Open All Hours?

An investigation into the current expansion of opening hours in public libraries.

A study submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Librarianship

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Abstract

This study aims to present a current picture of public library opening in the UK beyond the hours of 9.00 am – 8.00 pm weekdays, and 9.00 am to 1.00 pm Saturday. It reports on the plans of public library authorities to extend opening hours in the future. It investigates the factors that library service managers consider to be significant when considering the implementation of extended opening hours. It also highlights the main barriers to increasing library opening hours.

The study involved an email survey of UK public library authorities to generate a nation wide picture of current extended opening hours practice. A number of telephone interviews were undertaken with library service managers in order to allow a greater understanding of why decisions had been made relating to the management of extended opening hours. In addition interviews were carried out with staff and managers from three case study libraries. This was in order to identify the attitudes and opinions of staff to the practice of extended opening hours.

It was identified that public library authorities are heavily committed to providing access to library facilities on a Saturday afternoon. Over 90% of respondents to the survey aim to have some or all of the libraries in their authorities accessible to the public on Saturday afternoons by 2005. Sunday opening is currently less widespread. However there is support for increased Sunday opening in the future. Extended opening hours elsewhere in the week have limited support in comparison. Bank holiday opening rarely occurs.

Public library authorities report that they are greatly concerned with providing the services that are most appropriate to the needs of the local community. As a result many authorities report undertaking consultation exercises before the introduction of extended opening hours. Social trends and Public Library Standard were also identified as influences that make a significant impact on the introduction of extended opening hours.
Pilot schemes were viewed by many authorities to be a valuable way of measuring the public response to extended opening hours before making a permanent commitment. The level of service provision during extended opening hours was found to be as high as during core library opening hours. There appeared to be a very low-key approach to the promotion of extended library opening hours in general. The limited amount of promotion that did occur appeared to be mainly directed at current library users.

Funding was identified as the most significant issue to extending library opening hours. It was suggested that any other barriers to opening could be overcome if enough funding available, hence funding would always remain the most significant issue.
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### Abbreviations used

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<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>CILIP</td>
<td>Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals</td>
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<td>CIPFA</td>
<td>Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy</td>
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<td>DCMS</td>
<td>Department of Culture, Media and Sport</td>
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<td>IT</td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
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<td>PLA</td>
<td>Public Library Authority</td>
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<td>PLS</td>
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### Definition of terms

#### Core library opening hours

<table>
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<th>Day</th>
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<tr>
<td>Monday – Friday</td>
<td>9.00 am – 8.00 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>9.00 am – 1.00 pm</td>
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#### Extended library opening hours

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Monday – Friday</td>
<td>Before 9.00 am</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday – Friday</td>
<td>After 8.00 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>After 1.00 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>Any time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bank holiday</td>
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Chapter 1 – Introduction

Society is increasingly moving away from the fixed points of a nine to five working day. This is reflected, for example, in the extended opening hours of retailing, banking and the service industries. These organisations have adapted their opening hours as a result of user demand in order to remain competitive and relevant to their public. Recent public library reviews and reports have highlighted the need for libraries to follow this example in order to provide the most beneficial and valuable service to their current and potential users. “Framework for the Future”, (Department of Culture, Media and Sport 2003), “Building Better Library Services”, (Audit Commission 2002) and “New Library: The Peoples Network” (Library and Information Commission 1997) all highlight the need for libraries to maximise their accessibility through opening at times which are appropriate to the needs of their local communities. This involves public libraries consulting adequately with users and non-users in order to identify the most appropriate manner in which to develop and extend the service.

Many public library authorities are now under pressure to extend their opening hours as a key component in fulfilling the requirements of Public Library Standards and “Best Value” inspections. In order to be viewed as being socially inclusive they must strive to be accessible to all and to offer an appropriate range of services. Libraries which are open only through the traditional core hours of nine to five, weekdays only, can be seen as disenfranchising those who are unable reach the library during these times, such as the full time employed.

The most recent statistics presented by CIPFA, however, indicate a gradual reduction in the number of library service points nation-wide since 1995. The number of libraries open for over 60 hours a week has dropped from 43 in 1995 to 25 in 2001. Small libraries, (open for less than 10 hours a week) have also suffered with a reduction in number (CIPFA 2002). Research by Proctor, Lee and Reilly assessed the extent of opening hours reductions and closures between 1986 – 1997 and concluded that:

“access to libraries is now less than it was ten years ago in eight out of ten library authorities in England and Wales.”
In addition

“authorities reporting reductions in opening hours seemed to be increasingly adopting standard patterns of opening and these are not always compatible with community needs.”

(Proctor, Reilly and Lee 1998:82)

This research project developed from an interest in identifying the reality of current public library opening hours nation-wide. Questions of particular interest occurred, such as:

- to what extent are public library authorities currently responding to the pressures to extend their opening hours?
- how are public libraries responding to user needs?
- what are the main barriers to extending opening hours?

Preparatory research highlighted the fact that a number of library staff and managers have used the “JISC mail” public libraries email list (accessible from www.jiscmail.ac.uk) as a forum through which to request advice and information in relation to implementing such extended opening hours. In addressing the practicalities of extending hours into evenings and weekends these emails identify three main areas of interest and concern:

- the extent of the opening hours
- human resource issues related to extending the opening hours
- funding of the extended hours.

Recent research by O’Sullivan also suggested that staffing issues were considered to be a “major hurdle” when considering the possible extension of library opening hours in Ireland (O’Sullivan 2001: 95). It is against this background that the aims and objectives of this study were determined.
1.1 Aims and objectives

The overall purpose of this study is to present a current picture of the extent to which public libraries are now extending their opening hours beyond the traditional core hours. It also reports on plans for extended opening hours in the future. It aims to increase the knowledge of library managers and professionals with regard to extended opening hours. It investigates the factors which library service managers consider significant in the informing of plans for opening, and highlights the main barriers to increasing extended opening hours.

