PUBLIC LIBRARIES ADAPTING TO CHANGE: FROM CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS TO AGENTS OF CHANGE IN LEARNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Lindsay McKrell

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The University of Edinburgh
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This thesis is an examination of public libraries in Britain today. It sets forward the hypothesis that a new type of librarianship is emerging to meet the needs of change in the socioeconomic environment, and that this is based on a community development approach.

The thesis examines the role of public libraries within their communities through a historical, contemporary and international review of literature and a national questionnaire survey of community development strategies in public library authorities. The survey forms part of a research programme funded by the British Library Research and Innovation Centre on the social impact of libraries. It was designed collaboratively, by myself, Andrew Green of the Community Services Group of the Library Association and Kevin Harris of the Community Development Foundation, although all subsequent work has been my own. In-depth analysis is followed by telephone interviews with four library authorities chosen as case studies, to establish the relationship between policy and practice.

The thesis as a whole considers the history and development of libraries. After suffering years of policy drift, a poor research base and a low public profile, public libraries are considering how best to quantify their social impact. Rapid socioeconomic change has had a marked effect on the labour market and social cohesion in the UK, resulting in greater demand for training, education and information. Government has responded with community-oriented policies aimed at improving public access to the information society, making local government more accountable, empowering communities and supporting citizenship in an increasingly active democracy. Rapid advances in Information Technology have increased the potential of public libraries to contribute to this process and act as lifelong learning facilitators and providers. This thesis presents evidence of public libraries' changing role as an educative medium. A majority of public libraries responding to the survey are engaged in interagency work to support the independent learner and empower communities. Many are doing so as part of a community development strategy, or are working on such a strategy.

Respondents to the survey of public library authorities expressed the desire to involve their public in a meaningful way. Those library services with a written community development strategy have taken practical steps to achieve this and have set up systems to monitor their progress.

A new model for management of community-oriented services is proposed, highlighting issues of policy and practice such as staff training and service accessibility. Conclusions are drawn on an effective role for public libraries in Britain and the need for further research on how this can be achieved.
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INTRODUCTION

This thesis is an examination of public libraries in Britain today from the perspective of a reflective practitioner. It looks particularly at how public libraries have adapted to change. It sets forward the hypothesis that a new type of librarianship is emerging to meet the changing socioeconomic environment, and that this is based on a community development approach. It examines the characteristics of this new approach to public library policy and practice and presents a model for successful realisation of community development ideals.

This thesis contends that the new model is motivated by the same fundamental rationale which has guided the public library since its inception. The transformation has its roots in the original purpose of public libraries, now revived to meet the challenges of rapid economic and demographic change. Whilst public libraries have always offered access to enlightenment and education, their role has developed from cultural institution to agent of change. This development is marked both by continuity of rationale and change of model. While the fundamental purpose of public libraries has not changed, their response to that purpose has adapted to meet changing public expectations and need.

Public libraries are now actively encouraging community development and learning in all its forms. They believe that their network of service points in the community, the availability of new technology and their skills in organising resources and exploiting information make them an agency uniquely placed to offer public access to the information society.

Most of my ten years as a professional librarian have been spent working in a public library environment. Whilst I had always hoped to work in a library which was responsive to its community and imaginative in its work, working at Petersburn library in Airdrie from 1991 to 1996 gave me an opportunity to help create a unique service which gained national recognition and enormous local support. Petersburn was funded by Urban Aid, a purpose-built community library with teenage drop-in centre, recording studio and video-editing suite. Apart from extensive provision for young people, there was an emphasis on organising artistic, information-based and educational activities for adults. This ranged from computer classes to writers' workshops, from careers surgeries to yoga. As the later case study of Petersburn may show, we attempted there to involve the local community in determining priorities for service provision. Contact with local groups was very active, and many of these groups met in the library.
In 1994, Petersburn Community Library was shortlisted for the Library Association/Holt Jackson Community Initiative Award, and after a visit from a panel of judges who asked about our work and met members of the community, Petersburn was announced as the winner.

I had always been aware of other library projects doing similar work to ourselves. The following year I was myself a judge for the award, which allowed me to consider objectively the successful elements of a community-based library service, and to increase my awareness of the range of services being provided across the country. Some of these were individual projects, but others were part of the strategic plan for a mainstream service. Involvement with the Award also gave me an opportunity to work with Andrew Green, Chair of the Community Services Group of the Library Association and Kevin Harris of the Community Development Foundation, who were interested particularly in community development in public libraries.

Petersburn Library had always had clear aims and objectives, with targets to achieve, but not a strategic plan. Rather it thrived on the enthusiasm and commitment of project workers, good relations with other new projects in the area, and the interest and support of local people. In the end this was not enough. Urban Aid money ran out in 1995, and although the library and essential staff were covered by mainstream budgets, some staff posts (including my own as Community Librarian in overall charge) were less secure. There was confusion over the future of these workers as local government reorganisation approached. This coincided with a change of management, as Monklands was subsumed into North Lanarkshire. There was a restructuring at departmental level.

All the Community Librarian posts in Monklands were deleted and staff reassigned to central posts. Music and artistic activities were seen purely as the province of Arts and Venues who took mailing lists and contact files used in Petersburn, but subsequently failed to organise events in the area. Interagency work with Social Work and Community Education projects ceased. Community activists wrote to senior management on several occasions, but received no reply. Youth Workers involved in the project have left for other positions. Only the Sound Technician remains, offering recording sessions to the whole council area for an hourly rate. The drop-in centre has closed.

While this is certainly a jaundiced account, the basic facts are history, and a cause of some resentment in the Petersburn community. The experience of working in Petersburn has informed my professional knowledge, and will impact on all my subsequent work. On reflection, I believe that if we had been part of a departmental
strategic plan, the project would have had an obvious long-term role. If there had been a formalised Users Group, they might have had more input to events. To some extent Petersburn was experimental. If its experience had been less isolated, it might have been more secure.

With this experience behind me, I was approached by Andrew Green and Kevin Harris to assist with a national survey of public libraries. This aimed to establish public libraries' involvement in community development work and the extent to which this was enshrined in strategy at a departmental and corporate level. I had already begun research with Moray House on public library involvement with communities, particularly through the medium of the arts, and this seemed a natural extension of that work.

I assisted in the questionnaire design and was solely responsible for interpretation of results and writing of the report which was published in 1998 by the British Library. Since then, the questionnaire has become central to my research. While the questionnaire results indicated the extent of public libraries' commitment to working with communities, I wanted to look at how this commitment was expressed and to examine it more closely. I did this through in-depth analysis of the questionnaires, and by semi-structured interviews with four of the authorities emerging as models of good practice. The objective here was to find out why strategies had been adopted and how they are articulated by senior management. There was no intention to evaluate the strategies or their effectiveness, which would have been a research project in itself. Rather, the aim was to discover how the authorities concerned consult their communities; how they attempt to offer a responsive service; how departmental priorities are decided; the links to corporate policy; and the part played by strategic planning in service delivery.

The empirical research contained within the thesis sets out to answer two fundamental questions:

- What is the level of commitment to community development work in public libraries in the United Kingdom?
- How is this translated into policy and practice?

The commitment to empowering communities appeared high from responses to our questionnaire. If the services making that commitment aim to be agents of change in community development and lifelong learning, how do they approach the task?

I wanted to establish whether a new type of librarianship was emerging as a result of public libraries' commitment to working with communities. I wanted to set my
findings in the context of a historical, contemporary and international exploration of the themes. And finally I wanted to establish what lessons could be drawn from this research to inform professional practice.

The first chapter examines the research methods adopted in this investigation. It begins by considering the hypothesis at the centre of the thesis: that a new type of librarianship is emerging in public libraries to meet the needs of change in the socioeconomic environment. While the fundamental rationale of public libraries has not changed, a new model of policy and practice can be detected, based on a community development approach. The reasons for this hypothesis are explained, and the strategy for testing the claim laid out.

After stating the research aims and questions of the thesis as a whole, Chapter 1 considers why particular research methods were chosen and how they relate to the purpose of the enquiry in each case. It also looks at the elements of the research individually, examining the pitfalls possible with certain techniques and setting out strategies to deal with these.

The chapter gives a detailed consideration of the Libraries and Community Development National Survey research contained in this thesis, starting with its origins as part of the British Library’s Social Impact research programme. It examines the specific aims and questions of the survey. These aims are presented at two levels: the initial collaborative questionnaire design, and the subsequent analysis and enquiry which was my own work. Chapter 1 therefore considers the aims and questions of: the PhD thesis as a whole; the Social Impact programme which includes the survey research central to the thesis; the questionnaire survey itself and subsequent analysis and consideration of the survey results.

The second chapter, Setting the Scene, considers the developments in libraries and in public policy which support the hypothesis underlying this research. It begins by tracing the history of libraries in Britain, from the first mediaeval collections, through subscription libraries to the beginnings of the public library movement in the mid-nineteenth century. From their earliest days, public libraries offered free access to information and educational material. As time moved on, the range of books they offered became more popular, with more to offer the general reader and children. There is a long history of adult literacy groups meeting in the public library. Many individuals denied access to formal education for one reason or another taught themselves under the auspices of their local library.

This chapter goes on to examine the socioeconomic environment in which libraries currently work: a landscape featuring high levels of poverty and unemployment,
fragmented families and large groups of people in outlying estates with limited amenities. The move towards community-oriented policies in the changing political scene is also examined, since that too has implications for public libraries.

Libraries are also adapting to changed expectations of local government. There is a new culture of increased accountability and performance-driven public sector management, and an emphasis on opening up the democratic process and increasing access to citizenship information. The new model of public librarianship is emerging to meet these demands.

Information Technology is also opening up possibilities. The second chapter considers this, and examines how the underlying philosophy of libraries has changed, through developments in public library use and increased emphasis on marketing of services.

A third chapter, Current Practice - an International Literature Review, considers examples of public libraries engaged in community development work throughout the world. It presents a critical summary of a review already published by Evelyn Kerslake and Margaret Evans on the period from 1992-1997, and updates and extends that work. The same themes, of rapid and dislocating socioeconomic change; demands for a more flexible workforce and an educated and informed public prove to be international. The literature contains constant demands for public libraries to adapt to meet this change, with particular emphasis on the need for training and for new styles of management.

The following chapter deals with Libraries and Community Development, showing how this strand of public library work has grown from the natural interaction of libraries with their communities to something more active and focused. Chapter 4 concentrates on the long history of links between public libraries and education, up to the present day emphasis on lifelong learning and information technology.

Libraries and the Arts are considered in Chapter 5. This includes an examination of why and how libraries have used the medium of the arts, and how art can contribute to community development.

Chapter 6 considers the examples of library practice highlighted by the Community Initiative Award. Elements of community development, adult education and the arts are present in many of the projects concerned. Three winners, including my own library at Petersburn, are examined in some depth. They are considered as possible representatives of the new model of librarianship emerging to meet new demands.
Chapter 7 presents the detailed research design and methodology for the questionnaire itself. The results are given in full, summarised, and analysed further. Telephone interviews with key policy makers in case study authorities are also presented here, to establish how departmental priorities are decided; how they are articulated by senior management; the impact of strategic planning on service delivery; and the extent of public involvement in that process.

A final chapter examines the implications of the initial and subsequent research findings for public library management. This is addressed particularly in terms of the demands raised by community development strategies for additional training, funding and accessibility of services. It also considers what this investigation contributes to professional practice. Significant themes are the extent to which public libraries are embracing strategic planning in their work with communities, and the need for further research on how this influences service delivery.

This thesis argues that public libraries have always been a product of their society. They have responded to the educational, cultural, informational and artistic needs perceived at a given time. In the past, public libraries have been criticised for falling out of step with the needs of their user group. Now, the combined dynamics of information technology, growing emphasis on lifelong learning and citizenship information and local government obligations are opening up new opportunities for public libraries to meet increasingly sophisticated demands. Commitment to strategic planning, a responsive service, and an emphasis on interagency work appear to facilitate this process. Detailed analysis of the national survey on community development strategies indicates that libraries with a commitment to community development in their work appear more focused, more active, more closely monitored and more responsive than those without. Finally, in the light of the dynamic for change within the library profession and at governmental level, this research examines contradictions between policy statements on public libraries and the funding problems that have led to recent library closures.

This thesis makes a unique contribution to knowledge by considering its empirical research in the context of the history and development of the public library role, and by assessing the implications of the survey findings for public library policy and practice today. The results are considered in a multidisciplinary context. They draw upon aspects of history, sociology, community development studies, public sector management, theory and practice in art, education and librarianship in a confluence of relevant academic thought. The comment and analysis contained in this review establishes a common thread running through public library rationale, from past to present, at home and abroad, and in the context of prevailing public
policy. This common thread is responsiveness to the community served. The commitment to strategic planning which we have shown as an emerging trend in service delivery, and the new model of librarianship based on community development stem from the original rationale of public libraries. Adaptation to socioeconomic change has resulted in a model of policy and practice which does not just provide a service, but actively seeks to engage and empower the community served.

Several themes are taken up in this research and recur again and again: libraries' contribution to literacy and education; how libraries help to redress the democratic deficit and encourage active citizenship; how libraries use art, education and information technology as tools for community empowerment; libraries and public policy; libraries' role in their communities; how libraries can interact with other professionals in eg. community education and the arts; the increasing emphasis on interagency work for all concerned.

These themes are examined by a variety of research methods. For example, in Chapters 2-6, the argument is presented that libraries have a vital contribution to make to lifelong learning. One of the questions explored by this research is whether the public library is an appropriate place to develop the kinds of citizenship which is the dominant concern of the Labour government in the United Kingdom today. While there has been widespread discussion on how citizenship can be taught in schools, and the Scottish Office has published a policy document on the role Community Education services can play, libraries have not been a major player in the debate. In fact the Scottish Office document concerned makes several references to the potential for community educators to cooperate with libraries:

The work of several library services is likely to increase the adoption of community education approaches over the coming years. Such work includes the development of IT as a community resource, increasing local access to information and the development of libraries as local learning centres. (1)

The focus of writing within education is naturally schools and community educators first, and complementary agencies second. My role has been to look at themes like citizenship and lifelong learning from the professional perspective of libraries, to explore whether such ideas are being embraced in policy and practice, and to assess the rationale behind such support. This thesis provides evidence of libraries actively supporting adult education.

This research highlights the contribution libraries make to public policy, and
increasing recognition of their role at local and national government levels. Public libraries are striving as they have throughout their history to meet society's needs for education, information, recreation and culture. This research indicates that libraries are keen to work collaboratively and strategically to empower communities and many are adopting a completely new model of professional practice to achieve this end.

NOTES

1. The Scottish Office, Communities: Change through Learning, Scottish Office, 1999, Section 7:12.
1.1 Aim of research for the PhD thesis

This thesis presents the hypothesis that a new type of librarianship is emerging to meet the needs of change in the socioeconomic environment, and that this is based on a community development approach.

If this hypothesis is to be substantiated, it is not enough to prove that library services all over the world are committed to community development. Evidence must be found that they are changing their management approach to achieve that objective. Two distinct management styles have emerged from my review.

The traditional approach

This is characterised by a hierarchical structure and closed management style. Emphasis is on operational demands, and tends to be buildings and materials based, concentrating on lending books and other media rather than organising events and activities. The approach to users is paternalistic, and interaction with the community served is minimal. Although a range of demands have resulted in this style becoming less prevalent, it is still common.

The community development approach

This is characterised by flatter management structures, with more devolved responsibility. Representative library services show evidence of clear objectives, strong leadership and an overarching “vision”. The community served make a significant contribution to policy development. There is an emphasis on interagency work and joint funding bids for community projects. Policy is driven by external demands more than internal routines. Our national survey indicates that this approach is apparent in a growing number of library authorities.

1.11 How the hypothesis emerged

The hypothesis emerged from detailed examination of public library policy and practice, as explained in the Introduction. This thesis considers public library
rationale in a historical and contemporary context, at a global level, and with a multidisciplinary perspective. Central to the research is a national survey of public library work with communities to establish the extent of commitment to community development work and how this is enacted in policy and practice. Case studies of authorities and individual projects working in the field give further insight into whether a new type of librarianship can be identified, and what its characteristics might be.

1.12 Justification of hypothesis

This section will consider general points on the hypothesis, and then considerations specific to the traditional and community development models of management.

General comments

The national survey at the heart of this research set out to investigate what appeared to be a significant new field of public librarianship, working to empower communities and formalising this work in community development strategy. In funding our exploratory research, the British Library Research and Innovation Centre acknowledged that the idea of a new field merited further investigation.

At the same time, my own research on the historical and contemporary context of public library policy and practice indicated that whilst the fundamental rationale underlying their work had not changed, there had been a significant shift in how public libraries approached that work. Libraries have historically had a commitment to meeting societal needs in terms of education, recreation, culture and information. It is logical that their models of library provision would change in line with societal needs. The imperatives of rapid information and communication technology developments, reform of local government management and restrictions on public finance may increase the appeal of partnerships with like-minded agencies. Equally, given the emphasis on performance measurement and consultation in the public sector, community-oriented policies are a logical approach. Many libraries have been adapting their behaviour to take account of these changes and this thesis contends that a new model of professional practice can now be discerned.

From professional experience and extensive reading I concluded that all public libraries were confronting extreme change in use. Increased unemployment, job insecurity, greater flexibility in the labour market and the need for training to update and develop new skills mean increasing demands for education and information. A
growing emphasis on community participation in eg. housing associations and council area fora have led to demands for citizenship information from public libraries. In addition, libraries are having to adapt to demands for more accountable public services, and closer consultation with users.

It seemed that public libraries in general shared the same historical development, and were committed to the fundamental ethos of offering access to education, information, recreation and culture: all public libraries faced the same pressures for change. However, preliminary reading indicated vast differences in how libraries responded to those pressures. Many libraries were providing extensive resources and signposting educational opportunities, but some were proactive in developing services to meet local needs, and committed to partnership initiatives to empower communities. As my reading progressed, I found increasing evidence of libraries considering their purpose in the current socioeconomic setting. Many were concluding they could increase access to lifelong learning and information technology, and that they had to adapt models of delivery if their service was to reach those most in need. I concluded there were two distinct states of professional practice, operating side by side.

1.13 Models of management

Realistically, it is more accurate to describe library services as sited on a continuum between these two extremes. This thesis contends that the basic rationale of public libraries: their public service ethos and commitment to education, information, culture and recreation, has been a constant since the inception of public libraries. These fundamental principles are shared across the continuum. However, service delivery shows enormous variation because different management styles respond in different ways to socioeconomic shifts. While basic principles of library service remain the same, the exigencies of rapid socioeconomic change require that public libraries adapt their service to keep pace with external developments and community needs. The difference in management styles is most apparent in how libraries cope with change.

The continuum which emerges is one of adaptation to change. At one end lies the traditional approach to library service provision: “reactive”, responding to change where unavoidable; characterised by strong central control and no innovation. At different points between are degrees of the “adaptive” approach, which strives to keep up with developments. There may well be areas of skill and excellence in authorities of this type, but there is as yet no overall strategy. At the other extreme lies the “proactive” approach embraced by the community development model,
which is at the leading edge of change, consulting users and interagency partners on future strategy.

All library authorities show elements of each approach in different circumstances. Their commitment to public service is equally strong. But the general style of operation will enable each to be placed at some point on the continuum. These were the different models of management which appeared to operate at the start of this investigation. Each model could be established by a variety of types of evidence. The emphasis in my thesis is primarily on establishing the existence of the new model referred to in my hypothesis and defining its characteristics. Evidence of this new model emerges not only from survey results and examination of case study authorities, but from the extensive literature review presented in Chapter 3.

Many of the themes emerging from the literature review reflect those expressed in other parts of this thesis. Library services all over the world face the same radical socioeconomic change as ourselves: the rise of the information society; increasing unemployment and job insecurity; a growing need for education and training; recognition of libraries' role in supporting citizenship and an increasingly participative democracy. Every continent reports examples of library services supporting lifelong learning, engaged in outreach to increase community use, promoting literacy to disadvantaged groups, helping those with English as a second language. Many examples demonstrate a commitment to community development, and place community consultation at the heart of service delivery. An extensive range of initiatives are described - sufficient to indicate a groundswell of opinion in favour of empowering communities as a service aim.

The articles presented in the literature review tend to be examples of practice rather than academic research, rigorously argued. What they offer are the circumstances of a library service, their particular response to need and the results of their initiative as perceived by practitioners. Taken as such, they do reflect a growing professional concern with combating disadvantage and social exclusion. Furthermore, many of them call for changes in practice if this aim is to be achieved, and there is a surprising level of agreement on precisely what change is required. They suggest, for example, changes to library and information science courses to better prepare library staff for the range of demands they will face; new training for library staff to enable them to relate to disadvantaged groups; more work with interagency and multidisciplinary partners on joint projects aimed at empowering communities; increased outreach work to support literacy and lifelong learning initiatives; simplification of library systems and procedures to make them more accessible; more research on the social impact of libraries to inform theory and practice. Many of them advocate a closer relationship with users and an increased sensitivity to
their needs. The majority reflect a bias for action, tied to clear strategic objectives.

All of these points are reflected in the community development model outlined at the start of this section. Representative library services show evidence of clear objectives, and an overarching "vision". The community served make a significant contribution to policy development. There is an emphasis on interagency work and joint funding bids for community projects. Policy is driven by external demands more than internal routines.

While it is hard to test exhaustively for examples of the new model described in the literature review, many of the initiatives point to a new focus on community, and imply that service objectives and management styles must change if such initiatives are to succeed.

This research set out to determine whether there was in fact a shift towards the community development approach, and whether such a shift resulted in significant differences in management style. The articles presented in the literature review, the survey results including case study interviews, the projects shortlisted for the Community Initiative Award and the background reading on the public policy context for libraries all provide evidence of a new rationale and a change in management approach. The effect on practice is also considered, although not strictly evaluated. The impact of the new model would undoubtedly benefit from further research, but there is not space to do that justice here.

1.2 Choosing appropriate methods

Initial reading on public library rationale in a historical, contemporary and global context, combined with professional experience, led to an awareness of the pressure for change facing public libraries.

A number of shifts in public library policy and practice could be identified. Book lending is no longer a dominant goal for the public library. Professional literature indicates that lifelong learning provision, access to citizenship information and close consultation with the community are assuming increasing importance in public library policy.

The hypothesis central to this thesis contends that:

i. Public library rationale has developed from the earliest days in line with social expectations, and is doing so proactively now.
ii. The socioeconomic context in which public libraries operate has been subject to rapid and major change.

iii. A new model of public librarianship is emerging as many services adopt a community development approach to meet the new demands.

At a crucial time for public libraries, new models of management, if found to exist, can provide significant lessons for policy and professional practice. It is therefore vital that claims based on experience and exploratory research are rigorously tested. To justify its claims this thesis therefore defined its research aims as:

i. establishing whether there has been radical change in the socioeconomic context of public libraries and what they are expected to provide

ii. assessing the extent of public libraries' commitment to community development in the light of these changes

iii. investigating any new models of policy and practice emerging as a result

How were these aims to be achieved?

To establish whether there has been radical change in requirements of library service provision it is necessary to consider the history and development of public libraries. It is necessary to establish the reasons for change, and to find evidence of change. To establish the extent of public libraries' commitment to community development work it is necessary to examine the strategies libraries have for working with communities, and to determine what their priorities are. To establish the existence of a new model of librarianship it is necessary to find a rationale for such a model, and evidence that it exists. In all cases, the question posed is what are the key components of change?

We might expect to find an engine for change in altered environmental circumstances, requiring adaptation for continued existence. These circumstances would have to be shown to have widespread application and continuing effects for any conclusion to be drawn about public library rationale at a national level. We might find evidence of change in library policy and practice, in service priorities and how they are defined. This might be reflected in public library strategies for working with communities. Again, there would need to be authoritative evidence that such change was occurring on a wide scale. Evidence of change would need to be found in comparison with previous rationale. In other words, an examination of public library rationale in its historical and contemporary context would be required.

What methods are required to obtain this evidence?
A variety of research methods can achieve the research aims outlined. Combining a qualitative and quantitative approach would enhance evidence gathered during the investigation, helping to confirm or refute trends emerging. Each would contribute important evidence to substantiate the research claim that a new model of librarianship is emerging to meet changing socioeconomic demands, based on a community development approach.

The context of change can be established from reading of the literature, from original sources and existing reviews, policy papers and research reports reflecting recent developments. A multi-disciplinary thematic approach would examine different professional perspectives on public policy changes, revealing how related disciplines have reacted to new demands.

• A national survey offers a reliable guide to community development work in public libraries, whilst closer analysis and selected interviews allow for a critical assessment of any commitment expressed.

• Experience as a reflective practitioner assists in interpreting the cumulated evidence to inform professional practice: the academic perspective of the thesis might point to areas which could benefit from further research.

• Experience from practice can also test the original research hypothesis - that significant community development in public libraries was underway at the time of our research.

This was broadly the approach adopted. The remainder of this chapter divides the research strategy into qualitative and quantitative elements, and considers what each contributes to satisfying the research claims.

### 1.21 Qualitative methods

The historical and contemporary context was established by extensive desk research of texts and policy documents.

Desk research drew on academic and professional literature to outline the historical, socioeconomic and international context in which public libraries operate, and to find examples of community development work in libraries. This included:

i. considering public library rationale in its historical context, looking at the
original purpose of public libraries and considering their development as social demands changed.

ii. looking at the public library role in the light of rapid changes in social and public policy, local government reform, and the growth of the new managerialism within the public sector. This was achieved by an overview of the public policy debate, highlighting the main themes to emerge in recent years. Extensive references to professional library literature including books, journal articles, conference papers and policy documents considered the repercussions for libraries. There was also an examination of other disciplines such as adult education, community development and the arts where similar work with communities was undertaken, and similar concerns were being addressed.

iii. investigating the extent to which the ideas emerging from contextual reading and our national survey are reflected in the international library literature, including community development work by public libraries in the USA and Canada, within the EEC, Scandinavia, New Zealand, Australia and South Africa. The aim was to examine practice in the different settings, but also to search for similar national surveys in the 1990s, to establish as far as possible whether our own work was a unique contribution to the field.

iv. examining previous shortlisted and winning entrants for the Holt Jackson/Library Association Community Initiative Award, as representative of community development practice in public libraries around the time our survey was designed.

All of the above helped to establish the background to the empirical research, indicating that there are many examples of libraries engaged in community development work, and pointing to trends in library provision reflecting new socioeconomic needs. The national survey of community development strategies set out to map these trends, and the extent to which they had been formalised.

An examination of multiple choice and written responses to the national survey on community development strategies in public libraries also contributed qualitative evidence on the level of commitment to community development in public libraries. For example, many respondents stated that they were participating in interagency initiatives aimed at empowering communities. A smaller number were engaged in specific community development projects, and a still smaller group were committing specific budgets or dedicated staff to community liaison. These are only a few of the points which tested a strategic and practical commitment to community development objectives.
Semi-structured interviews with representatives of case study authorities established in detail the rationale for community consultation and service priorities in each case. Policy documents from the authorities concerned allowed the work of the library service to be considered in relation to corporate policy.

A detailed comparison of respondents to the survey was made. Commitment to community development was tested by comparing selected community development criteria. The services with high scores according to these criteria were then examined separately.

Qualitative research in a variety of forms makes an important contribution to this enquiry. It is a form of research which is sometimes felt to carry less weight than more scientific methods. In this context, especially combined with quantitative information to support its findings, it offers an authoritative base for what is essentially exploratory research.

1.22 The role of qualitative research

Catherine Hakim, in Research Design: strategies and choices in the design of social research, has remarked that because qualitative research is so often used as an adjunct to other types of study, or for initial exploratory work, there seems to be a tendency to undervalue it, with relatively few examples of reports presenting this type of social research independently of connected studies. (1)

Hakim contends that qualitative research is particularly suited to the situation that confronted us, where initial exploratory work is required to establish the extent of a new phenomenon:

Qualitative research may be used for preliminary exploratory work before mounting a larger scale or more complex study. It is frequently used as a purely technical first step in the design of structured interview studies. It is also used in the development of theory and for theoretical research, especially by psychologists, and can form a significant element of a research programme concerned especially with causal processes.

...The other great strength of qualitative research is in the study of motivations and other connections between factors. The question "why?" often cannot be asked, or answered, directly and may involve a variety
of circumstantial and contextual factors creating links between, or choices between, apparently unrelated matters. Whether one is seeking explanations at the social-structural level, or at the level of individual choices and life styles, qualitative research can be extremely valuable for identifying patterns of associations between factors on the ground, as compared with abstract correlations obtained from the analysis of large scale surveys and aggregate data. (2)

Two of the applications mentioned by Hakim seem directly relevant to the research in this thesis. Firstly, this research aims to contribute to the development of theory in what is a new and expanding field. Quantitative data alone would not be sufficiently authoritative to form the basis for theories of professional practice. Any theory has to be tested, and qualitative investigation allowed us to confirm (or refute) any hypothesis arising from the data.

Secondly, qualitative research has allowed us to study the motivations of policy makers, which is fundamental to understanding what we argue is a significant new trend in public libraries’ interaction with their public. Only detailed investigation of written and oral responses could reveal the growing emphasis on consultation at corporate level and how this is impacting on service priorities; funding imperatives for interagency working and common concerns for improving provision in information technology and lifelong learning. In this thesis, a reliance on quantitative data alone might have led to the conclusion that support for interagency working was almost unanimous among public library authorities. Eighty-three per cent of respondents stated that they worked in partnership with other agencies on initiatives aimed at regenerating or empowering local communities. However, follow-up questions revealed that only 39% were involved in interagency community development projects. (see Section 8.22, Summary of Results)

Thirty-eight library services (33% of respondents) stated that they had library user committees or focus groups. This was a fairly large proportion, but did not give a real picture of commitment to consultation, since some library services might have a one-off focus group on a particular issue, or one user committee at the largest branch. An interview with Hertfordshire revealed that this this authority had a total of 33 Library User Panels in its 53 branches. These panels each met three times per year, were approached for ideas and involvement, took on particular projects, and surveyed other users on specific developments. In this case quantitative information suggested an important area for further investigation, which qualitative information from the interview could expand upon.

Equally, it might have been expected that commitment to community development
strategy in 18 services would have extended to involving communities concerned in policy formulation. In fact, user groups were consulted in only eight of these services.

It might have been assumed that those with a published strategy would have been most active in the field of community development. However, closer examination of the documents themselves is revealing. In the analysis of the respondents with a strategy in Chapter 8, it emerged that one authority had defined a list of Fees, Fines and Charges as a strategic plan for working with communities.

Semi-structured interviews were particularly important in assessing the motivation of case study services active in community development work. They also gave an insight into the process of policy formulation which the questionnaires alone could not provide. Matthew Watson, representing Gateshead Libraries, pointed out that despite indications to the contrary in the questionnaire return for Gateshead, their library service did not have a strategy dealing specifically with community development. They were in fact quite resistant to the idea, despite making strenuous efforts to consult and involve library users. In this case, qualitative information played a vital role in establishing the policy position of the authority concerned, and corrected an impression that might have been given by the questionnaire return alone.

In the case of Hertfordshire Libraries, the semi-structured interview allowed clarification on the issue of focus groups and staff responsibilities for community liaison. In some authorities, focus groups have been convened on a one-off basis to deal with a particular issue, and the approach has been somewhat tentative. In Hertfordshire, Library User Panels operate in 33 libraries. Community liaison and partnership working is included in the job description of Library Development Managers. A very clear commitment to working with communities was confirmed by my interview. Examples have been cited here not as an indication of research findings, but to illustrate the research methods used. All the points mentioned will be amplified later in the thesis.

Whilst not underestimating the importance of quantitative research producing data, Ian Dey emphasises the added value qualitative elements can bring to that research:

The whole thrust of qualitative analysis is to ground our account empirically in the data. By annotating, categorizing and linking data, we can provide a sound empirical base for identifying concepts and the connections between them. (3)
Both quantitative and qualitative methods were seen as essential to justify the claims contained within this thesis.

1.23 Quantitative methods

The empirical research presented in this thesis used a questionnaire survey sent to all UK public library authorities as its principal research method. The research set out to test the currency of the community development approach in public libraries, and to determine the extent to which such an approach is being incorporated in strategy, at departmental and corporate levels. The survey gathered quantitative evidence to assess the extent of any shift in public library practice. Gauging the extent of public libraries' commitment to working with communities and how this is reflected in strategy gave an indication of how significant the perceived change actually was at a national level. This provided an essential baseline for more detailed case studies.

The need for this research was established by the Community Services Group of the Library Association, represented by Chair, Andrew Green, and the Community Development Foundation, represented by Information Manager Kevin Harris. These two individuals, with assistance from myself and advice from marketing consultant Tina Dunn, drew up the questionnaire.

An initial pilot to six representative authorities ran in June 1997, with results being used to amend the questionnaire design. The final questionnaire was mailed to every UK library authority in August 1997, with a closing date set for 12th September. One hundred and eighty-six questionnaires were mailed in total. One week before the closing date 76 had been returned. Following telephone calls to 25 random authorities and a later fax to all non-respondents, by 3rd October the final total of completed questionnaires stood at 115. This represents an encouraging 63% response rate.

Computer analysis of questionnaires was undertaken by Krystyna Dunn Associates, using the Office 95 package on Windows 95 software. One in five questionnaires has been checked for input accuracy and all questionnaires with free text have been checked. While raw data was passed to me by the software consultant, all analysis and report writing from that point have been my sole responsibility.

For the purposes of this research, community development is defined as a process which develops the power, skills, knowledge and experience of people as individuals and in groups. This enables them to undertake initiatives of their own
to combat social, economic, political and environmental problems and to participate in the democratic process. It aims to empower groups and positively engage communities.

The survey of every UK library authority revealed widespread evidence of public libraries' commitment to community development, increasingly being formalised in strategy. The survey showed significant levels of interagency activity, joint funding bids and a commitment to projects aimed at empowering disadvantaged groups. The survey responses also offered information on how service priorities were decided in each authority, the types of activity currently underway, and how library provision is monitored and evaluated. This survey has to be considered within the context of other research funded by the British Library at the same time, all concerned with the social impact of public libraries.

1.3 The Survey Research

1.3.1 Background

This section of the chapter sets out the origins of the empirical research contained in this thesis. The Libraries and Community Development National Survey is an investigation of community development strategies in public libraries throughout the United Kingdom. The questionnaire was designed by Andrew Green, Kevin Harris and myself, although analysis and reporting was all my own work. Research at a national level into how public libraries prioritise and enact their work with communities was seen as important at this time, with significant implications for professional policy and practice. The PhD as a whole considers the findings of the national survey in terms of public library rationale, taking a historical, international and multidisciplinary approach.

The investigation of community development strategies throughout the United Kingdom was one element of a broad-based research and dissemination programme funded by the British Library Research and Innovation Centre to measure and promote the role of public libraries in improving communities. The programme was coordinated by The Library Association and involved Comedia Research, the Community Services Group, the Community Development Foundation and the University of Sheffield. Other elements of the programme were an international literature review and bibliography on the social impact of libraries, the development of social benefit indicators, a social audit, and an investigation of the long-term benefits of library-based community initiatives. The research programme is an
example of research as development, rather than research as academic enquiry. Although primarily an investigation of public library policy in the United Kingdom today, it also has a clear focus on practice, and its conclusions inform the debate on an emerging trend in service delivery.

The programme was partly a response to two key documents on the public library service: Comedia’s Borrowed Time and Aslib’s Public Library Review. These reports highlighted the need for imagination and commitment in the way libraries relate to their communities, and the perceived importance of the library as a “community asset”.

In his outline of the research programme, Ray Templeton of the Library Association remarked:

The main problems in promoting the social contribution of public libraries have been to do with the unevenness of activity across the country, and the lack of sustainability of many initiatives in this area. A further difficulty has been the need to demonstrate in measurable terms that public libraries do offer value for public money.

The springboard for this programme is a strong sense among the participating agencies that it is a crucial time to be exploring and promoting the relationship of public libraries and communities. In order to shape new policies for the social role of libraries, library authorities need a platform of research and analysis, a set of demonstration examples, and a penetrating debate. (4)

In response to this, the Social Impact of Public Libraries Research and Demonstration Programme coordinated the work of a wide range of practitioners and researchers, drawing together their knowledge and experience and starting to measure what had previously been thought unquantifiable: the social good that public libraries do. This research was initiated by the Library Association which, as a campaigning professional body, stated clearly at the outset their view that libraries make a positive contribution to society. They did not set out to conduct an independent audit of the public library service. Rather, as the lead professional organisation, their findings were intended to contribute to public library development and the pool of professional knowledge.

The Social Impact research programme comprised several discrete but complementary elements:
• an international social impact literature review, *Outlining the socioeconomic framework of public library services*, carried out by Evelyn Kerslake and Margaret Evans of Loughborough University.

• the National Survey of Community Development Strategies designed by myself, Andrew Green of the Community Services Group and Kevin Harris of the Community Development Foundation. The survey provides empirical evidence of activity in a developing field of librarianship, and demonstrates the extent to which this is enshrined in strategy at a departmental and corporate level. This particular research is central to my thesis.

• evidence of the social impact of library projects identified by Francois Matarasso and Charles Landry of Comedia. In *Beyond Book Issues: the social potential of library projects*, the authors used the methodology developed for the Comedia study of the social impact of the arts, testing for evidence of six social development themes: social cohesion; community empowerment; local image and identity; imagination, vision; health and well-being. Comedia focused on the 130 projects submitted for the Library Association/Holt Jackson Community Initiative Award since 1992, and examined 18 projects in depth.

• a social audit of public library services in Newcastle upon Tyne and Somerset carried out by Bob Usherwood and Rebecca Linley of Sheffield University. This looked at the impact of the library in the light of the two authorities’ stated social objectives. The project aimed to get as full a view as possible of library activity by cross-checking the perceptions of selected stakeholders (local politicians, library staff, groups of library users and non-users).

• research by Richard Proctor on the Sheffield libraries strike took advantage of an unprecedented opportunity to discover what people missed most about the service and what was irreplaceable. This work has led to a national study of the impact of library closures and opening hours reductions on users at Sheffield University.

• the research jigsaw concludes with a study by the Community Development Foundation to identify community perceptions of the social value of public libraries. The aim was to develop a methodology for the measurement of the social value of libraries, in the communities’ terms, and to explore community perceptions of the social value of libraries.

The various strands of research in the Social Impact Programme start from the assumption that public libraries benefit individuals and communities.
The programme was initiated by a campaigning professional organisation and set out to affirm the value of libraries. The research was undertaken at a time when the vision and objectives of many new unitary local authorities embraced the need to develop anti-poverty, employment and lifelong learning strategies, and recognised the role that libraries could play. The Director of Information Services at the Library Association, in correspondence with the British Library Research and Innovation Centre on the research bid, specifically addressed the needs which informed each element of the Social Impact programme. On the National Survey at the core of my own research, the Director commented:

Feedback from both practitioners and researchers around the country indicates that there is no comprehensive body of knowledge on the role of public libraries and community development. The literature and practice review, therefore, will carry out a comprehensive literature search of activities in the UK, USA and Australia. In addition, a comprehensive survey of all UK public library authorities will be carried out to identify which have, are developing or do not have strategies for public library involvement in community development. (5)

The Library Association intended our national survey to contribute to a body of knowledge on the role of public libraries and community development being developed by the Social Impact Research Programme. Although the initial National Survey research was undertaken as part of the Social Impact Programme, my own development of that research takes a different position. I set out without preconceptions to undertake an objective investigation into the motivation, policy and practice of public libraries.

My thesis in its entirety provides the comprehensive body of knowledge on the role of public libraries and community development called for above.

1.32 Aims and questions of the National Survey

The primary research presented in this thesis springs from the National Survey of Community Development Strategies, which is itself one element of the broader Social Impact research programme. The survey set out to take a snapshot of a crucial period of change in public library policy, in the context of a wider programme of research.
This is important because of the limitations it placed upon the National Survey research. The survey was not intended to develop indicators of the social benefits of libraries, to conduct an international literature review or to look for evidence of the social impact of library projects: other parts of the programme were addressing this. My own research for the PhD thesis includes some of these elements, such as an updated international literature review (Chapter 3) and a case study investigation of libraries working with communities. The National Survey research aimed to investigate the commitment of public library authorities across the United Kingdom to community development policy and practice. Quantitative and qualitative elements of research were combined to establish the validity of our findings.

The quantitative information provided by the questionnaire results allowed us to build a picture of public library activity in the United Kingdom, and the 63% response rate allows us to make authoritative statements from our findings. We have combined this quantitative enquiry with a more qualitative approach, considering the strategy documents provided by respondents, and cross referencing responses to compare commitment to working with communities to services provided. Considerable attempts were made in the original research to probe commitment to working with communities. I have developed the qualitative approach much more in my own research through further analysis of responses, interviews with key policy makers and consideration of corporate policy documents.

The research aims required us to ask particular questions of every UK public library authority:

Firstly, we needed to establish where strategies were present.

i. Did local authorities have a community development strategy, or were they working on such a strategy?

ii. Did the library service itself have a strategy for working with communities, or was such a strategy being developed?

Secondly, we needed to establish the nature of such strategies.

Copies of all relevant documents were requested.
Thirdly, we needed to establish how these strategies were formulated.

i. What contribution did the library service make to corporate strategies?

ii. Who was involved in agreeing departmental strategies?

For comparative purposes, it was important to gain a clear picture of public libraries’ interaction with their communities, regardless of whether a strategy was present. This also allowed for testing of any stated commitment to community development, and assessing the impact of strategy on practice. Equally examples of good practice in library services with no stated strategy were identified. To this end, the library services' involvement in a range of representative community development activities were assessed. For example:

i. Does the library service work in partnership with other agencies on initiatives aimed at regenerating or empowering local communities?

ii. Has the library service been involved in partnership bids for funding?

iii. Are specialist staff/budgets/projects/focus groups dedicated to community liaison work?

iv. What events and activities are offered by the library service?

Each library service’s commitment to monitoring the effectiveness of their work was established, regardless of whether a strategy was present. All of the information gathered helped to form a clear picture of library service priorities, and to assess the impact any strategy has had.

1.4 Validity of research

The basic data provided by the survey results was quantitative. This information was not enough in itself to test the “face validity” of policy statements made by respondents. Many of the questions probed more deeply, investigating any evidence which might or might not confirm the accuracy of these statements, and providing a qualitative assessment of community development work in libraries. In his text, *Qualitative Data Analysis: a User-Friendly Guide for Social Scientists*, Ian Dey contends that a “valid account” is one “which can be defended as sound because it is well-grounded conceptually and empirically”. (6)
Dey has defined "face validity" as the fit between our observations and our concept in research activity. "We have to decide whether ‘on the face of it’ the observation is consistent with the concept". (7) Dey stresses the need to consider "the potential for abuse" in qualitative analysis, and then determine which safeguards can be built into the process. (8) It is important to look for corroborating evidence, and not to settle for a plausible account of the data.

If our survey results had detected no move towards community development strategies, the claims contained within this thesis could have been disproved. If a large group of respondents had claimed to have a strategy but their practices did not reflect a commitment to community development, that would have been apparent from answers to other questions in the survey. Case study interviews allowed for closer questioning of the respondents, so that commitment to community development could be tested. If any change detected was superficial, without major influence on policy and practice, I could not have argued that libraries were adopting a new community development model. If the literature review had found no evidence of library services actively working to engage disadvantaged groups within their communities and striving to develop services in line with users’ needs, there would be no convincing proof of a groundswell of opinion in favour of community development.

Our research did not set out to assess the value or impact of community development strategies, but how a particular policy approach was worked out. We were interested in the reasons for choosing to adopt a strategy; how the task was approached; consultation; presentation of the results; and management perceptions of how strategy has affected service provision.

This question of how a policy has been addressed is central to our research approach. This thesis has also considered how libraries have fulfilled their role in society; how this has developed, and how they are interacting with their communities. It does not seek to evaluate their impact. We have also asked whether an approach has been taken, and this helps to give a clearer picture of our respondents, and to guard against error by closer scrutiny of policy and practice.

We were aware that research sometimes presents inaccurate results and made strenuous efforts to combat error. Ian Dey has emphasised the importance of objectivity in research:

To produce a valid account, we need to be objective. This refers to a process, of which a valid interpretation is the product. Being objective does not mean being omniscient - it doesn’t mean we can know ‘what really
happened.' It means accepting the canons which govern rational enquiry as a basis for realizing conclusions which are reasonable. It means taking account of evidence without forcing it to conform to one's own wishes and prejudices, and accepting the possibility of error. (9)

We had to be sure that our research methods would allow us to disprove our hypotheses. We suspected that there had been an increase in libraries working with communities, but if our supposition was wrong, our methods had to be able to detect that no such trend was present. We needed to know if our claims were unfounded. It would have been easy, being immersed in research on community development, to focus on evidence confirming an increase in community development activity in public libraries. However, the initial and subsequent research was devised to detect any evidence that this was not the case. Various tests were incorporated in the questionnaire, analysis and case study interviews to explore the face validity of statements by respondents.

For example, we asked whether respondents had a community development strategy within their library service. We realised that those services which stated they had such a strategy might not in fact have a relevant strategy. We therefore asked for a copy of the departmental strategy to be sent to us, and these documents are evaluated as part of the principal research chapter. We were also aware that any stated community development strategy might not be reflected in working practice. For this reason, we tried to establish the type of interaction libraries have with their public, and the sorts of services they provide. Our questions focused on activities which might point to community development work, such as the existence of partnership initiatives and interagency projects and partnership bids for funding of community development programmes. We also tried to establish the structural commitment to such work in each service. This might be reflected in specialist staff working on community liaison, budgets devolved to work with communities, or the existence of focus groups and user committees. There would be evidence of claims being false if a service professed a strategy but all of the factors above were not present.

The case studies selected included one service (Renfrew) which did not have a strategy for working with communities, and yet appeared from responses in the questionnaire to give a high priority to such work. Therefore, no claim was made that the absence of such a strategy precluded a community development approach: nor that possession of a strategy for working with communities meant that a community development approach had actually been adopted. Our role was to present the public policy statements of the authorities responding to our
questionnaire, and to probe as far as possible the evidence supporting those statements.

It quickly emerged, during my detailed analysis of responses, that those services which did profess a community development strategy were a very diverse group. While an initial approach to analysis might have been to compare all those services in possession of a strategy, it emerged that few points of similarity were present, and that with such a small group (18 out of 115 respondents), it was unwise to draw general conclusions. In other words, my approach to analysis changed in the light of responses received. My methods allowed me to detect that there was no significant consistency of data across the group, and to change the direction of my analysis accordingly.

The fact that the library services in our survey already claiming to be in possession of a community development strategy are a disparate group does not challenge the claim in this thesis that a community development approach is an emerging trend in public libraries. Eighteen library services could not authoritatively claim to represent such a trend. The consensus emerges not from this small group, but from the respondents as a whole, the majority of whom stated for example that they were engaged in interagency initiatives to combat disadvantage. Just under half of respondents had either produced or were working on a community development strategy. Thirty-one per cent had specialist library staff working on community liaison and thirty-nine per cent had ongoing interagency community development projects. A significant proportion had made a structural commitment to empowering communities by allocating staff and taking on projects: for them community development work is a service priority.

While it would be wrong to make comparisons across the small group of libraries in possession of a community development strategy, closer analysis of respondents as a whole did reveal that that group was notable for its active commitment to community development. While only 13% of all respondents had specialist budgets for working with communities, one third of library services with a community development strategy had such budgets. It is possible to identify how these services rate on general community development criteria, but not to define or categorise their management style. There is an emphasis on meeting community needs, but the survey does not permit a more detailed picture of each service to emerge. Consequently, it would be unwise to narrowly define the parameters of the community development approach identified in this thesis as an emerging trend - it may come in many forms according to the type of community it serves. It will however be characterised by responsiveness, a bias for action and a commitment to empowering communities by increasing their access to information and
opportunities for education and culture.

1.5 Possible conclusions

This thesis presents the hypothesis that a new model of librarianship is emerging to meet the needs of change in the socioeconomic environment, and that this is based on a community development approach. The word model is used here with care. It can be interpreted in the academic sense of one ideal type among several others, represented by particular features, with no judgement made as to value. However, an alternative meaning takes the word model as a professional development idea to aspire to. My thesis subscribes to this use of the word.

After presenting the evidence and examining changes in policy and practice over time, I have established a new focus on community development striving to meet the needs of the socially excluded. The model identified with this focus, which is examined more closely in the Conclusion of this research, is characterised by a community development approach. The issue of whether the community development model is superior to the traditional model is open to debate. To subscribe to one model over the other is really to step outside the academic remit of this thesis. However, it could be argued that from the standpoint of practitioner research it is relevant to take a view. This thesis presents a case not solely gleaned from academic enquiry, but based on years of professional experience in this particular field. It concludes from evidence presented that those library services characterised by a community development approach are more focused, more active, more responsive and more closely monitored than those without.

Those libraries which favour a community development approach tend to have certain characteristics in common:

i. the library operates as part of a network of services to empower disadvantaged communities: there is a commitment to interagency work with eg. health care and community education workers; there is evidence of joint funding bids and ongoing partnership projects. (All of this information is available from responses to the questionnaire, including types of partners and whether partnership is formal or informal).

ii. there is a desire to improve consultation with the public and allow this to shape policy and practice: this commitment is increasingly formalised. (This desire for consultation would be tested by the presence of focus groups and user committees, or a formal system of surveys).
iii. there are significant differences in management style: this tends to be more open, with more devolved responsibility; there is evidence of strong leadership and a shared vision; there is an emphasis on action and innovation, rather than maintaining operational routines. (It is difficult to test for these features within the questionnaire. Indicators might be evidence of ongoing projects, interagency initiatives and funding bids. Leadership, vision and openness of management style tends to emerge more from case study interviews, and the literature review).

iv. there is a commitment to accountability: monitoring and evaluation procedures in place impact on future work. (This can be tested by the existence of formal monitoring systems such as surveys, evaluation of programmes and projects, and how this contributes to service development).

v. While these key points may indicate a commitment to community development, at this point in the thesis they do not represent a model, or any sort of prescription for practice. The characteristics outlined above are indicative of a new approach in libraries’ interaction with their communities. At this point it is not possible to determine the exact nature of this approach or to consider how best its aims can be met. The early part of the thesis is concerned primarily with establishing community development criteria: near the end of the thesis it should be possible to construct a community development model, meaning a model of good practice in working towards community development.

With all the different methods used to collect evidence in this enquiry, the overriding aim is to uncover evidence of change. It is also important to establish where this change originated.

It is argued that the community development approach has its roots in the original rationale of public libraries, but that socioeconomic change and public policy including local government reform have resulted in a more obviously community-oriented approach.

The second fundamental question to address is how this change is reflected in practice.

The thesis concerns itself throughout with these points: are public libraries undergoing a process of change? If so, how can we tell? What is its effect? It is not the aim of this thesis to judge or evaluate the effect of socioeconomic change on public library service delivery or the results. Rather the intention is to determine
how this change is influencing public library policy and priorities. The point of interest is how library managers are addressing change. The impact of such changes on library users will be longer-term and would require a very different method of research.

While the evidence of change in libraries' socioeconomic environment seems undeniable, the extent of change within libraries is harder to gauge. This research sets itself the task of assessing how libraries are adapting to change, and the effect it is having on their policy and practice.

Over the last five to ten years, libraries have questioned their fundamental rationale: they have been considering whether to adopt a business approach, or concentrate on their unique social role. All have had to adapt to significant environmental change and major shifts in demand. Those equipped with a strategy for working with communities may be better equipped than most. My research concludes that while some public libraries are struggling to keep up with developments, others are at the leading edge of change.

NOTES

8. Ibid, p228.
9. Dey, I., op cit, p256.
CHAPTER TWO - SETTING THE SCENE

Introduction

This chapter establishes the context for the research contained in this thesis. It examines the public library movement from its earliest origins; considers current pressures and possibilities for future developments.

Section 2.1 considers the first libraries and the social and legislative parameters that shaped their development in the UK and Scotland in particular. The next section goes on to examine the challenges and opportunities facing public libraries at the present time. It does so by considering the economic context in which libraries now operate and the changing demands of community and public policy. It also considers recent developments in the local government sphere such as increased pressure for accountability through performance indicators and Best Value initiatives. This section considers current interest in the concept of citizenship, and the role libraries can play. The final section of this chapter considers the issues the library profession must address to maintain and expand current levels of public library use.

2.1 Public library past - the history of public libraries

Distinguished Chief Librarian, L. Stanley Jast, wrote in 1939 that a library is "a collection of books made effective, organised in such a manner as to convey their contents easily and quickly. An ideal library, then, is a collection, or selection, of books, accompanied by a machinery for their exploitation operated by people trained in the necessary techniques". (1)

The earliest libraries in Britain, dating from mediaeval times, were small, scholarly and accessible only to an educated elite. In later years these were succeeded by private subscription libraries in the larger towns. One of the earliest recorded libraries is the Leicester Library, founded in 1587 and originally housed in the parish church. In the early seventeenth century, the library was taken under municipal control. From this point, the public were granted access, but few new books were added and the library fell into disuse.

Chetham’s Library in Manchester was founded in 1653 following a bequest by Humphrey Chetham. It was intended for scholars and other interested members of
the public and was the first library to offer genuine public access. However, like many early libraries, it offered only reference facilities with restricted hours and was little used. (2) A handful of similarly endowed libraries survive.

Thomas Kelly’s impressive text on Early Public Libraries explains that pre-1800 most libraries catered for a middle class clientele of clergy, gentry, schoolmasters, professional men and well-to-do tradesmen. The following fifty years saw an increase in provision for humbler people such as clerks, craftsmen and small shopkeepers. Kelly accredits this change to the general increase in literacy, which in turn is linked with the advance of popular education, with political and economic change, and with the availability of cheap literature. (3)

In Scotland, by the time the Public Libraries Bill of 1850 was being discussed, library provision was already extensive. There was at least one library, often more than one, and frequently reading rooms too in almost every burgh in Scotland. (4) W R Aitken’s published PhD. thesis on the history of the public library movement in Scotland reports that a few libraries were founded in the seventeenth century or even earlier. In the early eighteenth century the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland had organised a system of parochial libraries in the Highlands and Islands. Elsewhere, many villages had libraries, as well as smaller collections held by Sunday schools and other bodies. Most of these were established by the middle and late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Aitken records the earliest public library in Scotland as the product of an advocate’s bequest to the town of Edinburgh in 1580. Similar philanthropic gestures led to the establishment of the library at Saltoun in 1666 and the Leightonian Library at Dunblane (1669), but none of these could be credited with genuine public access. (5)

From 1709, the public also had access to the Faculty of Advocates Library in Edinburgh, and the University libraries of Edinburgh, Glasgow, St. Andrews and Aberdeen. At the other end of the spectrum, commercial circulating libraries were established in 1725 (Edinburgh) and 1753 (Glasgow), charging a penny a night to borrow popular cheap novels, a source of much moral indignation at the time.

The Leadhills Reading Society was a new departure, being neither a religious library nor a source of popular distraction. It was established by a group of Scottish miners in 1741 for the use of local people, and a similar venture followed in nearby Wanlockhead in 1756. These libraries and Westerkirk are classified by Thomas Kelly as “the first three working class libraries in Scotland”. (6) Kelly quotes with some scepticism Samuel Smiles’ report of Westerkirk Library, a going concern after a legacy of £1000 from Thomas Telford. Smiles describes “farmers, shepherds, ploughmen, labourers and their children” reading avidly the works of Shakespeare,
Langholm Library also benefited from the generosity of Thomas Telford. Within a few decades it contained most of the standard works of English literature and the popular periodicals. At the beginning of the twentieth century the Langholm library was accommodated in post office buildings. The postmaster's son, living on the premises, was Hugh MacDiarmid. The writer recalled how he would carry a big washing-basket full of books downstairs to read at regular intervals. He claimed to have read almost every book in the library's collection by the age of fourteen.

Kelly also records a Mechanic's Library formed in Greenock by a group of working men in 1830, and at Lochwinnoch a Working Man's Library formed in protest at the exclusively religious character of the two parochial libraries there. Libraries established in a working class area with reasonable access to education seemed to thrive. The Monkland Friendly Society began buying and distributing books among its members in 1788, and ceased operations as recently as 1931. Meanwhile, Dumfries Public Library was founded in 1792.

Public subscription libraries took hold in Scotland from the 1750s. A number of bibliophiles would join together voluntarily to buy a collection of books for use by subscription-paying members. The Stirling Library in Glasgow began in this way in 1791, while Perth Public Library was founded in 1786, with its constitution guaranteeing public ownership. Glasgow Public Library, founded in 1804, contained 16,000 volumes. The Edinburgh Subscription Library in George Street had been instituted in 1794. Ayr's town library dated from 1762. Cumbernauld Public Library was established in 1816; when its books were transferred to Dunbarton County Library in 1933, they were found to include several valuable first editions.

Aitken believes that the subscription libraries, embodying as they did the principle of voluntary association, almost anticipated the public library idea. They had a resilience rarely found in libraries established by gift or bequest, unless these were particularly generous. They attracted a certain type of books and membership, with a contemporary writer describing them as "intellectual catacombs of learning" and criticising their "exclusive and aristocratic spirit". The special interests of individual subscribers often dominated the bookstock.

"Itinerating libraries" were among the Scottish libraries reported on to the 1849 Select Committee. These libraries were part of a scheme based in Haddington and established in 1817, where a collection of 50 books was placed in each community, and exchanged every couple of years.
Itinerating Libraries was to promote religion. Such was the success of the scheme, it was replicated in Berwickshire (1822), Roxburghshire (1829) and the Highlands (1829). (15)

The endowed, the subscription, the parish and the itinerating were all fore-runners of the public rate-supported library, along with the Mechanics' Institutes which in the early nineteenth century played a crucial role in the development of libraries for the public. From Edinburgh, Glasgow and London as centres they spread first to the great ports and manufacturing towns, then to the smaller industrial and market towns. (16) In Scotland in 1850 there were reportedly 55 Literary and Mechanics' Institutions, mostly in the Forth-Clyde area, with a total of almost 60,000 volumes in their libraries. (17) The libraries at these educational institutes for working and professional men required a subscription and were usually subsidised, directly or indirectly, by the gentry. Again most of the books were donated, covering science, art, philosophy, and theology, but they also incorporated a very popular fiction collection. According to Hudson in 1850 the library with the “largest circulation in the kingdom” was the Edinburgh Mechanics’ Subscription Library, founded in 1825. (18)

The Select Committee established in 1849 to consider extending the availability of libraries for the public therefore heard many witnesses. Members listened with interest to reports of existing library provision in Scotland. In its Report the Committee states:

It would seem, from the Evidence, that few countries are better calculated to profit by Public Libraries than Scotland. A respect for education and reading, long fostered by the ancient and excellent system of instruction by means of parochial schools, is hereditary in the people of Scotland. Even in distant rural districts Libraries have been formed. (19)

The 1850 Public Libraries Act allowed towns of over 10,000 inhabitants in England and Wales to raise taxes to provide a public library if local ratepayers consented. Money thus raised would go towards staff salaries and upkeep of the premises. Books would come solely from donations. A Bill to extend the Act to Ireland and Scotland was passed in August 1853. Additions to the legislation in 1855 allowed for the provision of science and art classes and authorised purchase of books. Further Acts specific to Scotland followed in 1867 (stipulating that general management of the library would be by a committee of up to twenty people, drawn equally from the town council and the ratepayers), 1871, and 1877. The Public Libraries Act was passed in 1884 and The Public Libraries Consolidation (Scotland) Act, 1887 gave specific powers for the provision of reading rooms. (20)
The first rate-supported library in Scotland opened in Airdrie in November 1851. This was followed by libraries in Dundee (1869), Paisley and Forfar (1871) and Galashiels (1874). Thurso’s library, opening in 1875 was such a success it was considered better used than any of the Scottish or English libraries available at that time. (21)

Several towns opposed the increase of local rates for the provision of a public library when so many libraries already made books available for a nominal charge. (22) Proposals for public libraries were initially rejected in Aberdeen, Glasgow and Arbroath. In Edinburgh it was argued that total book provision already ran to 75,000 volumes. Most of these books were technical or professional in subject matter, or belonging to library where subscriptions “put them practically beyond the reach of working men”. (23) So library provision, although extensive, was not yet of general benefit. The public library had much to offer a broader audience.

There was no great clamour to establish the free public library. Aitken’s account states:

There is an attractive and widely-held belief that public libraries were established as a result of the public demand for them, but it has been shown on the contrary that the public library was largely the work of philanthropists and reformers who saw it as an ameliorating and educational force they were devotedly willing to further. (24)

W.J. Murison’s history of The Public Library reiterates this point with his comments that, “The 1850 Act was passed despite lack of proof that the public libraries were wanted. That they were needed is a different matter.” (25)

Kelly’s history informs us that up to about 1886, “the main emphasis among the promoters of libraries was social and philanthropic rather than cultural, and that the libraries were generally regarded as a means towards the improvement of the working classes”. After 1886, there was increasing emphasis on the educational value of public libraries, which then became “more respectable”. (26)

In 1891 Andrew Carnegie made the first of his generous donations, gifting £8000 to his native town of Dunfermline for the establishment of a public library. Since then, over half of the towns with rate-supported libraries have benefited from the same source, in Scotland fifty out of seventy-seven libraries receiving such donations. (27) At the time of Carnegie’s death, 380 separate library buildings in the United Kingdom were associated with his name, he had donated nearly £2 million for public library buildings in the United Kingdom and his influence continues today.
through the Trusts he founded. (28) Where opposition to funding a public library did exist, a generous donation from Andrew Carnegie on the condition that the Public Library Acts be adopted would often sway opinion behind the idea.

These donations have since been criticised for the "overbuilding" they provoked, with impressive edifices costing too much to maintain. The cost of rates, caretaking and cleaning staff often left no funding for books. Restrictions on the rates which could be levied for public library provision left little flexibility in this regard, although the restriction was eventually abolished for England and Wales and raised to 3d in Scotland's case. (29) It was not until the Public Libraries Act of 1955 that this restriction was removed.

While burgh libraries were still founded by a local rate levy, the Education (Scotland) Act of 1918 allowed for more widespread provision from the county education rate. Two separate systems of libraries operated, with burgh (stationary and central) and county (circulating and rural) being quite distinct, though cooperation did occur. The Local Government (Scotland) Act of 1929 abolished the parish council and the education authority, giving jurisdiction for libraries instead to the county council, and obliging each independent library authority to pay in addition to its own library rate its share of the expenditure on the county library service. (30) The bookstocks of Scottish county libraries increased from a total of 440,822 in 1928-9 to 1,290,928 in 1938-9 and to 2,089,913 in 1950-1. Between 1946 and 1951 the number of full-time branches increased from 33 to 47; part-time branches increased from 44 to 73. (31) Books were not necessarily the priority for librarians at the time. The 1923 Mitchell Report on the Public Library System in Scotland discovered that approximately two-thirds of libraries submitting returns had spent more than half as much on newspapers and periodicals as they had on books. (32)

The Kenyon Report in 1927 helped raise the status of public libraries, setting out their role as the "centre of intellectual life of the area which it serves". The librarian should aim to provide good quality recreational literature, information and literature of a professional and technical nature. The freedom, informality and independence of the library movement are frequently stressed. (33)

Early libraries in Britain did not welcome children. Paul Sturges reports that at the turn of the century, children could not join until the age of 14. As late as the 1950s, the earliest joining age remained nine years old. Collections were housed on a closed access basis, with selection made from catalogues. This restriction was criticised from the outset by some in the profession. One particular librarian wrote in an article for the library press in 1892: "What lending libraries want, in addition to a
less suspicious method of dealing with the public, is a better means of making their book-wealth known.” (34) Nothing was bought specifically for children. (35) Sturges identifies an early tendency of librarians to provide for an idealised reader, preferably a scholar or adult learner, rather than the actual schoolchild, fiction-reader or information-seeker who entered their doors. (36) There were of course honourable exceptions, with Marylebone Central Library in 1940 providing a children’s library with separate side entrance and a projection room for lantern talks. (37)

The expert on library architecture, Michael Dewe, sees the overriding purpose of the early public library as educational. In the 1890s there were calls for new library buildings to include a lecture hall, while instructive and diverting talks were offered free of charge. (38)

Library architecture provides an interesting historical record of the original purpose and activity of our public libraries. Michael Dewe has found further evidence of libraries’ willingness to host and provide events of interest to local people:

From their inception there had always been a cultural dimension to the work of the public library through lectures and classes, and associated museums and art galleries. The post-war period saw this develop further, particularly in buildings in towns of some size. For example, of the buildings constructed in the years 1960-6, twenty of the 31 main libraries, both municipal and county, provided special rooms for extension activities. (39)

A notable text on Public Libraries from 1891 declared, “no public library will be considered to have a complete record unless it has within its ramification of work winter lectures and, in one way and another, science and art classes associated with its efforts”. (40)

This emphasis on talks and educational provision changed as time went on, with a 1903 text stressing that book provision was the first call on library budgets and the comment that arranging courses of lectures was “no part of a librarian’s work”. (41)

As far as book provision is concerned, much of the stock bought was non-fiction, despite far greater demand being shown for fiction. A 1890 survey of 25 libraries in England and Scotland showed fiction accounting for 74% of total issues, whilst it only represented 37.5% of the stock of the libraries examined. Enlightenment was a stronger criteria in book-buying.
To begin with the public library was seen as a service aimed chiefly at the working class:

The 1849 Committee recommended that a lending library was important if the lower orders were to be attracted to make full use of books, and a reading room would certainly be needed. Reference libraries were often first set up in towns followed immediately by lending departments. These libraries were soon opened at hours convenient to the working man. (42)

Speeches in the House confirm that public libraries were a utilitarian means to an end intended to occupy the working man and keep him from crime:

The debates in the House of Commons around the 1850 Public Libraries Act were often very much based on the economic efficacy of free library provision. One MP, RA Slaney, argued in support of free libraries because 'by encouraging habits which kept the working men from the public house, they lessened the incentives to a dissolute life, and, consequently, to idleness and crime; which cost the country much more than all the libraries they could build under this bill.' Another MP was even more direct, arguing that libraries 'provide the cheapest police that could possibly be established'. (43)

There was also support from the outset for the educative role of the public library. Peggy Heeks acknowledges the mixed motives of the first Public Libraries Act, but finds evidence in the debates surrounding it to support the view that the establishment of public libraries was part of the development of mass education. She points out that the very fact that library legislation came twenty years before the Education Act of 1870, which accepted the principle of universal elementary education, gave added impetus to educational programmes by libraries. (44) There was certainly a great incentive for the upper classes to secure an educated workforce, but more idealistic motives gradually took over from this basic remit. In its early days the public library offered genteel diversion to the middle classes and kept the working classes off the streets, but, through its usage and development, it has become a service offering infinitely more.

By the early years of this century, the view of libraries had completely changed. The 1915 Adams Report on library provision for the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust saw the public library as a service essential to its community’s well-being, “and one which, like the question of public health and education, should be freely available to the whole community as part of its civic rights”. (45) Lionel R McColvin, whose 1941 survey of the public library service in Great Britain is quoted in the same text,
sees the development of the "whole personality" as the library's purpose. (46)

The early years of the twentieth century saw the number of national public libraries increase from one to three. By the 1930s, a national and regional system of co-operation for interlibrary lending increased the range of bookstock available to every public library.

As James Olle reports in his history of libraries in Britain, the years immediately following the second world war saw a marked increase in the number of special libraries, soon to be followed by an increase in university and vocational college libraries. Meanwhile, hindered by building and other restrictions, public libraries marked time and waited hopefully for a new Public Libraries Act. They benefited from the system of full-time professional education which developed after 1946 when the first of the post-war schools of librarianship were established. (47)

Significant legislation for Scottish public libraries was passed in 1955. The Public Libraries (Scotland) Act removed the limitation on expenditure and borrowing; authorised co-operation among libraries; enforced contributions to the maintenance of the Scottish Central Library, and permitted the lending of items other than books. Further guidance came in 1964 with the United Kingdom Public Libraries and Museums Act.

The public library as we know it today is a library established under the Public Libraries Act in the United Kingdom and supported by local taxpayers. Such institutions exist in all communities over a certain size to lend books and provide information free of charge. (48) The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions define a public library as, "a library established and financed by a local - or in some cases, central - government body, or by some other organisation authorised to act on its behalf, available without bias or discrimination to all who wish to use it." (49)

The Public Libraries Research Group published a set of objectives as a practical management tool for public libraries in 1971. This served as a basis for discussion. They agreed the public library's central aim is:

To contribute to sustaining the quality of life in all its aspects - educational, economic, industrial, scientific and cultural, and promote the concept of a democratic society in which equal opportunity exists for all to develop into true citizens, with whole and balanced personalities leading to an increase in the sum total of man's happiness and awareness of himself, his fellow men and his environment. (50)
The public library exists for cultural enrichment and the enhancement of education, information and democracy. In general its workers have a strong commitment to these principles and the public service ethos. Much of public library work is intended to benefit the individual. McColvin identifies three main purposes: firstly, the public library affords an opportunity for reading those books which foster a full and good life; secondly, the public library provides a source of information, and thirdly it enables a person to develop to the fullest extent any abilities he may possess to benefit society in so far as they can be developed by books. (51) The public library can enhance an individual’s education, offer spiritual and cultural riches, and increase life opportunities.

The public library also offers benefits for the community. This term, as we will see later in this thesis, can be defined in a number of ways. It can mean a catchment area, with differing characteristics for a town centre, a housing scheme or a rural village. It can imply an interest group, such as small businesses, or women with children. A public library has to balance many competing interests. It also makes a contribution to civic life. The public library is one of the most heavily used local authority services, a repository of public information and a source of advice. It has a crucial role to play in facilitating full democratic participation. As we enter the new millennium the public library is still pursuing its initial aims of fostering culture, information, recreation and education. With rapid advances in information and communications technology, commitment to community consultation and increasing evidence of partnership working, they have every chance to achieve these aims.

Libraries play a fundamental role in public life at a local and national level. Bob Usherwood reminds us lest we forget: libraries are the collective mind and memory of society. (52)

2.2 Public Library Present - Where we are now

2.21 The economic context

Poverty is a major problem facing modern Britain. In 1992/3, between 13 and 14 million Britons were living in poverty measured by the two most common definitions. In 1979 the equivalent figure was 5 million. (53) It could be argued that Britain is now, as in the Victorian era, a country of “two nations”, with the gap between the poorest and the richest households growing. Between 1979 and 1992/3 real incomes (after housing costs) of those in the poorest tenth of the population fell by 18%; the average rose by 37% while the richest rose by 61%. (54)
Will Hutton believes we live in a divided society. Only around 40% of the workforce enjoy tenured full-time employment or secure self-employment; another 30% are insecurely self-employed, involuntarily part-time, or casual workers; while the bottom 30%, the marginalised, are idle or working for poverty wages. (55) Writing before the 1997 General Election Hutton saw the emerging two-tier National Health Service and the three-tier education system as examples of social inequality heaped upon the income inequality already identified:

Herein lie the origins of family stress, the crisis of parenting and the general communal decay which are at the root of so many of Britain's social problems. Altruism and the civilising values of an inclusive society have been sacrificed on the altar of self-interest, of choice, of opting out and of individualism. (56)

Young people are leaving school with no hope of a job. Marriage breakdown and social instability have ensured increasing numbers of lone parents struggling to survive on benefits. Crime, vandalism and alcohol and drug addiction are just symptoms of this. Income inequality in the UK grew rapidly between 1977 and 1990, reaching the highest level recorded since the War. One in three children in the UK live in poverty. (57) In Scotland, estimates suggest 38% of children (including 42% of under-fives) live in poverty. (58)

Scottish Chief Librarian Alan Hasson has identified an "acute and developing social crisis, centring around unemployment, low pay and the development of areas of extreme deprivation". (59)

Scotland has struggled to cope with radical social and economic change. The 1980s saw a decline in its industrial and manufacturing base and a rise in unemployment in the service sector. While most employed people are in permanent jobs there has been a trend towards part-time, flexible and short-term work. In Scotland, of all households with children, 21.5% (132,400) are headed by one parent. The vast majority (93%) of lone parents are women, and around 70% are dependent on Income Support. (60)

Hasson highlights particular problems in the west of Scotland:

...in Strathclyde Region, which includes the traditional powerhouses of the Scottish economy - Clydeside, Lanarkshire and their hinterlands - the overall unemployment rate is 16%, with 23% of families on income support and 44% of children receiving clothing
grants. Yet the situation is worse than this because such deprivation is not spread evenly. For instance, whilst in 1992-3 just under one in eight of the Region's school leavers went straight into unemployment, more than one in five did so in Glasgow, whilst in those areas of Glasgow designated as areas of acute deprivation, one in three went from school to unemployment. (61)

The government has had to adapt to this changing socioeconomic environment and respond by reappraising its role.

2.22 Community and public policy

The last two decades have seen fundamental change in public policy and the role of the state in welfare provision. Many authors have considered the implications of this change. Stephen P Savage et al, in Public Policy in Britain, suggest more private sector provision is likely:

In part this will be the result of continuing attempts to redraw the boundaries between public and private sectors, i.e. an ideologically inspired series of attempts to restructure the state. At the same time change will also emerge from the Government's ever more pressing need to control public expenditure. (62)

Continuing public and private sector interaction is part of Tony Blair's vision for Britain. There is an increasing reliance on private pension provision for the more affluent elderly. Business and the voluntary sector are joining local authority departments offering New Deal workschemes to young people. Britain's largest ever contribution by a private sector company involves British Telecom arranging Internet access for every school in the country. We no longer speak of workers and bosses, but of partnership. Black and white have blurred. The post-war consensus and commitment to Keynesian economic policies is now abandoned. Will Hutton comments on the end of consensus in The State We're In. (63) Equality is no longer a policy priority.

Education is a key issue for this government, which has prioritised investment in the infrastructure of crumbling schools. They assert that schools must be seen to succeed, parents must enter into contracts, ineffective teachers face dismissal. There is no connection made between poverty in the home and underachievement in the classroom. It could be argued that the current government are brave to take on the major challenge of improving educational standards. Others contend they are tackling the symptoms of a problem rather than its cause.
tackling the symptoms of a problem rather than its cause.

Curiously enough, despite the fact that Conservative policies over seventeen years increased the divisions in our society, aspects of their government recognised the importance of community. Michael Heseltine’s emphasis on regenerating inner city areas, George Younger’s support of Urban Aid and other programmes at the Scottish Office seemed to support local initiative, targeted investment, self help and development. Virginia Bottomley praised community development work, singling out the achievements of the Community Initiative Award.

The Conservative government’s reasons for this policy were complex. Just as Care in the Community can be seen as a cost-cutting measure allowing the closure of mental health institutions, so their encouragement of community involvement could be seen as a palliative, appearing to value disadvantaged groups without actually spending vast sums on the infrastructure necessary to provide a real route out of poverty. It could be that implementing policies at community level was simply the most effective way to solve local problems.

There is increasing cross-party agreement on the value of self-help and voluntary community initiatives. Writing in Community and Public Policy, Hugh Butcher identifies “a growing trend towards the adoption of policies that build on the attractiveness of community values” (64) and argues this is chiefly for pragmatic reasons. Community policing is an effective means of tackling the increasing tensions caused by inner-city deprivation; residents of crumbling housing estates are given more say about their future in community ownership schemes and partnerships with voluntary sector housing cooperatives because the enforced rehousing of previous decades is no longer acceptable. The costs of state welfare provision continue to rise. An ageing population and other demographic factors place a heavy burden on the current welfare system.

Marjorie Mayo, writing in Radical Community Work: Perspectives from Practice in Scotland, comments that:

Policy-makers, with widely differing perspectives, seem to be agreed on the relevance of community-based strategies. There has been a plethora of community-based approaches to improve service delivery, and to promote self-help and voluntary effort, in the mixed economy of welfare. There has also been increasing focus upon community-based strategies to combat poverty and to promote ‘community participation’ and ‘empowerment’. This ‘fashionable rhetoric’ of ‘community’, as it has been
described by Professor Alan Barr, including the recent
focus upon the new ‘communitarianism’, has been a
major feature of debates on both sides of the Atlantic.
(65)

Mayo argues for a critical analysis of contemporary community development
practice, to “unravel the ways in which terminology is being hi-jacked”. (66)

Inappropriate use of community work terms is addressed by Chik Collins and Jim
Lister in the same text, where the authors focus on “partnership” areas, highlighting
the contradictions between “the dominant discourse of ‘local democracy’ and the
experience of it in practice.” (67)

Conservative and Labour embrace the community ideal for different reasons. Hugh
Butcher gives the example of Douglas Hurd, arguing for the “Victorian” ideals of
active citizenship, enthusing about housing associations, tenants’ cooperatives and
neighbourhood watch schemes as alternatives to state bureaucracies. Butcher
maintains these are alternatives which resonate with one-nation Conservative ideals
and traditions of voluntary service, civic obligation and the diffusion of power in
society. (68) The Citizen’s Charter is a later version of the same thought.
Meantime, the Labour Party envisage a society of realistic choices. Their basic aim
is a more caring social order with the extremes of capitalism taking a back seat to
community values. They also speak now of “one nation”, and have probably
attracted some of the more traditional Conservative voters with this approach.

David Marquand, writing on ‘Community and the Left’ in What Needs to Change,
believes that the concept of community has been sacrificial to that of liberty in the
1980s and 1990s with the result that “present-day Britain is threatened by
progressive atomization and growing alienation”. (69)

Marquand sees community values embodied in the “public domain”. Their
motivation is an ethic of public service and a commitment to the public interest.
The public domain is defined by Marquand as “a set of practices, animated by a
principle. And that principle can be realised as fully by a business firm, a trade
union or a group of animal rights protesters as by a government department or a
local authority”. This is, effectively, a definition of community.

For Marquand, the principal community is our society, and it comprises a mosaic of
smaller communities such as trade unions, business associations, cooperatives,
universities and local councils. Because such organisations are naturally self-
serving, he sees potential for conflict between themselves, with wider society, and
with the interests of the individual. He quotes the Thatcher era as a period when
strong organisations independent of the state were attacked, and the public domain drastically curtailed. (70) The effects of this period were wide-ranging and revolutionary. Marquand believes the Thatcherites sought cultural and intellectual domination - “in a word, hegemony”(71) - as well as political power. Certain policies fundamental to politicians on the left pre-1979 are quite unthinkable now, “as Labour’s nervousness over taxation and public expenditure vividly demonstrates”. (72) Marquand argues we cannot blame the current “hollowing out of community” (73) on the legacy of the New Right, but on the “restless, voracious capitalism of today”. (74)

The new communitarianism, which advocates that citizens have responsibilities and duties as well as rights is represented in the USA by Amitai Etzioni. Etzioni argues that political parties should not be active at the level of the state, relying on voluntary action and civic duty to provide the necessary safety net.

Etzioni has written an introduction to a recent text on New Communitarian Thinking. Attempts at definition within this book divide into the two most prominent schools of communitarian thinking: one school arguing that communitarian thinking is a source of reform for contemporary liberalism, and another which argues that communitarian thinking offers an altogether distinctive approach to political theory. (75) Furthermore, Etzioni points out that there are two strains of contemporary liberalism at opposing ends of the political spectrum, namely the libertarian and the egalitarian. While some thinkers see the individual as the prime agent in a deliberative democracy, others attach importance to the roles of institutions too.

William M Sullivan writes in his chapter of the book that society must provide material, personal and organisational support to institutions and the social environments where they thrive or fail. He concludes that a vigorous effort to launch a project of institutional renewal (including eg community policing, neighbourhood watch schemes) is the best way to halt “social entropy”. (76) In other words, the free market and individual action is not enough.

Other contributors to this text, Charles Taylor and Jeffrey Abramson and Elizabeth Bussiere, express concern about the power of centralised, overbearing media conglomerations in contemporary society, and the threat this might pose to democracy. (77) Abrahamson and Bussiere consider how government can stimulate a more “rich and robust public debate” by ensuring that telecommunications giants do not have sole purchase on mass media. (78)

In his own contribution to New Communitarian Thinking, a chapter entitled ‘Old
Chestnuts and New Spurs', Etzioni stresses the link between individual rights and social responsibilities, and the dangers of majoritarianism. Etzioni believes that the relationship between individual and community has mutual benefits. (79) He believes that the relationship between individuals and communities, the I & We is "at one and the same time, mutually supportive and tensed" (80); a "tense but close bond". (81) Like bricks in an arch, "a proper relation among the bricks ensures that a sufficient level of tension will maintain the bond". (82)

Etzioni has already differentiated between liberal and communitarian schools of thought, but believes it is too simplistic to suggest that while liberals are preoccupied with individual rights, communitarians concern themselves only with social responsibilities. Communitarians define and promote societal balances. They recognise that most individual rights have as their corollary a social responsibility. (83) Etzioni quotes the famous President Kennedy exhortation to "ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country". This seems to be the very essence of the communitarian view. Communitarian thought has a tendency to moralise, and seems to embrace standards of behaviour to which all should adhere. In 'Old Chestnuts and New Spurs', Etzioni briefly defines community as "social webs carrying moral values" (84).

