

Extending Community Reach

# “My Open Library” Pilot

Mary Stuart  
County Librarian, Offaly County Council

Tullamore  
Central Library  
County Town



# My Open Library

Unlimited Access 8am-10pm



Banagher Library  
Small Community Library  
Rural Town

# Development of Open Libraries

- ▶ Denmark since 2004
  - ▶ Nordic Countries since 2010
  - ▶ More recently –UK, Germany , Netherlands, Far Eastern Countries, US and Ireland
  - ▶ Academic libraries
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# National Context

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

The public library as a catalyst for economic, social and cultural development



A STRATEGY FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES 2013-2017



- ▶ Free service
- ▶ 333 libraries
- ▶ Over 15 million items
- ▶ Wide range of services and e-services
- ▶ Community and cultural hub
- ▶ Welcoming and friendly staff

[www.librariesireland.ie](http://www.librariesireland.ie)

# National and Local

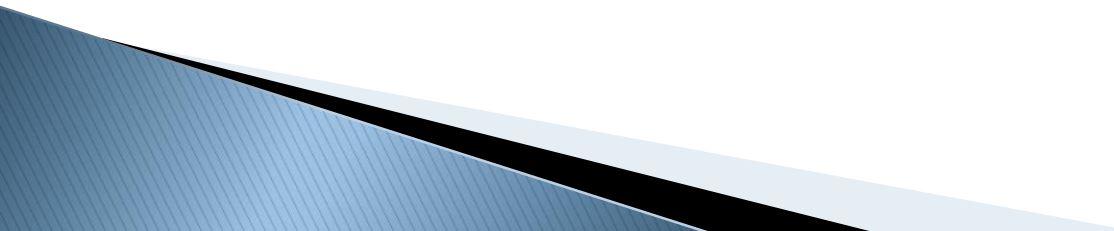
## ▶ National – 30 LA's

- 1,500 staff
- 333 branch libraries, 30 mobile libraries
- 1.1 million users in 2015
- 17.3 million visits in 2016
- 17.9 million issues in 2016

## ▶ Local – Offaly

- 24 staff
- 8 branch libraries
- 14,557 users in 2016
- 260,529 visits in 2016
- 251,815 issues in 2016

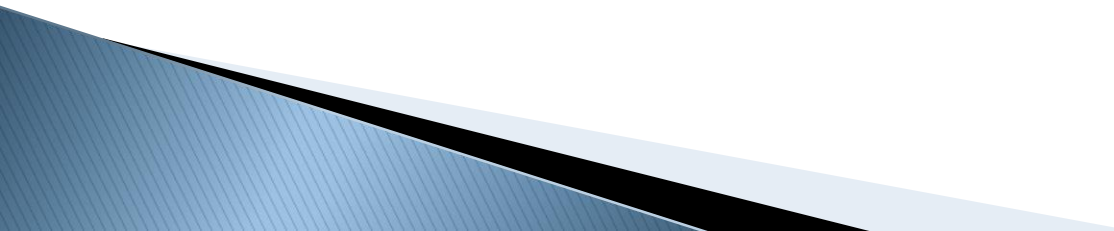
# What is “My Open Library”?

- A Library which has staffed hours and unstaffed hours open every day from 8.00am to 10.00pm
  - Members (aged 16 and over) sign up for the service – new terms and conditions
  - Technology–controls alarms,cctv, lighting,door access, window, printing and pc reservations
  - Self service access to services
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# How it Works

- Access with Library card and PIN
- Self service technology
- Children under 16 (Parents/Guardian)
- Young people 16–18 (Written consent of parent or guardian)
- Digital signage provides information on safety and Security
  - All members are required to carry their mobile phone and have access to an emergency number

# Who Uses the service?

- ▶ Students
  - ▶ Local business
  - ▶ Commuters
  - ▶ Families
  - ▶ Job Seekers
  - ▶ Wifi users
  - ▶ Groups
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# Why?

- ▶ Flexibility
- ▶ Key civic space
- ▶ Reaches out to all sections of the community
- ▶ Democratic role of the library
  - “When a library is open, no matter its size or shape, democracy is open too”  
Bill Moyers
- ▶ Technology as an enabler and enhancer



# Offaly Experience

- ▶ Library –Third Place
- ▶ Community interaction and collaborative Learning
- ▶ Tullamore Central Library “ Living room in the square”



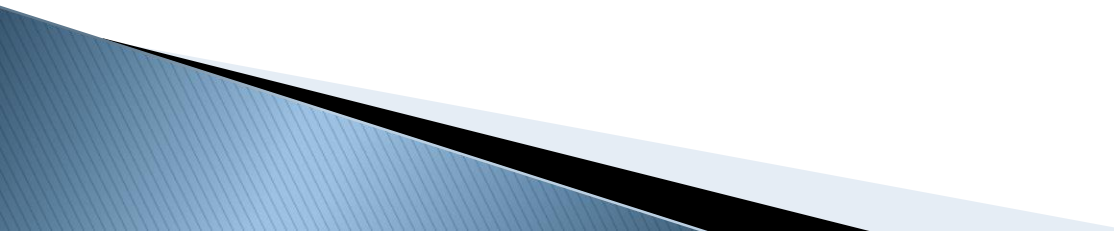
# Offaly Experience – Positive

- Users value and appreciate the service – Positive feedback – more accessible for commuters, students and families.
  - *“Best initiative in Tullamore, fantastic service, we’re so lucky”*
  - *“Lovely to be able to come in after hours and relax – no rush”*
  - *“Great resource, an example for others”*
  - *“Great idea, means we can access the facility at all sorts of odd hours– all very happy”*

# Offaly Experience – Usage

- ▶ Operating very successfully for over 2 years
- ▶ Increase of up to 85% opening hours
- ▶ Significant increase in usage –
  - 2122 users have signed up for My Open Library.
  - Since Jan 2015 55k visits
  - In 2017 there is already a 42% increase in visits compared to previous year
- ▶ Library service adapting to way people work and approach education

# Offaly Experience – Benefits

- ▶ Revitalizes local communities threatened by depopulation
  - ▶ Central Location in town square
    - Only indoor lighted non commercial place with public access
  - ▶ Cultural centre of the community
  - ▶ My Open Library – community space with lots of opportunities
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# Offaly Experience: Challenges

## Staff/Union Concerns

- ▶ Anti social behaviour & vandalism
- ▶ Feeling of being safe
- ▶ Child Protection
- ▶ Loss of professional posts
- ▶ Staffed hours – reduced
- ▶ Tailgaiting
- ▶ Costs
  - Risk Assessment – CCTV, Security Service, User education
  - Additional staff in Offaly
  - User Education

# Staff

- ▶ Role of staff misunderstood

**Libraries are more important than ever** **Librarians** are more important than ever

**Libraries  
make their  
communities  
smarter**

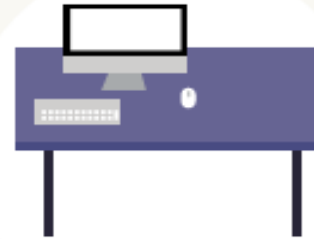
# MY OPEN LIBRARY



- 8am - 10pm
- 7 days a week
- Banagher and Tullamore Libraries
- 2122 registered users



- Study Space
- Free Wifi
- Printing and Photocopying
- 55,000 visits so far



- Internet Access
- Borrow and Return items
- Bookable meeting space
- Coming soon to more libraries



**Offaly County Council win Best Library  
Service Award at Chambers Ireland  
Excellence in Local Government Awards**



**CHAMBERS IRELAND**  
**Local Government**  
**AWARDS 2016**

**WINNER**