1.1.1 Aims

- To identify the extent to which public libraries are now extending their opening hours beyond the traditional core hours.
- To identify the management issues associated with this.

1.1.2 Objectives

- To identify a nation wide picture of the extent of extended opening hours in public libraries.
- To examine the reasons and motivations that led to the selection of those hours.
- To identify management issues resulting from the extension of the opening hours.
- To examine the human resource implications of extended opening hours.
- To identify barriers to extending opening hours.
- To examine the impact of extended hours on level and pattern of usage.

1.1.3 Intended outcome

- To create good practice guidelines for practitioners to consult when considering the issue of extended opening.
1.2 Scope of the study

The study was UK based, undertaken using a survey of Public Library Authorities (PLAs) in England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Scottish Islands. Telephone interviews were carried out with questionnaire respondents who had indicated that they were willing to be contacted in order to assist further in researching opening hour practices in their authority. The case studies interviews were undertaken with staff and managers from libraries in three different public library authorities in the north of England. They were not contacted as a result of responding to the questionnaire.

“Framework for the Future” highlights the call of library users and non-users for increased flexibility in library opening times. In addition there is public demand for more weekend opening of public libraries (DCMS 2003). The primary aim of this study is to identify the extent to which public libraries are now extending their opening hours in order to address this need. This aim meant that the researcher considered it a priority to identify trends related to extended opening practice rather than focusing on the specific opening hours of individual libraries. In addition it was a priority to identify examples of extended opening practice which were of particular note or that offered a particularly extensive range of opening hours to the public. It was therefore decided that the study would focus specifically on identifying the extent of library opening during the following extended opening periods:

- Any time Sunday
- Saturday afternoon opening after 1.00 pm
- Weekday opening before 9.00 am
- Weekday opening after 8.00 pm
- Bank holiday opening.
Chapter Two - Reviewing the Literature

2.1 The context

Public libraries offer a local gateway into a world of information resources. They are one of Britain’s most popular institutions, representing one of the countries greatest educational, cultural and social resources (Comedia 1993). However, to remain effective and successful the library must provide a service that is appropriate and relevant to the community it serves. As the patterns of work and leisure alter in response to a move towards the “twenty-four seven” society, public libraries are under to pressure to consider the appropriateness of their opening hours. This is reflected in much of the recent literature. In 1995 it was forecast that:

“The issue of opening hours is likely to become more important in the light of social and demographic changes that are altering the pattern of peoples daily lives and their expectations of services and facilities.”

(Greenhalgh, Worpole and Landry 1995:39)

The ASLIB Review in 1995 highlighted the importance of library opening hours being appropriate to the needs of users, suggesting that:

“The call for longer opening hours was...an expression of need for more convenient opening hours of libraries.”

(ASLIB 1995:179)

In “New Library: The Peoples Network” it was suggested that the convenience of opening hours needs to be addressed from the users point of view.

“If the intention is to provide a service to maximise use...the library needs to be open during evenings, weekends and lunchtimes, to that all can benefit from the service.”

(Library and Information Commission 1997: 2.4.F)
The need to address the issue of extended opening hours was formalised by the introduction of Public Library Standards (PLS) in 2001 by the DCMS. The standards are one element of a government framework including Annual Library Plans (now replaced by proposals) and Best Value reports designed to encourage and ensure an effective development strategy for each library service (DCMS 2001). The PLS are designed to ensure the continuous improvement of library services and to safeguard the basic infrastructure of the public library service in England. (Library Association 2001) Public library standard 3 states as an objective:

“Library authorities must provide adequate opening hours of libraries for users.”
(DCMS 2001:10)

In addition it details that:

“Our authorities will be required to report in their Annual Library Plans on their policy for opening hours outside 9 am - 5 pm on weekdays and on their aggregate opening hours that fall outside that core”
(DCMS 2001:10)

Continued calls for an expansion in opening hours have been made increasingly vigorously through other publications such as “Building Better Library Services”, (Audit Commission 2002) and “Framework for the Future” (DCMS 2003).

The Audit Commission stated in 2002 that public libraries must focus on delivering the services that the local community wants. In particular it refers to maximising the accessibility of the library by opening at times to suit local people and responding to the demands of current library users for “more flexible and weekend opening” (Audit Commission in DCMS 2003:40).

A library service that fails to make its services accessible beyond the core hours is judged as in danger of becoming irrelevant and powerless. The president of the Australian Library Association argued that a library service which fails to extend its services beyond the core hours undermines it’s position in any national
information strategy, weakens it’s community profile and undermines it’s credibility (Wagner in Greenhalgh, Worpole and Landry 1995).

2.2 Public Library Standards

Current public library standards report that a minimum of 30% of total library opening hours should occur outside the normal working day of 9.00 am to 5.00 pm, weekdays (Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council 2002). However, the “Appraisal of Annual Library Plans 2002” (DCMS 2002) suggests that one of the major challenges facing many public library authorities is to provide sufficient access to libraries. The report states that only 27% of authorities are currently meeting this standard, 56% of authorities aim to meet in by March 2004 with a further 18% planning to attain it by March 2005 (DCMS 2002). The publication highlights the difficulties which authorities are facing in achieving the designated standards by the original target date of March 2004.

“Most authorities are planning to meet the Public Library Standards, although less than half are planning to achieve these standards by at least March 2005, a year later than the original target. Nevertheless many authorities have not set target dates to meet some of the standards.” (DCMS 2002:1.2)

2.3 A legacy of cuts

The years of the late 1980’s and early 90’s were years of financial pressures and cuts for many public library authorities. The decline in services was declared to be a “crisis” by the Library Association (Library Association Record 1991a). Reductions in opening hours and branch closures were regularly reported in the “Library Association Record” (Library Association Record 1991c). Proctor et al highlight in “Access to Public Libraries” the decline in library opening hours across the country at this time.
“Between 1986 and 1996 library service points open more than 60 hours a week in English authorities fell by 77%...even more disturbing is the indication that libraries open between 45 and 59 hours per week in English authorities also fell, in this period, by 33%.”