John A Hall is engaged in a closely related debate about the values that drive public and private life. He quotes John Keane's 1988 definition of civil society as "the opposite of despotism, a space in which social groups could exist and move - something which exemplified and would ensure softer, more tolerable conditions of existence." (85) As Hall points out, civil society has been held up as a goal to achieve by those opposing state communism, as well as those supporting different ideologies in the west. (86) Civil society is a modern concept, describing how we interact with our fellow citizens and engage in the democratic process. Hall charts its development in Europe from agrarian civilisations through the religious conflict of the middle ages, gradual acceptance of religious differences and the final separation of church and state. (87)

Hall comments that in recent years some political theorists attracted to the idea of civil society have also served as spokesmen for the revival of the tradition of republican civil virtue. (88) Although Hall does not mention Etzioni by name in this regard, he does seem to fit the description.

Adam Seligman has also identified two distinct schools of thought in the debate about civic society and civic virtue, which parallel the strains identified by Etzioni. Seligman maintains there are republican and liberal views of citizenship. In many ways this represents an updated version of the contrasting views of citizenship, of
individual and public good contained in the two traditions of public thought represented by Adam Smith and Rousseau:

Liberal... theory views society as an assortment of morally autonomous individuals, each with his and her own concept of the good life, with the function of society being limited to ensuring the legal equality of these individuals through a procedurally just or fair process of democratic decision-making in the public sphere. It is concerned with insuring the continued operation of universally valid principles of justice or right rather than with imposing any particular moral vision on the individual social actors who make up society.

Republican versions of citizenship posit, by contrast, a conception of society as a ‘moral community’ engaged in the pursuit of a common good, whose ontological status is prior to that of any individual member. (89)

While the two perspectives seem diametrically opposed, Seligman believes they can point to a new model which can be usefully applied. (90)

A more sophisticated example of civil society in action is posed by Gellner in the self-organization of strong and autonomous groups which balance the state and are “both voluntary and overlapping”. (91) This is an important qualification, itself expanded on by Hall, who believes the state should not exclusively be seen as a threat.

Hall believes that state and civil society need each other:

... the image of the state that suits civil society is that of eighteenth century Britain in which state and society interacted continuously, with state capacity being increased by the ability to work through notables who accepted this because they trusted an institution - their institution - that they could control. (92)

Considering that many observers feel the New Labour government have taken on the mantle of communitarian ideas, and approve the concepts of voluntarism and self-sufficiency often connected with that philosophy, the comparison with Victorian values strikes a discordant note. While this is more the province of Conservatism in the Thatcher years, the parallels with contemporary America are clear - the philanthropic benevolence of billionaires like Bill Gates, the alienating poverty of the “underclass”. There are parallels too with the moral authoritarianism some observers have criticised in the government and Victorian
moral hypocrisy in public pronouncements and private action.

David Marquand has described the communitarian movement associated with Etzioni as "a counsel of despair". (93) He argues that voluntary action should be buttressed by appropriate use of public power, which may be at local and supranational levels in preference to the central state. Marquand advocates subsidiarity - the principle that decisions should be taken at the lowest level of government appropriate to the issue concerned. (94) He makes two further crucial points. Firstly, the public domain must be kept separate from the market domain and should not be described with commercial terminology. The service ethic is the true guarantor of quality in the public domain. Secondly, the central objective of economic policy should not be to promote wealth creation: economic growth should not be our paramount goal. (95) It is not acceptable to prioritise a high GDP per head over social inclusion and employment opportunities.

Marquand is himself very close to the government of Tony Blair. His position on state and community is essentially a social democratic one. When Tony Blair speaks of a social contract between citizens and government, his focus is on the responsibilities citizens have to society, as well as their rights.

A recent article in the Benefits periodical examines New Labour thinking on welfare, and Tony Blair’s own commitment to reform. Writers Alan Deacon and Kirk Mann refer to a speech in Amsterdam in January 1997 in which Tony Blair set out three “principles of modern welfare”. These were; a greater emphasis upon the responsibilities and obligations of claimants, a “less dogmatic” approach to the balance between public and private provision, and a move towards provision which is active and not passive. (96) They quote directly from Tony Blair’s speech:

Today the welfare state seems too often to fail: its attempts to provide security are overwhelmed by the scale of insecurity in people's lives. The more demands are put upon it, the more the essentially passive nature of too much provision - especially benefits - is revealed.

The authors comment that:

These principles are in turn a reflection of Blair’s belief in the need to rebuild ‘a modern civic society around an agreed basis of social morality’. (97)

The authors remark on the extent and nature of the redefinition of welfare in Britain, and the influence of both Communitarian ideas and the Christian Socialist beliefs
held by Blair and several of his ministers.

They conclude that it is impossible to distinguish the influence of Christian Socialism upon Tony Blair from that of Communitarian writers, and Amitai Etzioni in particular. They highlight Etzioni’s work *The Spirit of Community*, in which he argues that our preoccupation with rights rather than obligations has produced three “deficits”. First of these is the “moral deficit” which comes from a reluctance to lay moral claims on people, a lack of standards. The second deficit is in parenting, with self-interest and a focus on careers making parents neglect their obligations to their children. The third deficit is in moral education, manifest in the failure of schools to transmit values and develop character. (98) Tony Blair is seen to address all these issues, perhaps most clearly embodied in his advocacy of citizenship. As Deacon and Mann explain, “The Communitarian agenda is simple yet daunting. It is to recreate a sense of social and civic responsibility: in effect to remoralise society. (99)

Like many participants in the debate on social responsibility and social policy, Deacon and Mann point to its inherent dangers. Whilst people are seen as engineers of their own destiny, they may be blamed for their misfortunes.

From the other end of the political spectrum (in party terms at least) comes David G Green. In *Community Without Politics: a Market Approach to Welfare Reform*, he advocates a laissez-faire approach, with minimum state involvement in welfare provision. He sits at the libertarian extreme of the spectrum described by Etzioni, and subscribes to the liberal theory as outlined by Seligman above, in Hall’s text on *Civil Society*.

From the very beginning of the book, Green makes a series of emphatic statements which are questionable to say the least, and then goes on to use these as a basis for his broader argument:

> The main purpose of this book is to examine whether there is a viable private, non-political alternative to the welfare state. (100)

Some would believe that the terms “private”, in opposition to “welfare state” could never be described as “non-political”, because of the shift in policy priorities it implies. Green’s bold assertion of the competitive market’s moral legitimacy is also open to debate:

> … a system of voluntary exchange is based on respect for the preferences of other people; and a market
economy by comparison with a planned economy, helps to disperse productive resources, thus reducing the potential for the abuse of concentrated power and increasing opportunities for human creativity. (101)

Even the throwaway comment that “a market economy increases prosperity”, (102) leaves no room for debate. Surely it does not increase prosperity for all? However, Green is not arguing that a market economy is sufficient in itself to meet the welfare needs of the poor. He writes instead of the strong moral obligations on those who -through luck or judgement - are successful. They should be willing to come to the aid of the less fortunate. (103) He echoes the distinction made by Etzioni that the individual or family is separate from the state or government, but that in between comes “community”. The “community without politics” favoured by Green is an older ethos which, he argues, was an indispensable element of classical liberalism until the twentieth century. (104)

There is little contemporary evidence to support Green’s premise that a sense of duty will lead the affluent to assist the poor in the absence of state provision. Yet he declares:

> Experience this century has surely taught us that political caring is a poor substitute for the mutual caring of civil society, and political solidarity an inadequate replacement for the sense of belonging that derives from free acceptance of a moral tradition to which all subscribe, rich and poor alike. (105)

Green calls for constitutional reform “to confine the state to its proper task of maintaining the conditions on which liberty rests”. (106) Liberty for many people might be seen as having enough money to eat, clothe their children and heat the house. The old fashioned concept of the welfare state tried at least to offer this according to defined guidelines, in an even-handed way. Green is not talking about liberty in terms of rights but in terms of opportunities. In a civil association the government is an instrument of the people. Green equates the concept of liberty with civil association: it is the acceptance of shared conditions, legal and moral, and the assumption of personal responsibility for maintaining them. (107)

Acceptance of responsibility is the foundation of Green’s credo. Self-reliance is the key:

> Civil association rests on the view that we grow by facing challenges, and improve by bearing responsibility for overcoming the difficulties we face. (108)
The debate has profound implications for community and public policy.

In *Public Sector Management*, Stewart and Ranson explain the need for the public domain to follow collective values, as “its rationale and its purpose”. (109) It follows, then, that democracy is a basic value for management in the public domain. It is interesting to consider whether public libraries draw their “rationale and purpose” from this source.

It could be argued that from their earliest appearance public libraries attempted to address collective values, in the bookstock they provided and the service offered. How comprehensively they did this is open to debate. It could further be argued that if we wish to offer a service relevant for future generations we should ensure that we acknowledge community values now. Again the definition of community is all-important.

A community development approach could be seen as a truly democratic approach to service provision. It is one possible model for the profession to adopt, and its success or failure may depend on how successfully it does reflect community values.

A community perspective is a departure from the bureaucratic model despised by the Tories, and the commercial model rejected (to some extent) by the Labour Party. Its apparent emphasis on democracy at a local level is understandably popular. There is increasing cross-party agreement on the value of self-help and voluntary community initiatives.

The Conservative Government’s emphasis on community was not universally applied. Some of its policies were highly centralist. It could be argued that putting the onus on a community to run eg. a housing association gives the appearance of consultation without real power. It may be a means to an end.

With echoes of the celebrated speech by President Kennedy, Tony Blair called at the Labour Party Conference of 1997 for individuals to recognise not their rights but their obligations. He exhorted the public to become active citizens. He spoke of one quarter of government decisions being made electronically by the electorate in two years time. There is a great deal of work to do in making information necessary for such decisions available to the general public. Libraries can play that role.
Scottish local government reorganisation was a traumatic process for all concerned. On April 1st 1996, 9 Regional Councils and 53 District Councils were replaced with 29 unitary authorities each responsible for all local government services.

In some cases, the disaggregation of the regions gave rise to smaller authorities. Clackmannan in Central Region is one such example. Some City Councils like Glasgow and Edinburgh retained broadly similar boundaries but inherited new responsibilities from outgoing regional authorities in their area. Other district councils amalgamated with neighbours to create new superstructures. Planning for and adapting to change has been difficult. The huge costs of local government reorganisation, and the additional responsibilities entailed, have yet to bring the forecast economies of scale. Local people still need local services, and authorities have found themselves struggling to provide those services on standstill or reduced budgets.

Scottish libraries are no longer sheltered from the kind of reduction in service familiar to English authorities in recent years. When Glasgow Libraries can announce, “The good news is that the School Library Service is to be saved” (110), there is serious cause for concern.

Another aspect of local government reorganisation is its effect on departmental structures.

The SLA/SLIC report on Libraries and the Arts commented:

> The Working Group has looked with interest at the creation by some authorities of departments involving arts, libraries and museums. We believe that this is a very positive development which will benefit both the individual service components and the authority as a whole. Such a grouping allows for economies of scale, while reflecting the community of interest between the services. (111)

The most common change has been the absorption of existing Libraries Departments into multi-strand Cultural Services Directorates, Community Services Departments, Education, or even Environmental and Technical Services. Following implementation, Robert Craig, Director of the Scottish Library Association, commented that the preference in almost all authorities is for overarching structures
which cover a wide range of functions “sometimes with only tenuous links between them”. (112)

As Alastair MacNaughton, a correspondent to the Library Association Record pointed out, many Scottish library services have had their book funds reduced by ten to twenty per cent while in at least two authorities the library headquarters has been commandeered for other purposes. MacNaughton concludes that “a few individual librarians may have done reasonably well out of reorganisation, but it is far from clear that libraries have, and there is definitely a perception that they have been downgraded relative to other council services”. (113)

Other fears have been expressed about the effects of local government reorganisation on a UK-wide basis. John Hicks, Director of Cultural Services for Berkshire County Council, has outlined the chaos of changes in England, including arguments over the division of resource collections, opposition to joint arrangements, failure to protect specialist services and loss of experience and expertise. He detects “real concern about the size of many new councils and the cost of the change amidst current expenditure patterns”. (114)

Restructured local government has struggled to cope with the vast administrative changes, and to tailor available finances to all the services involved. Every council has trawled for voluntary redundancies, allowing crucial posts to be deleted, throwing away decades of experience, sharing out duties among less skilled staff, not filling vacancies, concentrating on core service provision. Such stringencies have been routine south of the border for the last decade, but have come as a shock in Scotland.

While the Scottish Arts Council, the Scottish Library Association and many leading library representatives welcomed the amalgamation of libraries and arts sections, and respondents to a survey by Libby Ward (115) saw it as a positive development, in practice the consequences are hard to predict. Other less obvious liaisons within local authorities may offer a way forward for community-oriented arts and library work. As the authors of The Social Impact of the Arts point out, social development-oriented cultural policies often emerge from local authority departments, such as planning, economic development and social services. (116)

David Liddle, Director of Community Leisure in Avon, has focussed on Development as the key term in local authority structures if arts provision in particular is to be meaningful. Having inherited an inanimate Youth and Community Service from the local Education Department, his Council allocated this and the Libraries Department to separate Assistant Directors, creating in between a
new Development Unit. This brought together Arts Officers, Sports Development Officers, people responsible for advising on minority groups etc. (117) Several Library Services Departments have appointed Development Officers in the same spirit. However, Liddle believes that, “for all its importance... the partnership between libraries and the arts is only one facet of the development of library services to meeting a wider range of community needs.” (118) This thesis also argues art is not the only means of achieving civic pride, but it is accessible and effective. With the right approach, it is something that can make a tangible difference to peoples' lives, and their perceptions of libraries.

The Charter for the Arts has been criticised for scant consideration of libraries. The Tayside Branch of the Scottish Library Association has remarked that, “With greater insight, libraries could fulfil a more significant and distinctive role in Scottish culture.” (119)

The Scottish Arts Council recommends:

...that local authorities develop arts and museums policies which are based on an holistic approach to cultural policy involving strong inter-departmental cooperation, and, where appropriate, inter-authority cooperation... (120)

Public sector management

In recent years local authorities have had to reexamine how they manage services. Cold, hard comparisons have been made with the private sector. There has been a constant need to compete for contracts, justify costs, and ensure quality in every type of service provision.

While some comparisons can be made between public and private sector management, the contexts in which they operate are very different. The private sector example may not be a fair base for comparison. To define other sectors (voluntary, public) as “not-for-profit” or “non-market” is to define negatively, and say little about their purpose. John Stewart and Stewart Ranson have argued terminology like this tells the reader “that the public sector organisation does not aim for profit, but not what it does aim at”. (121)

These two authors believe there should be a new model for strategic management in the public domain. They see the review of the organisations activities in relation to a changing environment and the analysis of organisational strengths and weaknesses
commonly applied to private sector organisations as valid, but believe comparisons cannot be taken any further:

It is not meaningful to think of the competitive stance of the public sector except in certain fields. Government cannot opt out of a product or a market merely because the environment seems unfavourable. It may well have to opt in because of market failure. None of this is to argue that strategic management is not required in the public domain, but that strategic management cannot be based on the competitive stance of different organisations and cannot choose product/market mixes on the basis of profit margins.

(122)

Stewart and Ranson make the point that while the private sector is concerned with demand for products at a price, the public domain is concerned with need. (123)

It is often assumed that the public sector is only now being held to account by more systematic reporting, while performance in the private sector has always been judged by the market. According to Stewart and Ranson, “Public accountability is both wider and deeper”:

The public organisation is accountable to all - to the public at large and to individuals. Accountability cannot therefore be defined in a single dimension. Public accountability is required to explain and to justify actions taken. It has to find many languages to give many accounts. It has to encompass quality and quantity. Public accountability is through a political process which responds to many voices. (124)

Public demands, pressure and protest are a condition of the public domain, and the political process. For the private sector, such sentiments are problems to overcome. Furthermore, the public domain is motivated, through the electoral process, by social responsibility. If equity is an aim, it must influence management style.

Crucially, the writers differentiate between service provider and service user in each sector. The private sector is quite clear about its role in responding to customer demands. But many analysts of public sector management are unclear on how to define the people they serve: customers? clients? users? Stewart and Ranson argue:

The public are not merely clients or customers of the public sector organisation. They are themselves a part of that organisation as citizens. Citizenship can be a basic value in the public domain. In building citizenship management has to encompass a set of
relationships for which the private sector model allows no place. (125)

In the public domain no interest can be excluded. We do not have the option of niche marketing. We have to struggle with the conflicting demands of the collective and the individual, representation and participation, bureaucracy and responsiveness. We have to strive for balance, impartiality and effectiveness. And we have to be accountable. It is likely that the years to come will see growing tensions between local government, central government and the Scottish Parliament. Of these, local government is the most vulnerable.

John Fairley, in his article, ‘The changing politics of local government in Scotland’, points out that the last local government reorganisation in Scotland was consensual and did not seek to alter the scope of local government. It was intended to rationalise and simplify responsibilities. The recent highly controversial reform has diminished the powers of local councils, giving the functions of water and sewerage, Children’s Reporter, and aspects of responsibility for roads from local government to the Scottish Office or to quangos. (126) Police forces and fire services are now responsible to joint boards of local authorities, arguably weakening their accountability.

Some of the smaller councils face difficulties providing former regional services such as social work and education. There is provision for local authorities to opt out of a direct service provision role, retaining responsibility for services but increasingly contracting out the activities of service delivery. This marks an important shift, perhaps not immediately apparent to the general public. (127)

One of the changes seen in local government in recent years is the move to greater private sector funding, through initiatives like PFI, the Government’s Private Finance Initiative. Arthur Midwinter has analysed the Conservative Government’s motives for initiating local government reorganisation, and their stated aim of bringing government closer to the people with a simpler one-tier system. (128)

A 1991 Scottish Office consultation paper commented that some regional authorities were seen as “too large and too remote from the local communities they serve”. It was felt that a two-tier system entailed unnecessary expense, duplication and delay in terms of central administrations like Personnel and Finance. The government’s emphasis on consumer choice, competitive tendering and private sector involvement stressed the enabling role of government rather than direct service provision. This made the Wheatley Commission’s concern with the operational advantages of large authorities seem less important. (129) Yet it could
be argued that the division of power represented by the two-tier system resulted in economies of scale, and significant areas of expertise, clearly defined. There was no groundswell of opinion for local government reform. A System 3 Poll taken in 1991 showed 49% of Scots favouring the status quo, and 37% favouring a shift to a single tier system. The upheaval of change was generally unpopular. Midwinter points out that there was no rigorous appraisal of the existing system, no “case for change”. (130) Indeed, some academic observers challenge the view that unitary authorities bring economies of scale. C. S. Page for example has shown that administration expense is highest in small burghs and lowest in cities and counties. (131) There is also evidence that Scottish people were clear on the different roles of district and regional government, and had high satisfaction levels with the service they provided. (132) On accountability, the point is made that a single tier system allows for fewer elected representatives, and removes the opportunity to comment at separate elections on the provision of different services. Summing up the arguments, Arthur Midwinter concludes the changes bring “a fragmentation of democratic accountability rather than its clarification, and a reduction of democratic control”. (133)

However, in a sense this debate is of limited historical interest. The reform is here to stay. There is now all-party consensus that the one-tier system is the best option for local government administration. With the Scottish Parliament and increasing public/private sector partnerships, any change is likely to be a diminution in power, rather than a return to former strength for local government.

The impact of local government reform for libraries is considered in an article by Sandra Parker, Linda Banwell and Moira Bent in the Public Library Journal. This describes the initial work carried out by LOGOPLUS (Investigating the impact of Local Government reorganisation on Public Library Users and Staff). LOGOPLUS was established by the Department of Information and Library Management at the University of Northumbria to investigate the effect on library services of the move to Unitary Authorities in England and Wales.

Parker et al raise the concern for financial accountability voiced by several observers. Liddle, for example, believes library authorities will be created with an entirely inadequate resource base for providing a public library service. Midwinter points out smaller authorities will incur higher average costs and extra district charges. Defendants of the status quo (Hopkins) believe the inevitable result of reorganisation is that either the service will deteriorate or costs will increase. Local government reorganisation assumes that each authority will move from the role of “provider” to “enabler”, buying in the most cost effective services. Malley feels competitive tendering is just one of the agents of change which, together with
enablement, quality issues and performance indicators, accompany reorganisation. However, the Library Association believe competitive tendering could result in a worse service to users by undermining co-operative arrangements. (134)

Parker, Banwell and Bent also point to problems of access:

One of the many fears expressed is that a decrease in resources will result in shorter opening hours, particularly in smaller libraries, which could even close altogether. This is already happening in Glasgow and is the opposite of the recommendations in the DNH Review which advocates the enhancement of the local library network by increasing opening hours and creating mini-libraries. (135)

The fears about the resource implications of local government reorganisation for public libraries have proved well-founded.

As trends in Management have come and gone, the library profession has embraced in its turn Management by Objectives, Systems Management and performance measurement too. Like all public sector organisations, libraries in the eighties and nineties were forced to prove their worth in terms of value for money, efficiency, and quality of service. Quality management has seen an emphasis on demonstrating the library’s performance to users, local councillors and national government. Recent research by Loughborough University concluded that Quality Management was probably having a limited impact overall. Only 21% of library authorities had a policy on Quality Management; 47% had some involvement but could name no specific initiative and 64% were providing no training in quality. (136)

The Benchmarking in the Library and Information Services Sector study, which looked specifically at the academic and special sectors, produced similar findings, but discovered that more public library services (over 80%) were using performance indicators than academic and industrial services (around 44%). The study also found academic and special libraries were slightly less likely to use team working (just over 50% compared with 60% for public libraries). (137)

Margaret Kinnell concludes:

There is what we might describe as a healthy scepticism amongst library and information professionals at the hyperbole associated with what many have come to see as yet another management fad.
However, in a climate where the competitive threat to services is increasing, there is undoubtedly a need to make use of all possible tools which can support effective management. Recapturing the ground for public sector services from the ideologues of the past decade means defining a quality ethos for library services. It also requires models or preferably tool kits for managers to support them in developing effective client and community-centred services. (138)

Libraries need to be careful in their selection of performance indicators. They will not change the popular view of what they do by reporting only how many books they lend each day. They also need to examine whether their objectives are appropriate. What are the local needs and are library services set up to meet these needs?

Performance Indicators

Throughout the eighties and nineties, the era of accountability and new managerialism, the constant refrain has been “value for money”. This is generally closely tied to the concept of the “3 e’s” - economy, efficiency and effectiveness. It means offering a service to the public at minimum cost, as long as the quality of the service remains acceptable. Such has been the rationale for contracting out of services in local government. The issue of quality is a complex one, however. And the issue of value is even more problematic.

In their paper on ‘Scottish Education and the New Managerialism’, John Fairley and Lindsay Paterson examine the use of audit in local government. While preferable to the bureaucratic system operating until the 1970s, they see new managerialism as seriously flawed, and suggest an alternative model based on human autonomy.

The authors identify the impetus for the new managerialism as the Conservative government elected in 1979. The government argued that public sector failings could be explained by bureaucratic inefficiency and poor management, rather than policy weakness or inadequate resources. (139) Performance measurement was supported by a wide range of politicians and other groups in the hope it would increase the accountability of local government and other public sector services.

The authors point out that the new managerialism can offer benefits for Councillors, local council officers and interest groups using services in terms of increased transparency, arguing that there is a large measure of consensus support for the new approach among councillors and authorities of various political colours. (140)
Furthermore, “it appears to be something of a bandwagon, with those who oppose or criticise likely to be left in its wake, or, worse still, flattened by its rapid advance”. (141)

The detail of the article examines the benefits and problems associated with performance indicators. The authors highlight the “uncritical acceptance of measurement”, (142) but perhaps recent years have seen a growth in critical awareness of performance measurement and its limitations. This is one of the reasons for current interest in the social impact of the arts and of libraries. It has been recognised that where there is an effect it should be demonstrated. In fact, education faces the same difficulties as libraries and the arts in having a long term impact which is difficult to prove.

Fairley and Paterson argue that for monitoring to be effective its starting point has to be a belief that organisations rely on people... that the people in an organisation are the main asset of the organisation, rather than sources of difficulty. (143) They establish three principles essential to any system of monitoring:

- A monitoring system should not focus more attention on measuring activities than the activities themselves.
- A monitoring system should be designed so that human beings are motivated to interpret and act on results.
- A monitoring system must be backed up by professional training for staff and adequate time for response.

An alternative to performance management for education is a partnership or “collegial model”, where the rationality of educational professionals and others is placed at the heart of the management system. To work effectively, this model would depend on: the professionalism and political awareness of those involved; a focus on process rather than product in education; an organisation working towards consensus; collectively reflecting on practice and producing critical research which embodies the views of all concerned; and local self-government.

As the authors point out, “A particular advantage of an emphasis on process is that it would tend to focus attention on what is valued rather than on what is achieved, and that might be more consistent with what people want from education”. (144)

The authors’ alternative offers a solution based on consensus and dialogue which
would apply not only to education but to the majority of public service organisations. It acknowledges the diversity of views which legitimately exist about how a public service should do its job and places the exploration and resolution of this debate at the heart of public sector management. (145)

In Managing in Local Government, Richard Kerley considers the response of Councils and other public bodies to the demand for performance review. He feels this response takes three forms: concluding that assessment is too difficult and the performance of dedicated professionals should be taken on trust; seeking ever more elaborate and all-embracing ways of assessing performance; and thirdly recognising that there is a legitimate political, managerial and public concern for the effectiveness of public services. He concludes that:

Because of the diversity of the interests that have a concern with performance, the appropriate response for local authorities may be to examine and develop a wide diversity of approaches to assessing performance. Rogers (1900) is very positive about the variety of different approaches that he observes in different councils: The mechanisms being used are immensely variable - consumer surveys, customer contracts, more realistic planning mechanisms, devolved management, and more rigorous and sensitive performance appraisals and review procedures are but a few examples. They all signify that a continuing analysis of how a local authority can improve its performance is underway. (146)

Kerley argues it is not enough to compile the data for publication of required performance indicators. This would be a “sterile and ritualistic” exercise. He argues that careful use of appropriate performance indicators can aid service development, improving quality and meeting service-users’ needs.

Kerley believes managers should develop additional performance indicators more closely tailored to the immediate requirements of their service and the context in which it is delivered.

In The Glue that Binds, the report of a large-scale survey into public attitudes to local government conducted in February 1996 by the Public Management Foundation, results show a clear level of support for public services. The survey indicates that 94% of the British population believe public services are essential in our modern society, and 97% believe they are there for everyone. Eighty per cent of people surveyed believe public services are a safety net for those in need and services should be targeted at those in greatest need. When asked how services
should be run, 82% of the nation believe people who use public services should have more say in how they are run; 77% believe public services should be under public control; and as many as 61% believe they should be owned by the state. Eighty percent believe too many public services have been privatised. There is no difference in the predominant views across social classes or across political parties. (147)

It is significant that the report highlights a strong consensus around the public value of public services. The vast majority of the population, 83%, either agreed strongly or tended to agree with the statement that there is not enough investment in public services. (148)

When asked about public service failings, 82% of respondents were concerned about the lack of user involvement. Three-quarters also feel that services cannot cope with the demand placed on them. But there is also a strong feeling that services are often inappropriately targeted, indicated by the fact that almost two-thirds of the population feel that “the people who most need services don’t get them”. (149) It could be argued that conventional library provision should address this issue.

Bob Usherwood argues:

We should focus on the range and quality of services and not just on crude cost. Our ‘accounting’ should include the social value and function of libraries. We also need to examine questions such as the degree of public accountability and control. (150)

We need to examine the impact of library services as well as their efficiency.

The problems of social audit are addressed elsewhere in this dissertation as it affects other areas, particularly the arts. Usherwood highlights the problem:

As can be seen, information of different types is needed for a social process audit. Some of the data may be readily available; other information may not exist in any recorded form. The National Consumer Council in its attempt to evaluate outreach services found itself ‘unable to propose a practical indicator of community benefits’. (151)

Usherwood concludes by saying that, “The social audit is an untried tool as far as library services are concerned.” (152) This is beginning to change.

Libraries have a legal requirement to formally measure, compare and publicise our performance through prescribed indicators. There is a large body of professional
literature on the subject of performance measurement dating back several decades. Comparative data is collected year on year, authority by authority, to assist examination of membership, issues, requests satisfaction and other variables. There is a growing emphasis on assessing customer satisfaction through use of surveys and analysis of formal complaints and comments documentation.

We know that on average the public library service costs £12 per head per person per annum, and that each book issue costs around £1. (153) Put in slightly different terms in recent Library Campaign literature, at a cost of 25 pence per person per week the public library represents tremendous value for money: "It is a shining example of a service it pays the community to provide together." (154)

Reading the Future: the Public Libraries Review proposes new performance indicators for libraries in England and Wales. These are under two separate headings. As indicators of Efficiency, it is proposed to quantify the number of issues per item; net expenditure per loan; total expenditure and income per capita, and the relationship between outlay on materials and staff costs. Meanwhile, indicators on access and usage will consider issues per capita; reference enquiries per capita; time taken to supply requests and the percentage of opening hours outside traditional office hours. These figures also extend to the percentage of eligible people requesting housebound services who receive them, and detailed analysis of membership. Specifically, the indicators would establish: percentage of total population who are library members; percentage of under-14-year-olds who are library members; percentage of library members who are active borrowers (ie. who have borrowed in the preceding 12 months). The announcement that the performance of public library services is to be measured and evaluated by the Department of National Heritage formed part of the report’s launch. Membership analysis in particular would provide vital information never before collected on which to build future library services.

Sound performance indicators allow us to make a much stronger case for current plans and future funding, and to develop strategically. But there has always been the danger they are used as a cost-cutting exercise, which is why the indicators chosen and comparisons made are so important. Comedia ask how we can put a price on the benefits a library might bring to a demoralised community:

...a neighbourhood library is cheaper than half a dozen anti-crime projects, custodial sentences on young offenders, or individuals institutionalised as a result of family breakdown. For it is certainly the case that there are many difficult areas in Britain where the public library is the last affirmative, dignifying and

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respected public institution, among many others whose function is, more negatively, to redress social problems, to repair social damage or to counterbalance social disintegration. (155)

This fits in with the view that community-based initiatives are being used by the government to give the appearance of local accountability. Whether it is appropriate for libraries to be the last bastion of crumbling communities, a sticking plaster on social ills, Community Care by default, is a bigger issue.

When Petersburn Library won the Community Initiative Award in 1994, there was intense media interest in one performance indicator: the 23% drop in local vandalism attributed to the drop-in centre by the police. It was a source of no great joy to those of us working in the project that journalists focussed on this to the exclusion of less easily quantifiable benefits. It sounded like a quick fix, when the work involved was long term, aimed at all different age and interest groups, and worthy of deeper consideration.

Another indicator used at Petersburn was the number of adults and children attending events organised by the library in a given month, and the number of children using the library creche during the adult events. Figures were often in the region of 100, 200, and 40 respectively for one month, which lent some authority to our approach.

As libraries, the impact we make on our environment merits closer study, and performance indicators could help us achieve this. What we need is a holistic approach: an examination of our economy, efficiency and effectiveness alongside our social impact.

Recent developments in local government are intended to ensure services reach the people who need them most. Social inclusion, a flagship for the new government, is now a major plank of local government policy too. There is an attempt to increase consultation on planning and resource allocation at a local level. In July 1997 the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities established a joint Community Planning Working Group of senior officials to “consider how councils and other public bodies can work more closely together in addressing the needs of their communities”. Their report was published in July 1998. There are five pathfinder local authorities developing community plans in Scotland (one of these being my own council in Stirling). Best Value is also being adopted by local authorities throughout the country. As the questionnaire results and case study interviews will show later in this report, both are driving forces for policy at departmental (ie library service) and corporate level.
Best Value also has its advocates and its detractors. While it does attempt to make local government services transparent and accountable, and has a strong emphasis on public consultation, the framework in which it does this could be questioned. Under Best Value, the effectiveness of services is still not established, merely economy and efficiency. While ostensibly a mechanism to establish that public money is not being wasted, Best Value could be seen as a means of achieving economies with a rationale only slightly more sophisticated than its predecessor, Compulsory Competitive Tendering. With the obligation to achieve more for less year on year, economic indicators may end up driving policy, without the flexibility Councillors and officials enjoyed before to adapt to events as they happen.

All of these issues can be viewed as part of the debate on the role local government should play, in the light of increased private sector involvement in service provision, and the new Scottish Parliament. The appropriate role of the state and our own rights and responsibilities as members of society are key public issues.

Citizenship

Citizenship is a major concern of the current government, with significant implications for public policy. We are told that as citizens and stakeholders, our views matter. It is therefore appropriate to consider the relevance of this debate for libraries if, as our hypothesis suggests, public libraries reflect the needs and demands of society.

A benchmark in the citizenship debate was laid down in 1950 by T.H. Marshall. In his paper on 'Citizenship and Social Class', Marshall draws on arguments first set out by Alfred Marshall. His predecessor stated that whilst there would always be inequality, there would also be a kind of basic human equality associated with the concept of full membership of a community, which he terms citizenship. A principle of equality of citizens to set against the principle of the inequality of classes. For Alfred Marshall, such citizenship was more concerned with duties than with rights.

T H Marshall makes an important definition of the term:

Citizenship is a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed. There is no universal principle that determines what those rights and duties shall be, but societies in which citizenship is a
developing institution create an image of an ideal citizenship against which achievement can be measured and towards which aspiration can be directed. (156)

He divides citizenship into three constituent parts: civil, political and social. The civil element is concerned with individual rights - liberty of the person, freedom of speech, thought and faith, the right to own property and to conclude valid contracts, and the right to justice. The political part of citizenship translates into the right to exercise political power, as elector, activist or representative. For T H Marshall, the third right enshrined in the social element of citizenship means the right to a basic standard of economic welfare and security and inclusion in civilised communal life. (157)

In their influential 1977 report, The Fourth Right of Citizenship, the National Consumer Council reiterate the three phases of citizenship rights outlined by Marshall. In addition to civil rights, political rights and social rights, they believe in a fourth right of citizenship. They acknowledge that Marshall included education and information in with other social rights, but they are important enough on their own to be treated as a fourth dimension of citizenship. This fourth right is the crux for the NCC who believe that, "Without the right to education and information the other three sets of rights are liable to be hollow shams". (158)

For citizenship to be fully realised, public participation has to be knowledge-based and critically-aware. Education should assist this process. Education aimed at enhancing citizenship should therefore have two objectives: it should allow participation in democracy, and make dissenting citizenship possible.

Wilfred Carr makes the case in his essay, 'Education for Citizenship', that citizenship is a concept with a diverse group of followers. He points out that politicians, academics and educators from both the New Right and the New Left have adopted the term. He believes that for some the call for citizenship is a response to the vogue for individualism; while for others it is a reaction to the dismantling of welfare, the erosion of local democracy and the increasing power of the state. He divides the different viewpoints on citizenship into the moral model and the market model. (159)

Stewart Ranson approaches the debate on education for citizenship by arguing that a learning society should celebrate the qualities of being open to new ideas, listening to as well as expressing perspectives, reflecting on and enquiring into solutions to new dilemmas, cooperating in the practice of change and critically reviewing it. (160)
Education for citizenship is high on the political agenda. An interim report produced by Bernard Crick’s Advisory Group on Education for Citizenship and Teaching of Democracy in Schools called for five per cent of the school curriculum to be devoted to citizenship education - the percentage currently given to religious education. Under the proposals of the committee, children would be expected to take part in voluntary work, participate in school democracy and be graded on their performance as citizens. The report recommends teaching children social and moral behaviour and how to become more involved in their communities. It identifies three key strands to effective citizenship: social and moral responsibility, community involvement and political literacy. (161) One aim of citizenship would be a more active and aware electorate. Crick’s interim report claims that nearly one in three of those aged 18-24 had no plans to vote in the 1997 general election, pointing to greater interest among young voters in single issue pressure groups, particularly environmental ones. (162)

Whilst the reports from Bernard Crick’s working group and the Qualifications and Curriculum authority on teaching of citizenship and democracy have as their remit the English educational system, the issue is equally topical north of the border, where the Scottish Parliament promises greater openness of government than anything we have previously encountered. This will be facilitated by information technology, combined with modern telecommunications and digital technology, otherwise termed “telematics”.

A report by the Advisory Committee on Telematics for a Scottish Parliament explains that computerised systems networked to digital communications have created new electronic systems revolutionary in their ability to enable large numbers of people to interact and obtain information. This report advises:

The Scottish Parliament must be a “champion” for the development of on-line public communication sites in public libraries, post offices, council offices etc. and dedicated information kiosks. Universal access must be granted to citizens as consumers of public services.

(163)

Telematics would offer much improved public access to parliamentary information, and allow more democratic consultation through Citizens Panels, deliberative polling, electronic surgeries, on-line fora, and other means of including individuals and representative groups in the decision-making process.

Community education would seem well placed to address the democratic deficit.
Stewart Ranson, in *Towards the Learning Society*, argues that educational practitioners working in some of the most disadvantaged areas in the country have engaged in a radical rethinking of values and practice to fulfil the capacities and powers of the disadvantaged. This is a particularly impressive exemplification of the learning society. (164)

Ranson believes that if citizenship education is to be effective, there must be new values and conceptions of learning at the level of the self, at the level of society and at the level of the polity. This requires a commitment to the value of lifelong learning, in the sense of an individual’s development throughout his or her life. It also demands social conditions for learning whereby citizens actively participate in creating the moral and social order and interact with each other in this process. A learning and participative society requires structural change to facilitate public involvement. The current move to de-centralisation in local government seems to be heading in this direction, although its effectiveness remains to be seen. Stewart Ranson is clear that local government has to adapt to embrace the new ethos of social inclusion:

> The task is to discover a solution that eschews either professional corporatism or market self-interest, and this challenge of realising public choice that is sensitive to diversity can only find its solution in processes that are much more democratic as well as collaborative than we have accomplished hitherto. (165)

After the arguments of Marshall that citizenship guarantees basic rights for all, if not equality of status, it is Ranson who makes the point that even basic rights have been seriously eroded in recent years: “Once more education is becoming a privilege rather than a right that underpins a shared citizenship”. (166)

Ruth Lister has made an interesting contribution to the debate with her text, *The Exclusive Society: Citizenship and the Poor*. It begins with a preface by Peter Golding and the statement, “To be poor is to endure conditional citizenship”. Golding argues that we are increasingly seen as consumers rather than citizens, limiting our rights to our purchasing power. The poor, he believes, are increasingly seen as a group apart: “Just as the social explorers of the nineteenth century ventured among the ‘ragged’ and ‘dangerous’ classes, so recent writers have begun to cultivate this image of a new ‘underclass’”. It is a term in widespread use in the United States (see, eg Murray above) and apparent in the thinking of the new Labour government. One of its members, Frank Field MP, has produced a book entitled, *Losing out: the making of Britain’s underclass*.

Drawing on the work of T H Marshall, Lister considers citizenship at its most
Drawing on the work of T H Marshall, Lister considers citizenship at its most fundamental level to be about membership of a community and participation in that community: “This participation is an expression both of the formal political, legal and social rights and duties of citizenship, and of the social and economic conditions under which they are exercised. That an interaction of the two is critical for the effective (author’s emphasis) exercise of the rights and duties of citizenship is one of the central arguments of this book”. (167) T H Marshall’s work certainly acknowledged the context in which citizenship operates, and how this affects its effectiveness, but Lister’s emphasis on the point is strong.

T H Marshall wrote in a post-war era when social inequality was less marked, and appeared to be narrowing. His paper coincided with a general extension of social provision in the form of a National Health Service, children’s allowances and pensions, the National Insurance scheme, a standardised system of schooling etc. He was thus able to write:

The extension of the social services is not primarily a means of equalising incomes. In some cases it may, in others it may not. The question is relatively unimportant; it belongs to a different department of social policy. What matters is that there is a general enrichment of the concrete substance of civilised life, a general reduction of risk and insecurity, an equalisation between the more and the less fortunate at all levels - between the healthy and the sick, the employed and the unemployed, the old and the active, the bachelor and the father of a large family. (168)

T H Marshall also wrote of the general rise in the standard of living being experienced at that time, and the widespread availability of work. Forty years later, the conditions Ruth Lister addresses are very different. She continues to trace the development of citizenship which T H Marshall began:

The twentieth century marked the extension of citizenship rights from the civil and political to the social spheres. Yet we are in danger of entering the twenty-first century with a growing number of our fellow citizens excluded by poverty from full enjoyment of those rights. It is therefore imperative that the implications of poverty and its various manifestations are central to the current citizenship debate. (169)

Lister believes some of the rights identified by Marshall have been eroded in recent years, as “the welfare state increasingly turns its back on the citizenship ideal that inspired its architects during and after the Second World War”. (170) The current
vogue for policies aimed at social inclusion acknowledges to some extent the problem Ruth Lister has identified. It could be argued that the root cause of such exclusion is financial, and will only be alleviated by economic investment. Whether or not this is forthcoming, community development seems to be an obvious way of trying to include the disadvantaged, and letting their voice be heard in the debate. With a branch in every community, public libraries are well placed to help.

Stuart Hall and David Held give another angle on the citizenship debate. They argue from the left, arguing that much of the debate on citizenship in recent years has come from the right. Following Margaret Thatcher’s famous rejection of the concept of society, there has been some acknowledgement that unbridled individualism brings its own problems. Citizenship has been seen as the solution:

Thatcherism has... rediscovered the need for some concept to help integrate and ‘bind’ society and has come up with the idea of the ‘active citizen’, who engages in ‘doing good’ but in a purely private capacity. In this discourse, citizenship is detached from its modern roots in institutional reform, in the welfare state and community struggles, and rearticulated with the more Victorian concepts of charity, philanthropy and self-help. (171)

It is clear from the writers quoted above that the left have a long-standing identification with citizenship too. The authors see citizenship as a progressive historical movement, reflected in Paine’s Rights of Man and Chartism. There is an obvious dichotomy on the attribution of citizenship: it is claimed and used equally by left and right. Hall and Held believe membership of a community implies rights in and responsibilities towards that community. These rights should be defined and specified so that any loss may be challenged. According to these authors, citizenship’s three leading notions are membership; rights and duties in reciprocity; real participation in practice. All of these aspects are more complex than they first appear, and lead in fact to a “politics of citizenship”. (172)

The two authors enlarge on a point made above. Even though rights may nominally be available to all, the opportunity to use such rights may not exist. This is a problem not addressed by writers on the right. According to Hall and Held, citizenship rights, particularly in Britain, are largely defined negatively. There are no laws preventing you entering the Ritz or buying property in Docklands or applying for most jobs. Whether in fact you have the means or the capacity to do or achieve any of these things is a quite different matter...

This is really another way of restating the Left’s
critique of classic liberalism in terms of the tension between 'formal' and 'substantive' rights. The citizen may formally enjoy 'equality before the law'. But, important though this unquestionably is, does he or she also have the material and cultural resources to choose between different courses of action in practice? (173)

It remains an important principal that formal rights should be stated in a constitution or bill of rights.

Hall and Held call for a system of rights specifying certain responsibilities of the state to groups of citizens, which subsequent governments would be obliged to follow. This, they argue, would redefine the balance between state and civil society, which is at the heart of debate for both left and right. (174) They feel the current system is archaic and unaccountable, and that the left must now address the issues involved in citizenship and the state. (175)

Hall and Held believe that the left/right debate divides on whether citizenship rights are individual or collective. The New Right is committed to the classic liberal doctrine that the collective good can be properly realised in most cases only by private individuals acting in competitive isolation, pursuing their interests with minimal state interference. (176) The free market is, for the New Right, the key condition of the liberty of citizens. (177)

However, the left have argued that the free market produces and reinforces those very forms of exclusion and "closure" associated with private property and wealth, against which the idea of citizenship was directed. The prerogatives of property and wealth are held in check by the redistributive welfare state, which the left see as essential to the very idea of citizenship.

Hall and Held point to an inevitable tension in the Left's position on citizenship, since it both requires and can be threatened by the state. They see the extension of popular democracy as the solution. (178) But the majority vote does not solve every problem. Etzioni, among others, identifies the limits of democracy, and the need to protect minorities and the vulnerable from its excess.

*Citizenship information and the public library role*

For the rights outlined by Hall and Held and others to be acted upon, public access to information and education is vital. People will not take up their rights unless they have confidence in determining and asserting those rights. As a local
government service with extensive public contact, libraries are well-placed to be a gateway to a new, more active democracy. Meeting place, information point, community resource, centres of cultural and educational activity, they present a golden opportunity for public interface with government in all its forms.

A British Library research project by Rita Marcella and Graeme Baxter at Robert Gordon's University has found that the British public has a keen interest in obtaining information to help them participate in the democratic process. Public libraries, with face-to-face communication, are their preferred method of getting such information. The research project surveyed almost 1300 users of public libraries, Citizens Advice Bureaux and other information and advice agencies throughout the UK. Only a small proportion of respondents preferred to use a computer for information seeking. However, almost 75% felt they would be willing to use computers if public access to them was improved - and public libraries were seen as the most appropriate location by 72.6% of respondents. Post offices, shopping centres and town halls also rated highly.

Leisure and recreation would be the subject of most future enquiries. Other topics were employment and job opportunities, legal issues, transport and travel, education, healthcare and local government. There was less interest in information on consumer and credit issues, equal rights and discrimination. The majority of people believe there is a significant relationship between information access and citizenship: more than 79% of respondents felt that access to accurate and unbiased information was very important for exercising their rights as citizens. (179)

Marcella and Baxter have enlarged upon their work in an article entitled 'Citizenship Information and Public Libraries'. They quote from the benchmark NCC review of advice services in Britain, which maintained that access to information and advice should be regarded as the fourth right of citizenship:

> People will not be able to get their dues as citizens of present day society unless they have continuous access to the information which will guide them through it and, where necessary, the advice to help them translate that information into effective action... (180)

They also refer to the definition of citizenship information by the Policy Studies Institute as “the information necessary for successful, and if necessary critical, participation in the accepted rights and responsibilities of British citizenship”. (181) The PSI also differentiates between the citizen consumer and the active or participant citizen. The citizen consumer model regards an individual’s relationship with the state as that of consumer and service provider, and focuses on the consumer’s right
to exercise market choice over public services. The active citizen model, though, goes beyond the right to exercise consumer choice and instead identifies an individual's right to have a say in public service planning and decision making. The PSI has identified the following additional information needs for the active citizen:

- Information on how services are planned and information about mechanisms for participation in planning processes and influencing decision making.
- Information about the process of service delivery and information about outcomes.
- Information about violation of entitlements, rights and protections. (182)

As Marcella and Baxter point out, in many respects, the definition of citizenship information provided by the PSI is similar to some commentators' definitions of community information. They quote the Library Association's description of community information services as those:

which assist individuals and groups with daily problem-solving and with participation in the democratic process. The services concentrate on the needs of those who do not have ready access to other sources of assistance and on the most important problems that people have to face, problems to do with their homes, their jobs and their rights. (183)

The rest of this thesis will document examples of such interaction and its effect, but at this stage it may be useful to quote two examples of community information needs and how they are being met.

Baxter and Marcella refer to an exploratory study of the information needs of elderly people conducted in 1992 by Anthea Tinker et al for the Age Concern Institute of Gerontology. The study comprised two group interviews and 50 individual interviews with elderly people, together with interviews with 18 information-giving organisations. The organisations revealed that five topics dominated the enquiries received from the elderly: social security benefits and entitlement; health; housing; residential and nursing home care and how to pay for it; and support and services for people at home. However, it also found that elderly people, particularly if disabled, often seemed unwilling to seek information and had a low perception of their own needs; and that the professional organisations sometimes did not recognise this need for information or were themselves ill-informed. (184)
The Library of Information for the Elderly (LIFE) project based in Renfrew was established to fill this gap. Set up in 1993 with Urban Programme funding, LIFE was a response to suggestions from library volunteers working with housebound people who felt that they were often asked questions they could not answer. Elderly people did not know where to get the information they needed. As Francois Matarasso explains in his review of the project in Beyond Book Issues, LIFE draws on existing Council resources, including the LINFO Information Centre and Child Poverty Action Group publications. Based in Library Headquarters, the project has an information assistant and two information officers who visit people in their homes. It is limited to the Areas of Priority Treatment in Renfrew, and to people aged over 60. LIFE staff visit community groups and facilities to tell people about the service, distribute information leaflets and respond to queries. A key feature is the offer of home visits to anyone who finds it hard to get out: the information workers have made an average of about 800 home visits a year since the project started. (185)

A report on the Needs of Young Lone Parents in the Greater Govan Area highlights “the continuing obstacles that still exist to the use of statutory and other services by lone parents - most notably the lack of child care, transport and supportive attitudes by staff”. (186) The Greater Govan area has over one thousand lone parent households. (187)

Sixty-two lone parents under the age of twenty-five were interviewed about accessibility of local services. They confirmed the finding of a previous survey that the Library was the service that was most welcoming and most able to cope with the needs of young lone parents. Other agencies considered were Health Centre, Housing Department, Housing Association, Benefits Agency, Job Centre and Social Work service. Although only half of those consulted had visited the library (which highlights a problem), it scored well among those who had for basic points such as having somewhere to leave a pram, someone to watch children, a play area, supervised creche, toys, and an access ramp. While not every library can boast Govan’s accessibility, perhaps its model is something to aspire to.

Marcella and Baxter highlight comments by professional and representative bodies and other interested organisations indicating public libraries should provide citizenship information. For example, the Library Association’s 1993 Charter for Public Libraries states that public libraries should give everyone access to information which will “encourage them to take part in democratic activities” and which will “help them exercise their democratic rights”; UNESCO’s Public Library Manifesto highlights the role of libraries in enabling “well-informed citizens to exercise their democratic rights and to play an active part in society”; and the
Public Library Review stresses the importance of public libraries providing effective access to information because “access to fuller information is an aid to democracy, and should increase a citizen’s ability to exercise his or her franchise and to influence policy”.

The importance of public libraries providing information “to enable individuals to be active as citizens” was highlighted by John Palmer in the Scottish Library Association report, Developing an information strategy: the role of the library service. Citing a Convention of Scottish Local Authorities suggestion that councils should consider establishing the public library service as the information service of the authority, Palmer recommends libraries establish joint working and partnership agreements with other council departments and agencies, and develop the role of information intermediary between the general public and the council. (188)

2.3 Public library future - problems facing the profession

The 1996 Public Library Conference reflected widespread frustration and impatience prior to the General Election. Its theme was ‘Threshold of Opportunity or Brink of Disaster?’. Councillors and Chief Officers attending agreed that much more could be achieved by the Public Library Service were the financial and political context even marginally more favourable. (189) The 1997 Conference title: The World Our Oyster - the Information Society and the role of Public Libraries in Democratisation for the Citizen, reflects a new mood. Fresh clarity of theme, confidence and a change of government have removed the note of doubt.

Several important library reports produced in recent years have attempted to address fundamental issues of power and priorities within the profession.

The President of the Society of Chief Librarians urged Government to unequivocally accept the conclusions of the KPMG report on contracting out, and the Public Library Review’s confirmation that local government should continue as the direct provider. Other significant reports include the Comedia Borrowed Time study, the LISC England review of services to children and people in rural areas, the ASLIB review and the Audit Commission Value for Money study. New agencies have been established. The Library and Information Commission is a non-departmental public body established by the government to act as a national focus on information and library services. Its remit is to deal with key strategic issues arising out of cooperation and information access. The Advisory Council is another recent addition. Despite this frenzy of activity, President Geoffrey Hare still bemoans “our collective inability satisfactorily to define the core purposes of the service, to examine and
inability satisfactorily to define the core purposes of the service, to examine and verify its continued value to society and, above all, to enlist effectively at local or national levels, the political support necessary to its future”. (190)

Efforts to link schools and libraries throughout Britain to the Internet, and provide IT training for teachers and librarians are underway. However, three years into the new government, there is no fresh investment in infrastructure. This is particularly apparent in Scotland, excluded from recent announcements of increased library funding.

The *Public Library Review* suggested the establishment of a Library Inspectorate - OFLIB, an OFSTED equivalent to monitor the performance of library services. A key feature of OFLIB would be the involvement of users and non-users in inspections. (191) The *Public Library Review* brief was to assess the scope and value of the public library service; to establish guidelines for a “comprehensive, efficient and modern public library service”. As part of this study, the Review team considered the desirability of any changes in the Public Libraries and Museums Act, 1964.

The authors discovered that most people want the public library to spend more on books, and on more convenient and longer opening hours. On average, English and Welsh people would be prepared to spend an extra £5-£10 per household annually to see improvements in public library services. The majority view the public library as a valuable resource for future generations and a “community asset”. The team behind the report believe that, “these are important findings that offer a basis for securing new funds for the long-term development of public libraries”. (192) They recommended the then Department of National Heritage set a new comprehensive framework for public library services that would allow flexibility in local choice.

The research identifies four main purposes for a public library service: to ensure the service can meet the demands of future generations; to create a service that will be a community asset and source of local pride; to operate facilities and services of direct benefit to people living, working or studying in the area, and maintaining services with an occasional or “contingency” value.

The final version of the DNH’s Public Library Review is entitled *Reading the Future*, and was launched in February 1997 to significant media interest. Iain Sproat, National Heritage minister for the Conservative government, presenting the report, remarked that libraries have risked trivialising their role: “That is not to say that libraries should only stock worthy and dull books, but we intend to look at libraries providing entertainment in the context of a public libraries service. The Government
will want to look at a general return to high seriousness.” (193) High seriousness is not the most attractive marketing slogan with which our profession could approach the future. Not if we hope to attract young people and new users.

Bob Usherwood argues that the popularism so decried in Reading the Future is the direct result of Government pressure for customer responsiveness:

The Government cannot have it both ways. It is this Government, above all, that has espoused the value of market forces, customer focus, statistical indicators and all the other paraphernalia of the new managerialism. This had led to the commercialisation of library services which, in turn, has caused a decline in standards as libraries entered the great issue chase. (194)

Mr Sproat added that libraries should investigate “more modern management practices, including contracting out services and using franchises”. The report also advocates the development of sponsorship deals. It makes many recommendations for developments in the public library sphere, but does not really address their current problems. It does not acknowledge the serious cuts to core services across the country, or suggest how resources can be found to plug the gaps. (196)

One possible model for the future management of libraries is devolving library services to independent trusts. Hounslow is the first local authority to devolve its service in this way.

Perhaps the main difficulty facing libraries with budget constraints is the need to provide the “comprehensive service” required by statute. This problem was becoming apparent as early as the 1970s, when Barry Totterdell wrote: “Many librarians have simply felt that the public library, in competing with other services for resources which never have been, and are less likely to become, abundant, can no longer afford to be “all things to all men”, but must decide on a priority of service. (197) That problem is all the more acute today.

Comedia point out difficulties with the multiplicity of roles public libraries adopt:

In effect the library has become a service provider of last resort. This is not necessarily a happy scenario, because it both confuses librarians as to what their own precise role is, and often forces them to undertake tasks for which they are not necessarily equipped and trained. (198)
The attempt by libraries to be fair and balanced, and to provide a comprehensive service, may actually hinder progress: "The ideal of neutrality goes together with that of universal provision and both ideals can be restraints to a more active and targeted promotion of library services". (199)

The 1993 Comedia Report, Borrowed Time? The Future of Public Libraries in the UK, is a benchmark study, based upon interviews with more than a thousand library users, analysts, publishers and other interested parties. The report notes that while book issues have been slowly declining, other library uses are increasing. There has been a growth in information and study use, use as homework centres, for literary events and other community activities. The authors regret that librarians are failing to articulate, monitor or promote these other uses. (200)

The study acknowledges that in most British town centres, the public library is one of the most accessible and open public institutions, often acting as a focal point for local civic life. (201) It comments that public libraries sadly lack a national body to represent their interests. It further concludes that while other cultural institutions such as theatres, opera houses, concert halls etc were regarded as key elements in programmes of urban regeneration in the 1980s, public libraries have not been part of this. This point overlooks a great deal of valuable library work in community development, which will be examined later in this thesis.

The Comedia study concludes that public libraries are making an impact in five main areas of public life: education, through support for self-education and lifelong learning; social policy, by giving an entry point into the wider culture for minority groups and providing a safe, supportive space for disadvantaged groups; information, providing services in response to growing individual and local needs; cultural enrichment, and finally economic development. (202) Despite the value of these activities, the authors of the report believe public libraries suffer from too wide a remit. The work they do is increasingly duplicated by other public, voluntary and commercial agencies. However, Comedia accept that what is unique about public libraries is the way they transcend traditional boundaries between education, information and entertainment, often validating individual interests and identities and acting as focal points for community life and identity. One of the unique points about the public library service is the contribution it makes at different levels: to the individual, the community, the civic and the social.

Public libraries were not the only institution to suffer upheaval in the 1980s and 1990s. De-regulation, the reduction of the role of the state in favour of the marketplace, and the drive for performance review in the public sector, has also affected areas like education, transport and health. Libraries escaped relatively lightly.
In recent years, charging has affected uptake of services like dental health checks and eye tests. If such basic provision can be charged for, why should the library service be exempt? As Comedia point out, the Conservative rationale for charging in areas such as health has been that free provision has not always benefitted the poor. Uptake of free or subsidised services has been greatest among the middle and upper class. There may be complex reasons for this effect, however, including a raised level of awareness among these groups, and a desire to claim what is rightfully theirs. It could be argued that this effect is less important than the fact that some elements of the poorest groups do benefit from subsidy, whereas they would certainly be excluded by a charged for service, or the dropping of a universal benefit.

Comedia argue the value of a comprehensive community development approach:

...if the principle of free access is to be retained then the library world will have to be better equipped at demonstrating that it is a genuine public good, that its services do reach some of the most disadvantaged sections of the community which a charged-for service would not, and that it is not an instrument by which cultural resources are paid for out of the public purse for the benefit of a minority who are already economically and culturally privileged. (203)

The Report concludes that if the public library service is to survive it has to find a new over-arching rationale and a new public policy agenda. This should be based on developing the public library network as an active national and international network for lifelong learning, freedom of information and the cultural rights of citizens. The report recommends the establishment of a national strategy and advocacy representing the public library interest, with input not just from librarians, but politicians, publishers, telecommunications and information technology experts to develop and promote the public library network at a national level.

Comedia complain of a lack of direction in public libraries:

lack of policy contributes to the invisibility and marginalisation of the service. A policy vacuum cannot last, and the growing preoccupation with performance indicators and management techniques may threaten to displace true policy development in libraries. (204)

The authors of the DNH report, Reading the Future, acknowledged the need for a national body to represent library interests by recommending the functions of the
Advisory Council and the LIC be combined to “provide a single source of public library advice in England”. (205)

However, in his analysis of the DNH Report Bob Usherwood is concerned that there will be no actual monitoring of plans. He condemns the “arid” Audit Commission standards referred to in the report, believing that measurement by itself will never improve the public library service:

What we require, and what is sadly missing from the DNH document, is a strategy that uses the results of measurement to assess levels of services, and the improvements that are required for the future. Improvements that may require more, rather than fewer, resources. (206)

A strong case can be made for public libraries broadening their traditional range of activities. Alan Hasson has identified a steady decline in libraries’ core activity, book lending. Between 1984-5 and 1993-4 loans of book material fell by a total of around 5,000,000 throughout Scotland. (207) Hasson emphasises the need to attract, not to passively wait for new users. (208)

Information Technology

An estimated two million British people had Internet access from computers in their home in 1997, and the number is increasing rapidly. (209) Recent figures estimate an Internet population of 40 million users worldwide. According to the Internet Industry Almanac, 5.8% of the UK population are Internet users. This compares badly with the US population (54.7%) and Japan (7.9%), but is ahead of countries like Australia (3.4%), France (1.2%), and Switzerland (0.8%). (210)

Computers are a part of every profession and each daily transaction. Computer ownership is growing, and computer literacy is increasingly essential for work and personal requirements. However, concerns are now being expressed that the Information Age, which has so facilitated business, communications, scientific research and many other fields, has disadvantaged many others: the Information Poor.

James Cornford in the periodical Poverty highlights a new policy interest in computers and poverty. This has emerged from the growing perception of information is a key economic resource. Increasing use of new information and communications technologies, coupled with an upsurge in buying and selling of
information, are hastening the Information Society. (211)

The European Commission have warned that:

the main risk lies in the creation of a two-tier society of have and have-nots, in which only a part of the population has access to the new technology, is comfortable using it and can fully enjoy its benefits. (212)

Cornford argues that the rich/poor divide is already evident in terms of ownership of IT goods. Over the whole of Britain in 1995-6, 92.4% of households possessed a telephone, and 23% a home computer. But, of the ten per cent of households with the lowest incomes, only 76.5% had a telephone and only 79.2% had a video recorder in the same year. Cornford concludes:

On the basis of these figures, then, the divide between the information rich and the information poor, far from being the future threat presented in the official policy documents, is here now. (213)

Since the economics of the information society require the appropriation of information, we are likely to see more subscriber-based services, such as the purchase of BSkyB Television of the rights to show premiership football, and attempts to buy key football teams. There may also be pressure from advertisers to highlight specific information or slant it in a particular way. It is hard to predict at this stage what effect market forces will have on provision of information, but the profit motive will drive developments. Cornford warns about the effect of economics, and mentions public libraries in this regard:

...the real issues concerning information poverty are not about computers and telephones, much less about being on the internet. It is about access to public libraries, about freedom of information legislation, about publicly funded media that are not driven by the dictates of advertisers or individual proprietors. (214)

In 1995, IBM United Kingdom Limited and the Community Development Foundation established the National Working Party on Social Inclusion in the Information Society (INSINC), to examine the impact of new information technology on local communities, and the potential for greater social inclusion. The report produced by the working party, The Net Result: Social Inclusion in the Information Society, argues computer technology can help reduce isolation; enable more informed contributions to local management and politics; and stimulate the sharing of knowledge and experience. (215) This requires social policies which acknowledge
knowledge and experience. (215) This requires social policies which acknowledge the structural nature of disadvantage; develop sustainable initiatives and do not raise expectations and then disappoint; and integrate access to communication channels with other measures. People on low incomes, and those who are neither in education or employment, are identified as being most at risk of exclusion in the Information Society. Specific issues concerning women, ethnic and racial groups and older people are also explored. (216)

The report highlights new technology’s potential for enhancing participation in democratic processes and calls for a consensus on the types of information that should be available to all citizens free at the point of delivery. It calls for core public funding for Community Resource Centres. (These could be entirely separate from libraries, but from the library viewpoint it would be beneficial to be involved.) Partnership is important in establishing this key foundation for the Information Society.

A number of important requirements are highlighted in the report:

• Initiatives should target those on low incomes or those not in employment or education, to reduce the risk of creating a class of excluded people.

• Communication and information handling skills are of critical importance to the individual in the Information Society. People need to be able to exploit information once they have it, and to generate and publish their own material.

• Community networks and Community Resource Centres have enormous potential to contribute to social inclusion. Policy makers have a role in helping to establish and support such initiatives.

• Community Resource Centres must have some form of public funding: without it they will not fulfil their potential in underpinning the Information Society across the UK.

• The nature of partnerships in community networks is critical: they must be equal and all agencies need to examine their roles in this context.

• Community development strategies are vital and should incorporate strategies on access to the information highway and other IT resources.

The working group argue that information technology can be a key agent of empowerment:
There is no room for ambiguity about the empowering potential of the information highway. It is non-hierarchical, it stimulates horizontal communication and the coalescence of opinion and representation.

Policy measures can help people in communities by empowering them to create the kinds of environment they want. (217)

Not surprisingly, in a report with IBM involvement, the message about the role of IT is upbeat, and the emphasis is on social policy ensuring that computers have a positive rather than a negative impact on life as we know it:

The key question is whether the new technologies can help communities to break out of the stifling impasse of disadvantage and disempowerment. For example, if the Information Society were characterised by new levels of partnership and participation, by a policy willingness to empower communities and by renewed appreciation of social values, then the information highway and associated technologies offer a powerful mechanism for development. Without such a socially supportive context, access on its own will not be enough. (218)

Many people remain unconvinced about the advantages of Information Technology. A report commissioned by the electronics firm Motorola disclosed that over 40 per cent of respondents did not regularly use any of the main information products, such as computers and mobile telephones. Although 85 per cent had heard of the Internet, almost 80 per cent did not know how to get connected. Of those already on-line, only 9 per cent used it regularly. More than half the top executives questioned said they were not interested and 15 per cent did not know how to get on-line. (219)

There is undoubtedly a role for libraries. Just as the public library has been a bastion of literacy, a repository and promoter of the written word, so libraries can increase access to computers, both for information-retrieval and information-generation. Comedia suggest one important role for the library of the future may be encouraging and facilitating computer use. (220)

The Library and Information Commission’s report, New Library: the People’s Network recommends a central role for libraries in a developing information society.

Chairman of the commission and of report working group, Matthew Evans said:
A UK-wide information network made available through libraries could do more to encourage the spread of information, knowledge and communication technology skills among the population than any other measure the Government could introduce. (221)

The report calls for a £770 million transformation of the public library system, with the bulk of the money being spent on “network infrastructure” and a substantial sum on purchase of computer hardware such as terminals and printers. It calls for the establishment of the Public Library Networking Agency, to co-ordinate library developments; digitisation of special collections in libraries, museums and galleries; and a training strategy for 27,000 library professionals. It argues that tomorrow’s libraries should be an integrated component in a national education system; be open and available; maintain their place at the hub of the community and help people involve themselves more with the democratic process.

Culture Secretary Chris Smith described the report as “a defining moment for Britain’s library services” and said:

The Government’s vision is of an integrated grid linking libraries and schools, a vision made possible by technological change. Libraries are the colleges for ordinary people, the key to ensuring that we do not divide into a society of computer have-nots, and computer have-nots. (222)

In a landmark talk at the 1997 Public Libraries Authorities Conference, (223) Chris Smith outlined the government’s position. He talked about libraries as one of the cultural industries which contribute to the economic well-being of the nation. They are part of a sector including literature, publishing, film, music, fashion, design, architecture, the media and the arts which together account for over £50 billion of the country’s economy. He said, “The Government does not regard culture as marginal, or as an optional extra. It lies at the very heart of our mission.” (224) On libraries in particular he stated:

Public libraries are, quite simply, a cornerstone of our cultural life. They are both a stimulus to and a conduit for the creative industries I have described. They are a central plank in the delivery of wider educational, social and economic benefits. They are accessible and egalitarian. They are a platform for self development, a gateway to knowledge and catalyst for the imagination. They are in a very real sense the people’s universities. But above all, they are highly respected and used by the public. I can think of few other public
services to which nearly 60% of the population subscribe. It is this bond with individual users and communities that represents the sector's single major strength, and long may this remain. (225)

Smith touches on the social role of libraries:

This Government recognises that libraries have an important role to play in fostering community development and promoting community identity. What other service has nearly 4,000 separate public access points, spread reasonably evenly across the country, where access is free, and where the environment is so welcoming and stimulating?

...Libraries are often the first place of contact between members of the community and their local authority, and are often the first local authority service which children knowingly use. I would like libraries to develop that position and become the hub of community life. I would like them not just to be repositories for books and information, but actively to embrace their community by thinking of new and imaginative ways in which they can be used to this end. (226)

Chris Smith also reminded his audience that when public libraries were first established, their primary purpose was seen as educational:

Since the 1850s, public libraries have provided a largely free means of accessing, harnessing, sharing and developing knowledge. These services, sitting alongside the formal educational system, enable people of all ages and abilities to participate in life-long learning, and to develop their potential as enquiring, literate and informed human beings. (227)

Speaking a few weeks before the publication of New Library, the Culture Secretary highlighted its importance, and the level of support within the government for its findings. He calls the report “a very significant document for the future of the libraries sector”(228):

The report presents a compelling argument for libraries to be at the leading edge of technological change. It sees libraries as providing a bridge between the ordinary citizen and the wealth of knowledge and information available globally. It sees the library of the future as a catalyst for enabling people to involve themselves more fully with the democratic process, and to give them many more opportunities to
participate in the decision-making processes that affect their lives. It sees libraries as an enormously powerful agent for change, to be renewed and reinvigorated by technology investment. (229)

Public libraries are still suffering from cuts, strikes and crumbling buildings. But they can look forward to libraries bristling with IT, and well-trained staff. Even if he made no cash commitments, Chris Smith's speech was a statement of belief. Renewed government interest in the library profession is welcome in itself, and the Library Association is more positive than it has been for years.

The New Library: People's Network report paints a picture of public libraries' integrated role in the National Grid for Learning, giving children and students access to global information; re-skilling and training workers through IT, and involving people through national networks in the democratic process. “Content” to be delivered in the new library will include multimedia learning resources, networked encyclopaedia databases, digitised collections, and interactive communication with MPs. Davis Rowan reports in his Guardian analysis of New Library that people can expect access to government departments via websites, as well as commercial data, local archives, self-publishing equipment and video-conferencing facilities. (230) Many things on this list are already offered by libraries. The advantage is that IT offers more flexibility in searching, and greater currency.

Chris Batt, leading light of Croydon Library and an expert on IT in libraries, saw the publication of New Library: The People's Network as the spark to fuel a revolution, “the most important document ever to be prepared on the UK public library service”, (231) based in part on the “rightness” of the recommendations, but also on its timing:

...the chemistry of the moment makes The People's Network the best and perhaps the last chance for us to take our rightful place at the heart of the Information Society revolution.

The future historians of our movement will tell how over many years the public library service ploughed a lonely furrow, ignored by the movers and the shakers, despite a reputation with users as the primary community resource, at the very heart of people's everyday lives. The home of lifelong learning before the term was invented; the 'enquire-within-upon-everything' service; open to all and prepared to try and help anyone and everyone. This was our period of gestation - the simmering of the broth of revolution. We could see the need for change, the need to respond nationally to the challenge of the Information Society,
nation ally to the challenge of the Information Society, but so long as the public library was on the back burner there was insufficient heat for the broth to boil over.

How times have changed. (232)

At this "defining moment", some commentators have pointed to the decline of the traditional library. The Audit Commission reported in Due for Renewal that the number of books borrowed has fallen by nineteen per cent in ten years, and that a third of main libraries have reduced the 45 hours they used to open. Meanwhile, costs have increased: total expenditure of £670 million in 1995/6 was ten per cent higher in real terms than 10 years earlier. The Library Association points out that libraries are actually growing in use as study centres, and loans to children remain steady. (233) Within the profession, the tone of the Audit Commission report was rather resented as "telling us something we already know". The desire to embrace new technology is heartfelt. The problem is a lack of resources and infrastructure to make the necessary change.

One early example of public libraries promoting IT was the British Library research project in Solihull, where a special area was set aside for computers for public use. This was intended as a resource for word processing and DTP, an information source using CD-ROMs and the Internet, an access point for community information, a pre-sale computer "test site", and a communications facility. Established with specialist staff, this project proved very successful. The IT point in this case was purposely sited in an economically deprived area, and indicates that the "information poor" also want public access to IT in an accessible, de-institutionalised setting. (234)

Information is a resource like any other. To be deprived of information is to face serious disadvantage. Bob Usherwood argues that public libraries can offer some measure of equal access to, and redistribution of, the wealth of information. Such access is important because information, reading and literacy skills are fundamental to the life chances of individuals. (235) Whether such access will genuinely be equal is another issue. Charging for library services once provoked heated debate, but income generation is increasingly seen as a necessity for cash-strapped councils. There is often a charge for online access.

Patricia Coleman, a well-respected writer in the field of community librarianship, has warned of the dangers of over-reliance on new technology: "Technology tends to provide an additional means of access to information for those who already have other means of access..." (236) She advocates a balanced approach and stresses the importance of maintaining and encouraging traditional literacy. She warns, "...it
is dangerous to pursue technology for its own sake since for many people technology presents a barrier to access rather than a means of access.” (237)

The Scottish Library Association, in its report on Developing an Information Strategy: the Role of the Library Service, reflects a general preoccupation not just with information technology, but information itself. Whilst there is no denying the centrality of information in our lives today, it is not the only raison d’etre of the public library, nor the only exciting area of development.

In this particular document, information shapes and defines the library:

A library and all its constituent parts - buildings, professionally trained staff, computers, books and periodicals - is ultimately a technology created to bring order to the overload of information. It is the most effective means we have devised to collect in central places the vast array of information that is regularly generated. There it can be organised, stored or displayed, and can be used to answer people’s queries about their daily lives and the world. (238)

This document may seek to embrace literature under the general heading of information, but it does little to acknowledge fiction on its own terms. The provision of literature for leisure reading is the most popular aspect of public library provision. There are many artistic, cultural and educational activities associated with libraries. It is important in our rush to embrace ever-better information handling techniques that our professional interests do not overwhelm the general public interest, and the multi-faceted service we provide.

IT has sometimes been seized upon as an engine to drive public library development. It may be more effective if IT complements long-term strategic objectives. Thus Frances Hendrix, Director and Company Secretary of LASER, declared at the Public Library Group’s 1996 Conference:

We need to take up the challenge of the new Information Society and to develop the Superhighway in imaginative, creative and beneficial ways which will help all the citizens of society in a truly equitable way. (239)

There is talk now of a new medical condition: information overload, where workers have too much paper and computer data to process. The Internet offers a whole new galaxy of information to enrich our lives and also increase this stress. Much of its content is unverified and unclassified.
Jesse Shera has a memorable line about, "Data, data everywhere, but not a thought to think". (240) Today’s mass of information requires a critical mind. Bob Usherwood has remarked, "The new technology can provide information, but knowledge can be achieved only through the effort of placing facts in their historical and social context". (241) Libraries can be a crucial interface, helping users access and evaluate information. Simon Speight concludes, "As librarians, we possess the knowledge and skills to make the Internet work - a fact which is gradually being recognised - and we should harness its power, whilst simultaneously influencing its development. The real value of the Internet lies not in knowing how to use it, but when". (242)

2.31 Philosophy

Comedia have pointed out that the public library is by far the most popular and widely used cultural institution in contemporary society. With over £700 million of state funding, it absorbs as much as the publicly funded arts, museums and galleries put together. (243) Yet libraries have until recently been low on the political agenda, a stable backdrop to the whirlwind of changes affecting our society. As Arthur Maltby, a former Her Majesty’s Inspector with responsibility for libraries has pointed out, they have not even merited a footnote in the predictions for a future knowledge industry within the works of writers like Toffler, Stonier or Drucker. (244)

There has been much talk of crisis in libraries, lack of direction amid burgeoning possibilities, inadequate funding, and a lack of charismatic leadership. Dave Muddiman and Alastair Black, in The Public Library Policy and Purpose, a Comedia Working Paper, observe a lack of radicalism; a search for a core purpose amid confusion and change, and a tendency among public librarians to conceptualise "core purpose" primarily in terms of materials rather than ethical ends. (245)

Many librarians do not take a critical approach to their work, being more concerned with the logistics of supplying books than why they are supplying them, more interested in buildings than the opportunities they offer. F A Sharr reflected, "For too long librarians have been preoccupied with books and techniques. They have forgotten that what they should really be concerned with is people." (246) Bob Usherwood believes current library literature is too often concerned with the "mechanics and minutiae" of our profession, and Michael Harris (247) has referred to "the librarian’s penchant for technical and organisational matters". In the same

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vein, W J Murison expresses hope that “the self-satisfaction of the profession” and the “lack of curiosity concerning its fundamentals” is disappearing, and that librarians have realised they have not yet fully established their significance in the community and that they cannot afford to be content with their previous mechanical attempts to satisfy immediate and vociferous demands while ignoring other pressing problems”. (248)

Until recently library research has had a low profile within the profession. In 1985, library academic Bob Usherwood complained that the criticism most often levelled at Library and Information courses is that they are too much grounded in theory, too little in practice: “As one who has twice made the round trip from practice to teaching and back again, I am convinced that the relationship between the two is far closer than it is sometimes portrayed”. (249)

When librarians do consider their basic purpose, they do so as if they are a species apart from their users. The service is addressed in terms of “us” and “them”, and many journal articles maintain this distinction. Sharr probably did not intend to be insulting when he wrote of information services “to all citizens, including the unintelligent, the ill-educated and those under severe stress”, (250) but he saw library users as a body of people literally and metaphorically on the other side of the counter.

Thus McColvin, quoted in Barry Totterdell’s text on book selection in libraries, writes of the importance of providing a wide choice of material for the user, and allowing them their own preferences:

If there are people who do not want to become whole individuals, influences more potent, persuasive or punitive than libraries will fail to alter them. But the library can help those who do want; it may lead others to want - and it may do much to make the remainder less un-whole than they might otherwise be. (251)

It is the serious discussion of book selection from a position of power, from supplier to user that gives pause for thought. There is something very patronising about considering what we provide in this way. Do we trust our users? Are we users ourselves? If not, perhaps we should be. It is a skewed view of professionalism that can throw obstacles in the path of service development which is genuinely in line with user needs.

Michael Harris’ history of public libraries in America states that the traditional “neutrality” of the librarian stems from a philosophy of library science adopted in
the 1930s, where the librarian’s role was to make information available to those who seek it out, placing the responsibility on the user. Librarians no longer needed to worry about their ability to interest large numbers of people, which rather suited their elitist leanings. They “felt comfortable with the middle-class patrons who made up the majority of the library’s clientele”. (252) This view has been challenged, and by the early seventies canvassed opinion among a sample of American librarians was almost unanimous that the measure of library success can best be judged by the breadth of the community reached. (253)

The focus has moved on from routine operations and a neutral approach. Some academics believe the original aim of a “comprehensive” service is no longer attainable. Choices have to be made. Usherwood exhorts the library profession to consider its basic purpose:

> We have in Great Britain been slow to develop a philosophy of public librarianship. With a number of notable exceptions, we have only just begun to consider the social, economic and cultural implications of the public provision of library and information services. In the current circumstances we need to develop, and justify, an economic and social model which places such services outside the market economy. We need to provide a theoretical underpinning to professional practice. (254)

Joe Hendry, County Heritage Services Officer for Cumbria, thinks we need to focus more clearly on our aims and objectives, and how we manage our services:

> The library profession - and not only that segment of it which is at present being examined, namely public libraries - must formulate urgently, and then agree and adopt, a policy designed to develop the natural leaders that this service must possess if it is to survive. (255)

He advocates fast-track MBA training for bright young library and information science students as the best preparation for effective management within the profession. Echoing this view, John Pluse calls for real leaders for the public library movement, “not only as effective service managers but also (and crucially) to operate with confidence and effectiveness around the whole local government scene and nationally.” (256)
2.32 Planning

Until recently, the lack of consideration of public library purpose by many practitioners was reflected in a lack of policy and strategy. This is one of the issues addressed in our questionnaire survey.

In his 1974 article, 'The Public Library: Dodo or Phoenix', F A Sharr wrote confidently:

> Very few public libraries have clarified and determined their purpose in clear terms capable of translation into administrative action: whom they aim to serve, with what, for what purposes and - since they cannot do everything equally well - with what priorities. (257)

Now most authorities have a mission statement and list of objectives, spurred on in some cases by local government reorganisation. How effective these statements are is a different question.

In England and Wales, following The DNH report, Reading the Future, each library authority has to provide a Public Library Plan, addressing efficiency, access and usage according to new Performance Indicators. The plans will indicate how libraries are meeting their own goals. Launching the report in February 1997, then Heritage Minister Iain Sproat explained there would be "calibration of authority according to type and size so that each can be compared to authorities of a similar profile". (258) What role can such league tables fulfil? The point has been made that councils may not want their library service to be seen doing too well, as this may mark the authority out as high spenders when times are hard. (259) The balancing act is not easy to achieve.

The Scottish Library Association's recent document, Developing an Information Strategy: the Role of the Library Service, makes an important contribution to the debate about public library purpose. It underlines the importance of the library sector within Scotland, with 680 library service points. A third of these are open more than 45 hours per week. In 1995 libraries recorded 29 million visits and dealt with 3.5 million enquiries. The document reaffirms that Libraries will work with other services in partnership agreements, and maximise the return on their Council's investment in information technology. Councils have accepted nationally agreed standards endorsed by COSLA for their library services.

Stated objectives in the Scottish Library Association document come under headings
like Social Benefits (offering a familiar, relaxing place; a stimulating environment to meet people, exchange information and enjoy activities) and Community ("A library can assist community groups and organisations with their activities", (260) "It can be a ‘telecentre’, providing word processing, reprographic and telecommunication resources, to enable people and groups to organise and disseminate their own information". (261) There is no lack of imagination in the guidelines laid out in this document, but it does reflect the current preoccupation with information above all else.

