

Focus on Piershill Library



Circus Stars at Piershill Library

It's summertime and the reading is easy... I went on a visit to Piershill Library to hear about the latest offers from Edinburgh City Libraries.

It's 'Rhymetime' and Piershill library children's corner is crawling alive. Handheld babies, crawlers, toddlers, grans, mums and older brothers and sisters are enjoying a mixture of simple songs and traditional rhymes like 'Incy Wincy Spider' and 'Three Crows.'

Library worker, Christine Tromans, smiles, gently tosses toys and puppets to introduce the rhymes and we see lots of little eyes lighting up and hands clapping. Readers checking out books in the adult section pause to look on and the smiles spread even further. The fun is infectious.

This is summertime at Edinburgh City Libraries. In communities all over the city library assistants make sure that words and books are mixed up with play and the libraries a super place to be. After stopping for a minute or two to tell me what's going on, Christine is back, this time helping older children make their Big Top circus tents. This is a craft activity linked to the summer reading scheme circus theme. It's quieter, the mood a little more serious. All participants are really concentrating on the decoration of their paper plate tents, on getting the sparkly bits and colours just right. They want to make something really beautiful. It's creative.

Team Leader, Dawn Birkinshaw explains that the summer reading challenge this year for children on school holiday is 'Circus Stars.' Each child who reads 6 books gets a sticker, a medal and this year a yoyo for encouragement. The children take these summer challenges extremely seriously. Activities are

planned to tie in with the scheme. There's a circus frieze displayed in the children's corner, clown cookies have been decorated and clown puppets fashioned and workshops for juggling and circus skills are organized. "We want to make reading attractive and these activities are the hook," said Dawn.

Christine Tromans tells me more about the libraries' canny approach to working with children. "We go out to mothers and toddlers groups in the area too. We show that the library is not something old-fashioned. A certain amount of noise is acceptable now, for example if a child cries, it's not seen as a big problem. If a child damages a book they aren't charged. They may be excited and accidents can happen and for kids there are no fines for overdue books. We know that if we get the kids when they are young, the things they learn here and also by reading will help them as they grow up."

Rhymetime for the under-fives runs in the libraries throughout the year. Meadowbank resident and mother Sarah Cleary said, "We don't come every week, because I work, but we've been coming since my child was a few months old. It's nice to have a place to go and we are always remembered. It's relaxing and has also made me realize, as an adult, what a valuable resource the library is."

Clare Manson, who also lives at Meadowbank, said:- "This is our second time here. Emily is just 4 months but it's nice to start early. Coming along is like a break for me during the school holidays."

As well as this grassroots work that they do so well Edinburgh City Libraries embrace change and take up the latest innovations. For example, they were quick to bring in computers. This helped increase the number of people between the ages of 25-40 who visit libraries. These people are often busy with work and didn't need the library so the free internet on offer was the attraction for them. "Technology and

books can work well side by side. It's everyone's library," said Christine.

Recently there have been many more exciting new developments. The e-resources include downloadable e-audiobooks which is useful because these books can be quite bulky. People can also download e-books on [Library2go](#). Over 19,000 classic books by authors such as Dickens, Lawrence and the Brontes have been added to Overdrive recently. These can be downloaded, as many as you want, and also they do not count towards [Overdrive](#) loans. Ebooks and e-audiobooks are being added to the regular Overdrive collection all the time and there are lots of new titles by Marian Keyes, Raymond Chandler, Asa Larsson, Mary Hoffman, Haruki Murakami and many other authors.

You can renew your books online as well and some libraries now have self service terminals. There are also tools to help with the driving theory test and the Life in Great Britain citizenship test.

Byki is another fantastic new e-resource:- a language-learning system with an amazing choice of over 80 languages. Whether it is a smattering of Spanish or French for that short holiday or a yearning to speak Afrikaans or Zulu, Byki is a fun, easy, online way to learn. Where most other foreign language tools start by teaching grammar Byki teaches key words and phrases, allowing you to learn dozens of phrases an hour and remember them later. It is perfect for learning a holiday language or improving vocabulary. There is even a comprehensive range of English as a second language (ESL) courses. Byki can be used from home and there is no software to install. It also has an Apple or Android app available for learning on the go.

Readers can also suggest their favourite Edinburgh books for a popular [new interactive literary map](#). For full details of how to contribute to this and for information about the initiatives described above then visit the [Tales of One City Blog](#).

Details of all city libraries are on our information page [here.](#)