(Proctor et al 1998:3)

The number of libraries open in the UK for over 60 hours a week, as reported by CIPFA, has continued to fall. 43 such libraries were recorded in 1995-1996, in comparison to a total of 25 in 2000-2001. In addition there has been a reduction of 141 in the number of static service points since 1995-1996 (CIPFA 2002).

2.4 Barriers to access

The public library is viewed as a free public service. However, there are costs to the library customer in using the service. These may be in terms of money, effort, time or accessibility. The issue of opening hours is central to a library’s accessibility. Inappropriate opening hours can function as a barrier to access. This is confirmed by a number of studies. A study of the New York Public Library identified library opening hours as being more significant than locality in influencing an individual’s decision to use the library.

“(The) library users did not seem to be clustered near the library. The hours during which service was available was the most important feature of competing branches.”

(Getz in Shoham 1985:103)

The “Branching Out” report highlights the most significant barrier restricting the publics’ use of the library in Ireland as the operation of opening hours that restrict the ability of people to use library buildings (Department of Environment and Local Government in O’Sullivan 2001). Proctor et al identifies inconvenient opening hours as one of the reasons frequently cited for the non-use of libraries (Proctor et al 1998). A study of Cheshire libraries explored the issue of lapsed library users and identified unsuitable opening hours as being a significant influence on their decision not to use the library (Wadley, Broady & Hayward 1997a). If a library customer is unable to access the service because of inappropriate opening hours, the efforts
involved in producing the service will be wasted (Wadley, Broady & Hayward 1997b).

“However well developed, priced and promoted the service is, if customers are unable to get to it or cannot easily find it, all this work is jeopardised” (Wadley, Broady & Hayward 1997b: (online))

It is therefore important to ensure that the opinions of users and non-users of the library services are considered when planning the future direction of the service. Their involvement enables the library to accurately identify the needs and wants of the community regarding opening hours. Muir and Douglas suggest that libraries should plan to survey citizens at least once every two years in order to meet the needs of the community (Muir & Douglas 2001). In addition, they should consult with the front line staff delivering the service.

“If access is to be improved libraries must address reasons for the non-use of their services. And the best people to improve procedures are the employees delivering the service, who have first hand knowledge of what works and what does not work.” (Muir & Douglas 2001: (online))

2.5 Social inclusion

The current Labour government view public libraries as having a significant role to play in tackling social exclusion and building community identity, describing them as “public anchors for neighbourhoods and communities” (DCMS 2003:9). The public library is also recognised as an important resource for Britain’s ethnic minorities. Greenhalgh et al state that:

“The public library has a long history of being an entry point into ... society for Britain’s ethnic minorities...(and) acts as an entry point to the wider, multicultural and cosmopolitan British life” (Greenhalgh, Worpole & Landry 1995: 93-5)
For libraries to become fully inclusive they must provide the appropriate services, and be accessible by all members of society (Hawkins, Morris & Sumison 2001). Therefore, public libraries must consider the cultural makeup of the community they serve when determining the range of opening hours. Wadley et al suggest that certain religions and cultures may find that Sunday opening allows the users a greater opportunity to access the libraries than on Friday or Saturdays (Wadley, Broady & Hayward 1997a). As stated by ASLIB:

“For ethnic minorities, much longer opening hours are desirable so that they can use a public library out of the hours in which they work, and have time to travel to a library which meets their needs.”

(ASLIB 1995:180)

This suggests that the public library needs to be responsive to such issues in order to encourage social inclusion.

2.6 Serving the full-time employed

The full-time employed are perhaps the largest segment of the potential market for public library users. However they are relatively low users of library resources. One reason for this is that the opening hours are not appropriate to their needs. A poll conducted in 1994 reported that in the preceding twelve months, forty two percent of full time workers had not visited a library (Wadley, Broady & Hayward 1997b). The results of a survey in Cheshire showed that over a third of full time workers noted unsuitable opening hours as a negative factor affecting their use of the library. They also reported that an alteration in opening hours would encourage them to make increased use of the facility (Wadley, Broady & Hayward 1997b). From this it can be suggested that extending opening hours beyond the “nine to five” working day has the potential to impact significantly on the level of library usage. Wadley et al warn that any failings in the service to a market segment of this size will have considerable impact on the efficiency of the whole public library system (Wadley, Broady & Hayward 1997b).
The ASLIB “Review of the Public Library Service in England and Wales” (1995:14) stated that:

“working people find the present limitation on opening hours inconvenient”

and recommended a review of opening hours and days by library authorities.

2.7 Saturday and evening opening in public libraries

Proctor, Lee and Reilly undertook extensive research into the impact of opening hours reductions and closures in public libraries, which was published as “Access to Public Libraries. The Impact of Opening Hours Reductions and Closures 1986 – 1997” (Proctor et al 1998).

As one element of the research they examined the current level of Saturday and weekday evening opening. During the period studied the total number of reductions which affected Saturday and evenings had increased significantly, with authorities stating that the decision to do so was made for financial reasons. The research identified that reductions in evening opening were particularly prevalent in urban areas (Metropolitan and London Boroughs.) Reductions in evening opening occurred much less frequently in County libraries. The study also considered the latest evening closing time in public libraries and found that, at the time of the study, only one English authority had a library open after 8.00 pm. The number of evenings that libraries were open in Scottish authorities compared favourably against those in the Welsh and English authorities.

Saturday opening appeared to have been less affected by cuts and closures than weekday evenings. Metropolitan Districts and Welsh authorities were reported to have the highest reductions in Saturday opening, whilst County and London Borough libraries had the lowest level of reductions. The research identified that many parts of Scotland did not seem to consider Saturday opening to be a high priority.
17.8% of Scottish libraries remained closed on a Saturday, leading the report to suggest that this seemed to:

“imply a pattern based on tradition and culture rather than one which results from shortage of resources.”