2.33 Public Library Use

It is estimated that three out of five adults use public libraries at least once a year. (262)

According to the most recent edition of Cultural Trends, libraries have seen an increase in use over the last decade, which The Guardian reports as "perhaps the biggest surprise contained in the report: book buying overall has been unaffected, while libraries have seen an increase in use, although not all of it for borrowing books. Both 15 to 25-year-olds and 33 to 54 year olds are more likely to be regular users of public libraries than they were in 1991". (263) This is a positive counterpoint to the common perception that libraries are ailing and frequented by a dwindling elderly clientele.

The recent Review of the Public Library Service in England and Wales contains an interesting, if not new, analysis of public library use. Its main conclusions are that there are higher proportions of teenagers, older people and people in the AB and C1 socioeconomic groups using libraries than other socioeconomic and age groups. Frequent library users generally borrow books, both fiction and non-fiction, and they mainly read for pleasure or leisure, not work purposes. Popular uses of public libraries also include reading newspapers or magazines, and searching for information, usually in reference works. Other media (cassettes, compact discs, videos) have a minority appeal.

A user survey for the Review disclosed that people who use public libraries generally prefer main or central libraries to branch, village or mobile libraries. The larger the library the more often people will go to it, the further they will travel, and the better its image. The authors of the report believe this reinforces the view that increased scale will benefit public libraries and their users. This interpretation may be flawed in that large central libraries will always have heavier use - they have a wider choice of books, and will generally hold the main reference collection for a
library authority. People travel to get there because of these increased choices, but also because they are travelling to the centre in any case, to work and carry out daily business. This point is underlined in another survey finding, that on average, people travel for about half an hour when they visit a public library, and they may call at the shops, a bank or a building society on their way there. (264) The same survey reveals that people are attracted to conveniently located public libraries, and are more likely to use such libraries on impulse. (265)

The results possibly reflect information-gathering based on larger libraries and their users, whose needs are markedly different from those of local communities. Use of a local library will be lighter, but often more intense. The local or community library often plays a crucial role as meeting place, social space, arts and cultural venue, source of information and advice. There is far greater interaction with the staff, less of an assumption that people will find things for themselves. It appeals to a different type of user and meets different needs. Other research quoted in this thesis notes the importance of a local library in peoples’ lives. Numerically, fewer people would support the small local library: in terms of social impact this library might have the greatest effect.

The common view of library users as middle class is not true of many urban areas or much of Scotland, nor is it reflected in the nature of books borrowed in such service outlets. This is an impression gained as a practitioner and widely shared, although a demographic analysis of use in Scotland is hard to come by. Most surveys undertaken are of England and Wales, or cover the UK, without geographical distinctions being made.

One increasingly significant user group is young people. This is underlined by the dramatic recent increase in books and other items borrowed by children from their public library: from 82 million in 1990-1 to 101 million in 1992-3. Margaret Kinnell, commenting on these figures, believes that “the growth in children’s use of libraries for computer use, homework and the range of promotional activities now routinely provided by libraries also indicates the shift from a solely book-centred service to one which offers wider opportunities to users”. (266)

Internet access in every library is the single most important service which would attract teenage non-users to libraries, according to a recent survey in Falkirk Libraries. Second most popular option was availability of computers/CD-ROMs, and third, better cassette or CD choice. Refreshments, TV and better book choice made up the remainder of the top six choices. The Falkirk research used the national standard model questionnaire devised to evaluate young people’s services by a Cipfa working party. (267)
We should all be considering how best to meet the needs of young users. They will determine the future of the public library service. If we want the youngest generation of library users to be lifelong members, we have to respond to their needs now.

2.34 Public Relations

The library profession has been slow to embrace public relations. It has perhaps been guilty of taking its public approbation for granted.

A 1990 Which survey of attitudes to public libraries showed 63% of the public rate their local library as good (56%) or excellent (7%). Library staff came in for plenty of praise, rated “good” or “excellent” by 80% of adults expressing an opinion. (268)

The Borrowed Time study reported the public library service as “drowning in goodwill”, with a flurry of campaigns to defend libraries from public spending cuts. They believe such campaigns are based on nostalgia for the remembered libraries of our youth. They do not attempt to tackle today’s needs and bring in new readers and new services. (269)

The report finds evidence that in some areas young and aspirational groups have a poor view of libraries, considering them to be old-fashioned, or poor quality: “These are the people who tend to be interested in new technology and new ways of finding information, a target group that the public library of the future cannot afford to ignore.” Part of the problem may be that we are so closely associated with local government and public service that we are seen as a rather dreary institution. Despite our best efforts at outreach and promotion, whatever new and exciting services we offer, our “civicness” drags us down, we retain what Alastair Black refers to as “a powerful anachronistic image”. (270)

Public libraries have a very strong customer base, and may rely too much on their inherent popularity as a service. As the recent DNH Public Library Review pointed out, each year, more than twenty-four million adults (aged 16 or older) use public libraries. (271) Few services can claim such an impressive customer base for such little promotional effort.

The Review conducted research in nine case study authorities. It found that public libraries have a generally favourable image among library users, who believe they are well-organized, a good source of information, easy to reach, and pleasant to use.
They feel libraries are not well publicised, and both users and library staff suspect 
public libraries do not appeal to young people. Further survey findings, (the 
Guardian reported Cultural Trends survey above excepted) confirm that suspicion. 
On balance, teenagers do not feel public libraries are up to date or staff are 
approachable. Conversely, older people who often visit public libraries have a 
positive image of their services. (272)

The Comedia report is guilty of tarring public libraries with the worst stereotypes. I 
would argue this is partly because non-conventional libraries do not promote 
themselves, but the authors also seem unaware of normal library usage at a local 
level, as this quote from the report underlines:

The common perception that libraries are worthwhile but boring, is perhaps based on its ‘steady-state’ notion of service. A library in Melbourne, for example, visited by one of the researchers, for the last hour of the day allowed staff to play background music (chamber, instrumental folk, ethnic music, as some book chains do), and this transformed that space for just that hour and turned it into an early evening ‘venue’. Very successfully too. To propose thinking about such innovations is not to insist that libraries become piped music stores, but that in consultation with users, and with thought (and monitoring of effects), libraries could become slightly more interesting places at different times of the day and the week. They are cultural centres as well as book lending warehouses. (273)

Comments like this border on the patronising. We do not need to travel to 
Melbourne for piped music in libraries, and there are cultural centres in library form 
in many communities. What we do need is a strategic approach to our work, and 
promotion as a priority.

All public services are under scrutiny today. They need to be represented by a 
credible voice. As Bob Usherwood points out, public librarians have traditionally 
reacted to rather than initiated government policy. The profession has been too 
ready to let others set the agenda.

At a time when public librarians are facing decreasing resources and increasing competition from private agencies, there is an urgent need for vocal public support for the services libraries provide. (274)

Libraries are popular because they are familiar and comfortable. The very buildings 
they inhabit, so often tomb-like Carnegie edifices perched atop perilous stairs to
deter the elderly and pushchair users, maintain an image of late Victorian decorum. It is easy to see why Lionel McColvin in *Public Library Purpose* described the public library as “a great instrument and bulwark of democracy.” (275) As we approach the new Millennium, an institutional image is not an asset. It is redolent of local government bureaucrats, rules, regulations and barriers. It is not a place where exciting things happen, or young people are welcome. We need to be realistic about all aspects of our image problem, beginning, but not ending with the bricks and mortar that make up our working environment.

Library design is important. McColvin’s 1942 text on *The Public Library System of Great Britain* condemns the majority of library buildings as “unsuitable, inappropriate, inadequate, expensive or ill-sited”, many being “ugly, uncomfortable, cold, badly lit, dreary, undecorable monuments.” (276) Even the dreariest building can be altered, however. Motherwell’s Carnegie library has been recarpeted throughout, and with the addition of low, metal shelving, a bright childrens’ section and a cafe, offers a relaxed and attractive environment.

Great time and effort is often invested in the newest libraries, with Sunderland Central Library and Art Gallery a good example. Local crafts have been used to good effect in a building filled with space and light, with lines of poetry encribed on the bannisters, wooden benches reflecting the flow of the river Tyne and local industry depicted in contemporary stained glass windows.

Elgin Library Complex, which opened in February 1997, is a shining example of a modern library, incorporating both arts and information provision. The building is in three main sections, offering an arts area, a public library area and support services to the Libraries Department. The Council see the arts area offering “an exciting platform for development, which gives the library service an opportunity to play a key role in contributing to a corporate arts strategy”. The information/promotional potential of the new library is recognised by Moray Council and it is anticipated that the library will be developed as a key “Access Point” within the Council’s decentralisation programme. (277)

*Borrowed Time* praises the architectural design of Swedish libraries, particularly the Central Library in Stockholm built in the 1920s by Erik Asplund. This library was designed to demonstrate a journey from a state of darkness to one of light by way of an enclosed stairway leading to a light filled dome. (278)

The Comedia report presents the traditional library image positively, describing the “quasi-religious or spiritual aura... deriving from the large-scale presence of books”; seeing the library as a “quiet haven in a sea of urban noise”, a “sanctuary”, with
"non-judgemental","self-effacing" staff, concluding:

This quality of 'libraryness' is historically rich and widely understood. It is one of the great institutional strengths of the public library service, and has proved resilient and self-renewing. Yet the weight of this history may hinder the capacity of librarians to identify with a fresh perspective about where libraries could be going in the future. (279)

Firstly, this reflects a rather stereotypical view of the central, Carnegie-type library. As argued above, it does not portray the growing number of teenage and community libraries, or those attached to cultural centres, where the atmosphere is upbeat and the staff active. But this is the image that persists in this report, and probably in public perception. Peace is what attracts many people to a library. Few public places provide such peace, and it has its value. It does not mean that every part of a library should be silent all the time. This would be incompatible with the idea of library as meeting place, social and cultural centre. The "institutional strength" described above is not what will draw people to Elgin's new library. And Elgin is an indication that "librarians' capacity to identify with a fresh perspective about where libraries could be going in the future" is not impeded by the weight of history. It is not our perspective which is the problem. Just our image.

Library design is very important to public perception. The 1990 Which? survey reported that library surroundings were not rated very highly. Asked to consider how relaxing and attractive their local library was, 50% of adults rated surroundings as "fair" or less. (280)

In his biting article on 'Public Library Policy, The Public Library: Dodo or Phoenix', F A Sharr warns, "If the image of the library is static, calm and passive it will not receive the funds to enable it to get up and go". (281)

We are not a profession much in the public eye. Comedia write of "the invisibility of libraries". (282) Until recently, they have been absent from public policy and discussion. People tend to feel generally positive about libraries, if they feel anything at all. They do not excite controversy. It is up to us to ensure this changes, and it is crucial that it does, if we want to maintain levels of public funding and support in an increasingly competitive environment.

There are few if any famous librarians. The Curator of the National Library for Scotland has appeared in the media discussing questions of Scottish heritage, but such a high profile is noticeable perhaps because it is so unusual. Libraries will exist without celebrities in their ranks, but when resources are tight, it does not help to be
seen as a quiet service, one that will not protest too much. Libraries have been subject to heavy budget cuts within Glasgow City Council, and some observers feel they have been an easy target.

Local publicity is often limited to photographs of children’s events or branches under threat of closure. The most memorable national coverage in recent years has centred on the embarrassing delays in building of the new British Library. The whole operation was described in The Guardian as a “mega-British failure”, (283) with journalist John Ezard commenting that, “It took 44 years and £511 million to get the first little book three-quarters of a mile from the British museum to its new home”. When an opportunity for positive publicity did present itself, with the largest removal of books from one site to another ever known, the first book the cameras recorded, carefully placed on new shelves in the new site, was a book of traditional verse. Something of a missed opportunity.

There does seem to be an effort to address this problem. A full-time Coordinator was appointed to work on the second National Libraries Week in November 1997, and radio, TV and press coverage for this was extensive.

Coverage of various awards ceremonies in the profession has increased year by year. Particular projects like the Boxx promotion for teenagers or the Bookstart project aimed at babies have excited a great deal of media interest. There is an appreciation now that media coverage requires a great deal of work, but is very worthwhile.

Chris Batt, IT expert and manager of Croydon Central Library, made the most of his recent brush with the media. Croydon Library forms part of a complex including a museum featuring interactive exhibitions, cinema, concert hall, gallery and cafe. It is “not so much a place to borrow books as a tourist attraction”, or in the words of Batt himself, “The library is at the centre of a cultural and community resource”. (284)

The Audit Commission’s Due for Renewal, and the government-commissioned report New Library: A People’s Network have attracted widespread media coverage and led to heated debate on the future of public libraries. There is a growing consensus within the profession of the way forward and a strong desire to prove the impact of public library work. Libraries are a public policy issue for a government committed to education, education, education. At the same time they are suffering financial difficulties which threaten their very existence.
2.35 Cuts

When progress is required in so many areas, funding of basic library services is being reduced. According to material produced by The Library Campaign, although expenditure on public libraries over the past ten years has risen slightly more than inflation, this disguises the fact that a large number of authorities have made savage cuts. All authorities are having to cope with increasing needs, with more elderly people in the population; higher demand resulting from government policies such as Care in the Community and reforms in education; sharp increases in the number of books published and a rapid expansion in other media.

Since 1975 the number of libraries in England open 60 hours or more has slumped from 163 to 13. Libraries are frequently closed in the evenings and on Saturdays. There is only one library open for over 60 hours in London: none in Wales or Northern Ireland. In Scotland, where local government funding of libraries has traditionally been more generous, there are 36 such libraries, but local government reorganisation is making itself felt here too. (285)

The most recent LISU Annual Library Statistics found that staff numbers in public libraries are declining and professional librarians are being partly replaced by unqualified assistants. This has serious implications for any work on publicity, improving access and interacting with the public. When services are understaffed, optional extras are forgotten.

Geraint Evans in Public Library Journal pointed out that in the two years between 1994-95 and 1996-97 it was estimated book prices would rise by 1%. At the same time, materials budgets were reduced: by 2.9% in London and the metropolitan boroughs, by 7.7% in English counties and by 12.7% in Scotland. (286)

Perhaps unsurprisingly for a Government-sponsored report, the Public Library Review makes no reference to this overwhelming crisis. Instead, it calls for “new, forward-looking approaches to help secure a broader, diverse basis for funding revenue expenditures in public libraries.” (287) It goes on to say that focusing on public libraries’ financial problems could be counter-productive. (288) New funding sources are more likely to support activities they think are vigorous and healthy than services they are told are in decline. From a public relations viewpoint, this is worth considering. It does not benefit libraries to have nothing but negative images about cuts and closures. However, if services are under threat because public finance is reduced, staff and public alike have a right to protest.

The Public Library Review recommends reviewing library opening hours with the
possibility of opening more on evenings and weekends and closing during quieter periods. The resources required for this may not be available, but the DNH simply recommends the use of volunteers. There is a general desire for different opening hours. The Which? survey of attitudes to public libraries reported that 15% of adults thought the opening times of their local public library inconvenient, and 42% wanted to see some changes in opening hours. Most people either wanted libraries to be open later in the evening, or for more hours over the weekend. Younger people tended to be least happy with current opening hours. The demand is there, but finance is sadly lacking.

This chapter has set out the background to the research contained within this thesis in terms of the UK scene. It has established the history of public libraries from their earliest origins and has examined the continuity of rationale and changes in application running from the beginnings of public libraries to the present day. It has highlighted radical change in the socio-economic environment of public libraries and the particular issues raised which demand change in public library policy and practice. Having established the extent of change and the imperative for a new approach in UK libraries, the following chapters begin to look at what form, or model, that new approach might take. The hypothesis central to this thesis is that the new model emerging is based on a community development approach. The objective of this research is to test for evidence of a new model in UK and international practice, and to establish its characteristics. From that point recommendations can be made on the features an ideal model should present if public libraries are to be proactive in meeting the needs of their community and if community development aims are to be successfully achieved.

The next chapter presents an international literature review which addresses current concerns for library services across the world and contemporary practice in interacting with communities.

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CHAPTER THREE - CURRENT PRACTICE -
AN INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

As the Research Methods chapter of this thesis explained, the British Library commissioned an international review of literature as a key feature of their Social Impact research programme. The review was undertaken by Evelyn Kerslake and Margaret Kinnell of the Department of Information and Library Studies at Loughborough University, and covers the five year period immediately preceding the research programme, although documents consulted date back to the end of the 1980s. I gave some assistance from my own desk research at an early stage of the review.

In this chapter I describe and analyse the Social Impact Literature Review prepared by Kerslake and Kinnell. I have examined this review in some depth, because it has close parallels with my own work. It was conceived as the foundation of the wider Social Impact research programme and published together with our survey. It gives the context for the primary research we carried out. In addition to examining the commentary and analysis contained therein, I have consulted many of the sources directly, and drawn conclusions from my own reading of those sources. These two elements comprise a review of the social impact of public libraries for the period 1992-1997.

I also give details here from my own international literature review. To avoid duplication, this covers the period from completion of the Kerslake and Kinnell report to date. Although it examines similar themes to the earlier review, my review has a particular focus on public library policy. One aim of the review is to discover whether similar research projects to our own have been attempted elsewhere, and to ascertain as far as possible whether our contribution is unique.

The review by Kerslake and Kinnell outlines the socioeconomic framework of public library services. This theme was so closely related to my own that it would have been a duplication to conduct a wholly separate literature review for the same period. I considered their work in great detail, but primarily as a guide. Their groundwork enabled me to conduct my own analysis of the original texts they consulted and to move forward to consider articles from the later period. However, the focus of Kerslake and Kinnell’s work is different to my own. It
concentrates particularly on public library development and the public policy imperatives to which libraries are adapting. It was produced at a critical time for public libraries, when their social impact was being seriously considered by local and national politicians for the first time, arguably since their inception. The Kerslake and Kinnell review highlights socioeconomic concerns common to many countries, such as the pace of technological change, demand for lifelong learning and increasing access to information to support the democratic process. My own review echoes these concerns.

My assessment of the public library role in the past, imperatives currently facing public libraries and the broad areas of their current work is similar to that of Kerslake and Kinnell. However, my primary interest is whether libraries are addressing changing demands: how they are interacting with the communities they serve, and the strategies they are adopting to guide their work. My international literature review seeks to determine the currency of a community development approach, and to establish how this is influencing strategy. This information might be gleaned from national policy papers, research reports or articles on individual projects. I also need to establish as far as possible that the research I have carried out has not been duplicated elsewhere.

My own investigation of literature covering the period after the Kerslake and Kinnell review reveals a surge of interest in exploring public library rationale in the face of rapid technological and societal change. There is also clear recognition of the socioeconomic impact of libraries and the need to convey this impact to public, policy makers and funding bodies. My own review assesses the current state of public libraries by reflecting concerns within the profession and activities reported. The two sections of the review combine detailed analysis of 45 original articles and examination of 138 abstracts, giving an authoritative context for the primary research contained within this thesis.

The literature review presented here covers the period from 1992 to the present, although since the work addressed by Kerslake and Kinnell dates from the end of the 1980s, it effectively examines the professional literature of the 1990s. The historical survey in Chapter two of this thesis offers a literature review of the main themes in public librarianship from the 18th Century up to the 1970s. The review presented here is more thorough since its purpose is establishing contemporary themes and determining any duplication of my work.

For my own review, although authoritative conclusions can best be drawn from original documents consulted in depth, it was felt that an abstracting source would achieve a broader vision. Abstracts were also the only means of accessing articles.
not in English. Emerging trends can be detected by examining abstracts from a variety of countries over several years. Original articles then offer an opportunity to examine how trends are reflected in the policy and practice of individual public library projects. Abstracts were chosen for the literature review by consulting Library and Information Science Abstracts (LISA) for the relevant years using the following subject headings as a guide: public libraries - activities; promotion; disadvantaged; social aspects; users - social groups; political aspects, as well as community development; libraries and literacy teaching. The abstracted articles are clearly differentiated in chapter notes and the bibliography at the end of this thesis with an asterisk. All other references were consulted as original documents.

The Internet was searched for relevant sites, using libraries and community development as keywords. The LISA abstracting service appeared to be extremely thorough, a point confirmed by many of the same references emerging from Internet searches and my own reading of professional literature.

I have divided the review of literature into significant subject areas, rather than geographical groupings, since this highlights the fact that many trends are truly international. The most significant themes influencing public libraries work with communities can be examined under the following headings:

- research
- social impact
- economic impact
- public library rationale
- art and culture
- health
- community outreach programmes
- citizenship
- community consultation

These areas are examined in the same order below.


In their Social Impact Literature Review, Evelyn Kerslake and Margaret Kinnell present a comprehensive and incisive assessment of contemporary public library rationale.(1) Their primary focus is the United Kingdom, but they include many examples of library work in other countries, with particular emphasis on North America.
They examine every aspect of public libraries' interaction with communities and highlight their role as a social and economic agent at local and national level. As a strong foundation for the wider research programme, Kerslake and Kinnell's review outlines the areas in which public libraries are active. It considers the impact they have on community, skills and economy. The authors believe that three imperatives have forced public libraries to consider their fundamental role in society: a crisis of funding; demographic changes, and the development of the information society. Their review assesses the benefits public library work brings. It provides examples of that work at home and abroad and concludes that public libraries are in a prime position to encourage social inclusion in the information age.

The review does not attempt to assess the current state of public libraries, or to give a national overview of impact under the headings mentioned. It does not detect a dramatic shift in public library policy or prescribe such a shift. It seeks primarily to emphasise the value of what libraries are already doing, and to call for that work to be extended. It considers the opportunities and threats confronting libraries: it concerns itself less with their strengths and weaknesses.

Kerslake and Kinnell contend that if public libraries are to secure funding when issues are falling and other organisations are providing information and access to information technology, they must demonstrate their unique social role. They argue that high levels of use and extensive geographic spread mean public libraries are well placed to cater for those excluded by a commercially-based service.


3.21 The Research Context

This review aims to situate my research within the international literature and determine whether similar work has been carried out before. It begins by assessing trends behind recent research, and considers what this research has set out to achieve.

The literature review in this Chapter does not attempt to encapsulate the theoretical underpinning of contemporary public library work at a global level. Rather it aims to reflect significant trends in library policy and practice. These may be discerned from documents issued by think tanks, government ministers and professional
bodies. While some references will be the product of authoritative research projects, the majority will not be academic or theoretical in nature. They will reflect the experience of librarians documenting common concerns and contributing to professional knowledge. Although not all of the articles will offer evidence to substantiate claims or present a case grounded in research, significant issues for the reflective practitioner are in themselves a litmus test of priorities for public library policy and practice.

One example is the recent change in research aims and objectives for the library profession. Kerslake and Kinnell highlight the trend under the previous Conservative government of justifying the economy and effectiveness of public libraries through quantitative research. They argue this has resulted in neglect of more theoretical work on public library rationale. This thesis contends that several research projects are now addressing that criticism.

Kerslake and Kinnell argue against over-reliance on quantitative measurements of public libraries because the results might be disappointing. They highlight recent figures showing that libraries are lending fewer books, "thus undermining their assumed primary rationale". (2) They believe that safeguarding funding for public libraries depends on demonstrating their value in the widest sense.

Several issues are raised by this argument. The quantitative data which points to a fall in public library lending bears closer inspection. Whilst the overall trend is down, recent years have seen an increase in borrowing of non-fiction books. Use by children has increased across the board, as Kerslake and Kinnell point out. (3) Figures show that use of libraries is multi-purpose, and not limited to borrowing books. Fiction provision is likely to continue as a central role for the public library. Quantitative figures showing a decline in lending are not necessarily a death knell for libraries, merely an indicator that library use and users are changing. Both quantitative and qualitative data can examine that use. Kerslake and Kinnell seem to believe "value in the widest sense" cannot be demonstrated by quantitative means. Others might argue we should measure more purposefully what libraries do.

Many strands of library work are not included in indicators routinely collected and compared by library authorities, but could be measured usefully and with relative ease. Enquiries made to a reference library could be recorded (our own Central Library Reference section in Stirling answered 13,000 enquiries last year). Computer or room bookings, participation in organised events or reading schemes could be monitored. Figures like these are often maintained for housekeeping purposes, but not always publicised. If the public library is to expand its role in lifelong learning provision, performance indicators which measure our "assumed primary rationale"
Qualitative evidence of library impact can be harder to come by. This thesis discusses in Chapters 5 and 6 problems encountered by adult education and the arts in measuring social impact. Educational attainment, employment and community activism may improve after a project targets a community, but any number of factors could be responsible for such a change. How can an individual project prove its unique contribution? Evidence of social impact could demonstrate the lasting effects of public library work with communities and provide a body of theoretical and practical work on which to model service delivery.

The Social Impact research programme was established to consider just this problem. One of its research reports considered winning and shortlisted entries for the Holt Jackson/Library Association Community Initiative Award and the elements successful projects had in common. Beyond Book Issues by Francois Matarasso considered how such projects impact on their participants’ quality of life. Research on the effects of the Sheffield library strike also considered how libraries are valued by users, and how for many people, reading is not replaceable by any other activity. (5) It will always be difficult to assess the contribution libraries make to eg. enjoyment of literature among the public; how children are introduced to books; helping citizens establish their entitlements; assisting community groups. It could be argued that time spent identifying library impact in these hard-to-measure areas is difficult to justify, and could not be maintained on a large scale. Further research on demonstrating the social impact of libraries is urgently required.

Kerslake and Kinnell highlight a distinct lack of research in the library sector at the time of their review. They call for a strong theoretical underpinning to library practice, and a justification from evidence of public library rationale. In contrast, the latter half of the 1990s saw significant efforts within the library profession to pull together existing research and direct future activity.

A research project commissioned by the Society of Chief Librarians and funded by the British Library, Research and Development Department, reviewed the development of UK research and investigation into public libraries since 1982. (6) This report surveyed the needs for future public library research programmes and developed a database of research. Following the review by the Society of Chief Librarians, six main categories for future research were determined: assessing value and impact; technological issues - the Information Age; human resource issues; resources issues; managerial issues; and monitoring research effectiveness. (7)
An overview of current UK research is provided by Deborah Goodall in her 1998 article for *Public Library Journal* (8), while her report on research activities in public library services draws on a series of interviews with 20 chief librarians. (9) She contends that current research activity and method concentrates on "simpler" issues of operational service development rather than "harder" research addressing the social and economic impact of the service. She argues the restricted research capacity within the public library sector is a brake on its strategic potential. There is growing recognition of the need for research into the value of library activities, and increasing awareness that such research should be planned and coordinated.

Contemporary Swedish articles also address research. Faced with the same rapid technological and socioeconomic development as ourselves, they focus particularly on theories of change and what it means for organisations and institutions. Zetterlund and Hansson consider previous research on public library change and development from historical and organisational perspectives; (10) public libraries and cultural policy; their changing roles within popular education; changes brought about by technical development; and professionalism and competence. (11) Their conclusion considers how theories of change can apply to public library research.

Hoglund describes a longitudinal research project on public library changes, involving questionnaires and interviews on the changing role of librarians and library objectives, (12) while Klasson examines recent research with an international perspective on the library’s role in society. (13) All the authors consider the history of Swedish public libraries and adopt a multidisciplinary approach. Social change is perceived as having a major impact on the library role, particularly within education.

The Libraries and Community Development National Survey (14) and the other elements of the Social Impact programme outlined in the Research Methods chapter above address several of the research categories determined by the Society of Chief Librarians. These include managerial, human resource and resources issues and assessing value and impact of library activities.

Rochester and Willard report the results of a survey of information retrieval and use by community groups in urban and rural Australia. (15) Accuracy and reliability were identified by all groups as primary criteria for source selection. Information-seeking behaviour in urban and rural groups was broadly similar. Most rural groups felt their access to information was inadequate. They relied heavily on local public library resources and staff. This study links its findings to definitions of community and recent writings about the “civil society”, (16) thus informing the debate on the social role of public libraries.
The definition of community organisation adopted here is closer to my own than, for example, the one employed by Walzer and Gruidd in the Kerslake and Kinnell review (17) which interpreted community economic development from a business viewpoint. At the time of the study (1996-1997), only one group obtained information directly through the Internet. One librarian was particularly well known as a participant in community affairs. A representative of a senior citizens group acknowledged the library’s support for their oral history project and remarked that some group members had used the library public access computers to gain computer skills.

The author concludes that since many people involved in community groups are busy, any assistance given must directly contribute to their community’s well-being. A high-quality information service to community groups was seen to depend on knowledgeable, competent staff with a good understanding of their communities and highly-developed interpersonal skills. The value of this type of public library support is emphasised in recent research, focussing on the public library as a community “space” used by a wide cross-section of people, which helps develop and sustain urban vitality.

A review of the UK scene shows a clear commitment to research, increasingly coordinated by professional bodies as part of a planned programme. In recent years, the comment made by Deborah Goodall about a lack of interest in “hard” research on assessing the impact of public library services has been addressed. The Social Impact research, which includes our National Survey of Community Development Strategies and ongoing work on libraries and Social Exclusion, is attempting to fill the gap which Goodall justifiably highlighted.

Socioeconomic change is prompting research in many countries. In Scandinavia this research often takes public library history as its starting point. The research by Rochester and Willard on the information needs of community groups also considers its environmental context. Current public library research appears to address the fundamental rationale of public libraries, their socioeconomic environment and the implications this has for policy and practice.

There is increasing evidence of the difference libraries can make to individuals and communities, particularly when they work in partnership with other agencies.
Several articles employ individual anecdotes as well as more quantitative indicators to underline the difference libraries can make (Nespeca, Talan, Sawyer etc). While this type of evaluation is arguably subjective and lacks validity and generalisability, authors do not generally use these anecdotes as the basis for broader claims. They argue rather that the comments of a user who finds a service helpful and is willing to be quoted on the subject add interest to a statistical report. They provide qualitative material to be considered alongside other information. Rod Sawyer argues that public libraries must be bullish about their economy-driving and job-creation-related successes. Staff or volunteers should be encouraged to gather "economic success" information to underscore the economic and job creation benefits library services have. (22)

Sue McCleaf Nespeca’s paper on ‘Urban Head Start Mothers’ quotes a mother living in a particularly deprived housing project. (23) Despite her difficult circumstances, Jolette describes in detail the numerous literacy activities she does with her children: making up dramatic plays and songs (one while the children are jumping on the bed), doing fingerplays, helping with shapes, drawing letters on a piece of paper and encouraging the children to practice, etc. Jolette gave a speech on parental involvement at a Head Start Parents’ Recognition Banquet, which is quoted in full in the text of Nespeca’s article. (24)

Similarly, Carole S. Talan ends her article with profiles of three very different people who had been involved in literacy programs, and have gained more satisfying employment, or become more confident visiting the library with their families. Her article also includes comparative research findings on how involvement in preschool programs indicate lower rates of juvenile correction, unemployment and teenage pregnancy for those involved, and quotes a number of publications and conferences supporting her arguments. The anecdotes are a small, but impressive part of the whole picture.

From my own experience when Petersburn Library won a national award, press releases focussed both on quantitative results and comments from users. In one instance, a family spoke about what the library offered each generation. A grandson attended the junior writers’ workshop, while his father learned guitar, and his mother was Secretary of the Women Writers’ Workshop. Teenagers also commented that there was nothing to do but get into trouble before the library came. These remarks were remembered by many associated with the project when precise details of figures had been forgotten. (25)
Impact on communities

Kerslake and Kinnell suggest that “one result of the emphasis on quantitative assessments is to position public libraries as irrelevant, and therefore vulnerable to public funding cuts”. (126) Kerslake and Kinnell contend that libraries must justify their existence in qualitative as well as quantitative terms. There are issues to be addressed here about precisely what libraries should measure to adequately reflect the range of contemporary service. But it could be argued that recent years have shown an increasing recognition of the social impact of libraries at governmental level. There has been little increase to core funding as a result.

Moving on from Deborah Goodall’s (27) comments about the “hard” research urgently required by the library profession, it is clear that significant efforts are now being made to examine the social and economic impact of public libraries. Miranda McKearny, who has a long-standing connection with the Library Association/Holt Jackson Community Initiative Award in a public relations capacity, considers the effect the award has had in a 1996 article for the Library Association Record. (28) After the first five years of the Award, the 125 entrants were marketed to journalists, local politicians, commercial sector partners and other agencies with an interest in community development. They demonstrate how libraries are contributing to the building of lively, involved and informed communities. McKearny highlights the 1996 winners, while research by Francois Matarasso on the Social Impact of libraries, focusing on shortlisted and winning entries for this award is examined later in this thesis. (29)

Philip Wark highlights the 1997 Award winner, the Horley Local History Centre, and describes how it contributes to its community’s needs for education, information, cultural enrichment, economic development and social policy. (30) This project forms part of the Heritage Strategy of the local Surrey County Council, and has resulted from a partnership between Horley Town Council, local Parish Councils and neighbouring Local History Societies. The enquiry desk in a section of Horley Library is staffed by Horley Local History Society volunteers who have the required subject knowledge and were also trained in library procedures and enquiry techniques by library staff.

Wark points out that one of the key elements in allocating this Award is the degree to which the project or service is, as its title suggests, a community initiative. The Horley project is community led rather than library management led, with its own HLHC Management Committee consisting of Councillors representing the County, Borough, Town and Parish and representatives from the local schools, library
service, local history societies and public. (31)

As part of the award criteria winning projects have to have identifiable objectives and a measurable impact on the communities served. Entrants are also asked for corroborative evidence in the form of testimonials from users, messages of support, examples of media coverage etc. Together these indicators demonstrate the social impact of projects concerned, as the author explains:

HLHC’s objectives are explicit, attainable and fit into an overall Council strategy which enables and encourages projects like this to happen. While some of the impact may be subjective a lot of it can be measured in terms of meeting its objectives, eg the growth in the number of enquiries dealt with, the number of publications produced, donations received, exhibitions and displays held, number of people attending events and talks, the expansion of local knowledge through community interest and assistance. (32)

The author also describes work in his own locality of Craigmillar, Edinburgh, a Priority Action Area with a high level of economic, educational and social need. In 1996 plans were well underway for the biggest new community library to be built in Edinburgh for decades. Consultations with the Wester Hailes community were ongoing and as part of that process a member of a community group brought up Sunderland’s Bookstart which they had read about in the Times Educational Supplement. Wester Hailes Library opened in October 1997 and a Books for Babies scheme similar to that in Craigmillar was established. The library complex at Wester Hailes included Edinburgh’s first teenage library following extensive consultation with local teenagers. Philip Wark remarks that to gain ideas and inspiration Edinburgh staff also visited Petersburn Drop-in Centre which won the award in 1994. (33)

One of the guiding principles of the Community Initiative Award is that entrants show evidence of sustainability and replicability. Wark’s article gives an insight into the kind of work being done by libraries with their communities, and how such ideas can be embraced elsewhere if good practice is disseminated.

Evelyn Kerslake and Margaret Kinnell consider the rationale for public libraries providing information in a social context when information is beginning to be seen as a commodity. (34) Their article outlines current research programmes aiming to provide evidence of public library impact and effectiveness, and emphasises the continuing role of public libraries as promoters of citizenship and democracy. Kevin
Harris and Andrew Green examine the Social Impact of Libraries research and demonstration programme intended to promote understanding of the role of public libraries in their local communities. (35)

John Pateman considers public libraries’ role in combatting social exclusion. (36) He argues that to date they have acted more as agents of social control than social change. Pateman feels libraries are often based in the community without being community-based, lacking a sense of community ownership, management or accountability. He feels that libraries subscribe to the notion of deserving and undeserving poor, and certain groups, such as refugees and asylum seekers are excluded as a result. He draws attention to the black community in particular, preferring its network of community-based and religious bodies to the public library for information and cultural provision at a local level. Many public library services would dispute his claim, and have significant involvement from ethnic minority communities, but research in this area will certainly clarify the extent of their commitment.

Pateman calls for library school programmes to be updated to cover the issue of social exclusion. He also argues that libraries must identify the socially excluded and their needs; tackle staff attitudes and behaviour towards the socially excluded; put community librarianship back on the agenda; market library services to the socially excluded; develop quality performance indicators; shift resources to meet the needs of the socially excluded and disseminate examples of good library practice to the socially excluded. (37) The Library Association has developed a programme of events around the theme of social exclusion, focusing on poverty and ethnic minorities.

Impact on society

Dividends: the value of public libraries in Canada, (38) is the title of a substantial report on public libraries’ contribution to society and economy. It is the subject of articles in 1998 (39) and 1999, (40) and has been published in full on the Canadian Library Association website. Dividends argues that public libraries in Canada are well used. Thirty-four per cent of Canadians over 15 visited the library at least once in the previous year. Programs organised are also well attended, with over 163,000 participants at London Public Library in 1995, and almost 129,000 at Halifax City Public Library.

Public support for the library service is also high. Dividends quotes surveys showing nine out of ten Albertans regard the library as an “essential service to the
community", and only 1% of Nova Scotians view public libraries as non-essential. (41)

Libraries are cost effective information providers. Because of their organised methods of identifying, locating and retrieving information, libraries save users millions of dollars a year in time not wasted attempting to recreate data already available and time not wasted on erroneous work. One survey quoted in Dividends reported that of the people visiting the library for work-related information, ‘40% saved time or money; 25% resulted in performing work better; and 18% resulted in completing work faster’. (42)

Public libraries support their local economy. A report on public libraries in Nova Scotia states that “Increased library traffic directly benefits area businesses. Studies have shown that people using public libraries also tend to include shopping with visits to the library”. Research in British Columbia showed that over 75% of library patrons regularly combined trips to the library with the purchase of goods and services ($500 - $600 annually) from retail stores close to the library... the total value of economic activity generated by a library location could be measured... The annual “direct economic activity” for Guildford was $20 million, for Newton $10.8 million, for Ocean Park $5.7 million and for Whalley $9.9 million. (43)

Libraries also support the cultural industry sector. In 1996 the Canadian Publishers Council commented that, “the inability for libraries to purchase materials in Canada will ultimately put some Canadian publishing companies out of business”. (44)

The Dividends report argues that public libraries in Canada sustain Canadian culture, underpin democratic society and promote literacy. They have a vital role to play in encouraging lifelong learning and ensuring new and emerging technologies are accessible to all Canadians.

The report also examines the effects of reduced funding to public libraries on the Canadian economy and society. In 1992 the Toronto Public Library system lost 30% of its materials expenditure budget. Libraries also had to incorporate the costs of technology into operating and capital budgets already under pressure. In 1995, Winnipeg Public Library reported their staffing levels had shrunk from 495 to 368 since 1990, and the Metro Toronto Reference Library had almost 25% fewer employees than in 1992. Authors of the report argue that such cutbacks are detrimental to the maintenance of high quality service in public libraries, particularly where there is a reduction in professional staff responsible for selection of library materials and assisting the public using the library. Library opening hours were also cut.
All of the issues addressed in this report are equally relevant to library services in the UK. It would therefore be extremely valuable to monitor developments in Canada, and the response of the library profession to the major changes underway.

Rosemary Norman has reviewed a significant study on the social impact of libraries funded by the Library Council of New South Wales. (45) It relates how economic and social planners have worked together in Lane Cove to find out what a public library represents and what it stands for in the lives of those who pay for it and use it.

The report makes clear that it is not concerned with "the broader assessment of the economic value of public libraries - the commercial significance of location, the importance of foot traffic, libraries' buying power and influence on what is published", (46) since these issues are addressed elsewhere. The Lane Cove research attempts to value library services by adapting the "time allocation theory" and applying it to the purposes for which people use libraries. (47)

The consultants involved were asked to collect stories indicating the benefits of using Lane Cove Library and to put an economic value on these benefits. People were asked if, instead of visiting the library, they had considered alternative ways of using time. They were urged to try to identify any financial benefits they might have gained from library use, including those not apparent at the time. They were, in fact, encouraged to recall benefits of any kind they had received and any changes that had taken place in their use of libraries over time. The report explains the theoretical basis for the economic and social planning analysis and the reasons for combining qualitative and quantitative research. (48)

It emerged from group discussions that the library was seen as a place which supported lifelong learning, where one could become better informed and develop new interests and skills. For the recently retired and people who are unemployed the library was seen as particularly necessary. (49)

Rosemary Norman comments that:

For many people the library is the only source of reliable and readily accessible information. It provided many people with their first and only hands on contact with new technology. (50)

L. Amey considers the potential of a combined school and public library to address the library and information needs of rural communities in South Australia. This
Kevin Harris's report on community perceptions of the social benefits of public libraries was part of the Social Impact research programme funded by the British Library. Harris investigated the perceptions community groups had of their libraries, discovering that they were unclear of the extent of the library remit, and did not tend to be vocal in their demands.

My own article for the journal *Assignation*, reported on Kerslake and Kinnell's contribution to the Social Impact programme research, and the findings of our own National Survey of Community Development Strategies in public libraries. Kerslake and Kinnell present their own literature review on public libraries and social inclusion in *Libri*. They summarise the social impact and effectiveness of public library initiatives in community development work and the potential of such work. The full British Library Research and Innovation Report by Kerslake and Kinnell has been fully examined above, but most significantly argues that the impact of public libraries may be seen at two levels: their more immediate impact on the economy, skills in the labour market place and society and community development; and more indirectly, the extension of social inclusiveness and citizenship.

Jennifer Abend and Charles R. McClure explore the notion of "public good" as it applies to libraries. Drawing together a number of studies, they offer a typology of public library impacts and consider the importance of those impacts for local communities, particularly in terms of local economic development.

A major component of the research is evidence from an in-depth study of Pennsylvania Public Libraries, their use, benefits and impacts. The findings showed that many Pennsylvania public libraries contribute directly to the economic productivity of the local community and the state by encouraging the establishment of businesses, helping residents find jobs, attracting new businesses to locate in a community, and providing information and programs on being a successful entrepreneur.

One of the significant points about this article, is the line it draws between traditional library services, which have an "expected impact" as a matter of course and those which have a "significant impact", resulting in a secondary and unexpected positive effect due to the targeting of resources and services. Expected impacts might include collections of novels for recreational reading, back issues of newspapers and facilities for community group meetings. Significant impact might be found in preparing a directory of community businesses, offering library resources to literacy groups or career counselling. Thus significant impact is often achieved by
the public library’s employment of additional energy and focus in order to increase service to specific user groups. (58) An alternative term for this might be an “added value” service. The authors argue that expected impacts are of more benefit to the individual, while significant impacts are more of a public good. Perhaps the benefit in the latter case is merely more direct.

The authors share the desire of British library professionals in the current economic climate to provide evidence of public libraries’ social impact. (59) Documenting and communicating the existence and extent of public library impacts can be the impetus for users and policy makers to realise how library services can be indispensable to the community. (60)

Abend and McClure raise an interesting dilemma facing librarians on both sides of the Atlantic:

The reality is that many public libraries are barely ‘holding their own’ in terms of maintaining existing services and programs. Can the promotion of targeted impacts to politically important community groups increase the visibility and importance of the public library? Perhaps more importantly, can the promotion of such impacts increase funding for library services? (61)

The desire to find evidence of the social impact of public libraries is identified here in Canada, New South Wales and Pennsylvania. In North America it seems that attempts to define social impact are driven by the need to justify continued public funding.

A further aspect of public libraries’ social impact - their role as part of local government response to crisis - is highlighted in the review by Kerslake and Kinnell. One example given is Towyn in Wales, where the library was an information centre following a major flood. Similar action in information provision has been taken in Dover, following the sinking of The Herald of Free Enterprise, and in Renfrew, as a response to the major industrial closure at Linwood.

3.23 Economic Impact

Articles from as far afield as the UK, USA, Canada and Australia emphasise the need to provide evidence of public libraries’ economic impact too, highlighting their role in supporting local and regional economic development and demonstrating their cost-effectiveness in a harsh economic climate.
Public libraries and the information economy: easing the transition

Funding and economic imperatives are strong themes running through the Kerslake and Kinnell review, and probably reflect the primary concerns of the new Government. However, they are not the only concerns shaping public library policy. Community and societal needs are not always related to economics, and it could be argued that too heavy an emphasis on performance measurement can leave no scope for creativity and taking risks.

Kerslake and Kinnell emphasise that public libraries have an important educational and cultural role in helping individuals and communities deal with the effects of change in family structures and employment opportunities. They set out succinctly, and with good supporting evidence, the effects of changes in the UK labour market. (62) Long-term unemployment has led to an increase in poverty which often hits hardest at marginalised groups, such as women with dependent children, the elderly and disabled. Increasing use of flexible labour has led to more widespread temporary and part-time employment with greater job insecurity and decreased investment in training. The authors identify a significant skills deficit for the UK relative to global competitors. (63)

In particular they emphasise the shift to an information society, where personal, social, educational and business transactions increasingly rely on information technology. They point out that public libraries in their early days helped ease the transition to a fully industrial society by educational and cultural provision which increased skills among the working class, and they can play a similar role now:

Although the particular skill needs have changed, public libraries remain an appropriate and effective way of bridging the contemporary skills gap and the gap left in lives by unemployment. (64)

Kerslake and Kinnell argue that the shift to an information economy, where information is a commodity for sale in the market place, is accompanying demographic changes. Information of different types is central to public libraries. However, if it is accepted that information is a commodity, then it might also be accepted it should be provided by private industry, rather than public services. (65)

In recent years the issue of extending Compulsory Competitive Tendering to public libraries has been discussed. Kerslake and Kinnell argue that:
the commodification of information remains a threat to
the continued existence of public libraries unless a
practical and theoretical framework for public
 provision of a marketable commodity is developed.
(66)

They believe public libraries have to demonstrate their effectiveness in reaching
disadvantaged sections of the community. If they wish to retain the principle of
free access, public libraries have to prove that they attract users who would not
take up a charged for service. (67) An exploration of the social impact of libraries
could underpin such a framework. We need to justify our existence, but
furthermore, we need to base any strategic planning for the future on demonstrable
need.

Attracting those who cannot afford to pay for access to the information society may
be the way forward. Public libraries are uniquely placed to take up this challenge,
and with the right management model, can achieve it very effectively.

Whilst Kerslake and Kinnell focus on UK libraries, the international examples they
cite show that work of a similar type is underway in many other countries. This
reflects:

... the common difficulties facing societies worldwide, the global nature of connection and communication between library and information professionals, and the sense of common purpose shared by public libraries which is emphasised in work by international bodies such as Unesco and IFLA. (68)

The economic imperatives identified by the authors in the UK setting apply equally
to many other countries. The information age, globalisation of markets, the need for active, educated citizens are themes identified by Kerslake and Kinnell’s review and my own.

Contributing to the economy

Economic impact is the third area addressed by Kerslake and Kinnell, who highlight
the contribution public libraries make providing information to business; improving access to information to alleviate poverty; stimulating town centre economic activity and contributing to sales of books, audiovisual and other materials.

Kerslake and Kinnell argue that public libraries help to keep welfare costs down.
They highlight provision of information on the social security system, signpost benefits queries to relevant agencies and help the unemployed to find work. They make up "the educational deficit". (69) Public libraries are often viewed as a "social safety net" (70), catching individuals marginalised by other social institutions. Public libraries increase access to cultural products for marginalised groups.

The authors argue that libraries have a direct economic impact on their own geographical catchment area, contributing to a "fusion of civic and retail provision", (71). Libraries situated in shopping centres have proved very successful and people visiting such libraries tend to use their trip for other purposes too. The evidence cited indicates retailers do not always appreciate libraries' economic impact. Figures quoted in the Comedia Borrowed Time report underline the significance of the "footfall" generated by public libraries.

Comedia took Birmingham as a case study. They focused on the "invisibility" of the library to planners and city centre managers. The central library lies at the heart of its city centre strategy area, but was never mentioned in the publicity about the success of that urban regeneration initiative.

A survey of attendance figures at city centre institutions was compiled. This confirmed that Birmingham Central Library was responsible for the highest amount of daily "people activity" of all public facilities in the city centre, and should therefore have been seen as pivotal in any discussions about the further animation of the city centre. Monthly attendance figures revealed that Birmingham Cathedral had had 4,200 visitors; Birmingham City Museum of Science and industry 33,000; Birmingham City Museum and Art Gallery 61,000; the International Convention Centre 83,300, and Birmingham City Central Library 151,000 visitors. (72)

The same report quotes a case study for Dorset County Council to assess possible locations for a new central library in Bournemouth, including the main shopping centre. Surveys were carried out amongst retailers in Weymouth and Hartlepool - other towns where libraries had been relocated to central shopping areas - to assess the economic impact of these libraries on surrounding retail trade. The case study concluded that the benefits for libraries in these circumstances are clear - usage goes up by up to 100% when located in shopping complexes. With notable exceptions, there was no conclusive evidence to suggest that retailers recognise the significance of a library relocating, although in many instances local shops noted increases in footfall and turnover. (73) Many retailers commented that but for the library their situation in the recession may have been still worse.
An increasing number of developers who were interviewed in a second round of interviews noted that putting libraries into shopping centres may be a way of revitalising centres that are either declining or because of the recession have not yet got off the ground. This is supported by evidence from librarians themselves who have noted a more positive attitude, and in some instances deals are being suggested involving peppercorn rents for libraries to relocate. (74)

Research on the Sheffield Library Strike sponsored by the British Library also points to the importance of the library in the local economic infrastructure. This research revealed that for many people, library use is a key factor in determining the frequency of their visits to local centres, rather than the other way round. Nearly a quarter (23%) of all respondents visited their local centre less often because of the library closure. The research suggests that the library’s presence in a local community may have a significant impact on local retailers and other businesses. (75)

The funds spent by UK libraries on book and audiovisual stock each year are vast, to the extent that certain publishers and particular types of book rely for their continued survival on public library purchase. Minority interest formats like hardback first novels, spoken word records, reference books and specialist magazines are also supported by public libraries. In effect public libraries are “financially underwriting experimentation”. (76) However, public library support has been reduced by cuts in library funding over the last ten years.

Casualties have also been noted among library suppliers and bookbinders who rely on public libraries for business. (77) Several library authorities have joined forces to benefit from large-scale contracts in regional “cartels”, while Best Value is forcing authorities to look critically at book selection policies, and the most efficient means of obtaining and processing library stock.

Public libraries’ direct economic impact on Gross Domestic Product has yet to be measured. The authors call on the work of Sawyer (1996) on the value of Canadian public libraries. Sawyer states that Ontario public libraries provided 6,480 jobs in 1993/1994. Their direct and indirect impact in terms of jobs numbered more than 9,000 in 1993/94, while their direct and indirect impact on gross domestic product (GDP) reached $486 million in 1993/94. (78) In 1998, the total GDP figure for Canada was estimated at £688.3 billion.

Sawyer believes that the provincial information infrastructure contributes significantly to job creation. Funding for database creation creates employment opportunities in libraries and participating agencies. Training in these projects
provides valuable technology job skills. Sawyer contends telework and electronic cottage industries are developed that are ideally suited to workers who combine family and work opportunities in the home. (79) Sawyer also argues that libraries help attract new or relocating businesses and new residents to communities.

There is no doubt that libraries are substantial purchasers of information technology products. Ontario public libraries spend $40 million annually in the publishing industry. Since 1984, they have spent more than £33 million on library automation. (80)

Sawyer emphasises the importance of public library services to business, and consequently to the Canadian economy. He details information partnerships including public libraries, which benefit local businesses, job-seekers, lifelong learners and people acquiring literacy and other skills. (81) He points out that many Ontario libraries successfully provide fee-based services to business and have hosted business seminars and lectures on management topics. (82) Public libraries help business people to gain experience on the Internet before investing in their own Internet access.

Sawyer underlines libraries' key role in educating Ontario's children and providing lifelong learning opportunities. It is estimated that only 62 per cent of Ontarians aged 16 to 99 have reading abilities sufficient to deal with most everyday reading requirements. The cost of this level of illiteracy to Canada's businesses is estimated to be over $1.6 billion annually, through in-house costs due to poor productivity, and lost marketing opportunities. (83) The cost to Canadian society as a whole is estimated to be up to $10 billion or more each year.

Thirty-one per cent of Ontario libraries coordinate literacy efforts in their community. Sawyer refers to a report by the Ontario Ministry of Culture and Communications, indicating that Ontario's libraries were among the first institutions to recognise and respond to a need for community-based literacy tutoring. A study called 'How Libraries Help' noted that people who used libraries for literacy services felt they were helped in more ways by the library than by any other organisation. (84)

Sawyer also explains the role of Ontario libraries in supporting citizenship. The vast majority provide access to the interlibrary resource-sharing Information Network for Ontario (INFO) which ensures Ontarians in small and rural communities have access to the same public information as their urban counterparts. Sawyer describes a situation very similar to our own, with the Information Highway Advisory Council (1995), a federally-appointed body, recognising the importance of
libraries as community information highway access points in Canada. The provincial Ontario government has also recognised this by promoting library-based electronic access to government information.

The profile of Ontario libraries given in the article includes a figure of 2,023,036 people who attended library programs (organised activities) in 1995, at a time when the population of Ontario stood at 10,964,900. During the same period, Ontario's public libraries provided 322 public access points to the Ontario government's electronic Environmental Bill of Rights and Environmental Registry. More than 210 public libraries and community information centres offered public access to Government of Ontario information. It was predicted that by the end of 1998, Industry Canada's suite of programmes would link all of Canada's schools, libraries, colleges and universities to the information highway. Many library initiatives to support citizenship in British libraries were in place in Canada and North America several years ago. The socioeconomic motivation for these trends was fundamentally the same. Perceived needs have been addressed in the same way in different continents:

Career, lifelong learning and education information needed to build coping skills in a time of economic restructuring can be found in Ontario's libraries. (85)

In Canada too, factors including the growing service sector of the economy, rising unemployment, job mobility, increased subcontracting, changing economies of scale, the move towards deregulation, and the adoption and generation of new technologies are seen as likely contributors to the continuing growth of small businesses and a corresponding creation of new jobs. (86) Sawyer acknowledges public libraries' assistance to job seekers in the form of careers information and support. (87)

The article concludes that despite shrinking budgets, one of the key purposes of libraries is helping individuals of all ages and backgrounds stay educated and informed. (88) The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education found that 92 per cent of respondents considered public libraries either very important or fairly important in furthering the education of adults after leaving school. (89)

This article argues that libraries should promote the economic benefits they bring. It recommends analysis of library jobs, direct and indirect library impact on the GDP, promotion of public electronic access to information, the generation of "economic oriented patron anecdotes" (90), an economic impact survey, and development of an entrepreneurial spirit.
Kerslake and Kinnell contend that public libraries make a significant economic impact through providing business information to local companies, through countering the effects of poverty on individuals and communities and combatting the marginalisation of minority groups. (91)

**Public libraries supporting economic development**

In specific projects, the impact of libraries on communities can be more direct, if difficult to quantify. Projects offering long-term courses in eg. computing, accredited Open Learning courses with tutor support, even basic skills training, can lead directly to library users taking up further education or employment. In my own project, it would have been impossible to prove the contribution libraries had made to any such results, compared with other projects operating in the community at the same time, but it was often the library that people came to first. The proactive signposting libraries often undertake in communities can ensure that contacts are followed up, and advice taken.

'The Role of Small Public Libraries in Community Economic Development', by Norman Walzer and John Gruidl examines how libraries benefited rural communities facing economic hardship in Illinois in the 1980s. (92) Illinois librarians trained for a new role in local economic development. Librarians from more than 90 libraries statewide participated in workshops looking at economic development practices and the role they might play in the process.

Illinois libraries give extensive support for economic development. They provide services out of hours to local companies, target resources, and involve themselves in community strategic planning. (93) Libraries reported increases in budget allocations for business materials ranging from 19.6 to 48.9% in the past two years. (94) Almost 32% of all libraries had joined the Chamber of Commerce, and 39% had compiled inventories of their library business collection to see if it met local needs.

Support for community development is primarily defined here as development of the business community. (95) This is an important distinction from the standard British usage of the term community development. As explored in some depth in the chapter on community development and the section on community and public policy contained in this thesis, definitions of the term vary. However, Butcher, Glen, Henderson and Smith (96) see one model of community development as promoting community self-help with the community defining and meeting its own needs, using creative and co-operative processes with professionals working in a non-directive way.

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With the business-oriented definition in mind, it is interesting to note that 16.5% of libraries in the Walzer and Gruidl study felt that library staff had taken a leadership role in community development projects. (97) The same study of Illinois Libraries did report that 78.5% of libraries participated in ongoing community-wide events, such as festivals and shows, with some libraries providing special programming for children to support festival themes.

Kerslake and Kinnell consider the functions of the social impact of libraries, stating:

> It is often asserted that public libraries exist to organise books; this is an activity, however, not a rationale. (98)

They do not cite any authors for this assertion. I would argue that it is rarely stated that public libraries exist to organise books and nothing more. There is usually a clarification that books are organised so that information can be easily accessed for the benefit of the readers, for the purposes of recreation, education, culture and enlightenment. Organising books is an important part, but not the whole ethos of public library work. Serving the needs of the user community has always been essential.

### 3.24 Public library rationale

The library profession appears to be engaged in a fundamental reappraisal of public library purpose. This is not merely a UK phenomenon, but can be seen in all continents and at all levels of service.

Kerslake and Kinnell acknowledge criticism that public libraries have sometimes lacked a sense of identity and purpose, and that they must work to justify their effectiveness, meaning and impact. This was particularly true when the writers compiled their report (Summer 1997), after publication of the very critical Audit Commission report, *Due for Renewal*, and before the *New Library* document emerged. Nevertheless they argue that the history of public libraries all over the world is packed with examples of their social importance: as developers of adult and childhood literacy; as promoters of community projects; and as providers of information and accessible cultural collections. (99)

The establishment and continued existence of public libraries has been predicated on their social impact, according to Kerslake and Kinnell. (100) From their earliest days, public libraries were intended as a distraction from urban vice, a means of
increasing the skills of the labour market and a source of cultural enlightenment, focusing on enabling individuals to participate as citizens. (101)

Adapting to socioeconomic change

Effectively public libraries have developed in line with changing socioeconomic demand:

The philosophy of service contained in the initial development of public librarianship, and later in both children’s and community librarianship links back to both utilitarian and idealist notions of citizenship, self-realisation and education. The development of these strands within public library services continues to be of critical significance now. (102)

Libraries have always responded to socioeconomic demands, and recent social and economic change has prompted further refinement of library rationale to meet new demands. Thus the public library service’s longstanding commitment to education in various forms is increasingly being realised in terms of direct provision, often in collaboration with other agencies. Classes in computing, essential skills, NVQ courses, Open Learning, Study support and homework clubs are offered by many services. This sort of provision is likely to increase with ICT developments and initiatives such as the Government’s National Grid for Learning. Our National Survey of Community Development Strategies indicates an increasing tendency to formalise such work, bringing together agencies responsible for education, culture and economic regeneration to work towards precise aims and objectives. Partnership is often the easiest route to funding, and the only means of realising special projects. It recognises the holistic needs of communities, and pools all available resources for their benefit.

Kerslake and Kinnell identify a key role for the future as bridging the gap between information have and have nots, in an increasingly information-oriented society. They point to arguments that the middle class derive most benefit from public libraries. They see the tradition of community librarianship born in the 1970s as an attempt to redress this imbalance.

The issue of public library rationale has enormous contemporary resonance. Sources consulted for my own literature review resulted in 38 articles and reports addressing the issue: by far the largest group of references found. Libraries in every continent are questioning their role and considering how best to serve their clientele in a socioeconomic environment marked by extensive change.
Interaction with the community

Debate about how public libraries interact with their community is particularly lively in the professional press of South Africa. S. M. Marais, for example, in Cape Librarian, (103) discusses the dependence of the library on the local authority and the need for communication channels between library, community and local authority.

B. J. Mostert reports on a study of norms for community libraries focusing on Pinetown, South Africa, (104) which revealed that the five libraries examined had made significant progress towards becoming community libraries in the true sense of the word. They had moved towards an active service-oriented system, based on the needs of the community as a whole. A second article by B. J. Mostert and W. M. Vermeulen on Pinetown Public Library (105) takes a slightly different approach, arguing that most public libraries in South Africa have failed to address the information needs of developing communities. As a result the establishment of alternative library services, notably resource centres and community libraries, has gathered momentum since the 1980s. C. Stilwell affirms the importance of progressive resource centres and considers their role in the public library sector. (106)

H. Du Preez believes public libraries have a crucial role to play in helping to develop democratic society. (107) The article looks at public libraries in the Western Cape of South Africa, setting out specific indicators, guidelines and goals to be achieved as part of a vision for change. It discusses the prerequisites for empowerment which include: freedom of access to public libraries and information; the need for proper standards and training; refining the process of selection of library materials; community investment and involvement and the need for cooperation in the face of financial constraints.

Public library purpose

J. N. Gautam has addressed the role of a modern public library in Indian society, (108) describing how a public library equipped with the latest technology can promote adult and continuing education and serve as a cultural and information centre for the community. Gautam describes the modern public library as “a living force for education”(109), and recommends that public libraries collaborate with district or city Adult Education Committees, and other government and non-
governmental organisations to eradicate illiteracy. (110) This author concludes that the modern public library is a "community university", contributing to the intellectual advancement of society.

Many of the articles reflect changes in the ideology of libraries. There has been a particular focus on this in Sweden. Joacim Hansson considers the ideological change in public libraries as reflected in two government reports. (59) One of these is a 1911 report on the relation between public libraries and the state; the other is a 1995 report on Swedish cultural policy in general. There appears to have been little change in the theoretical underpinning of public libraries in the intervening period. The earlier report saw libraries as contributing to positive social development, while the 1995 report sees them helping to prevent an undesirable one. An article on Stockholm City Library (112) relates how three library services combined to form this library in 1927: parish libraries, Stockholm's Workers' Library, and reading rooms run by the liberal Movement for Popular Education. Arguments for such a library were: economic, as an educational investment; democratic, giving access for all; and social, providing wholesome literature. The early rationale for public library service mirrors that in the United Kingdom.

C. Revelli (113) presents a digest of professional opinions on how recent radical changes in traditional public library structure have raised basic questions about the library's mission. Topics include: the social significance of public libraries in bicultural Quebec; the thesis that public libraries should abandon the idea of serving all strata of society; and the future role of libraries as information coordination centres. This article cites the 12 aspects of the public library mission listed in the Revised Unesco Manifesto 1994. This document is also the focus of an article for the Malaysian Journal of Library and Information Science, by A. Rachman. (114) This notes how the 3 definitions of public libraries provided by Unesco from 1949 to 1994 have evolved to cater for the changing needs of society. The 1994 definition stresses the link between public libraries and the eradication of illiteracy from the community. The article urges Unesco to consider the unhappy situation of public libraries in developing countries and help bridge the gap between the information rich and information poor nations.

C. Harboe-Ree in Australian Library Review, has written an article entitled 'Public libraries: questioning the canon'. (115) This author points to recent publications which have challenged the traditional belief that public libraries are central to the vitality, independence and effectiveness of democracy, and argues that this offers an opportunity for the role of public libraries to be creatively redefined.

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Social exclusion

A topic of growing interest and research in the United Kingdom has been social exclusion. John Pateman, currently Head of Libraries and Heritage for the London Borough of Merton, is a leading author in the field. In an article for LASER Link, (116) he sets out his case, and suggest how libraries can ensure they are reaching those most in need. The UK focus on social exclusion is also reflected by C. Moore and H. Baigent writing on The EARL Consortium’s work, (117) and an examination of the BLRIC research project on public library policy and social exclusion by Martin Dutch, who remarks that “tackling social exclusion is now a key component of the Government’s social policy strategy”. (118)

Dutch argues that social exclusion is important to libraries for precisely this reason. Many government initiatives on social exclusion are centrally developed but are expected to be locally administered, and it is clear that Government expects local authorities to be partners in working to tackle social exclusion. Increased centralised monitoring via annual library plans will require library services to consider actions with partners planned after consultation with the community.

Dutch also comments that the focus on public services and social exclusion gives the public library the opportunity to more strategically develop a social policy centred on supporting those most in need and often least provided for by present strategies:

There is no doubt that community librarianship has been in long decline and was at best only developed partially. Now there is an opportunity to harness the present concentration on technological futures for public libraries with clear social strategies. Now the core question will be how best the public library service can address social exclusion in an emerging informational, or knowledge based society. New technologies are providing the public library with new tools. The social exclusion agenda, with its link into many fields (health, education, race, gender, crime etc) offers the scope for potentially imaginative partnerships with the community and other agencies. (119)

The research project, Public Library Policy and Social Exclusion aims to assess the impact of current public library policy on social exclusion, to explore links between public library policy in this area and local authority policy/initiatives as a whole and to explore the potential of cross-sector/inter-agency initiatives. It also seeks to make recommendations on how activities in this area might be enhanced and strengthened through new and changing practice and via new models of local library provision. This research has strong parallels with our own work two years
library provision. This research has strong parallels with our own work two years earlier, when the trend of interagency initiatives in community development work in public libraries was just emerging. This project had a completion date of Spring 2000. (120)

The relevance of public library services is also being addressed in Northern Ireland, where three surveys carried out by the North Eastern Education and Library Board in Northern Ireland in 1993 attempted to find out the real needs of their user community. (121)

Reflecting contemporary values

Moving on to North America, an interesting Japanese article by H. Yakushin in May 1999 (122) attempts to establish a theory of the nature of public libraries. Yakushin argues that public libraries have changed their aim through time, subordinating them to contemporary values. This is exemplified in a study of American public library aims beginning in the 19th Century, showing a shift from esteem of education to valuing intellectual freedom and social diversity.

J.H. Billington draws a different conclusion to Yakushin. He suggests the public library system in America is unique among nations for universal accessibility and openness to knowledge at community level. US libraries are marked by continuous expansion of the body of knowledge; knowledge accessibility in a free society; libraries as 'temples of pluralism', and are simultaneously a unifying force in communal relations. An article by M. Dempsey (123) argues that for over 150 years the mission of US public libraries has been to collect, organise, preserve and provide free and equal access to information, knowledge and entertainment in all formats. This paper forecasts that the future mission of public libraries will be to lessen the gap between information rich and information poor by providing books and technology. J. W. Focke (124) discusses the elements which need to be addressed as public libraries in the USA adapt to continuing change. Topics covered include the library as a communications technology centre; public libraries as social centres; the future role of the librarian; the value of incorporating flexibility in the design of libraries to accommodate technological change; and the role of the architect in library planning.

B. L. Lamont gives practical examples of what such changes can achieve in the Illinois State Library Annual Report for 1996/97. (125) The article highlights the state government's promotion of access to information, and the fostering of growth, development and networking in libraries. Illinois hosted the National Adult
Literacy Conference in August 1996. In the same year, nearly 100,000 families participated in the fifth annual Family Reading Night. (126) The Illinois Family Literacy Conference in May 1996 attracted more than 300 participants. “Spotlight on Achievement Awards” sponsored by IBM were given to 10 exemplary literacy students from across the state.

Through a pilot project coordinated by the US Immigration and Naturalization Service, 20 Illinois public libraries provided citizenship assistance to immigrants in ethnic communities. Packs distributed at participating libraries contain citizenship application forms and study guides to help immigrants prepare for the citizenship test. The first literacy grants under the new Educate and Automate funding program were used to purchase family literacy software for 216 sites, including 145 libraries and branches. The target population for the new software is parents and children with low reading levels. The Illinois Library service spent a total of $5m on community literacy in the period 1996-1997. (127)

Public libraries in Quebec have also responded to changes in lifestyles and values over the past twenty years. John-Paul Baillargeon argues that renewed interest in reading and increased book loans are evidence of the impact of the public library in the cultural development of Quebec. (128) His article also warns that this influence needs to be structured and strengthened.

J-C. Utard takes a critical look at public libraries in France, (129) which are seen to have achieved outstanding success in modern communication and consultation, but consequently face problems in terms of numbers and diversity of users. The article stresses the need to foster partnerships with schools and other socially involved groups and calls for a lead from public policy. J. D. Baillon-Lalande concurs that French public libraries face pressure to cope with a multiplicity of roles and are looking to interagency initiatives and partnerships with other community organisations to solve the problem. (130)

Chris Batt reports on PubliCA: the Concerted Action for Public Libraries, a European programme for public library development. (131) Short goals for the programme are: to act as a catalyst for the development of telematics systems in libraries; to create the right climate to foster Europe-wide support for libraries and stimulate European library cooperation. In the longer term the Programme aims to promote accessibility to modern library services for all citizens of Europe; assist the standardisation required for resource sharing among libraries and work towards the harmonisation and convergence of national library policies. R. Hapel comments that very few libraries actually make use of the EU’s library programme, with the result that their role in development of the information society remains unrecognised. (132)
PubliCA aims to stimulate participation, spread information about project results, and reduce inequalities between public libraries.

A state-of-art international review of public libraries, *Library and information work worldwide 1998*, considers the current reappraisal of public library rationale. A representative chapter is ‘Public libraries’ by Ray Astbury, (133) which considers public libraries and economic development; legislation, reorganisation and restructuring; public libraries and the information society; public libraries and lifelong learning and the North-South divide.

Moving on to Eastern Europe, B. S. Elepov, and O. L. Lavrik (134) raise the issue of the library and sustainable development. The authors feel libraries should ensure the needs of the present generation are not met at the expense of future generations. As part of this process, all countries must have equal access to information resources.

**Support for citizenship**

There are clear parallels between the role of UK libraries in supporting citizenship and the approach of the Povaska Library of Povaska Bystrica. E. Baculikova points out that libraries play a significant role in the implementation of the State Social Policy through their daily contact with a considerable proportion of the population. (135) The Povaska Library provides a range of services specifically designed for vulnerable groups such as the visually impaired, the unemployed and pensioners. Similarly, E. Sakalova considers the role of libraries in the implementation of the Slovak state employment policy. (136) The article examines the specific features of services for the unemployed and discusses their information requirements. M. Zumer and S. Novljan consider ‘Public libraries in the transition society of Slovenia’. (137) This paper argues that in order to cope with the challenges in transition societies, people need access to more information to be better able to understand change. Some libraries in Slovenia have already adapted to the changes in society, but will have to extend their traditional cultural role and become information centres.

J. Wojciechowski compares the concept of the public library as understood in Denmark, Sweden and England. (138) The author underlines the philosophy in these countries of ensuring common public access to libraries and a lack of ideological bias. He draws attention to the concept of the public library in Poland, emphasising the educational function of such institutions. Meanwhile, V. Maxwell’s 1997 article ‘Vision or nightmare?’ (139) presents a commentary on the report 2020
Vision: towards the libraries of the future. This report was commissioned by the Libraries Working Group of the Cultural Ministers’ Council. Maxwell concludes that the document is open to severe criticism and is largely lacking in new insights into, or challenging discussion of, the future of public libraries in Australia.

Frances Awcock considers the origins of the public library movement in Australia in the great humanist traditions of the 19th century. (140) The author argues the vital role of state libraries as key cultural institutions in the capital cities and the need for them to reassert their role in the dissemination of ideas, in documenting their capacity and support for cultural and historic research as well as in providing lifelong educational and development opportunities for the Australian people. She concludes that this is a time when society is reconstructing itself to meet the challenge of new global forms of telecommunications and information technologies. Awcock is at pains to emphasise the importance of knowledge to public library rationale, rather than information. (141) She stresses that libraries serve humanity, and have an obligation to include minorities in their service plans. They must also respect all forms by which knowledge is communicated, from book to Internet, and use technology intelligently to enhance service. Awcock comments on the tendency to discard classic books, and to bombard customers with more information than they need. The library service should also protect free access to knowledge, which is why the policy of charging for Internet access should be carefully considered. Increasing amounts of information are only available electronically, so charging for access to it is analogous for charging for reading a newspaper or checking out a book in a library:

> Even the major Australian newspapers now place their classifieds on the Internet. These classifieds include job vacancies. It is not hard to see that electronic versions of employment opportunities are likely to replace traditional newspaper listings so the unemployed person using the library for assistance in such circumstances, and relying on it to do so, will be disadvantaged if he or she is unable to consult the electronic lists because of the lack of money to do so. This is at the heart of the access and equity principle. (142)

Lastly, Awcock exhorts librarians to honour the past and create the future, and is extremely optimistic about the continuing importance of the public library, quoting the 1994 Public Library Manifesto to the effect that:

> The public library, the local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning.
independent decision making and cultural development of the individual and of social groups. (143)

S. Philpott reports the results of questionnaire survey of South Australian public libraries, (144) also forced to respond to the forces of economic rationalism, local government reform, changes in management practice and the relentless push to do more, be more and serve more of the population whilst contending with 'the neverending battle for resources'. (145) Library service managers were asked their reasons for choosing to offer some services and not others. Community demand was seen as the most significant factor in decisions to offer particular services by 61.7% of library services, with staffing issues also significant. K. Poustie reviews a report on flexible public library service models for the Libraries Board of South Australia. (146) The report tries to identify innovative and flexible approaches to public library service delivery, with particular reference to community information services. Again, the same reappraisal is underway, spurred on by the same socioeconomic change. There is an attempt to redefine and refine services provided, and to steer a clear path into the future.

One of the engines for change has been information technology, and this is at the heart of considerations of public library rationale. An editorial in Advanced Technology Libraries in 1997 (147) reported the results of the 9th annual National Library Survey of over 1000 public and academic libraries in the USA, concluding that libraries are using information technology to meet new demands. Similarly, S. Criddle reports on a major United Kingdom library conference with a focus on information technology and the future of public libraries. (148) The Public Libraries Group Biennial Study School in 1998 was entitled Resurrection: a new life for powerful public libraries, and dealt with issues such as lifelong learning, Open Learning and cross-sectoral alliances.

Reassessment of public library rationale is clearly an issue of global concern. The most frequently occurring word here has been change, and there is clearly some debate about whether libraries' efforts to address that change are radical or an evolution of their natural role. It is apparent that libraries all over the world are having to face the challenge of rapid changes in the labour market, increased demands for information, and the promises and challenge of information technology. In most countries examples of good practice are being documented. There seems to be a recognition that the library service cannot stand still in such a dynamic environment, but this is being addressed from fundamental considerations of what libraries are for. It is not enough to provide some new services in isolation: these services must be part of a strategic approach to library provision for the information society.
information society.

Articles from South Africa in particular reflect an increasingly vociferous and demanding user population. Many people are expressing dissatisfaction with what they see as lower quality provision in poorer, rural areas. India is one of many countries where libraries' contribution to the fight against illiteracy and support for lifelong learning is recognised at governmental level. In the UK in particular, a growing emphasis on social exclusion is emerging, particularly since the election of the Blair government. A major research programme on how public libraries are addressing this issue will have implications for policy development in the next few years. In similar vein, articles from the US indicate that a crucial role for American libraries will be helping to bridge the gap between information rich and information poor. This will be achieved by providing books, technology and support to users struggling to keep pace with the information society. As many of the articles in the community outreach section will show, US libraries are approaching this challenge with creativity and a willingness to work with interagency partners.

Library services worldwide are looking to meet the needs of their communities with interagency work, information technology and clearer connections with user groups. Many are looking for new models to help achieve this goal.

3.25 Art and culture

The Kerslake and Kinnell review of public library services to the community does not highlight cultural and artistic provision. Reference is made to the Peggy Heeks' report on Libraries and the Arts which identified libraries as a popular meeting space for voluntary groups. However, the full potential of the arts to strengthen community identity and offer opportunities for creative self-expression is not explored. There is an emphasis on the public library offering a "pleasant, safe environment" to the community, but few examples of direct community involvement.

Literary groups

Kerslake and Kinnell make no mention of the literary groups which have always been popular in libraries, encouraging interest in classic literature and contemporary fiction. One example is the winner of the 1998 Community Initiative Award, the Pontefract Library Readers' Group, which encourages fiction readers to experiment with new authors and share their experiences.
For this group, the combination of social activity, the trusted community base of the library and an emphasis on the readers' own imagination has been powerful. The philosophy underpinning the Group's work is that through reading imaginative literature, people learn, share experiences and combat isolation. Reading-based activities aim to involve as many people as possible. Booklists like The Full Ponty exemplify the group's approach - it features who is reading what in Pontefract (from the vicar to the traffic warden) and challenges people to develop their reading tastes. The library has a Reader in Residence, working with local people.

The Pontefract groups is one of many meeting in public libraries throughout the UK. Within Stirling Libraries, Strathblane and Balfron community libraries have recently established successful groups which meet in the evenings to share and discuss books readers have enjoyed. When conducting our national survey, some of the library strategies (eg. Birmingham, Gateshead, Hackney) specifically mentioned readers groups and writers workshops in their forward plans.

Public libraries also host writers' workshops which support creative self-expression, build the confidence of those involved, and generate new writing talent. Sandwell Community Libraries developed an innovative multicultural creative writing project 'Beneath Four Moons', which was shortlisted for the Library Association/Holt Jackson Community Initiative Award in 1995. Their strategic plan for 1996-1999 reports a successful bid for two Literature Development Workers. Chapter 6 of this thesis is devoted to Libraries and the Arts and has specific sections dealing with a wide range of creative writing and literature promotion activities in libraries.

Furthermore, the Kerslake and Kinnell review makes no reference to general artistic activities organised and supported by libraries, which can have a considerable impact on individual and community skills.

Reading

The value of reading itself should be acknowledged. As Chapter 5 of this thesis explains, research on the effects of the recent library strike in Sheffield found that in three out of four community libraries more than 40% of users normally visited their local library at least once a week. Reading was seen as very important to those surveyed. Many went to considerable lengths to find alternative sources of reading material during the strike, exchanging books on loan with one another. The majority of over 500 respondents reported that reading was not replaceable by any other
The leisure side of library provision is not really addressed in Kerslake and Kinnell’s review, although it is extremely important to many library users. Free access to a vast range of contemporary literature must be a social benefit in itself. But increasingly libraries are spending time on reader development and literature promotion.

Many authorities organise special events and festivals on a reading theme. Recently, Derbyshire received a grant from the Poetry Society, via Arts for Everyone lottery funds, towards a programme at Chesterfield library that included Andrew Motion, local poet Hovis Presley, ex-librarian Fleur Adcock and a week of workshops and readings by poet-in-residence Ann Samson. Kirklees held their fourth Reading Matters Festival in September-October: ten days of poems, talks, parties and shows at 13 libraries, mostly on local or 1890s themes. For the first time the Festival included sessions for users to read out their favourite passages.

Initiatives like Now Read On for adults, BOOX for teenagers, and the National Year of Reading have been taken up by many public library authorities. Now Read On, organised in Scotland with Scottish Arts Council support, attempted to broaden literary taste and promote less well-known writers, or writing from different cultures. Many libraries encourage discussion, with comments boards, displays of reader reviews and book groups. The Pontefract library group above argue such groups increase reader confidence and combat isolation. Fiction provision in libraries can be seen as a complex and often under-valued role.

The authors of this review believe that the public library has the capacity to improve literacy and numeracy skills, establish a reading culture and offer access to continuing education. This can translate into increased employment opportunities, a chance to escape from the poverty trap, and improved quality of life, benefits for the individual and the wider community.

Compared with the mass of references examined in the earlier section on public library rationale, art and culture does not seem to have enjoyed much attention in recent years.

Only one relevant reference was found in my review in an article by S. Brandehoff on turning libraries into cultural centres. The article describes the work of the American Library Association (ALA) Public Programs Office and some of the projects which it has sponsored. It highlights current exhibitions, “A more perfect union: Japanese Americans and the US Constitution”, “Beyond category: the
musical genius of Duke Ellington” and the ongoing project “Writers live at the library”, which brings prominent authors into public libraries in the Midwest area.

The lack of coverage of the arts may result from increased emphasis on bread and butter issues of literacy, computer skills and social exclusion in the professional press. However, this thesis provides many examples of libraries involved in arts projects with their communities. There may simply be less documentation in this field.

3.26 Health

Health information is an area where public libraries can play a unique role. They operate as neutral agencies, have vast capacity to organise resources, and can reach large numbers of the population, particularly in collaboration with other agencies.

One example of what can be achieved is the Teen Health Information Network (THINK) in San Francisco, USA, a partnership of public libraries, schools and community agencies formed in 1994 to provide materials, information and programming on issues related to teen health. The network was established in response to significant health concerns in the 12-18 year age group. In one year, 20% of the teenagers treated at a specific health centre were treated for conditions related to pregnancy, and in addition, 16% were treated for psychiatric disorders. (156) Project workers gathered collections of material following an extensive teen health survey in the area. Teenagers showed a marked preference for visual formats, including videos, demonstrations and speakers,(157) and magazines, newspapers and CD-ROMs were chosen over the more traditional books. Comments from participants were overwhelmingly positive, and great efforts had been made to ensure this project had its roots in the community.

One example of health information provision in New Zealand offered by Kerslake and Kinnell shows no evidence of outreach and only limited interagency work. The focus of the article by Pam Bidwell is books. Materials, rather than users, are the starting point. There are references to consulting the contents pages of books before withdrawing them: “the librarian should consider reviving tattier items through new covers”. (158) The big picture, of whether the service as a whole is reaching and benefiting its target groups, is not considered. This is an example of a library service without a clear theoretical basis to its work, where research could be usefully applied.

