

An Introduction to the PALLACE project

'Imagine, if you will, a system of linked learning cities and regions around the globe, each one using the power of modern information and communication tools to make meaningful contact with each other

- *School to school to open up the minds and understanding of young people*
- *University to University in joint research and teaching to help communities grow*
- *College to College to allow adults of all ages to make contact with each other*
- *Business to business to develop trade and commerce*
- *Hospital to hospital to exchange knowledge, techniques and people*
- *Person to person to break down the stereotypes and build an awareness of other cultures, creeds and customs*

And so on – museum to museum, library to library, administration to administration

Imagine that these links include both the developed and the developing world so that say Brisbane, Seattle, Southampton, Shanghai and Kabul, to pick 5 at random, form one Learning Cities ring among a hundred similar networks.....

Imagine that one tenth of the money used to develop military solutions to human and social problems were to be spent on people and tools to make more than 100 of these rings work effectively.....

Imagine that such links had started ten years ago..... What difference might it have made to today's world?

Isn't this one of the key challenges to us in the Learning Cities movement? Isn't this a worthy objective?'

OK – so it's a stupid, hopelessly idealistic, idea, BUT..

Imagine the advantages.....

- Thousands more people and organisations contributing to the solution of social, cultural, environmental, political and economic problems
- **A giant leap in mutual understanding and a transformation of mind-sets through greater communication between people and organisations**
- Profitable economic, trade and technical development through contact between business and industry
- **Active interaction and involvement, and a huge increase in available resource through the mobilisation of the goodwill, talents, skills, experience and creativity between cities and regions**
- Fewer refugees – developing problems can be anticipated and addressed through cooperation between the cities
- **It's sustainable – because it's so much more dispersed. Governments and NGOs are no longer the only initiators of aid to the underdeveloped. Action is now shared with the cities and, through them, the people.**
- organisations and institutions in the city/region have a real world-class focus and raison d'être
- **Again three major advantages – understanding – understanding – understanding leading to solution - solution - solution**

What an opportunity to make a real difference!

This is the raison d'être of the Pallace project - (Promoting Active Lifelong Learning in Australasia, Canada, China and Europe). This pioneering project established multilateral links between cities, creeds, cultures and countries to facilitate the building of a new learning and understanding world. While such a poorly funded project could obviously not change the world in 2 years, it could at least verify that the methodology works.

In its two-year time span, PALLACE liked stakeholders - schools, adult education colleges, cultural services departments, elected representatives and community builders - in

- the Adelaide and Brisbane regions of Australia
- the Auckland region of New Zealand,
- the city of Beijing in China,
- Edmonton in Canada,
- Espoo in Finland,
- Edinburgh in Scotland
- Sannois in France

The objective was to stimulate these stakeholders to develop greater knowledge, experience and practice in helping themselves and each other to work together in understanding the nature of the learning city and their own role in helping it to grow. Thus the interaction between these partners was at many levels of the learning city, engaging a variety of individual stakeholder groups in collaborative pilot activities, and increasing knowledge of their roles in learning city and region development. Each partner ran a separate sub-project, as follows:

The sub-projects

- Global **schools** networks are not new, but the network which **South Australia** put together is the first to involve children, teachers and parents in debate about the learning city and what schools can do to help create it. At the same time Schools in Espoo collaborated with South Australia in a project to get the students to articulate the characteristics of their own cities as learning cities and to exchange ideas. Its beauty is that the answers are coming from the future citizens themselves, and not being imposed upon them by others.
- Similarly the Adult Education project led by **Papakura/Auckland** linked students and staff in **Teacher Training and Adult** colleges in debate about what such an institution and its people could do to help transform their own city into a learning city. In this they were twinned with Sannois in France, a very different culture and educational outlook. To help New Zealand an audit was developed for the teacher training organisation, while in France it concentrated on the value of Adult Education.
- The **Cultural Services** project led by the **City of Espoo**, one the world's foremost learning cities, twinned the city with the Library department of Queensland. Here the objective was to engage museums, libraries and galleries in debate about their own contribution to the development of lifelong learning in the city. The result was the outline of an attractively presented portable display which any city can use to explain what a learning city is, the place of the arts and education in it, and what the citizen can do to further it. This was rather less of a success because of a change of local government in Espoo.
- A Learning City needs Leadership and that is the theme of **CEFEL**'s project for **elected representatives**. CEFEL is the French national organisation for the training of councillors at town and city level. Alain Bournazel, its President, organised links between councillors in one or two French cities and those in the involved partner cities in South Australia to debate the nature of the learning city and to decide the strategies they would want to put into place to help create it. He made use of questionnaires and the results of previous learning city surveys such as the stakeholder Audits. Language and culture differences in this sub-project presented some difficulties.
- Two projects address the issues of establishing learning communities within a city or region, but they very different from each other. The City of Beijing was establishing a lifelong learning centre in a suburb of a million people. It wants to explore creative and innovative ways of bringing together the different sectors – schools, adult education, business and industry, community organisations, the city and district administrations – into one huge facility that can promote and deliver lifelong learning. Their role was more one of observation and learning and they learned much from the other partners.
- The Queensland project was of a different nature. South and West of Brisbane there was being created a 'Learning Corridor' a scheme to encourage greater community involvement in Lifelong Learning and community activities. The four suburbs involved were different from each other in social composition, age, existing facilities and income, but they had the promotion and improvement of community life as a common aim. Here the two major universities, UQ and QUT, combined (another first for PALLACE?) to help build lifelong learning structures into community life in the corridor, in places using public/private investment companies. They also produced a paper on learning festivals to help promote the idea.
- Finally, a learning city will use technology creatively in many different ways. Our Albertan partner therefore addressed the needs and contributions of the technology providers in the city – how they can improve the learning infrastructure and its performance in the schools, the colleges, business and industry and higher education. Out of this came a podcast for technology providers in the city, accessible to others..

So we had seven projects to push back the frontiers of what we know about, and how we build, the learning city. The insights and perceptions to be gained from running, interacting and participating in these projects were many and various. The value they had had the potential to push back frontiers. Sadly the post-project publicity was lacking because there was no money set aside for it. But Pallace at least proved that international cooperation could work.

In addition four seminars took place during the two year period, at least one in each participating continent,. Their locations will be

- Auckland, New Zealand
- Edinburgh
- Adelaide, Australia
- Edmonton, Canada

These seminars will help both with the dissemination of project activities and results and with the establishment of Learning City and Region networks where they do not already exist. Further outcomes include, in addition to the learning modules and exhibitions,

- good practice examples in all aspects of the project,

- continental networks of cities and competence centres capable of extending the work and of assisting cities to become learning cities,
- the nucleus of an expanding global network of Learning Cities to be formalised at the World Conference and
- a sophisticated global facility promoting learning city-rings world-wide