(Proctor *et al* 1998:19)

### 2.8 Staffing issues

The decision to extend opening hours in public libraries has a significant impact on management issues. One of the key issues is the manner of staffing the extended hours. Possible problems have been identified as the need to renegotiate trade union agreements that compel libraries to award staff increased rates of pay if working on Sundays, or the need to increase available finance to support extended hours (Wadley, Broady & Hayward 1997a). Current staff may be reluctant to alter their established working patterns in order to cover extra hours, and it may be found preferable to recruit staff specifically to cover these hours.

“Permanent part time staff appear to be employed primarily to cope with extended opening hours. The majority of employers of this type of worker said they employed them to provide cover for weekends and evenings”

(Goulding and Kerslake 1995: 606)

Goulding and Kerslake identified flexible staffing as an important feature of libraries today. Their research shows that library managers rely upon part-time, temporary and casual workers as central to their organisation's ability to operate effectively (Goulding and Kerslake 1995).

O’Sullivan suggested that staffing and related issues were regarded as a “major hurdle” when exploring the issue of extended library hours in Ireland (O’Sullivan 2001: 95). Staff training can be difficult to organise for those who work the extended hours, requiring the training to be undertaken within the extended hours or demanding the staff to report for training beyond their hours of work. Permanent part time staff play a significant role in the provision of LIS staffing for extended hours. However Goulding and Kerslake identified that the logistics of training
provision means that these staff are often excluded from training because the schedules are unable to accommodate them (Goulding & Kerslake 1995). This may impact on the level of service provision that is delivered to the customer within the extended hours, and lead to the possible development of a second-class service beyond the library’s core hours.

2.9 The level of service provision

Security and “Health and Safety” issues have been identified through JISC public library email lists as major concerns of library managers considering the implications of extending library opening hours. In addition there is considerable interest in the level of service provision that libraries are able to provide beyond the core hours. These issues have been of particular interest to academic libraries as well. Many of these have already confronted the issues relating to extended opening as a result of student pressure to increase opening. A survey by Wells on the attitudes and practices relating to extended opening hours in academic libraries revealed that many librarians felt that the situation was less than satisfactory. She concluded that many institutions were struggling to establish an acceptable compromise between the needs of the students and the needs of the library concerning the level of service provision.

“Many appear to be frustrated by being caught between aspiring toward the ideal (professional service every hour the library is open) and providing what is practical under existing circumstances.”

(Wells 1979:27)

This is the problem which public libraries are now being forced to address
Chapter 3 - Methodology and Methods of Investigation

3.1 Methodology

The nature of the subject was judged appropriate to an inductive approach based on grounded theory. An inductive approach commences with no initial assumptions relating to the outcome of the research. Theories are developed as a consequence of the data collected (Gorman & Clayton 1997). The term “grounded theory” is used to describe how theories become established through the progression of the study (Gorman & Clayton 1997). As a result, through this approach the researcher aims to collect data, subject it to analysis and then present conclusions that result from the theories which have emerged from the study (Rhodes 2002). This approach was selected in order to allow the researcher to draw conclusions from the data collected in order to develop a set of “good practice” guidelines that may be of practical help to others in the future. Information was collected via both quantitative and qualitative methods in order to generate a complete and comprehensive picture of the current situation of opening hours in public libraries.

Quantitative research is based on the collection of “observable events and facts that can be measured” (Gorman & Clayton 1997:23). Through the analyses of quantitative data it is possible to identify and describe the range and extent of public library opening hours.

Qualitative research is based on:

“A process of enquiry that draws data from the context in which events occur, in an attempt to describe these occurrences, as a means of determining the process in which events are embedded and the perspectives of those participating in the events”

(Gorman & Clayton 1997:23)

The gathering of qualitative information serves to provide an understanding of the impact that the alteration in hours has at a local or individual level, and may suggest trends in issues associated with extended hours.
3.2 Methods of investigation

3.2.1 Literature search and review

An extensive search for literature related to library opening hours or library management issues was conducted on LISA (Library and Information Abstracts.) In addition a thorough search of the “Emerald Reviews” (management, accounting and business database) was undertaken. The library catalogues of the University of York and the University of Sheffield were consulted in order to locate a wide range of appropriate documents, journal articles and reports. Relevant University of Sheffield MA Librarianship dissertations were studied, as were the relevant research reports undertaken by staff in the Department of Information Studies at Sheffield. In addition a wide range of web based resources were consulted, such as the “Re:source” web site, the “CILIP” web site (The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals) and the web site of the “Department of Culture, Media and Sport.” These were consulted in order to identify current policies and legislation relating to public library opening hours. Archive correspondence from the JISC Public Library email lists was examined in order to identify the concerns of current library staff and managers relating to the research topic. These sources yielded a wide range of relevant, insightful information. However very little of this was current (i.e. produced since 2000) or could report accurately on the present situation regarding extended opening hours in public libraries.

3.2.2 Consultation with academic library staff

Many academic libraries have already addressed the issue of extended opening hours in response to user demand. It was therefore judged that a meeting with academic library staff during the early stages of the research process could highlight significant issues which may be relevant to consider in respect to the study. As a result the researcher undertook interviews with a service manager and with a Sunday supervisor in a local university library. The interviews were informal in nature and designed to allow the interviewee to identify the issues they perceived as of significance. The interviews resulted in a range of insightful comments that were of great value when preparing the PLA questionnaire and the interview schedules to investigate current practice in public libraries.
3.2.3 Public library authority email questionnaire

It was decided to email a questionnaire to all United Kingdom public library authorities in order to ascertain a national picture of opening beyond the core opening hours. It is recognised that the questionnaire is an appropriate manner by which to collect large amounts of factual data in order to produce numerical evidence (Stone & Harris 1984, Yin 1994). The collection and analysis of this data produced a comprehensive picture of the current opening hours situation. The questionnaire was developed in June, and was distributed as questionnaire attached to an email. Clear details were given of how to complete and return the attachment. Respondents were also given details of how to print and return a paper copy of the questionnaire, if preferred. Oppenheim (1992) highlights that a difficulty associated with questionnaires is the lack of control over how questions are interpreted by the respondents. In an attempt to overcome this problem one public library authorities agreed to pilot the questionnaire in advance of the general mailing in order to “show up any weaknesses in the questions” (Stone & Harris 1984:19). This led to a number of minor adjustments being made to the questionnaire in order to improve its relevance, clarity and layout.