Kerslake and Kinnell’s coverage of the UK scene is very thorough, ranging from
monographs to significant reports and journal articles covering all aspects of service provision. Reporting of the international scene is necessarily more sketchy. Their review does not really set out to criticise individual reports, or evaluate their contribution. It is therefore not always possible to ascertain how different projects have prioritised work with communities, how highly services value their social impact, and how committed they may be to a community development rationale. The most interesting articles they highlight are clearly grounded in research, such as the teen health article by Judith Kuzel and Su Erickson quoted above, the national survey by Frances Smardo Dowd or Sue McCleaf Nespeca’s piece on ‘Urban Head Start Mothers’.

All of these present statistics on the level of poverty in their target group, before setting out the rationale for their work:

Fifty one per cent of Head Start families have a yearly income of less than $6,000... 47% receive Aid to Families with Dependent Children, and 47% of the heads of household are unemployed. (159)

This indicates a research-based approach to the work of the library and other agencies involved. Furthermore, it indicates that links have been made between deprivation and what the library can do. The work starts from and is guided by the needs of its community. I would suggest that this is indicative of a community development approach. This is certainly not true of all the examples presented by Kerslake and Kinnell, but there are some instances where the approach is difficult to gauge and details presented are brief.

3.27 Community outreach programmes

This section is divided into general programmes to extend library service into the community, and specialist programmes targeting particular groups.

General

In their review Kerslake and Kinnell emphasise the importance of the library as meeting place, and the support libraries can give to the unemployed and minority cultures. This extends to catering for groups often neglected by other social institutions, including children, people with disabilities and the homeless. Articles in my own review range from the relationship between an individual library and its community to the extraordinary efforts made to take library services to
disadvantaged groups.

Some articles document the inauguration of a new library for the community, such as Masifunde: the latest library in the Knysna community of South Africa, which actively engages local people. (160) At the opening ceremony for Nqutu library, the guest speaker described the new library providing a door to the world outside Nqutu and the library’s role in evolving a culture of reading. (161)

Innovative outreach approaches

Other articles look at taking traditional services to the community in innovative ways. H.R. Asamoah-Hassan presents regional statistics for rural public library provision in Ghana. (162) The article argues that traditional library functions and activities such as lending and reference services are not adequate to educate, inform and enlighten the rural population. It stresses the importance of involving rural people in planning and delivery of information services. L. W. Kuburu provides a historical overview of the Kenyan service, (163) which includes the Camel mobile library, the Book Box project, an AIDS information service and a service for the visually impaired. It also discusses a community based approach to supplementing government efforts to establish libraries in Kenya.

There is a particularly strong emphasis on outreach in US library services. Articles by R. L. Scott (164) and S. Orange (165) in Spring 1999 for the journal North Carolina Libraries, describe efforts to promote Internet use among the local community, offering group access to information, particularly to disadvantaged users. One particularly innovative mobile library service in the US is offering help to job seekers and employers. J. A. Drescher describes how the JOBLINC mobile for the Memphis/Shelby County Public Library System provides listings of available jobs, aid in locating training opportunities and assistance in conducting job searches and preparing for interviews. (166)

Australian broadcaster Diana Giese reports on a number of community outreach programmes run by the Dandenong Valley Regional Library, Victoria, Australia, which serves a rapidly growing population with a high proportion of non-English speakers. (167) Programmes include initiatives to bring in new Asian readers using an Asia/Australia culture and literature festival with storytelling and cookery demonstrations; and another to attract teenagers with the help of a “writer in the community” project.

The Illinois Library Association’s public library standards require libraries to
identify specific target groups within their population. Such groups might include the educationally, culturally and socioeconomically disadvantaged; the elderly; the illiterate; ethnic minorities or those with English as a second language. M. Collins reports on a diverse range of programmes and services provided to serve these groups. (168)

From a UK perspective, Laura Swaffield contends that the essence of successful community development work is to tailor it to local needs, structures and priorities. (169) Her article is examined later in this thesis, and focuses on two projects: the homework help clubs run by Southwark (London); and Stockport libraries' cooperation with Age Concern. Both projects were runners-up in the 1996 Library Association/Holt Jackson Community Initiative Award.

Special programs and projects to raise the profile of libraries have been particularly popular in the USA. One example is The New Americans Program of the Queens Borough Public Library in New York. (170) According to the 1990 census, Queen's population of almost two million residents includes 36 per cent who are immigrants and 44 per cent who speak a language other than English at home. (171) F. J Gitner explains that The New Americans Program involves a proactive approach - including personal contacts by phone and in person to local community agencies, attendance at community fairs, and press releases to the ethnic media - to ensure immigrants know the library welcomes them and has programs and services to offer. With seventy-five classes in twenty-four branches, the New Americans Program runs the largest library-based English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program in the country. There are also smaller classes for those people not literate in their own language, beginning with how to hold a pen and how to write on paper. (172) At the other extreme, the advanced level ESOL class introduces students to the computer and its use in the library. The Program aims to assist immigrants in the acculturation process, but also to help maintain native languages and cultures. To that end, programs of music, dance, storytelling and crafts celebrating the diverse ethnic groups of Queens are presented using primarily local artists and performers. These programs have proved very popular, with up to seven hundred people attending the all-day festivals. (173)

In similar vein, the Works Progress Administration Library Service project in South Carolina was a nationwide program designed to encourage the development of library services to underserved populations while providing temporary work for the unemployed. Through the WPA project libraries were started or expanded, a mobile library service was initiated, and rural library service to rural and African American citizens improved. (174)
Promotional activity

Many activities in South Africa focus on the promotional library week held each year. “Knowledge is power” was the slogan for national Library Week in 1998, which included literacy programmes; women’s programmes; reading programmes; talks on library and educational matters and user education programmes. (175)

The UK Community Initiative Award represents a wide range of promotional activity. The 1996 Community Initiative Award highlighted two projects at opposite ends of the human life cycle: Stockport Libraries’ project to extend library services to old people’s day centres run by Age Concern, and Homework Help Clubs for young people in Southwark. (176)

An innovative scheme by Castelfiorentino town council to foster reading and increase membership of the main public library involved setting up a ‘radial’ system of 20 book lending/reading points in outlets such as hairdressers, beauticians, Coop supermarket, local hospital and leisure centre. (177) Meanwhile French ministries of culture, youth and sport are encouraging disadvantaged groups to use the library by employing community work mediators who base their work around reading. (178) In Provence-Alpes-Cote d’Azur, nine towns with innovative literacy projects were nominated “reading towns”. (179) Carros is one example, where the public library is located in a deprived housing estate and has fostered partnerships in an effort to make books accessible to the greatest possible number of people, despite social and cultural problems.

Several articles consider the history of public libraries in a particular country or region, such as the article by B. Thomas on Swedish public library development (180), and M. A. Bernard’s paper on reading and identity in Peruvian local libraries. (181) Bernard reports that peasant communities in Peru have had access to reading materials for the last twenty years through a network of rural libraries created to combat illiteracy. The libraries are part of continuing education efforts by librarians and volunteer community coordinators. Reading groups have been established, and Andean traditional materials have been published in an Enciclopedia campesina.

There are clear parallels with experiences in the United Kingdom in a conference paper by S. Thier on public libraries in Finland. (182) Finland has many small public libraries spread over a wide area. Forty-nine per cent of the population use a public library, each reader borrowing an average of twenty items per year. The 1996 seminar examined the ‘House of Knowledge’ project aiming to link all public libraries to the Internet by the year 2000. P. M. Valentine describes The Community
of the Book in North Carolina. From 1900 to 1960 library services have extended into rural areas and expanded from a "whites only" service to one reaching the entire community. (183)

Other articles examine the future of public libraries in a particular country or region. D. Edgar forecasts growth in the number of community libraries in Australia. (184) An article on the history of public library services in Ghana and prerequisites for future development examines book provision, preservation of culture, distance learning, and resources for handicapped people. (185)

Community involvement

Many articles focus on a particular library and what it means to its community. Many features are common to successful libraries, one example being community participation. T. Mini takes a public library at Georgetown, Pietermaritzburg as a case study, focusing on the role, nature and extent of community participation in establishing this library. (186) The Oudtshoorn Region Library Service in South Africa is involved with the national arts festival of the Little Karoo, and other outreach activities. (187) Oosterhout Library in the Netherlands attracts 380,000 visits each year. (188) Theo Peeters, library manager, attributes this success to exploiting local interest in the arts. Close contact is maintained with the local press and community organisations to publicise library services. The library has an emphasis on education and provision of online information. A report on the 50th anniversary celebrations of Dzierzonow library in Poland outlines its history and current activities, highlighting the high degree of cooperation with local organisations. (189)

A. Picard argues that the public library in Canada has traditionally tailored information resources to the needs of the community it serves. (190) A special partnership exists between the district library in Laval, Quebec and the local Autistic Society. This involves making the local community aware of and sensitive to the needs of autistic people through the efforts of informed, committed staff and appropriate information resources.

A. Rintaluoma highlights the library's role as a cultural meeting place in Scandinavia. (191) The public library of Kokta in southern Finland is closely involved with the Kokta Music Institute operating from the same building, offering an exhibition space for local artists, staging literary events and promoting Kokta's long-standing cultural relationship with Estonia and other Nordic countries. Tensta public library in Stockholm has overcome reduced budgets to provide services to
diverse groups including a large immigrant population. There is an emphasis on developmental work with children, adults learning Swedish, and local history work. (192)

Esther Sibanyoni is Senior Library Assistant, Resources for Development of the State Library in Pretoria. She has written about a library in Soshanguve as a model of community development. (193) She gave a Guest Lecture on the subject to the IFLA Conference held in Copenhagen in September 1997, winning the Woman of the Year Award in South Africa the same year. Sibanyoni exemplifies some of the characteristics identified by Francois Matarasso in managers of successful library projects. She has vision, and she is an inspiring leader:

I entered a library for the first time when I was 27 years old, and developed a love for the spirit of librarianship: that of helping people to find information. (194)

When the author moved to Soshanguve, it had no public library. Needing access to books herself, she convened a meeting to address the problem with the local church, housewives, sportsmen, teachers, nurses, businessmen and students. A committee of concerned residents was established, including a librarian, and became the Soshanguve Library Association. The group were allocated a room in a building next to the community centre and established a library run by volunteers with donated equipment and books. After some problems, an agreement was reached with the township manager that the old Transvaal Provincial Library Services (TPLS) authorities would provide books and a librarian to staff the library. Shortly afterwards, the library was petrol bombed, since it was seen by some groups as an arm of government. Sibanyoni met with ANC leaders and showed them the records of the library project to show that this was a self-help project but relied on TPLS assistance. The level of community involvement in establishing and maintaining the library and other cultural initiatives in the town has been an important factor in their success. (195)

On another continent, E. Korulczyk reports on the municipal public library in Garbow as a community centre cooperating with social organisations and the local authority. (196)

3.28 Immigrants

Ethnic minorities are the focus of attention for the library profession. They have been highlighted as at risk of social exclusion by writers such as John Pateman,
Marlene Morrison and Patrick Roach. Libraries are increasingly recognising their responsibility to immigrants and other ethnic minority groups who may find services difficult to access.

C. A. Alire notes the rapid increase of ethnic populations in Colorado and suggests a model for statewide library service to meet their needs. (197) Public libraries in North Carolina are working with ethnic groups to meet the information needs of immigrants and refugees. (198) R. Tjoumas outlines the Coping Skills Component in the New Americans Program (NAP) at Queens Borough Public Library, an initiative which offers free lectures and workshops in immigrant languages on such topics as job training information; child care; and tenant-landlord relationships. (199) Materials are also made available on local social services and agencies. The Toronto Reference Library and North York Public Library both support local Turkish communities by providing a Turkish collection, organising displays and Turkish cultural programmes. (200) Research is also underway on immigrant population’s use of library services, such as the 1995 survey of public library use by immigrants in Trondheim, Sweden, designed to help planning for service delivery. (201)

Several articles during this period address the needs of ethnic groups in Australia. In 'Beyond Books', C. Lannan explains how the Geelong Regional Library Service in Victoria, Australia, is developing new services and collections for clients who speak languages other than English. (202) The library service has simultaneously to direct its efforts towards the ageing, European dominated communities and their traditional recreational material; and to enhance current cultural information provision to reflect the needs of more recent migrants from Eastern Europe and Asia. Articles by N. Briggs-Smith (203) and M. Jackson and R. Briggs (204) describe the work of library services in New South Wales promoting library services for Aboriginals. R. Cullen reports the impact of a national bicultural policy on librarianship in New Zealand. As New Zealand redefines itself as a Pacific nation, rather than a member of the British Commonwealth, New Zealand libraries have to pay increasing attention to the Maori and Pakeha cultures and reflect them in library provision. The author discusses the specific provisions libraries must make to adapt to Maori culture, attitudes to knowledge and cultural materials. (205)

**UK provision**

In similar vein, Patrick Roach and Marlene Morrison have considered the UK approach to provision for ethnic minorities in 'Pursuing the wind of change', written for the Library Association Record in July 1998. (206) The authors completed a
report *Public Libraries, Ethnic Diversity and Citizenship*, (207) on the results of a questionnaire and interview survey in 1996/97, conducted by the Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations and Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal and Research at Warwick University. The research set out to determine how public libraries have responded to the growth of an ethnically diverse society in the UK. Roach and Morrison challenge the profession to a debate on whether public library services in the UK are pursuing policies which best serve a multicultural society. In *Public libraries and ethnic diversity. A baseline for good practice*, (208) Morrison and Roach offer a practical guide on: setting aims and objectives; conducting performance reviews; taking into account ethnicity and racial equality; undertaking research and consultation, and promoting library services to ethnic minorities. The guide highlights the importance of creating a racial equality culture in public libraries; meeting the needs of ethnic minorities through the use of technology, and developing strategies to support the lifelong learning needs of ethnic minority communities.

Lesley Willetts, as Libraries and Arts Development Officer for Sunderland, describes a local initiative which set out to address some of the problems of the Bengali community. (209) The project is called “Shondhan”, a Bengali word meaning “new beginnings”. Unlike most large towns and cities, Sunderland does not have many resident ethnic minority groups. Chinese, Japanese, Indian and Vietnamese groups are fairly scattered and have generally assimilated into the community. The Bangladeshi community at 1,200 members form the largest ethnic community group in Sunderland, but do not seem to have integrated well. Almost all of the Bangladeshi community come from the same village, and have tended to gravitate towards two clearly identifiable areas of the city. The community suffers from a high level of economic deprivation, poor health and incidents of racial harassment. (210) Families live close together and are mutually supportive, but tend to be very isolated. In most cases only the man of the household works and can speak any English. The women and children lead sheltered lives, only going out when their husbands can escort them. The children often begin their school lives unable to speak English. A further complication arises since the everyday language spoken - Sylheti - has no written form and the community therefore use Bengali for any written communication.

Women in the community would not go to libraries unaccompanied but did attend the health centre. Through discussion with the Health Centre staff and in association with Northern Arts and the Arts Council of England, a proposal was outlined for a major literacy project within the Bangladeshi community. A Bengali Readership Development scheme was designed to work directly with the Bangladeshis in their community. The project aimed to research the community's
needs in order to determine appropriate provision; if necessary to establish book
loan collections in target libraries and extend the book loan collection at the Health
Centre; to encourage the Bangladeshi community to use the libraries across the city,
and to raise awareness in the indigenous population of the diversity of Asian
culture. A Writer-in-Residence was engaged to work with the Bangladeshi
community. Shamin Azad was a writer and teacher who spoke Sylheti, Bengali and
English, making her acceptable to the Bangladeshi community, and able to act as a
link between the community and library staff who spoke only English. The
development programme included reading, storytelling, creative writing, drama
workshops, crafts and celebratory events. (211) One of the main aims of the
residency was to produce a book of creative writing from the community. This
developed from creative writing and activity sessions with a group of writers and
took the theme of “Journeys”, including journeys in Bangladesh, to the United
Kingdom and within the United Kingdom. An essay was included on the history of
the Bangladeshi community in Sunderland. The finished book was launched by the
Deputy Mayor at a celebratory event at the City Library and Arts Centre in
Sunderland. Over 100 adults and children from the Bangladeshi community
attended. (212)

Debby Raven responds to criticisms made by Marlene Morrison and Patrick Roach
about library and information provision for Britain’s multicultural society. (213)
Raven contends that library services for ethnic minority users are increasingly
treated as part of the wider community development role that libraries play.
Policies tend to be incorporated within wider Equal Opportunities action plans and
vision statements. Some library authorities have strategies responding to recognised
ethnic minority needs, however, and some employ specialist staff. In Hackney, a
vision statement recognises that nearly half of the population is from black and
minority ethnic communities. In Westminster there are 116 recorded mother tongues.
It offers a service for the large Chinese population, employing two librarians with
language and community networking skills, plus assistants. In addition a local
resident volunteer selects stock for the Japanese community. Southwark is about to
launch an African Caribbean Resource Centre at Peckham Library. Wolverhampton
is creating the first specialist ethnic services librarian post. However, Ealing has no
full-time staff in its Ethnic Services Department, despite having an ethnic minority
population of around 30%. (214)

All the library authorities consulted agreed that measuring use of their services by
different groups of people is crucial. Some degree of monitoring is carried out by all
but Ealing. Leicester City Libraries service has managed to identify considerable
under-usage by specific client groups. It plans further developmental work when the
authority extends its geographical information systems. IT is one area where clear
progress is being made in encouraging library use by ethnic minority groups. In Hackney, for example, free Internet access and word processing facilities targeted at black and minority ethnic communities have proved very popular. A multilingual open learning centre is planned for Ealing Road Library in Brent. (215) Literature development programmes help promote stock to different communities. Brent has an annual Literature Festival funded by the regional arts board, and a Tamil Book Fair and Bazaar. There was also a programme to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Windrush, with publicity about library services in 16 different languages. In Birmingham, 33% of 0-4 year olds are from black and ethnic minority groups, and were found to be missing out on early literacy learning due to barriers to their use of libraries. Community libraries have targeted parents and organisations with strong black and ethnic minority clientele, to find out what they need from libraries. A Bengali Read and Ride scheme is under way in Camden, which takes young Bengali women to the Central Library to help them with homework needs.

There is a split between those who believe funding for ethnic minority materials should be part of the mainstream budget and those who feel protection is more likely if it is kept separate and related to demand. Many services were keenly aware of shortcomings in trying to establish what clients in ethnic minority groups need and want. Some are attempting to include representatives from relevant community organisations in focus groups. Raven comments that one of the main reasons for the Morrison/Roach research was a perceived lack of opportunities for national discussion about services to ethnic minority groups, and an invisibility of decision and policy making in the area. Several of the Chief Officers consulted concur. As Joan Middleton of Hackney remarks:

There seem to be very few avenues for discussion or debate. This is a poor, neglected area. (216)

Raven concludes that it is important to have librarians from ethnic communities in mainstream posts, at every level, to reflect communities served, instead of marginalising them into a "specialist" role. She also notes comments that the Morrison/Roach research project launch at the British Library was not well supported by policy makers and Chief Officers, and that the Library Association could take a more active role in supporting ethnic services. (217)

3.29 The skills impact

Kerslake and Kinnell begin their assessment of the public library's impact on skills by considering illiteracy, both in a global sense, and for its repercussions for the UK
job market. They argue public libraries in developing countries have been established principally to increase literacy and other skills. (218) The library has access to children before they reach school, in the years when ideas, tastes and skills are first beginning to form, and as such its role is unique. Particular mention is made of projects in the USA and the UK, where libraries encourage parents to begin reading development with their children as early as possible, and a summary of current work in the field is given. Many projects also aim to improve the reading confidence of parents. The Sunderland example is considered more closely in Chapter 6 of this thesis, as one of the winners of the Library Association/Holt Jackson Community Initiative Award.

Children’s literacy

The range of work promoting children’s literacy is extensive, although the quality may vary, and ideas are not always new. Su Scott describes the Summer Reading Programme of Napier Public Library in New Zealand. (219) The librarians concerned based their work on American experiences and achieved a total of 3000 children participating in activity sessions. (220) Carole S Talan describes work on family literacy in California which tries to take into account the holistic needs of the child being served. (221) California was the first US state to develop a state-wide, state-funded, library-based family literacy initiative. The emphasis on families grew from the adults who took up direct literacy instruction in libraries, but were reluctant at first to bring their children. The intent of Families for Literacy is not to have parents teach their children to read, but to recognise and foster the vital role parents play in preparing children for a lifetime of enjoyment and success in reading. (222) The underlying premise is that children who are exposed to books and reading at an early age enter school better prepared to learn and succeed in school and in life. Children who do not have these early experiences, particularly because their parents or primary care givers lack reading ability themselves, are at high risk of continuing the cycle of illiteracy or low literacy.

Talan emphasises that the most successful Families for Literacy programs are ones which form cooperative partnerships with other agencies in their communities, including, for example, health and daycare providers. Involvement in family literacy puts the library in a very active and vital role within the community. (223) Talan points to research showing that students who participated in preschool programs involving parents had a 35% greater high school graduation rate, a 36% higher employment level, a 45% lower adolescent pregnancy rate and 90% fewer special education placements than peers not involved in such programs. (224) Talan’s and Kerslake and Kinnell make the point that investing in children’s literacy now will
pay dividends in future economic growth.

Sue McCleaf Nespeca presents research on parental involvement in early literacy programmes. Head Start is a US initiative very similar to Bookstart projects in the UK, where library workers encourage parents to read to their children from a very early age. (225) The emphasis for preschool years is on reading for enjoyment, rather than teaching the mechanics of reading. There seems an obvious role for libraries here, but many of the Headstart mothers in this research were reluctant to use public libraries, fearing they would have to pay for books their children damaged. Libraries were often closed in the evenings and some distance from where mothers lived. (226) The articles by Nespeca and Talan point to the need for libraries to be proactive in pursuing those most in need of such initiatives and to consider how they interact with more vulnerable users. (227)

Talan argues:

> Literacy involvement demands that the library go to the people and be known by the people. A library involved in family literacy is a social institution working to help solve a social problem. (228)

Kerslake and Kinnell acknowledge that public libraries fulfil an important function in promoting community development which incorporates the process of helping individuals and communities express their ideas, their needs, and their wishes and is ultimately about enabling communities to acquire skills and power to influence the way society works. (229)

The article by Felix Tawete on joint school/public libraries in Africa (230) shows that where resources are limited, a combined library can meet the needs of the whole community. (231) There are relatively few functional school libraries in Africa. They do not benefit from centralised planning like public library systems. They are often at the mercy of headmasters wishing to establish a new classroom and have to struggle for limited funds. Few public libraries in Africa have children's collections, and the author here argues that such libraries are not used by the poor, since "libraries in Africa serve the elite as they have since colonial times". (232) There are few mobile library services, despite a dire need in rural areas for locally available information on farming methods, trade, health, crime, legal matters, politics and government.

Tawete explains that schools are increasingly offering adult learning programmes out of hours. Joint libraries provide information for rural development, support education programmes and serve as centres for community education and culture. (233) The author argues a change in attitude and training of library personnel is
essential if a combined library service is to work:

Joint school/public library service requires not only the knowledge and skills of librarianship but also the understanding and love of the community as a whole...

Librarians in combined libraries should have the ability to relate information to development. (234)

A joint school/public service would have a children’s section with services like storytelling and school-oriented materials and another section for the adult public. (235). “Such an innovation involves a transformation in library mission and delivery.”(236)

3.30 Family literacy

It is argued in Chapter 2 of this thesis and elsewhere that public libraries have had a significant educational role, particularly in supporting literacy. The United States has been at the forefront of moves to encourage very young children and their families into the library.

Babies and books

Clara Barlow outlines the work of Born to Read, an initiative which has attempted to build partnerships between public libraries and health care providers to reach out to new and expectant at-risk parents. (237) Barlow quotes research in a 1994 Carnegie study called ‘Starting Points’ which found that a quarter of families with children under three in the US live in poverty. The findings also showed that only 50 per cent of infants and toddlers are read to routinely by their parents, and many parents give insufficient attention to their child’s intellectual development. (238)

Born to Read aims to help parents improve their reading skills, impress upon them the importance of reading to their children and promote awareness of the health and parenting resources available in libraries. Pittsburgh’s Carnegie Library launched Born to Read in 1995 by targeting mothers-to-be. One key group were pregnant adolescents scheduled for checkups and parenting classes at the Magee-Womens Hospital. Utah’s Provo City Library arranges storytimes for even the youngest children: Book Babies for infants; Mother Goose for 12-24-month-olds and Toddler Times for two year olds. (239) Provo’s first-year Born to Read programme also included Time with Dad. Housyon Public Library’s Born to Read programme is
designed to reach at-risk African-American and Hispanic parents through local health clinics. Clara Barlow comments that at-risk parents are one of the toughest groups for librarians to reach, and the fact that most librarians are white, middle-class, English-speaking women does not help. She calls for a more ethnically diverse profession, to help reach minority and immigrant families with infants who are not accustomed to using public libraries. (240) The importance of reading to young children is underlined in a short paper by Steve Herb accompanying the article by Clara Barlow. Herb quotes research concluding children need to be immersed in an oral culture intimately connected to their families before they can absorb text later on. (241)

J. Marino describes the experience of Scarsdale Public Library in New York in developing effective library programmes for children from birth through to adolescence. (242) Similar work is described by L A Fehrenbach et al in developing the emergent literacy of preschool children through a library outreach programme, (243) and K Gross on the Illinois “Baby TALK” project. (244) Programmes tackling early literacy seem to benefit from an interagency approach. B. White reports that liaisons between libraries and other agencies serving children and families are proving an increasingly valuable tool for extending literacy based services to young people in the community that libraries otherwise might not reach. (245) As an example of a successful partnership scheme, White describes the origins and work of APPLE (Advocates for Preschool Partnerships and Literacy Education), a collaborative grassroots organisation in Ohio. In the United States, work with preschool children is just one element in a comprehensive approach to encouraging literacy. Initiatives are planned to embrace whole families, and then extend to the population as a whole.

**Whole family initiatives**

One example is the Caring Communities project in Missouri. (246) This initiative brings together libraries and neighbourhood organisations, schools, health providers and state organisations to deliver integrated services linked to or based at schools. Some services and supports are offered in neighbourhood public libraries, including employment search kiosks and homework and literacy centres. K. Quinn’s article on library involvement in family literacy (247) cites a US National Adult Literacy Survey showing that up to 49% of Missouri’s adult population is functionally illiterate. Missouri State Library has responded with a family literacy project using Family Nights workshops. The success of the workshops has resulted in them being funded by a state appropriation for library literacy programming. C. Talan describes the capacity of literacy support work to transform lives. (248)
J. Brody examines the adult literacy programme at Sterling Municipal Library in Texas, which has become an integral part of library services in the local community. (249) In the last two years alone, over 300 students have been helped by the literacy programmes and many adult students and their families have become confident library users. Of the 39 million Americans (15% of the population) with learning disabilities, 60 to 80 per cent have serious reading disabilities. (250) An article by A. J. Gorman describes two literacy programmes which offer disability specific help to learning disabled people. (251) Support for literacy programmes in the United States was reflected in the creation of the Lila Wallace/Reader’s Digest Fund in 1996, which has granted 4 million dollars to support model literacy programmes in public libraries.

D. W. Johnson argues that literature, case studies and research suggest a number of important factors that are linked to successful library literacy programmes. (252) He believes the essential element of success is the integration of literacy efforts into overall library operations. This “institutionalization” of literacy into the fabric of the library helps to assure its relevance. In the information age, P. Barber argues we should not forget basic support for literacy. When the appallingly high rate of illiteracy in the USA threatens to break down the very foundation of democracy, it is time for librarians to claim literacy as their top professional mission. (253) Computer literacy is also a concern for the professional press. J. E. Drumm and F.M. Groom examine efforts to introduce children to the Internet in Indiana (254), while J. Lavery and B. Livingston describe introducing the Internet to adult learners in Toronto Public Library. (255)

There is significant interest in developing literacy in South African public libraries. The journal Cape Librarian discusses the plans and activities of the Literacy Interest Group, which involves supporting family members of different ages in improving their literacy skills. (256) A literacy survey conducted by the Centre for Adult Education at the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburgh reported that the number of illiterate people in South Africa may total 11,145,084 with KwaZulu-Natal having the highest number of functionally illiterate people. (257) The editorial argues that it is very important for libraries to promote books for the newly literate and for literacy classes to link up with libraries. Janet Hart reports on the Training and Resources for Early Education (TREE) project in KwaZulu-Natal. (258)

There are over seven million children under the age of six in South Africa, mostly from disadvantaged communities with no access to pre-primary education. (259) TREE became one of the Library Service affiliated “libraries” in January 1996, and began providing inservice training to people who were already working in a
preschool or creche facility. Workers are shown how to cater for the educational needs of the children by making inexpensive equipment out of household waste. They can also exchange toys and puzzles as well as the books supplied by the Library Service. (260)

The Library Service of the Western Cape has prioritised the objective of improving literacy in its area. G. Azar-Luxton describes a campaign which aims to encourage as many children as possible to obtain a library card. (261) P. Westra reports on the Centre for the Book of the South African Library, which exists to promote the use of books and other reading material and thereby contribute to the development of a culture of reading and lifelong learning in South Africa. (262) Efforts to combat illiteracy are also underway in Nigeria. M. Adamou asserts that the illiterate are excluded from libraries despite making up the overwhelming majority of the population of that country. (263) The author argues that libraries should maintain a collection on traditions which they can use to enliven and support development projects, and which can be backed up with audiovisual material, a medium more accessible than writing. Once linguistic problems are overcome, the library can be a point of contact for written and oral cultures, and a real tool for democratisation and development.

K. C. Das describes the role of libraries in combatting illiteracy in India. (264) The author argues that a network of libraries should be developed to promote literacy, and suggests the enactment of public library legislation in every state for this purpose.

In Latin America literacy promotion offers the possibility of a new approach to librarianship, with libraries at the heart of social change. (265) D. A. Zapata argues that social institutions supporting access to reading should be strengthened. The library’s role is to work with individuals and communities, providing learning opportunities to complement those offered in the home and school. This involves using methods derived from the social sciences, reinterpreted to fit the local context.

Literacy support is also a priority for Australian public libraries. A. Stuchbery describes the literacy services provided by the Yarra Plenty Regional Library Service, which covers an area of 983 square kilometres near Melbourne: of a population of 275,000, some 135,000 are library members. (266) A literacy strategy was developed in 1994: literacy collections are provided within the region, and the library service liaises extensively with local literacy providers and gives support to local groups. S. Scott offers a careful analysis of literacy provision in Australia to date. In “Literacy response” he refers to a paper by Stephen Black which argued that literacy programmes help ensure dominant groups in society retain their
position. (267) Scott analyses what librarians are trying to achieve by providing a targeted service to adults with low literacy: the author agrees with Black that to place a collection of material in a library and not break down or demistify any of the other structures of the library would be a waste of time. In this respect, Scott and Black echo the views of D. W. Johnson earlier in this section, discussing the US scene. Johnson argued that literacy has to be integrated in a whole library approach. Here, Scott draws on some Australian examples to illustrate that libraries can be non-judgemental places which are part of the local community, providing access to information, education and recreation: they can step outside the dominant culture but also provide a gateway into it if required.

The trend for early literacy work is also evident in Ireland, according to an article by E. McKay on the DELTA programme at Newry Library. (268) The DELTA programme is a preschool parenting scheme, jointly funded by the Southern Health and Social Services and the Southern Education and Library Board, Ireland, to enhance the parents’ role as the prime educators of their children by building their self-esteem and facilitating the development of a parent support network. The article describes the role of Newry Public Library in this education programme and suggests ways other public libraries could adopt the programme.

On the UK scene one article on early literacy focuses on ethnic minority families. A. Khan reports on the strategy adopted at Birmingham Libraries to attract more black and ethnic minority preschool children by targeting their parents. The work focused on two community libraries in different parts of the city. A crucial element of the project was the allocation of funds to purchase appropriate picture books to enhance the stock of both libraries, making promotion much more effective. (269)

3.31 Young people

Looking at a more specific user group, Kerslake and Kinnell point out that public libraries increasingly design services specifically for teenagers, offering recreational reading, music, videos and software on loan, relevant information and a social space. This is one area where services in Britain can be seen as leading the way. Judith G. Flum and Stan Weisner comment in their article on developing models for services to young people in America that “targeted public funding for services to teens in the United States remains woefully inadequate”. (270) The authors bemoan the fact that only 11% of public libraries in the USA have a young adult librarian, despite the fact that 25% of public library users are young adults. These figures make interesting reading, because the proportion of young adult users seems extremely high. They come from a very creditable source: the National Center for
Educational Statistics Survey Report: Services and Resources for Young Adults in Public Libraries, produced by the US Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement. If accurate, it does seem surprising that US "libraries rarely develop special services, staff, collections, and areas for young adults". (271)

The Bay Area Youth At Risk Project profiled in the article seems an excellent model of community development. A youth-at-risk coordinator supported pilot projects in nine library services in Oakland, California, focusing on the personal and social development of teenagers as well as their educational needs. Each library identified its own community's youth needs and priorities and then developed creative programmatic responses to help meet those needs, forming partnerships with other youth-serving organisations. Around eighty library branches were included, and more than 400 youth organisations, so this was a large-scale project carried out over two years (1990-1992). (272) The project director's background was in social research and social policy rather than libraries. Project participants shared their experience by convening meetings and documenting the entire project, publishing a do-it-yourself manual for librarians across the country. Project staff developed innovative media and outreach strategies to publicise the project among teens as well as the general population.

As with many UK library community development initiatives, the Californian project's multi-agency approach has been partly motivated by scarcity of funding:

A major challenge of this project, aside from assessing needs among at-risk youth in nine very diverse communities, was identifying innovative strategies that public libraries could implement without a large influx of new money. (273)

Consultation with youth service providers and young people themselves led to a local needs assessment, plans and pilots, evaluation, training workshops for staff, integration with library plans and expanded or restructured services to young adults. (274) Strategies ranged from "hip pocket" guides to library resources, tutoring programs for teenagers, and issue-based workshops on job seeking, health and sex, rap and poetry.

Another US article offers ideas for working with preschool and young teenage groups, seen as the most important developmental stages for the child. V. Mathews argues that to compete in global markets countries must develop the learning potential of their children and instil lifelong learning, through information services for all and literacy in the fullest sense of the word. (275)
Often working with teenagers requires special efforts, evidenced by an emphasis on outreach in some articles. P. Boudol relates the experiences of book mediators at two branch libraries in Grenoble. In one case newly trained workers in the field prioritised underprivileged children, operating completely outside the library in collaboration with other local agencies. (276) The second venture involved an untrained youth worker whose task was to help young readers in the library and prevent aggressive behaviour - essentially acting as a librarian but with no official status. The article argues these skills should be recognised as a new specialism within the library profession.

E. Sussmilch describes a story group for 8-12 year olds in a home for political refugees. (277) As well as story-reading, the girls read magazines, play games and listen to music, with relevant material lent from the local library service. Activities have a multicultural emphasis and focus on women’s role in society. A United States collaborative project is detailed by C. Stilley in “Light a peaceful fire”. (278) The public library, youth theatre and schools joined forces in the city of Flint, Michigan, for the Flame of Peace Project. This initiative was part of the Flint Community Schools’ Peaceworks programme which emphasised finding peaceful solutions to conflicts. The project featured activities based in the classroom, the library and the theatre. While innovative projects like this may be underway elsewhere, they are rare in the literature.

3.32 Lifelong learning

In contrast, there is no shortage of articles examining public libraries’ role in supporting lifelong learning. In the United States, the focus is on developing the library role. N. Whitse, and P. Adams compare views on how to make libraries behave less as passive repositories of information and more as active agents in education and training. (279) Their article focuses particularly on the role of libraries in distance learning.

Computer-based access is often key to public libraries’ support of lifelong learning. The article by J. R. Madaus and L. Webster on opening the door to distance learning reflects this trend. (280) It describes the collaboration in Florida between university, college and public libraries to offer learning opportunities via the Internet. T. Foster reports on learning support in Australian libraries in “Libraries and learning: a partnership for life”. (281) Authors C. Egging and J. Wieberdink describe the work of a community information centre at Emmen public library. (282) They believe libraries must assist all levels of society to cope with the information explosion, and
see the community centre as striving to meet that objective.

John Allred, who has written extensively on the Open Learning scene in the UK, reports on the 1995 ODIN study which reveals wide ranges of open learning and correspondence courses in Europe. (283) Allred argues that libraries must choose which of their roles to play: they should offer a wide range of media and advice to users. As in other countries, public libraries in the United Kingdom are increasingly involved in partnership approaches to learning provision. The article by J. Jones on the “Gloucestershire Learning Network”, reports on a successful initiative of this type. (284)

Angela McCormick and Audrey Sutton discuss the findings of a British Library Research and Innovation Centre backed project in “Independent learning online” for Scottish Libraries, in January 1999. (285) The 14-month project looked at ways of offering online learning provision to users of South Ayrshire Libraries. It investigated the WWW as a means of accessing online study for independent learners and offered information skills support. The majority of learners preferred to use the WWW to support existing courses, but were open to the suggestion that they might use the Web for the actual courses themselves. It was concluded that further work was necessary to promote the use of the Web in this way before sufficiently large numbers of users would be prepared to engage in such learning in the public library environment. Although the authors comment that “open learning has a long and successful history in Scotland” (286), online learning provision is at an early stage. It was felt that further research was necessary to highlight the type and standard of courses available online for learners. This was pursued via a case study, concentrating on one of the CyberCentre’s independent learners. A number of open and online courses were identified as being available on the Internet, and these are collated on the project website.

Crucial to this project has been the local partnership developed to further learning in the area. This comprises the independent learners who are users of the Cybercentres in South Ayrshire; learners from schools, further and higher education, community based adult learners and members of the business community. In future this alliance may be extended to include the local careers partnership and the voluntary sector. (287) Staff training has emerged as one of the main themes of this project. The traditional tasks of staff have been extended to include information skills support to learners; learning support, including learning needs analysis to assist learners engaged in open learning, online or otherwise; and the communication and organisational skills required to build and maintain successful partnerships. To these are added the marketing skills necessary to demonstrate the potential of the library in such an environment, and the project management skills to enable such
projects to take place.

Furthermore, as information overload increasingly requires solutions to make networked knowledge relevant to and accessible by the local community, professional skills will increasingly embrace database management, web authoring and the generation of active server pages, via SQL, to enable resources to be queried by users in the library or at home or at work. The article argues that if librarians are to continue as facilitators of information sharing they must embrace skills currently the province of IT professionals:

Although IT professionals have the technical expertise to organise and retrieve information, they are rarely as qualified as librarians to examine the content of information in general, and to identify and disseminate appropriate and quality information to their identified audience. (288)

In the Learning Resources Journal, M. Kendall looks at the potential of the National Grid for Learning and stresses again the need for appropriate training for library staff. (289) B. Stratton highlights a new helpline from the UK Department for Education and Employment, aimed at guiding adults to learning opportunities and advising them on related issues such as childcare. (290) A further UK development is reported by F. J. Hamilton, R., Shimmon, and M. Evans, with their article, “£200 million boost for public library network”, in Information World Review, of May 1999, which details the Community Access to Lifelong Learning (CALL) scheme which will target libraries and other community facilities to become lifelong learning centres. (291)

3.33 Unemployed

Kerslake and Kinnel cite an article by Kuzmin on Russian libraries as an example of public library support at a time of rapid socioeconomic change. Kuzmin reports a marked increase in public library use, attributed to the increasing levels of unemployment making workers keen to improve their skills or re-train for other careers. (292) Kerslake and Kinnell highlight the role of Russian libraries as “a haven in threatening times of change”. (293)

Although one of the target groups for lifelong learning is the long-term unemployed, they are not a focus of writing at this time. Only two relevant articles were found, and these were not British in origin. K.Vandlikova addresses the social impact of libraries for this group. (294) She reports on the latest in a series of seminars on the social role of libraries organised by the Slovak National Library. The seminar
social role of libraries organised by the Slovak National Library. The seminar focused on the provision of services to the unemployed and covered the state employment policy; unemployment benefits, bibliotherapy, information requirements of the unemployed, the role of libraries in combatting unemployment and its psychological impact. Heerlen Public Library in the Netherlands is currently participating in the national Infocus project to provide information services for the long term unemployed. The project is run in cooperation with the council’s advice and study centre and other local organisations and has offered language courses for immigrants. Tom Pagen of the Centre believes the library has an important role to play in supporting such courses but stresses the need for librarians to acquire new skills in communicating with such groups. (295)

3.34 Homeless

An article on homeless children in US public libraries in 1996 by Frances Smardo Dowd provides a rare example for this review of a national survey conducted to inform service delivery. The investigation followed a national study revealing that three million people in the United States have not lived in a fixed residence, and that more than one third of the homeless are families with children. (296) It set out to determine how well public libraries are serving this client group.

Dowd’s article begins with a search of library literature and the related disciplines of sociology and education, revealing that little published descriptive work exists on library services to the homeless and no research has been done in this area. The national survey gives an overview of existing service provision, and from this, six exemplary public library programmes with homeless children are described. There is a brief discussion of the needs of young homeless children and their parents, with implications for public library services. The article concludes with two reports, by or about homeless individuals, describing the social impact public libraries can have for the homeless. (297)

While Dowd discovered that the impact of homeless children on libraries was seen as minimal by 80% of children’s librarians consulted, in some areas such children were significant, and services were targeted to their needs. Sixty-five per cent of libraries did organise relevant programmes, including storytimes and book deposits at homeless shelters. (298) Other services offered by libraries were assistance with homework and food distribution. Most of these programmes were organised in collaboration with other community, voluntary and statutory agencies.

J. Hersberger confirms the importance of collaborative work in an article on the
homeless, public libraries and outreach services. (299) The French approach to this problem is presented by A. Vuillermoz, who stresses that an interagency approach has been vital to the project’s success. (300) The author details a partnership between libraries and the Water Point homeless project as part of a government initiative for collaborative development of reading and writing. This evolved from librarian visits with book parcels to establishing a reading corner with specifically selected materials. Initial selection of materials indicated distrust (expectation of theft/defacement), yet equally respect for printed material is incompatible with reader lifestyles. Vuillermoz concurs with other writers in this literature review, that traditional librarian practices need serious modification if outreach of this sort is to be successful.

3.35 People with disabilities

Kerslake and Kinnell highlight attempts in Swedish libraries to make libraries more accessible to people with disabilities. (301) Alan Watkin describes efforts in Gothenburg Public Library to explore the potential of new technology for increasing access to library materials. Examples given are the Textalk system, which converts documents to machine-readable formats, and a computer-based system allowing the visually impaired to access the library catalogue.

While the literature on library services to people with disabilities is diverse and extensive, my particular interest was an interagency and inclusive approach to such services. One example in particular emerged. M. Prasad-Chowta reports the work of the Cultural Diversity Services Team at the State Library of South Australia in coordinating services for people with disabilities, and cultural diversity initiatives. (302) Coordination is achieved through two programmes: by making the State Library’s services and resources accessible to people with disabilities, and by providing support and advice to public libraries establishing their own services. The use of technology in assisting the artistic pursuits of people with disabilities, and the compilation of a resource guide for school teachers are examples of initiatives to date.

3.36 Information Technology projects

Many libraries now offer direct routes to training and education through computer and Open Learning provision, or joint ventures with colleges offering formal and informal learning opportunities. The flexibility of Open Learning is particularly attractive to women with children, the unemployed and cultural minorities.
Libraries also have the capacity to develop IT literacy. Projects working in the area of adult computer literacy are said by Kerslake and Kinnell to address an economic skills deficit as "more jobs in the labour market involve use of IT", and IT literacy becomes necessary to finding a job.

Kerslake and Kinnell focus particularly on the role of libraries in the information society, in terms of work and leisure. Examples given are support for teleworkers and increasing public access to IT. The authors suggest public libraries offer widespread access to Internet resources on a pay-as-you-use service to cover costs. They admit that this excludes those who cannot pay for the service. Even at the time of writing, public libraries were addressing these concerns. Many public library authorities offer public access to the Internet free of charge, and make strenuous efforts to reach those who would not normally be attracted by either computers or libraries. The authors also highlight libraries' role in developing children's IT skills. They quote an article on this subject by Denham et al. which found that although most library authorities provide IT equipment, children's access to this resource is limited by the charges levied, which are generally the same for children and adults. I would argue that policies on IT charging vary widely between authorities, but that equipment use is often free or charged at concessionary rates. Few examples are cited by Kerslake and Kinnell, but it could be argued that most public libraries offer information skills training to organised school groups and routinely assist individuals using the computerised library catalogue.

Although information technology is key to many current public library initiatives, particularly where lifelong learning is concerned, some projects particularly reflected the interagency and community development criteria we looked for in our national survey. IT point was a 21-month project in the UK that brought public access to information technology and networks within a public library before computers reached current levels of popularity. N. Mackenzie describes the project, hosted by Chelmsley Wood Library, Solihull, West Midlands. A range of electronic information services included Internet access; e-mail; CD-ROMs; typical office software applications and printing facilities.

K. Cloyes describes a community network linking 34 public libraries in Illinois, and offering public access to the Internet. J. Janes also provides a US perspective in an article for LASERLink reflecting different views on information technology and how it can be made accessible to the public.
Homework clubs have become commonplace in libraries over the last five years. In England particularly, libraries are an important feature of after school care provision, often with significant budgets for staffing and resources. The Library Association’s Youth Adviser, Anthony Tilke, explored the issue of homework centres in the UK, as part of the political debate preceding the 1997 general election. (309) The author argues that libraries’ contribution in this area is not being recognised. Tilke refers to a number of reports examining the relationship between both public and school library services and children’s homework. This includes the 1987 report Reading the Future: a review of public libraries in England, which highlighted examples of good practice involving school and public librarians. (310)

Southwark and Westminster are leading authorities on after-school homework clubs. A conference organised by Southwark identified the issues and features in both borough’s developments. The concluding speech was given by Matthew Evans, Chair of the Library and Information Commission, who indicated a considerable interest in the concept at that time. Northamptonshire was another authority with a homework project under way, where the involvement of the chartered librarian was seen as a vital part of the process:

Not only is there a role in identifying appropriate resources and information sources, but developing children’s information-handling skills, assisting them to become independent learners, is a goal in this initiative. (311)

Two years later, D. Bevin and A. Goulding gave a review of the UK scene, indicating that provision has increased, but the same problems of recognition exist. (312)

The New Opportunities Fund (NOF) is currently encouraging applications in Scotland, but most of the pilot projects to date have been based in schools. This is reflected in NOF publicity and NOF-organised seminars held to highlight the issue, which have not mentioned libraries as possible applicants.

3.38 Elderly

Kerslake and Kinnell’s literature review encompasses old and young alike. They highlight the work of Stockport library, shortlisted for the Library Association/Holt Jackson Community Initiative Award for its literature development work with the elderly. The library worked with two Age Concern Day Centres whose members
had no access to books or literary activities. The library development worker and Age Concern coordinator worked together with members to identify needs and interests. As a result story, quiz, heritage and browsing sessions and reading aloud groups were established. Project worker Jane Evans believes that reinvigorating literacy skills boosted members' confidence and enhanced their quality of life. (313)

An article by F. Stein takes a socially inclusive approach to library provision for the elderly. (314) The author explains that promoting reading amongst the socially-disadvantaged is a fundamental role of public libraries in the Netherlands. In 1993 Zeist Public Library received a local authority subsidy to provide services to the elderly, infants, immigrant mothers, and students on lower-level vocational courses. The funding has enabled closer contacts to be made with homes for the elderly and infant schools.

Most of the outreach programmes outlined in this review target groups who would not normally use a library, and attempt to provide a service that is welcoming and accessible. Many comment on the need to reconsider service delivery as a result, the need for change in management style and appropriate staff training.

3.39 Citizenship

Libraries are the first port of call for members of the public wanting to check the electoral roll, to find out the name of their councillor, who sits on which committee, where surgeries are held, how to challenge a planning decision. A network of public libraries, including my own Stirling Central Library, have been designated Partner Libraries for the Scottish Parliament, offering a quick route to parliamentary information and access to the relevant website.

Rod Sawyer, in his article on the economic benefits of Ontario libraries, explained that public libraries are recognised by federal, municipal and provincial governments and the public as community providers of information. The Information Highway Advisory Council (1995), a federally-appointed body, recognises the importance of libraries as community information highway access points. The provincial Ontario government has endorsed this by promoting library-based electronic access to government information. (315) In the same way in the UK, the emphasis of the New Library: a People's Network report is on linking public and school libraries to the Internet because this is seen as the easiest way to offer access to important information resources to the greatest possible number of people. Government information is increasingly being published on the Internet. The House of Commons Information Committee decided parliamentary records and documents would be
made available in this way. UK Citizens Online Democracy is ‘Britain’s first national online democracy project’ (316), which aims to develop opportunities for wider participation in the democratic process using online electronic communication. Public libraries with free or subsidised Internet access offer a route to online discussions.

Kinnell and Kerslake quote Murdock and Golding’s work developing the National Consumer Council’s definition of citizenship. They argue that universal access to communications and information facilities is essential if individuals are to participate in the political process and other social processes. (317) In the current climate, this means access to ICT facilities, and assistance in their exploitation. The role of information in enabling citizenship could be undermined by the development of an information society in which information is only available as a commodity for sale. (318) Crucial information available only on a commercial basis would “undermine the normal universality of citizenship” (319) and threaten democracy. To combat this danger, the authors suggest an extension of the libraries’ traditional gatekeeping role, whereby they would rationalise any information overload and become advice centres on public information. (320) This may entail public libraries working in a collaborative way with other agencies, and a move away from traditional service models. (321) A community development approach would meet these demands. The authors perceive public libraries’ established role as contributing to community, education and economic structures, and their developing role as widening access to the information society. (322)

Until recently, community development in libraries has been portrayed at the level of individual projects. Publicity has tended to focus on single initiatives. There has been no analysis of a strategic approach on a larger scale, no pooling of resources or gaining from experience. The literature review compiled by Kerslake and Kinnell has stressed the value of social impact but not highlighted community development as a library strategy or underlined its currency. Examples of practical projects with measured impacts have not really been drawn upon. Kerslake and Kinnell believe public libraries are in a prime position to expand the potential for social inclusion in the information age. They argue that without a community-oriented perspective on library services they can only be partially effective, as those most in need of the service will never encounter it. None of this conflicts with the aims and objectives of most public library authorities. Our national survey of community development strategies reveals a desire to work closely with communities and respond to local needs.
3.40 Community consultation

Two Dutch articles highlight the importance of consultation to service development in the Netherlands. M. Limpens explains that despite regular surveys at Zoetermeer Public Library little was known of the public’s information needs. (323) A scientific marketing approach was adopted with the aid of management consultants to assess how services should develop. The statistical basis for this was provided by an extensive survey of the community on library use undertaken by the local council. This was followed by detailed analysis. A similar attempt to provide a user-oriented service is reported at Emmen library. (324) In its strategic plan to the year 2000, Emmen recognises that it has to be accessible, attractive, popular and interactive. The library has closed down little-used branches and concentrated on creating closer links with local organisations. It also prioritises convincing its local authority of the value of the library service.

Consultation in the UK has taken different forms. John Pateman, formerly Chief Officer for Hackney Libraries, and now a leading figure in moves to develop socially inclusive practices in public libraries, sets out one attempt to get closer to the user. (325) He explains how the London Borough of Hackney, faced with poor performance figures and a budget insufficient for its needs, decided to ask its residents whether they wanted quality or quantity from their library service. Following a preliminary survey by Aslib, the council’s consultation exercise found that residents opted for service quality over quantity. The resulting service improvement plan aimed to reduce the former 14 branch libraries to 7, but leaving all Hackney residents within 1 mile of a public library.

A., Staniland, A., Fletcher, and P. Townend, describe the activities of “Walkley Library Action Group” in an article for the Public Library Journal in September/October 1998. (326) Rebecca Linley explains the use of focus groups in a public library research project. (327) She describes how a recent research project at Sheffield University’s Centre for the Public Library in the Information Society used focus group techniques as part of the wider research programme on the Social Impact of Public Libraries. The social audit project aimed to evaluate public library services in a new way by looking at the value, impact and outcomes of library activities in relation to stated local authority objectives. The research was carried out in two contrasting local authorities (Newcastle upon Tyne and Somerset) and involved cross-checking the perceptions of elected members; library staff and groups of users and non-users. (328) The focus groups generated interest in both local authorities and in Newcastle, when the project ended, the library service was looking at further use of focus groups to evaluate services.
Improved consultation is a priority for annual library plans, now obligatory in England and Wales. It is also key to the Best Value review process being implemented throughout the UK, so this will be an important area of development for public libraries.

3.3 Conclusion

After examining the three areas of impact of public libraries: on the community, on skills and on the economy, Kerslake and Kinnell ask why this impact should be needed, and what useful purpose it serves. They conclude that the public library meets many needs: for example, it offers a safe meeting place for the community; provides a non-threatening venue for training and contributes to the livelihood of small publishers and booksellers. Above all, by offering collections of reference works, literature, newspapers and periodicals in addition to meeting the diverse social needs outlined above, public libraries provide the basis for citizenship which is a prerequisite for participative democracy. (329) They enable individuals to play a full part in the democratic system.

What has been presented here is a comprehensive examination of recent international references on the public library role from professional journals, with the aim of placing the research contained in this thesis within the international literature. Some of the information has been gleaned from abstracts, since the rationale for the review was ascertaining which subjects were of most interest in the library world, rather than the detail of hundreds of projects mentioned. However, in a high proportion of cases, the original articles have been consulted. This allows us to determine the reasons for developing an initiative or research task, how it has been approached, what parallels can be drawn and which lessons learnt. Certain themes recur throughout the review. The topics highlighted range from research and examination of library rationale to community outreach, lifelong learning, information technology, family literacy and community consultation. These subjects were chosen because of the level of activity in these particular areas. What has emerged from this international literature review is a growing recognition of the need for research in public library work. Much of the current research takes a historical view of public library purpose as its starting point and sees social change making a major impact on the library role.

Recent years have seen an increase in the range and quality of public library research underway in the UK. This is now reflected in a commitment at professional and governmental level to a coordinated research programme. Furthermore, great
efforts are now being made to provide evidence through this research of the social impact of public libraries. The section considering the social impact of libraries did so at the level of individual projects like the Horley Local History Centre and Wester Hailes library, where community consultation had been a key factor in service development, but also examined commentaries on the subject. Some of these emphasised libraries' support for lifelong learning: others mentioned the continuing role of public libraries as promoters of citizenship and democracy. Research in other parts of the world, such as the USA, Canada and Australia, emphasises the need to prove economic impact too, to argue libraries' role in supporting local and regional economic development, and demonstrate their cost-effectiveness in a harsh financial climate.

The section on public library rationale indicates a fundamental reappraisal of public library purpose at a global level. Often the driving force for this has been change. The same factors are mentioned again and again: the rise of the information society, the need for education, re-skilling, an active citizenship, an engaged public. Libraries in many countries are responding to a more demanding public by striving to consult, and letting the consultation process shape service development. South Africa is one country where library users are demanding higher standards, and more equitable delivery based on the needs of the community as a whole. In the UK, there is a growing emphasis on combating social exclusion, a theme which seems closely related to concerns in the USA about the information rich and information poor. Many examples of projects working with immigrants, the homeless, disadvantaged teenagers and families demonstrate the commitment in that country to supporting literacy and increasing access to opportunity through the public library.

Community outreach programmes documented in this review covered a wide range of subjects. Many focused on the relationship between an individual library and its community, often built up over many years. Some made extraordinary efforts to unite books and people, from the camel mobile library in Kenya, to French outreach work with the homeless. From the examples of public library development work presented in this review, it seems that many libraries are adopting innovative and interagency approaches to working with disadvantaged groups. Their efforts to engage immigrants, ethnic minorities, young parents with preschool children, teenagers, the unemployed and people with disabilities, while not perhaps typical of traditional library services, do indicate that libraries can have a significant role in combating social exclusion.

At the same time, a growing emphasis on consultation with the public, and increasing recognition at local and national government level that such consultation must influence service development, indicate that initiatives and programmes to
include disadvantaged groups are likely to become part of mainstream provision in the future. The emphasis on close consultation with the community in developing new services is a key point made many times. And the issues of training for staff, and a whole new attitude to their relationship with library users, occurs like a leitmotif throughout the review. There are many indicators here that new models of librarianship are required.

The number of articles sourced indicates not only the level of interest in these areas, but perhaps more significantly the geographical spread of this interest. Thus family literacy projects are a focus of activity in the United States, and increasingly Britain, but are also seen in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. And fundamental reappraisals of public library rationale are underway in France, the Netherlands, Australia, the United States, India and many other regions.

As previously stated, this review combines published research, policy papers and journal articles from the professional press. Many of these are not grounded in theory, but reflect current concerns within the profession and document attempts to meet changing demands. While not as authoritative as research-based papers, professional articles are in a sense more authentic: they reflect professional priorities and their impact on both policy and service delivery. The articles do not set out to be objective accounts but to argue the effectiveness of a professional approach. They play an advocacy role. The review highlights an increasing concern with reappraising public library rationale; a growing commitment to finding evidence of public libraries’ social impact; significant interest in partnership working to meet the needs of communities, and a range of imaginative and innovative projects targeting people not normally attracted to libraries.

While the majority of the articles included in the literature review reflect a desire to work with communities, they offer no reliable evidence of the extent or nature of this work. The articles in this literature review tend to support the original hypothesis outlined in my Introduction. This was that the fundamental rationale of the public library service has remained basically unchanged since its earliest days, but socioeconomic change is making radically new demands on the contemporary library service. My view is that while the rationale remains the same, public libraries are developing new means of implementing that rationale in the form of different management styles. The literature review indicates that the profession is trying to adapt to change, but it provides no systematic evidence of that adaptation. It leaves important questions about the motivation for change, the extent of commitment, and how this affects models of management unanswered.

My research in its entirety will address these questions and determine what the
answers mean for the future of public library provision. I will explore the literature review's reflection of professional concerns with a national survey of public library policy priorities, determine the nature of new characteristics emerging and rationalise this into an academic model for professional practice. While many of the articles in the literature review presented above call for a new approach to management, a closer relationship with the community and a commitment to social inclusion, this is reflected in very diverse practice. The literature review has not allowed for a conclusive examination of new models involved. However, common criteria are clearly emerging. These may or may not be present in authorities responding to the National Survey of Community Development Strategies, but further analysis of results and close examination of case study authorities will allow a more authoritative statement to be made on similarities and points of divergence. When common "community development criteria" can be established, the process of determining an appropriate model for future provision can begin.

The literature review by Kerslake and Kinnell, my own work extending and updating that review, the national survey and other social impact research, all contribute to a theoretical underpinning of contemporary public library work.

It is also crucial to link the analysis of public library policy and practice to the work of other professionals interacting with the community, to consider areas of mutual concern and possibilities for a partnership approach to community development.

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325. Pateman, J., 'More or less in Hackney', Library Association Record, 98 (11), November 1996, p582.
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CHAPTER FOUR - LIBRARIES AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Community Development

Concepts of community have changed enormously over the last four decades, and are still being reappraised. They are crucial to the theoretical underpinning of work with communities.

Writing in 1971, at the end of a dynamic period for community work, Colin Bell and Howard Newby acknowledge difficulty in defining "community". They refer to over ninety definitions of the term (1), but highlight the suggestion of Butterworth and Weir, in *The Sociology of Modern Britain* that: "(community) contains some or all of the following: a territorial area, a complex of institutions within an area, and a sense of belonging". (2) They also refer to the writing of D W Minar and S Greer, who point out that most of the social systems we would call communities are geographic entities of one sort or another, but "what finally binds a community together is a state of mind on the part of its members... a sense of interdependence and loyalty". (3) And they quote Rowland Warren's emphasis on "a relationship of social interaction within a geographic locality." (4)

The notion of community is quite separate from that of society, a distinction made most clearly in writings around the topic by Ferdinand Tonnies whose book *Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft* was first published in 1887. Tonnies used the terms to mean respectively community and society, where the former was based on intimate and enduring human relations and an evaluation of individuals according to who they are, rather than what they have achieved. The latter refers to the large scale and contractual ties that bind us. Bell and Newby suggest that in *Gemeinschaft* would be found what Max Weber calls 'traditional' authority whereas *Gesellschaft* incorporates what he would call 'rational-legal' authority. (5) They argue that this dichotomy is the starting place for more recent conceptualisations of the concept of community.

The debate was moved on by Harold Kaufman in 1959, when he developed an interactional model of the community. (6) He highlights firstly the community participant, secondly, the community groups and associations, and thirdly, the phases and processes of community action.

Bell and Newby commend one definition of community in particular. This was
produced by Talcott Parsons, and slightly amended by Gideon Sjoberg to be: “a collectivity of actors sharing in a limited territorial area as the base for carrying out the greatest share of their daily activities”. (7)

Parsons himself was at pains to emphasise both territory and people, since some definitions have focussed more on one element than the other.

All of this deals only with the attempts to define community, avoiding discussion of community as normative prescription, from a moral or social philosophy viewpoint or as ideology. This is more the territory of writers like Etzioni, who consider the obligations of members of a community and have advocated a whole school of thought in communitarianism.

For our practical purposes, any community is made up of individuals, and operates at both an individual and group level. It can be geographically based, or formed from a common bond - an ethnic community, the gay community. It can even be used as a synonym for society, past, present and future. The term “international community” is in common currency, so “community” is not confined to neighbourhoods. But the communities which most concern professionals like librarians and community workers tend to be local, limited in size and far from uniform. They may include communities of interest, even pressure groups, but they are usually greater than the sum of their parts. They will be fluid, and defined by those currently living (and sometimes working) in an area. Their common interest will be their well-being as individuals and members of the community.

Community development is an increasingly common element of local government strategy aimed at increasing participation in decision-making processes.

Alan Barr has written an important review of work in Strathclyde Region, Practical Communuity Development. Working from two field studies of Social Work Department community workers, Barr makes a series of recommendations for policy and practice. Among these is the point that “the application of community work techniques must not be seen as the exclusive province of community workers”. (8) He comments that in-service training in community-based approaches to social problems is needed for all local authority workers. This is even more important for the non-specialist managers of community workers. Barr advises community workers that they should reduce their isolation from other local authority staff and give more attention to promoting relationships which foster the engagement of other disciplines in community development. (9) He makes the point that other professions may have expertise in tackling community problems which is equally valid, thinking probably of social work, but opening the doors at least to different
ways of working for people like ourselves.

If libraries are to consider their work in terms of developing communities, it may be useful to look at the three models of Community Practice outlined in Community and Public Policy by H Butcher, A Glen, P Henderson and J Smith. Here, one model sees Community development as promoting community self-help with the community defining and meeting its own needs, using creative and co-operative processes with professionals working in a non-directive way. The community action model campaigns for community interests with structurally oppressed groups organising for power, using campaign tactics on concrete issues. Its prime agents are activists or organisers mobilising for political action. Finally, the Community services approach aims to develop community oriented organisations and services with users as partners, by maximising community/user involvement and interagency links. In this model the role of service managers is restructuring transactions with users.

Andrew Glen comments in presenting these models, that "Community practitioners need not be captive to any one of these methods over and above the others". (10) The most obvious role for a local authority appears to be the Community Services approach, and this is certainly the least we can expect if a community-oriented council is to have credibility for its policies. It can move towards the community development model at a more local level, with specific projects. Only rarely will libraries embrace a community action focus. Although some of those who advocate the principles of community librarianship will argue that community action is an appropriate role for libraries and has been actively adopted in the past.

Chik Collins and Jim Lister, writing in Radical Community Work, take a cynical view of community work practice in the 1990s. They feel it became a means of gearing communities to accept "partnership" with the government (central and local), the voluntary sector and the private sector to create areas competing for economic prosperity:

Here the term 'partnership' is used - quite deliberately - to mask the unpleasant realities involved in securing the compliance of community organisations with this objective. The goal is not so much community development as 'community redevelopment' (a redevelopment which parallels the property redevelopment which usually accompanies it). (11)

The phenomenon described was common throughout Scotland in the 1990s. It could be argued that it focussed more on local government and private sector finances than the needs of residents. 207
than the needs of residents.

For our purposes as librarians, this is best considered as a warning to remain critical and consider all possible interpretations of our actions when working with local authorities and local users.

4.2 Community librarianship

Community librarianship, like community arts, had its heyday in the 1970s. This model is characterised by highly interventionist public libraries, geared to the pursuit of equal opportunity, social change and community development, particularly in the context of deprived and minority communities. (12) It has been characterised as “freedom of access and of delivery, responsiveness to the needs of local communities and availability to all, regardless of location, ethnic or cultural origin, or level of income or education.” (13)

Librarians committed to such responsiveness have used different methods, such as outreach, community information and referral services, promoting the library as meeting place and resource centre and organising events to attract people who would not normally use libraries. They employ community profiling and user satisfaction surveys to develop a service which is user-led.

Community information has been described by W J Murison as offering “not simply access to neutral facts but commitment to the material supplied, with the library offering help on its use, encouraging community action and community education.” (14) A good working example of community information provision is the Linwood Information Project (Linfo), which opened in Renfrew in August 1981 as a response to the closure of the local Talbot Car Plant. It was styled as a one-door approach to local services and information sources and is outlined in more depth in the Renfrew case study later in this thesis. (15)

Some commentators argue that taking a proactive approach challenges the neutrality of the librarian. Bob Usherwood believes that the public library has never been neutral, and that as a concept it embodies important radical ideals - equality, provision for need rather than commercial profit, educational advancement, free access to and free expression of information and ideas. (16) Murison argues, with staunch advocate of community librarianship, Pat Coleman, that librarians are in general too interested in delivery systems, and not enough in people. (17)

Others feel the library is not the best agency to address the needs of the poor. F A
Sharr divided service to the underprivileged into two groups: the elderly (who have problems of physical access) and “those who by reason of language problems, inadequate education and the like are inhibited from using a library” (18) (the culturally disenfranchised). He asks whether the differing needs of these two groups can be served well by one organisation:

It is at least arguable that libraries would be better to develop their traditional and historic function both in quality and in quantity, encouraging other and distinct organisations to tackle the very different needs of various underprivileged and deprived groups, using different techniques and with different social aims.” (19)

Community librarianship is a term not frequently used now. The term community libraries is in common use, generally as just another name for branch libraries. Any library which is not a headquarters support service or a central library may be termed a community library. There is no commitment implied to community librarianship. Nonetheless, it is community (or branch) libraries, which form the strongest links with their community. Staff are often on first name terms with customers, socialising with them, and being part of the local scene. Borrowed Time describes the feeling of hospitality in such libraries, their “sense of shared ownership balanced between librarian, users and local authority” (20) With management support, this empathy can result in clearly defined interagency projects as part of a strategic plan. More commonly termed community development than community librarianship, but arguably, achieving the same affect.

The report quotes a case study from Cleveland where more than 300 users were interviewed in two libraries serving large, isolated and disadvantaged housing estates. In the first library more than half the people interviewed had visited the library within the past fortnight, and nearly 75% of the users of the other library had done so. These figures were much higher than national averages. In both, library staff had created a very warm, almost domestic ambience, a “home from home”, which seemed to give the community ownership of the library, unlike other forms of public provision such as job centres, youth clubs, training projects, welfare centres and some community centres on the same estates. (21)

The Cleveland study also pointed out that in supporting the emotional needs of particular groups in the community - women carers, middle-aged unemployed men, grandparents - the library was supporting some of the most strategically important people in the community who helped to provide its stability and continuity. And whereas many public agencies working in disadvantaged areas are funded to offset or diminish the negative aspects of community life - unemployment, youth
disaffection, alcohol and drug problems, children at risk, family break-up etc., the public library supports the positive aspects of a community. (22)

Some observers have signalled the death of community librarianship. The Comedia Working Paper, Public Library Policy and Purpose, consigns it to history. (23) But this is premature. Its values have been assimilated in some cases into mainstream services, and it has taught important lessons to the profession as a whole about profiling and “keeping in touch with the customer”.

The Introduction to the Comedia Working Papers concludes that, whereas other cultural institutions - theatres, opera houses, concert halls - were seen as flagships for urban renewal in the 1980s, public libraries (which had a wider audience base than any of these) were overlooked, and missed out on the crucial “arts and regeneration” debate. (24) This is unfair comment when there were many small projects working to precisely these objectives. Certainly they have been in the minority, and against the trend, but none the less significant for that. What community-oriented projects targeting the unemployed and disadvantaged groups require is the oxygen of publicity, and other projects following in their footsteps. The backing of the library establishment would be a great step forward, and it has not always materialised.

While community librarianship tends to be associated with disadvantaged areas, the basic principles of profiling and user responsiveness are transferable. In a large central library there may be unmet demand for traditional art, for performances and exhibitions. The important point is to establish community needs. Or as Alan Hasson states, the public library “can, and arguably should, reflect in the manner in which it carries out its core functions and in the evolution of its services the values and priorities of the community in which it is situated.” (25) It is still fashionable to see outreach as a priority in public libraries. The term is taken to mean going into the community to highlight services, organising events and activities to attract new users. I would concur with Alan Hasson, that in addition to talking of reaching out, we should ensure we are fitting in.

Whilst library authorities may temper the language they use about working with communities, it is still very much a live issue. Hackney libraries recently faced a crisis of poor book issues (31st according to published performance figures out of 32 London boroughs), staff shortages and crumbling buildings. The authority embarked on a vast local consultation exercise to determine priorities for the future. Participants were presented with a range of possibilities “designed to provide a vision for the future based on economic regeneration, community development and new technology”. Following a consultation exercise resulting in over 1000
responses, an outreach strategy is being drafted which will bring community members into libraries, forge links for future activities, and take the library service to community groups. A case study of Hackney libraries below examines the process in more detail. (26)

The interest of the recent Conservative government in community-oriented services providing vital social cement, as outlined in the Setting the Scene chapter of this thesis, can be seen in the recent DNH Public Library Review, where there is a call for public libraries to develop services for “latchkey children” that will “stimulate their attention and interest, benefit their development, and discourage them from roaming the streets or engaging in anti-social behaviour”. (27) This is reminiscent of the Victorian view of public libraries as a cheap form of policing, and is aimed more at solving a problem than providing a service valued in its own terms. This would not reflect the motivation of practioners in community librarianship, nor that of managers of public library authorities. However, reduced teenage alienation may well be an effect of a good local library service seeking to include that group, and that can only be a positive result.

Alan Hasson has examined a select group of library projects targeting young people, including my own at Petersburn. He points out that the libraries do not exist just to give adolescents somewhere to go. They aim to give young people a place to call their own, where they can listen to “their” music and read “their” kinds of books, to encourage them to think for themselves about their own lives:

It should be noted that this success is not simply a question of providing clients who are potentially disruptive in a mainstream setting with a diversion, although even that minimal outcome might be useful. Rather, it is about the feelings of legitimacy and of self-worth which are encouraged, having beneficial effects outside the artificial setting of a library. (28)

4.3 Managing a community-oriented service

A community development approach to service provision requires a fundamental reassessment of existing systems:

Social commitment to a community requires involvement in that community. It has been found that library outreach programmes which fail are most likely to do so because the library has acted in isolation or has expected to become suddenly involved and successful after many years of non-involvement. (1)
The success or failure of community development projects depends above all on management support. Approaches to management will be considered in the case studies in Chapter 8 of this thesis. If they appear significantly different from the norm, this might be indicative of an emergent model of librarianship.

Alan Hasson's research considers three case studies in particular: Whitehill Resource Centre in Hamilton, Ferguslie Park Community Library in Renfrew and our own Petersburn project in Monklands. He believes that the process of change we have all undergone to fit our communities is only possible because of a higher management which actively encourages change, coupled with a political leadership which supports the philosophy underpinning the initiatives.

Hasson elaborates that the success of these projects is not susceptible to quantitative measurement, but an indication can be seen in the fact that three years after opening, 67% of local residents were members of Ferguslie's library, Petersburn's Drop-in Centre was being used by over 1200 teenagers per month and Whitehill, in its second year of opening, had already attained a membership of 40% of the community. (2)

Hasson identifies the willingness of senior management to allow and support change, coupled with the ability of front-line staff to delineate and fit their services to the demands of the host community as common themes linking these projects:

In reality, whilst the ostensible purpose of the changes in service provision carried out by these libraries was to make the library more efficient in pursuing the type of goals recognised as legitimate in mainstream provision, and defined in their Urban Aid submissions, a reciprocal process was underway: an acculturalization to the norms of the host community. (3)

If there is management support, resources, publicity and staff training will follow from that, making the task much easier for all concerned. Stewart and Ranson have commented that, "Management in the public domain both requires bureaucracy and must seek to overcome it." (4) Rules and procedures are necessary for impartial service delivery, but should not limit the potential for collective action:

Collective action need not be limited to uniformity. Public provision does not necessarily eliminate individual choice. The problem for management control must be to distinguish that which must be controlled and that which should not be or need not
Community-oriented services also have to be willing to work with other agencies. An atmosphere of empire building sometimes prevails in local government, particularly at times of financial stringency. As Stewart and Ranson point out, "Organizations have their own dynamic and those who work in them have their own purposes. Health and local authorities seeking their separate purposes can easily deny collective purposes". (6)

In the same way, there may be friction between Libraries and Community Education, Leisure and Recreation or Arts and Venues, when all parties could benefit from a close working relationship. If all council services including Housing and Benefits offices shared accommodation within the area, local people would not have to drag their children on public transport to a geographically and metaphorically remote government office. The way forward may be Community Resource Centres, with computer, reprographic and communications facilities on site. Libraries should be careful they are not left out in the cold when complexes like this are built.

Within the profession, managing to have the right people doing the right things in the right positions requires a critical examination of existing systems, from selection of students for library and information science courses, to departmental structures and management styles. A community development approach in libraries demands a special attitude from staff, including a high degree of interpersonal skills. Alan Hasson has pointed out that some of the most successful library projects seen in recent years in disadvantaged areas have been staffed by non-librarians: support from Social Work at LINFO, youth workers at Petersburn, another non-librarian at Ferguslie Park.

Hasson has identified an organic approach to the management of these projects, which is unusual in the traditional library setting:

The managerial style generally utilised involves a matrix approach to functions, a non-hierarchical flow of ideas, a high level of responsibility for ostensibly junior staff and the reality of leadership deriving from functional experience rather than official position. Such an approach is very different from that traditionally demanded, and arguably for which library schools prepare their students...

It would appear that a multidisciplinary approach to service provision is evolving in these libraries, almost by default. Important questions arise from these facts,
concerning both the type of people being attracted into librarianship and the kind of professional framework provided by library schools. (7)

As Alan Hasson has indicated, attracting the right graduates to library training is in itself an uphill struggle. Librarianship is not seen as a glamorous profession: it is not well paid. Nor is it seen as a profession which aims to benefit disadvantaged communities. Some of the blame for this lies at our own door, in our failure to publicise innovative and exciting work.

The issue of selection, recruitment and training of public library staff is crucially important if non-traditional activities are to succeed and if non-traditional library users are to be encouraged. Stuart Brewer contends that, "To be effective, libraries need flexible attitudes and staff who are arts and community oriented." (8) Specialist arts and community development workers taking key roles in joint projects. This might free library staff to coordinate, maintain contacts with the community, or concentrate on other aspects of the service.

The SLIC report on Adult Education states that:

Every member of library staff ought to be able to respond to adult learners in a positive manner. Adult learners can often be unsure of their abilities to participate in learning programmes and approach the library feeling uncertain. The response they receive from the member of staff has to be informative and welcoming. (9)

It is hugely important for the public perception of libraries that this is addressed with staff. Particularly in smaller libraries, the staff are the most important resource a branch has. If they are not approachable and enthusiastic, and it has to be admitted that many harassed library staff are not, the library will not thrive. Alan Hasson believes staff:

require the skills to define need, to listen to potential users, to enter into cooperative work both with the local community and colleagues from other disciplines, and to provide the services that are needed in a manner which ensures that they are used. Above all it requires the recognition that whilst the provision of books and information is central to our role, it is only a part of the arsenal which we can, and should, employ. (10)

This relates again to management support. Staff need to be aware of the aims and objectives of the library service. They need to know why certain activities are being
offered and what they can do to help. If their views are considered in deciding which activities to offer, their commitment will be all the greater.

While the seventies view of community librarianship was of radical action and direct engagement with communities, the philosophy and the terminology has changed. The language now is of citizenship, stakeholding, community development. We are still striving to provide library services which meet community needs, and increasingly doing so as part of mainstream service.

The Community Services Group of the Library Association is one of 23 special interest groups to which librarians can affiliate and represents the interests of community librarianship. As a branch of the Library Association it is influential within the library profession. The CSG is active in advising and informing policy makers and encouraging the role of library and information services in community development strategies. It is perhaps best known for its administration and support of the Library Association/Holt Jackson Community Initiative Award, mentioned above.

The CSG promotes community information, services to minorities, equal opportunities, community development and the social benefits of community libraries, among other issues. In its Mission Statement it pledges to work to "promote equal access for all communities to library and information services and to combat disadvantage". (29) The Community Development Foundation has worked closely with the CSG on a number of projects and publications, and is heavily involved in the ongoing research on Libraries and Communities.

Both organisations were involved in the empirical research for this thesis.

4.4 Current Practice

There has been a general recognition that community development in libraries cannot be achieved by libraries alone, particularly in the current financial climate. Such work must be collaborative and grounded in proven local need to succeed. Library services seemed to be moving to a more strategic area-wide, interagency approach to work with communities. Our survey was designed to test this impression.

Libraries and Community Development was a major theme for 1997’s National Libraries’ Week, and the subject of a key article by Laura Swaffield in the Library Association Record that year:
The word "community" has been part of librarians' professional vocabulary for years, but now it has become a fashionable political buzzword - albeit one that means whatever you want it to mean. Meanwhile, concern about social breakdown is growing, and there is even some heady talk about the rediscovery of morality as a public concern. (30)

Swaffield examines some of the partnerships currently being formed: "Instead of thinking 'that would be a good project if only we had the money' more and more library professionals are asking 'who else would be interested in this?', opening up strategic alliances to get community development schemes off the ground. Swaffield refers to the evidence gathered in successive years of applications for the Community Initiative Award.

Southwark's pioneering after-school Homework Help Clubs are a good example, assisted by their particular local government structure which groups Southwark's libraries and leisure services with education. Improving exam results is a borough-wide priority which made backing for a joint project to tackle the problem easier to achieve. Librarians working on the project selected homework helpers for their skills with children rather than their library expertise. (31)

Another short-listed Community Initiative Award entrant, Stockport libraries, chose to work with Age Concern Stockport (ACS) to provide literature development sessions to two day centres for old people. It is interesting to note that Stockport libraries are located in the leisure division of their authority, which has an overall commitment to development work (eg in arts and sport). A specific development post for libraries was created two years ago.

Entrants for the Community Initiative Award have always been asked to show evidence of interagency involvement in their projects. Over the years successful agencies have seen such links given authority-wide support and inclusion in formal strategic plans.

The Stockport scheme had a thirteen-month launch stage part-funded by the government's Development Funding in Public Libraries scheme. Whilst this stage is now complete, the project is continuing, largely run by ACS volunteers. Stockport stresses that the specific skills of the ACS volunteers are indispensable - they are not used to reduce staff costs. The Chief Librarian, Brian Stevenson, emphasises that outside funding was needed as "seedcorn". He argues the importance of developmental work in libraries: "Librarians are able to work developmentally if they can be freed from the daily routine." He appreciates the benefits of such work for presenting a positive image of the public library: "Frontline services get us a lot
of appreciation, but don’t make headlines. As well as the benefits to the individuals, developmental work raises our profile and gives us credibility... There’s been a lot of interest from the local media. And a lasting legacy of good relationships within the local authority and with ACS itself.” (32)

The examples outlined above tend to support the hypothesis outlined in my Introduction. This was that a new type of librarianship is emerging to meet the changing socioeconomic environment, and that this is based on a community development approach. The new model is motivated by the same fundamental rationale which has guided the public library since its inception. While the fundamental purpose of public libraries has not changed, their response to that purpose has adapted to meet changing public expectations and need. Case studies and current practice begin to indicate which elements an effective model for interaction with the community might comprise. Key features are management vision, partnership working and a commitment to action. Evidence of these characteristics can be found in a wide range of work with communities, including work based around adult education and the arts.

NOTES

2. Butterworth and Weir, quoted in Bell, C., and Newby, H., ibid, p14.
3. Minar, D., W., and Greer, S., quoted in Bell, C., and Newby, H., ibid, p14.
7. Parsons, T., and Sjoberg, G., quoted in Bell, C., and Newby, H., ibid, p31.
17. Coleman, P., quoted in Murison, W., J., op cit, p203.
22. Ibid, p37.
32. Ibid, p89.
5.1 A proud tradition

The earliest attempts to organise adult education in Scotland were the small lending libraries and reading classes established nearly 300 years ago. (1) The Scottish Library Association’s 85th Annual Conference for 1999 chose as its theme ‘Developing a Learning Culture: Scotland’s Opportunity’. Education remains a key part of public library provision.

