

Newsletter

No. 1 Summer 2006



Welcome ...

... to the first edition of the Wiltshire & Swindon Learning Resources newsletter.

We will be producing it three times a year. This issue is coming to you in June, but in future we plan to get it to you in September, January and April. We will use it to give you news of what is happening in W&SLR, but in future editions there will also be a place for you in it. We would love to include articles about how you are making use of our resources, and about ways in which we have been able to work with you.

As this is our first issue, and as it comes at a time when W&SLR is going through many changes, it includes lots of information. In future issues we hope to balance the facts with some lighter pieces. We already have "A day in the life ..." of one of our staff lined up for next time. We hope that there will also be space for a crossword, a word-search or a tea-break quiz from time to time.

Please let us know what you think of our first edition, and what you would like to see in the newsletter in future. Do get in touch as well if you would like to contribute an article. You will find our contact details on the back page.

Towards a brighter future for W&SLR

As you read this, our first newsletter, my first six 'probationary' months with W&SLR will be up - and I'll be eager to know whether or not I'm being kept on to continue the task of setting the service on a new road to growth and stability!

Can there ever be such things for us? Growth, I think, yes, provided we do more of the right things better, and appeal to more schools. But stability? In the age of devolution and delegation? Possibly not. Every time a school decides to spend its money elsewhere it becomes more difficult for us to maintain a viable, affordable service for those remaining - and by some calculations, not all that many would need to pull out to sound the death knell for W&SLR.

But we are optimistic. We know that most of our member schools love our service and would not want to be without it. But we are not standing still. We are working on some new offerings - video clips, discount book buying, additional advisory and support services - which we believe will have wide appeal. And great effort is going into cost saving, enhancing the quality and range of resources and the efficiency of our operation, and - arguably, belatedly - into promoting our services more effectively to schools in Wiltshire, Swindon and beyond.

Mention to anybody at W&SLR: computer systems; our website; transport; catalogues; integrated cross-media packages; storage and handling systems; collaboration with neighbouring services - we are working on them all. This is an exciting time in W&SLR and I for one look forward to bringing a number of projects to fruition over the coming year - and, I hope, to meeting with heads and others from some of our member schools, and to welcoming even more schools to share in what we do.

Finally, before you move on to read the contributions from my colleagues that follow, may I just thank you and all concerned for your continued support for W&SLR. If you ever have any comments, favourable or otherwise, on W&SLR's resources, services or operations, please do contact us. Feedback is taken seriously here, and is of genuine assistance to us in maintaining and improving our standards.

Peter Kemp, Head of Service



Focus on Audio-Visual Resources

"You mean they do videos as well?"

Well, yes, we do, but not just videos.

It's true that we currently hold a catalogue of nearly 4,500 educational programmes covering all National Curriculum topics from Key Stages 1 through 4. And that we also have over 1,100 feature film titles ranging from literary classics and social dramas to blockbusters and animated favourites. But all of these are now offered not just on VHS tape but also on DVD, so that you can choose the format which suits your classroom.

The programmes we send you, whether on video or DVD, are produced on request in our professional broadcast-standard edit suite from our high-quality master tapes.

But that's still not all we do.

We also have a collection of music CDs running to over 200 titles - not just an ideal resource to support the music curriculum, it can also enhance topic work in subjects such as history, geography and RE. Then there's our BBC Sound Effects Library, which can add those finishing touches to your class project or school play with an effects track compiled specifically to your needs and supplied on CD.

As technology moves forward, so too does the audio-visual service we offer you. Coming soon, our most recent acquisition, an on-line interactive video clips vault, will contain short video clips from Channel 4 and other producers. The clips are designed specifically to quickly illustrate a point or concept while smoothly integrating into your lesson, and will be particularly useful to lessons based around the increasingly popular interactive whiteboard.

We add new titles to all our existing catalogues on a regular basis, but in addition we are always on the look-out for completely new services to offer our users. Currently we are looking into the range of interactive DVDs and CD-Roms available from Channel 4 and other educational multimedia providers.

So please visit our online catalogue to see the range of options available to you and to find the perfect audio-visual resource for your next lesson.

You can contact the Audio-Visual Team on 01225 713747.



Did you know ...?

Schools subscribing to W&SLR are entitled to a free half-day visit from our Library Advisory Officer. Advice can be given on any aspect of the organisation, management and promotion of resources, whether in your school library or in the classroom.

For more information contact Lesley Hughes on 01225 713748.

Introducing ...

Peter Kemp, Head of Wiltshire & Swindon Learning Resources, joined us in December - just in time to see us at our busiest, as we checked in over 8,000 boxes of books, artefacts, videos and other resources as you returned them to us at the end of term.

He came to us with a wide range of management experience in both public and private sectors, plus past service as a school governor.

He has made a big impact in the short time he has been here. Already we are seeing much-needed changes beginning to happen - new ways of delivering resources to you, bringing essential cost savings; a long-awaited update to our bookings computer, with opportunities for improved efficiency; an overhaul of our marketing strategy And that is only the beginning. With Peter in the driving seat, we are confident that we will be here to support you for many years to come.

Lesley Hughes, Newsletter Editor

Read Peter's thoughts on the future of W&SLR in his article on our front page.

Did you know ...?

W&SLR's membership fees include delivery of resources to, and collection from your school, every term.

Pulleys, gears and eccentric wheels

In between periodically delivering and then checking back in thousands of artefacts, models, specimens and works of art, the Visual Resources team are busy improving collections and preparing new resources for loan to schools.