It was decided to distribute the questionnaire electronically via email rather than as a paper postal questionnaire. Research has shown that responses to email surveys are faster, with more complete answers, a reduced non-response rate and fewer completion mistakes than to a paper questionnaire (Schaeffer & Dillman 1998, Roselle & Neufeld 1998). In addition it is an inexpensive way of mailing over 200 organisations, dispensing with the costs involved in postage and printing (Schaeffer & Dillman 1998). It is recognised that email questionnaires sent without prior notice are less likely to produce a response than those that are preceded by an earlier request for participation (Mehta & Sivadas 1995). Due to several questionnaires being sent to public library authorities from students in the Department of Information Studies it was decided that the Course Co-ordinator would be responsible for sending a pre-notice to the authorities.
The questionnaire was kept as short as possible in order to encourage respondents to complete and return it (Proctor et al 1998). It was decided to adopt a semi-structured format to the questionnaire, including both open and closed questions. A combination of both open and closed questions was used in order to ascertain opinions and facts from the respondents (Peterson 2000). It has been suggested that the length of answers to open ended questions, within an email questionnaire, are higher than in other formats (Bachman, Elfrink & Vazzana 1996 in Schaeffer & Dillman 1998). It was therefore hoped that significant information regarding the management issues associated with extended opening hours could be identified through the use of a small number of open questions. The majority of questions were of a closed format in order to allow easier coding and analysis.

A total of 202 questionnaires were emailed out. Two weeks after the initial mailing, a reminder notice was sent in order to encourage a higher response rate (Line 1982, Schaeffer & Dillman 1998). 61 questionnaires were returned in the first two weeks after the mail out. A further 32 were returned after the reminder notice was sent, giving a total of 93. 7 addresses, which failed to be delivered initially, were successfully sent to alternative email addresses located through the searching on the web. A total of 18 responses were returned as paper copies through the post. Many of these mailings included additional information such as leaflets detailing opening hours or copies of policy documents. A total of 9 questionnaires were returned too late to be included in the study.

The average response rate to such an email survey, as reported in Schaeffer and Dillman (1998) is 41%. The response rate to this questionnaire was 46%. This can therefore be viewed as a relatively high response rate. It is suggested by Dillman that those questionnaires which are on topics of high salience to recipients are more likely to be returned than those of less interest (Dillman 2000). A response rate of 46% therefore indicates that the issue of extended opening hours is an area of particular interest in library managers currently.
Due to the number of respondents that indicated that they did not wish their library authority to be identified, a decision was made not to identify any respondents in order to ensure confidentiality. This confidentiality was extended to the telephone and case study interviews, in order to encourage the expression of honest and candid opinions by all participants.

The results of the questionnaire were analysed through the use of SPSS software (Statistical Package for Social Scientists.)

3.2.4 Telephone interviews

A number of individuals were identified through the questionnaire as being willing to be contacted for further information and discussion. These individuals were then subject to telephone interview. This approach allowed the interviewee to highlight “self-perceived issues or relationships of importance”, which are valuable in forming links between key issues and understanding the significance of contexts (Gorman & Clayton 1997:45). The interviews were based on a semi-structured format which would generate answers to specific queries whilst allowing the freedom to add further questions. Open questions were used wherever possible in order to encourage full and detailed responses. Through a qualitative approach it was anticipated that individual opinions and observations could be identified. As a result of this, a greater understanding of why decisions have been made relating to the management of extended opening hours may be gained.

The researcher contacted a total of ten library service managers to undertake telephone interviews. It proved particularly difficult and time consuming to contact some managers despite repeated phone calls and contact by email.

Interviewees were selected in response to the information they gave on the questionnaire in order to give greater insight and provide further information on issues of particular interest. Service managers were contacted from authorities serving contrasting communities and with contrasting patterns of extended opening hours. This was undertaken in order to highlight the different priorities and challenges faced by different public library authorities.
Range of public library authorities contacted

**London Borough (7) (9) (14)**
Urban authorities serving multicultural communities.

**County authority (7) (9)**
Authorities serving predominantly rural based populations.

**Scottish authority (12) (14)**
Authorities not subject to English Public Library Standards. Authorities serving communities with a low density of population.

**Welsh authority (9)**
Rural based authority, subject to Welsh Public Library Standards.

**Metropolitan authority (1) (5)**
Authorities serving predominantly urban based communities. Authority (1) serving multicultural community.

3.2.5 Case Study Libraries

A small number of case studies were carried out in local public libraries in order to identify attitudes and responses of staff and managers to the extension of hours and their perceptions of its worth and success. As suggested by Line:

“The detailed exploration of a few libraries can be quite as illuminating as the general exploration of many.”

(Line 1982:36)

Yin (1994:1) suggests that case studies are an appropriate approach when the study is focused on “a contemporary phenomenon within some real life context.” A series of interviews were undertaken which were designed to be informal in nature, in order to encourage honest, candid opinions from the participants regarding their attitudes to extended opening (Gorman & Clayton 1997). The researcher compiled an informal interview guide prior to the visit, composed of issues and queries of particular interest. This was written in order to ensure that all significant points were covered in the course of the interview (Gorman & Clayton 1997). However, it was hoped to address the issues through the natural flow of the conversation rather than
through a structured session. A decision was made not to tape the interviews, in order to encourage the participants to relax and to express their honest opinions (Erlandson 1993:90). In addition it was judged that the transcription of audiotapes for approximately ten hours of interviews (telephone and case study interviews) would take an excessively long time.