As the Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC) point out in their 1993 report, *Public Libraries and Adult Education in Scotland*:

> The origins of the public library service in this country are rooted in a desire for education and self-development. This is still one of the main areas of responsibility in the modern library service. (2)

Many individuals who have not had access to formal education have used public library resources to educate themselves. The recent report on public libraries and information technology, *New Library: The People’s Network*, has an interesting quote from Isaac Asimov: “I received the fundamentals of my education in school, but that was not enough. My real education, the superstructure, I got out of the public library.” (3)

John Palmer acknowledges the importance of education in public library history and current development in the recent Scottish Library Association document, *Developing an Information Strategy*:

> Public libraries were originally founded to give ordinary people access to stores of knowledge, and their received culture. (4)

Bob Usherwood comments that the public library has developed “as everyperson’s university, providing a complement to the formal education system and a major support to part-time education. There is a direct line that links the students of the old Mechanics’ Institutes to today’s Open University students studying via a mixture of printed and broadcast material.” (5)

Before going any further, it is useful to define exactly what we mean by learning and education. Stephen Drodge defined certain key terms in his 1988 book. He
explained that *adult learning* is what adults do when they learn; *adult education* is what is provided in classes for adults. *Independent learning* is designed by the learner: although it may include periods spent in formal education these will just be intervals and their objective will be to contribute to a wider learning goal. *Open learning* is structured for the learner, but access to it is much freer, and it is more flexible than formal classes. (6)

There has been a change in the educational support provided by libraries over the years reflecting society's developing educational demands. In the early days of public libraries, adult education was taught in classes. The public library provided academic and uplifting texts in support of educational institutions. In the intervening period, libraries have widened their range of stock. They now provide for leisure interests as well as vocational and academic demands from individuals and learning providers. They offer information on courses available locally, often through specialist training and education databases. While libraries may have been slow catching up with the rapid move towards independent learning, and in particular its IT applications, these changes are being addressed now.

5.2 Libraries and literacy

The issue of illiteracy and literacy education is addressed in an impressive article by Maria Zapata, Director of Public Library Networks, Caracas, Venezuela. (7) Her view on illiteracy is a global one. She points out that 98% of the 889 million adult illiterates live in developing countries. There is a close relationship between illiteracy, poverty and underdevelopment:

> Illiteracy is associated with a country’s socioeconomic situation and development level. To this effect, it is related to the problem of unequal access to resources and social wealth and therefore, to unequal access to information and knowledge. These inequalities create a process by which illiteracy becomes at the same time, a cause and a consequence of poverty: 'they are excluded because they cannot read and can't learn to read because they are excluded'. (8)

Zapata argues that the illiterate are effectively disenfranchised. This prompts important questions for debates on citizenship and the stakeholder society examined elsewhere in this thesis. While all individuals may have the right to participate in and benefit from economic, social, cultural and political development, literate individuals may exercise that right more easily. Opportunities are far from equal:
It's not only that in some countries knowing how to read and write is a basic prerequisite for practising the right to vote and other rights, but that literacy is also essential in helping citizens to understand, analyze and reflect on their personal and social situation, and to become active participants in promoting changes.

(9)

Literacy, she explains, is a prerequisite for any type of education, and an essential tool for accessing information and knowledge. As well as the radical illiteracy of populations living in conditions of extreme poverty in underdeveloped countries, there is also the problem of “functional illiteracy”, which affects millions of people in the world, and large population groups in developed countries.

Zapata defines functional literacy as the ability to acquire the information, knowledge, values, skills and abilities a person needs to participate effectively in the social, educational, economic, civic and cultural activities of his environment. It is a question not only of decoding and interpreting signs and symbols, but also of developing the necessary conditions and abilities to interpret, understand, incorporate, evaluate and use concepts and ideas expressed in written form so as to generate the knowledge required to solve problems and improve living conditions and the quality of life, both as individuals and as members of a social group. She views literacy education as an integral process which enables the individual to be actively incorporated into his society, and believes public libraries have an important role to play:

... public libraries have a key social mission to fulfil with regard to basic, functional and integral literacy education, especially in underdeveloped countries, where large groups of the population live in poverty and have no access to books. (10)

While Zapata is chiefly considering literacy needs in developing countries, the point is no less valid in industrialised, computer-driven economies, where the uninitiated can become an underclass because they lack fundamental interpretative skills. From their earliest days, public libraries in the United Kingdom have played a crucial role in enhancing the literacy of both children and adults.

Despite campaigns to encourage literacy, as recently as 1992, a Gallup poll found that 35% of children aged between 6 and 12 read little or nothing for pleasure; 24% of parents read no books for their own enjoyment in an average year; 44% of parents never read to their children. (11)
Surveys by the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit show that:

- one-third of 14-year-olds have a reading age of 11 or less.
- 6.5 million, or one in eight of over-16s, have serious difficulties in writing, understanding or speaking English.
- Forty per cent of 16 to 19-year-olds in further education lack basic literacy and numeracy skills. (12)

5.21 Children and literacy

The 1995 report Investing in Children stresses the unique role the library can play in improving children's literacy.

Despite the bewildering range of activities competing for children's leisure time, reading is still popular, and the public library as a source of reading matter is doing well. There has been a dramatic increase in public library holdings of children's books, and loans (or issues) of these books have also risen. Figures for England and Wales show that in 1990-91, there were 20.7 million items of library stock for children, a figure which rose to 22.5 million items for 1992-93. Issues in the year 1990-91 stood at 82 million, while the equivalent figure for 1992-93 was 101 million. (13)

If reading is to be encouraged among children, books must be accessible in every sense of the word. As the Investing in Children report points out:

Public libraries are the only means whereby the widest choice of titles can be made available free of charge to the user. They also have, or should have, the means of making books accessible to children through display, promotion, advice and assistance. They are the one potentially constant source of supply of books which can also provide an environment in which to enjoy reading and gain value from it. (14)

This view is endorsed by the Book Trust, who observe in Books in Schools that public libraries are vital for giving children easy and free access to a wide range of books, forming the basis for a lifetime's use and enjoyment. They offer children the freedom to browse and to choose for themselves:

In teaching information skills and the subject courses, most schools require pupils of all ages to use sources outside the school. They should have to search for and assess the information sources as they will have to in
assess the information sources as they will have to in their adult working and personal life. The public library is central to this. (15)

The Department of National Heritage report concludes that by making books available to all who want them, and offering advice from specialist staff, libraries are uniquely placed to encourage reading among children and young people:

...it is our clear view that, at a time when unfulfilled reading potential affects the economic, cultural and social life of the country, the potential of a library, which is freely available to all, as a force in support of reading and information literacy cannot be too strongly emphasised. (16)

In view of this, the writers of the report feel it is a matter of considerable concern that this unique force appears to have been overlooked or at least marginalised by those agencies set up to study and combat illiteracy:

The place of the public library in getting books to children, either directly or through parents or carers, is hardly mentioned. Clearly there has been a failure to communicate the potential of the public library in this respect. (17)

Despite these comments, the final report by the Literary Task Force, The Implementation of the National Literacy Strategy, mentions libraries only in passing. It includes many recommendations on initial teacher training and strategies for developing teacher training and awareness, and specifically recommends a literacy hour in primary schools and literacy consultants. Although the report states that the successful teaching of reading “both stimulates and requires good library use” and calls for Ofsted inspections to give unambiguous advice about library provision, this is the extent of libraries’ consideration in a major governmental report on literacy. The potential of the public library service for enhancing literacy is being ignored. (18)

The same point is made in a Guardian report by Vivien Griffiths, Assistant Director of Leisure and Community Services for Birmingham:

Public libraries are mentioned but hardly with the profile that one would expect for a national network of outlets which loans about 115 million children’s books each year. Nevertheless, libraries will play a key role in tackling literacy issues in the Year of Reading which starts in 1998, and it is important that they do so.... (19)
Vivien Griffiths points out that in public libraries, every year is a year of reading. (20)

Existing public library provision is wide and varied, from initiatives on books for babies, examined later in this thesis, through storytelling, library skills classes, reading schemes, arts and crafts activities, homework clubs, computer clubs, junior writers’ groups, specialist teenage collections and dedicated youth libraries designed to cultivate the library habit.

But here, as in many other aspects of library work, financial restrictions apply. As a counterpoint to the increase in library stock and lending from 1990 to 1993 mentioned above, recent years have seen a marked decline in funding. The level of expenditure on public library materials for children fell by 5% between 1995/6 and 1996/7, according to the Library and Information Statistics Unit annual survey. A further fall of 9 per cent was predicted for 1997/98. The survey highlights the disturbing fact that public libraries now spend less in real terms than they did in 1992/92 - just £1.39 per child on average. (21)

5.22 Adults and literacy

One aspect of public libraries’ commitment to adult education is their involvement with teaching basic literacy. In 1975, three quarters of public library authorities were providing, or considering the provision of, literacy services. These included services for tutors, referral services, provision of suitable reading material and the establishment of reading clubs. (22)

Jimmy Reid, former trade union activist, journalist, and well-known figure on the Scottish political scene spoke at a Scottish Library Association conference in 1983. He related how when asked where he went to study English literature, he replied, “Govan library.” (23) He sees this as reflecting a tradition of literacy amongst the Scottish people that goes back some centuries. He also speaks of one aspect of deprivation with effects which are long-term, complex and often underestimated:

cultural deprivation can be more pernicious in stunting development of the human personality than lack of proper nourishment from food. Many working men and women are seared with a lack of self confidence that stems, in my opinion, from a cultural deprivation. That seems to me to be a tragedy which we must overcome, and the library system is a vital cog in that process. (24)
To overcome such deprivation and in order to properly fulfil our role as a public service, we have to consider barriers to maximum uptake of that service. It is not enough to offer libraries as an atmosphere appropriate to quiet study - this can actually have a negative effect. Hallowed halls can be intimidating to those put off formal education at an earlier age:

What may be called the Temple of Learning syndrome has done much harm. Internally, it led to the hushed quiet beloved of some librarians, to whom architectural styles which made the new user feel oppressed, rather than welcome and at ease, and generally to an atmosphere repellent to young people today... A temple once established will survive unchanged for generations without further attention, or much expenditure. But a library is not a monument, or a storehouse, it is - or should be - a powerhouse supplying information, ideas, the life stream of progress to the community it serves. (25)

This phenomenon has been remarked upon elsewhere in this dissertation. If libraries are to have any relevance in modern society, accessibility is all. It could be argued that every effort at outreach, organising events, involving communities in libraries, is part of the drive for adult literacy. The aim is to ensure that as many people as possible feel at home in libraries, and can access the wealth of opportunities they offer.

Pablo Foster has highlighted the barriers libraries present to full participation by all sectors of the community. These range from physical barriers posed by the older Carnegie-built edifices, to mental barriers where “the old stereotypes of silence and formality (conspire) to intimidate the shy, the insecure, or people disadvantaged by language or by channels of communication”. (26) Foster goes on to elaborate the less obvious stylistic barriers preventing public library use:

... the habits of centre-based staff who expect others to do the approaching, to initiate any exchanges, to fathom out procedures. The latter barriers are often amplified by the dominant medium used by libraries - print. The spoken word can be so much more welcoming and accessible. (27)

Multimedia facilities and organised events help to vary the focus of library provision and broaden their appeal. Public libraries are an appropriate place for quiet reading, but they are not designed solely for this purpose. When a library is seen as integral to a community, a welcoming, relaxed atmosphere is one of the
things which gives people a sense of ownership. As we will see later in this thesis, research on a major library strike in Sheffield discovered that it was not fundamentally the books people missed when the library was closed, more the place itself.

Foster proposes exactly the policy we adopted at Petersburn library: breaking down the barriers:

The strategies for tackling these barriers are being explored by the Community Services Group within the Scottish Library Association, and by libraries in places like Ferguslie Park, Paisley or Ardrossan. Their discoveries should be adopted by all libraries, however: improve access, improve your welcome, provide support services (such as a creche or coffee bar), and then negotiate services as people gain the confidence to express their needs. (28)

Education is itself a field where barriers prevent people from seizing opportunities. Barriers raised by the formality of an institution, its opening hours, rules and regulations, the means by which officials communicate with potential students, its childcare provision or lack of it. (29) Returning to education after a long break, one or all of these things can mean a tentative approach is permanently abandoned. Colleges in particular are making major efforts at outreach, strengthening their links with the community and offering courses in local areas. (30) Some of these courses are held in libraries because they offer unparalleled access to potential students.

5.3 Community Education

In considering our own role in educational provision, we have to acknowledge that there are many professionals working in the adult and community education field whose sole raison d’etre is to encourage adult learning. Our role is really to complement their work, to fill gaps in provision and avoid overlaps. If we are to establish worthwhile and enduring liaisons with community educators, we have to appreciate the basis of their work and their professional skills.

Charlie McConnell has edited a thought-provoking text on Community Education, tracing its origins to the previous local government reorganisation in Scotland in 1975, when the Government’s report The Challenge of Change, chaired by Kenneth Alexander, recommended to central and local government the merging of the former adult education, youth and community work services under the new title of community education, and placing it within a lifelong learning paradigm. (31) It
was felt that local communities should be encouraged to participate in shaping social and economic development and that educational disadvantage should be tackled.

Strathclyde Region, which was responsible for half the population of Scotland, is given as an example. From the outset Strathclyde made a political commitment to tackle multiple deprivation and corporately to promote community development:

Within community development they identified four main objectives. The promotion of community networks, the encouragement of self-help, the identification and stimulation of local leadership, and the provision of ‘effective and sympathetic’ resources and services to meet a community’s needs. For Strathclyde all of its new departments had a role to play in the promotion of community development. But three services in particular were identified as having a lead role - education, social work and the police. (32)

The roles of these services were reviewed in an influential report by Councillor Tony Worthington. This and Strathclyde’s community development and anti-deprivation strategies set community education within a wider strategy and emphasised that it was essential for the education and social work departments, both of which employed professionally trained community education workers, to collaborate in supporting community empowerment.

A few years after publication of the Worthington report, the Scottish Council for Community Education was established. Whilst the Worthington report was the product of a post-war social democratic consensus, the SCCE followed a change of government and a change of focus to individualism, consumer power and self-help. Charlie McConnell highlights a SCCE discussion paper which presents the organisation’s thoughts on the concept and direction of community education:

There is a heavy emphasis upon individualism and the primacy of the individual learner throughout the paper. Community education is viewed not as the title of a particular service but as a process, an approach to helping individuals to learn. (33)

In 1980, Ian Martin criticised the SCCE working definition which he believed focused only on the learning needs of individuals. He argued instead that collective forms of learning were both feasible and necessary. He saw an ideological divide between the SCCE view of educational disadvantage as a result of individual inadequacy and his own belief that the real cause of educational disadvantage was structural inequality. (34) Martin argued for a service which actively tackled
...what really matters is that community education should not be regarded as just another way of providing what we think is good for them. It is a chance to explore possibilities for genuinely participatory forms of learning in which people are active partners, not merely passive consumers or, worse still, clients. (35)

This basic difference is reflected in librarianship too. While commitment to a public service ethos has always been strong in the public library service, and offering equality of opportunity was one of the founding tenets of the profession, a difference in emphasis can be perceived in both policy and practice. Every library service has to deal with disadvantage. For some, disadvantage will be limited to discrete geographic areas: in others the whole authority will be marked by social issues such as unemployment and the alienation of young people. Some library services see offering a quality library service as the most appropriate contribution they can make in these circumstances. For others, tackling disadvantage is a priority.

Library approaches to tackling deprivation could perhaps be seen along a continuum, with some authorities seeing no direct role for the library service in addressing the issue; most offering concessionary schemes to those in receipt of benefits and organising book deliveries to the housebound; some experimenting with one-off projects addressing poverty in selected areas, others devoting budgets and staff at a departmental level to work on regeneration, and a growing number considering the benefits of a community development approach, taking their cue from local users and shaping the service in line with expressed need. This is reflected in responses to our national survey of library authorities.

The 1980s saw a move towards local government as enabler rather than service provider, and the increasing importance of Urban Programme projects alongside the mainstream. (36) Specialist work focussed on housing issues, young people and adult basic education. During the first half of the decade there was an increasingly critical consideration of the effectiveness of community education in outreach work

Colin Kirkwood argued that the perception of community education as “single process and profession” was problematic. There were fundamental differences in training and philosophy between youth and community and adult education workers. (37) McConnell points out that a further distinction has emerged, with community work increasingly a field in its own right. Furthermore, community education work developed into specialist branches like the arts, health and
environmental education and work with ethnic minority or language groups.

At the start of the 1990s the community development approach gained currency in Community Education departments, with common goals of "working around issues of inequality, disadvantage and marginalisation and seeking to empower such communities". (38) Community development is generally seen now as underlying the three main functions of community education: adult education, youth work and community work.

McConnell himself sees community education as a lifelong activity that emphasises the learner’s active participation and decision making, and lays great stress upon the problems and needs of people as starting points for learning. It is an activity based within identifiable communities, whether these be neighbourhoods or communities of interest; it stresses the process of change as well as the achievement of change and encompasses both formal and informal educational approaches. Community education is: “the developmental process of life-long learning and social action relevant to the problems and needs of individual and groups”. (39)

5.4 Lifelong learning

While the phrase “lifelong learning” has been over-used, there is no denying a major shift in educational expectations over the last two decades.

Colin Kirkwood paints a clear picture of the change in his paper Scotland as a learning Society: Identity, Difference and Relatedness. He recalls that thirty years ago, adult learning was not a significant trend in education as a whole. There were schools full of children, and colleges and universities full of people in their late teens and early twenties. Only a small number of adults studied with Extra Mural Departments, the WEA or night classes. Mature students were a rare breed. (40)

Now, Kirkwood believes, popular demand and central government intervention have ensured that colleges, universities and even some schools welcome adult students of all ages. Teachers are increasingly seen as managers of learning resources or facilitators of learning. Even learning as a concept has changed:

...there has been a shift away from an emphasis on imbibing knowledge - books, papers, research reports, lectures - to a greater valuation of active learning and reflection upon experience. (41)

The argument is presented in this thesis that public libraries are adapting to the
change outlined above by widening their educational provision, increasing access to learning opportunities of all sorts. We are responding to changing educational demands.

In his essay on ‘Popular education and social movements in Scotland today’, Ian Martin makes the point that education itself is a reflection of societal change. He remarks that popular education:

is always contextual and contingent, reflecting and responding to changing circumstances and, in particular, the changing relationship between the formal politics of state and the informal politics of social movements in civil society. The essence of the argument presented here is that the ‘popular’ is located within the dialectic between the political culture of the state and the cultural politics of communities, and the potential of a ‘popular education’ is to catalyse this dialectic, to make it work. (42)

Public libraries are thus responding to change at two levels. Firstly, industrial and economic changes and a move to active citizenship require more vocational learning and personal development opportunities. And secondly, individuals are recognising their own educational needs and endeavouring to meet them. Throughout their history, libraries have responded to societal and individual needs. While they have sometimes done this in a rather passive way, now there is a greater need to promote what libraries offer. A range of leaflets on local courses is not enough. There is a need for value added services in response to educational demands: databases of educational and training opportunities, Open Learning packages, courses in the library, advice. Libraries are increasingly offering such services in a strategic way, acknowledged at corporate level.

The Scottish Community Education Council have presented a vision of Scotland as a “learning society” which ties in clearly to current moves to embrace lifelong learning for all. The idea relates to the definitions and explorations of community education outlined above. In such a society: “it would be taken for granted that virtually everyone would wish to engage in some form of learning at different stages of their lives.... structures, working hours and other aspects of employment, and social life, both nationally and within local communities, would be adapted to encourage learning and provide everyone with ready access to the facilities they require to pursue the kind of learning they need or want “. (43) The SCEC feel the present system is neglecting human potential. A healthy society needs its people to possess a high degree of critical awareness. Learning is a profoundly social activity, as well as an individual one, and our social relations need strengthening. The
protection of our environment depends on people acquiring levels of knowledge and understanding of our world well beyond their current levels. Even the most progressive schools are not able to meet all the learning needs of our young people and communities. People need support to develop their potential. (44)

The SCEC underline the need for adequate resourcing and infrastructure if the vision of a learning society is to be realised, including “obligations on employers and other organisations to ensure minimum standards of provision and/or financial commitment” (45), a point which the Labour government were criticised for not addressing in the spring of 1998.

The new Labour government have publicly committed themselves to supporting adult education, and the Grid for Learning and the University for Industry may achieve a great deal in promoting educational opportunities to a wider audience. It could be argued that recent cuts in community education budgets and staffing levels seen particularly in Scotland as a result of local government reorganisation contradict the stated aims of the new government.

The Government’s first major statement on education was the Excellence in Schools White Paper, published in July 1997, dealing purely with schools. Its second major statement was the Green Paper The Learning Age, which deals with all learning which is not compulsory or school-based. The introduction to the Green Paper identifies a fundamental weakness in basic and intermediate skills in the UK. Seven million adults have no formal qualifications; 21 million adults have not reached level 3 (equivalent to two A levels); one in five adults has poor literacy and numeracy skills. Policy commitments include:

- expansion of Further and Higher Education: 500,000 extra students by 2002
- launch of the University for Industry in late 1999
- setting up of Individual Learning Accounts, with £150m seed money from Government
- doubling the number of adults receiving literacy and numeracy training: 500,000 by 2002
- raising teaching/learning standards by, for example, establishing the Training Standards Council, and a system for HE lecturer accreditation. (46)

Broadcasters are seen as making a major contribution to raising awareness, widening access and distributing learning opportunities. The BBC has launched a dedicated educational channel, and is increasing its Internet provision on learning. The consultation paper re-states the Government pledge of an extra £165 million funding for Higher Education and £100 million for Further Education in 1998-99. It

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sets out the priorities for public funding of lifelong learning. These are to encourage adult returners, address particular shortages, widen access to those who are disadvantaged and enable individuals to choose the method of learning that suits them best. (47)

Chapter 4 of the report focuses on the role of schools, FE colleges, Higher Education Institutions and public libraries in widening access to education. Fifty million pounds of lottery funding has already been set aside to digitise library collections, and proposals for the development of the public libraries electronic network are due for publication. This opens up a whole range of new possibilities for partnerships between public libraries and education in the provision of learning information, opportunities, resources and services. (48)

The most recent research funded by the British Library’s Value and Impact programme concerns five topics on the lifelong learning theme. The first will be an examination of homework clubs in public libraries; the second, the impact on learning of a “good” school library/resource centre, and the third will look at “barriers discouraging access to libraries as agents of lifelong learning”. (49) There will be an investigation of public libraries’ impact on educational disadvantage and exclusion, and the final research project will look at public library policy and social exclusion.

Government moves to enhance adult education are marked by two major initiatives: the University for Industry and the National Grid for Learning.

The University for Industry has been awarded £40 million in funding for the year 1999-2000, and will be launched in 2000. It aims to develop that element of lifelong learning concerned with employment and employability. It will not itself be a direct provider of training and learning but will act in a planning, marketing and support capacity to connect individuals and companies wanting to learn with providers of that learning - with a strong emphasis on the use of ICT in delivering services. (50)

The University for Industry hopes to employ around 100 staff, developing a UK network of learning centres. These will build on existing facilities. A national telephone helpline for guidance and advice on learning opportunities is already in operation. The University for Industry’s initial priority areas are: basic skills, IT skills, small and medium-sized enterprises and specific sectors (such as automotive components, multimedia production and environmental technology). But eventually the University for Industry will embrace the full span of vocational learning and training, from basic skills through to advanced CPD.

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The National Grid for Learning is a framework for coordinating and increasing access to learning opportunities in the UK. The current Web site provides useful learning materials. But much of the material currently available is information about learning rather than actual learning resources. (51)

The government consultation paper outlining the National Grid for Learning is called *Connecting the Learning Society*. It gives a deadline of 2002 for all schools, colleges, universities and libraries to be connected to the Grid. It describes the Grid as “an infrastructure and service for networked learning”, “the framework for a mosaic of interconnected networks and services” (52), focusing initially on teacher development and the school sector and extending to lifelong learning. The report states:

> We intend that libraries, with their vast stores of information and accessibility to the public, will be an integral part of the Grid. (53)

In a section on ‘Identifying and building on best practice - libraries and museums’, the comment is made that public libraries:

> have a key role in stimulating a personal thirst for knowledge and self-improvement, and help to create an informed and ICT literate society. (54)

On a more downbeat note, the report notes that public libraries have a long way to go to improve their IT provision. A survey of public library authorities undertaken at the end of 1995 indicated that only 3% of the 3,800 public libraries in England and of the 700 in Scotland had public Internet access points. They estimate that even now, the total is likely to be well under 20%. (55)

Both the government initiatives outlined above suggest a coordinating role, building on existing facilities. They do not claim to extend the range of educational opportunities available.

Some library authorities are already leading the way. Sunderland, for example, calls itself a learning city. It has a telematics strategy and includes Sunderland University, the pilot project for the Government’s University for Industry. The twenty-one public libraries in the city are now linked via computer to college and university libraries, with 3,000 full-text journals now available through the public libraries’ Internet terminals.

A British Library research project in Sunderland is investigating what staff training
is needed for successful cross-sectoral co-operation. Identifying the support role for lifelong learners as the biggest challenge facing library and information science professionals, the research highlights the need for a "shared understanding of learners' needs, and of the range of library services available". Joint staff training events under the scheme were sometimes the first time that staff from different libraries in the city had met. (56)

Three public libraries are among the 47 pilot learning centres in Sunderland, two of the others sited in the Sainsbury store and the football stadium. Visitors can try starter courses on topics like IT, time management, writing a CV etc. Five thousand new learners have used the service in its first year. The principal officer for Sunderland's community libraries, Chris Wood, comments:

We're all so pleased that lifelong learning is now so high on the agenda. We've been saying it for years, but we've never before had the government saying it, and reports identifying how essential libraries are to the community that you can wave in people's faces. (57)

Sheffield public libraries have restated that their core purpose is to support and develop lifelong learning. They are one of the key players in Citinet, a new umbrella partnership between Sheffield College, the Tec, and the city's libraries and education departments which aims to co-ordinate learning and training activity and provision across the city. (58) Many other library authorities are involved in education forums working on similar proposals.

Eight months after the publication of the Green Paper in England and Wales, its Scottish counterpart was launched. Opportunity Scotland: a Paper on Lifelong Learning looks at every aspect of educational provision currently available, and considers how it can be improved. It includes a ten point action plan setting out specific objectives on the National Grid for Learning, Individual Learning Accounts and workplace training along similar lines to the English report.

In its section on Public Libraries and Museums, the report comments:

The traditional role of the public library in lifelong learning is based largely on accessibility - over 58% of the population are regular users - backed up by a wealth of resources. The development of information and communication technologies presents a challenge and an opportunity for library services to become key agents in enabling people to acquire new skills for employment, to use information creatively and to improve the quality of their lives. (59)
The emphasis in the Scottish report seems to be more on skills needed for industry, rather than learning for pleasure:

While this paper takes a broad view of lifelong learning at its core is the fact that people at all levels need to use learning opportunities to keep pace in the jobs market and to ensure that Scotland is equipped to compete in the global economy. (60)

Although there is a place for informal learning in the report, it is covered fairly briefly, and without much imagination:

Informal learning provides opportunities for adults to engage in educational activities for personal and social development, to acquire new knowledge and skills and to be more critically aware of themselves and society. In community education, the process focuses on motivation and confidence-building, and individual and group effectiveness, improving the capacity of communities to develop their ability to participate in civic affairs. The skills gained are transferable and the benefits to the community tangible; both can be subject to assessment. (61)

Chris Pilley, in his discussion paper on The Arts and Informal Education, is more fired with enthusiasm:

Both the arts and informal education are about a ‘celebration of awareness’ and the arts are particularly concerned with the liberation of people at an expressive level of their lives. In many cases the arts are indeed a form of therapy, providing the initial impetus for a journey of self discovery, and this strand of work is now recognised as an increasingly important aspect of personal development. (62)

The Scottish report refers to the 1994 ASCETT (Advisory Scottish Council for Education and Training Targets) and comments that skill levels in all the areas covered by the ASCETT targets have risen and achievement in Scotland is ahead of the rest of the UK, although current targets for workforce achievement have still to be met.

However, other commentators paint a far gloomier picture of the Scottish educational scene. The Scottish Trade Union Review consider the ASCETT target that 70% of all organisations employing 200 or more employees, 35% of those employing 50 or more, and 15% of those employing under 50 be recognised as
Investors in People by the year 2000. They point out that in the over-200 group, the figure attained so far is just 17%, in the over-50 group, only 7% have Investors in People accreditation, and only 4% of companies with less than 50 employees had achieved recognition. (63)

A recent report in the *Glasgow Herald* pointed out that there are huge problems of literacy among Scotland's adult population. COSLA estimates that 600,000 Scots adults have "functional difficulties with literacy and numeracy" and only 4100 of them are getting help through adult basic education schemes. The situation is far worse in Scotland than England, where 250,000 adults are on such programmes. (64) And while in England the Labour government is committed to doubling the adult literacy programme, in Scotland the service could face further cuts. The number of adults in Scotland taking council-funded literacy courses has fallen by 40% since the early 1990s.

The concept of a learning society is examined from different perspectives in a text edited by Peter Raggatt, Richard Edwards and Nick Small, *The Learning Society: Challenges and Trends*. The editors identify a change in attitudes and vocabulary concerning adult education. The focus is no longer on the education provider, but the learner. The learner at home, in the workplace, in groups and alone:

This has produced new practices and a new challenge has arisen as to how best to accredit learning which takes place in these non-formal settings. But by focusing on learning, in contrast to education or training, attention has been directed to the individual. It is the individual who has to take responsibility for learning and for selecting what, where and how to learn. (65)

They believe that there has also been a shift in the responsibility for developing learning opportunities for adults from the state to individuals and employers, and that this has coincided with a surge of interest in lifelong learning and the learning society. One of the prime agents of change has been new technology, and the need for the workforce to develop new skills.

From a management viewpoint, training itself may not be enough to meet organisational needs. A broader education may encourage skills such as creativity, the ability to take initiatives and solve problems. It can also encourage employees to identify where improvements can be made in production and to spot openings for new products and services. The authors argue that this type of education goes beyond HRD (Human Resource Development) and is offered by "learning organisations". This type of education is still the province of those already in
employment. It may be those most in need who have little or no access to education.

The book's editors detect increasing interest not just in vocational training but in education for personal development. They also refer to the new learning opportunities which have developed around environmental, feminist, conservation and self-help groups. All of these different strands of learning play a part in "a learning society in which lifelong learning may contribute not only to economic and labour market objectives but also to wider cultural, social and equitable goals". (66)

Lyn Tett has identified changing opportunities and participation by different groups of adults in Scotland. In particular she notes low levels of participation by older people, minority ethnic groups, the long-term unemployed, those in semi-skilled and unskilled occupations, women with dependent children and those living in rural areas, a problem addressed to some extent by interagency collaboration on educational provision and information and advice to students. The economic imperative for further education in the workplace may take attention and funding away from those unemployed or in part-time employment, the sort of groups highlighted by Lyn Tett:

If most opportunities are determined by occupational relevance it limits them to those who are, or could be, economically active. Age and gender become important influences affecting access to learning. Opportunities for people of retirement age and those approaching it have been in decline despite an increasing population of third-agers (over 50), whereas empirical studies have demonstrated significant differences in participation rates in occupational continuing education with women having much lower rates. Who controls opportunities for adult learners then becomes a key issue. (67)

Arthur Stock, in his chapter on 'Lifelong learning: thirty years of educational change', charts recent developments in educational provision and policy. He recalls the adult education movement as one founded on high ideals, and characterised by those with a social consciousness, and a desire for equity and democracy in adult education. He refers particularly to the "social motives" of the "romantic era" in the sixties and seventies, when adult education grew exponentially and funding was generous. He believes the spirit of that period was actually encapsulated in the early part of the century, in a Report of the Adult Education Committee to the Ministry of Reconstruction.

The adult educational movement is inextricably
interwoven with the whole organised life of the community. Whilst on the one hand it originates in a desire amongst individuals for adequate opportunities for self-expression and the cultivation of their personal powers and interests, it is, on the other hand, rooted in the social aspirations of the democratic movements of the country. In other words it rests upon the twin principles of personal development and social service. (68)

Given the current debates on social policy, it is interesting to consider the sentiments expressed in the modern context. Stock believes that the generalised "social motive" - idealistic and rather vague, but nevertheless purposive and inspirational - was a core element, almost the leitmotif, in liberal education for adults for almost 100 years. While official recognition and endorsement of the value of education is far from lacking now, financial support is harder to come by. And the cuts Stock describes as "wholesale butchery", (69) are a major concern to educational providers.

He sees this as:

the supreme irony of our present adult educational times: when there has been more instrumental acceptance of the societal importance of education for adults than ever in history, as exemplified by all the disparate promotions of the many departments of government; but when the essential and basic educational structure is falling to pieces around us, like the broken windows of abandoned buildings. (70)

Stock highlights in particular the lack of protective legislation for education. This has resulted in local authorities cutting back on education, rather than face capping (first rate-capping, the Poll Tax capping, and currently council tax capping) of council funds. The inevitable casualty has been life-enhancing, non-vocational general adult education. (71)

Hendrik van der Zee believes the burgeoning debate on education to meet society's needs is a response to a variety of factors including the explosion of knowledge and technology; automation in companies and institutions; the tendency towards individualisation; increasing free time; an ageing population and changes in the labour market. (72)

Van der Zee advocates recurrent education, an overall strategy aimed at restructuring the educational system so as to distribute periods of study over the total life span of the individual in a recurring way, i.e. alternating with extended
periods of other sorts of activity such as work, leisure and retirement. (73)

Education in all its forms will be profoundly important in the coming years, if we are to make sense of rapid and continuing change in our society. Van der Zee identifies five strategic issues for the development of a learning society:

- The need to broaden the definition of learning (education as dimension of society).
- The need to redirect the goal of learning (growth towards completeness).
- The need to go beyond learning and instruction (increasing collective competence).
- The need to foster autonomy in learning (self-education).
- The need to stress a political approach to learning (the right to learn). (74)

The author believes that an effective strategy for increasing learning opportunities should chart existing forms of learning, consider how these can be expanded, and examine the role that diverse agencies can play in this process:

Recent studies on learning in the workplace, the public library as an open-learning centre, learning through television, and the educational possibilities of museums indicate a basis upon which we may proceed. (75)

Alan Tuckett describes adult learning in Britain today as a mass activity. (76) Adults aged over 21 are now the majority of participants in both universities and further education colleges. However, Tuckett points out that institutions are often structured and timetabled to meet the needs of a younger clientele. And although adults are the clear focus of Local Education Authority, Council and voluntary sector programmes, and a key target group for community education services, explicit provision for adults accounts for less than 1 per cent of central government education expenditure. Delivery systems are consequently diverse and fragmented, and coherent planning is difficult. (77) Tuckett concludes that the policy picture is complex, with adult learners in different parts of the country enjoying wildly different opportunities to study, as a result of a range of disconnected decisions made by bodies working to very different goals. (78)
Hendrik van der Zee addresses the issue of barriers to education, examined earlier in this thesis. If adult education is not accessible, it is not effective:

Attention must also be given to the quality of the learning environment. For this is often the difficulty, as can be seen from research into the background and reasons for (non-)participation in educational activities. Lists of the large numbers of barriers to learning have been drawn up time and time again. However, we are still waiting for a plan of campaign for tackling these obstacles. Unless it is accompanied by free access to the relevant sources of learning, the right to learn is just so many words. (79)

Libraries and education face the same challenge. We need to attract non-users. Foster argues that librarians should commit themselves to respond to people who are not traditional beneficiaries. He sees the way ahead as being through partnership between libraries and adult educators:

Perhaps over fifty per cent of the adult population derive little benefit from existing education or libraries. These 'Heineken' folk, the ones not reached by present services, remain a challenge to both ABE and the library services. The people who derive least benefit from current 'provision' cannot be dismissed as sub-literate or ignored because they do not respond to conventional styles and practice. (80)

This is taken from the 1980s television advertising campaign for Heineken lager, with the slogan that "Heineken reaches the parts that other beers don't reach". Foster believes many of the "Heineken" people lack confidence, do not see education as something for them, and lack awareness of what is available:

To summarise: many of the 'Heineken people' will reject themselves; most will be unaware of what libraries can offer; and others may know but reject libraries as irrelevant to their needs. These factors lie at the heart of the challenge to the library services. (81)

Herein also lies the potential for links between educational and library workers.

The normal library role of offering study material and information about educational provision is important. In Lights in the Darkness: Scottish Libraries and Adult Education, the Motherwell respondent to a survey of libraries reported that 40% of participants of a local Community Education class had first heard about the class through the local library. (82) New Library: the People's Network quoted 58% of
through the local library. (82) New Library: the People's Network quoted 58% of the population as library members, so public libraries are ideally suited for advertising educational courses.

As argued in the section on libraries and the arts, there is often a lack of vision about what libraries can do. Practitioners, theorists and independent commentators often fail to remark the work going on and the possibilities for future development.

Anthony Cooke is one of many writers to underline the three benefits libraries can bring to education: they offer learning resources in the form of books and other media; provide advice, guidance and counselling, encourage uptake of courses, and provide easily accessible premises. (83) But many libraries are offering more, either from their own resources, or in conjunction with other agencies. Thus there is a proliferation of writers' workshops and writers in residence schemes, local studies groups, study skills instruction.

Pablo Foster has called for a more proactive role for libraries in promoting education:

> Perhaps libraries do not sufficiently recognise their *dynamic* as opposed to their custodial potential. Their crucial democratic service of maintaining evidence of alternative versions of the truth must continue, but their potential for promoting personal and community development should be exploited more confidently. (84)

Promotion is the key word here. In all the areas examined in this dissertation, in arts provision, community development and education, there is plenty evidence of work on the ground, but little awareness of the work beyond a local level. The *Which?* survey of attitudes to public libraries reported that 41% of people surveyed thought libraries were "not very good" or "not at all good" at marketing their service. (85)

This problem may be due to inadequate public relations, but another factor may be the lack of a strategic approach. Every piece of work should relate to departmental and corporate aims and objectives so that it can be fully supported and promoted. Library services should not be guilty of offering what Francois Matarossa has described as "bread and fairy cakes", (86) a basic service with the odd extra thrown in.

Libraries have always been associated with education, but in a rapidly-changing world the association needs support. Vernon Smith has pointed out that some of
world the association needs support. Vernon Smith has pointed out that some of our traditional independent learners have turned to formal education, while libraries themselves have tended to prioritise leisure and information. The average person no longer thinks of the library as “the People’s University”, and the average library rarely promotes the services it could offer to independent learners. (87)

As writers in educational theory have pointed out, the divergence between education and recreation can in any case be false. In 1981, Geoffrey Adkins wrote that, “the deeply-set distinction between ‘vocational’ and ‘non-vocational’ (‘recreational’ activities) is not only false but reinforces the primitive idea that education is either purposive or enjoyable, but not both. (88) Who decides where pleasure ends and learning begins? Perhaps precise definitions exclude the majority of the population who do not see formal education as something for them.

There have also been significant change in learning itself. Echoing the comments of Colin Kirkwood above, Vernon Smith outlines the shift that has occurred during the last two decades. There have been significant developments in learner-centred education - via distance and open learning; a growing emphasis on community-based learning; and a substantial number of learning activities promoted by the new popular movements and local action groups:

A process of re-orientation in the education system itself is also under way; and the development of citizens capable of engaging in self-directed learning - and motivated to do so on a lifelong basis - has now emerged as a major aim. (89)

Adult education classes are increasingly being provided in schools, breaking down the barriers between formal and informal education. Public libraries have a presence in every community in the same way as schools, and to some people they appear less threatening. Smith is concerned that unless action is taken, the gap between the information rich and information poor in our society will grow. Information technology has been raised as one means to alleviate the problem, and public libraries, assisted by such technology, are well placed to bridge the gap.

Peggy Heeks believes that a minority of libraries are going down the educational route at present.

One can even detect a distancing from education in recent library history, for example in the move in many counties to independence for the library committee from its previous position as a sub-committee of education, and in the growing alliance of libraries, arts

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This has become quite a marked phenomenon, with recent local government organisation most frequently allocating libraries to some combination of leisure services. This does not mean that educational activities cannot flourish too. Within the Cultural Services division at North Lanarkshire Council, a former local Urban Aid project is now expanding to offer Adult Learning Support throughout the authority, using libraries as a venue and link to other agencies.

As Smith points out, there needs to be a clear policy on libraries' role in education. Are we aiming to meet the increasingly sophisticated needs of learners such as young adults, already well-equipped and experienced in information-handling, or are we hoping to attract and assist those who have previously slipped through the education net? Should we see independent learners as a specialist client group and work to meet their needs accordingly. Can we satisfy such diverse educational demands?

Does the average library service currently meet the needs of independent learners? Vernon Smith concludes that most libraries offer information, learning materials and facilities, but that provision of "learner support services" is rarer. He uses this term to describe assistance with planning learning activities; training in effective use of library materials, including assistance with reading and study skills; help with selecting suitable materials, at the right level; help with keeping records of progress; and opportunities for consultation, general encouragement and advice. (91) He sees this including negotiation of referral arrangements and other collaborative schemes with outside agencies. He does at least admit such provision exists.

Jenny Monaco in the Journal of Community Education has little faith in library support for learners. She writes that:

A few public libraries are known to mount special sessions to help users make the best use of the library facilities available. However, this sort of provision is still exceptional and for the most part the learner is heavily reliant for sources of information on the librarian who he/she happens to encounter on entering the library. (92)

Monaco bemoans the lack of a single agency to offer adult independent learners a coordinated, comprehensive service. With an active adult education forum working strategically, it should be possible to overcome this problem. Libraries are well placed to be key players in such a forum.
Examining the potential of public libraries to expand their role, Monaco quotes examples of library services involved in educational initiatives. She refers to the location in public libraries of some of the educational guidance services for adults and highlights the ILEA/London Borough of Islington Library Service Joint Learners Advisory Service Research Project, commenting, “However, these sorts of activity appear to be far from typical of services across the UK”.

Peggy Heeks has identified a division of opinion among librarians about the appropriate limits of their educational support. Whilst there is general agreement on the need to provide bookstock for reference and student use, some libraries are unwilling to expend material and staff resources to offer a more comprehensive support service. Those making more extensive provision do not always do so as the result of a clearly-defined policy. (93)

What is needed in the field of education is a nationally coordinated research programme to build a database of successful projects. And if projects like this are to be extended, training is also required to develop skills so they can be applied more widely. This is finally happening for library activities in the arts, and work with communities. In all these fields there is a great deal of positive work going on, but the groundwork is being repeated too often with the same mistakes being made, because individual projects and authorities are working in isolation. The need for co-ordination is crucial, especially at a time of rapid change in adult education.

5.5 Open Learning, Information Technology and Training Support

John Allred recently reported from the third baseline survey of Open Learning provision that a total of 83 per cent of library authorities nationwide now provide an open and flexible learning service from 210 Open Learning Centres. These are generally a separate section of the public library, equipped with computers, audiovisual equipment and multimedia Open Learning resource packs, staffed by librarians who work full time promoting Open Learning and assisting the public in its exploitation.

Total spend on stock in the UK is around half a million pounds per annum with recorded loans in excess of 86,000 for the year ending March 1996. Libraries both increased their stock and provided a wider range of subjects and titles. Computing, languages and GCSE and ‘A’ level subjects were the most popular. Nearly every open learning centre provided equipment such as computers and audiovisual players, and most had trained staff. (94)
Nigel Paine suggests that Open Learning may be the bridge that links libraries to active learning provision in their premises. He sets out a ten point plan, largely relating to provision of Open Learning, but with wider relevance too. On Structured Learning and the Library he argues:

With a stock of relevant packages, it would be a small step for the library to begin to offer a series of integrated courses managed exclusively by the library. It would obviously be pointless competing with the colleges and getting involved with subject areas beyond the competence of library staff. There are, however, key learning needs related to other open learning courses. A library could, for example, offer short study skills courses or courses which relate remedially to a range of others such as basic communications or mathematics. Some short courses such as 'report writing' could either stand alone or form an integral part of other provision. The familiarity of the library setting could also help people back into adult learning in areas where the traditional college might appear frightening. A library will be seen as more 'formal' than a community centre but less 'formal' than the college - a perfect bridge between the two. (95)

The Comedia report, Borrowed Time, saw the development of Open Learning as a result of community librarianship dating from the 1970s, and a "new orientation to community need". (96) It also reflects a new approach to education which fits in very well with the information and guidance role librarians have traditionally fulfilled, depending as it does on "the skills of the librarian rather than the skills of the teacher". (97) The public library is returning to some of its original traditions in supporting the active self-educator. (98)

The authors of this report consider the rationale for public libraries to offer resources and facilities to support Open Learning:

Many may observe that in the promotion of the public library as a community educational resource, the wheel has come full circle. The development of open learning facilities in libraries is in a sense a return to the original values and philosophy which established the public library system 150 years before. For whilst we can see that the library ethos has undergone many changes since its inception, there are certain elements which have remained fundamental. (99)

Open Learning, by its very nature, encourages people to learn "at their own pace, in their own place". This means they can study in the library or at home, there is no
pressure to complete projects on time, and none of the usual entry barriers that prevent "adult returners" taking their first steps back to education. The library is a place where women on their own, the elderly, and ethnic minority groups like Asians report feeling safe and welcome. (100)

Furthermore, Open Learning is free, whilst college fees, difficulties in obtaining grants and benefit penalties can militate against some of the more formal types of educational provision. Many people simply see such institutions as not for them, but this attitude can change after success with appropriate Open Learning packages gives them the appetite to learn. Comedia have commented on the recent boom in Open Learning in libraries:

Librarians are not trained to award qualifications, or assess educational development, but as a starting point on the educational ladder, it is clear to us that public libraries have found a dynamic new role to play. This also appears to be the view of the Department of Employment and other training and educational agencies. (101)

Current research funded by the British Library is examining the extent and impact of Open Learning provision in public libraries.

Another role suggested by Comedia for the public library is acting as a centre for Local Employment & Trading Schemes (LETS) which are growing in popularity and have great potential to tap skills in communities which might otherwise be wasted. (102) Vernon Smith highlights the growing number of community, church, trade union and special interest campaigning groups with educational needs to be met. (103)

The attitude to community will shape educational provision. Adult education underpins a community development approach, whether it is called adult education or not:

Some libraries certainly engage in a full range of support activities, often under the community service umbrella. It really doesn't matter, in the end, whether the provision is labelled 'adult education' or 'community librarianship', so long as nothing is omitted by the choice of label, and the right network of support is brought into play. (104)

There are many examples of libraries extending their traditional role of educational resource and signpost.
In Sheffield independent learners are among those targeted by a general policy for services to “open learning”, including a pledge to train all staff in the needs of adult learners. No specific provision is made for this group, but educational support is undertaken through community groups, eg women's groups, to which some independent learners gravitate in search of assistance, rather than look to formal education. In this case, the library provides materials, book and audiovisual, for use within the group. (105)

Clwyd's librarians also provide for independent learners within the context of their overall work with adult education and advice services. Advice and counselling are offered, with specific staff training undertaken on topics such as welfare and benefits. Learners are encouraged to link together in groups, or information and individual learning packs are available in some subjects. (106)

Stephen Drodge comments that in both these instances there is a direct attempt to provide a service for independent learners which goes beyond the library's central, stock-oriented tradition and moves out into advice and guidance. In both instances, also, this connects with a wider library commitment to advice work in the context of community provision, whence the emphasis on links with voluntary groups and with welfare rights information and advice. (107)

Drodge draws attention to adult literacy schemes in operation which encourage learners to write about themselves and their own experiences. This develops writing skills, encourages self-expression and helps participants to be confident and positive about who they are and where they come from. In this way the technique contributes to personal development as well as literacy:

Many library services have publishing programmes of their own which concentrate on local history. It makes clear sense for libraries to support creative, autobiographical and community writing from basic education, not to the exclusion of writing from other sources, but as an important extension to it. Basic education clients do tend to come from social backgrounds other than the middle class base of much local history work, and the perspectives they can bring, indeed the information that they may be able to provide, will often be different from what is already available. In this way, promoting basic education writing can bring benefits to the library and the community as a whole, as well as offering a challenge and self-development to the learners. (108)

While the topic of writing in libraries is explored in far greater depth in the chapter
on Libraries and the Arts, it is interesting that writing is placed very much in the arena of education here, and is not seen as pure recreation.

At its launch, Chapelhall Library in Airdrie incorporated an Urban Aid-funded Employment and Training Support Unit. Until 1996, I was employed as Community Librarian in charge of this library and nearby Petersburn. Chapelhall employed a Community Development Worker, Open Learning Officer, Crafts Organiser and clerical assistant. Here arts classes were arranged as tasters, to introduce people to the project and the library. Community groups were encouraged to meet in the library, supported by the on-site Community Development Worker. There were frequent surgeries by local Lone Parent and Welfare Rights Workers employed by the Social Work Department. The Careers Service and a local Urban Aid employment project provided training and advice in the library. There was close collaboration with local colleges, and several SCOTVEC courses were run as joint ventures. A free creche was available. The project had a basic economic remit, but used art and education to contribute to personal development, community development and community identity. The aim was a service which is holistic and in line with local needs. Many local people took up the opportunities offered. Funding is no longer available for this project, but some courses continue as part of a wider departmental commitment to education.

Many libraries now offer access to the TAPS network (Training Access Points) or similar systems organised by Careers Service and local education fora, which provide information about open learning and other opportunities. The SLIC report, Public Libraries and Adult Education in Scotland, suggests a common sense approach to multi-agency adult education provision at a local level, with an umbrella group meeting infrequently and delegating most functions to working groups. (109)

It seems obvious that collaboration of libraries and adult educators will achieve the best results for the least outlay. Often such links are on a personal and informal basis. The 1983 and 1985 Her Majesty’s Inspectorate surveys reported in Lights in the Darkness indicated that while all libraries provide some basic support in terms of publicity and bookstock, the extent to which provision develops beyond that depends largely on links between librarians and those involved in education provision at a local level. (110)

Similar issues arise in consideration of links between librarians and those working in the arts: links have to exist at both informal and formal levels locally, and there must be national professional support for the idea of joint working. It is also important for libraries to highlight the work they are already doing, so that they are
not left out of the equation when educational provision is being addressed at local or national level.

Arthur Maltby regrets that libraries are “often sadly forgotten or underestimated in the context of continuing education”, (111) but himself belittles their potential with the comment that, “adult and community educators certainly need links with libraries for stock support, as local outlets for their advertising literature, and at times for accommodation”. (112)

As far as educational provision is concerned it has been recognised, particularly in Scotland, that there is a role for national organisations to initiate and encourage progress and act as a forum for discussion on wider issues. Links were established in the 1980s between the Scottish Library Association, the Scottish Institute of Adult and Continuing Education, the Scottish Community Education Council, Network Scotland Limited and other agencies. (113) At a UK level, successful liaison is exemplified in the annual Adult Learners Weeks, where broadcasters, educational institutions, Careers Services, libraries and other agencies combine to encourage adult returners.

According to Comedia, the “lifelong learning” revolution is here to stay, with more than 6 million UK adults involved in some kind of education every week (not including distance learning, library-based open learning schemes, and that provided by voluntary organisations). (114) This is a significant number to be involved in regular classes.

Learning is a very old idea enjoying new popularity. Demographic factors, the needs of a volatile employment market, skills shortages, job insecurity, enforced mid-life career change, and redundancy are just some of the factors increasing the drive for lifelong learning. Increased interest in adult and continuing education has often been sparked by economic necessity, but can lead to a love of learning for self-improvement. Nigel Paine has commented that, “There is a very powerful role for the library of the future which takes it directly into the learning style of the contemporary world. For the first time in a long time, a library could become a central rather than a peripheral resource... Learners and libraries were made for each other”. (115)

Rapid developments in information and communication technologies (ICT), such as telematics, hypertext and multimedia, desktop publishing and the Internet are offering new opportunities and wider forms of access to education for all types of people. Theoretically, groups thus far deprived of further educational experience, like disabled learners or those from rural areas, should find IT opening new doors.
Public librarians might argue that before new doors are discovered, they must be clearly signposted, and that is the public library role.

Gill Kirkup and Ann Jones have written a chapter entitled, ‘New technologies for open learning: the superhighway to the learning society?’, in The Learning Society. They feel the success of distance education in delivering education and training across all age and social groups has been a significant spur to the development of the learning society idea. (116)

Libraries are having to adapt to the learning revolution as they are adapting to other changes in public life, almost by default. In recent years libraries have noticed an increase in users with mental health problems, as a result of the “Care in the Community” programme. In the same way, libraries face increasing demands from the growing student population, and from schoolchildren as a result of the National Curriculum and its counterpart in Scotland, project work, and devolved management of schools. At certain times of the day many libraries become study rooms and homework centres. (117) Libraries should be approaching these additional demands in a structured, strategic way, and taking every opportunity to increase their funding. Their role is additional and complementary to that of the school library, which is open limited hours with a smaller bookfund. Public libraries have a unique educational role, partly because this is not their only raison d’etre. For adolescents, and for those lacking qualifications, the non-pressurised atmosphere a library offers is the perfect environment for study.

Public libraries seem to be filling a gap, but they could fill it more effectively with increased coordination. There have been calls for closer links with broadcasters, so that libraries are informed of forthcoming television programmes tying in to books, as retail outlets are. Booksellers can have their stacks of Jane Austen or Dickens at the ready when a major serial looms, but libraries will only start ordering them in when such a series is advertised to the public. (118)

The BBC is increasingly active in educational broadcasting, and in fostering links with businesses and public service organisation to increase the impact it has. “Computers don’t bite” and “Webwise” campaigns are examples of the commitment in terms of staffing and publicity resources it is devoting to educational objectives in the IT sphere. Free taster days at a national level with BBC backing in all sorts of public and private organisations are an attempt to increase public awareness of what IT can offer. Public libraries are closely involved with the campaign.

There is no excuse for what Peggy Heeks describes as “the ambivalence of the public
As we will discover with artistic, information and other provision at a local level, inter-agency collaboration is vital. It requires hard work, and a meeting of minds often used to thinking in different ways. Both libraries and educators can benefit from joint work, through increased clientele, improved communication and staff training, and the economies of scale that a local plan can bring. In other words we need to coordinate our service if it is to achieve its true potential. We cannot reach the “Heineken people” on our own. Partnership working is a key component of the community development model.
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32. Ibid, p7.
34. Martin, I., 'Signposts to Nowhere', pp97-102, in McConnell, C., ibid, p100.
35. Martin, ibid, p103.
37. Ibid, p15.
41. Ibid, p3.
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44. Ibid, p369.
45. Ibid, p369.
47. Ibid, p251.
53. Ibid, p5.
54. Ibid, p11.
55. Ibid, p12.
56. Raven D., ‘Making it easier to learn’, Library Association Record, 100 (10), pp526-528, p526.
57. Ibid, p526.
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61. Ibid, p23.
69. Stock, A., ibid, p16.
70. Ibid, p19.
71. Ibid, p19.
71. Ibid, p19.
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74. Ibid, p165.
75. Ibid, p167.
77. Ibid, p45.
78. Ibid, p57.
79. Van der Zee, H., in Raggatt et al, op cit, p180.
81. Foster, P., ibid, p19.
89. Smith, V., op cit, p22.
100. Ibid, p32.
112. Maltby, A., ibid, p44.
117. Comedia, *Borrowed Time?*, op cit, p76.
CHAPTER SIX - LIBRARIES AND THE ARTS

6.1 Definitions of art

A commonly accepted definition of art is that employed by the Scottish Arts Council in their Charter for the Arts in Scotland, originating in the US Congress Public Law definition:

The term ‘the arts’ includes, but is not limited to, music (instrumental and vocal), dance, mime, drama, folk art, creative writing, architecture and allied fields, painting, sculpture, photography, graphic and craft arts, industrial design, costume and fashion design, motion pictures, television, radio, tape and sound recording, the arts related to the presentation, performance, execution, and exhibition of such major artforms, and the study and application of the arts to the human environment. (1)

There are thirteen principles central to the Charter for the Arts in Scotland, but the first two are perhaps the most important and the most frequently quoted:

1. The arts are an essential element of our national life, contributing spiritual, social and economic vitality, and are legitimate activities for public investment.

2. Everyone has a right to enjoy and participate in the arts. (2)

It is the second part of this definition which is of most interest to arts and library professionals, who are able to offer opportunities for involvement with the arts.

Former Chief Librarian and Arts Officer for Solihull and current Library Association Chief Executive Dr Bob McKee favours a broad definition of art. He sees it as something highly personal, for artist and audience, something not easily categorised:

As well as being a ‘finished’ product, it is also a live process of artistry and of connection between art and audience... As well as involving traditional art forms, it can also embrace the widest range of expressions of popular culture. (3)

The debate about the relative merits of process and product in the arts has a long history, but the important word here is “also”, because libraries are well placed to
offer art for appreciation and for participation.

The Scottish Arts Council has said that local authorities are by far the biggest supporters and providers of the arts in Scotland. (4) The most recent figures available from the Scottish Arts Council and Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) annual survey show that total local authority net revenue expenditure on the performing and visual arts in 1997/98 was £37.2 million. Total net capital expenditure on cultural services including libraries, museums and galleries for the same year amounted to £233.8 million. (5) The Scottish Arts Council, in its Arts and Local Authorities document, explain the commitment. Local authorities recognise that for the individual, involvement in arts activity entertains and enriches:

The arts help to overcome isolation and break down barriers. They can be used to raise awareness of social issues, and change perceptions of people who are marginalised.

Taking part in arts events can lead to greater confidence and a sense of self worth. For people with special needs, and for those who are, or who feel, excluded from mainstream activity, participation in the arts provides the opportunity to learn new skills and enjoy wider social contact. (6)

The arts offer an unparalleled means of community development for individuals and groups.

In the art world, there has been much debate about how art is accessed by the public. As well as the process versus product debate there has emerged a division into “high” and “low” culture, enlightenment and empowerment, traditional and community arts. Some leading lights, such as Roy Shaw and Franco Bianchini, have argued that the priority should be to promote high quality art and democratise access to it. (7) Other protagonists, like Owen Kelly, argue for a different sort of “cultural democracy”, and reject the authentication of culture according to middle or upper-class received wisdom. (8) They see no greater importance or relevance in so-called “high art” than in the art produced within a local community, expressing its own values.

Rachel Gonley, speaking as Director of the North West Arts Regional Arts Association at the Sheffield Conference on Libraries and the Arts, sees the real value of art lying in the depth of individual experience, whatever media is being used. (9) She believes the role of those working in the arts is to be “enablers and
catalysts, not arbiters of good taste or choosers of arts”. (10) This idea reflects a community development approach. Gonley is asserting that there is no good or bad art - its value lies in how it is experienced by the individual. For art to be challenging and life-enhancing, it has to speak to the individual about their experience, which is where a skilled facilitator can play a crucial role. Without such an intermediary, for people lacking formal education, exposure to art in itself often has limited value.

It could be argued that this debate on access versus self-expression is mirrored in library arts provision to date. Readings, demonstrations, exhibitions and recitals have tended to be the staple arts provision in more traditional library venues, with hands-on workshops offered in more community-oriented projects. Bob McKee argues for library arts activities to place greater emphasis on encouraging artistic self-expression in his paper, ‘Product, process, participation: an evolving strategy for arts and libraries.’ (11)

6.2 Why libraries?

In 1983, Timothy Mason, then Director of the Scottish Arts Council, argued that libraries possess a potential for arts development seen in few other cultural organisations. He refers to the library as performance space and patron, collecting local writers, exhibiting artists, publishing local history. (12)

David Liddle points to a well-established historical connection between libraries and the arts:

The power to use libraries for art exhibitions has long been recognised, back to the 1964 Act. What we have seen most recently, however, is librarians using the arts as a way of extending the use of their buildings and promoting the role of libraries in their communities. Are there any libraries remaining that only issue books? This wider use of libraries is now so well established that we are well on the way to changing the public image of libraries into recognising that they are places of cultural experience. This trend will continue to gather pace. (13)

Stuart Brewer, City Librarian and Arts Officer for Newcastle and Chair of the Library Association’s Libraries and Arts Working Party also argues that libraries and the arts work well together.
The public library, itself a source of creative activity, offers basic advantages as a cultural centre. First, interests are stimulated by books, story times, craft activities and all those pervasive services which are so familiar as to be often overlooked. Second, the library is a community information resource, gathering information about cultural, social and educational events. Third, library buildings are often accessible and capable of use as centres for arts activities both formal and informal. (14)

Brewer points to a list of current arts activities in libraries, including exhibitions, displays and demonstrations, recitals, film shows and readings; space for writers, photographers, artists and musicians to meet and practise; local history societies, reminiscence theatre and community festivals; artists in residence; murals, crafts and sculptures; ticket sales; loans of musical and other equipment; publications; ethnic arts, folk arts and community drama. Such activities are assisted by the natural network of library branches, offering locations from crowded High Street to isolated village, in large multi-purpose buildings and small mobiles.

According to Brewer, writing in 1989, the chief librarian has a specific responsibility for the arts in nearly half of the public library systems in the UK (15) This offers potential for joint work between libraries and arts services to facilitate community development and individual achievement. Libraries have the relevant resources - premises, equipment, budgets. Staff work at neighbourhood level and know the community. Libraries are generally open long hours and have a good public profile. They can act as enabler, broker and support.

An arts event in a library, if thoughtfully organised, can be better attended than a similar event in a community hall or school. It can also be more accessible, comfortable, and in the case of a series of meetings, likely to continue. This is because of the connection between local library staff and a core group of users. An activity can be promoted to those who have an interest. There is a word of mouth factor less developed in community centre or schools venues.

In recent debate about the role and purpose of libraries, a number of possibilities have been suggested, all of them valid, and not necessarily mutually exclusive. Chris Heinitz, of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities (AMA), envisages the library as information centre, particularly in the Internet age, the library as learning centre, community centre, and literature centre. The AMA submitted recommendations to the recent Public Library Review:

We made very strongly the point that with the Arts Council talking about access to culture, Libraries
actually present the most successful example of accessibility of culture of any arts activity. (16)

The Introduction to each of the Comedia Working Papers (17) refers to the 1991 Out of Hours report which found that, "the continuing central and key role of the public library in sustaining a lively civic culture was strongly pronounced." Mention was also made of public libraries' wide user profile; its reputation as a safe, neutral environment. Writers of the report point out that "its ambience often successfully crossed the boundaries between learning and leisure, enlightenment and entertainment, casual use and dedicated study, which many other arts and cultural facilities failed to do."

The Summary of The Charter for the Arts in Scotland devotes a whole section to "The audience: issues and needs". It hopes to develop a wider audience for the arts. Key findings and recommendations in this section are: to empower people to enter and play a part in the cultural life of the nation; and to create easier access to cultural activity. The document indicates libraries are part of the solution:

The main mechanism of empowerment is education in all its forms including formal and informal education, self education and education through libraries and museums. Arts organisations and individual artists also have roles to play. (18)

Joyce McMillan comments that much publicly funded arts provision is not well supported. Eighty-five per cent of Scots never attend ballet, dance or opera, yet 60% of funding is channelled into these areas. Thirty per cent attend the theatre once a year - but usually to see a pantomime. However, 55% of Scots visit museums, with libraries in a similar position. (19)

As Chris Meade and Rachel Van Riel remark in Marshalled Arts (20): "If community arts become available through mainstream library provision they reach far more people than if they are confined to a few purpose built art centres."

Bob McKee outlines the benefits a close relationship with the arts can bring, not only for users, but for providers like local authorities. They will benefit firstly from an improved image, because the arts provide a mechanism for the regeneration and expression of civic identity and pride; secondly from a financial viewpoint, because of the proven link between arts activity and an expansion of local economic activity; from a community perspective because of the role that the arts can play in the process of community development, and finally in terms of quality, because the existence of arts amenities and activities in a locality is seen, by many people, as an indicator of the quality of life in that area and may well be one of the factors which
indicator of the quality of life in that area and may well be one of the factors which influences relocation decisions for households or businesses. (21) Despite this, the relationship between libraries and the arts has not always been well supported.

The Scottish Library Association/Scottish Library & Information Council Working Group report, Libraries and the Arts, recommends networking with arts agencies and underlines the need for a local authority arts policy. It has good points to make on the need for management support, but its view of library arts activity is prosaic. The Working Group recommends that arts organisations:

encourage clients to make the maximum use of library services as information points (my italics) for arts events and activities (22)

The report urges the public library profession to:

ensure librarianship training courses devote sufficient time to the management of library collections (23)

ensure that book selection procedures are broad enough (24) and allow for an adequate representation of Scottish work (25)

encourage borrowing of a wider range of videos from libraries, including those from independent film and video makers and community groups in Scotland (26)

consider ways in which community access to arts equipment and facilities can be widened (27), including use as non-professional venues for arts provision and film-viewing.

Libraries and the Arts offers a relatively uncritical assessment of the Scottish Arts Council's role, considering the limited extent of their support to libraries. The organisation provides matching funding and travel expenses for writers' visits. There is no incentive funding for innovative projects or literature promotion as exists in England, and while it could be argued that SLIC have a role to play here, their main remit is not the arts. A useful suggestion is made that the SAC should extend the input it provides on marketing for arts organisations to library services. (28) But in general this report does not call for any reappraisal of public libraries' relationship with the arts, or demand greater interaction with relevant agencies.

At a time when public libraries are keen to find new and positive directions for their work, there have been other opportunities to identify cultural provision as a way forward. A Charter for Public Libraries offers libraries a model which can be used
to develop, or revise, local users' charters. It makes a commitment to give everyone access to books, information and works of creative imagination (my italics) to encourage them to take part in cultural, democratic and economic activities; educate them, either formally or informally; help them make good use of their free time; promote reading as a basic skill for life; and make them aware of the value of information and encourage them to use it. (29) The largest section of the draft charter is devoted to “Books and other Stock”. One brief section is entitled “Encouraging people to use our services”. There is a commitment to organise activities for children (my italics) to encourage them to use the library and to read regularly and a general pledge to introduce a programme to promote services and encourage everyone to use them. There is mention of making library buildings available for other groups to use, and an intention to work with other organisations to promote literacy and reading. But there is no commitment to adult education at the Working Paper stage or to workshops, classes, exhibitions or performance-based arts provision.

In the same way the first Comedia Working Paper on the future of public library services lists “the typology of public library services”, including the expected (book lending, inter-library loans), the slightly more unusual (cafes, picture-borrowing) and the positively banal (keeping warm). Despite the long and illustrious history of activities in public libraries, there is no mention of adult learning provision, performance, writers’ workshops, arts and crafts demonstrations or computer access. All of these are to a greater or lesser degree routine in modern libraries and should be acknowledged in a report such as this. The sort of things we have additionally offered at Petersburn and Chapelhall, like recording studios, video editing suites and creches are unrepresented, but not unrepresentative. Libraries have an uphill struggle changing their image with other librarians, arts workers, elected members and users, if more credit is not given for work that is fresh and adventurous.

The 1995 COSLA standards for the public library service in Scotland make some positive points on libraries’ involvement in the arts. In a section on the Purpose and Key Activities of the Public Library Service, the first area addressed is culture, where the Working Group propose that we:

Promote the use of the library as a centre for community arts activity, by initiating cultural events and by providing a focus for local groups and societies fostering the creative use of leisure through the arts. Act as an entry point into the world of culture by responding to cultural diversity and different ethnic minority cultural traditions. (30)

It is also refreshing to read the draft discussion document recently agreed by the
Arts and Libraries Sub-Committee of the Library Association. The Vision Statement contained within this paper declares emphatically that:

All publicly funded libraries can and should contribute to the cultural life of the communities in which they are situated. They are, however, only part of a wide diversity of providers within any community and if the benefits of cultural activity are to be maximised then partnerships and alliances with other agencies need to be forged. (31)

The Library Association go so far as to state that, “libraries, especially public libraries, are, or certainly should be, the foremost cultural development agency within their local community”. This is an important statement of support.

There are some dissenting voices. F A Sharr, who expressed reservations about libraries taking on the role of work with the underprivileged, is also wary that a commitment to the arts goes too far. While he recognises that the library may play the sole arts role in a rural or newly developed community, in other cases:

When... the point is reached that the library is subsumed into a leisure-recreation-cultural complex, and loses its specific identity, it may be questioned whether this is sound policy... to satisfy these interests is an important part of the role of the public library, but it is not the whole. (32)

As W R Maidment pointed out in his 1986 paper on ‘Public libraries and the arts’, in spite of legislative guidance from the Public Libraries and Museums Act of 1964 and the Unesco Public Library Manifesto’s reference on cultural activities in public libraries, there were still “librarians who have doubts about departing very far from the basic service”. (33) Maidment felt such doubts were more common in the USA, where as late as 1980 the ALA World Encyclopedia reported the subject as less controversial but still a matter for debate. (34)

Although Peggy Heeks national questionnaire survey on the relationship between public libraries and the arts showed general support for arts activities in libraries, with 71% feeling that “Public libraries have an obligation to promote the arts”, 5% of respondents believed that “Public libraries should concentrate on their basic tasks and leave arts promotion to the specialists”. (35) The view that libraries should leave the arts to arts workers is more common than these responses would suggest, particularly where arts and libraries are structurally separated by departmental arrangements. In some cases, such as Kirklees, others were carrying out arts work:
"In our organisation public librarians are part of a team of leisure specialists. Arts initiatives and promotions can therefore be left to those with the experience, time and inclination... Librarians may have the facility for some aspects of this area, and can encourage use, but they shouldn’t assume a responsibility that they have neither the skill nor the opportunity to pursue". (36)

The Heeks questionnaire further revealed that although 40% of libraries responding had a high degree of arts involvement, 48% of respondents held no regular arts events other than clubs and book weeks. (37) Heeks herself commented that 25-30% of respondents “gave the impression of libraries little concerned to promote the arts”. (38)

There are critical voices even amongst proponents of arts provision in libraries. Rachel van Riel has worked as a Community Arts Coordinator in Sheffield Libraries and gone on to promote arts and literature in libraries programmes at a national level. She believes there should be a reason for the arts activity we choose:

Anything can happen in a library. The big question is: what should happen and exactly why? Zany ideas and cheery enthusiasm are fine, but, as the pressure of cuts and threatened privatisation increases, this whole area of work could be blown away unless it’s underpinned by clear objectives and a real commitment to make libraries places not for words from on high but for active, creative participation in the community and world we share. (39)

Some would argue that this is exactly what has happened, with arts, like adult education and community development too often seen as an add-on luxury, easily ditched when financial times are hard. It is easier to make an impact with the arts when they are part of a strategic programme with departmental support:

Library authorities may have budgets for booking artists into branches, or links with Arts Departments keen to include libraries among their community venues, they may use community arts to advertise their service - but we’ve been fortunate enough to be offered the chance to build community arts into the fabric of a library service, and to be part of redefining what a library is for. (40)
6.3 Track records - successes and failures

Libraries have a history of "extension activities", organised to attract and entertain. For adults, these are often craft demonstrations such as floral art or lacemaking, organised without community involvement in mind and with no commitment to any groups that may develop. More traditional library services tend to put their own agenda before community needs, planning a programme and sticking to it. Above all, they tend to lack imagination, repeating the same formula because an activity can be organised easily. This applies to children's activities too. Most library services run holiday activities, storytimes and book awareness projects to encourage children to read. But as Patrick Conway has pointed out, so much more could be achieved if such activities were presented in the form of mime, creative writing, craft, drama or music. (41) Existing programmes tend to be materials-based, focused on books, records and videos. (42) They often hinge on annual competitions and displays of work.

Bob McKee explains that libraries, galleries and museums have traditionally offered the finished product and the traditional art forms under glass, in a heavy frame or classified shelf sequence which left the product or artefact removed from the live artistic process:

This is, of course, changing. There has been a significant shift away from this approach in the arts; and, indeed, in sport. Art galleries have become arts centres, museums are now heritage centres, stadiums... are becoming community sports centres. The product is less remote and more accessible. The focus goes beyond product to explore process. Participation is encouraged - interest becomes active involvement. Sport - and art - for all. (43)

McKee sees the products of book, CD and video being complemented by participation in the form of creative writing groups, music workshops and community video, still as a natural extension of the library's role. The libraries and art interface has taken wildly different forms. The end result depends on time, resources and management commitment to arts work. Enthusiastic individuals, who "do the arts' in their lunch-hour or at some other odd moment, fitting in between more important things" (44) have their work cut out.

Christine Wares has stressed the importance of structural support if libraries and the arts are to work well together:

I cannot stress too strongly that only with a high level of financial and staffing commitment can the link
between libraries and the arts be effective. (45)

Certainly, some library services are prepared to invest in the arts. Sheffield Libraries appointed two part-time Community Arts Coordinators, Chris Meade and Rachel van Riel. They ran Write Back schemes in many Sheffield libraries, photocopying and lending "books" of poetry by local writers, pinning writing on notice boards. Other projects included a Carnival book launch, The Library of the Future, complete with drama and edible books, a Murder in the Library crime promotion with library staff dressed as Batman, Miss Marples, Sherlock Holmes and other figures from detective fiction and an appearance by Alice Walker at a literary festival drawing a crowd of 2000 to The City Hall. (46)

Since special efforts have to be made to attract young people to libraries, this is where the most innovative projects sometimes develop. Glasgow Libraries Yoker Youth Library had a regular programme of arts and crafts activities to occupy young people, including fashion, photography and design. As Alan Hasson points out, the success of that library was that young people were actually in a library setting and using it. In 1990 Yoker had a membership of over 2000 young people, approximately 70% of local people in the 12-25 age group. (47) Even this success is not a guarantee of continued support. Yoker Youth Library fell victim to budget cuts and is now closed.

A community-oriented approach was also applied in Ferguslie, as Alan Hasson relates in Continuity and Innovation. Excerpts from "The Slab Boys", a play dealing with life in a local carpet factory, were staged in the library by a group of professional actors. The Community Librarian reported that the excerpts, and the question-and-answer session which followed it, elicited the liveliest response of any "cultural" event ever held in the area. In Whitehill, a reminiscence group produced an oral history of the area. Hasson refers to such activities as "legitimization", giving a sense of individual and collective worth to a peripheralized and often stigmatized community. (48)

Shaun McCarthy has said in the context of writers’ workshops, “the sense of ‘something going on’ can add vitality to the overall ambience of the library”. (49) It challenges the idea of libraries as temples, and librarians as quiet custodians. The effects of such work on individuals and communities is now being examined as part of the British Library funded programme of research on the social impact of libraries.
6.4 Creative Writing in Libraries

Much has been written about the enrichment participation in the arts can bring to both individual and community. In her introduction to the Scottish Arts Council publication, *Changing Places*, Seona Reid outlines her belief that artistic self-expression can increase confidence and self-esteem:

The product communicates too. It is a familiar experience to be surprised and impressed by the ability of a friend, a partner, a child or a parent. ‘Since he saw me in that play, my son thinks I’m brilliant. He thinks I can do anything,’ said a member of a women’s arts group. (50)

Similarly creative writing projects offer a chance to find a new voice and to share experience.

Writing Activities in Liverpool Libraries (WALL) was established in 1988 as a government funded three year project. Various factors led to the creation of WALL. The first was the growth of a number of independent writers’ workshops in the city. Some of the earliest in the country, like Liverpool 8 Writers’ Workshop, were set up in the mid-1970s and bring together mainly working class (often unemployed) people to explore their feelings and thoughts about life through the medium of creative writing. The workshops provide a supportive atmosphere and constructive criticism to new writers. This has been a project with long-term aims. Many people attending classes have gone on to join workshops and attend further education courses. The project led to the creation of a mainline Writing Liaison Officer post, and then to sufficient urban programme funding for three Black Writing Liaison Officers. The Writing Liaison Office, based in a branch library in Toxteth, is now the centre of an extensive network with partners in libraries, education, social services, the arts and local communities. (51)

Creative writing is a obvious activity for libraries to promote. But as with many artistic activities in libraries, the rationale for establishing an activity and the level of management support it receives will dictate how it is organised, the sort of users it attracts, and how long it lasts.

Shaun McCarthy, himself a Writer in Residence, believes that a tutor’s groupwork skills are not the most important they possess:

Personally I feel that most authors make at least adequate teachers and that it should be a writer, not as it were a tutor of creative writing, who is offered the
However, experience in dealing with adult learners may be equally important. A sympathetic tutor can tease out writing from people not used to expressing themselves, and can encourage a supportive atmosphere among the group. It is important that the focus remains on the work of group members rather than that of the resident artist. In *Arts and Communities*, the Community Development Foundation comment that, “Many residencies produce benefits mainly for the artist and their CV. The longer-term cultural aims of the people a residency can touch may too easily be seen as a by-product rather than the point of a residency.” (53)

I worked as Community Librarian with Petersburn Community Library and Teenage Drop-in Centre in Airdrie from 1991-1996. The Women Writers’ Workshop in Petersburn was established as a joint project with Community Education and the WEA in 1992. It meets fortnightly in the library with a regular tutor, a programme of author visits organised by the committee, and a supporting creche. Meetings are free of charge and the workshop has an informal atmosphere. Several members came initially to listen to other people’s writing and now write themselves. Much of the work produced is of very high quality. The workshop has published two anthologies, is shortly to launch a third, and has secured several major grants. It has developed in different directions, including a drama and writing residential weekend for thirty women and several dayschools in the local area.

Key members of the group first met in a vibrant Community Education group called Women and the Arts. Long ago adopted as the sister group of our own this involves reading and discussing the likes of Thomas Hardy, Liz Lochead, Sylvia Plath and Daphne du Maurier, and trips to the theatre to see drama, ballet and opera free of charge. Women’s history walks and heritage visits are an important part of the programme too. Discussion in both groups relates art to common experience, finding parallels in the daily lives of those attending. In a similar vein, a junior writers workshop has run at Petersburn Library for over five years. It meets fortnightly on Saturday mornings, in a fun, informal atmosphere, and generally boasts a dozen or so 7-13 year olds. A developmental approach has been adopted with this group too, and a lively anthology of the group’s work was successfully launched for Christmas 1995.

Our commitment at Petersburn was long-term in response to obvious and continuing interest from the community. Our own work and that of partner agencies has had measurable results. In terms of social impact, a number of improvements to personal and community wellbeing can be highlighted: women whose writing has been published/teenagers whose music has been released on CD; an increase in
numbers of people attending adult and continuing education classes, seeking and taking up further education and employment; an increase in community and political activity.

In the writing field alone, there is evidence that other libraries are taking a developmental approach to cultural provision. A new post of Joined Up Writing Coordinator was established by Leeds Library and Information Service, jointly funded by Yorkshire and Humberside Arts. The post went to an experienced Community Arts worker who will support and promote writers in Leeds. The post has an annual budget of £22,700. (54)

The examples given here show that writing is an activity which builds on its own success.

6.5 Literature Promotion

Reading is very important to library users. Comedia’s Borrowed Time reported that most users in two community libraries in disadvantaged areas of Cleveland came to borrow fiction:

it was clear that the reading habit was a central and psychologically important part of their daily lives. It was a need rather than a want, and the library clearly played a crucial role in many local people’s lives, particularly on estates where there were few other leisure choices. (55)

It appears that even in deprived areas, reading is an activity people can enjoy. Librarians are in a position to persuade new people to take up this pleasurable activity: and to persuade existing readers to try something new.

Many libraries are active in literature promotion. Libraries exist primarily to lend books: it is their most popular attribute and something long-serving librarians often do without much thought. They often buy what is popular because they know it will be borrowed. There is increasing pressure in the form of performance indicators to succeed in this aim. No measurement is made of the quality of bookstock, its range, balance or relevance. Councillors used to a diet of issue figures demand nothing more, and sometimes librarians demand nothing more of their users.

In the early days of public library provision, fiction was frowned upon. As long ago as 1890 a survey of 25 libraries in England and Scotland attributed 74% of total
issues to fiction, despite fiction representing only 37.5% of the stock of the libraries' examined. (56) These figures illustrate a serious mismatch between demand and provision which was a result of deliberate policy.

Library historian Robert Snape explains:

Although the popularity of the public library was virtually totally dependent upon its leisure appeal, its attractiveness as a provider of fiction was not generally welcomed by librarians. Many were acutely embarrassed by the overwhelming demand for fiction, for they saw their own claims to professional standing to be undermined by what they perceived as a non-purposeful and non-profitable use of libraries... (57)

Even now literature promotion is not always given the serious consideration it deserves. Barry Totterdell, discussing the various functions the public library has historically embraced sees fiction provision as fundamental: “It is significant that all the evidence from surveys suggests users have ‘voted with their feet’ for a largely recreational service, the one aspect of library purpose most consistently ignored by the theoreticians”. (58) Snape has detected a redefinition of self-image among library professionals over the last 15 years, to favour a close alignment with information, and particularly with information technology. (59) This is reflected in the campaign to amalgamate the Library Association and the Institute of Information Scientists. With the rush to embrace the Internet, and so many in the Information Industry eager for the same clientele, there is a danger libraries will forget what they are really good at. Their stock in trade.