We regularly monitor requests from teachers and where there are shortfalls we produce more collections. At present we are preparing a number of brand new mechanism collections. Each box contains four demonstration size boards for exploring different types of mechanisms. One board has a range of gears and cogs which can be driven in different ways. Another has a number of pulley wheels, and yet another various arrangements of levers. Finally, everyone's favourite, a selection of cams and eccentric wheels. Each board comes with a leaflet describing the various mechanisms.

We are also in the process of producing some displays of original toys. Each display will contain a variety of toys, rather like a shop window. Some will be arranged in eras such as the 30s, 50s and 60s; others will feature toys from a mixture of periods. Each display will have notes with information about the toys.

We intend to have these new collections ready for loan after the summer holidays. As always we are happy to hear from you about additional resources you would like us to stock or topic areas that you would like to see covered. Please contact John Young, Visual Resources Officer, on 01225 713746.

What's happening at the Drove Centre?

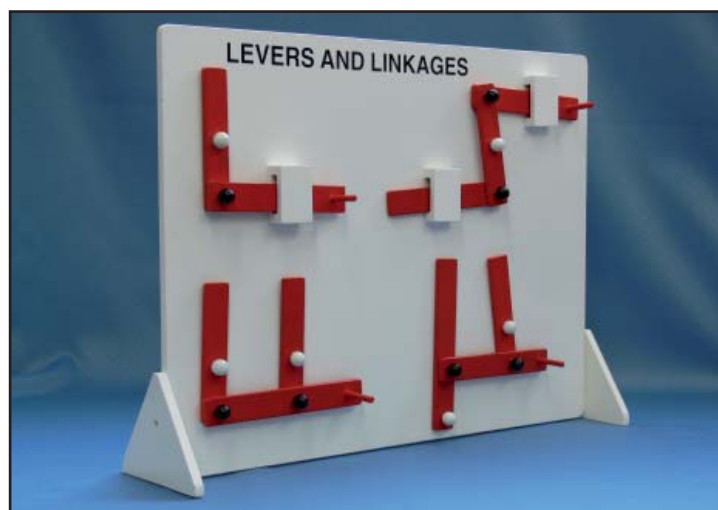
Do you use our base at the Drove Resource Centre in Swindon to choose books to supplement your boxed collections? If you do, you will know that since the departure of Sue Ockwell, who was Senior Library Assistant there for many years, we have been operating a skeleton service. This has been achieved with the kind assistance of Swindon Libraries, who allowed us to use two members of their relief staff, Pat and Shirley, to fill in, pending a more permanent replacement for Sue.

There have been many areas of uncertainty - over the financing of staff salaries (which we are discussing with Swindon Education); over the availability of the premises (the good news is that we now know that it will remain available to us at least until July 2007); and not least over how we can encourage greater use of the facility. Although we are aware that those of you who do use it value it highly, the overall level of use has slipped over the years and remains disappointingly low.

We have been looking at the reasons for this. One reason is the location. Although it has advantages - especially the availability of parking - a major drawback is that it is remote from other Education facilities, so there is little incentive for drop-in use. So we are currently exploring with senior Children Services staff the possibility of relocating eventually alongside other Education resource bases.

We are also working hard on upgrading the stock at the Centre - both by doing some long-overdue weeding and by adding new stock. Hundreds of books have gone over the last few months - but, because they were the books you didn't want, which sat on the shelves term after term, the result has been to highlight the better books which remain. And we've balanced the withdrawals by buying nearly 800 new books which arrived at the beginning of this term.

If you haven't used the Drove Centre for a while, do drop in and have a look at the changes. It is open on Wednesday afternoons from 2 to 5 pm, plus extra days at the beginning and end of terms. Phone 01793 464015 on Wednesdays or 01225 713748 at any time to check out the latest on opening hours and other developments at the Centre.



Get your requests in now!

The target date for your Book and Visual Resource requests for September deliveries is fast approaching. Get them to us by 30 June to have the best chance of getting the resources you want.

The cut-off date for requests for Audio-Visual Resources is 25 July.

General Fiction collections revamped

We on the Books Team have been revising our General Fiction collections - if you have borrowed a collection for Reception or Years 1 - 2 this term, we hope that you noticed and were favourably impressed. There are now many more brand new books in the boxes, and no book is more than seven years old.

Demand for these collections has fallen off recently, and we found we had lots of boxes left once deliveries had finished. We decided to turn this to our - and your - advantage by reducing the number of boxes available, using only the best books from each box, and topping them up with some new books. It also gave us the chance to review the balance of books in each box, so that everyone gets a good range of titles.

We're doing the same thing with the collections for Years 3 - 4 and Years 5 - 6 at the moment. If you borrow these, you will see the difference from September.

Why did requests for these collections plummet? It has been suggested that because they are no longer available on standing order many of you thought that they had been withdrawn completely. Well, now you know - they are still available, they are better than ever, and we are committed to keeping them that way. We look forward to receiving your requests.

Contact the Books team on 01225 713748.

We have also given the General Fiction collections new reference numbers as part of the reorganisation - this was necessary because of the way our computer system works. The old and new numbers are listed below.

General Fiction Collection for	Old number	New number
Reception	FB1100	FB1010
Years 1 - 2	FB1200	FB1020
Years 3 - 4	FB1300	FB1030
Years 5 - 6	FB1400	FB1040



Contact Wiltshire & Swindon Learning Resources

Telephone 01225 713748

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www.wiltshire.gov.uk/wslr



Wiltshire & Swindon Learning Resources is a service of Wiltshire County Council Department for Children and Education, Schools Branch, in conjunction with Swindon Borough Council Children Services, School improvement and Support.