3.2.5.1 Profiles of case study libraries

Three case study libraries were consulted in total. The libraries selected had a variety of practices relating to extended opening and the extent of its current implementation. The libraries selected were chosen in part because of their geographical proximity to the researchers home address. As a result all of the libraries were located in the north of England. Such opportunist sampling is recognised as being practical and efficient manner of producing valid, significant results (Bell 1999). A total of nine staff and managers were interviewed between the three libraries. Constraints of time and staff availability limited the number of libraries consulted and the number staff who were available to be interviewed. However, it was judged that this number of respondents could provide a range of useful insights and opinions about issues related to extended opening hours. A decision was made not to pilot the interview guide before carrying out the case studies due to the restraints of time. In addition the earlier experience of interviewing academic library staff was judged to have provided valuable insights in undertaking such interviews.

**Case study library A**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opening</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evening opening</td>
<td>Open until 8.00 pm (x3 nights a week)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday opening</td>
<td>10.00 am – 5.00 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday opening</td>
<td>12.00 pm – 4.00 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank holidays</td>
<td>Closed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3.1 Opening hours of case study library A*

Case study A is a central library, based in a city centre location, in a Metropolitan public library authority. The city currently has a population of 727,800 and is served
by a total of 56 static libraries. The primary industries within the city are manufacturing and service industries. The unemployment rate currently stands at 3.4%. Ethnic minority groups make up 4.4% of the population. Sunday opening was introduced in January 2003 and is considered a permanent addition to library opening hours.

**Case study library B**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evening opening</td>
<td>Open until 7.00 pm (x2 nights a week)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday opening</td>
<td>9.00 am - 4.30 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday opening</td>
<td>Closed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank holidays</td>
<td>Closed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3.2 Opening hours of case study library B*

Case study library B is a central library based in a town centre location, serving a Unitary authority. The town is the largest urban area in a predominantly rural authority, and has a population of approximately 76,000. It is considered as the local centre in the area for employment, shopping and educational opportunities. The economy was traditionally based on heavy industry and in recent years has seen a diversification into a mainly manufacturing based economy. The town’s work force is made up predominantly of semi-skilled employees who receive relatively low wages. Minority ethnic groups make up less than 2% of the population.

**Case study library C**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evening opening</td>
<td>Open until 8.00 pm (x2 nights a week)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday opening</td>
<td>9.00 am -1.00 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday opening</td>
<td>10.00 am – 4.00 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank holidays</td>
<td>Closed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3.3 Opening hours of case study library C*

Case study C is a community library in a Metropolitan public library authority. It is based in a small town, with a population of 17,111. The town used
to rely on traditional heavy industry for employment but with the closure of major local employers the unemployment rate now stands at 12.7%. The area has a very low level of ethnic minority population (currently at 0.6%). The library does not currently open after 1.00 pm on a Saturday afternoon. A Sunday opening pilot scheme is currently being piloted in the library by the local public library authority. This scheme was originally intended to last for six months, but has been extended in order to allow further evaluation of its level of success to take place.

(The case study information of libraries A, B and C is sourced from the Annual Library Plans (2002) of the relevant library authorities (accessed through http://www.libplans.ws/default.asp))

3.3 Triangulation

As suggested by Gorman and Clayton (1997) the use of more than one research technique can increase the scope, depth and accuracy of a study. It was therefore considered that the use of both a qualitative and a quantitative approach to data collection would minimise the significance of any weaknesses within the research technique. As a result this would ensure that a balanced, valid and reliable outcome was achieved (Bell 1999).

3.4 Limitations of methodology

A total of ten telephone interviews were undertaken. It was originally hoped to undertake significantly more than this. However it took a considerable length of time to contact some service managers despite repeated phone calls and emails. A number could not be contacted within the appropriate time period due to their being absent on annual leave. However the material provided by the ten service managers was judged to reflect a representative sample of public library authorities and highlighted a range of issues that authorities are addressing in relation to extended opening hours.

The public library authority questionnaire was piloted before it was mailed out. This led to a number of changes being made in order to improve its clarity. In retrospect, however, a number of further adaptations would have improved the
response level to some questions. The questionnaire would have benefited from clearer instructions in how to answer a number of questions. In addition, some of the terms used in the questionnaire were poorly defined and may have been interpreted in different ways by different respondents. One question also appears to duplicate the information requested in an earlier question. However the high response rate from public library authorities generated a wide range of detailed information relating to extended opening hours.

The low level of opening reported for some extended opening periods (for example bank holidays or weekday opening before 9.00 am) results in some statistics appearing to assume greater significance than is perhaps the case. It is important to remain aware of the sample size throughout the study. Any conclusions drawn relating to these opening periods are reliant on a very low number of examples and should be regarded with some caution. In addition, the discussion of management issues is mainly focused on the experiences associated with Saturday afternoon, Sunday and weekday opening after 8.00 pm due to the low number of authorities offering bank holiday and early morning opening.

The questionnaire was mailed to all UK public library authorities in order generate a nation-wide picture of the extent of extended opening hours in public libraries. By doing so some authorities were asked to comment on issues that were not directly relevant to their own circumstances. For example, Scottish and Welsh libraries are obliged to conform to local Public Library Standards. However the responses received from those authorities outside of England were of great value to the study.
4.1 Introduction

A total of 93 public library authorities responded to the e-mail questionnaire within the allocated time span. Respondents were asked to indicate the current extent of library opening hours within specified time periods:

- Saturday afternoons after 1.00 pm
- Sundays
- Weekdays before 9.00 am
- Weekdays after 8.00 pm
- Bank holidays.