The Comedia report, Borrowed Time, believes that Victorian attitudes to fiction are alive and well among contemporary librarians: “Even today it sometimes appears that librarians are happier with the back catalogue of fiction than with the literary avant-garde, the sensationally new, or contemporary genres.” (60) It would be true to say that public library shelves feature more bestselling fiction than award-winning novels, because the overwhelming demand from the readership is for lighter material. But the comments made in the Comedia report are rather unfair in that there is a great deal of literary and cutting edge fiction available in libraries. Many now offer themed displays of new (or eg. Scottish) writers to promote their work. And the public library is more likely to stock the back catalogue of the “literary” author than many bookshops. Public libraries are working very hard to support more challenging writing and encourage people to broaden their reading taste as examples in this section will show.

Literature promotion is one of the more positive roles libraries have embraced in
recent years. It is not something they are obliged by statute to do, but it encourages more reflective use of stock. It can extend the appeal of the library to those who thought it had little to offer, and it is also good for featured writers, and for writing in general. The power of literature should not be underestimated. Bob Usherwood argues in Continuity and Innovation in the Public Library:

History has shown that literature and the other arts can sometimes bring about social and political change. This can occasionally be direct, as was the case with BBC television’s “Cathy Come Home”, but more often it is by providing people with insights into the lives of other people and/or by communicating across the barriers of race, class and age. Public libraries can, of course, do this directly by displays and publications that introduce their public to different cultures and different views on issues of the day. (61)

A number of schemes have proved highly successful in recent years. Possibly the best known of these has been the Now Read On scheme, adopted widely throughout Scotland. This was adapted from Southern Arts’ Well Worth Reading, a pilot scheme to promote contemporary novels. Whilst about 70% of all issues from public libraries are fiction, a significant proportion of these are westerns, romances, and bestsellers. Having found a genre they like, readers tend to stick to it like limpets. The idea of this promotional scheme is to tempt them to try something else. Four broad themes each year are chosen and promoted in a bookshop marketing style with dumpbins, posters, bookmarks and multiple copies of books. Past themes have included Scottish Writing Today; Transatlantic Tales; You’ve Seen the Film and Time Off, promoting authors such as A L Kennedy, Roddy Doyle, Neil Munro and John Updike. While these writers may seem like household names, they are not the staple fare of the average library user, and the success of the Now Read On scheme has been seen in greatly increased issues of their books. Such schemes can also prompt library authorities to reassess their book buying criteria and end the self-fulfilling prophecy of undemanding stock for an undemanding clientele.

Children’s Book Week and Readathon have become regular events at a national level. The Library Power campaign, launched in January 1995, aimed at encouraging teenage use of their libraries, achieved widespread media coverage. In Scotland, the Book Campaign for 1995 was Rediscovery, which included poster campaigns, the Rediscovery BookBus for primary schools and the first National Book Day. Scottish Book Fortnight is another regular event.

At a local level, promotions like these could be really challenging with a multimedia approach and a little imagination, tying organised film and theatre visits to
appropriate novels, offering drama or visual arts workshops on highlighted themes. What libraries need to do, and what they so often fail to attempt, is take risks, take programmes one step further, draw lessons from other skills and professions and make the most of their own input in that context. It makes for good publicity opportunities, and challenges the public perception that libraries are dull.

In February 1997 the Arts Council of England published a new manual of good practice in public library literature promotion. **Shelf Talk** is intended to prove that literature is at the core of what libraries do and that promoting it is an essential task, not a luxury. (62) It is a loose leaf manual, designed to be updated regularly with case studies of literature promotions and material on staff and audience development. Its publication acknowledges the value of literature promotion work.

6.6 Community art

Malcolm Dickson gives a definition of community art in *Art with People*:

> Although problematic and requiring redefinition, 'community arts' is used as an umbrella term to describe a multitude of arts work which is grounded in community practice. It is also a way of thinking about the arts and their reintegration into an increasingly threadbare social fabric. (63)

Lola Clinton and Andrew Glen, writing in *Community and Public Policy*, explain that community art is "not an artform in itself but involves arts created out of the imaginations and experiences of communities". (64) The authors divide community arts into four main types: amateur and cultural arts; access to arts; professional arts activities and arts as a sociopolitical tool. The engagement of artists with people as "animateurs" challenges the view that art and artists are separate from, and somehow "above", society. (65) Community arts, more than any other artform, are a challenge to those who might presume to impose a "cultural hegemony" on others. (66) They enthuse and empower. They do not solve problems of multiple deprivation on their own, but they are an important part at an individual and group level of giving people the confidence to demand more.

Clinton and Glen make several important recommendations for the future success of community arts. They identify a need for local infrastructures of arts resources and support and training for arts workers using a community practice approach. (67) They stress the need to document the range of activities in community arts which are too often unseen and unheard by all but the participants, and suggest that
performance indicators include processes related to "excellence of participation and access". (68)

Chris Meade and Rachel Van Riel make their interpretation of community art in a libraries context:

Libraries exist to serve the cultural and information needs of their communities. Community arts enables the information to be two way. You don't just go to your library to get the received opinion about a subject; your library should give you the opportunity to explore and express what you think about it. Community arts also enables information to be given in an interesting way, fun rather than good for you, but challenging too, stretching people to think more imaginatively, not patronising or talking down. (69)

Community arts has many parallels with community librarianship. Patrick Conway, Borough Librarian and Arts Officer, Gateshead, believes that both promote positive community values of equality and harmony, and help reclaim a place on the cultural map for those whose voices have been most blunted and muted. (70)

Conway believes that Community Arts, though far less formal, has strong affinities with progressive adult education:

Community arts work, though clearly aimed at creative aspects of personality, has clear links with various styles of community development work...

The central philosophy remains - that skilled and sensitive artists working alongside other members of a community can help to unlock the wealth of creative energy latent in any group of people, and can help channel that energy into constructive and confident revitalisation of such communities. (71)

Speaking at the 1985 Sheffield Conference on Libraries and the Arts, Patrick Conway gives very clear guidance on what libraries can do, and why they are so well placed to do it:

...firstly, libraries can act as catalysts for community arts work by assisting in community development. This may mean organising playschemes, establishing senior citizens tea clubs, initiating oral history groups, etc. Once established there are then organisations in the local area with which to develop community arts.
From this may develop local festivals, community newspapers and other activities. (72)

Conway also outlines what libraries can offer in terms of resources: meeting rooms; audio and video equipment; staging; chairs; tables; crockery and tea urns. Photocopiers, DTP facilities, a video-editing suite may allow local projects to set up and expand.

David Liddle has described, “the dynamism released by putting into practice the shared values of Community Arts and Community Librarianship”. (73) While there are many examples of arts activities based around community libraries, it has less frequently been articulated in a coherent, authority-wide strategy, with a rationale for action. Ray Astbury, writing on ‘Education for Community Librarianship’, states that “the community librarian must work in the community in dynamic partnership with a range of professionals from other disciplines, and with volunteers; inter-disciplinary and inter-departmental co-operation is essential to the effectiveness of community-based initiatives”. (74) Later he elaborates, “librarians, in common with workers in more established professions, have often failed to respond in holistic terms to individual and community needs, reacting unilaterally from the standpoint of their particular and often narrowly defined specialism.” (75) This is a key point if our work is to succeed. No one agency should act alone.

A holistic approach has been the core philosophy at Petersburn, based on the premise that many agencies can achieve far more than one. We have worked with Social Work, Community Education, The WEA, churches, schools, the health board, community fora and others in a partnership aimed at making all of our work more relevant and more focussed. The long-term value of such work is increasingly being addressed by arts professionals in research papers such as Comedia’s The Social Impact of the Arts. New techniques of evaluation are being developed, and the importance of this aspect of work with communities is now well recognised.

The same idea is perhaps reflected in the Comedia report, Borrowed Time, where the authors discuss the economic and social benefits of the community library approach:

...we are convinced that the community library has a strategic and enabling part to play in the repertoire of an holistic community development approach, among so many compensatory, welfarist or crime prevention strategies. (76)

The role envisaged here is not passive or neutral. It can only be the result of a departmental commitment to community development, backed up by elected
members. As such it is a long-term project.

Bob Usherwood, along with many leading library writers, believes in the capacity of public libraries to effect social change. He feels public libraries have the ability to empower people through the strength of the ideas in the material they hold and organise, commenting that, “Poetry and literature can provide a means by which people obtain greater insight into the issues of the day.” (77) I would argue that this is still better achieved when performance or interpretation provide a context. The Women and the Arts group running in Petersburn and a Readers’ Group in nearby Chapelhall are doing just this. The Women and the Arts group have for example read Daphne du Maurier’s Rebecca, as well as watching the film and considering biographical writing on the author. Their programme has included the life and work of Charles Rennie MacIntosh, considered through literature and visits to relevant buildings and exhibitions. The life and work of a composer is examined before a visit to the opera. In general the group will read about their topic before the regular meeting, so it can be discussed. The Readers’ Group in Chapelhall meets to discuss books which members of the group have read and to talk about writing and literature in general. Both of these groups were initially established with the support of a Community Education worker, but are now operating independently.

Peggy Heeks’ benchmark report on Libraries and the Arts followed a questionnaire sent to all the public library authorities in Britain in 1989. She found that nearly half of Britain’s libraries provided accommodation for voluntary groups and over half provided space specially for arts exhibitions. She also found evidence of libraries being used for live music performances, drama performances, writers’ workshops and other literary activities, for photography projects and the screening of films. The reason for the library accruing these functions was either because the library was regarded as the only available space in a town or because it was seen as the most accessible. (78)

This questionnaire, returned by all but 28 library authorities in the country, produced some interesting results. It revealed for example that 71% of respondents believed public libraries have an obligation to promote the arts, and 61% believe public libraries should be centres of community arts, fostering local creativity. Eighty-three per cent provide accommodation for arts groups, 88% have exhibition space available and 44% have buildings designed for joint library/arts use. Fifty-six per cent of library authorities responding had a departmental officer with an arts responsibility: 83% recognised a need for external training on arts work. As far as strategic planning is concerned, 74% of authorities were involved in joint projects; 61% had a library policy statement of objectives. In 45% of cases an arts survey had already been conducted in the area: 48% reported a local arts development
plan. Although some of the findings may be inconclusive - it is easy to give a commitment to fostering local creativity - the existence of arts surveys and development plans implies many authorities are now taking concrete steps to achieve this aim.

Heeks' concluding chapter, 'Agenda for Development', highlights a continuing lack of awareness by some arts administrators of library initiatives, the absence of coordination between different library authorities, and the low professional impact - at the time - of librarians on the Arts Council and the Regional Arts Association (RAAs). She recommends a wider definition of arts activities, greater Library Association involvement in organising library and arts co-operation, better marketing of services, greater use of library premises for the full range of arts activities, and a greater emphasis on “minority arts”. Other priorities are improved liaison with the Arts Council and the RAAs, better staff training and increased professional awareness. (80)

Peggy Heeks believes her work highlights the variety of ways in which public libraries are involved in the arts. About 30% of library departments limit their activity to the traditional roles of providing accommodation for arts activities, maintaining collections of materials, and giving information. The remainder do more - organising arts events in libraries or cooperating with others in joint projects; finding a role as a community arts agency. She notes that around 40% of library authorities have moved or are about to move into a completely different relationship with the arts: taking on a role in strategic planning, coordinating local effort, initiating partnership projects. This proactive, structured approach is infinitely preferable to the more normal ad hoc mode of provision: “progress depends too often on personal enthusiasm unsupported by elected members (and resultant) lack of consistency and continuity in the events organised”. (81) Her questionnaire replies reveal that a high proportion of library departments (45%) hold arts activities mainly as one-off events, rather than part of a regular programme.

Overall, Heeks is positive about her findings, noting “a tide of energy and opinion which is bringing public libraries into a new and more dynamic relationship with the arts”. (82) But she believes that to capitalise on this enthusiasm, there must be strategic planning at a local and national level.

As early as 1976, the Redcliffe-Maud report on Support for the Arts in England and Wales called for greater collaboration between library services and council arts and leisure services, with the assistance of an arts development plan. (83) The Heeks report indicates that progress has been slow.
So, having considered community development, adult education and the arts in relation to libraries, we should be considering what exactly we hope to achieve by them for our users. The original aims of community development and community arts were to encourage social action leading to social change. It is apposite to ask the question Own Kelly asked in Storming the Citadel: what comes after community arts? Is it a means of achieving social change, leaving individuals with the confidence to voice an opinion and alter existing power structures?

Examples above show that libraries' commitment to arts provision can vary. The longer term impact of arts activities has not always been considered. This does not mean that enhancement in skills and quality of life is not achieved. Short-term activities such as a summer reading scheme for children, an adult computer class or a local history week may encourage participants to take their interest further. If this affects social change, it may be in an incremental fashion, with individuals seeing talents blossom, going on to greater attainment at school, or to further education and employment. Sometimes aspirations can be raised at a neighbourhood level, but this really requires an interagency approach, a clear commitment to community development from all interested parties, and a significant investment of resources. If there are no employment opportunities, achievements can only be on a limited scale, and agencies involved may lose support.

The inevitable result of community art, even the holistic approach we have tried to adopt at Petersburn, is that people move on, sometimes out of the community. Many of our original participants are now in employment or full-time education. If they are replaced by new faces, and others are inspired by what they have achieved, this is still a worthwhile result.

Storming the Citadels is perhaps a rather seventies goal. But empowering people with the desire to demand more is relevant, and is actively happening in many of our communities. Community development is opening doors for individuals, but changing the nature of a community cannot realistically be achieved without long-term investment and improved employment opportunities.

6.7 Performance Review

The arts have not escaped the drive for performance review in the public sector. Whilst initial interest focussed on quantitative indicators relating to value for money, more elusive has been the definitive measure to assess what qualitative difference any arts work has made.
There has been great interest in assessing the social impact of the arts. The 1993 Comedia document on this theme considered the difficulties involved and began to work towards a methodological framework for performance review. The writers believe that we are likely to see more attention paid to the assessment of the impact of policies, rather than simply to the monitoring and evaluation of organisations at an operational level. This shift is reflected in an emerging emphasis on evaluating outputs of policy rather than inputs. (84)

They acknowledge that when looking at the impact of the arts, it is dangerous to attribute all positive outcomes to the “arts” elements of a project when it is obvious that it is the “social” element that predominates - the experience of working with other people and of learning team skills which could equally be achieved by sports, a carpentry project or being in the army. (85) This is why adult education, community information and other aspects of library provision also have an important role to play in enhancing people’s lives. Art is one possible agent of community development, but not the only one.

The indicators proposed by the Comedia report address issues like the enhancement of local skills and the strengthening of local identity and pride, (86) qualities not easily quantified. Examples of work in the health sector and prison service are considered for their impact on participants. Some disability projects have already developed their own evaluation and performance measurement policy. ArtLink relates all evaluation to its own principles of practice, aims and objectives.

Comedia suggest a whole range of techniques for measuring social impact of the arts. Quantitative methods include postal questionnaires, street and telephone surveys, panel studies of attitudes and cluster sampling. Qualitative techniques include focus group interviews, structured or unstructured interviews, participant observation, community self-assessment, gathering of life stories, role playing and so on. (87) Despite all these efforts, the authors admit it is hard to measure the effect of arts activity on the social cohesion of a community.

The authors of the Comedia discussion document arrive at four specific indicators of social impact, namely: strengthening social cohesion; developing individual confidence and life skills; creating common ground between people of different ages and improving peoples’ mental and physical well-being. (88) These indicators could equally be applied to the development work of libraries. And certainly, it is not satisfactory for such work to go on without review or closer examination. On-going evaluation in line with local needs is the only way we can seek to achieve our own objectives in community development. The Libraries and Communities Research Programme is seeking to establish such a database for community development.
work in libraries. Some direction is also coming from the Library Association, which commissioned research to produce a model arts and libraries statement/policy for adaptation by individual local authorities. The LA believe this could form part of a wider exercise, promoted by the Arts Council of England and others, to encourage local authorities to produce local arts plans.

The recent Library Association draft discussion document, *Cultural Development and Publicly Funded Library Services*, acknowledged the need for libraries to actively pursue arts plans and policies: “If libraries are to build on their position as leading local cultural centres they need to demonstrate their contribution to cultural policy as a whole. Only then will more of them attract the kudos and active effectiveness of other arts organisations such as concert halls, theatres or galleries”. (89) If we wish to be taken seriously, we need to make serious plans for our stake in the future of local and national arts provision.

The 1995 COSLA Public Library Standards urge authorities to take account of the need for arts provision when new libraries are built, ensuring features such as separate access, sound proofing, blackouts and loop induction systems are installed. (90)

Libby Ward made pertinent points in her presentation to the 1997 Scottish Library Association conference. Libraries must bring their image up to date and market themselves energetically to all segments of the community. They must invest in staff, training and facilities and be prepared to quantify their achievements to prove that arts have an impact on their communities, and libraries are an important part of the process. (91)

The points which emerge from this examination of public library arts provision are: the need for whole service commitment to arts activities at operational and strategic levels; the importance of partnership working; the need to invest in training and the need to be proactive. Where libraries are engaged in artistic activities, their approach should be part of a strategic, developmental plan. In this way, library arts provision is both credible and effective.

**NOTES**

15. Ibid, p711.
27. Ibid, p19.
34. Ibid.
37. Ibid, p27.
38. Ibid, p27.
42. Ibid, p30.
43. McKee, R., in Hinton, B., ibid, p127.
45. Ibid, p19.
48. Ibid, p158.
51. Wallace, P., 'The Right Stuff? Writing in the Community - a Liverpool Lib-
52. McCarthy, S., op cit, p108.
53. Community Development Foundation, Arts and Communities. CDF, 1993, p89.
65. Ibid, p94.
66. Ibid, p95.
68. Ibid, p107.
71. Ibid, p32.
75. Ibid, p45.
76. Comedia, Borrowed Time?, op cit, p38.
82. Ibid, p68.
86. Ibid, p20.
87. Ibid, p47.
88. Ibid, p59.
90. Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, Standards, op cit, 7.2.3., p28.
CHAPTER SEVEN - CASE STUDIES

7.1 Holt Jackson/Library Association Community Initiative Award

As the Introduction to this thesis explained, the research was motivated by the perception of library authorities engaged in community development work. Individual projects throughout the country have had a tremendous impact, but they have not always had a high profile beyond their immediate community. Thus their contribution to good practice has been limited.

The Holt Jackson/Library Association Community Initiative Award was an attempt to address this issue. Established as a joint venture between the Community Services Group of the Library Association and the Community Development Foundation, the award was supported by the Library Association, and a major library supplier. After five years of support, Holt Jackson bowed out, leaving sponsorship in the hands of conference organisers “The Library + Information Show”. The award was given the new and more manageable title, “Libraries Change Lives”. This might reflect a heightened sensitivity to marketing five years on, and an awareness of the need to attract interest from outwith the profession. The award has provided 125 case studies over the past five years which illustrate how libraries are helping to build lively, involved and informed communities. These case studies have been "marketed" to the outside world; to journalists, local politicians, commercial sector partners and other agencies with interested in community development. (1)

The award is well-recognised within the library world. Being shortlisted and eventually winning the award brought great benefits for Petersburn. It increased the credibility of a rather experimental project within the library service; provoked media interest locally, nationally and internationally and raised the profile of the project with Councillors. In the long term this did not secure Petersburn’s future, but it could be argued that the fundamental changes there were due to local government reorganisation.

What is striking about the entries for this award is their range: both in the users they seek to attract and the means they employ. The projects involved offer models for libraries building strategic alliances to work with communities. Furthermore, our survey proves that community development work in libraries is more than a series of successful projects, remarkable for how different they are from mainstream provision. There is in fact a commitment to empowering communities in the
majority of library services throughout the country. Our case study interviews show that projects directly engaging with communities can be part of a traditional service with a strategic plan to work collaboratively with other agencies.

Three past winners of the Community Initiative award are outlined below, to give an indication of the type of work libraries are doing in communities, their rationale and the methods they employ. The approach is "bottom up", rather than the "top down" approach taken with questionnaire respondents later on. The chapter that follows, with full details of the national survey of community development strategies in libraries, places their work in context.

7.2 Petersburn Community Library and Youth Drop-in Centre

A brief description of this project has already been given in the Introduction to this thesis.

Petersburn Community Library was part of Monklands District Council Library Services Department and is now part of the Cultural Services Department, North Lanarkshire Council. It is situated twenty miles from Glasgow in Airdrie and serves 10,000 people in the housing schemes of Petersburn and Craigneuk. The area has the highest percentage of teenagers per head of population in Scotland (23% aged 12-20 in New Petersburn; 20% in the whole Urban Programme Area). The industrial decline which has been a feature of much of West and Central Scotland is evident here in high unemployment and significant levels of deprivation.

Although there had been a small library in Petersburn since 1973 in a variety of temporary locations, Monklands District Council sought Urban Aid funding in 1989 for a purpose built community library with teenage drop-in centre attached. This was agreed and work began the same year. The project opened in December 1991.

Until local government reorganisation in 1995, the staff of ten included myself as Community Librarian in overall charge, two Youth Development Workers, a studio technician and a clerical worker. The project incorporated a recording studio and video-editing suite. In addition to guitar classes, keyboard tuition and courses in sound recording, video-editing and music management, a full programme of arts and educational activities ran from the library aimed at all age groups. This included writers' workshops for women and children, a teenage girls group, an after-school computer club, a Higher English certificated course, a community newsletter, computer classes, yoga, assertiveness, drama, aromatherapy and self defence. Many of the adult activities were supported by a fully registered creche. A
reminiscence group ran at the local sheltered housing complex. Careers advice surgeries gave help to those looking for jobs. Many libraries offer events and activities of this sort, but perhaps Petersburn was unusual in the range of activities it provided, and its commitment to arts and education as an integral part of the service.

Almost all of the activities above were organised collaboratively, with one or more partners from the local Home School Community Partnership (an Urban Programme project running in the four local primary schools), the Lone Parent Project (run by Social Work, also Urban Aid funded), Community Education, and the Workers' Educational Association. This avoided gaps and overlaps in provision and pooled resources. It also made for a broader client base and meant activities were not always associated with the same project or person.

In a recent article about the impact of the Community Initiative Award, Miranda McKearney recalled the acceptance speech made on our behalf at the 1994 ceremony by Marianne Rowan: “A middle-aged woman from Petersburn, a deprived estate near Airdrie, spoke of women’s lives in the area having been transformed by the educational and personal development opportunities offered by the dynamic Petersburn Community Library”. (2)

The philosophy of our local authority at Petersburn’s inception was crucial. The support of Chief Officers convinced elected members to support us philosophically and financially. But the value of this support became obvious all too late, when a change in library structures and management, as well as a diminution of local council power within the North Lanarkshire area, changing the entire nature of the project. The arts components of the Petersburn project are now run independently by Arts and Venues, meaning that some workshops continue under their auspices and less established activities have ceased. Use of the recording studio and guitar tuition is now charged, as are loans of CDs and music videos to teenagers.

The library survives, but the project which invigorated the library has effectively ceased to exist. The reasons for its demise, including the lack of strategic planning in the library service managing the project, have been examined in the Introduction to this thesis. This section will focus on the project’s early success.

A community profile and extensive consultation were carried out before the new library opened. Every effort was made, through door to door leafletting and publicity through schools and community groups, to involve the community in its operation.
We tried to organise events in a developmental way. When an assertiveness day featured an aromatherapy workshop it proved very popular. As a result we organised a four-part aromatherapy course with forty people attending, and a follow-up “Alternatives to Stress” course with sessions on yoga and relaxation. Activities at the library resulted in a fluid and growing “core” of users. Mailing lists and the community newsletter promoted library events.

Several groups met in the library. The writers’ workshops, the drop-in users’ group, the video users group, the mediation group, the community newsletter group. In some cases library staff attended in a supportive role. The guiding principle was that all sections of the community should feel welcome. We wanted the library seen as a safe, neutral place by the community, a focus of activity where all could get involved. Partnership working was key to the success of Petersburn, but the nature of its staff was also important. Community education trained youth workers were as integral to the department as the librarians. The library and drop-in each contributed different things to the project: both were essential.

Above all the service was dynamic. We felt that in an age where we have to compete with television, video, computer games, the Internet, leisure centres, we had to really promote our service and ensure it met local needs. We had to give something to the community that was not there before, and to make the community part of it.

While we were important to Petersburn, we did not prove ourselves indispensable. Many of the core users of our service have gone on to find work or to study at university, although the vast majority still live in Petersburn. Marianne, quoted above, is one example. Perhaps our achievement should be seen in terms of how it changed individual lives. If all the agencies concerned had continued to work together change in the community might have been permanent.

There are lessons to be learnt from the experience of Petersburn and the results of our survey. Perhaps the most interesting centre on the difference between small, experimental projects, departmental strategic plans and what can be achieved in each case.

7.3 Wandsworth Prison and Psychiatric Libraries

The Escape with a Book project which won the 1993 award operates from two sites: HMP Prison Wandsworth and Springfield Psychiatric Hospital. It offers inmates and residents of an impersonal, often harsh, regime access to information,
education and the arts, encouraging self-expression and stimulating interests. In the first year of the Escape with a Book project, book issues increased by 22% at the prison and 18% at Springfield Hospital.

Wandsworth Prison is a traditional Victorian establishment, its identical wings featuring rows of cells and tiers of walkways. It houses around 800 category B male offenders. In January 1992, the average inmate was locked in his cell 23 hours a day and was subject to “a powerful discipline”. (3)

Springfield Hospital has 450 beds, with two locked wards. Both libraries are funded by the Home Office and the borough council and are run by Wandsworth Council’s mobile library services team, headed by Jan Barnett. Jan and her staff have worked to develop different ways of attracting new users, some of whom would not have dreamt of visiting a library. Many of the events focus on black culture. Nearly one quarter of the prison population is Afro-Caribbean. Wandsworth’s Afro-Caribbean librarian and the outreach worker for Wandsworth Museum are both involved.

A Times Educational Supplement report describes the prison library as:

‘nothing too fancy’. Long, narrow and dowdy, it resembles an ageing railway carriage, devoid of decoration. (4)

Yet the project provides “an oasis of civilisation within a tough prison regime”. In both institutions the libraries can be an “escape route” from the harsh realities of the environment. (5)

Library staff working on the project have been keen to improve the quality of life of inmates and patients and to promote greater library use. They have organised special events, including opportunities for the prisoners to dress in Roman armour and flying suits and gas masks. Older inmates have talked about their wartime experiences. Patients have tried on Victorian underwear and Home Guard uniforms. Multicultural events have been organised with appropriate food. Music has played an important role for the psychiatric patients. A rock band performs concerts in the library. Initially formed by a group of manic depressives, it was called Feeling Good, and has been renamed Feeling Better. There have also been Irish music concerts, popular sing-a-longs and Latin jazz events. The libraries themselves are seen by users as somewhere they can relax and play music.

Sue Townsend, Claire Rayner and Miriam Margolis are among those who have visited the libraries without charging a fee. Miriam Margolis gave a talk on the value
of books and performed parts from her one-woman show about Charles Dickens' women. This was especially entertaining since many of the inmates did not know that Dickens' father served time in the debtors' prison. A lecture on the Romans inspired one inmate to request books on this subject and he is now researching the Greeks. Another is studying for A-level History. Staff have encouraged patients and inmates to use the arts as a means of self-expression. Some have worked with wood to create traditional African sculptures. The project have applied for funding for sculpture workshops and a library-based project, possibly creating a mural. Local writers are involved with creative writing workshops in the prison, particularly with sex offenders. There have been poetry readings and workshops on black writers and achievers, black poets and history. The project has no funding for events and its success is due to the commitment of staff involved.

The library has given its support to a whole range of prison activities, including providing source material for Chaplaincy events on a theme of "Around the World". There are weekly basic skills sessions in the library with a literacy tutor, and monthly patients' rights surgeries with a Community Health Council officer.

At a seminar on the Community Initiative Award, Jan Barnett played a tape of interviews with prisoners involved in the project. One said, "When I go into my cell at 8 o'clock in the evening and pick up a book I am not in prison. I have escaped into another world and that world keeps me going until my door is open again at 7.40 in the morning". The library in a prison or hospital is like a public library, seen as a neutral, safe place.

Jean Douton works in the Springfield hospital library. She has her own view of the appeal that library has for its community:

I have worked in public libraries for years. They have always attracted the homeless and deprived. Springfield is no different, it just has a greater concentration. But it's not just about book borrowing. It has a therapeutic atmosphere. People are frightened by libraries, they are put off by hushed atmospheres. Springfield's library provides a stepping stone for patients out into the community. (6)

Projects like "Escape with a Book" often thrive because of the commitment and enthusiasm of staff and users. Guy Oprey used to work in Wandsworth Prison Library and through it set up a prison magazine, called Spare Luggage. He commented:

I used to enjoy work on it so much I was often in the
library until 2am. A lot of prisoners got involved. It was hard work but very rewarding. (7)

Michael Inns is one of three Wandsworth prison inmates working in the library, with guidance from professional library staff. He comments: “basically we have a free hand in the actual running of the place.” (8) He describes the library’s bookstock, which includes law, the DSS, prison rights within the European Community and standing orders relating to the prison.

The library also provides a service of letter reading and writing:

We have a cross-section of people within these walls, some of whom cannot read or write and as correspondence is a very important part of prison life we try to help those who have difficulty with this. We also cater for a wide variety of non-English-speaking inmates and we carry a selection of books in most European languages, as well as books by Hindi and Afro-Caribbean authors. So there aren’t many people whose needs we cannot meet. (9)

One prisoner who wanted to maintain his relationship with his young child, asked library staff to obtain children’s books for him so he could read them on to a tape and send the tape home.

Another important role for the library is providing an interest for inmates or patients. This might be in the form of information about a new career, or starting a new hobby. Michael Inns explains:

Many people use the library for help with their studies. Whether it’s for the Open University or a correspondence course to learn another language, we try to make sure that the right books are available. Coming into prison is a heart-wrenching time. Most of us have cried in frustration. Once you have gone through the process of trying all the avenues to get released - the realisation sets in that you must serve your sentence. Then, and only then, do you decide how you are going to spend your time. This can be in one of many ways. You can be disruptive or you can sit and do nothing but wait for your door to be opened. Or you can plan a new life, which has to be the best way. (10)

Before they won the award, both establishments felt they often missed out on funding. The libraries had a low profile and were not seen as a priority. Library resources have now been increased. Springfield library is currently part of the
Therapies Department, whereas before it was positioned alongside cleaning in General Services. The Prison library service is now represented at Senior Governor level. This elevation has produced advantages particularly in terms of funding and prestige.

The Community Initiative Award featured as part of the application for a Charter Mark for "quality and excellence" by Wandsworth's Leisure and Amenities Department. The Governor of Wandsworth Prison, Graham Clark, is now directly involved in the service. In his words, "A good and active library gives the inmates a chance they never had before. It can give them openings, provide them with a new vista of life. A library is a necessity of civilised life, not a luxury". (11)

The Escape with a Book Project has worked on community development in its own specialist community. It has involved its users and allowed them to shape service delivery. It has been highly resourceful, working with outside agencies where appropriate, and has made its own unique service indispensable to its community. Above all it has opened up opportunities and changed people's lives.

7.4 Sunderland Bookstart Project

This project aims to introduce books to babies at 9 months, and won the 1995 Award. Sunderland applied for finance from the City Challenge Fund and sought partnerships with local bookshops, schools and health authority services to establish the scheme. It involves giving a drawstring bag containing a book, poster, rhyme card, leaflets, bookmark and library membership form to families of babies attending a Health Clinic for their first hearing test.

Sunderland was not the first authority to try Bookstart. The Bookstart Project was initiated in 1992 by Book Trust, working in co-operation with Birmingham Library Services, the South Birmingham Health Authority and Birmingham University School of Education. The Project set out to explore the significance of the role of parents and carers in sharing books with very young children. Parents need to have the appropriate information, advice and confidence to launch their child's reading development from the earliest possible age.

The Bookstart pilot scheme in Birmingham concentrated on 300 parents or carers of nine month-old babies. They were given a gift book and advice and information about books and reading by their health worker and were monitored (alongside a control group) over a five year period. Early results from Professor Barry Wade and his team at the University of Birmingham indicated a substantial increase in
awareness of books, sharing of books, enrolment of babies in libraries, use of book clubs and family use of books. The University of Birmingham continued to monitor the original Bookstart babies as they arrived at primary school. The Bookstart children performed noticeably better than their carefully matched peers in all 9 categories of the Baseline Assessment. Children who had had the advantage of Bookstart were clearly ahead in both literacy and numeracy. (12)

The Sunderland Bookstart project was launched in May 1994 by children’s author Jan Ormerod. Seventy mothers signed up in a City Challenge area in the north west of the city where unemployment is high. The intention was to expand to other areas when funding became available. Lead agent for the project is the City of Sunderland Department of Education and Community Services, Libraries and Arts.

Comedia’s Borrowed Time report quoted a 1993 estimate that 6 million UK residents lack functional literacy. (13) The same report argued that the library’s “espousal and encouragement of early childhood literacy and enjoyment of reading is seen as a welcoming entry to the young into civil society and ‘the great book of life’; the library’s role in creating and sustaining literacy cannot be overestimated.” (14)

In Sunderland, Bookstart has three specific aims:

- To promote, encourage and assess the sharing of books with babies
- To increase access to books by promoting local library services and book ownership to new parents
- To assess the impact of the Bookstart pack in terms of increased library membership and general awareness of early literacy issues.

An important element of the Sunderland project is work with adults involved to encourage family literacy. This is crucial if the investment in children is to have long-term results. Maria Zapata’s study of literacy work focussed particularly on developing countries, but it is probably relevant for our user groups too when she comments that:

Special attention should be paid to mothers, as it has been proven that illiteracy in mothers affects their children’s health and nutrition, and their drop-out, repetition and absenteeism rates. (15)

Bookstart project officer Angela Wilkinson is a playworker by training. She believes the project helps parents who may lack the confidence to guide their child’s early reading experience. She explains:
Some parents are scared to go into a bookshop and ask advice. We'll take them. Others have never been in a library - we'll guide them, and help them to take their first steps into the world of books.

She added that for parents who may not be able to read well - or at all - the project will give confidential help, and provide links with adult literacy classes. (16)

Bookstart differs from the Escape with a Book project in that its approach is systematic, and based on a strategic plan. It is trying to reach as many new users as possible, rather than encouraging more imaginative use from an existing community. So although Bookstart began in one area of the city, based in one library, from the outset it had plans to expand. A year after the project launch there were plans for Bookstart to include nursery schools, preschool play groups and other related under five groups. This was intended to support a Reading Recovery Programme already in place and lead to higher levels of literacy amongst City Challenge residents. There was consultation with local head teachers. Outside the City Challenge area but within the City boundaries it was proposed to introduce the scheme to other areas of need, including former coalfield and shipbuilding areas.

Ann Scott, Senior Librarian, Children and Young People’s Services, remarked in her application for the Community Initiative Award:

\[
\text{It is hoped that by the end of 1996 Bookstart will have reached many more areas of the City, linking libraries to communities more firmly and increasing parents and carers awareness of the importance of sharing books with babies, thereby stimulating young minds. (17)}
\]

Monitoring and evaluation has been integral to the project, with the Bookstart officer making return home visits and asking parents to complete a questionnaire on all aspects of the scheme.

Bookstart has taken a holistic approach to child development by involving library workers and health visitors. It taps into the determination of poorly educated young mothers to do better for their babies. Sixty-three per cent of the 400 families reached by 1995 were looking at children’s books more often with their baby, and 72% had bought more books. Many families have made their babies library members; others have been surprised at how positively young babies respond to being shown books - one of the project’s aims is to get babies to connect books with pleasure.
Linda Stewart, one of the mothers involved, admitted she was sceptical at first:

I thought nine months was too early to introduce Rachel to books, but she loved them. I've now joined her to the library and I've joined myself! (18)

Funding was awarded to extend the scheme to four other areas of the city from April 1, 1997.

While very different to the Wandsworth and Petersburn projects in scope and operation, Bookstart in Sunderland is driven by the same desire to increase access to library resources, to be innovative, and to involve the local community in shaping its library service.

7.5 Summary of Community Initiative projects

While the three projects above deal with extremely different client groups, they all offer something radical and new, and attempt to attract those who are not traditional library users. They have tried hard to tailor services to the needs of their users, both expressed and perceived, and they retain an essential flexibility in adapting services as circumstances change. Petersburn and Wandsworth seem to be self-contained, operating in a relatively small catchment area, although collaborating with outside agencies to maximise their potential. Sunderland is the exception. From the evidence available, Sunderland showed strategic planning at departmental level, which was not obvious in the case of Petersburn or Wandsworth. While there had been many individual examples of libraries engaged in innovative community development projects throughout the country, here was a case where the whole service adopted a project as central to its policy and planning.

It was far from clear which approach prevailed in public libraries: the individual project or the departmental plan. Could both approaches be combined? Above all, how extensive was the commitment to community development work in any form, and how was it being applied?

This thesis, and the research it contains, is an attempt to answer that question.

NOTES

2. Ibid, p589.
11. Clark, G., quoted in ‘Five of the Best,’ a dayschool organised by Northern Region Community Services Group, February 1996, Community Librarian, Winter 96, No. 19, p11.
8.1 Comedia Research for National Libraries Week 1997

It has been argued above that librarians as a profession are not self-critical. We try to improve the methods we work with, but rarely question why we use them, or to what ends.

As early as 1978, Peter Worsley, writing on 'Libraries and Mass Culture' in Totterdell's Public Library Purpose, commented on public perception of libraries, and questioned if our reputation was deserved. General high esteem, he argued, is not a cause for self-congratulation in itself. Librarians should still be thinking about the place of the library in society, because all about them is a communications revolution (1). He wrote:

I submit to you that we simply do not know, in any disciplined way, what the impact of the library is on its users, let alone on non-users and the community in general, and this is an appalling admission to have to make more than 100 years after the passing of the first Public Libraries Act. (2)

It is increasingly important that we do find evidence of how public libraries affect the communities in which they work. Public relations consultant Miranda McKearney has commented in an article for the Library Association Record that libraries could potentially make much more of their positive social impact. (3) Margaret Kinnell points out that the Borrowed Time report raised a similar issue. It stressed the importance of the library as a community resource but provided no new thinking on how library authorities should set about defining what precisely their communities needed from a public library service for the future and how it should be funded. (4)

There is growing interest in community involvement by politicians, with all parties recognising its centrality to social policy. There is increasing awareness of the importance of public libraries in modern life, with several major reports, from the Public Library Review to New Library: a People's Network, addressing their contribution.

The Social Impact of Libraries: a research and demonstration programme is the first major examination of how libraries interact with their communities and the effects this has. This has brought together a number of agencies working collaboratively:
Comedia, the Community Development Foundation, the Community Services Group of the Library Association and the University of Sheffield. Case studies from the Community Initiative Award form the backbone of Comedia's contribution to the study. There is also exploratory research on establishing indicators of the social benefit of libraries by the Community Development Foundation, an analysis of the changing philosophy and practice of community librarianship over the last twenty years by Leeds Metropolitan University, and work on guidelines for local authorities on public libraries' community development role from the Community Services Group of the Library Association and the Community Development Foundation. The combined force of these projects should have a considerable impact on UK public libraries, shaping future policy and practice.

Delegates to the 1996 Public Libraries and Communities conference expressed a growing commitment to community involvement. In 1997, Public Libraries and Community Development was one of the themes of the LA UmbrelLA 4 June conference, and ‘Libraries and Communities’ was a theme of National Libraries Week in November.

Kevin Harris of the Community Development Foundation commented in the Library Association Record:

Pulling together activities and ideas in the fields of public librarianship and community development could be crucial to bring about change. (5)

Although each part of Social Impact of Libraries research programme stands independently, it is coordinated by the Library Association with a view to proving the importance of public libraries to communities and the lives of individuals. The research is part-funded by the British Library Research and Innovation Centre, and its principal elements are:

- A social audit of public libraries (Sheffield University)
- Examination of the social benefits of public libraries - the development of performance indicators (Community Development Foundation)
- Analysis of good practice in community development (Comedia)
- A study of the effect on communities of the strike in Sheffield public libraries (Sheffield University)
- The establishment of guidelines on community development and public
• The establishment of guidelines on community development and public libraries (Community Services Group of the Library Association and Community Development Foundation)

One element of the research programme outlined above examines the impact on users of recent industrial action in Sheffield Libraries. Five libraries were chosen for the survey, reflecting a range of local communities, from satellite township to inner city, and from central library to small branch.

The strike began in the summer of 1995, in response to proposals to cut enhanced pay for Saturday working. It became the longest closure of a public library service through industrial action on record. The research involved a survey of more than 500 library users returning items just after the industrial action ceased. Researchers were surprised to find how often those interviewed visit their local library. In three out of four community libraries more than 40 per cent of users visited their local library at least once a week. Differences in frequency of use between libraries seemed to depend on the nature of the community. The highest figure (72%) came from an inner city community with high unemployment, social and economic deprivation, where only 1% of residents had a university education. The lowest (20%) came from the library serving the most affluent community, where 44% had gone to university. The research suggests that the library may be particularly significant as a resource in communities where unemployment is high and access to other resources, including financial resources and educational opportunities, is limited. (6) Whilst other research has indicated that the well educated are more likely to exploit informal educational opportunities, the difference here may be that the library’s role is not just educational, but social and cultural. When it is removed, there is less to replace it in a working class area with limited amenities.

Reading appeared to be very important to respondents. Some went to considerable lengths to find alternative sources of reading material. Users of one library organised a weekly coffee morning on the library forecourt and conducted an informal exchange of books already on loan. Twenty per cent of respondents resorted to buying books, many from jumble sales and charity shops. Others exchanged library books with friends or turned to unread Christmas presents. The research provides evidence of the extent to which reading is an essential and critical factor in the lives of library users. For the majority of the 518 respondents, it was not replaceable by any other activity.

The survey asked for which purposes users missed the library most. More than half the respondents in three out of four community libraries said that they had missed the library for a reason related to its social value or because it had become an
indispensable part of their lives. This gives added weight to the conclusion above that libraries are most heavily used in poorer areas, perhaps not in raw quantitative terms, but proportionate to the user population involved.

Educational use was also missed most in those communities where people might have been expected to have less access to other sources of educational materials. The highest educational use of a community library was in the community where the smallest proportion of people (1%) had had a university education. The evidence suggests that there may be a high potential for extended educational provision through the library service in communities with limited access to higher and further education.

There was strong popular support for the library service throughout and following the industrial action:

Of more than 3000 comments recorded during the three months following resumption of the service, more than 98% were positive, e.g., '...glad the library is open again, I didn’t realise how much I missed it...'; 'welcome back'...'. The overwhelming support for staff in readers’ letters to the press, in the analysis of comments made to libraries and in the user survey reveals what a close relationship there is between the service and its users. It is hard to think of another service which would engender such loyalty in such difficult circumstances. (7)

The place of the library in the local economic infrastructure was also examined. It emerged that for many people, library use is a key factor in determining the frequency of their visits to local centres, rather than the other way round. Nearly a quarter (23%) of all respondents visited their local centre less often because of the library closure. The research suggests that the library’s presence in a local community may have a significant impact on local retailers and other businesses.

Overall research findings indicate that for the vast majority of library users the public library is an irreplaceable service of great value, enhancing quality of life, and for many people, fulfilling an essential need which no other pursuit or activity satisfies.

Public Libraries and Communities: Demonstrating the Value was the title of the November 1997 conference organised by The Library Association, The Community Services Group of the Library Association and the Community Development Foundation. It was a platform for work-in-progress reports about all the strands of research outlined above, and was addressed by the then President of the Library

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Association, Joe Hendry, in a very upbeat mood.

Hendry spoke of the original aim of libraries as a public service for the poor and disadvantaged, and Carnegie’s desire to instil a thirst for knowledge. He pointed out that 22% of those of working age today are deficient in literacy skills, and that libraries are often the first point of contact between council and public. Chris Smith has spoken of libraries as the hub of community life. Hendry believes they are a national passion, quoting the figures that 360 million people visit libraries every year, whilst only 36 million attend football matches. He raised a theme repeated throughout the conference that there is an urgent need in libraries for sound academic research and the ability to quantify what we do.

Charles Landry of Comedia introduced speakers on every element of the research programme, saying that the library profession needs to look for new forms of indicators. The current book-based measurements do not reflect the richness of what libraries are.

Bob Usherwood and Richard Proctor from Sheffield University discussed their social process audit of library services in Newcastle and Somerset, based on inputs and outcomes, and working from a geographical analysis, utilising business information and local studies. They began by looking at council objectives and how the library met them, by questioning stakeholders in focus groups of politicians, library staff, users and non-users. They concluded that libraries help individuals to “get started” and “keep going” on a range of activities; they offer a place to meet and interact - they are the cement in the social fabric; they are community landmarks which reinforce community identity; the heart of the community. They help individuals build confidence in themselves, overcome social isolation and help sustain the viability of local shopping centres.

The work done by Sheffield argues that qualitative data does produce evidence of the value of libraries. Their research of the impact of the Sheffield strike in particular, confounded expectations of library user habits. Accepted wisdom had been that the average user visited their library fortnightly, but this research found that 70% of users in the poorest area visit their library weekly.

As seen above, they also found that what library users missed most during the period of closure was not the books offered by their library, but its social space. They valued the library as a place to be: somewhere to enjoy spending time. Its utilitarian role was not seen as the most important loss. The library was valued most highly in the poorest communities.
Another important finding was that the local library can be an important resource for personal development, particularly when users have had a poor experience of formal education. The research focussed particularly on the impact of Sheffield library closures on young children. This line of enquiry targeted three libraries, with questionnaires distributed throughout the schools in their catchment areas. It revealed that young children are the least mobile of library users. The value of the library service in building their relationship with adults and in bringing children into contact with the community was also clear.

Francois Matarasso for Comedia spoke about the long-term impact of public library initiatives. He outlined his analysis of 18 of the 100 projects entered for the Community Initiative Award since its inception. Intensive case study research on the 18 examples chosen revealed that 88% of participants in the projects had made new friends, and 45% had decided to go into training.

Matarasso identified six common factors for building success in projects studied:

- clear vision and leadership
- a strong connection with an identified need - a problem that needs addressed
- flexibility - to adapt and respond. Many projects are funded from existing resources
- clear objectives - but not in a management sense
- a talent for partnership and cooperation. Professional generosity
- imagination and creativity

He highlighted four elements as essential for sustaining success:

- political sustainability - has the project proved its value?
- economic sustainability - is it viable?
- social sustainability - is it appropriate?
- internal sustainability - may not be present even when other factors are

Matarasso also commented that giving people a voice can cause problems politically. In one project he examined, 50% of the young women in a writers’ group had left their partners, increased self-esteem not just being confined to three hours on a Wednesday evening. He concluded that the type of projects entered for the Community Initiative Award were not exceptional in the field of arts or museums, but are not much present in mainstream library services. As such they may be vulnerable.

If there is to be a closer connection with users, this is hard to achieve without the
equivalent of local management of schools. If projects of this type are to succeed, there is a need for genuine democratisation. Matarasso concludes that this is a great deal to ask of librarians, requiring a split in their current role. He advocates the appointment of a Community Liaison Director, and an appropriate division of tasks within the service.

Touching on the title of the conference, Demonstrating the Value, in his conference paper Francois Matarasso made the following point:

... existing library performance indicators which hinge on the crude numbers of book issues, are inadequate management tools for the library of the 21st century. As the Audit Commission's recent report, Due for Renewal, has shown, library services are engaged in the widest imaginable range of educational, leisure and community development provision, of which only a part, and perhaps the less critical part at that, is the lending of books. (8)

Evelyn Kerslake and Margaret Kinnell, who produced the authoritative literature review on the Social Impact of Libraries (9) discussed in Chapter 3, spoke at the conference of the need to link public library work to public library theory. She criticised the long-standing division between theory and practice within the profession, and argued that recent demographic changes have increased the need for public libraries. Libraries are being forced to engage with theoretical changes such as postmodernism, poststructuralism, and postindustrialism and to reassess their own role, function and impact as a result.

This particular conference had significant involvement from the academic sector, as well as professional bodies from the arts and voluntary sectors. It was felt that this was a positive development to encourage in future, and would help in adopting a more rigorous and theory-based approach to library development. There was general agreement on the need to prove that what we say has substance, that what we require is not rhetoric, but hard facts and figures.

The Library Association is also addressing some of the issues raised by the Peggy Heeks' report, Public Libraries and the Arts: an Evolving Partnership, outlined in the Chapter on Libraries and Arts above. A survey of library initiatives in cultural development is planned, to map out current provision and identify good practice, promoting the results as a baseline for professional practice.

The surge of activity outlined above indicates that something is happening in public libraries. Answers are being sought to fundamental questions about our future role:
what we should be trying to achieve and how best to achieve it.

Libraries and Communities: a research and demonstration programme outlines the various pieces of research underway and in a bid for further funding, sketches a context for this research:

The springboard for this programme is a strong sense among the participating agencies that it is a crucial time to be exploring and promoting the relationship of public libraries and communities. In the political context, both the public library movement and the notion of “community” - such as public ownership, and the sense of neighbourhood associated with corner shops and public space - have been eroded. The social context for community librarianship as it evolved in the 1960s and 1970s is irrecoverable. In order to shape new policies for the social role of libraries, library authorities need a platform of research and analysis, a set of demonstration examples, and a penetrating debate. (10)

The research plans have been given valuable support by Joe Hendry, County Heritage Services Officer for Cumbria, President of the Library Association for 1997, who adopted Community Librarianship as a theme of his Presidency.

My own involvement in the range of Social Impact research outlined above has been in the design, implementation and analysis of the National Survey of Community Development Strategies. This was sent to public libraries throughout the UK, to assess their interest in community development, policy and practice. The results were presented at the Demonstrating the Value conference in November 1997, and published by the British Library in 1998. (11)

8.2 Questionnaire Survey

8.2.1 Summary of Results

Respondents to the questionnaire expressed a high level of commitment to community development at local authority and departmental level. A significant proportion of public libraries are engaged in community development work and there is evidence that they are beginning to integrate this work into strategy.

One hundred and eighty-six questionnaires were distributed throughout the United Kingdom. One hundred and fifteen library services replied, representing a response

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rate of 63%.

Sixty-three of the local authorities responding, or 55%, had either produced or were working on a community development strategy. In fifty-four of these authorities the library service either had a major role, a minor role, was consulted or made a specific contribution. Comments from these library services indicated that libraries were contributing to their local authority’s community development strategy by:

- playing a central role in information provision, facilitating IT use and aiding citizenship
- partnership working with other agencies
- educational support in line with the councils’ commitment to lifelong learning

Only 18 authorities (16% of respondents) had a library service strategy for working with communities. This was generally developed by the Chief Librarian and Senior Library Managers. The next most heavily involved were other council departments such as Social Services/Social Work and Youth and Community Services. User groups and community organisations are more often “consulted” than “equal players”.

In addition, 33 library services were working on their strategy, making a total of 51, just under half of respondents, who had produced or were producing a community development strategy for their service.

Ninety-two library services expressed an interest in support or Professional Guidelines from the Community Development Foundation and the Community Services Group of the Library Association for the development of a community strategy.

Ninety-six of the library services (83% of respondents) worked in partnership with other agencies on initiatives aimed at regenerating or empowering local communities. Most formal links were with Education, Community Education and Economic Development Departments, LECs/TECs and Social Work. More informal liaison involved local community groups, the health authority etc. Most library authorities were actively liaising with a range of statutory and voluntary sector providers. There was also significant evidence of liaison with the private sector.

As far as funding is concerned, library services reported over 300 separate bids. Most popular sources approached were the Single Regeneration Budget (34
applications granted) and the National Lottery (17 bids successful to date).

Asked about interaction with their community, 31% of respondents had specialist library staff working on community liaison and 39% had ongoing interagency community development projects.

All but one service offered events for children. Ninety offered continuing education provision and 85 basic skills education, asserting libraries’ place at the leading edge of the lifelong learning revolution. Events were offered to a wide range of interest and age groups. Eighty-eight authorities offered local studies events, 61 multicultural events, and 70 events for teenagers. But in every area of provision library services reported demand they were unable to satisfy.

Asked about their policy on charging for such services, 64 authorities offered some services free to all; many offered free or reduced charge services to particular groups. Sixty-six library services aimed for charges to partly offset costs. Against the trend, 22% offered some services for income generation. This may reflect the funding constraints which have reduced work with communities in 64 authorities (56% of respondents):

Cuts had resulted in:

- a reduction in the number of professional librarians covering for library assistants
- the removal of key posts
- lack of staff training and development

Some authorities had concentrated on the “core” service, and community liaison had been a casualty.

It is a recognition of community development’s importance that where it was part of a departmental strategy, it was carefully evaluated. Sixty library services, or 56% of respondents, monitored development work with communities.

The survey in general revealed a high level of commitment to community development work, from the local authority and the library service. An increasingly strategic and rigorous approach was being adopted and despite significant funding constraints, a great deal of community development work was underway.
8.22 Questionnaire returns and detailed analysis

Two points regarding the response rate should be borne in mind when considering the results of the research.

Firstly, it could be argued that those authorities who did respond are the most highly motivated and active in the field of community development, so that the results are not strictly representative of the country as a whole. It is hard to gauge how much this may have influenced the overall results.

Secondly, the high response rate indicates that library authorities did feel community development was an important issue for public libraries, and this in itself is instructive.

Question 1 asked: Does your local authority have a published community development strategy? This may be in the form of a Social Strategy, or Anti-Deprivation Policy, or other commitment to working with disadvantaged groups.

Forty six library authorities reported that their authority had such a strategy; sixty-three reported it did not, and six respondents left the question blank. Therefore, forty per cent of local authorities responding did have a community development strategy, and in the remaining sixty per cent there was no such strategy, or it was not known.

Eighteen published community development strategies were enclosed with questionnaires returned.

Question 2 asked: Is your authority currently working on a community development strategy?

Of the eighty-eight respondents completing this field, thirty-nine, nearly half, reported this was the case. Whilst the previous question indicated only forty per cent of authorities with a community development strategy, this question shows that many more were in the process of producing one.

It would appear there is a considerable move towards the adoption of a community development strategy in local authorities.
Question 3 asked: If your local authority has, or is currently working on a community development strategy, please state what level of contribution was made, or is expected from the library service?

Sixty-three respondents, or nearly 55%, responded to Question 3. While there appears to be some overlap in response to the previous two questions, the figure of 55% here indicates that a small majority of authorities have produced or are producing such a strategy.

Of those who did respond to this question, sixteen (25% of those answering the question) reported that the library service played a major role, twenty-six (41%) described their involvement as a minor role in strategy development, twelve (19%) reported making a specific contribution, and nine (14%) either made no contribution, or reported that they didn’t know their (expected) contribution.

Given the range of local authority services in operation, it is significant that in a quarter of cases, the library service played a major role. The questionnaire defined being part of the steering group or a similar level of involvement as a major role. It could be argued that, given public libraries’ centrality in the debate about citizenship, the democratic deficit and lifelong learning, this figure should be a great deal higher, and it is possible that the range of research produced on Libraries and Communities will lend weight to this argument, and place libraries more at the centre of economic and social strategy. It is still interesting to note that 54 out of 63 library services responding had at least a consultative role or made a specific contribution. It would give greater cause for concern if more libraries had been excluded from what seems to be an important part of local government policy development and forward planning.

Question 4 asked: Are there any comments you wish to make on the role of the library service in the local authority's community development strategy? In what ways do you feel you can contribute to eg. anti-poverty strategies, voluntary sector liaison, community arts, adult education, economic development etc?

Fifty-eight library authorities took the opportunity to comment. Their responses gave a clearer picture of the range of contributions libraries can make in empowering individuals, groups and communities.

Information provision through libraries looks set to become a key element of local authority provision. Several authorities (Bolton, Caerphilly, Westminster, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Hartlepool, Powys et al) reported that they offer a
computerised community information system or act as a council information point. In the case of Westminster, libraries were responsible for the authorities network/information service for residents and One Stop Services, previously under the council’s Chief Executive’s Department. Conwy, Barnet, Middlesborough and Pembrokeshire also reported leading on information provision and the authorities’ one-stop/first stop shops initiatives. Devon were preparing to act as a forum for local information points as part of a County Council strategy of developing “Better Local Government”. East Riding’s community information service has been identified as having a major role in informing and empowering rural communities and the groups which serve them. Redcar and Cleveland gave an explanation of why so many libraries are playing this role:

The library service is regarded as a key service in the community and for the community as a provider of advice, information and community support. The perception of libraries as community buildings, in which the public regard themselves as stakeholders was the deciding factor in leisure and libraries taking the lead in the “gateways” public information system piloted in sub-libraries.

Southwark libraries saw the library as a focal point in the local community and identify it as a central point for those with access difficulties, such as children, the disabled, the elderly and the unemployed. Wirral also feel that the library should be a focal point, providing and involved with as wide a range of activities as possible.

Further examples given by respondents in the information field included Flintshire, who collect and disseminate information on voluntary organisations, as well as offering adult education packs and business information to help local economic development. Neath Port Talbot was seen as having a specialist role in providing information to clients and carers. Hartlepool also offered borough-wide strategies in training and IT Access for the community.

Several library services departments specifically mentioned joint ventures with other agencies as part of their work. Hertfordshire commented that:

Libraries throughout the county play a role in support of all aspects of the county agenda in local networking between the public and other sectors and in supporting/developing joint partnerships with other tiers of local government.

The issue of local government reorganisation has had a major effect on service delivery and the contribution libraries departments can make. In some cases (eg
Poole), new authorities were still working on strategy. Derby reported that their library service has only been part of Derby City Council for four months, and they were therefore still exploring possibilities for joint initiatives. Leicester had had little input to current strategies as a new service within the city. The Midlothian Council steering group dealing with community development was in its infancy. In North Lanarkshire, the strategy was only at a very early stage of development. Croydon also commented that these were very early days.

Some library services were key players in their authorities' community development strategy. The borough librarian for Barking and Dagenham, for example, chaired the council's corporate community development working group. In others, the effect of local government reorganisation has been to place the Chief Librarian at a lower tier in the council structure, as in Brighton and Hove Council, where:

The Chief Librarian is not included at senior management level at present, but contributes comments and suggestions as much as possible.

Library services departments often reported being central to their authority's education provision. Buckinghamshire commented that:

To pursue the strategy for lifelong learning, we are playing a vital role in the County Council's strategies on the arts, adult education, economic development, community groups etc.

Conwy were involved in adult education monitoring. Westminster reported that:

We have been identified at a corporate level as being core to the authority's wider policies of lifelong learning, access to services and WESTNET (local authority information service).

Devon reported that the library service was to have a major role in providing community, adult education and out of school study centres, as part of a new lifelong learning division. Gloucestershire contributed to community development strategy in specific areas of work such as Share-a-book programmes for under-8s in deprived areas and education and guidance information. South Gloucestershire specifically mentioned the promotion of Literacy as a contribution to community development, a major issue also highlighted in the Literature Reviews compiled by Kerslake and Kinnell and myself. Milton Keynes library services were linked with Education which was in turn part of a Learning and Development Directorate tackling community development issues. Since local government reorganisation Stirling Council library service has worked closely with Community Support to
develop Adult Learning.

Many libraries saw work with communities as central to their service. Edinburgh responded that:

Community liaison is part of the duties of all the professional staff - whatever their community or client group. We believe we can support many strategies through information dissemination, local partnerships, open learning and so on.

Liverpool also made specific mention of the "active role" of their community librarians. Hackney, meanwhile, commented that there were a number of community development initiatives going on in their area, and they were routinely asked to comment on draft documents and keep the council informed of the library service's plans for community development. Kirklees' ongoing review of libraries was proposing a specific role for the service in community regeneration - in particular equalising access to information, lifelong learning and citizenship. Middlesborough offered resources for community groups. Renfrew mentioned specific local projects such as Ferguslie Park Community Library and LIFE (Library Information for the Elderly) as having a major contribution to local community development.

Warwickshire identified five specific roles for their library service which contributed to economic development. These were:

• to provide a focus for community activity
• to provide information for and about the community
• to assist in improving literacy
• to encourage and support Lifelong Learning
• to offer access to cultural experience

These aims highlight the public library's crucial role in information provision and community life, and are probably shared by many other library services. If public libraries are striving to establish a rationale as we approach the new millennium, Warwickshire's positive statement of objectives is worth considering.

Other sections of the questionnaire made clear the impact of financial restrictions on local authority policy and practice. Conwy, for example noted that their authority's financial position was "dire".

Certain respondents took issue with the terms of the questionnaire. Richmond, for
example, felt it might have been more useful to look at the needs of older people or under-5s as specific groups, rather than "lumping 'the poor' together".

Question 5 asked: Does your library service have a strategy for working with communities?

Only 18 authorities, 16% of respondents, did have such a strategy. All of these kindly enclosed a copy of the strategy (as requested in Question 6), which may be helpful to other authorities.

Question 7 asked: Was the Chief Librarian involved in agreeing the strategy?

In every case the answer was yes.

Question 8 asked: Was the strategy initiated by Elected Members or Council Officers?

In every case the strategy was initiated by Council Officers, although in two cases the impetus came equally from Council Members. No library service indicated that the onus for strategy came solely from councillors, so there appeared to have been no pressure for formal strategy from this direction at that time.

Question 9 asked: Who was involved in agreeing library service strategy on working with communities?

As some parties would have contributed more than others, respondents were asked to estimate the extent of their involvement. While this question still operated on the small base of respondents (18) who do have such a strategy, it was instructive to see who was involved in the process.

The Chief Librarian was the "Lead Agent" in 8 of the 18 services with a community development strategy. Six authorities saw the Chief Librarian as an "Equal Player", whilst 3 felt the Chief Librarian had been merely "Consulted". In one case, the Chief Librarian had not been involved in agreeing the strategy.

Senior Library Managers were considered a "Lead Agent" for 6 authorities, an "Equal Player" for 10, "Consulted" by 2, and were not involved in one case.
Community librarians and other staff were the “Lead Agent” in only one authority, but “Equal Players” in 12. Four authorities consulted Community Librarians and other staff, whilst one did not involve them.

In terms of library staff then, the lead has generally been taken by the Chief or Senior Managers, with Community Librarians and other relevant staff heavily involved.

Councillors were “Consulted” in 9 of the 18 authorities, an “Equal Player” in 4, “Lead Agent” in only one authority and not involved in 3.

Involvement by other Council Departments tended to be at the lower end of the scale. The Chief Executive’s Department was the only one to be rated as a “Lead Agent” in strategy development, and this in only 2 authorities. The Community Development Unit was an “Equal Player” for 3 authorities, and “Consulted” by 2. Social Services/Social Work was an “Equal Player” for only one authority, although it was “Consulted” by 7. Similarly, Youth and Community Services was an “Equal Player” in strategy development for just one library service, although it was actually “Consulted” by 10. Four authorities also considered the views of the academic sector, and 3 used the services of a consultant.

User groups, voluntary sector umbrella agencies and community organisations had a surprisingly small role in strategy development for the authorities concerned. None of these featured as a “Lead Agent”. User groups had “Equal Player” status for only one library service. Seven authorities “Consulted” user groups, but an equal number did not involve them at all.

Voluntary Sector Umbrella Agencies did not rate “Equal Player” status for any authority, although they were “Consulted” in 7 cases. A total of 9 library services, half of those with a strategy for working with communities, had not involved Voluntary Sector Umbrella Agencies in agreeing the strategy.

 Whilst Community Organisations were rated as “Equal Players” in the strategy development process by 2 authorities, they were “Consulted” in only 7 cases, and 7 authorities did not involve them at all.

It could be argued that for a community development strategy to be credible, user groups and community organisations in particular should have had far more involvement. A strategy that is heavily driven by the library department, with little input from interested groups, is not likely to have energetic community support.

Comments for Question 9 revealed that Birmingham consult via user surveys and
also work closely with the Adult Education Service. Shropshire also involved other tiers of government.

Question 10 asked: If your service has no community development strategy at present, please indicate if you are working on one.

Answers here indicated that although only 18 library authorities had a community development strategy, a further 33 (0r 34% of those answering the question) were working on their strategy. Taken together with the result of Question 5, this meant that 51 out of the 115 authorities responding (44%) either had produced or were working on a library service strategy for working with communities.

Question 11 also indicated a willingness to consider a community development strategy. Respondents were asked if they would be interested in support or Professional Guidelines from the Community Development Foundation and the Community Services Group of the Library Association, and the response was very positive: 92 authorities (88% of those answering the question) expressed an interest. This might suggest that the area merits further research and a higher profile in the professional press.

Question 12 asked: Does your library service work in partnership with other agencies on initiatives aimed at regenerating or empowering local communities?

Ninety-six authorities (87% of those answering the question - 83% of questionnaire respondents) said that they did. This is a very high figure. It indicates that public library services feel they should have an impact on the economic and social environment in which they operate and are actively engaged in community development.

Question 13 continued: If yes, please list those agencies with which you work.

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they worked with these agencies on a formal or informal basis. Regular, scheduled meetings were taken here to represent a formal relationship, and a more ad hoc style of work based on personal contacts seen as informal.

The Education Service was the agency with which most library services worked formally (63%), followed by Community Education (35%), the Economic Development Department (30%) and Local Enterprise Company/TECs (30%) and
Social Work (28%). Informal liaison was most common with Local Community Groups (52%), followed by Careers Service (50%) and the Health Authority (44%), but figures showed informal liaison spread much more evenly across the whole range of statutory and voluntary groups. Liaison with Community Council and Voluntary Sector Forums was above 20% for both work styles. Responses to this question indicated that most library authorities were engaged in significant interagency community development work, and were playing a major role in the regeneration of local communities.

Comments on interagency working also revealed widespread work with the private sector on a partnership or sponsorship basis. Firms involved ranged from telecommunication and computer companies to booksellers and library suppliers. Many authorities mentioned specifically working with business groups such as the local Chamber of Commerce. Other agencies working with public libraries included other local authorities, further education colleges and universities, local media outlets, individual voluntary organisations, sheltered housing complexes and prisons. York commented:

"We will work together with any agency that has mutual benefits".

Question 14 asked respondents to indicate: if your library service is, or has been, involved in partnership bids for funding with specified schemes. Question 15 asked: Which bids have been successful?

The most popular source of funding applied for was the Single Regeneration Budget (England). Fifty authorities had applied for this, with 34 successful to date, 6 applications refused and 12 pending. The National Lottery was next in popularity: 45 applied, 17 successful, with 19 pending. The Public Library Development Incentive Scheme/Development Fund for Public Libraries prompted 35 bids, 21 successful and 4 pending. Funding was also successfully obtained from City Challenge (22 library services), Urban Programme (21), European Social Fund (17), European Union Telematics Programme (10), Millennium Fund (8), Rural Challenge (7), European Union Libraries Programme (6) and the Strategic Development Scheme for Wales (8) At least 300 funding bids had been made, not allowing for cases where more than one bid had been made to the same agency. Scottish library services seemed in general to have made fewer bids for funding, although several applications to the Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC), have been successful. In times of extreme financial stringency, libraries and partnership agencies were obviously making every effort to seek alternative funding.
The next part of the questionnaire examined community involvement in local libraries.

Question 16 asked: Do you have any of the following? a.) Specialist members of library staff working on community liaison. b.) Budgets devolved to working with communities c.) Inter-agency community development projects d.) User committees/Focus groups

Thirty-six authorities (31%) reported having specialist library staff working on community liaison. Only fifteen authorities (13%) had budgets devolved to working with communities.

Forty-five authorities (39%) had inter-agency community development projects. This response was much lower than the response to Question 12, where libraries were asked if they were involved in partnership initiatives aimed at regenerating or empowering local communities. The response in that case was positive from 96 authorities (83%). This suggests that many of the initiatives were at an exploratory stage, or that the libraries concerned feel more “ownership” of the projects referred to in this later question. Even so, 39% is a high figure, and the projects concerned would merit further investigation so that other authorities could benefit from experience gained.

Thirty-eight authorities, (33% of respondents) had library user committees or focus groups. Again, at a time when consultation is key in local government service provision, this indicates that a high proportion of libraries were committed to involving users in shaping service delivery.

Question 17 asked: Are you represented in community activities which have not been initiated by the local authority eg community councils or consultative committees, arts festivals or other community-organised events?

It was encouraging that 88 library services responded positively to this question, indicating a high level of commitment to their local communities, and a recognition of the need to be active within the community on an outreach basis.

Question 18 asked: Which of the following do you offer on a regular basis (eg weekly, monthly, annually etc.)? a.) Library accommodation for community groups b.) Problem solving information c.) Information about local community groups d.) Basic skills
Provision was generally good. All but one library authority regularly organised events for children. One hundred and eleven held information about local groups, and 78 offered problem solving or community information. The second figure was perhaps surprisingly low given the commitment to working with communities expressed elsewhere, but the response to this question may have been a matter of interpretation. One hundred and four library services offered accommodation within the library for community groups. Ninety offered continuing education provision and 85 basic skills education, indicating along with the analysis of local government strategy at the start of this questionnaire, that libraries are at the forefront of the movement to lifelong learning, and that this is a fundamental role for them now and in the future.

The number of activities organised in libraries was also high: 88 library services offered local studies events; 84 offered events for older people; 70 organised activities for teenagers; 65 held participative arts workshops; 61 organised multicultural events; 53 organised events for parents and 47 events for women. This suggests that libraries were proactive in working to broaden their user base and convince existing users that the library has a range of services to offer them. It is encouraging for the future of libraries to note the investment in children and teenagers as user groups.

Question 19 asked: Which of these activities were established in response to community demand or have community involvement in their operation, please indicate where there is community demand you are not able to satisfy.

In most cases, around half of the authorities ran their activity with community involvement and half without. It would be interesting to have a follow-up question on this point since the results depend very largely on the respondents' interpretation of the question. When 51 library services reported community involvement in their children's events, what exactly did they have in mind? Was there liaison with schools, did local parents help to organise events? Equally, when only 55 of the 111 authorities offering information about local groups specified community involvement, how are the rest obtaining the information?

The following question asked which of the activities on offer had been established in
response to community demand. Figures were very broadly similar, although community demand was understandably higher than community involvement in the letting of rooms. In general community demand was seen as higher for information and education provision (ranging from 39-44 for different services) than certain organised events (events for parents seen as stemming from community demand in only 18 authorities). Again this issue merits closer examination. A comment made by Edinburgh City Libraries was that their professional librarians tend to assess demand for a service. It would be interesting to compare exactly how demand is assessed across all the authorities participating. Has a service been established in response to door-to-door surveys in a local area, high issues in certain subject areas, a suggestions box or customers expressing an interest to frontline staff?

In every area, some library services reported demand that they are unable to satisfy. This ranged from events for children, (1 authority) local studies events (2), events for teenagers, women and multicultural events (9 in each case) to participative arts workshops (11) and accommodation for groups (14). Even though these figures were low in comparison to the number of services which are being offered, users were still being turned away.

Question 20 asked: What is your charging policy on the activities outlined above?

The highest number of authorities (66) stated that they aimed at partly offsetting costs, though this was closely followed by 64 authorities offering services free to all. The apparent conflict here is explained by the fact that respondents were free to choose more than one option, and an individual service might offer some activities free and others charged. Thirty-nine authorities offered some services free to certain groups such as the unemployed and pensioners, and thirty-eight offered reduced price services to the same groups. It is interesting to note that 25 library authorities (22% of respondents) ran some of their activities for income generation. This would appear to conflict with a community development strategy.

Question 21 asked: Has your library service’s work with communities been reduced because of funding constraints?

Sixty-four authorities (56% of respondents) replied that it had, 38 that it had not, and 13 left the question blank. This shows the effect of funding cuts on work which the rest of the questionnaire indicates is fundamental to public libraries.

Giving details of how work has been affected, the services concerned mentioned first 317
a reduction in the number of professional librarians (51 authorities), secondly the problem of librarians covering for library assistants (37 authorities), thirdly the removal of key posts (34), and fourthly lack of staff training and development (20). All of these issues will have major and long-term impacts on service quality and development. It is also significant that community liaison is a service which suffers when staff and resources are in short supply. Fifteen authorities mentioned that they had an emphasis on other activities as a result of funding constraints, and the same number that community librarianship had a lower priority. Other complaints were of more service points and less staff (11) and a reduction in mileage and subsistence allowances (10).

Seven library authorities commented here that local government reorganisation had been a factor in reducing work with communities. It had reduced the number of staff available eg in Conwy where, "Community librarians have had to play a more direct part in eg. selecting stock, managing requests etc". Glasgow reported a reduction in opening hours, cuts in bookfund and library closures. Merton reported a general reduction in funding/resources. Merthyr Tydfil, "Overall budgetary constraints"; Middlesborough, "Limitations on opening hours"; Surrey, "(Effects on)Information Services, Children's Services, Open Learning, Local History"…

Anglesey reported that financial measures had to be prioritised to meet statutory "core" (their emphasis) leisure elements. Barnet similarly reported a squeeze on the overall number of posts and stated that the first priority is maintaining the service, opening hours and the service to customers using libraries. Renfrewshire stated that reduced funding has meant that the priority, especially at holiday periods, had to be keeping public service points open with insufficient time/staff for extra activities. Somerset were concentrating on "protecting de minimis provision and ensuring at least a quality service for that". Wirral reported an "emphasis on core service provision due to cut-backs in support staff".

This sense of community liaison being extra and not a core service is important. Members of the profession may feel it should be challenged, and some of the research being published at this time may lend weight to the argument. Rutland had taken a different approach, stating:

As a new service, the service is restricted by staffing levels and budgets, but this is causing us to look at how we might be able to involve the community more in helping themselves.

Shropshire commented: "The effect of reductions has been offset by substantial commitment in this area of work". Wigan, meanwhile, went further:

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Community librarianship has been a major priority for the last twelve years. Despite reductions in staff and other budgets it has been safeguarded, if not increased.

It is ironic that public services are expected by government to become more customer-focused, to consult users, and to embrace all sections of community while the survey shows this is being hindered by restricted public funding.

Question 22 asked: *Do you monitor the effectiveness of your development work with communities?*

Sixty library authorities (56% of total) replied that they did.

Question 23 asked respondents to indicate if they used any of the following: a.) Performance indicators b.) Qualitative evaluation by survey c.) Comments from user groups d.) Monitoring groups e.) Other methods - please specify...

Sixty-eight authorities reported that they used performance indicators, 54 used qualitative evaluation by survey and 55 comments from user groups. Fourteen library services used monitoring groups and two other methods.

Question 24 asked: *Please add any other comments you wish to make about the evaluation methods you use.*

These comments revealed that Birmingham had a wide-ranging research programme and a comments and suggestions scheme. Westminster used comments books and feedback forms at events and Luton also used a Customer Comment scheme. Essex used suggestion boxes in all static and mobile libraries and a customer survey carried out every other year. CIPFA and Audit Commission data were processed and comparative graphs produced. Cornwall had undertaken a small-scale research project of non-users at their smallest library using GIS/postcode analysis. Redcar and Cleveland undertook an annual library survey and a 6 month review of use by community groups, while Redbridge also monitored library usage by groups. Merthyr Tydfil commented that surveys were their most important feedback.

Pembrokeshire relied on internal monitoring, while Vale of Glamorgan used feedback from branch librarians. Rotherham evaluated their own service plan targets. Liverpool mentioned the involvement of libraries in partnership plans. Wirral was
accredited to ISO 9002 and regular evaluation by survey was part of the system. Surrey, meanwhile, used benchmarking against other authorities, staff appraisal and review.

Derby and Rutland planned to use qualitative evaluation in the future.

It was perhaps surprising, given the commitment in other areas of the questionnaire to initiatives aimed at regenerating or empowering local communities (83% according to Question 12), that only 55 authorities (48% of respondents) drew on comments from user groups, and only 54 (47%) used surveys to influence service delivery. However, the use of performance review in public libraries as in other public sector organisations is likely to increase, and even now the figure is probably higher than it was a few years ago.

We can learn a certain amount from initial analysis of this questionnaire. It was a first attempt to evaluate community development strategies in local authorities and in library services on a national scale. It indicated a high level of commitment to the idea of community development, and ongoing strategic development.

But in many respects, this research poses more questions than it answers. Many of the responses were based on individual interpretations of the concept of community development. Some answers indicate confusion over definitions of participation and consultation and beg further investigation.

When the questionnaire results were presented at the Demonstrating the Value conference by myself and Andrew Green, Chair of the Community Services Group of the Library Association, they provoked a great deal of interest. There was some discussion about possible follow-up work, which might take the form of 20 or 30 interview case studies, or a 10% additional survey to establish more clearly working interpretations of community development strategies.

It was felt clearly that the next stage should be demonstrating effectiveness, with meaningful performance indicators, and qualitative review. The possibilities are still being discussed, but it was felt that this initial research broke new ground and could be built upon.

8.23 The next step - further analysis of results

So much was invested in the design and implementation of this questionnaire, and so many questions remained unanswered by the initial analysis, that I felt it was
logical to reexamine the research and consider the potential for more detailed analysis. This has in fact been extremely productive, underlining the factors contributing to a community development approach, casting a new light on the effect strategic planning has on service delivery, and highlighting models of good practice suitable for case studies.

Gleaning further information from the questionnaire returns required cross-referencing and comparing sets of responses. The key was to examine how library practice was influenced by policy.

Given the limited information available from the questionnaire returns, all the criteria measured had to be examined for their usefulness in assessing practice and management.

The principal points which differentiated the returns were:

- Strategy
- Partnership working - initiatives
- Partnership bids for funding
- Community liaison staff
- Devolved budgets for working with communities
- Inter-agency community development projects
- User committees / focus groups
- Community involvement in service provision
- Monitoring
- Level of deprivation

The point of the exercise is to examine the impact of having a strategy. Therefore it was advisable to build a picture of each service by looking at the other factors, and then examine whether or not it had a strategy. Conclusions could be drawn on which services seem committed to working with communities by examining eg. whether they have inter-agency community development projects or community liaison staff. In fact almost all of the factors identified above are evidence of a community development approach. So the more factors a service had, the stronger its commitment to community development would seem to be. An exception to this is the deprivation factor. While this may have affected a service’s policy and practice, it does not help in estimating their community development approach.

Equally, how a community development strategy was formulated is a useful point to consider among those services with a strategy, but was only relevant to a minority.
On reflection it was felt that it would be useful to analyse all the questionnaire returns on common criteria, and to examine all those with a library service strategy separately, so that the nature, formulation and implementation of the strategy could be examined in due depth and in comparison with other strategic services.

It was felt that involvement in partnership initiatives was important, but the range of formal and informal contacts was an unnecessary complication and did not need to be measured for all 115 respondents. In the same way, totals of partnership bids for funding give useful information, but the exact nature and success or failure of the bids was less important in determining policy and practice for a library service.

It was also felt that Question 17 - whether a service was represented in community events not initiated by the local authority, such as arts festivals or community councils - might be more usefully studied at the level of a case study (see section 6.26). It is open to interpretation, and in some cases, most such activities will have been initiated by the council. There may not be any appropriate community activities for the library service to join. This therefore was not a good point to judge community development effectiveness on.

Questions 18 and 19 dealt with services offered by libraries, such as accommodation for community organisations, educational and arts provision, events for children and other groups. While the first question established which of these were offered on a regular basis, the second was more complicated. It asked which of the activities were established in response to community demand or had community involvement in their operation, and asked respondents to indicate where there was community demand they were unable to satisfy. At first, it seemed as if the best way to reflect responses was to note those where there was community involvement, this being more indicative of community development practice than just responding to demand. Who has decided there is a demand? Librarians in an office, readers at the counter, door to door surveys, focus groups? Some of these demands will be more genuine than others.

However, looking again at the questionnaires, it became clear that the question had been interpreted in widely different ways. Some respondents with many services on offer (10 or 13) had ticked community demand for all of these. Others with similar profiles had ticked community involvement throughout. Some had ticked mostly involvement, with one or two services in response to demand, and some had done the opposite! Some had ticked both for the same activities.

It could be argued that community demand is a more pertinent measure of
community development than community involvement if such involvement is limited to the same ten faces at every children's event, the same few committee members who have attended local history events for the last ten years. There may be community involvement with limited local demand, or little democracy in operation. One has to suspect that the community involvement in provision of meeting rooms may not be as extensive as the questionnaire returns imply. This particular question was not well-framed, and has produced unclear results.

Nevertheless, to test the effectiveness of community development practice, we need to measure some kind of outcomes, and the questionnaire does not present many options. Most of the other criteria are inputs, like partnership working, specialist staff and monitoring. They reflect management values that imply a commitment to community development. Probably the only two points that actually check the evidence are the existence of interagency community development projects and this tricky question on activities.

Since it was too important to exclude, it seemed fair to count both community involvement and demand. For the purposes of giving each service a community development criteria rating, a points system was devised. Thus one point was given for a total of 5 or more activities with community involvement in its organisation or organised in response to community demand. Two points were given for ten or more such activities. This does give credit for a high level of activity in relation to community needs, and responsiveness is an important element of community development.

