens Information Centre for the public and literacy classes for visitors from St. Raphael's Special Needs School. The library also has a Shelf Help section; in fact, Kildare County Libraries are hosting sessions throughout their libraries dealing with issues such as stress, meditation and mindfulness. The latest project just launched is a series of sessions called Parents: Practical and Positive Supports. This is organised by Kildare Library Service with HSE Primary Care Psychology Team and Mental Health Ireland. This series of talks provides valuable support to parents – covering every aspect from toddler to teen. Topics include First Aid , Positive Discipline & Managing Challenging Behaviour, Nutritional Challenges, Social Networking & Cyberbullying Training and Self-harming Behaviours in Young People. This really impressed upon me the importance of the services provided by the library; I hope these sessions will be well attended.



## **The Future**

The public libraries will soon have a universal library card so users will not be restricted to certain counties. There will be a standard Library Management System (LMS) called Sierra. As we have also transitioned to a new Library Discovery Tool in MU Library I could definitely relate to this! I am very interested in marketing and felt that they were at a slight disadvantage to not have their own library Facebook and Twitter account to advertise their events.

As a huge fan of public libraries, this opportunity gave me a new insight to how they are run. The staff really are the “jack of all trades” dealing with the public, administration, courses and IT issues. Their passion for their job is so evident and they are committed to keeping the library as an important community service. A day they all love in the library is Saturday morning, with families coming in from the minute they open. They remarked that this is a wonderful time to watch children and adults alike enjoying their time in the Library.

I would like to thank Meabh, Aisling and Mary for being so helpful, warm and friendly during the day. I really benefitted from this experience. I would definitely recommend the Library Ireland Job-Swop scheme. Already I’m wondering about where I might go next time it is run!

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