They were also asked to indicate their level of commitment to extending opening hours in the authority in the future. The questionnaire asked service managers to report on the factors that influenced their decisions regarding the range of library opening time, and those issues which were considered to act as barriers to extending opening hours in public libraries. Opportunity was given for additional comments to be added by the respondents.

4.2 Saturday afternoon opening

4.2.1 Current opening practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of library authorities offering Saturday afternoon opening (after 1.00 pm)</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All of the libraries in their authority</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some of the libraries in their authority</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>63.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the libraries in their authority</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total no. of respondents to question</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4.1 Current opening practice – general picture*
Saturday afternoon opening currently occurs to some extent in the majority of public library authorities (78 (83.8%).) Only 16.1% of respondents do not currently offer any access to the libraries in their authorities after 1.00 pm on a Saturday.

4.2.2 Future opening plans

Reports such as “Framework for the Future” (DCMS 2003) and “Building Better Libraries” (Audit Commission 2002) call for public libraries to consider expanding their current range of opening hours. It was therefore considered important to establish the future plans of those library authorities that do not currently open any of their libraries within the specified extended opening periods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current level of commitment to extend opening to include Saturday afternoon opening (after 1.00 pm) by authorities currently closed at this time</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitely (plans are in place)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provisionally (aim to implement within 2 years)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideally (no formal commitment currently)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No intention</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total no. respondents to question</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*( x1 nil response received)*

Table 4.2 Future plans for Saturday afternoon opening

78 (83.8%) of public library authorities currently provide Saturday afternoon opening in some or all of their libraries. Of the 15 authorities that do not, 6 are committed to providing access within the next two years (stating that they had “definite” or “provisional” plans.) This suggests that over 90% of respondents to the survey aim to have some or all of the libraries in their authorities accessible to the public on Saturday afternoons by 2005.
4.2.3 Variation in opening patterns between categories of public library authority

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of authority</th>
<th>Libraries open on <strong>Saturday afternoon</strong></th>
<th>Total no. of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met. District</td>
<td>2 (15.4%)</td>
<td>10 (76.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>10 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London Borough</td>
<td>12 (85.7%)</td>
<td>2 (14.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Unitary</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>19 (76%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welsh</td>
<td>1 (10%)</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish</td>
<td>1 (5.9%)</td>
<td>12 (70.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|                        |             |          |             | 93                        |

**Table 4.3 Variation in opening patterns between categories of public library authority**

Saturday afternoon opening throughout England is provided in “some” or “all” of 58 (93.5%) of English library authorities. This is in comparison with 13 (76%) Scottish authorities and 3 (30%) of Welsh authorities. The highest level of Saturday opening occurs in the London Boroughs where respondents report that 12 (85.6%) authorities have “all” their libraries open, with a further 2 (14.3%) with “some” open. No London authorities report any libraries as shut on a Saturday afternoon. This reflects earlier research by Proctor *et al* (1998) into library opening hour reductions (1986-1997.) This identified London Boroughs as having preserved a higher level of access to library services on Saturdays than other authorities in the country during times of severe cut backs.

A response on the questionnaire from a London Borough suggested an assumption that all libraries should be open on a Saturday afternoon.

“Very surprised that you do not assume libraries should be open on Saturday afternoons.”

(London Borough PLA 13)
Welsh authorities provide very limited library access on Saturday afternoons. Comments from library managers in two Welsh authorities (4 and 5) with no current opening on Saturday afternoons stated that their discussions of extended hours and public consultation was still at a very early stage. One Welsh authority (9) had already undertaken public consultation which highlighted a demand for libraries to be open during this period, which was identified as the preferred extended opening time by library users. The authority reported that it would “ideally” like to introduce Saturday afternoon opening in its libraries, but did not give a definite commitment to do so. Of the ten Welsh authorities that responded to the survey, only one authority reported that it had “no intention” of opening on Saturday afternoons. This level of support for Saturday afternoon opening suggests that the low level of opening is not due to the lack of support from service managers. It may, instead, be due to difficulties in overcoming other issues such as funding and staffing issues. (The single Welsh authority which is currently able to open all of it’s libraries on a Saturday afternoon noted that this is as a result of securing European Grant Objective 1 money.)

It is noted that the type of authority with the highest level of opening on a Saturday afternoon is urban based, whilst the authority type with the most limited opening at this time is predominantly rural with a dispersed population.

4.3 Sunday Opening

4.3.1 Current opening practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of library authorities currently offering Sunday opening in:</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All of the libraries in the authority</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some of the libraries in the authority</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the libraries in the authority</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4.4* Current opening practice – general picture
It is clear that there is currently limited access to public libraries on Sundays. At the time of the questionnaire no public library authority chose to open all of the libraries in the authority on a Sunday. However one authority (County 9) did report that they were planning to launch Sunday opening in all libraries imminently “in order to attract former and new users.”

4.3.2 Future opening plans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current level of commitment to extend opening hours to include Sunday of authorities currently closed on this day</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitely (plans are in place)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provisionally (aim to implement within 2 years)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideally (no formal commitment currently)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>50.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No intention</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total no. of respondents</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(x 4 nil responses were received)*

Table 4.5 Future plans for Sunday opening

67 public library authorities stated that they did not currently open on Sundays. 63 of these reported their future plans regarding Sunday opening. Their responses indicate that 17.5% (11) of the public library authorities who do not currently offer any opening on a Sunday have at least a provisional commitment to do so within the next two years. The combination of these authorities with those already offering limited Sunday opening suggests that almost 40% of authorities will be able to offer limited Sunday opening within the next two years. Only 20 (21.5%) out of the total number of respondents to the questionnaire indicated that they have “no intention” of providing Sunday opening.
4.3.3 Variations in opening patterns between categories of public library authority