It was decided that the question on charging could also be misleading, since many respondents had ticked several boxes, and some might be forced to charge because of council policy on sustainability. The extent of any concessionary schemes could not be investigated here either. It seemed as if this was a question more suited to case studies, where a clearer picture would emerge.

The question on work with communities being reduced by funding constraints was not strictly relevant to assessing commitment to community development, although again an interesting point to elaborate in case studies.

It was crucially important to note whether services monitor their development work with communities. If a service was committed to community development, it would surely strive to evaluate the results. It was felt that the principle of monitoring was more important than the methods used, which would only further complicate analysis.
Since it was necessary to select models of good practice for case studies, some system of grading was required. After considering all the criteria covered in the questionnaire, it was decided that the 8 principal criteria listed above be used, with one point allocated for each. In this way, a point would be given to each service which worked on partnership initiatives aimed at empowering local communities; one for each service with five or more partnership funding bids (the majority of services having one or two); one for each service with community liaison staff; one for devolved budgets for working with communities; one for interagency community development projects; one for user committees or focus groups; one for five or more activities with community involvement or set up in response to community demand (two points for ten or more since this seems to indicate such activity is a priority); and one point for monitoring. It was therefore possible for pro-active, community-oriented services to amass nine points. The system is fairly crude, but covers the main elements a service committed to community development might be expected to have.

It is flawed, because there are several services such as Sunderland (5 points), Southwark (5), Kirklees (5) and Newcastle (4), which from coverage in the professional press of past and continuing initiatives should be rated more highly. These services might argue that they have an equally committed approach to community development, but that all the features rated above are not necessary to this. They may not have enough resources for specialist staff or budgets, but feel there is departmental commitment despite that.

However, it is surprising how common the features are, and how patterns have emerged considering the services involved.

Hackney and Hertfordshire both score nine points on the scale. Both have specialist members of library staff working on community liaison, budgets devolved to working with communities, inter-agency community development projects and user committees or focus groups. They both have a total of 13 activities with community involvement or responding to community demand, they are both involved in partnership initiatives and have made a range of joint funding bids (9 in Hackney’s case, 5 for Herefordshire). Both monitor their work with communities. In each case, the local authority and the service have a strategy on community development.

Five library services score eight points on the scale, including Gateshead (24 activities ticked for community involvement and demand and 10 joint funding bids) and Durham (21 such activities and 8 joint funding bids). Renfrewshire is the “highest scoring” Scottish service with eight points.
A total of 12 services score seven points, including Croydon and Edinburgh. All but one of the services on this score and above have specialist members of library staff working on community liaison, and in these times of limited public sector funding, this is a significant policy commitment.

A further ten services score 6 points - a major endorsement of partnership working, given all the criteria involved.

Nineteen services scored five points on the scale. They tend not to have specialist staff or budgets, but still have many activities with community involvement or responding to community demand (from 10 to 16 in most cases). All these services are involved in partnership initiatives, and 14 monitor their work with communities.

Going down the scale, 20 services scored four points, 15 scored three (including Glasgow), ten scored two points, fifteen scored one point and seven services scored zero. It is not hard to be given an unfairly harsh score on these criteria, but sometimes the profile will depend on the person completing the form. Perth and Kinross unfortunately scored zero, having no activities with community involvement or responding to community demand, no partnership initiatives or projects, no funding bids and no monitoring of development work with communities. This gives the impression of a service in hibernation, and probably does not reflect an accurate picture. Perth is well known for its local studies provision at the very least.

At the top end of the scale, a whole range of services give the impression that they are working well with other agencies, are proactive and highly responsive to their communities. Many of these have a community development strategy. Of the "top" 29 (scoring 6 and over), 14 library services have such a strategy, and the local authority as a whole has a strategy in a further ten cases. Considering that only 18 library services of 115 respondents had a strategy, they have acquitted themselves well.

In fact, while the average community development criteria score for the whole group was 3.9 out of a possible 9, for library services with a strategy the average criteria score was 6.7. This is a very significant difference, and is apparent in assessing any of the variables involved.

Looking through the questionnaires at first might lead one to believe that the library services well known for community-oriented work, particularly those in the Midlands, the North of England and the London boroughs, the urban centres of deprivation, have the clearest commitment to community development. But
deprivation is really not a feature of the results. Two indexes were used to classify the local authorities in terms of deprivation: the 1998 Index of Local Deprivation: A Summary of Results (Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions) and Revising the Scottish Area Deprivation Index (The Scottish Office, 1998). However, no clear pattern emerged in terms of the criteria used.

While the “top” scorer, Hackney, was the 4th most deprived area in England, it was closely followed by Hertfordshire (unclassified), Durham (155), and Gateshead (35). The “top” 29 ranged from 4 to 286 on the English deprivation scale, randomly spaced throughout. At the other end of the scale, deprivation indices were equally diverse. So while deprivation might have been expected to influence public library policy on community development, it does not appear to have been a factor.

The most significant factor for results seems to be the presence of a strategy. This will be examined more closely in the case studies which follow this section. The performance of those services with a strategy seems more focussed, more active, more responsive and more closely monitored than those without.

For example, the initial analysis pointed out the great divide between library services working in partnership with other agencies on initiatives aimed at regenerating or empowering local communities (88% of respondents) and those involved in inter-agency community development projects (38%). Initiatives arguably cover a wider area than projects and have longer-term aims, possibly in the form of campaigns, fora or discussion groups. An inter-agency project is likely to be locally-based, and have clearly defined aims and objectives over a limited timescale. Often any funding is dependent on such aims and objectives being met. So it could be argued that projects are more likely to produce measurable results. It is interesting to note therefore that every one of the 18 library services with a community development strategy is working in partnership with other agencies on initiatives, and 16 of them (88.9%) are also involved in projects.

A total of forty-four respondents have ticked the questionnaire to say they have an inter-agency community development project. As is clear from the paragraph above, 16 of these projects belong to library services with a community development strategy. A further 14 belong to local authorities where there is a community development strategy in place. Only 14 projects are operating in councils where there is no community development strategy at either departmental or council level.

Thirty-six authorities, or 31.3% of library services had specialist members of library staff working on community liaison. Twelve of these are authorities with a community development strategy. In other words, two-thirds of authorities with a
strategy have a member of staff working on community liaison. The combination of staff and strategy is likely to be powerful.

As far as specialist budgets devolved to working with communities are concerned, the total instance of this was much lower, with only 15 examples, or 13% of the 115 authorities responding. However, 6 of the 18 with a strategy (33.3%) had such a budget.

While 66 of the 115 total respondents have monitoring arrangements in place for their development work with communities, representing 57.4% of the total, 16 of the 18 with a strategy monitor their work, a figure translating to 88.9%. It is perhaps logical that where a strategy is in place there will be monitoring too.

On funding bids, figures varied widely, but the average for the total 115 respondents was 2.8 partnership bids per service. For those with a strategy the average was 5.

Thirty-seven out of the 115 respondents (32%) reported having user committees or focus groups. Precisely half of those with a strategy had such groups, 9 out of 18.

On the complicated question regarding community involvement and community demand for services, an average was worked out over the 115 respondents for these two categories added together. This average was 8.2. Those with specialist budgets had an average of 9 services with community involvement in their operation, or established in response to community demand. Those with specialist staff working on community liaison had an average of 11.5 such services. The average figure for all those with a community development strategy was 12.8.

For clarity, figures for the most significant parameters are tabulated below, giving a clear picture of the difference between the “strategy” group and respondents as a whole.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>All respondents</th>
<th>With strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average community development criteria score - mark out of 9</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved in interagency community development project</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>88.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist members of staff working</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
<td>66.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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on community liaison

Specialist budgets for working with communities 13% 33%

Monitoring of development work with communities 57.4% 88.9%

Average number of interagency funding bids 2.8 5

User committee or focus group present 32% 50%

Average number of services organised in response to community demand or with community involvement in their operation 8.2 12.8

There would appear to be a significant advantage for a public library service in having a community development strategy. So it would be interesting to examine the services which do have a strategy in greater detail...

8.24 Services with a strategy

Our questionnaire asked if the library service had a strategy for working with communities. Eighteen library services said that they did.

This particular question was phrased exactly as above, but on the first page of our questionnaire it was stated that we intended to examine community development strategies in public library authorities throughout the United Kingdom, and the following definition was highlighted:

For the purposes of this research, community development is defined as a process which develops the power, skills, knowledge and experience of people as individuals and in groups. This enables them to undertake initiatives of their own to combat social, economic, political and environmental problems and to participate in the democratic process. It aims to empower groups and positively engage communities.
So it was fairly clear the sort of strategies we had in mind.

In addition to the 18 library services with a strategy, a further 33 reported that they were working on such a strategy. Renfrew is one such example, investigated as a case study in the following section. However, it was judged that comparisons across the entire group of 51 would be complex. Because of the questionnaire design, those respondents who stated that they were working on a strategy were not actually asked how this strategy was being formulated. There is therefore no way of knowing the extent of community involvement in their strategy formulation and the services cannot be judged on this basis. Services with a strategy responded to the question on strategy formulation in detail and their answers are highly significant. It would not be possible to make comparisons across the entire group and the issue is too important to ignore.

Those services still working on a strategy are really a separate group. Since the impact of their strategies cannot yet be assessed, it seems best to exclude them from further analysis.

What proved surprisingly difficult was any sort of comparison across the 18 services with a strategy. A promising approach seemed to be consideration of how the strategy was formulated, to establish whether this had an effect on practice. And there was a marked division on consultation. As the initial analysis of the questionnaire indicated, involvement of user groups, voluntary sector umbrella agencies and community organisations was much lower throughout than that of library management and other sections of the council. Community organisations had “equal player” status for two authorities, but were “consulted” in only seven cases. Seven authorities did not involve them at all. User groups had “equal player” status for only one library service. Again, seven authorities “consulted” user groups, but an equal number did not involve them. If a strategy is genuinely aimed at community development, should it not acknowledge community views? Or are council officers best placed to make decisions themselves?

A consultation score was established for these three groups in particular, to establish how inclusive the consultation process had been. Under this scheme, two points were awarded for each of these groups offered “equal player” status, and one point if they were “consulted” at all.

With a total score of 6 possible on inclusive consultation, the highest score achieved was 5, scored by only one service (Hertfordshire). Hartlepoo, Middlesbrough, Shropshire, Wirral and Hackney scored only 3. Durham and Neath Port Talbot both scored two points on this, and Essex and Knowsley both scored one. The
remaining eight services had not consulted the community/voluntary sector in any way. It might have been expected that this consultation or lack of it would be reflected in the nature of the service provided, but no pattern was apparent.

On every point, there would be a diverse range of answers. The services with the best community development criteria (established in the previous section) often had no consultation on their strategy (eg. Sheffield and Rotherham, community development rating of 8, consultation score of 0). It was often the services with the worst consultation who had the best array of specialist staff and budgets and interagency projects in operation.

Funding bids were no reflection of consultation either. Birmingham had 10 interagency funding bids, but no community consultation on strategy. Hartlepool scored 3 out of 6 on consultation, but only made 2 interagency funding bids.

Almost all authorities mentioned in the section on interagency partnership initiatives that they worked with the voluntary and community sector. Fifteen of the eighteen used comments from user groups in their monitoring methods.

Levels of activity, and even the type of activities offered (Question 19) varied widely, with no discernible cause. Essex had a total of 26 activities with community involvement or in response to community demand: its consultation score was 1 out of 6. Wirral had ten such activities and a consultation score of 3. Sixteen of the eighteen services offer activities free to all or free to certain groups.

The conclusion should perhaps be drawn that the base of 18 is too small for meaningful comparison, and the questionnaire not sufficiently sophisticated. Searching questions should have been asked about the nature of community involvement in activities and demand for these activities, and exactly how consultation was achieved.

It would be very interesting to conduct a case study on each of the 18 services with a strategy and draw conclusions thereafter on their quality. These pioneering authorities might then have lessons to pass to those following in their wake. There is neither the time nor the space to include that work here. But if the follow-up survey spoken of does happen, it may be possible to critically examine the effect a strategy has had, and the importance of community consultation in its formulation.

Meantime, it is still possible to examine the strategies submitted, to gauge from the documents themselves how they might contribute to community development in
their authorities.

**Strategy documents**

There are some very good examples of strategy documents, which reflect the themes outlined elsewhere in this thesis, of libraries contributing to lifelong learning and citizenship information, of increasing access and responding to communities. There are also some community development strategies which seem to lack both community development and a strategy.

Among the more positive is a document from Wakefield Libraries and Information Services, entitled Community Development in Wakefield Metropolitan District, including a section on 'Why community development librarianship is necessary and important'. The document starts by defining community, and explains that the activities of community groups intrinsically enhance community participation and control. It explains community development in terms of service delivery and quotes three broad themes:

- helping to ensure the effective participation of people in determining the conditions which affect their lives (Community Development Foundation).

- Promoting equal access for all communities to library and information services (LA Community Services Group).

- Combating disadvantage (LA Community Services Group).

The service aims to support the aspirations of all those who wish to gain or advance knowledge; to meet the expectations of those who require information for work or life, and to offer a means of raising the quality of life within the district. (12) It aims to increase choice, quality, access and accountability of services. The policy states that by improving the quality of life in the district, Wakefield Libraries and Information Services will help to redress social imbalances, rebuild social cohesion, encourage neighbourhood regeneration and promote a swing back to community responsibilities, citizenship, justice and open democracy. (13)

This makes it all the more strange that Wakefield scored zero on the consultation score for its strategy formulation.

One section of the document gives an indication of the resistance to formal planning
Community Development is practised at 29 static service points and various other outlets within the service (eg two mobile libraries) to varying degrees. It is not labelled as such, nor focused in such a way as to achieve objectives, nor is it any part of any structured planning system - it is a piecemeal series of practices developed over the years, often according to individual staff interest or enthusiasm and occasionally in response to a demand, expressed or felt to be evident.

There is a genuine organisational desire to help the community, but no rationale or consistency of approach behind this. A Community Development Policy would seek to become proactive, to adopt a planning approach, to consider priorities and targeting and to take into account feedback. Above all it would seem to promote a Community Development CULTURE. (14)

Wakefield quote examples of their community development practice as letting of premises and meetings for community events; infrequent outreach visits and talks, eg careers conventions; notice boards available to the community; occasional stock promotions/events targeted to Community Groups, eg women, people interested in romance novels, Victorian evenings, poetry days; use of volunteers to assist with service delivery, eg housebound; Open Learning Centres; links with external agencies, eg Featherstone Arts Festival, TEC etc. It has to be said that these are all routine library services, without any real sign of community involvement in design or management.

The Wakefield document in a SWOT analysis stresses points made elsewhere in this thesis on the benefits libraries bring to community development, with their network of service points, accessibility, level of popularity with the public (not provoking the same suspicion as some other quangos and sections of the council but having links with other services). On the negative side it points out the lack of an existing community development policy to build on: “no leadership, no direction, no focus, no priorities, no targeting, no rationale”, and an admitted lack of objective knowledge of communities or systems for data collection, assessment or presentation. (15)

Among the other problems facing the community development approach are a lack of specialist budget and marketing, little training for staff. It also points to problems working with other sections of the council: “low service profile has meant that the Library Service has not played its rightful role in Community Development
across the Council". There have also been poor communications with other council departments, lack of desire to cooperate and the culture of power retention. (16)

However, there does seem to be a commitment to move on from this point, with a planned community development audit of the 29 service points. The plan then is to design a model community profile for each service point and use this as a basis for determining how library resources can be used to further community development. Libraries and Information Services also state that they will monitor the corporate community related activities, and the practice of community development as reported in libraries’ professional press. From profiles, the next step would be to identify what unique role libraries could play, and use surveys of users and mailing lists to take work forward.

Practical suggestions are made on providing library collections for community groups, eg committee skills and fundraising, and arranging related stock of different types together, for maximum accessibility. It is also proposed that external signage and internal guiding be improved. Training for staff and a higher profile for the library service at exhibitions and displays focusing on the community is proposed. The library service also acknowledge that specific projects should be established to provide early positive outcomes, which they consider important given that much of the other priority work is desk based. Two lead officers are assigned to prepare, implement, monitor and measure community development policy within Wakefield Libraries and Information Services.

This library service seems aware of the scale of the task in hand, even if it has not been democratic in addressing the task to date. This policy certainly has potential to be adopted as a model for other services.

Hertfordshire Libraries have carried out extensive consultation in defining their role within The County Agenda. On the corporate policy for community information, libraries have a time-limited target to define a strategy for the benefits InfoBus and implement the service, and to use libraries as hosts for Benefits Agency surgeries. There is a commitment to an annual user survey to determine appropriateness of opening hours, and to keep all costs to members of the public, eg for photocopying records, as low as possible. Hertfordshire have 19 Library User Groups and 3 Library Friends Groups. While User Groups have representation from County, District, Town and Parish Councils and include a variety of local users, their remit is to review and monitor work done by the staff. The Library Friends are "enthusiastic readers and supporters" of the library service, influential in several spheres of common activity. There will be a closer examination of this in the case study to follow.

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Kingston Upon Hull enclosed a Library Strategy, to be read in conjunction with the Council’s City Regeneration Strategy, Anti-Poverty Strategy, and the Department’s own Leisure and Cultural Services. The Library Service aims to provide materials and access to information for individuals pursuing lifelong learning, to encourage participation in and appreciation of literature and the arts, to support the council’s objectives of encouraging the development and sustainability of the local economy, and help individuals realise their full potential in the labour market. The Strategy has a Mission, Strategic Aims and Service Plan. Again, many of the targets are measurable and time limited. Many of the services the authority seeks to provide are again fairly routine - reading schemes, study facilities, community information. The library service is also committed to a staff development scheme and is working towards Investors in People accreditation.

The accompanying council Anti-poverty Strategy refers briefly to libraries, as the section with responsibility for the viewdata system in libraries, housing offices etc with information on benefits, job vacancies, seeking employment etc. They are also responsible for improving access to services and information for the visually and hearing impaired, with a Kurzweil Reading Machine and Braille transcription service, and for talks to pre-retirement groups and those caring for children to raise the profile of services provided. None of this could really be defined as a strategy for community development.

Croydon Borough Council does not have a strategy at corporate level, but did include a draft strategy at the consultation stage. Again, Libraries were mentioned in passing, for their project to run an information skills programme for people in training schemes and job clubs, and for their “range of services easily accessible to all sections of the community”.

County Durham included a four page policy statement from their Arts, Libraries and Museums Department. This includes a four point paragraph on community development which is well-meaning but rather vague, aiming for example “to enable individuals and groups to gain more influence over the issues that affect their own lives”. Durham comes out well in the community development criteria (scoring 8), and has specialist staff and budgets, but obviously has some way to go in developing a focused strategy.

Birmingham has included a lengthy and impressive Divisional Plan for 1997/98 on Libraries and Learning. This Division “aims to provide high quality education and training for adult learners, accessible, community-based services and, through collaboration with other agencies, to encourage lifelong learning”. Birmingham has
40 libraries, not including mobiles, housebound and other services. Key areas of development include developing computer based learning opportunities for Basic Skills students; supporting parents participating in Family Literacy programmes, developing an ESOL assessment toolkit in conjunction with TEC, homework support in libraries and Parent Volunteer training.

The service has conducted regular user surveys in its Central and community libraries, and with children. Birmingham offer story sessions and Saturday clubs for children, homework and after-school clubs. For adults, there is a Readers and Writers Festival and reading groups at a number of libraries, among a whole range of educational and recreational activities. The Divisional Plan document has fifteen pages of service targets, with target groups clearly identified.

Knowsley Library Services included two glossy and extensive publications with their questionnaire return. Their Libraries Policies document has sections on children, schools, teenagers, lifelong learners, special needs, reading promotion, adult lending, reference and information, local studies and archives and stock. Many of the statements made are generalisations. They have broad service aims but lack specific targets:

As part of the Library Service’s commitment to supporting life-long learning, the learning needs of adults will be met through easy access to books and electronic information and appropriate staff support. (17)

Much of the document is routine to all library service, but there is a community-oriented aspect to Local Studies and Archives provision which states that:

Community involvement in local history research and projects will be actively encouraged in conjunction with other sections of the Library Service, the results of which will be made available to the public as part of a local studies publications programme. (18)

The Service also commits itself to equal opportunity issues, stating that resources will portray positive images of race, gender, social class and people with special needs.

As might be expected, the Strategic Plan is much more focused, stating under Educational Support that the library service aims to provide Study Centres equipped with books and computers in each of the seven libraries and in partnership with schools run active Homework Clubs in all libraries by 1997, and
that they aim to provide a comfortable and stimulating environment for young people by completing a programme of theming children’s libraries by the year 2000. Under Independent Learning for Adults, the service states its aim to provide fully equipped Open Learning and Learning Resource Centres in all its libraries by 1997, and to staff the Open Learning Centres with Study Support Tutors to advise independent learners on suitable software packages for acquiring skills to improve opportunities for employment.

The documents refer to “the vulnerable”, meaning disadvantaged and elderly people, and the objectives regarding these groups mainly concern ensuring disabled access and services to the visually impaired. There are no aims or objectives under the specific heading of community development, although it could be argued that many of the policies on education would contribute to the community development process. The strategic plan includes an environmental analysis and a section on forecasting change. It is a well presented and impressive document.

Sheffield Library Service were included in the category of libraries with strategies because they reported that they were part of the Leisure Services strategy, but this strategy applies to the larger directorate and not only to libraries. They included a draft policy statement on community partnerships in Leisure Services. Its aims and objectives are to provide better services to the community; improve service efficiency and use of resources; develop an open and responsive service and have clear procedures for initiating and developing community partnerships. The document is only three pages long and primarily reflects the council policy of “getting closer to communities”. The implications for libraries are not explored here.

The remainder of the libraries’ strategic plans have less to contribute.

Rotherham enclosed the Service Plan for Library and Information Services 1997/98 with the standard themes of education, leisure, information and culture. It mentions at an early stage the aim of “contributing towards regeneration of the community by support of a local information strategy, provision of community information and other associated services”, but the document as a whole is long, and lists very obvious operational activities such as offering study facilities and making books and audiovisual materials available for home use. Some branches do not yet have facilities to lend videos, and there is no introductory leaflet for new users. Not all branches offer children’s activities. However, there is a pledge to appoint a full time Urdu speaking library assistant in the Central Library in the interests of customer care, and to establish a detailed programme of contact with local community groups or organisations at six service points. Why only six, out of 17 libraries? This is a routine report of the sort issued each year to council committees. It has little new to
offer, and little evidence of a community development strategy.

North Tyneside Libraries included a very brief document on Key Activity Areas. One of these is the Support and encouragement of lifelong self-development and education, including the stated aim of liaising closely with continuing education groups. Another Key Activity Area seeks to Support and stimulate community development, activities and initiatives, and promote libraries as a community resource. While this sounds hopeful, the operational objectives are uninspiring:

- to promote and publicise the library's enabling role
- to co-operate with other agencies to enable effective access to the information required by our community.
- to promote the role of librarians as information specialists and as guides to resources.

Public libraries can and do aspire to more than being guides to resources, and this does not equate with community development.

Lancashire County Library's Service Plan seeks to make its libraries "welcoming and friendly", and "relevant to local community needs", but is not much more specific. It has an extensive arts programme, including music recitals and events for people with learning difficulties. It is extremely large, with 102 branch libraries. They seek "to develop the role of the public library in providing access to the arts in the local community" and "to develop lifelong learning principles in association with other agencies. It aims specifically "to identify partnerships relevant to the maintenance and development of the library service"(19), although it mentions as its final programmed task for 1998/98 seeking new partnerships with the voluntary sector. Community development does not seem to be a priority here.

Neath Port Talbot enclosed a Development Plan, along with their Health and Safety and Stock Management policies. Much of the Development Plan is operational, dealing with maintenance of libraries and book request systems. There is a focus on children and lifelong learning, but this is only followed by a statement of the current position, that all libraries provide space, materials, and staff assistance to children seeking out of school support... "Providing supporting materials and information to children in conjunction with their schoolwork is an intrinsic part of public library work." (20)

Another commitment is to provide adults and children in all the communities in Neath Port Talbot with a range of literary and cultural experiences:
Neath Port Talbot libraries provide a range of outreach activities especially for children. Local cultural events, in both Welsh and English are well represented, though the coverage throughout the County Borough is inconsistent. Libraries regularly display material of general public interest. (21)

The timetable for action which follows is vague and without specific targets.

Middlesbrough Borough Council have included a copy of their council’s Anti-Poverty/Social Exclusion Strategy on the development of a corporate charging policy. Although the Passport to Leisure concession scheme discussed here will apply to libraries, it does not equate to a community development strategy, and was the only offering enclosed by Middlesbrough.

Last, and probably least, are the enclosures from Essex County Council Libraries. One of these is a sixteen page list of Fees, Fines and Charges which does not seem supportive of community development. The second is the Children’s Service Practice Document No.7 on contact with local authority and voluntary children’s agencies, where nominated staff liaise with local contacts of eg Social Services and the Kid’s Club Network to promote library services. Programmes of outreach promotional talks and visits are to be arranged with nurseries and playgroups. This sort of outreach is fairly routine for young people’s services and this document simply sets out the range of contacts and potential for development. It is certainly thorough, if exceptionally bureaucratic in tone.

It should be noted that the documents sent by all the authorities above may have been those most readily available at the time of sending the questionnaire. While there are some excellent examples, some of the Service Plans are very general, and may have been included because the libraries in question see all of their work as “work with communities”.

The main evidence emerging from closer analysis of the survey, is that those library services with a strategy seem more active, more responsive and more reflective than those without a strategy.

As we saw above, each of the 18 services with a strategy is working in partnership with other agencies on initiatives aimed at regenerating or empowering local communities. (Eighty-eight per cent of the whole group were involved in partnership initiatives). Sixteen are also involved in interagency community development projects. (Only 38% of all respondents were). For library services with a strategy the average community development criteria score was 6.7 out of a possible 9. (For
the whole group the figure was 3.9). Sixteen of the 18 services with a strategy monitor their work, compared with only 57.4% of the total group. Services with a strategy had made an average of 5 partnership funding bids: the average for the whole group was 2.8. Half of those with a strategy had user committees or focus groups. The figure for the whole group was 32%. Two-thirds of library services with a strategy have a member of staff working on community liaison, compared to under one third of the group as a whole.

There is enormous scope for exploration of the issues involved, but given the constraints of time and space, it may be productive to consider a representative group of library services in more depth.

8.25 Case study interviews

Four services were selected as models of good practice. Gateshead, Renfrewshire, Hackney and Hertfordshire were chosen partly because of the commitment to consultation and interagency working demonstrated in their questionnaire responses. They also represent differing extremes of local authority provision. Gateshead is similar in profile to Newcastle, Sunderland and several other smaller authorities in the North of England dealing with the effects of industrial decline. Its service provision and policy priorities tackle the problems posed by poverty and poor health.

Hertfordshire is at the other extreme of England, a leafy commuter belt. Though largely affluent, it has pockets of deprivation, and also suffers the disadvantages that rural isolation can bring. Hackney is comparable with other London boroughs. Highly populated and culturally diverse, it is struggling with limited resources to meet the needs of all its residents and to offer equal access to disadvantaged groups. Finally, Renfrewshire is representative of many of the West of Scotland/Central belt Scottish authorities and also has parallels with authorities in the north of England, including Gateshead. It has to deal with an economic and demographic context which has undergone radical change in the last ten or twenty years; change seen in rising levels of unemployment, family breakup, poor health and stressful home circumstances.

It was felt that the four authorities typified the social geography of contemporary Britain, and the challenges facing public sector management. There are interesting parallels across the services, with many policies and priorities in common and crucial points of difference. The four authorities were asked if they would be willing to be examined as a case study for this research: all agreed. A decision had
then to be made on the best technique for gathering information from the case study authorities. Interviews could either be by telephone or by site visits, which could arguably offer the opportunity to gather far more information.

Constraints of time militated against visits. The logistics of arranging visits to four far-flung areas of Britain, and ensuring that relevant staff were available for the duration of the visit raised real problems. Phonecalls appeared more practical for all concerned. It was also felt that an overview had been obtained from a lengthy questionnaire. The questionnaire had a good response rate, allowing realistic conclusions to be drawn. It would have been possible to visit any one of the four authorities, see various libraries, be introduced to staff and still spend less than the full hour asking direct questions of a senior management figure which the telephone interview allowed. In all cases, there was follow-up correspondence, with further information sent on points arising from discussion. The interviews were structured and highly focused. Their purpose was to discover the policy and priorities of each service, as presented by management; to determine how those policies were formulated and identify common themes. Telephone interviews achieved this goal.

Both the library services themselves and their parent councils were approached for relevant policy and strategy documents to give a context to information gleaned from questionnaire and interview. An extensive list of documents were supplied and examined. These informed both the interviews and subsequent analysis. The documents concerned are listed at the end of this section.

The case study interviews could have been tackled in a number of ways. If the focus of the thesis had been the implementation or evaluation of community development strategies, it might have been appropriate to interview a range of staff, and also users in a variety of service points within the authority. If the views gathered were to be representative and impartial, many interviews would be required. Site visits on a number of occasions would be essential, to interview staff at different levels and in different locations. Contact with user groups would probably have to come through the intermediary of the library service, and there might be a desire on all sides to present a very positive image. It would be hard to paint a comprehensive picture of the service without devoting major resources in terms of study time and writing: even then, it is questionable what real insight might be achieved.

Equally, it could be argued that lower level staff and library users might not know the history of policy development or be aware of all the elements of policy. For this reason it might be preferable to speak to policy makers directly.

It is unrealistic to expect a completely unbiased picture of service provision from
speaking to representatives of that service. Those directing the service may be reluctant to express a critical view. Without a prolonged period of research at the location concerned it is difficult to test the validity of remarks made. However, if these are accepted as factors at the outset, the purpose of the investigation is really to report the authority’s “public face”, what it feels its priorities are and should be, how service is shaped to reflect those priorities. And crucially for the purposes of this thesis, the origins and development of policies and strategies for community development.

Senior personnel were identified in each authority and dates and times for interviews agreed. The questions which were to form the basis for the interview related to the original questionnaire, seeking more details on how policies were formulated and how they shape the library’s work. They were sent to each authority in advance. It was agreed that my report of each interview would be sent to the interviewee so that it could be checked for accuracy. Renfrew and Hackney did return the reports suggesting minor changes. Although the interviews are reported as they occurred, they are followed by a section which aims to critically analyse what was said, to identify contradictions and common themes.

The interviews lasted approximately one hour. The first was conducted with Gateshead.

Gateshead Libraries

Gateshead has a population of around 200,000. A primarily urban authority with some rural areas, it encompasses deprived areas and pockets of affluence. Over fifty of its 66 Councillors are Labour, with the opposition formed by the Liberal Democratic Party. The Conservative Party is not currently represented.

This library service has 17 community libraries and two mobile services. Of the 146 library staff, 35 are professionals. The bookfund for this authority is £377,677 according to the latest CIPFA figures. There are currently 25 computer terminals available for public use. All of these have CD-ROM facility, 19 offer access to the library’s computerised catalogue, and 3 offer Internet access.

The Gateshead interviewee was Matthew Watson, Assistant Director (Support Services).

He explained the decision making and committee structures of the council and the role of the library service within this.
Gateshead Libraries is unusual in having a Libraries and Arts department with its own Committee. The Director of Libraries and Arts reports to this committee. The Policy and Resources Committee makes major decisions. Relations with Council members are reportedly good and Libraries have strong support. The Director of Libraries and Arts, the most senior library official, is a Chief Officer of the Council, of equal standing with other Chief Officers.

Each council committee has 22 members, the majority of whom are Labour. The Labour Group meet to consider reports before they are approved by the full Council at the end of the month. The decisions of committees are rarely overturned since objections tend to be raised at an earlier stage.

Gateshead also has management responsibility for Shipley Art Gallery. Museums Services are managed by Tyne and Wear Museums Service.

Having explained the existing system of decision making, Matthew Watson pointed out that this is all due to change in line with the Government's White Paper. Three new models of local government will be possible: the committee style, an elected mayor, or a Cabinet style of government. Gateshead has opted for the last of these, with 10 senior politicians elected from the ruling group. Each has a portfolio for a broad cross-departmental council objective, such as making Gateshead an attractive place to live and work; providing services relevant to families. This system was to replace the existing committee structure in May 2000. Panels will advise on policy, but these too will have broad and not departmental remits.

In some ways, greater responsibility for decision-making will pass to the service director. Reports will only be submitted to the Cabinet committee for major strategic decisions. Scrutiny committees will oversee the work of Cabinet and Chief Officers.

Gateshead is one of many councils trying to achieve Best Value. They feel that this is compatible with the new structure. Operationally, there is already a great deal of cross-departmental working. Watson believes this is likely to increase under the new system, and is likely to influence library policy. The change may necessitate a review of departmental structure. Matthew Watson did not feel this was causing insecurity among the staff, since the process of change would be lengthy. Political elements of the council's work would be scrutinised before officer elements, and there was no wish to demolish departments.

In the future, Senior Officers in council may spend more time working to portfolios
than running a single department. Bill McNaught, the current Director of Libraries and Arts, already works to a range of portfolios for the council, developing the service. There is collaboration with architects, planners, financial advisers and external agencies. Other staff have a more operational role. While the future may bring different job titles, the basic division of responsibilities is likely to remain.

Matthew Watson himself has responsibility for audit, quality assurance systems and appointment of staff. His role is to support the Director and Deputy. He has three functional responsibilities: for management information, quality assurance and support services. Three other Assistant Directors have responsibility for Lending; Information; and Arts. This group of staff make up the management team.

Unlike many library authorities, there are no team librarians. There is for example, no Senior Young People’s Librarian or other professionals whose entire responsibility is with children. Community librarians in branches have some autonomy within their area and limited budgetary responsibility.

Matthew Watson pointed out that it was now a statutory responsibility for library authorities to prepare an Annual Library Plan such as the recent document he enclosed. Departmental policy framework papers are also published throughout the year as progress reports on the service. These are currently considered by the service committee and the Policy and Resources Committee in turn. Watson described the Council-wide document “Beyond 2000” as a “vision statement”.

This has been the policy framework for the service to date. There have been no specific, named community development strategies within or across departments in Gateshead Council. There is in fact a section on Community Development in the council “vision statement”, and indeed many of the respondents to our questionnaire would have categorised the Annual Library Plan as a strategy for working with communities, but Matthew Watson was resistant to the idea of the Libraries and Arts department requiring a strategy specifically addressing “Community Development”.

He acknowledged that the situation might change. Under the present system the Library and Arts Plan goes to committee for approval when complete. From May there will be a need to relocate policies within the ten policy areas, and a workplan has to be established for this. These policy areas might fit more closely the concept of community development outlined in this thesis.

While Matthew Watson was reluctant to espouse the term “community development” as a library role, he described a service to its communities which is
well aware of the need to consult and which is striving to be responsive. The questionnaire return they submitted indicates extensive interagency work, a full list of events and activities, most of which were established in response to community demand or have community involvement in their operation. Watson argues that the service helps communities by providing good library services. While Gateshead libraries have both policies and strategies for working with communities, they are not called community development strategies.

The Council has a duty to provide services for local people and there is already significant pressure to work to agendas set by government at a national level. Almost on a daily basis, papers arrive setting frameworks for provision in areas such as education and social work. The Annual Library Plan requirement is one such example. The council has to work within government policies and does not need unnecessary internal documents too.

In an earlier telephone call, Watson was not keen to embrace “community librarianship”, saying that librarians were not social workers and Gateshead provides a library service based on traditional principles of access to literature and information. But there is not necessarily a conflict here. Libraries can in themselves be agents of community development.

Watson spoke about the staffing structure within Libraries and Arts. Many authorities have established systems with team librarians leading groups of staff on stock, community services, services to children etc. Gateshead has seventeen purpose-built libraries in very different areas, ranging from rural to urban, from affluent to deprived. Each of ten community librarians is responsible for all aspects of library service in their area. These librarians are expected to provide services for schools and voluntary groups. A professionally qualified librarian is available in each library. It is seen as important that librarians are face to face with the public in their area, and whatever changes to structure may emerge from the council reorganisation, this commitment will remain. No teams have been established for community development or any other specialism. Management have taken the view that support will be given from the centre, but there is no need for excessive time spent in meetings.

Discussing current library initiatives, Matthew Watson highlighted campaigns for the National Year of Reading. “Branching Out” is a Literature Development Programme established by the Society of Chief Librarians with “dozens of initiatives” both centrally and in individual libraries. One example is the Northern Children’s Books Festival, a joint initiative involving all councils and library services in the North of England. Each of these contribute to a central budget to fund the
Festival, held over two weeks every autumn. The Festival requires extensive preparation, but is able to capitalise on its economies of scale, attracting a large number of authors to read in schools and libraries. It has grown from modest beginnings over the last ten years.

Another example of partnership initiative is the MISSISSIPPI project in Gateshead's Central Library funded by the British Library/Woolfson Foundation to provide video telephony services for the hearing impaired. The Libraries and Arts Department took advice on making links with local deaf people and have appointed a member of staff able to use sign language in the Information Services section. Gateshead as a service has a high profile and good reputation for its services to the disabled.

Matthew Watson remarked that most of the library's initiatives are large scale and involve several or all of the branches. However, Community Librarians can also initiate or contribute to local projects. This is very much a part of their remit, with the only qualification being that library staff are advised not to take on officer positions in voluntary groups because of the local authority audit policy. There are for example four or five local history societies, as well as other arts based groups which are examined in some detail below.

Central Library offers assistance with homework. A recent bid to the Single Regeneration Budget was successful in obtaining funding to establish Homework Clubs in two specific areas of Gateshead and two new librarians have been appointed.

Watson made the comment that external funding for initiatives such as this often come with strings attached. There is often a requirement for matched funding, and the whole bidding and monitoring process brings its own workload. Money often comes in instalments, dependent upon the acceptance of the next monitoring report. If there is any delay, the service still has to be funded. There are strict bidding regimes for most European funding. If a bid is successful, the service it supports must be delivered responsibly. There is a need to think carefully before taking the step to apply for funds.

While Gateshead have no specialist budgets devolved to community development, there is a budget for each community library, some of which will be controlled by the librarian in charge.

While user committees/focus groups are not common to date, the AIRS service for the visually impaired has a user panel which meets three times a year. This service
exists to provide a talking newspaper and information tapes. Meetings review output, technical quality and the balance of the newspaper and other items.

Watson believes that as Best Value is increasingly endorsed, there will be a broader view of the concept of community and community involvement. There are already regular surveys and a longstanding comments, compliments and complaints postcard system. There are currently no Friends of the Libraries groups, but this may change. There is a requirement in the Annual Library Plan for user involvement to be reported, and Gateshead is currently considering this.

Users are consulted in planning a new service. Examples of this are a new computer network across thirteen councils in the north of England offering Internet access in all libraries, supported by British Telecom and the British Library and scheduled to go live at the end of February 1999. A new library system is also planned for Gateshead this autumn.

Asked about user involvement in the service's events and activities, Watson gave the example of storytimes, with parents involved on a supervised basis. They are also actively involved in the Book Festival and a wide range of other arts events. Watson believes the combination of Libraries and Arts within one department is a strength. Some of their activities are funded by the Council and Northern Arts.

Arts work divides into two separate strands. Firstly, arts programmes provide local people with access to the arts, in the form of theatre, music and the performing arts. Central Library itself is a major venue for events of this sort. Secondly, arts development aims to involve local people in producing their own art. Matthew Watson commented that this approach was very strong in Gateshead.

One example is the PRIMETIME group funded by the King's Fund, a London-based charity and policy advisory body. This offers arts to older people including dance, poetry and writing. The group operates with a high level of autonomy. Local people in one area may be interested in a photography group. In this instance the Libraries and Arts department would fund an arts worker or photographer and give the group money to purchase cameras. The group would decide on themes for their work and exhibitions. There is sometimes a spin-off between groups, so that, for example, the photography group might document the work of the others. Other groups meeting in libraries include clog dancers, amateur arts groups and the Felling Silver Band.

There is also a commitment to combining arts and health. The Northern Region has been designated a Health Action Zone. Matthew Watson's counterpart, Mike
White, is the Assistant Director, Arts. He is very active in the Arts in Health movement and has lectured in the United States on this topic. The guiding principles are that art relieves stress, and gives people an interest no matter how old and infirm. A great deal of work on this theme is planned in Gateshead. The Library and Arts service is helping to develop Healthy Living Centres, and is getting involved in arts and literature as preventive medicine. It is now known that stress and anxiety are major reasons for visits to the doctor. The sort of work envisaged is very much in the sphere of arts development. As Matthew Watson remarks, art in Gateshead is “not just doing things to people”. The emphasis is more that the department has expertise and can help people realise their potential through the arts.

On charging for events and activities, there is a policy that most organised activities will be free. Larger, more commercial performances are charged, with concessions available. The Council is currently working on a concessionary scheme for general application.

Asked about the effect of cuts on service, Watson commented that mainstream funding had not been dramatically reduced, but that under Best Value, services have to show that each year they are doing more for less money. Gateshead has been more fortunate, or perhaps more prudent, than some other councils. In Watson’s view it has been well-managed and moderate.

The view within the council has been that a budget fully spent is overspent. If a department has some funds remaining at the end of the year, it is more likely that it will be allocated the same budget again. It is understood that any growth in service has to be financed from existing funds: “If you want something new, think of something old you could stop doing before going to the council to ask for money.”

In general the level of spending has been fairly constant, although keeping pace with inflation is a problem. There have been no swingeing cuts, but reductions in eg opening hours on Wednesday afternoons. Gateshead has more libraries open longer than most authorities. The Council has seen this as a priority, with the service being highly valued by council members, despite many other demands. Despite the climate of financial stringency, managers have a good deal of freedom of action.

The management style aims to be inclusive. All members of staff can be involved in projects. Strategies for staff development are in place. The Libraries and Arts Department has a member of staff accredited to give City and Guilds training. Level 2,3 and 4 NVQs are available for assistants. The philosophy is that staff develop through education and accreditation.

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The Department is led by a Director and Deputy plus four Assistant Directors, of whom Matthew Watson is one. Specific projects are developed through groups of staff, not necessarily led by one of the management team. Library assistants may also attend working groups, for example on customer care. Watson contends there is extensive communication throughout the service. The culture in the department is open. A library assistant can knock on the Director’s door, or if he is unavailable, speak to his secretary and arrange a five minute meeting to raise a problem. No one stands on ceremony.

Asked whether staff are working towards clear targets for Departmental objectives, Watson answered that the first Annual Library Plan is quite broad and hard to relate to measurable criteria. However, the Local Performance Plan which is a requirement at council level will have specific targets and should be a key document for the Department. Staff are already working to targets on projects with external funding, particularly where European money is involved. Although there are many internal targets, such as issue figures, recirculation totals etc, there have been no published local targets. However, the Council’s first Local Performance Plan now contains targets for a range of services, including Libraries. Watson argues that Best Value regime will bring greater accountability, although many would dispute this claim. In the future more data will be gathered and also published. Watson believes there should be a small number of meaningful figures, not all based on quantitative evaluation. Satisfaction should also be measured, and the department should have a target for this. A central principle of Best Value is that service should “get better” year on year with the same resources.

The concept of Lifelong Learning has really taken hold in Gateshead. Libraries and Arts are already working closely with Education on initiatives such as the National Year of Reading. A report is due to go to Council on the creation of a Learning Borough, similar to the Sunderland, City of Learning concept. It addresses how schools are run, and how libraries can contribute to the learning network. Libraries also have a role in another key report, the Plan for Literacy.

Libraries generally do have an input to significant reports. If it is seen as relevant, a report can be referred from one committee to another (eg Education then Libraries and Arts), before going to the Policy and Resources Committee for consideration. Reports may be written jointly by two or more Chief Officers. There are likely to be some members serving on two related committees since each committee has 22 members, and there are only so many councillors to go around.

Matthew Watson believes that Gateshead’s library service is valued, and is seen as
an important voice in questions of public policy. Staff may not necessarily think of their work in terms of "community development", but in terms of access to a range of library, information and arts services. Gateshead librarians are quietly working to empower individuals and communities, because they believe that is what libraries do.

Hertfordshire

Hertfordshire operates in an entirely different environment. At the heart of South East England it ranges from the outskirts of London up to Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire. Largely rural, with 64% of its land used for agriculture, it encompasses towns like Watford (population 84,400), Hemel Hempstead (79,400) Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield. Although the county is generally perceived to be well-educated and financially secure, there are significant areas of deprivation in some of the larger towns.

The area has a total population in excess of one million people, and its library service is correspondingly large. There are 53 branch libraries in Hertfordshire, with 136 terminals for public use. Some of these give access solely to the computerised library catalogue, but every library has a PC for public use too. There are also mobile libraries, one of which is a Cybercafe aimed at teenagers, run in conjunction with the Youth and Community service. Annual bookfund is £1,545,852. The library service was the first section within Hertfordshire County Council to gain Investor in People status.

The Libraries section is unusual in that it comes under Community Information, a grouping which also includes Trading Standards and the County Record Office. These services, together with Fire and Rescue, Youth and Community, Registration, Emergency Planning and Gypsies all report to the county's Community Services Committee. The Community Services Committee and other service committees - Education, Environment and Social Services - report to the Policy Committee and to the full County Council. Elected members also serve on five cross-cutting "Commissions" to which all services contribute. Library staff are represented on four of these. There are 77 Councillors, and the Labour/Liberal administration group has a majority of one over the Conservatives.

The library service, like the Council as a whole, has had to contend with significant cuts in budget. The last financial year saw a 23% cut in the bookfund, and a decision to buy no new hardback fiction. Cuts to the basic service have resulted in no staff training, and the closure of service points due to sickness and other
absences. Perhaps because of this, there is a heavy emphasis on income generation, with 15% of the total budget accounted for by fines, loan charges, sales etc. There is a full-time post of Sponsorship Officer. There are 422 library staff in total. Twenty-eight per cent of these are librarians. There are 1000 volunteers, and 30 Library User Panels.

I spoke about the service to Glenda Wood, Library Operations Manager, and on specific questions to Derek Knight and Maree Staunton, both Library Development Managers responsible for an identified group of libraries. The library service, in common with most I spoke to, is in the midst of a restructuring. The first phase of this, affecting very senior management, is now complete. Glenda Woods has only recently been appointed to her new post.

I asked whether the political administration’s slim majority led to insecurity within the service, but Ms Wood felt this was not the case. The Libraries service have a relatively strong position within the council. Falling within the Community Information Directorate, their Chief Officer is a Director. Libraries are not particularly being targeted for cuts.

Ms Wood felt that the Vice Chairs of the Community Services Committee were sympathetic to Libraries’ situation. It is difficult however to decide in their favour when firefighters are represented on the same committee, arguing that funds are desperately required. In the past the public have been asked to decide between eg Libraries and Social Services, which should bear the brunt of cuts. In this instance libraries tend to lose out, but there is great concern if a library is threatened with closure. Great use is made within the council of MORI polls, and these consistently show that libraries are the most popular service. Even non-users value libraries and understand their significance.

In times of real financial stringency it might be necessary to reduce senior managerial or professional levels, putting pressure on the rest of the staff, or cut the frontline service by reducing hours or closing libraries. That does not seem to be a threat at present. Glenda Wood pointed out that the situation facing the London boroughs is far worse. At the time of interview Islington was proposing to close half its libraries and open the remainder only at evenings and weekends, making hundreds of staff redundant. Lambeth was discussing closing all but two libraries, and letting these open 24 hours a day. And Surrey was considering the closure of 22 libraries.

As Glenda Wood remarked, it is ironic that libraries are closing just when there is confirmation of the role of public libraries in society and an emphasis on lifelong learning. Public libraries can have a big impact, but only if they have a presence and
reasonable funding. Despite ministerial support for everything libraries are trying to do in their communities, the realities of local government finance mean that libraries in many areas are in crisis. Could the future see a network of computers, and no libraries to house them?

Responding to the question on the library service’s community development strategy and how it was agreed, Ms Wood said that at the time the document in question was the County Agenda. This has since been adopted and has had an impact on policies.

Ms Wood believes that libraries are naturally community focussed. Hertfordshire has many consultation processes. When drawing up the County Agenda the County Council set up Citizens’ Panels with the advice of MORI, in an attempt to reach a broad cross section of people. The geographical spread, age, income level, sex, etc were fairly represented in these Panels. Members were “trained up” and given information. The Panels were used as a sounding board for a cross section of public opinion. The County Agenda is one of the projects taken to these Panels. The County Council also consulted other relevant organisations such as district and parish councils and others.

The Annual Library Plan, as with Gateshead, has been draw up since our questionnaire. This was really an internal document concerning professional issues and compiled by a strategic team, so it was not opened up for consultation. However, a Task Group of five elected members reported on the future sustainability of library services in October 1998, and there has been huge consultation on this report.

Hertfordshire has a large number of libraries and a major complement of staff. Ms Wood commented that in the present financial climate this needs to be addressed. The report also considers how libraries can continue to be both innovative and traditional, making optimum use of books and information technology into the 21st Century.

The Members Task Group agreed a set of principles, and addressed particularly issues around buildings. The consultation that followed involved Library User Panels (LUPs), focus groups, parish and district councils, the health authority, TECs and other bodies who were sent a postal questionnaire.

The report highlighted the fact that some libraries are no longer well-situated and are not always a good use of resources when there could be alternative means of service delivery. Should major funds be invested in an old building which is no
longer in a central area? With shifts in population and changes to use, the report argues that consideration be given to what level of service provision is viable in a particular community.

Glenda Wood gave the example of Watford (population 84,000) which has a new shopping centre at the other end of the High Street, one mile away from civic buildings. Would it be better to take a shorter-term lease in a better location? Or in a village of 1500 people, is it sensible to operate a tiny library eight hours per week when there could be wider provision from a mobile?

I suggested here that village people might disagree. The discussion process explains how much a service costs. Ms Woods accepted that given the choice everyone wants their own physical place, but the budget has been reduced and savings have to be made.

I asked then was there really any point in a consultation process if a library had to be closed? She believes that, “The choice is around what we do and how we do it,” keeping an open mind on possible alternatives. These might be service from a mobile, or the provision of a Village Shop Information Point. These have been established as pilots in Post Offices, and include an Online Public Access Computer (OPAC). The possibility of working in partnership with other premises such as the village shop is now being investigated. It might also be possible to fit out a unit in the nearest Tesco or Sainsbury’s or in a local school. In Boddington, a library was built separate from the school on school ground. The school had money for building; Community Information, Libraries provide a public library service and the school uses the library as its school library. Ms Wood stated that the department is prepared to look at any alternative.

Answering Question 5, on whether the library service has specialist members of library staff working on community liaison, Ms Wood commented that this was a part of the Community Development Managers’ job description. Partnership working also falls within their remit.

On events and activities, she stated that there had been more arts-based activities in the past. Formerly, each group of libraries had its own budget for activities. There was a plethora of locally organised events. St Albans for example had an annual arts event featuring activities like tie-dying and origami. With cuts in the budget, widespread activities have to be concentrated and centralised, to get the best possible value for money.

There were still some coordinated events, such as the LitFest reading festival for
adults and children which has been running for the past 12/14 years. It is considered more effective to have “a few decent events” attracting well known authors, and some smaller children’s events. In this way provision can be rationalised, coordinated and themed for maximum impact, and can be publicised more effectively. It is better to organise provision in this way than to have too many diverse events and dissipate the effect.

Glenda Wood did remark that she feels arts in libraries is important, since they are part of cultural life. Local artists are welcome to exhibit in any library. There is currently a vacancy for a County Arts Development Officer, who works closely with libraries. Libraries Development Managers do work with arts workers at district level, some of whom are very keen. There is also a joint project officer with Education for the National Year of Reading, currently organising a range of activities.

In terms of more educational provision, there are some special projects of note. In Rickmansworth, for example, there is no longer a campus or college, but the library has established a Women’s Return to Work course.

I spoke to Maree Staunton, the Library Development Manager for Rickmansworth. She is one of 19 such managers in Hertfordshire and is responsible for three libraries in total. She explained details of the course which is due to run for six weeks in June 1999. The course is to be run jointly with the University of Hertfordshire as part of its Lifelong Learning course. They are providing the Project Manager. The course, to be called Next Steps for Women, was planned following successful Adult Guidance sessions held in the library over the past six months. It will look at the range of opportunities open to those attending, and will teach study and employment skills. Training sessions will be delivered by University tutors and will run one day a week over the six weeks. Because of financial support from the University, the package is offered at a subsidised rate of £35. Concessions will be available. It could be argued that this is still a significant amount of money for those at home with young children. There is currently no childcare provision but the course has been planned to run during school hours. It has not been advertised yet, but is expected to be very popular.

I asked Ms Staunton if the Library User Panel supported the course. She replied that the LUP were happy to try anything, since there is a dearth of educational resources in the area. Most adult education is focussed on Watford.

The course is to be held on a day when the library is closed. Ms Staunton is very keen for it to lead on to other things. Rickmansworth is a economically mixed area,
its town centre fairly comfortable, but pockets of deprivation further out.

Asking about the nature of this research, Ms Staunton commented that there is a need for more partnership working. This is a start and people are happy to try new initiatives.

Fifteen libraries have an Open Learning Centre, established in conjunction with the TEC. In addition to the libraries’ own facilities there are self-help packs and IT programmes plus an online jobs database. Open Learning is really offering a more modern version of what libraries have always offered. It focuses on the educational and informational provision and provides it in a more active and specific way than before, in response to need.

Glenda Woods commented that library events often involve local people, to the extent that Library User Panel (LUP) members can be seen putting out the chairs. There is an emphasis on monitoring. An evaluation sheet is always put on seats at public events asking attenders if they enjoyed the activity and what sort of things they would like to see in future.

There are 33 LUPs who meet three times a year. At meetings the Library Development Manager or User Services Librarian will highlight things coming up and ask for ideas and involvement. Since budget reductions, the LUPs are more likely to be involved with particular projects, giving reactions to developments. They take part in library surgeries such as that at Birkhamstead library. This was reorganised after receiving a new library counter. Previously there had been separate in and out desks, and the new system had implications for staffing. The Birkhamstead surgery looked at other refurbished libraries and got the LUP involved in planning so that they had a real input. After discussion, plans boiled down to 2 or 3 options which were then put out for broader consultation. In a similar vein, “stock surgeries” have generated important information on patterns of library use and purpose of visits. There is obviously a limit to the scope and decision-making powers of User Panels, but Hertfordshire is unusual in having such extensive consultation.

On charging, Glenda Wood pointed out that some services have always been free as a matter of course, for example pre-five storytimes in all libraries. A charge is made for visits from major authors, such as Ranulph Fiennes who spoke last year to an audience of three or four hundred people. His fee was expensive, but the return was such that the event was a commercial proposition. The policy on charging varies according to the event: some things are free or charged to break even. The literature festival relies partly on sponsorship. Sponsorship from Sainsbury’s has also led to an improved reading scheme for children as part of this year’s National Year of
Reading initiative, with a certificate for every child participating.

Speaking of the management culture within Hertfordshire, Ms Wood described some consultation with staff, but decisions are broadly made by the Senior Management Team of which she is a member. The Library Development Managers have a monthly meeting and any problems raised there are fed to her. Policies are changed or “lived with” at that stage. People may be unhappy with eg. charges, but the message may be that there is no option. According to Ms Wood, the management try to ensure that everyone has an input.

Policy is generally formulated by working parties in response to eg. changes in legislation. These working groups are assembled from people with relevant skills at all levels, including library assistants. It is most effective to have a range of staff including for example IT community service specialists. Reports from working groups are then fed up to the Senior Management Team for approval and then down to be implemented.

There are issues where every member of staff is consulted, such as the recent review of badges worn by staff, covering what the badge says, names and format. This consultation was undertaken because it affected people personally and generated strong feelings. Such widespread consultation is unusual because of the massive cost involved.

In answer to the final question on whether staff know the objectives they are working to and have clear targets to achieve, Ms Woods commented that every member of staff has a performance development agreement as part of the ongoing appraisal system. Each member of staff has their own specific agreement worked out with their line manager, all the way up to the service Director. An example of an objective might be to work closely with communities. To meet this, a Library Development Manager might have to “strive to attend x Council meetings with the aim of.....”. Objectives are translated into personal targets.

Glenda Wood did not answer some of my questions on partnership working and community development projects, referring me instead to Derek Knight, Library Development Manager for four libraries in the south of Hertfordshire. When I spoke to him, he described his major work as bidding for funds.

He outlined a highly successful and innovative partnership project based at Oxhey library. It is a joint venture with Hertfordshire County Council Youth Service, West Herts College, Herts TEC, Hertfordshire Careers Service, the University of Hertfordshire Adult Guidance Unit and a variety of other community projects in the
area, and seems to exemplify the best of community development work.

Single Regeneration Budget funding of £44,000 has been awarded for the development of a Lifelong Learning Centre at Oxhey. The library is ideally situated, in the heart of a shopping centre in an estate created from green fields 50 years ago. The estate has a population of 12 or 13,000. South Oxhey is the area which meets SRB criteria. Oxhey is a wider catchment area. The bid had the backing of Oxhey Library User Panel, whose members include District and Parish Councillors as well as lay users of the library. The Panel carried out a survey of library users prior to the bid which indicated a high level of satisfaction with existing services but identified the need for additional information services and computer facilities. With an average “footfall” of 500 people per day, the library was an obvious site for this type of learning centre.

The project has created an IT suite in a room off the main library, with 9 multimedia terminals linked to the Internet and County networks on a fast frame relay line. The library itself has good access, and the room can be used separately when the library is closed. The Learning Centre is a multi-use facility, and is targeting different groups of people in a phased development.

The bid for funding was made in September 1998 and awarded in November. It coincided with an ongoing County initiative to use Oxhey as a pilot site for the development of homework clubs. Phase 1 of the project began in September with homework clubs organised in partnership with the Youth Service. One member of staff has been delegated from Youth Services to work on the project. The club meets three times a week from 4 - 6.30 pm. It had registered 80 members by February 1999, with an average attendance of 10 or 11 per night. So far the club has run as a pilot, only in school terms. There are plans to extend the project to Saturday mornings.

It is the first direct joint venture arising from partnership working in the area. There were concerns before it started that there would be a split, with the Youth Service dealing with the club and the librarians concentrating on the homework. A staff training programme was initiated, but Derek Knight reported that fears proved groundless and staff get on very well. They are “learning many things from each other”, including the fact that three teenagers sitting together are not a threat.

The Youth Service remit is the 11-16 year old age group. There are no secondary schools in this area, with teenagers bussed out to three separate schools, so the club brings different groups of young people together. The Youth Service would like regular members to make a video about the club in the Easter holidays, using their
own camcorders and editing suites. Young people would interview each other and the staff and the video would be a promotional tool sent to all the secondary schools in the area.

The project is mutually beneficial, since it offers the Youth Service contact with young people they would not meet elsewhere. Libraries also get young people in who would not normally use the library. Most of the users are 11-13 year-olds, "building the Lifelong Learning habit". They are borrowing books, and will hopefully stay with the club and the library as they approach their GCSEs. The young people use the other facilities on offer, such as careers advice and guidance and computer courses. They will grow up seeing the library as a base to get advice, not just books.

The homework club were asked if they wanted to give their club a new name. They rejected various "clever adult names" (as Derek Knight put it) such as the "O" Zone, in favour of The Homework Club, so that name has stayed. The room used is 25' by 15' with tables in the middle. It has noticeboards for information and for comments.

Phase 2 of the project had just begun at the time of interview. During the day the local college runs two separate Royal Society of the Arts CLAIT courses (Computer Literacy and Information Technology). They offer 30 hours of word processing and basic computer tuition, after which course members can sit an exam and receive a certificate, giving them employability.

The course is not for the complete beginner, since it assumes knowledge of how to use a mouse etc. The Careers Service has been awarded separate SRB funding for two tutors to run an absolute beginners course. Now West Herts college are liaising with the Careers Service so that they screen people before they attend a CLAIT course and start at the most appropriate level.

I asked about childcare provision for the courses. The library has limited space. However, a project further up the road in a local church does have creche facilities. The ASCEND project (All Saints Centre for Employment and New Directions) also incorporates a homeless unit, the Careers Service and courses on numeracy, literacy and wordpower. It has been awarded grants by the Princes' Trust. Growing links between ASCEND and the library project mean that users may be referred between the two, and the childcare facility might in the longer term be mutual. In the library, courses are free to all South Oxhey residents. Derek Knight reports that they are "snowed under". With SRB funding there is a requirement to reapply each year for new funding, but he feels the project should be secure for the next five years.
Phase 3 began with the official project launch on Tuesday 23rd February. There are several possibilities for future development. The video idea may take off because there is a successful film industry in Hertfordshire. There may be sponsorship from Barclays Bank, who are especially interested in Homework Clubs and have given money for training and staff support.

In the coming months it is hoped that a Community Advisory Committee (a kind of steering group) will be formed, and the Learning Centre room may be broadened out to genuine community use. It may be possible to set up Internet clubs, such as the ones in Borehamwood (although not in this case in a library) where Computers for Scaredycats and The Golden Mouse Club attract older members.

Adult Guidance are hoping to use the library room for a Return to Work Skills Course, not the general course of this type on writing CVs and sending letters, but teaching people how to search for jobs using the Internet and the resources of the library.

Derek Knight is now seeking SRB funding for an IT support post and is hopeful money may be awarded for 25 hours of support per week in term-time. The aim would be to support the current initiatives and broaden use.

The ASCEND project mentioned above has recently appointed a community outreach worker. The Learning Centre might have applied for a similar post instead, but ASCEND pointed out there was no need for two such workers in the area. This is an example of how partnership working can operate to everyone's benefit.

As for the other partners, Herts TEC supply online information for the vacancies database to a dedicated terminal in the main library. They also provide the Lifelong Learning information point which has information covering careers, courses, books and guidance. The University of Hertfordshire Adult Guidance Unit and the Careers Service run regular drop-ins to answer queries in the library and refer people via the vacancy database and CLAIT courses. There is monitoring of these courses via exit interviews, and steering guidance from the University, the College and ASCEND, whose outreach worker also has a weekly drop-in. The Community Advocacy Project run by Watford CAB also runs a drop-in, offering help and guidance, home visits and form-filling and technical and legal signposting to the CAB opposite the library. This also enables the CAB to get new volunteers.

Derek Knight describes the whole project starting a year ago. West Herts College
already ran a drop-in session, and the library wanted to see if they could run a Return to Work course. After it was finished they discovered that ASCEND had run one two weeks later which had been poorly attended and they were not happy. ASCEND were also SRB funded, and the SRB wanted the two projects to work together. Now ASCEND’s essential skills users visit the library as part of their syllabus and learn how to find books on the shelf. Knight comments that, “It sounds pretentious, but you have to have a vision of where you’re going”. He also believes you have to respond to other things going on.

Ideas like the video editing proposal have great potential to access funding. It ties in with Council policy, buts needs a business plan with vision and strategy. Derek Knight believes, “Partnership working is the absolute key to accessing funds”. It is best to extend partnerships already there. Oxhey Library now has a Local Plan under the County Community Information, Libraries Strategy. It has still to be formalised.

As part of its SRB funding conditions, the Learning Centre project has to meet specific outcomes on attendance and educational attainment. The project can only count South Oxhey residents. The video will hopefully prove some of the benefits for young people, but Knight admits there is a lot of development work to be done. Funding has also come from the Further Education Funding council in West Hertfordshire, West Hertfordshire College, the Careers Service and grants from Hertfordshire TEC. The Youth Service has appointed and paid staff from its own budget, and the library has contributed premises and a special book collection.

The project has certainly raised the profile of the library. The SRB has now funded a set of high quality display boards to act as a community showcase to exhibit local residents work. This should be a real feature in the library, where it can advertise a programme of activities. A community newspaper just starting up could also raise its profile through the library. Many elements are beginning to work together.

Derek Knight comments that Hertfordshire was already working with its partners in a fairly superficial way. Informal, ad hoc working is not enough. It is surely the vision and the strategy he has referred to that has given this project the will and the means to succeed.
Renfrewshire

At the opposite end of the country, and serving a very different resident population, Renfrew is also doing innovative work on a limited budget.

I spoke to Vivian Kerr, Principal Librarian. Like the other services I examined, Renfrew is in the midst of a restructuring. According to CIPFA figures, the library service has a total of 134 staff, including 25 professional staff, 90 non-professional, and 14.5 F.T.E. manual library attendants. The proportion of professional staff is fairly high, a feature common to all the case study authorities. For a population of 178,260, the bookfund stands at £400,100. This is around £22,000 less than the fund available to Gateshead, which serves just over 200,000 people, so Renfrew's fund does not seem particularly restrictive.

Previously, Libraries were part of the Department of Leisure Services, and they now come under Education and Leisure, reporting to an independent Leisure Services Committee. The remit for this Committee is Libraries, Museums, Sport and Leisure Services, Arts, and the Town Hall, but not community halls. Parks and Cemeteries have been merged with Environmental Services. The Head of Service responsible for Libraries is the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services, one of four Heads of Service within Education. Labour currently have control of the council, but the local government elections in May were set to result in a hung council or a change in political power.

Libraries have become a small part of a big department. This may have advantages for funding but does mean the service is somewhat remote from decision-making. It means that the Head of Service has to work hard to raise concerns for the service and generate support. Vivian Kerr admitted that the library service could have a higher profile with some Councillors. Despite this they are perceived as "a good thing" which tends not to present major problems.

An exception to this was the decision in 1998 to close two community libraries and JILL the teenage library, a decision which was unpopular locally and led to a protest campaign. Miss Kerr believes there was no alternative: without this step the service might have had fewer new books and there would have been a significant deterioration in the services offered by all libraries to achieve the required savings.

The service is of a similar size to Gateshead and my own authority of Stirling. Apart from its main Central Library, it has 16 community libraries and two mobiles. There is also a toy library, which used to be sited at Library Headquarters but now operates from a community hall next to Glenburn Library. It is used throughout
Renfrewshire, and is particularly valued by single parents and playgroups. Finally a Local Government Library caters for staff and Councillors.

Renfrew has been well known for four innovative projects in particular.

The first of these, LINFO (set up after the demise of the Linwood car factory to give support to workers made redundant and their families) has been proactive in offering information and advice to individuals on benefits entitlements, consumer and legal matters. From April to November 1997 there was a total of 945 enquiries to the project. The whole year preceding this saw nearly 1400 enquiries according to the Urban Programme evaluation report. Two thirds of enquiries come from personal visits. While there has always been Social Work involvement in the form of Welfare Rights Workers to help with appeals and tribunals, the whole project will shortly be run by Social Work. This must be galling after the project has operated successfully in its original form for so long.

JILL (the Johnstone Information and Leisure Library) was also a long-running project, along the same lines as Glasgow's Yoker Library, providing books, magazines, audio, video, software, information, activities and a place to meet for teenagers in Johnstone. It has been a casualty of financial cutbacks.

The LIFE project was ground-breaking in bringing information and advice to elderly housebound readers. It is one of the projects examined by Francois Mattarasso in the Comedia report, Beyond Book Issues. It will move along with LINFO to the Social Work Department later in 1999.

Other interagency work has been done under the auspices of the Paisley Partnership, supporting projects in priority areas. Since Education is now in the same department as Libraries, they tend to work together.

The fourth project of note is Ferguslie Park Library, which moved to new premises to a modern location in the Tannahill Centre funded by Urban Aid through the Paisley Partnership. An evaluation report from the Paisley Partnership Appraisal Team supplied by Renfrewshire comments that the library operates as a key facility in Tannahill Centre, attracting large numbers of children:

Eighty-nine per cent of Ferguslie Park children are members of the library. The combined adult and junior membership is 79% of the ward population. Accounts Commission figures for Scotland for 1996/97 record the average percentage of the population borrowing items during the year as 33%. The comparable figure
for Ferguslie Park is 37%. These results illustrate the significant impact of the inter-agency initiatives developed by the library such as Bookbusters and the forthcoming Barclay’s New Futures - one of the few awarded in Scotland. It also demonstrates the successful role that libraries can play in education strategies for priority areas. The library is considered a model of excellence and has received visitors from across the UK and worldwide since it opened. (22)

The project is seen as contributing to Paisley Partnership Action programmes on Early Years; Wider Educational Access for Youths and Adults; Information and Advice and Community Participation. The team running the project have skills in library work and youth work. There is an extensive weekly programme of class visits from local primary schools to the library during term time. Homework support and after-school activities take place daily. There is extensive co-operation with the Community Arts Team. The project is involved in a range of local initiatives such as the Ferguslie Park Festival, Voice Box, Q96 Radio and various education and health projects, and has extensive links with other agencies from groups concerned with pre-fives through to the Elderly Forum. The Tannahill Centre itself has a Users’ Group.

More recently, Renfrewshire Libraries submitted funding bids for a project to encourage the reading habit among carers, parents and grandparents in areas where literacy levels are poor. Two separate projects have been agreed. A day workshop highlighting why children need to read, looking at storytelling for parents with relevant speakers has attracted £2500. Six thousand pounds has been awarded to a Learning is Childsplay course. These will be held in one or two libraries. Renfrewshire are also applying for funding for the Bookstart project in their area.

Discussing the concept of a community development strategy, Miss Kerr said that the Libraries section do not have their own written policy on community development, but instead try to target priority areas through service provision. Although their 1997 questionnaire return stated that the department were “working on” such a strategy, the document had never been finalised due to local government reorganisation. I asked Miss Kerr whether she felt it would be an advantage to have such a document now. She replied that it wouldn’t do any harm, but the commitment is now to working alongside other departments within Paisley Partnership guidelines.

Renfrewshire Libraries are now trying to consult users more on strategic concerns. For example, a campaign in October/November 1998 targeted 200 people over eight service points. This Points of View pilot scheme is to be extended to all libraries,
and there will be a programme of surveys and public meetings. Several performance indicators are specified in the departmental Service Plan to determine levels of consultation. One of these is the number of people attending public meetings, and other measures relate to the number of suggestions, complaints and survey responses received, so there is an obvious commitment to consultation at corporate level. The Council are now trying to set up User Panels and Focus Groups. One such group has already examined Reference and Local Studies services, with mixed success... Strong views can predominate in such groups. Vivian Kerr believes it is more important to listen to non-users.

Miss Kerr agreed that there was constant pressure to increase library membership and boost issue figures. It is difficult to count usage other than in terms of books borrowed, although this figure omits other significant types of use.

Individual projects are often required by funding bodies to have a strict system of monitoring. This applied to Ferguslie Park, described above, whose Urban Programme funding ended in January 1999.

The library service also prioritises Lifelong Learning. They are currently planning a bid for Excellence funding to extend Internet access for public and staff from Central Library to all other libraries. There have been several unsuccessful bids in the past, some with backing from Renfrewshire Enterprise. A bid for Lottery funding for an extension to Central Library and the Museum Complex is currently being prepared. There are limits to what funding is accessible without the necessary IT infrastructure.

Asked whether Renfrewshire had specialist library staff working on community liaison, Miss Kerr explained the current staffing structure and how this has changed recently. In addition to herself as Principal Librarian, there are five senior librarians, three of whom are involved in Paisley Partnership work. Although formal liaison work is not written in to the staff structure, all community library staff undertake community liaison work. This is given a high priority in job descriptions, and covers talks to outside agencies and supporting library use by the community.

Supplementary information was provided by Jennifer McFarlane, Senior Librarian Information Services. She explains that part of her remit is for Community Development work. This involves her attending the Health and Social Issues Action Group of the Paisley Partnership to represent Leisure Services. She has been asked to lead a new sub-group on Information, including issues of quality and effectiveness. A further sub-group, the Antipoverty working group, has been examining the possibilities of L.E.T.S schemes, Credit Unions, corporate debt
strategy and benefit take-up campaigns. The library service is also represented on a Health Promotion Task Group, and a Drugs Steering group. They are involved with a wide range of statutory and voluntary groups working on a bid to the lottery New Opportunities Fund for a Healthy Living Centre. Libraries are also co-opted to the Renfrewshire Forum on Disability. The library service is showing an exhibition to mark the Centenary of the University of Paisley, and future collaboration is planned.

Looking at the variety of events and activities offered in Renfrewshire, I asked if there were still no multicultural events, but Miss Kerr said there was insufficient demand to justify organising such activities. In the past there was a collection of books in minority languages, but it was not well used. People were looking more for material to improve their English. Books in minority languages can be obtained on request. Miss Kerr pointed out that only 1% of the population come from an ethnic background.

On arts activities, the library service has a Writer-in-Residence, Ajay Close, who is 50% funded by the Scottish Arts Council and works with adult groups and children. Funding has been made available by the Arts Centre for a large scale book event this year which will take place over one week. The traditional book fair held in Paisley has been dropped in recent years, although author visits are still arranged, and given a high priority according to the interviewee.

The library service tends not to organise arts events such as drama or photography, since the Arts Centre is well placed to meet this need. However, local groups can display their artwork in libraries. In one project local people have written about their visit to a museum, and reminiscence sessions have also been organised.

There are several writers’ groups, including two in Paisley and two in Johnstone. All such events are free and attract a wide range of adults and children from published writers to those developing an interest in writing.

Renfrew used to be well known for its policy of not charging fines for overdue books. In a harsher financial climate, charging was introduced four or five years ago, although at a fairly low level. Fines for adults are currently 20p per item per week up to a maximum fine of £1. Concessions also operate and those in receipt of allowances will pay a maximum charge of 40p per item.

Although financial restrictions have been difficult, no further cuts have been indicated. Renfrewshire has not suffered such severe hardship as some other councils.
Considering the management of the service, Miss Kerr admitted that communication can be difficult. The three Area Librarians meet on a 4-6 weekly basis with community librarians. The two other Senior Librarians with responsibility for Bibliographic Operations and Information also meet their teams every 4-6 weeks. Each of the five Senior Librarians has a specific responsibility for staffing, adult learning, bibliographic services, services to young people or information services. An effort is made to communicate information down and pass any response back up. Communication upwards tends to be less effective at big staff meetings than at the smaller ones where staff have more opportunity to put individual views forward. A Service Plan has to be completed by the end of each financial year. The community librarians are due to produce their own operational plan.

A Best Value system was being introduced for all Leisure Services by 1999. According to the Service Plan for 1998-2001, the main effort will focus on continuous improvement, performance management, customer involvement and integrated planning and budgeting. The EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management) business excellence model will be used for assessment of strengths and weakness and comparison with other organisations from the public and private sector. Renfrewshire Libraries have since achieved Charter Mark recognition.

In terms of freedom and accountability, there was some acknowledgement of individual initiative among staff. The example given was of one librarian who wanted to re-categorise junior stock and was given clearance to do so. No examples of staff initiating inter-agency projects at a local level were given, although this may happen. Priorities for the Service Plan are improving adult education; early years intervention; social inclusion; staff empowerment and building quality. These are all familiar concepts to the public library. Best value is now a driving force for the council and will impact on libraries' work.

Government legislation has changed the way that strategy is set down, but Miss Kerr believes that policies and priorities have not changed a great deal. Renfrewshire Libraries are currently trying to develop adult learning. They have a small Open Learning Unit consisting solely of language packs in Paisley Central Library. Vivian Kerr would like to extend the Unit's range to include computer learning packages too. She also hopes to network the CD-ROMs they have available. Renfrewshire Enterprise may be involved in a joint bid to boost this area of the service, and a planned meeting with Paisley University may prove fruitful too.

At a more basic level, adult literacy classes run in some of the libraries, and it is
hoped that closer links can be established with Community Education now that they are within the same department. The new Education Strategy is aimed at priority areas. There are no after-school homework clubs running in Renfrewshire Libraries at present, but this may change if an Excellence funding bid is successful. Libraries feel that they have the skills to help people use the Internet and other electronic information services effectively, and are uniquely placed to do so.

Despite the upheavals of reorganisation and funding cuts, Vivian Kerr feels there remains a tremendous staff commitment to the public. A recent public survey indicated that users were satisfied with the books and audio stock provided, but very satisfied with library staff.

**Hackney**

Again in extreme contrast, but with certain similarities too, libraries in Hackney are managing to be innovative and consultative despite extreme pressures on the service.

A major library review in Hackney in 1996 resulted in the library service being drastically reduced from fourteen branches to eight (one of which is temporary), and a change to a much flatter management structure. The library service in Hackney was criticised in the review for poor management and communication, inadequate bookstock, crumbling buildings and poor publicity. The Library Review pointed to declining use and increasing costs of provision.

However, the service has addressed these criticisms, and is tackling its problems head on. The bookfund has been increased and a wider range of items are now available for loan. Library hours were also increased; evening hours and new technology were introduced. A new Technology Learning Centre is being commissioned, which will house the Mare Street Library currently in temporary accommodation and the Reference Library. Refurbishment of other library buildings, requiring an estimated £1.2 million, is still to be addressed. In 1997 the Strategy and Commissioning Team was created in order to provide a strategic lead for the library service. The team facilitates the new commissioning relationships, with the aim of enabling the Director to performance manage the libraries.

Library managers’ role is to ensure a quality service is established and maintained throughout the defined catchment area of the Town Centre libraries and to be responsible for the planning, implementation, effective operation and further development of a borough-wide service. The flatter management structure has led
to increased responsibility for many of the lower level staff, with significant requirements for training.

Funding within the library service is a major issue. While the funds released from the closure of libraries went into stock improvements, improving security and some capital improvements, each year since the Review the library budget has decreased due to budget cuts. For example, the libraries budget was reduced by £225,000 in 1997.

Of a total library staff of 119, 34 or 29% are professional. Given the small size of the authority, it is well provided with public access computers, offering 42, each with access to the library catalogue and the Internet. For a population of 193,095, the bookfund is currently £540,000.

Hackney is committed to tackling poverty, and has set out an agenda for action in the document “The Hackney Anti-Poverty Strategy 1997 - 2001: Transforming Hackney”. In his Introduction to this Peter Townsend describes Hackney as “one of the three most deprived local authority areas in England.” (23)

Learning and Leisure is one of seven service areas in Hackney. Each of the libraries is a separate service within the Learning and Leisure’s grouping. Libraries, Museum and Archives are a set of services commissioned by one Strategy and Commissioning Officer, also responsible for the Council’s IT for Learning Strategy.

Each of the libraries produces a Service Development Plan. These are then fed into the Learning and Leisure Service Development Plan and then into the Hackney Plan. These plans form the basis for deciding and shaping services commissioned by the Strategy and Commissioning Officer. Budget-setting is done in conjunction with the Service Development Plans.

I spoke to Michele Guimarin, the Strategy and Commissioning Officer mentioned above. At the time of interview she informed me that Hackney had a hung Council. The Transforming Hackney document divides the borough into five neighbourhoods. The Council as a whole has a Chief Executive, but each borough has an Executive Director in addition to a series of Service Directors. The Chief Executive Officer resigned his post in March 1999, shortly after the Department for Education and Employment report on Hackney Education. Kevin Compton is the Service Director of Learning and Leisure, the section which includes libraries. Joan Middleton, my initial contact, is the Service Manager a tier below.

I asked whether the positioning of Libraries within a large department affected the
power they had. Ms Guimarin felt it was a problem partly of their own making, that the service had been severely reduced and was “very disenfranchised.” Libraries were now trying to repair the damage done.

Prior to 1996 the roles within the library service and the structure in which it operated were very different. The department was multi-layered, and viewed by politicians and the director as too top heavy. Guimarin believes the current flatter structure is more suited to the future of libraries. In effect there is no longer a Chief Librarian, but the new Director of Learning and Leisure feels there is a need for this post given their current difficulties, and it may be reinstated. The model of how libraries should be structured was established after difficulties with individuals and their roles, but this may have been a mistake, and the changes may have been too radical. A paper was going to Committee in April 1999 proposing a new Head of the Library Service.

Libraries currently report to an Education and Leisure Committee in each of the five neighbourhoods and a general Policy and Resources Committee. The neighbourhood committee system makes libraries more accountable at a local level.

Joan Middleton referred to the 1996 Library Review as a crucial piece of work, which “revitalised” the library service. The 1998 report on “Achievements in Library Services since the 1996 Library Review” is also an extremely significant document, referred to by Ms Guimarin as a “vision statement”. There was extensive staff consultation on both reports. The 1998 paper reflects the thinking and commitment of the library service and contains its community development policy.

While Hackney has no Friends of the Library organisations to compare with Hertfordshire there have been three separate public consultations since June 1998. In one of these the library service wrote to lapsed and current members, some of whom attended a series of “fairly dry” meetings on the services to be provided in 1999/2000. There has been specific consultation with people with disabilities. The vision statement for cultural enrichment they helped to write has not yet been fully acted upon.

Each consultation has been done using a broad geographical spread, with a representative range of age and ethnicity, to provide a relevant view of the service. Libraries have clear objectives now - the Annual Library Plan has very specific targets to meet on consultation, issues, surveys and the provision of community deposit collections in homes and other institutions.
On partnership/funding bids, Hackney has been unsuccessful so far in obtaining IT funding from Central IT and Wolfson funds. There is a proposal for a joint mobile library service and Customer and Advice service funded by the Single Regeneration Budget. There are also plans to work with Education and Lifelong Learning’s Strategy and Commissioning Officer to produce University for Industry and National Grid for Learning bids. Department for Education and Employment underspends have been secured for consultation work. Libraries are among a number of departments represented with the voluntary sector on a Council-wide Board for Lifelong Learning. Camden, Haringey and Islington have discussed formulating a consortium bid for the third round of DCMSI Wolfson funding.

In addition to this, arts funding in kind has been provided across the London area for The Word, a literary festival and campaign to celebrate the National Year of Reading. The campaign tries to increase interest in books and in Hackney is aimed particularly at young men discouraged from reading, and the Turkish community.

Answering the question on specialist staff or budgets for community liaison, Ms Guimarin explained how the position had changed since the 1996 Libraries Review, and subsequent “de-layering”. Before this one person had responsibility for services to children. Now members of staff work with two hats: they will be in charge of one specific library in addition to having a borough-wide responsibility for children. In effect, the person beneath them will deal with the day-to-day running of the library.

Staff and the Director are currently questioning their roles and responsibilities. Do you need a trained librarian or a person with administration skills to run a branch? It could be argued that an “office manager” is not who the public expect to address their needs in a local library. Hackney contend that while there is still a need for professional input, to manage staff and to manage a building may require a trained manager rather than a trained librarian. In terms of community liaison staff, Hackney have tried to specify in service development plans the type of community librarian they expect. Community liaison is very much part of their job. Research in the five neighbourhood areas has produced community profiles which community librarians can use.

Specific projects are being developed in libraries. Since 1997 a new library has opened at Shoreditch. It was purposely sited near the college, and local use of the library has changed as a result.

There is also an emphasis on arts and cultural work. Whilst it was known that funding would be available for this, there has been extensive work with resident artists in Shoreditch, and arts development work and displays in other libraries.
There is a sense of ownership with such displays and exhibitions. Artists often refer to the libraries as "their hall". While some "halls" are used for worship, others are used for Weightwatchers, or for pensioners' lunch groups.

Children’s activities are always free, and tend to be organised during the summer and other holidays. There are dedicated areas in libraries for participative activities. There are events targeting young mums, homework projects and fun events. There is a writers' group run by local residents employed in Higher Education and keen to support libraries. On cultural liaison, a specific budget is available to produce material and to provide eg. computers as part of the process.

Another current project in some libraries involves black publishers "X-Press" who are renowned for getting black writers started in business, and promote work on contemporary themes. They are interested in planning activities to promote writing, including publishing workshops and author events. Other book publishers and authors support workshops throughout the borough.

Like the other authorities surveyed, Hackney is involved in the Books for Babies initiative, Bookstart. One library is currently leading on this. It serves an area identified by health partners in the project for its high incidence of low weight babies, but the plan is to extend the campaign to all the libraries. Where funding is limited, the focus is always on need.

Ms Guimarin commented that Hackney is always striving to make itself more accessible. It is a magnet for a diverse minority ethnic community.

While Hackney does not come out well on some of the standard measures of library performance, such as low overall membership, minority ethnic membership is high. While they concentrate on the main language groups, they are trying to develop relations with different groups. There are significant Vietnamese and Chinese communities in Hackney. There is also an Orthodox Jewish community, and the service provides a specific collection in the closest library to this community. An Islamic collection is offered in the same way. The policy is to ask people what they want, and be open to comment and consultation.

As a policy decision, most events that are organised are free. Children and pensioners and those with disabilities pay no fines (an increasingly unusual position). There is a large proportion of disabled people in Hackney, and high levels of deprivation. Access to Information Technology is currently free, but there may be a move to charging for that. There will always be some mechanism whereby over-60s, unemployed and disabled residents pay no charge or a concessionary rate,
even if services are no longer free to all.

There are homework clubs at all libraries, with homework collections and guidance from library staff. It is intended that a couple of staff will become mentors and will build relations with young people. This role would be different from what most libraries offer. In one library a member of staff is already tutoring people with specific needs. There is no existing provision in basic literacy skills for adults, although Open Learning modules are available. Specific work has been done with the borough Literacy Strategy Coordinator but this has concentrated on children at primary age and below.

Asked whether cuts had affected service provision, Ms Guimarin commented that the worst pain was experienced in 1996. Discussions have been held on future plans. The library budget currently stands at around £4.2 million. Ms Guimarin aims to ensure that any money taken away this year will come back via the Single Regeneration Budget. Some staff have argued that it is a mistake to reduce mainstream funding in any case, but Ms Guimarin feels that realistically funding is needed from whatever source. It is hoped there will be no redundancies or closures this year.

It is fair to say that Hackney is a Council in crisis. Though it is certainly not alone in this, it is not seen as a well-managed council. The document “Transforming Hackney” is an attempt to respond to recognised problems. In many respects the library service in Hackney is far behind that of other authorities. The infrastructure necessary for the People’s Network is sadly lacking. The libraries have been rated low on stock quality. Before 1997, there was no provision for IT access. Although the library catalogue was computerised, the information was available only to the staff at that time. The authority also score badly on availability of word processing facilities and are seen in general as having low levels of income generation.

This may be a result of departmental charging policies. Guimarin argues it is possible to change these policies without disenfranchising the poor. The issue is currently being discussed at Service Manager level. Guimarin feels that some people have not thought through the implications of comprehensively free services. If 50% of public terminals are used only for e-mails, where is the evidence that free computer access is reaching the information poor?

Discussing the management style within Hackney libraries, Ms Guimarin commented that the culture is very hierarchical. She feels that people at a lower level are not empowered to carry forward ideas. She gave the example of a Scale 4 staff member working with Information Technology at Hackney Business Library, who was not
really given the credit they deserved. The worker in question has produced very
effective work on websites, and while this has been appreciated by his Library
Manager, it has not been widely recognised within the Library Service. While
individual effort may be good, the opportunity to develop work depends on the
manager concerned.

The “Transforming Hackney” culture is based on empowering staff and users alike,
but Guimarin felt it might take years for the effects to be felt. Although the
department has gone to a flatter structure, the change was a huge shock for many
staff, and is still difficult for some to deal with. There are now team meetings at
each site. Ms Guimarin has herself worked on teambuilding with two of the
libraries, trying to encourage teambuilding. In one library a lower level staff member
is training other staff in IT use, but this is still highly unusual.

As far as this is concerned, a mandate from the Commission for Racial Equality
could result in a sanction against Hackney Council. The implications are being
discussed with every member of staff. In specific instances like this, managers are
instructed to communicate clearly with staff. Guimarin believes communication is
an important issue. In order to be more effective, library managers will need to
communicate better with their staff and each other.

8.26 Analysis and summary of results

In the interests of accuracy, interviews have been presented here as close to their
original form as was practicable. While some sections have been paraphrased, no
significant comments were omitted. However, it may be instructive to consider
some of the contradictions raised, and not addressed, by each library service, as
well as the points they have in common.

In terms of the collection of information, one issue arises with Hackney in particular.
Here, the member of staff interviewed does not work solely for Libraries. Although
it could be argued this gives her a more objective viewpoint, it might have been
interesting to interview a range of other staff too. However, it would have taken
many hours of interviews to build up trust with staff members in any authority to
the extent that they felt comfortable criticising their service. It was accepted from
the outset that the views given would be management views, the “public face” of
service policies. The person selected to speak for a library service is likely to convey
management views, and defend their own position. This is a factor common to all
four authorities, but does not prevent analysis of views expressed.
Gateshead

Matthew Watson, a senior manager from Gateshead, was predictably upbeat about the new structure of local government about to be imposed in his area and the Best Value regime endorsed by the council. However a more neutral observer might question the wholehearted support he gave to the Cabinet style of government they have adopted. Of the three possible choices, this style is least favourable to an opposition group. Those not in the ruling party in such a council are unlikely to hold positions of power. There are arguments in favour of this structure where one party has a decisive majority, but it does mean that voters and areas not in the majority may not be heard. This local government structure would probably not be suited to Hertfordshire, with its delicate balance of power.

There have also been many critics of Best Value, arguing that it is a management tool aimed primarily at cutting costs, with a veneer of sophistication. They believe it is a system of performance measurement which directs policy more severely than its predecessor, Compulsory Competitive Tendering. It is results driven, with pressure to exceed targets year on year.

Gateshead is the only authority which has not suffered major cuts, or at least they did not appear to be an issue in our interview. Again, the impression given of financial prudence throughout the council seemed extremely upbeat, and it seems unlikely that Gateshead is an island which has escaped the rigours of resource cuts and hard choices. While Matthew Watson gave an extremely helpful and detailed account of Gateshead’s service, he gave little impression of mistakes made and the need to learn from experience. It is hard for an outsider to detect weak areas in policy if only a limited picture is portrayed, and if time and space allowed, Gateshead might merit further investigation.

Hertfordshire

The cuts imposed on Hertfordshire have been significant, even though an attempt was made in the interview to downplay their effect. Ms Wood did not feel libraries had been particularly targeted for cuts.

I questioned the fairness of a system where the public are asked to choose between libraries and a service like Social Services. Although closures are not an issue for
Hertfordshire at present, their bookfund has been cut by 23%, average bookstock is 9 years old, and libraries close if staff are sick:

Budget reductions have forced the freezing and lagging (delayed filling) of all posts in the Directorate since autumn 1997, and many new staff are employed on temporary contracts. Arrangements have been put in place to identify the minimum number of staff required to keep service points open in order to preserve a basic service to the public. These include all other work being put on hold, staff being withdrawn from training courses and meetings and providing flexible relief from other service points. Even so these measures have not prevented the ad hoc closure of several service points - sometimes more than once in the same week - as a result of combinations of leave, sickness and lagged/frozen vacancies. (24)

Glenda Wood remarked that “Hertfordshire has a large number of libraries and a major complement of staff. In the present financial climate this needs to be addressed.” It is debatable how real the consultation on the future of the library service can be, when the main aim is to make efficiency savings.

Many of the changes that Ms Wood explains as better co-ordination or rationalisation of resources might be seen by other observers as cuts, and diminutions in the quality of service. Libraries used to have an area budget for arts events: now there are fewer such events, and they are organised centrally. A library unit in the nearest Sainsbury’s might be a convenient choice for families with cars, but does it compensate for the loss of a centre of village life? Can consultation on such matters be genuinely representative in the circumstances? Library staff facilitating consultation meetings are unlikely to support campaigns against library closures. Can Hertfordshire centralise services, reduce services in individual communities and still have a community development approach?

On the other hand, Hertfordshire might argue that long term supporters of library service (in whatever form) might emerge from the consultative process, that lasting links might be forged with the community; that a service might be maintained where feeling was strong enough. It could be argued that it is better to consult on these matters than to impose. The financial climate makes for hard decisions, and perhaps criticism should be directed not at the library service, but the council committees which decide resource priorities, or the government which expects so much from libraries but arguably offers little in support.

According to Hertfordshire’s Annual Library Plan, income generation is an essential
part of Hertfordshire’s activity and sustains the delivery of the basic library services:

Income accounts for 15% of the total budget and, at £1.41 per head of population, is well in advance of the average for similar authorities (£1.23) Elected members require the service to seek new forms of income continually, and expect charges to be made for any service except those where charging is prohibited by statute. (25)

Once again, is this attitude compatible with a community development approach?

Renfrewshire

Renfrewshire Libraries currently offer Internet access from only one terminal in their Central Library, and Miss Kerr made the comment that some eg Lottery funding was not available to Renfrew because the necessary IT infrastructure is not present. This is a common problem with public libraries - no large capital sums are available to establish a service. Renfrewshire are still seeking funding to make the library catalogue available on computer in every library and to develop a community information database. Although progress has been rapid over the last few years in most public libraries, there are many like Renfrew with some way to go.

There do seem to be some gaps in Renfrew’s provision. While there is an obvious commitment to the traditional lending service, activities for young people and information provision, the library service tends not to organise arts events such as drama or photography. The Arts Centre in Paisley is seen as meeting that need.

The Arts section of the council seems to be a separate and distinct department. The Department of Education and Leisure Service Plan for 1998-2001 states that:

Poverty and geographic location are not the only barriers to access to service which can also be difficult for people with different cultural backgrounds and those who may feel marginalised by Council services such as women and young people. The Arts programme recognises differences and similarities, challenges negative perceptions and enables integration. Young people will be involved in decision making through a youth arts forum. (26)

However, many of the people living in housing schemes in Renfrew will never cross the threshold of the Arts Centre, whereas they might visit a local library. While
they may see the arts as "not for them", they might be interested in an exhibition on their doorstep, or go along to an event with a friend if it is cheap, local and offers a creche. While the Libraries and Arts sections in Renfrewshire are both involved in worthwhile and innovative projects, it could be argued that they are missing a useful opportunity for collaborative work. The library service has the contact with the public, the "footfall", and the Arts service has skills and experience to inspire local people.

On educational provision too, the approach does not seem particularly proactive. No real examples of courses or workshops were volunteered during my interview with Miss Kerr, and the original questionnaire ticked "No" under basic skills and continuing education provision. After some discussion it emerged that adult literacy groups do meet in some of the libraries, but I felt it significant that this was not seen as a priority by the interviewee in her outline of the service. Miss Kerr did say that she hoped to establish closer links with Community Education now that they are in the same department. Possibly the educational responsibilities are as clearly defined as the artistic ones, with little room for crossover. A new Education Strategy is aimed at priority areas and there may be opportunities for linkage here.

Like Hackney and Hertfordshire, Renfrew is a victim of cuts and closures and encapsulates the conflict between service ethos and financial realism. While funding is available for certain priority projects, the core service may still suffer. Thus in Renfrew the innovative teenage service, the Johnstone Information and Leisure Library, closed despite a local campaign to keep it open. The premises used by JILL were let to the Paisley Partnership Regeneration Company for £500 a year, for an Outreach Service providing employment and training advice. In return, the company agreed to undertake £60,000 worth of repairs on the 1930s building.

The Education and Leisure Service Plan states that:

services are to be reviewed on the basis of reducing overlap and benefiting from economies of scale as with the Education and Public Library Service, or Community Halls and Community Education premises. The programme of Value for Money Reviews of Leisure Services will be continued in co-operation with the Chief Executive's Department. (27)

During our interview, Miss Kerr stated that there would be a review of what staff are doing. The issue was not directly raised, but statements such as these would seem to leave the way open for further cuts.
Hackney

At the opposite extreme from the interview with Gateshead, the interviewee for Hackney was brutally frank, to the point of being rather unsympathetic to the library service. As a Strategy and Commissioning Officer for Learning and Leisure, it is Michele Guimarin’s role to cast a critical eye over the Libraries section.

She was clear that before the Review in 1996, Hackney Libraries were amongst the most expensive in London in terms of staff costs, and one of the poorest performers in terms of loans given its stock and population. (28) Apart from the obvious effects of closing half of Hackney’s libraries, some of the cuts to staffing are likely to have had a major impact. Perhaps because she is not directly involved, these effects were glossed over. Equally, in 1997, the Strategy and Commissioning Team was created in order to provide a strategic lead for the library service. This is bound to have bred some resentment.

This team identified the need for clear stock management policies. There were no training programmes or staff development plans in place, and they are urgently required. For example, in 1997, the Library Manager responsible for information technology, stock services and technical services was given additional responsibilities for a library, albeit with increased central technical support. Technical support tends to be a full time job and more within a library service, and the reduction in library-experienced support readily available is liable to have increased stress levels of all library staff.

Two Executive Librarian posts were also deleted, and replaced by Service Delivery Managers in charge of each Town Centre library. These were evidently lower level posts with “implications for staff training and development”. (29) The role of Executive Librarian had been to arrange training, appraise staff and lead a staff team. Lower level staff had to take on some of their responsibilities for personnel and site management. This major change has caused some problems:

Though capable librarians and willing managers, the service’s history as a hierarchical organisation left a gap in knowledge between the top management layer and more junior staff. (30)

Specialist posts for eg. Young People’s Services, are now handled as a part-time responsibility by a Library Manager who also has responsibility for one site. There
must be implications here for quality of service, and again they were glossed over by Guimarin.

As a whole, full time equivalent staff for libraries have been cut from 145.5 posts to 128.5. This is still seen as higher than other London libraries, and the paper on "Achievements and Progress in the Library Service since the 1996 Library Review" states that "Further work is needed to ensure that staffing deployment is efficient and effective", (31) which can do little to inspire the confidence of remaining staff.

The progress report explains that the funding released from the closure of libraries went into stock improvements, improving security and some capital improvements. Even so, each year since the Review the Library budget has decreased due to budget cuts.

Guimarin was again quite frank about the deficiencies of the service she represents. Issues per head of the population are a fifth lower than other London Library Services, despite having an above average book stock since 1997. However the progress report also states that issues are steadily improving compared to other London Library Services, and that the borrowing of children's books is almost a third higher than other Library Services. (32) Hackney has to meet the needs of an extremely diverse ethnic minority population. About 64.6% of Hackney library members belong to the Borough's minority ethnic communities, a significant achievement in itself. Attracting the various groups involved with suitable material is a difficult task. It is perhaps strange then that only a quarter of the stock fund is for Black and Minority ethnic stock. (33)

Issues are now at the same level as before the 1996 closures. Evening opening has been introduced, and the new library at Shoreditch operates as a First Stop Shop. A teenage group is starting up at Clapham Library. Since 1997 there has been Internet access and CD-ROM available in all libraries.

The Strategy and Commissioning team appears to be pressing for targets to be achieved within the service on standards of provision and clear policy statements. There are separate Vision Statements for the Library Service as a whole; Services to Children and Young People; Recreation and Reading for Pleasure; Information Services; Continuing Learning; Black and Minority Ethnic Communities; People with Disabilities and Cultural Enrichment.

The Annual Library Plan for 1999/2000 is a substantial and impressive document comprising a review of the service and a strategy and action plan.
While Guimarin's position is a highly unusual one in the library world, and she feels free to criticise the service she represents, it would have been interesting to interview a wide range of staff in Hackney, including managers, and staff at all levels who have weathered the change. It would be useful to test staff morale at this stage. The original questionnaire return from August 1997 was completed by an Executive Librarian since "deleted" who presented a picture of a responsive service quite different from the service Guimarin describes for the same period.

Hackney, like the other services examined here, has a major push from corporate level to achieve council wide objectives in terms of education, opportunities, information provision and responsiveness. Hence the "Transforming Hackney" Plan at Council level for an authority with problems to resolve, and the "Vision Statements" for staff to work towards.

The findings from Hackney, while meriting further investigation, indicate a commitment to change among the staff. Significant achievements have already been made in a short time period, considering the radical cuts endured. It would be particularly interesting to conduct a wider-ranging investigation of this service in two years' time.

Case study conclusions

Although the four library services examined as case studies are extremely diverse in profile, certain characteristics are common throughout.

Francois Matarasso, in his report for Comedia, Beyond Book Issues, identifies key concepts such as vision, flexibility, partnership working and leadership as elements in successful community development projects. They are all here in different measure.

The vision comes from individuals working with communities. Derek Knight of Hertfordshire's Oxhey Library remarked, "It sounds pretentious, but you have to have a vision of where you're going." His enthusiasm is the driving force for his community's lifelong learning project. Many elements are involved in the project, but he is able to draw these elements together and take them forward. Without management support his ideas would not be allowed to flourish and expand. Without a strategic framework to back him, funding and formal co-operation to secure the continuity of the project might be in doubt.

Vision also has to come from corporate level, as with Hackney. Gateshead's
Statement of Council Policies and Priorities advocates the development of a regeneration strategy in partnership with others and the development of better methods of consulting with local people. This fits very closely with a community development strategy. (34) Gateshead’s document states that the Council will give priority to community development work in those areas which are most deprived and with those individuals who are most vulnerable. As part of this policy the Council is committed to provide direct support to communities in a variety of ways including:

- encouraging wider use of existing Council owned buildings where feasible and appropriate
- direct provision of a range of services and opportunities which will enhance both personal and community development and provide a better quality of life for the people of the borough
- schemes and programmes for individuals which promote personal development, lifelong learning and re-entry into education (35)

It seems that there is a clear role for libraries here, if they choose to adopt that role. It fits easily into what libraries are about. This is a view reflected in Matthew Watson’s comments that Gateshead were not actively pursuing a community development strategy but providing a good library service; and in Glenda Wood’s remarks that libraries are naturally focussed on their communities. Their words possibly underplay the active commitment required to turn a natural closeness to community into something really dynamic. There has to be a desire to actually make a difference. Possibly the combination of vision, management, flexibility and sustainability Matarasso outlines in his book.

Another common factor among the four library services is their energetic pursuit of funding. At the time of completing our questionnaire, Gateshead and Hackney libraries had both made funding bids for partnership projects to nine separate sources, Hertfordshire to five. At the time of responding to the questionnaire, Renfrew had made no such bids, but this may reflect the lack of funding opportunities in Scotland as compared to England, or the relatively more secure position of Scottish libraries at the time.

In an extremely harsh financial climate, interagency projects and community development initiatives may be eligible for project funding. With mainstream funding in such short supply that libraries are closing, there appears to be an inherent contradiction to be resolved.

What unites the four services examined here is their commitment to accessibility, to
responsiveness, to increasing community use in relevant, developmental ways. They also exhibit, fundamentally, the desire to work with other agencies to provide the best possible service in the most efficient way. Gateshead, Hertfordshire and Hackney had ticked every box under agencies with which they work. In Hertfordshire's case, being such a large authority, all but one of these liaisons was formal, ie with regular scheduled meetings, while in Gateshead's case contact was informal in all but two examples. Hackney had formal contact with some larger statutory organisations such as Community Education, Social Work and the Education Service, but informal links with the Health Authority and NHS Trust and all the voluntary/community organisations. Renfrew responded that it had formal or informal links with all but four of the fourteen agencies suggested. It should be emphasised that my research allowed respondents to state their commitment to community development and present examples of relevant work. It did not attempt to evaluate such work or measure its impact.

Although Renfrew does not have a community development policy at departmental level, its representative did see that there might be an advantage in having a written policy. Renfrew has a track record of working with communities and a socioeconomic environment which militates against them providing any other sort of service. Their work with the Paisley Partnership has been formalised, and commitment there has been substantial.

All of the libraries voiced a commitment to public service and a desire to consult, and they are making energetic efforts to meet the needs of their communities. In different ways, they are models of good practice. They seek the views of their users, they are proactive, taking new opportunities, working with other agencies and striving towards clearly defined objectives at an individual, departmental and corporate level.

The case study authorities examined here are all actively engaged with their communities. All rated high scores for "community development criteria" as outlined in Section 8.23 of this thesis on Further Analysis of Results. Since we have been able to examine them more closely than other questionnaire respondents, they can also help to shape an ideal model for achievement of community development aims. The most significant features of these library services seemed to be their commitment to involve their communities and provide a service that meets community needs. To differing degrees this was reflected in a whole service vision or strategic plan, and characterised by interagency working and a dynamic approach.

The services examined do have areas of weakness. Most of these relate to
communication with staff. Thus Hertfordshire has no staff training because of reductions in budgets, and finds it “too expensive” to consult every member of staff other than in exceptional cases. Renfrewshire also admitted that staff communication can be difficult, with regular meetings at separate levels only every 4 - 6 weeks. Hackney was described as very hierarchical, with staff at a lower level not empowered to carry forward ideas. Public libraries do tend to favour a formal organisational approach and rarely exhibit the culture of openness which can foster community development. Commitment to staff development, training and consultation is likely to be an important element of the community development model proposed in this thesis.

Nevertheless, the range of activities described by the case study libraries indicate that they are fulfilling the ethos at the centre of this thesis, acting as agents of change in learning and in community development. As the emphasis shifts to library plans, best value and an objective driven culture, there is an opportunity for public libraries to use policy positively, with community support. These libraries are taking up that challenge.

8.3 Postscript - Evidence of Change

Events have moved on since our field research was undertaken in August 1997, in that the will to combat social exclusion has become a fundamental tenet of local authority policy in general, and library policy in particular. Our research established the early commitment to enshrining this approach in strategic policy, and using an interagency model to do so. Furthermore, my own research has made the links to public libraries historical and developing rationale, and the contemporary socioeconomic context in which they operate. Subsequent research validates the trend we detected towards closer collaboration between public libraries, the communities they serve, and other agencies in the field.

One example is the work currently underway on Libraries and Social Exclusion. *Public Library Policy and Social Exclusion: a BLRIC Research Project*, examined in the literature review of this thesis, also makes recommendations for professional practice. One of the people involved in this research is John Pateman, who has written extensively on the subject. Pateman highlights several issues to be addressed if libraries are to be credible players in community development: identifying the socially excluded and their needs; tackling staff attitudes and behaviour towards the socially excluded; putting community librarianship back onto the agenda; marketing library services to the socially excluded; developing quality performance indicators; shifting resources to meet the needs of the socially
excluded; using Commission for Racial Equality standards and other external validations (Eg. via an Oflib); disseminating examples of good library practice to the socially excluded; developing a system of internal checks (eg. asking Social Services staff to audit the library service); and developing the role of the Library Association towards the socially excluded. (36)

At the Demonstrating the Value conference on libraries and communities in November 1997, a comment was made that libraries should not be seen as filling gaps in social provision. Rather they should be at the forefront of helping communities tackle decline. The public library should be integral to urban community and rural development strategies.

Social exclusion was one of the main issues aired at the Public Library Authorities Conference, PLA 99. The Department of Culture, Media and Sport launched Libraries for All: Social Inclusion in Public Libraries, policy guidelines for local authorities in England. Dave Muddiman, Coordinator of the Public Library Policy and Social Exclusion research project, reported on work undertaken, and emerging themes and issues. He believes the success of “active”, or community, librarianship and outreach suggests such innovations must continue and be made more sustainable:

...services need to be active, participative and educative rather than passive in their nature, and resources and materials provided need to be closely related to the needs and culture of the community or group targeted. However, experience teaches that these kind of initiatives will falter and never be seen as ‘normal’ ways of working unless steps are taken to produce long-term whole-service strategies for tackling social exclusion. (37)

Also reporting from the PLA99 Conference, Head of Library, Information, Heritage and Cultural Services for Essex County Council, Grace Kempster, made a prediction for public libraries which closely resembles that contained in this thesis:

In the year ahead, I predict that libraries as agents for community development and social inclusion will emerge... Librarians will excel at partnership working and indeed have already proved themselves with an ability through the hard and difficult path of partnership to keep their focus on the end user of services - never forgetting why the partnership matters and what it is for. (38)
Kempster goes on to assert that for library leaders, the key agenda in the year ahead will be to evidence the impact of libraries. It is important to find rigorous indicators of, for example, the number of people who learn in libraries.

The recent Library Association draft discussion document, Cultural Development and Publicly Funded Library Services, recognises the importance of the arts for libraries, not just in terms of traditional provision, but in the context of communities:

As well as kudos and a higher political profile, libraries and arts is about staking out a legitimate claim to territory and entering, as an important player, into social and economic regeneration. It is about forming the necessary partnerships and strategic alliances with other cultural bodies in all sectors - the sharing of expertise and resources - so that exciting and challenging cultural programmes can be developed reflecting the needs and aspirations of each community. It is about establishing the necessary credibility, so that libraries are able to claim a share of competitive funding such as the Single Regeneration Budget, European Funding and the National Lottery, which have replaced, in many respects, traditional local authority funding. Ultimately it is about repositioning libraries so that they can survive and thrive as important institutions into the next millennium. (39)

David Murray of Southwark Libraries recently wrote about the successful introduction of Homework Help Clubs in public libraries. Ninety delegates from all over Britain attended a seminar organised by Southwark Libraries on the subject of Homework Clubs, now operating in many areas of the UK.

This thesis provides evidence that libraries are addressing issues of lifelong learning, social inclusion and community development, not as additional services, but part of mainstream provision.

Despite increasing recognition of the public library’s social role, funding cuts are hindering that work. Limited resources were an issue for all the case study libraries interviewed. While energetic efforts are being made to attract funds through applications for partnership projects, this may mean departmental policies can only be realised on a temporary and insecure basis, flying in the face of the rationale for strategic planning. Library professionals point to a major contradiction between the government’s championing of public libraries and the funding crisis facing these libraries. The New Library: a People’s Network report met with universal approval,
and all concerned welcomed the concept of public libraries as a primary route for the information superhighway. There was general agreement that libraries have a unique role to play in improving access to lifelong learning, offering citizenship information and helping to open up the democratic process.

As this thesis is about to be submitted, some London boroughs are closing half their libraries. Elsewhere opening hours are being reduced, bookfunds cut and staff made redundant. Government funding has been targeted at specifics, like computer training for staff and IT infrastructure. To date it has been awarded to a minority of applicants. People’s Network funding will soon come onstream in Scotland. At a UK level, investment may be of the wrong sort, and too late, to stem a critical decline in service provision.

Public libraries have worked hard to focus their services, consult their users, plan strategically and prove the value of what they do. This thesis is part of a growing body of research underlining the social impact of libraries. They are in a unique position to ease the transition to an information society. They have a branch in every community; they are viewed by the public as a safe, neutral service; they have skilfully gathered collections of literature and information, all the resources of information technology and the expertise to help the public fully exploit what is available. But this is not enough. To deliver a quality, relevant service to the widest possible community, public libraries have to prioritise their social role. If they are to ensure that those most in need of public library services have access to them, a new model of management is required.

This thesis has set out to collect evidence of change, and to make recommendations on the best model to adopt for libraries to achieve their social role and make the most of their work with communities.

NOTES

2. Ibid, p87.
15. Ibid, p5.
27. Ibid, p5.
29. Ibid, p5.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid, p7.
35. Ibid, p7.
CHAPTER NINE - LEARNING LESSONS FROM THE RESEARCH

9.1 Introduction

English Culture Secretary Chris Smith has called this a defining moment for public libraries. (1)

Since the initial idea for this thesis, the public library service in Britain has moved from crisis to renaissance. The Library Association Public Libraries Group Bi-ennial Study School of April 1998 was entitled Resurrection - a new life for powerful public libraries.

The results of key research on Public Libraries and Social Inclusion are eagerly awaited. Library services in England and Wales are now obliged to publish Annual Library Plans, and one of the areas they must address is social exclusion. The parameters are shifting, and policy and practice will be reappraised as a result.

Library Association Chief Executive Bob McKee wrote in a recent issue of library journal Impact:

... libraries and information services don't operate in isolation - they are all part of a wider institutional and community context. Increasingly institutions (whether public authorities, academic facilities, or commercial businesses) are developing a strategic approach which cuts across traditional professional or departmental boundaries. Libraries and information services need to engage with this if they are to be seen as important and influential within their institutions. Secondly, libraries and information services need to be increasingly creative in the ways in which they respond to resource constraints, service demands, community needs, and technological possibilities. New opportunities and new requirements mean new ways of thinking and working. (2)

9.2 Summary of research findings

This thesis presents the hypothesis that a new type of librarianship is emerging to meet the needs of change in the socioeconomic environment, and that this is based
on a community development approach. As the Research Methods chapter of this thesis explained, my research design began with an assumption of two models of public librarianship: the traditional and the community development models. I also argued that these models were positioned at either end of a continuum of adaptation on which all libraries could be placed. My contention is that an increasing number of library services can be identified at the proactive end of the continuum, and these services are positively engaging with their communities. This thesis presents substantial evidence to justify that claim.

Evidence of a fundamental reappraisal of public library rationale and an increasing commitment to engaging with communities is presented from a historical, contemporary and international review of literature.

The National Survey of Community Development Strategies reveals a high level of commitment to community development at local authority level. Public libraries are active in community development work, and are beginning to approach this strategically. Interviews with representative case study authorities responding to the survey indicate a public and strategic commitment to consultation, and development of services in line with proven community demands. Although it is not possible to fully evaluate such claims, it is significant when such objectives are publicly expressed by senior management figures.

With all of the different methods used to collect evidence in this enquiry, the overriding aim has been to uncover evidence of change, and to establish where this change originated. The second fundamental question has been how this change is reflected in practice.

While the evidence of change in libraries’ socioeconomic environment seems clear, it is harder to gauge the extent of change within libraries. This research has set itself the task of investigating how libraries themselves are adapting to change.

Over the last five to ten years, libraries have questioned their fundamental rationale; they have been considering whether to adopt a commercial approach, or concentrate on their unique social role. All have had to adapt to radical environmental change and major shifts in demand, but they have reacted to these changes in different ways. This research suggests that an increasing number of library services can be identified at the proactive end of the continuum. They have adopted the community development model as the most effective means of managing change. This model is best represented by library services in the survey with a departmental community development strategy.
This chapter aims to summarise the conclusions of my research on libraries and community development, and from that point to make recommendations for professional practice.

9.21 Literature review

The social impact literature review by Evelyn Kerslake and Margaret Kinnell and my own international review highlight areas for the profession to address if we are to achieve our objectives.

The Kerslake and Kinnell review presents many examples of interagency practice. They cite examples of family literacy programs which form cooperative partnerships with other agencies in their communities, including, for example, health and daycare providers. These articles point to the need for libraries to be proactive in pursuing those most in need of such initiatives, and to consider how they interact with more vulnerable users. Many see a change in attitude and training of library personnel as a prerequisite of success.

Kerslake and Kinnell’s review also emphasised public libraries’ central role in providing information to enable citizenship. This is reflected in my own literature review, which covers government initiatives in many countries to promote libraries as advice centres on public information.

Kerslake and Kinnell forecast that this may entail public libraries working in a collaborative way with other agencies, and a move away from traditional service models. (3) A community development approach would meet these demands. The authors perceive public libraries’ established role as contributing to community, education and economic structures, and their developing role as widening access to the information society. (4) They also believe that a fundamentally new model for public librarianship is now required.

This was reflected in my international literature review which revealed public libraries struggling to cope with a multiplicity of contemporary roles and looking to interagency initiatives to assist. Libraries in developing countries stressed the importance of involving rural people in planning and delivering information services. Some projects had clear objectives, an overarching vision or a strong leader. Numerous examples were given of library practice adopting a new approach where traditional models of library provision were no longer appropriate. The comment was made in several articles that community development initiatives have to tie in with the library service’s core mission, to be integrated in a whole library approach,
so that promotion of literacy goes hand in hand with efforts to demystify library structures.

Outreach emerged in the literature review as particularly important in work with families and teenagers. These articles argued that outreach work should be recognised as a specialism within the library profession. Similarly, projects working with the unemployed required new skills in communication from librarians involved.

Staff training emerged as a major theme. In many cases traditional staff tasks have been extended to include information skills support to learners: learning support, including learning needs analysis; and the communication and organisational skills required to build and maintain successful partnerships. To these are added marketing skills necessary to demonstrate the potential of the library in such an environment, and project management skills to ensure such projects run smoothly.

The review set out to establish if the research contained within this thesis is genuinely new, or is replicated elsewhere. From the evidence collected, no similar work has been conducted in any country. Many articles did consider new research and practical initiatives in the light of public library’s historical rationale, and the challenge of change confronting them. Some did take a multidisciplinary approach to considering public library purpose in the current socioeconomic context. Some conducted surveys to assess public libraries’ commitment to a particular field of work. However, I found no evidence of work which combines all the elements of historical, contemporary, multidisciplinary and international appraisal of public library rationale presented here, and takes that as the context for national research. While there has been wide-ranging discussion of the effect of socioeconomic change on reappraisal of public library rationale, there has been no other national investigation of how this is translated into public library strategy. This thesis sets out the hypothesis that the fundamental rationale of the public library service has remained basically unchanged since its earliest days, but socioeconomic change is making radically new demands on the contemporary library service. Many libraries are adopting a community development approach to meet these demands and a new model of librarianship is emerging as a result. It starts from the hypothesis that there has been both continuity of rationale and change of model.

Libraries have always been motivated by a public service ethos to offer access to education, recreation, information, culture and enlightenment: to achieve that objective in a contemporary setting they have to offer a wider range of services and offer them in a more proactive way, assisted by other expert agencies. Socioeconomic change has resulted in increased demands for access to education
and training. Changes in public policy require greater popular engagement in the democratic process. Reform of local government has resulted in increased accountability for public services. Public libraries must respond to the radical socioeconomic change of recent years to meet the needs of the community they serve. My literature review shows that the community is increasingly central to determining and delivering change in public library policy and practice. If public libraries are to remain a relevant and effective service they will need to adopt new methods of management which acknowledge this.

My research is unique in setting out so comprehensively the background to change, and examining its impact on service. It tests the currency of a new field of public library work, and confirms the emergence of a new approach putting library users at the centre of service delivery. It does this with a range of quantitative and qualitative research tools including a national survey, case study interviews, examination of library service and council documents and an international literature review. And it did so at a time when a commitment to social inclusion at government level was just beginning to emerge.

The work on social inclusion by John Pateman et al shows interesting parallels with the core research contained here, and in a sense could be seen to take it forward. The BLRIC research project on Public Library Policy and Social Exclusion aims, through an analysis of annual library plans and a broad survey of local authorities, to gauge the extent and coherence of current library activity in this field. It will then focus on a number of detailed case studies of public library provision to a range of "excluded" groups and communities with a view to highlighting good practice and identifying key problems in assessment of needs, community involvement, and service provision and policy development. (5)

9.22 National Survey of Community Development Strategies

To revise the key points of the survey results: sixty-three of the local authorities responding, or 55%, had either produced or were working on a community development strategy. In fifty-four of these authorities the library service either had a major role, a minor role, was consulted or made a specific contribution. Comments from these library services indicated that libraries were contributing to their local authority's community development strategy by:

- playing a central role in information provision, facilitating IT use and aiding citizenship
- partnership working with other agencies
• educational support in line with the councils' commitment to lifelong learning

This indicates increasing recognition at a local government level of libraries' contribution to combatting poverty and increasing access to information and education. This is one of the engines for change which facilitates the development of a new model of librarianship - support at local and national level for libraries to encourage community use of their services requires a reappraisal of those services.

Only 18 authorities (16% of respondents) had a library service strategy for working with communities at the time of the survey. But it should be remembered that we claim to have identified the emergence of a new professional trend, ie strategic commitment to community development work. An additional 33 library services were working on their strategy, making a total of 51, just under half of respondents, who had produced or were producing a community development strategy for their service at this early stage. Since then, annual library plans have become a requirement in England and Wales, and it is likely that those services already developing or in possession of a strategy would have been best placed to meet that challenge.

The evidence of commitment to community development work was clear:

• Ninety-six of the library services (83% of respondents) worked in partnership with other agencies on initiatives aimed at regenerating or empowering local communities.
• Library services reported over 300 separate interagency funding bids.
• Thirty-one per cent had specialist library staff working on community liaison and 39% had ongoing interagency community development projects
• Ninety services offered continuing education provision and 85 basic skills education, asserting libraries' place at the leading edge of the lifelong learning revolution. Events were offered to a wide range of interest and age groups.

A significant proportion have made a structural commitment to empowering communities by allocating staff and taking on projects: for them community development work is a service priority. All of this suggests a new operational model.

Funding constraints have reduced work with communities in 64 authorities (56% of respondents). Some authorities had concentrated on the "core" service, and community liaison had been a casualty. Budget cuts had resulted in a reduction in the number of professional librarians; librarians covering for library assistants; the removal of key posts and lack of staff training and development. All of these
points could hinder the development of new models of management.

In the context of the wider research in this thesis, I have argued that although the fundamental rationale of the public library service has remained basically unchanged since its earliest days, socioeconomic change is forcing the contemporary service to meet new demands. Evidence presented here suggests public libraries are rising to this challenge and taking a community development approach to ensure their service meets local needs. However, some respondents to the national survey commented that funding restrictions had resulted in them cutting back their commitment to community liaison. For some services this aspect of work is not integral to service provision and as such it is vulnerable.

The survey has established the extent of commitment to community development work in policy and practice. Case studies of authorities and individual projects working in the field gave further insight into whether a new type of librarianship can be identified, and what its characteristics might be. This model is best represented by library services in the survey with a departmental community development strategy.

As Chapter 8 on the Questionnaire indicated, the services with a written community development strategy were a very diverse group. However, it was useful to examine these libraries in terms of the "community development criteria" for which data was available.

These criteria were:

- involvement in partnership working initiatives
- partnership bids for funding
- staff dedicated to community liaison
- devolved budgets for working with communities
- inter-agency community development projects
- user committees or focus groups
- community involvement in service provision
- monitoring

All of these elements imply a commitment to making community development work, and library services with a strategy demonstrated the attributes above to a greater or lesser degree. The significant point is that they consistently rated higher on these points than services without a strategy, implying that where a commitment to community development has been expressed in words, it is acted upon. Positive action to engage with the community seems higher in those library services with a
community development strategy, and the commitment to monitoring such work is greater too. I would argue that these criteria could be used again in further research, to gauge a policy commitment to community development. The same criteria applied in five years time would be an interesting litmus test of the impact of national social inclusion policies on library services’ strategy and practice.

It might be expected that other aspects of service policy and practice would stand out from the norm in a service committed to community development. According to the management model suggested in my original hypothesis, the true community development approach would be reflected in a flatter organisation, with more devolved responsibility and a more open management style. Representative library services would show evidence of clear objectives, strong leadership and an overarching “vision” to work towards. The community served would make a significant contribution to policy development in an authority with this approach. There would be an emphasis on interagency work and joint funding bids for community projects. Policy would be driven by external demands more than internal routines. Do our respondents reflect this model?

The model is not really tested by the national survey, since too many important questions were not asked, and it would be wrong to draw conclusions about management style from the limited information available. However, elements of this thesis which did consider management style and policy priorities are instructive.

9.23 Case study interviews

For example, the semi-structured interviews with case study library services in Gateshead, Hackney, Renfrew and Hertfordshire threw up interesting insights into how these authorities operate. They were chosen partly because of the commitment to consultation and interagency working demonstrated in their questionnaire responses, and also because they represent differing extremes of local authority provision in terms of areas served.

Matthew Watson reported that Gateshead Libraries is involved in extensive cross-departmental working, and is particularly active in arts and literature development and services to people with disabilities. The service’s ten community librarians are responsible for all aspects of library service in their area. They are able to initiate or contribute to local projects. Users are consulted in planning a new service. According to Matthew Watson, the management style aims to be inclusive. Strategies for staff development are in place, with access to City and Guilds and NVQ training. The culture in the department is described as open, with direct access
to the Head of Service for all staff. Watson described a department committed to open management, community involvement, investment in staff through training and an emphasis on action. While none of the statements made have been tested, the fact that these points were offered as positive attributes indicates at least a recognition that all of the above is desirable, and probably means that efforts are being made in that direction.

Leadership was a key element of management identified by Francois Matarasso in his examination of successful projects entered for the Community Initiative Award, and he also stressed the importance of “vision” in helping to establish commitment to common objectives among both staff and users. When Hertfordshire Library Development Manager Derek Knight described the work of the Lifelong Learning Centre at Oxhey Library, he remarked, “It sounds pretentious, but you have to have a vision of where you’re going”. The Centre is the first joint venture arising from partnership working in the area.

A major library review in Hackney in 1996 resulted in the service being drastically reduced from fourteen branches to eight, and a change to a flatter management structure. This has led to increased responsibility for many of the lower level staff, and significant requirements for training. My interviewee, Joan Middleton, referred to the 1996 Library Review as a crucial piece of work, which “revitalised” the library service. The 1998 report on Achievements in Library Services since the 1996 Library Review is also an important document, which Strategy and Commissioning Officer Michele Guimarin referred to as a “vision statement”. There was extensive staff consultation on both reports. The 1998 paper reflects the thinking and commitment of the library service and contains its community development policy. There have been three separate public consultations since June 1998. Hackney is an authority where a strategic vision is at the core of service planning, and attempts seem to have been made to help staff feel ownership of that departmental vision, so that it guides their work. If a service is to be proactive in the face of change (and Hackney has had to face more change than most), there must be common consent on the way forward.

All of the case study authorities were committed to interagency working, were involved in interagency projects and had submitted joint funding bids. This in itself implies a flexibility of management style: the ability to work with other professionals from different disciplines to achieve shared objectives.

One example in Renfrewshire was Ferguslie Park Library, which moved to new modern premises funded by Urban Aid through the Paisley Partnership. According to the Paisley Partnership Appraisal Team, eighty-nine per cent of Ferguslie Park
children are now members of the library, and thirty-seven per cent of the local population borrowed items during the year. Their report concludes that these results demonstrate the successful role that libraries can play in education strategies for priority areas. (6) In addition to the Principal Librarian, Renfrewshire has five senior librarians, three of whom are involved in Paisley Partnership work.

Commitment to community liaison as part of librarians’ remit was another key unifying factor with the case study authorities. Furthermore, the majority of library services with a community development strategy had specialist staff working on community liaison. This indicates a genuine commitment to working with communities at management level. Staff time is being devoted to the task, and particular individuals have responsibility for its success.

If these authorities are measured against the “community development criteria” outlined in Section 8.23, they will not have every feature on the list. Management of large public services is an organic process, and our judgement is based on information supplied by management representatives. However, there is clear evidence that all of the case study library services are highly active. They have all expressed a desire to develop services in line with their communities’ needs, and have set out their strategy in that regard. Many stress consultation with staff (when libraries in general are not noted for informal management structures) and are committed to training and development. All are monitoring their service with a view to improvement. Policy and practice reflect an overarching strategic vision. Increasingly, this is seen in formal written strategies at departmental and corporate level, and partnership objectives further afield. The case study projects will have some points in common which may have contributed to their success, and which may have wider application in terms of good practice in community development. It is these features we need to tease out to establish a recommended model for community-oriented public library service.

Francois Matarasso examined library projects entered for the Community Initiative Award in Beyond Book Issues. He remarked that these projects are exceptional, and asks why such projects are not more widespread, and much closer to the mainstream of what today’s library is about:

We must get away from a 1950s menu which offers bread and butter for tea, except on Sundays when there are fairy cakes. (7)

The survey has revealed a significant commitment to community development work on the part of library authorities, and indicates that there are probably many more projects of the sort Matarasso describes which have not benefited from the public
attention entry for the Award ensures. But the increasing commitment to developing such initiatives in line with departmental strategy implies a brighter future for projects as part of mainstream, sustainable services.

9.3 A new model for a changing environment

This thesis has outlined at length the demographic, technological and socioeconomic change which has led to new demands for library services.

There is overwhelming demand for public libraries to provide support for literacy, to increase access to information technology and facilitate its use, and to extend availability of citizenship information. The public library with a branch in every community has great potential to work with other agencies on initiatives to combat poverty and social exclusion.

More traditional library roles, including provision of leisure reading and information face competition from other sources - cheaper books available in supermarkets and via the Internet, current information available to computer owners in their own home. While there will always be demand for traditional services, there is a strong argument for emphasising libraries’ added value services, such as special collections, out of print literature and training in search skills. There is every reason to extend library use by encouraging access to these services by disadvantaged groups.

The professional press gives extensive coverage to ICT developments, and how they are changing library services. A focus on IT without any commitment to disadvantaged groups may not be a useful role in the longer term. The percentage of homes with Internet access is growing exponentially, and such people may have less need of libraries in future. Libraries’ unique social role lies in bringing Internet access to those who cannot access it themselves. This role is ensuring renewed interest in libraries at the highest levels of government.

The rationale and the infrastructure are present, but appropriate service models may be lacking. Several sources in our literature review stated that initiatives are only effective if the service as a whole is reappraised, with an emphasis on new attitudes and skills.

This thesis presents applied research. It was conducted with academic rigour from the viewpoint of a reflective practitioner, and the intention was that this research would inform public library practice now and in the future. All the elements of the research - its consideration of public library history; examination of the current

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socioeconomic and political environment for libraries; the international literature review; the approach taken by other professional disciplines; the national survey of community development strategies and examination of case studies - were designed so that their findings could offer lessons for professional practice. Comments relating to professional practice are made throughout the thesis. However, it may be useful to bring together key points in the following section.

9.31 Mapping the Environment

Having considered the views of authors and practitioners from a wide range of perspectives and investigated the state of public library policy and practice on working with communities, what is my own contribution to this very important debate on the way forward for the library profession? How must we adapt if we are to succeed?

If we consider an environmental analysis of our current position, it is this:

STRENGTHS: national network of service, including library buildings and mobile visits, unparalleled resources of information and cultural material, free or low cost access to computers, skills in search techniques which can be passed on, customer loyalty. Public support for libraries as an institution for social good.

WEAKNESSES: under-resourced, sometimes resulting in limitations on staffing or opening hours, affecting quality of service or resulting in closure of particular locations, management and or staff can be wary of change, image problem of an old-fashioned local government service.

OPPORTUNITIES: building on their unique social role, public libraries can increase access to educational opportunities and citizenship information for all age groups and all types of people. They can extend such access to disadvantaged groups in a way no other service can. Information technology has vast potential for public libraries.

THREATS: competition from private sector providers of eg. internet access, competition as provider of public information from eg. supermarkets, broadcasting and internet service providers, impact of long term underfunding on service delivery

Facing such a multitude of challenges and threats, what qualities must professional librarians demonstrate in a new model of librarianship to engage their communities?
I would concur with John Pateman that aspects of current service should be reviewed and challenged where necessary. I would agree with Francois Matarasso on the elements of success he identified in particular community initiatives. My own empirical and related research indicates that libraries with a strategic approach to working with communities are more active, more focused and more committed to monitoring than the majority of services. Although the impact of the strategic approach is not tested here, I believe there are indications that it results in a more efficient service.

Because they are strategic in management and operation, the services highlighted in the empirical research have clear objectives and are willing to be measured against these objectives. They are committed to their “vision”, and this often extends to dedicating budgets and specialist staff to community liaison. They see interagency work with other departments and disciplines as an effective means of tackling disadvantage, and are actively engaged in securing funds to support this work. They are committed to community consultation, and have established structures and systems to enable this to influence policy and practice.

Case studies indicate that leadership, openness and vision tied in to clear departmental objectives have helped to produce models of good practice in working with communities. Of these, perhaps vision is paramount, a fundamental commitment, not just to the ethos of public service, but to combatting disadvantage.

With that in mind, I have constructed a simple acronym to encapsulate the features present in the models of good practice we have seen. Whilst not exhaustive, they are an indication of a service with a clear idea of where it is going, and a clear commitment to getting there.

VISTA stands for -

- **vision** - an overarching commitment shared by management and staff
- **interagency** - the desire to work collaboratively with other statutory, voluntary and community groups
- **strategy** - a planned approach to achieving agreed objectives in line with community needs
- **training** - equipping staff to deal with a rapidly changing environment
- **action** - a dynamic library service focused on results

I hope this acronym can be applied to any service working to a proactive community development model.

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9.32 Establishing the VISTA model

The key features of this model have emerged from the reports of public libraries working with communities detailed in the literature review, from entrants for the Library Association/Holt Jackson Community Initiative Award and from analysis of the services examined as case studies in this thesis. Although covering a broad range of activities and aimed at differing community groups, many of these library projects have similarities in approach, and have prioritised the same aspects of service to achieve their objectives.

A service with VISTA has clear goals to achieve, and a rationale for doing so.

- Library services must demonstrate an overarching vision to guide their work, a vision which is made clear in service documents and is apparent in practice. This vision should be attractive to staff and community alike. In a community development model it will aim to alleviate disadvantage by working with communities to meet their needs.

- Empowering communities in the current economic climate will rely on interagency initiatives, making the most of skills and knowledge from other disciplines, avoiding gaps and overlaps in provision.

- Possession of a strategy indicates a long-term, whole service commitment to meeting community needs and providing a service both relevant and responsive. A strategy should be informed by community consultation and should include systems for monitoring.

- Training is an essential element to ensure staff feel confident in achieving strategic aims, are committed to working with disadvantaged groups, and equipped to communicate effectively with such groups.

- Any service committed to community development will have a bias for action, with support for risk-taking, new ways of working and innovative projects. This may mean more projects in communities than in libraries.

Each element of the VISTA model is important. Without a vision of what the service can achieve, the operational nature of daily library business can prevail over longer-term, more ambitious initiatives, and staff may lack understanding of service aims and motivation in their work. An interagency approach ensures a mix of skills.
and is helpful in achieving project funding in the current economic climate. Commitment to a strategy means that all partners involved are clear on service aims and what role individual projects can play in achieving those aims. Training empowers staff, and increases their confidence in working with all sections of the community. Action ensures that all ideas and strategic plans bear fruit. It lends credibility to a service with a stated community-oriented focus.

These points are enlarged upon below.

### 9.33 Vision

In *Beyond Book Issues* Francois Matarasso identified vision as a key concept in successful community development projects, alongside flexibility, partnership working and leadership.

Vision comes in different forms. It can come from individuals working with communities, like Derek Knight of Hertfordshire’s Oxhey Library who remarked, “It sounds pretentious, but you have to have a vision of where you’re going.” His enthusiasm is the driving force for his community’s lifelong learning project. Many public library projects with communities rely on the enthusiasm of one or two key workers. In the longer term, such projects may be more secure with strategic support from departmental or corporate level.

This has been the case in Hertfordshire, which demonstrates that vision can also come from management. Without management support the Lifelong Learning Centre in Oxhey could not have flourished and developed. The centre relies heavily on interagency working to deliver its mix of services. Without a strategic framework, the formal cooperation necessary to ensure planned development and continued funding of the project might not have been possible.

Vision comes from a corporate level in Hackney which is working towards a Vision Statement document and in Gateshead, where a Statement of Council Policies and Priorities advocates the development of a partnership regeneration strategy and improved methods of consulting with local people. The Gateshead document states that the Council will give priority to community development work in those areas which are most deprived and with those individuals who are most vulnerable.

Vision can sometimes come from members of the community itself, like Esther Sibanyoni. When she moved to Soshanguve in South Africa, it had no public library. Needing access to books, she convened a meeting to address the problem with the
local church, housewives, sportsmen, teachers, nurses, businessmen and students. A committee of concerned residents was established, including a librarian, and became the Soshanguve Library Association. Community involvement in establishing and maintaining the library and other cultural initiatives in the town have been crucial to their success.

Many of the examples presented in the literature review show evidence of vision behind a long-term goal. Work with very young children in the USA and the UK to encourage pre-reading skills and a love of books; work with the homeless in France; work to increase library use by immigrant groups in Canada shows the ability to look to the future and shape library policy and practice with that view in mind.

9.34 Interagency

There have been increasing moves towards "joined-up working" in local government in the UK, recognising that different departments are all working to the same corporate goals. So even within councils, there is encouragement for workers in different fields to collaborate.

There is also a growing awareness that other statutory and voluntary bodies are working to similar goals with the same client groups, and it is logical to pool expertise and resources to avoid gaps and overlaps in provision. In some cases this type of collaboration is for one-off projects, but if successful, it can lead to longer-term interagency ventures with strategic support.

The trend towards increased interagency working was very evident in a wide range of countries represented in the literature review. One reason for this was that in a climate of financial stringency, interagency projects represent a new source of funding, particularly for community development work in disadvantaged areas. In coming years work aimed at fostering social inclusion may be more likely to receive external funding than more "traditional" provision. This in itself may lead public library services to consider its potential.

9.35 Strategy

This thesis set out to test the hypothesis that public libraries are responding to socioeconomic change by engaging in community development work, and that this approach is increasingly enshrined in strategy. Evidence of a significant move towards adopting strategies for work with communities emerged from the national
survey contained within this thesis.

Even where there is no written strategy, there may be a “strategic approach”, where a department is committed to long-term goals, and is working clearly towards those goals with measurable results. Some respondents to the national survey felt that a formal strategy was not strictly necessary when all the staff involved knew what was required and the role they could play.

In a practical sense, commitment to a strategy makes initiatives more secure and more meaningful. They are more likely to expand and develop if part of a departmental plan, rather than the brainchild of one individual worker who may move on.

A genuine community development approach will have far-reaching implications for library management. Public libraries cannot adopt community development policies without simultaneously examining every aspect of their management style. As Hugh Butcher and Maurice Mullard point out, this will involve organisational change and possibly also changes in day-to-day practice, professional attitudes, budgetary priorities, and decision-making methods. (8)

Those libraries which have an established community development strategy are likely to be well placed to apply for funds. They will be able to prove that individual initiatives tie in to longer-term departmental objectives.

9.36 Training

One of the points mentioned by several authors in the literature review, and by representatives of case study authorities, is training. If public libraries are to adapt to the needs of the twenty-first century, a reappraisal of attitudes and updating of skills is required.

Training in Information and Library Studies is not designed to prepare librarians for community development work. Current courses are often heavily weighted towards Information Technology in a business context, and even training in traditional public library skills does not seem to be a priority.

In its draft discussion document, the Arts and Libraries Sub-Committee of the Library Association made a commitment to assess arts management training available to library staff, to consider how best to meet gaps in provision and encourage uptake amongst practitioners.
Bob Usherwood of Sheffield’s Department of Library Studies suggests library school programmes should be designed to develop management skills, especially interpersonal skills, to include funding and financial management, marketing and public relations, and to help develop the political awareness of students. He feels there should be more use of experiential learning, role play, case studies and practical exercises, to encourage analysis, argument and creativity. (9)

John Pateman, Head of Libraries and Heritage for the London Borough of Merton, and a member of the research group on Libraries and Social Exclusion, has also criticised library school programmes. He argues they should be updated to take into account the issue of social exclusion, and that there is too much emphasis on technology, to the detriment of more traditional teaching and services to special groups. (10)

Great potential exists at a local level for joint training ventures across the disciplines, encompassing the needs of those working in both arts, community education and libraries, bringing them closer together. This trend was also reflected in the literature review, where several of the more innovative projects were led by non-librarians.

The increasing recognition that libraries are integral to cultural services provision is reflected in a trend for “crossover” jobs to be advertised. Lines of specialism have blurred. In this way, Monklands Library Service, now North Lanarkshire, employed Youth Workers, a Studio Technician and a Crafts Organiser; Leeds has employed a Community Arts worker as Creative Writing Coordinator, and Dorset and Manchester Councils have advertised for arts professionals to work with library departments. Innovative work can spring from such cross-fertilisation.

Commitment to ongoing training should be part of a departmental strategy, and for most of our case study authorities this was the case. If social exclusion is to be addressed effectively, this should extend to staff attitudes in dealing with disadvantaged groups.

9.37 Action

The literature review presented a wide range of libraries’ practical work with communities: work with children, work giving information and advice to the unemployed and health information to teenagers, work promoting library services for Aboriginals. In many cases a long-term project has been planned, with
particular activities aimed at drawing people in who are not traditional library users.

Work with the Bengali community in Sunderland began with a community profile and outreach to determine how best to increase opportunities for this community to access library services. A major literacy project was developed, and a Writer-in-Residence was engaged to work with the Bangladeshi community, helping them to produce a book. All the elements of this initiative are important, but the appointment of a member of staff and production of a publication show real earnest of intent likely to encourage continued interaction. The Bangladeshi community have seen real evidence of a stated commitment to help them access library services. Critics of formal strategies may say that they are “only words”, that sometimes policy documents are compiled and then forgotten. It is possible that local communities might share this opinion if stated policy aims are not tied in to visible and measurable activity.

While a commitment to community development work begins with a vision of what can be achieved, it must end with action. When vision is combined with interagency work, built in to strategy, assisted by training for frontline staff and translated into practice, it becomes a powerful force for change.

All of the VISTA elements are important. However, the focus of this thesis has been strategy. It presents evidence that library services are increasingly adopting strategies to guide their work with communities. I would argue that the S in the VISTA model is perhaps the key to actually achieving community development practice in a way that can be evaluated by the objective observer. All the other elements - vision, interagency, training and action are more vulnerable without the strategy “glue” which binds them together.

9.38 Issues for the library profession

Whatever the model of professional practice adopted in the coming years, certain challenges have to be addressed if public libraries are to remain relevant and effective.

Funding

Many of the library services responding to the questionnaire were concerned about restrictions placed on their service by budget cuts.
The survey has shown library services throughout the UK forced to dispense with specialist Community Liaison staff and budgets since they cannot afford to buy books. There has been a marked de-professionalization within the service with many branches now run by unqualified supervisors and fewer librarians in specialist posts.

The Labour Government is using National Lottery funding to support two mainstays of current library activity - after-school clubs for children, and widening access to IT through libraries. The People’s Network is being funded to extend access to library resources through digitisation, and through distance learning via the National Grid for Learning and the University for Industry. (11) This is likely to have a major effect on library provision in the next few years.

Access

The term access in its broadest sense is vital to community development and social inclusion for libraries. It embraces physical accessibility; suitability of location and opening hours, the type of activities organised, how they are marketed and the price charged. To be meaningful, issues of access should be at the heart of library service rationale.

The growth of teenage libraries acknowledged that the traditional library approach to young people was inadequate. Yoker, JILL, Petersburn and other such initiatives consciously promoted a relaxed atmosphere with minimum rules, and were successful in attracting their target group as a result.

Libraries are intimidating places to many people, who enter a building with interminable shelves of books in no obvious order, with the only source of help behind a desk. People do not want to be embarrassed by their own lack of knowledge. They worry about running up fines. They have to jump through hoops to obtain membership, providing multiple proofs of identity, signing forms. Sometimes it is easier not to bother.

Bob Usherwood argues in The Public Library as Public Knowledge. “Provision of information is one thing, effective access (his italics) is quite another. For many with the greatest information needs, access may be impaired by physical, psychological, educational, social, linguistic, technological, cultural and economic considerations”.

(12)
Increasing access must be part of a strategic approach. S. Scott commented in the literature review that to place a collection of material in a library and not break down or demystify other library structures is a waste of time.

The many initiatives on family literacy, services to the unemployed, ethnic minorities and the homeless described in the literature review challenge traditional barriers to access. This is an issue at the heart of public library policy today, and the potential for libraries’ future in support for citizenship and lifelong learning depends upon how it is addressed.

Charging

The Public Libraries and Museums Act prohibits charges for lending “a book, journal, pamphlet or similar article” but permits them for borrowing other articles such as pictures or sound recordings. (13) It is not clear from the 1964 Act if charges may or may not be legally imposed on individuals for the use of information services, but it is certainly common practice now to charge for research, computer use and internet access.

Libraries in 1997 raised £12 million in hire charges for videotapes and music CDs. (14) Profits from use of rooms, publications, booksales, hire charges etc. can raise significant amounts of money. The short-term benefits of such income generation for the council are obvious. Many libraries are proud of the income they generate, quoting ever increasing sums in their annual reports. But excessive rises in an overdue charge often result in overdue books not being returned at all, and the borrower concerned turning away from the library service. The imposition of charges for audio items in ex-Monklands libraries following local government reorganisation led to a dramatic drop in issues, and the loss of some users who borrowed such items in preference to books.

Bob Usherwood asks if our enthusiasm for income generation is making a rod for our own backs, in that all library authorities are now being encouraged to go down the commercial road. Many councils set yearly income targets to which library services must adhere, so there is no room for debate. Under Best Value these targets are likely to rise.

Usherwood points out that not all areas have communities that can afford to support money-making activities. “At the very least, engaging in such programmes blurs the distinction between public service to the community and commercial gain”. (15) Hand in hand with the issue of access, libraries need to consider if the charges
they apply are a deterrent to the disadvantaged user.

9.4 Recommendations for Practice

The “community development criteria” outlined in Chapter 8 judged commitment to community development by:

- evidence of partnership working
- staff or budgets dedicated to community liaison
- joint funding bids
- interagency community development projects
- community involvement in focus groups or user committees

Library services with a VISTA, i.e. community development model are also more likely to be effective if they have:

- flatter management structures
- an open management style
- devolved responsibility
- an emphasis on outreach
- a commitment to marketing
- monitoring as part of service development

All of these factors are becoming more common.

For the community development model to be successful, there is a need for support at the national level of the profession, such as training provided, publications produced and conference agendas. The Library Association has been supportive of public library work in combatting social exclusion, although it could play a greater role in dissemination of good practice. The forthcoming Social Inclusion research may exert pressure for a reappraisal of current public library provision. An ongoing programme of research is vital to ensuring the effectiveness of public libraries' community development work, and to keeping the issues of public libraries interaction with communities at the forefront of professional debate.

9.5 Overall Conclusions

In Chapter Two, this thesis examined the history of public libraries, from their earliest days as a civic institution and social diversion to their current position as a
major local government resource. Multidisciplinary in operation, public libraries have extended their role from lending and reference to providing citizenship information, supporting community and economic development, and opening up access to culture and lifelong learning. There is a growing consensus now on the way forward for public libraries, and a growing body of authoritative research on the impact of their work.

Also in Chapter Two, the thesis considered libraries' current socioeconomic context, including changes in public policy and local government reform, the pressures of the new managerialism, and the opportunities it can offer for service development.

Chapter Three provided an extensive review of international literature from the 1990s on the theme of libraries and communities. This reflects universal concerns about issues such as social inclusion, lifelong learning and information technology and their effect on public library rationale.

Chapter Four looked at how libraries interact with their communities: the tradition of community librarianship which already existed, and how this piecemeal approach has largely been replaced by strategic policy at departmental or corporate level to support community development. This has been achieved through increased consultation, services targeted to the economic needs of an area, and efforts to increase access through new technology and other means to a world of culture, education and information which might otherwise not be available.

The long history of libraries as an educative medium is considered in Chapter Five, from rather passive beginnings with the provision of academic, religious and moral texts through more popular information and recreational reading, to the current position with a boom in Open Learning and Lifelong Learning Centres, courses organised in the library environment and active signposting to other agencies. The crucial and dynamic role played by information technology in the development of educational provision is also examined. It is argued that public libraries have always reflected contemporary educational demands. Now that forms of education are so diverse, the desire for independent learning so widespread, and information technology offers new routes to education and training, libraries have tremendous potential to maximise public access to all the opportunities available.

Along with community development and adult education, libraries' relationship with the arts is examined in Chapter Six. The history of cultural and arts provision in libraries is considered, as well as the different models of current provision. Literature promotion and support for creative writing can be seen as extending the natural role of libraries. While artistic events in libraries are often in the form of
displays or demonstrations, more developmental work attracts new users to libraries, and can increase the self-esteem and confidence of those involved.

Past winners of the Community Initiative Award are examined in the light of earlier chapters in Chapter Seven. They combine elements of community development, adult education and the arts and show what small library projects with clear aims and objectives can achieve. Awareness of projects like this inspired the empirical research contained in this thesis, to establish the existence of wider and more strategic support for community development in libraries.

This research is one of several projects funded by the British Library on the social impact of public libraries. It is seen as increasingly important that libraries justify their existence by highlighting the effect they have on individuals and communities. This ties in to recent debate about the public library role. The 'Social Impact of Libraries Research and Demonstration Programme' is the first major examination of how libraries interact with their communities and the effect this has. The full research details are contained in British Library Research and Innovation Centre Report No.86, available from the Community Services Group of the Library Association. Other parts of the research programme have examined the social benefits of public libraries; analysed community perceptions of libraries and studied the effect on communities of the strike in Sheffield Public Libraries.

The findings of the National Survey of Community Development Strategies, outlined in Chapter Eight, show a clear interest among public library authorities in formalising their interagency community development work in a strategic framework. They indicate that professionals involved in libraries are keen to consult and involve their public in a meaningful way.

Further analysis showed that those services which have a strategy in place appear to be the most active, focused and responsive to their communities. The case study interviews reveal how strategies for working with communities have been developed and applied: how they are articulated by management; their relationship with and contribution to local government policy; how they affect library services to the public.

The final chapter looks at the implications of all these findings for public library policy and issues raised for management of community-oriented public library services.

There is a feast of public library research underway where only a few years ago there was a famine. The Public Library Authorities Conference held in October 1999
acknowledged that one of the most effective weapons in libraries’ battle for repositioning is research. For too long undervalued, research was becoming much more positively received thanks partly to the training programme provided by DRIPL (Developing Research in Public Libraries). Public librarians are also realising that research can help raise services’ profile, and that sharing research can save valuable time. (16) Mlac, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council has undertaken a review of current research and will coordinate future research projects.

This is indeed a defining moment for public libraries. The coming years will offer an opportunity for them to fulfil their potential as never before, if funding permits them to continue at all. In Beyond Book Issues, Francois Matarasso concludes that public libraries in Britain:

represent a development infrastructure which many nations can only dream of. Libraries, if used as a means of community self-development, could confidently assume a position alongside schools and hospitals within the public sector. They have the capacity and the public support to do so: do they have the will? (17)

I believe this research has shown that public libraries do “have the will”. They are taking a strategic approach to development in communities, and working with other agencies to achieve this. They are proactive and keen to innovate.

The change in public libraries since their inception has been both subtle and profound. They are still pursuing the self-help and self-improvement ethos of the Victorian library. They are still seen as civic and cultural institutions, the natural place to go for citizenship information.

But libraries now are infinitely more flexible and dynamic in their work. They offer a huge range of services under one roof in a safe and welcoming environment. They offer access to information and literature all over the world through inter-library lending and the resources of the Internet. This thesis has shown that they offer specialist services from toy libraries to community newsletter groups, from writers’ workshops to creches, from careers advice surgeries to self-defence classes. In their diversity is their strength.

Libraries have always been the mirror of their society. I would argue that their reflection was clear in the Victorian era, and though it may have faded at points in between, it is clearer still today. I believe this research has shown that libraries are well aware of their potential as agents of change in community development and lifelong learning. If they are to fulfil that potential and ensure their funding is
adequate for the task in hand, they must continue to consult and plan and review their work with communities. The libraries examined here have worked hard to acquire grant funding and re-allocate budgets to development work. They need to make a case for increased mainstream funding so that that development work is secure.

Public libraries can use the consultation and evaluation process to model a service in line with local needs, to justify their work and demand the resources they need. With a strategic approach they may be able to convince funding bodies at local and national level that investment in their “development infrastructure” will bring returns.

Libraries have long argued that they make a difference to their communities. Now they can prove it. The majority of the libraries surveyed here have shown a commitment to empowering local communities. They are leading local government initiatives to increase access to information and education, and opening up culture to a wider audience.

This thesis is part of a whole body of research that underlines a quiet revolution in public libraries. They have developed from cultural institutions to agents of change in lifelong learning and community development. They play a unique role in increasing access to information, culture and education. They are evaluating the impact of their work and developing strategies for working with communities. They are working to a new model, empowering communities to gain from the information age: planning for the future.

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The National Survey is part of the libraries and communities research programme funded by The British Library Research and Innovation Centre, looking at the social impact of libraries and how they relate to the communities they serve. It aims to examine community development strategies in public library authorities throughout the United Kingdom. Other elements of the research programme include a bibliography/database; an analysis of good practice based on Community Initiative Award projects; a social audit of libraries and work on social indicators.

If you would like further details of this programme please contact Guy Daines at The Library Association - telephone 0171 636 7543.

Your contribution is important. We are trying to build up a picture of the extent and nature of community involvement in public libraries, so that we can establish a basis of information and research from which to influence policy.

Completing this form should not take more than about 15 minutes, and your co-operation is greatly appreciated. Please return the form as soon as possible and not later than 12th September 1997. An address label is attached for this purpose.

Results of the survey, together with a range of other related pieces of research, will be presented at the fourth "Public Libraries and Communities Conference" in London on 4th November 1997. This is part of National Libraries Week and we will send you details of the event soon.

For the purpose of this research, community development is defined as a process which develops the power, skills, knowledge and experience of people as individuals and in groups. This enables them to undertake initiatives of their own to combat social, economic, political and environmental problems and to participate in the democratic process. It aims to empower groups and positively engage communities.
1. Does your local authority have a published community development strategy? This may be in the form of a Social Strategy, or Anti-Deprivation Policy, or other commitment to working with disadvantaged groups.

   Yes [ ]  No [ ]

   If yes please enclose a copy, or indicate how we may obtain a copy

   Copy enclosed Yes [ ]  No [ ]

   Copy can be obtained from ____________________________

2. Is your authority currently working on a community development strategy?

   Yes [ ]  No [ ]

3. If your local authority has, or is currently working on a community development strategy, please state what level of contribution was made, or is expected from the library service? Please tick the appropriate box.

   a) Major role in overall drafting, e.g. involved in steering group

   b) Minor role in overall draft, e.g. consulted

   c) Specific contribution

   d) No contribution

   e) Don't know

4. Are there any comments you wish to make on the role of the library service in your local authority's community development strategy? In what ways do you feel you can contribute to e.g. anti-poverty strategies, voluntary sector liaison, community arts, adult education, economic development etc.?
5. Does your library service have a strategy for working with communities? If Yes, please enclose a copy. If no go to question 10

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<th>Yes</th>
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7. Was the Chief Librarian involved in agreeing the strategy?

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8. Was the strategy initiated by Elected Members or Officers?

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<th>Member</th>
<th>Officer</th>
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9. Who was involved in agreeing the strategy? As some will have contributed more than others, please estimate their involvement. Please tick the appropriate box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lead Agent</th>
<th>Equal Player</th>
<th>Consulted</th>
<th>Involved</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Chief Librarian</td>
<td>a)</td>
<td>a)</td>
<td>a)</td>
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<tr>
<td>b) Senior Library Managers</td>
<td>b)</td>
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<td>b)</td>
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<tr>
<td>c) Community Librarians/Other library staff</td>
<td>c)</td>
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<td>d) User groups</td>
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<td>e) Voluntary sector umbrella agencies (e.g. CVS, RCC)</td>
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<td>e)</td>
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<tr>
<td>f) Community organisations</td>
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<tr>
<td>g) Councillors</td>
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<td>h) Community Development Unit</td>
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<td>i) Planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>j) Chief Executives Department</td>
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<td>k) Social Services/Social Work</td>
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<td>l) Youth and Community Services</td>
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<td>m) Academic Sector</td>
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<tr>
<td>n) Consultant</td>
<td>n)</td>
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<td>o) Other, please give details:</td>
<td>o)</td>
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10. If your service has no community development strategy at present, please indicate if you are working on one:

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<th>Yes</th>
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11. Please indicate if you are interested in support or Professional Guidelines from the Community Development Foundation and the Community Services Group of The Library Association for the development of a community strategy?

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<th>Yes</th>
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</table>
12. Does your library service work in partnership with other agencies on initiatives aimed at regenerating or empowering local communities? If No go to 14.

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<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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13. If yes, please list those agencies with which you work. If you have regular scheduled meetings, please tick formal. If your joint work is on a more ad hoc basis working with personal contacts, please tick informal.

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<tr>
<th>Statutory / Local Authority</th>
<th>Formal</th>
<th>Informal</th>
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<td>a) Careers Service</td>
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<td>b) Community Education</td>
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<td>c) Community Health Council</td>
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<td>d) Economic Development Department</td>
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<td>e) Education Service</td>
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<td>f) Health Authority</td>
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<td>g) NHS Trust</td>
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<td>h) Social Services / Social Work</td>
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<td>i) Training and Enterprise Council / Local Enterprise Company</td>
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<th>Voluntary / Community</th>
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<td>j) Churches</td>
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<td>k) Community Council or Forum</td>
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<td>l) Local Community Groups</td>
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<td>m) Racial Equality Council</td>
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<td>n) Voluntary Sector Forum</td>
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<th>Private Sector</th>
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<td>o) Please specify</td>
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<th>Other</th>
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<td>p) Please specify</td>
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14. Please indicate if your library service is, or has been, involved in partnership bids for funding with the following schemes. *Please tick appropriate box.*

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<tr>
<th>Scheme</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<td>a) City Challenge</td>
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<td>b) Rural Challenge</td>
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<td>c) Strategic Development Scheme (Wales)</td>
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<td>d) Single Regeneration Budget (England)</td>
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<td>e) Urban Programme</td>
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<td>f) Millennium Fund</td>
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<td>g) National Lottery</td>
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<td>h) Public Libraries Development Incentive Scheme/</td>
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<td>Development Funding for Public Libraries</td>
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<td>i) EU Libraries Programme</td>
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<td>j) EU Telematics Programme</td>
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<td>k) ESF Funding</td>
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<td>l) Other please specify</td>
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15. If yes, please advise if bids have been successful. *Please tick appropriate box.*

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<tr>
<th>Scheme</th>
<th>Yes</th>
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<th>Pending</th>
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<td>a) City Challenge</td>
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<td>b) Rural Challenge</td>
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<td>c) Strategic Development Scheme (Wales)</td>
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<td>d) Single Regeneration Budget (England)</td>
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<td>g) National Lottery</td>
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<td>h) Public Libraries Development Incentive Scheme/</td>
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## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN LOCAL LIBRARIES

16. Do you have any of the following? Please tick any that apply.

- a) Specialist members of library staff working on community liaison
- b) Budgets devolved to working with communities
- c) Inter-agency community development projects
- d) User committees / Focus groups

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17. Are you represented in community activities which have not been initiated by the local authority e.g. community councils or consultative committees, arts festivals or other community organised events?

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<td>Yes</td>
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18. Which of the following do you offer on a regular basis (e.g. weekly, monthly, annually etc.)? Please indicate by ticking the appropriate box.

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19. Which of the following activities were established in response to community demand or have community involvement in their operation, please indicate where there is community demand you are not able to satisfy.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Involvement</th>
<th>Community Demand</th>
<th>Not able to satisfy</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>f) Participative arts workshops</td>
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<tr>
<td>g) Events for older people</td>
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<td>h) Events for children</td>
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<tr>
<td>i) Events for teenagers</td>
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<tr>
<td>j) Multicultural events</td>
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<td>k) Events for parents</td>
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<td>l) Events for women</td>
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<tr>
<td>m) Local Studies events</td>
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<td>n) Other please specify</td>
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20. What is your charging policy on the activities outlined above?  
*Please tick any that apply*

- a) It is aimed at income generation
- b) Partly offsetting costs
- c) Charges reduced for e.g. unemployed / OAP's
- d) Free to some e.g. unemployed / OAP's
- e) Free to all

21. Has your library service's work with communities been reduced because of funding constraints?

*If yes, please indicate how by ticking the appropriate box.*

- a) Librarians covering for library assistants
- b) Reduction in numbers of professional librarians
- c) More service points, less staff
- d) Reduction in mileage and subsistence allowances
- e) Removal of key posts
- f) Lack of staff training / development
- g) Community librarianship a lower priority
- h) Emphasis on other activities please specify below
EVALUATION OF LIBRARY-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

22. Do you monitor the effectiveness of your development work with communities?
   Yes [ ]  No [ ]

23. Please tick the appropriate box if you use any of the following:
   a) Performance indicators [ ]
   b) Qualitative evaluation by survey [ ]
   c) Comments from user groups [ ]
   d) Monitoring groups [ ]
   e) Other methods [ ]
      Please specify

24. Please add any other comments you wish to make about the evaluation methods you use
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

Name of Library Authority: ____________________________
Name of Chief Librarian: ____________________________
Title of Chief Librarian: ____________________________
Address: __________________________________________
                  __________________________________________
                  __________________________________________
Post Code: ____________________________
Phone: ____________________________ Fax: ____________________________
e-mail: ____________________________

Authority Type:
   County [ ]
   Metropolitan District [ ]
   Unitary [ ]
   Education & Library Board [ ]

Date formed/reformed ____________________________
Approx catchment population served by Library service: ____________________________
Local authority population: ____________________________

Please tick appropriate box(es) if you require further information on
   Community Development Foundation [ ]
   Community Services Group [ ]
   Community Initiative Award [ ]

Thank you for your time.
Please return the completed questionnaire to:-
Tina Dunn, Krystyna Dunn Associates, 4 Dorrington Grove, Porthill, Newcastle, Staffs ST5 0HY
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QUESTIONS FOR CASE STUDY LIBRARIES

1. Local authority

Who has political control of the Council? What are the decision making and committee structures?

Which department includes libraries, and at which tier does the Head of Service operate?

2. Library service

Number of branches, staff, bookfunds etc. (Checking my figures are up to date)

3. Community development strategy

Who instigated this? How was it agreed? How is it put into action? How is it monitored?

4. Partnership bids for funding

How have these joint bids arisen? What were the end results?

5. If you have any of the following, please give details and assess their impact:

- specialist members of library staff working on community liaison
- budgets devolved to working with communities
- inter-agency community development projects
- user committees/focus groups
6. Events and activities

How do you decide what to offer? Are local people involved in the decision? Are they involved in running the events?

7. Charging policy

Which of your events are free? What sort of concessions do you offer?

8. Cuts

How have financial restrictions affected your work? How much flexibility do you have on funding for eg. special projects, new services?

9. How would you describe management within the library service?

How is policy decided? How much work is delegated to lower levels? Is there an opportunity for members of staff to initiate projects and see them through?

10. Do you feel your library service has clear objectives?

Are there targets that the staff work towards in achieving these objectives?
Libraries and Community Development National Survey

A Report on the National Survey of Public Library Authorities

Lindsay McKrell
Moray House Institute, Edinburgh

with

Andrew Green
Community Services Group

and

Kevin Harris
Community Development Foundation

National Survey commissioned by the Community Development Foundation and the Community Services Group of The Library Association

British Library Research and Innovation Centre

1997