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of authority</th>
<th>Libraries open on Sunday</th>
<th>Total no. of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met. District</td>
<td>4 (30.8%)</td>
<td>9 (69.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County</td>
<td>4 (40%)</td>
<td>6 (60%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London Borough</td>
<td>10 (71.4%)</td>
<td>4 (28.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Unitary</td>
<td>7 (28%)</td>
<td>18 (72%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welsh</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>10 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish</td>
<td>1 (5.9%)</td>
<td>16 (94.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.6 Variations in opening patterns between categories of public library authority

The London Boroughs provide a particularly high level of access to library services on a Sunday in comparison with other authorities. 10 (71.4%) of the London PLA respondents stated that “some” of their libraries are open on a Sunday. This figure represents 40% of all Sunday opening reported nation-wide. 7 (28%) of English Unitary authorities state that they have “some” libraries open on a Sunday. County authorities have a relatively high level of “some” Sunday opening (40%), when considered as a percentage of the total number of County authorities that responded to the survey. This level will increase further when County authority 9 rolls out Sunday opening in all 44 of the authorities libraries and resource centres from August 2003 onwards, to become the first authority in the country to offer Sunday access to all of it’s libraries.

The level of Sunday opening outside of the English authorities is currently very low. Only one Scottish authority stated that “some” libraries were open in the authority on a Sunday, representing 5.9% of Scottish respondents. Neither Welsh nor “Other” authorities reported any Sunday opening. This, in addition to the limited range of Saturday opening already identified, suggests that there are limited opportunities to visit libraries in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland at weekends.
This may impact especially on the level of use by the employed in the authority. As suggested by Wadley et al (1997a) the free time of the full time employed is at a premium during the week, and sufficient leisure time may not be available for them to visit the library until the weekend.

Of the 20 respondents who do not currently open any libraries on a Sunday, and who have no intention of introducing Sunday opening, 15 are from authorities based in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This suggests that limited weekend access to public libraries in these areas will remain for some time to come.

4.4 Weekday opening before 9.00 am

4.4.1 Current opening practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of library authorities currently offering weekday opening before 9.00 am in:</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All of the libraries in the authority</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some of the libraries in the authority</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the libraries in the authority</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>91.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.7 Current opening practice – general picture

The figures illustrate that there are currently very few library authorities nation wide that open any of their libraries before 9.00 am on a weekday. Comments from respondents reflected the apparent lack of public demand for opening at this time.

“Feedback from users so far has shown no demand for libraries to be open earlier than 9.00 am.”

(London PLA 1)
“The expansion before 9.00 am and after 8.00 pm does not necessarily receive the highest demand.”

(London PLA 9)

A number of authorities commented on that they were now opening their libraries earlier than before in order to increase public access. However this generally applied to opening at 9.00 am or 9.30 am, compared with the previous opening hours of 9.30 am or 10.00 am.

“In the past most of our libraries opened at 9.30 or 10 so moving to a 9 am opening has been a popular change.”

(County PLA 7)

“Opening before 9.30 am to encourage mothers returning from dropping children at school”

(Unitary PLA 21)

“Libraries will open at 9 am instead of 9.30, three libraries will open on Mondays 9 am-5 pm for the first time since 1975.”

(London PLA 2)

### 4.4.2 Future opening plans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current level of commitment to extend opening hours to include weekday opening before 9.00 am</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitely (plans are in place)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provisionally (aim to implement within 2 years)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideally (no formal commitment currently)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No intention</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>80.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total no. respondents to question</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(x8 nil responses received)

*Table 4.8 Future plans for weekday opening before 9.00 am*
Only 8 public library authorities reported currently offering early morning opening in any of their libraries. Authorities reported a low level of commitment to introducing early opening in the future, with 62 respondents stating that they have “no intention” of introducing it. These results suggest that “early opening” is judged by public library authorities to be a low priority in regard to the extended opening periods considered in the study.

4.4.3 Variations in opening patterns between categories of public library authority

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of authority</th>
<th>Libraries open on weekdays before 9.00 am</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met. District</td>
<td>2 (15.4%)</td>
<td>11 (84.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
<td>8 (80%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London Borough</td>
<td>1 (7.1%)</td>
<td>13 (92.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unitary</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>22 (88%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welsh</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>10 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>17 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.9 Variations in opening patterns between categories of public library authority

Weekday opening before 9.00 am does not occur at all outside of the English authorities currently. The level of early morning opening occurring anywhere is currently very low. In authorities where early morning opening does occur it was established that this only occurs in a single library in each of the authorities.

Two of the authorities that are currently offering limited early morning opening confirmed that they were running the service in specific locations as a pilot scheme in order to gauge the level of public response. One pilot scheme in is based in a library that is located adjacent to a bus station. The library opens at 8.30 am in order to be accessible to library users on their way to work (County PLA 9.) The second authority (London Borough 14) is piloting an 8.00 am start one day a week as a result of public demand. (This was the earliest reported opening time.) Two other
authorities, (Unitary PLAs 19 and 21) had opening times of 8.30 am and 8.45 am in libraries which were part of shared facilities (community libraries within a school/college.)

Two central libraries (Metropolitan PLAs 7 and 12) reported that they are now open at 8.30 am, six days a week. In the case of Metropolitan PLA 7 this was in order to:

“To widen access within town centre, particularly ICT training.”
(Metropolitan PLA 7)

These findings suggest that the location of the library is of particular importance when considering the possible introduction of early morning opening hours. These examples of early opening all occur in areas where there is an assured daily flow of potential library users moving through the locality in order to reach work, school or retail areas.

4.5 Weekday opening after 8.00 pm

4.5.1 Current opening practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of library authorities currently offering weekday opening after 8.00 pm in:</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All of the libraries in the authority</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some of the libraries in the authority</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the libraries in the authority</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>89.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4.10 Current opening practice – general picture*
Responses to the PLA questionnaire identify weekday opening after 8.00 pm as the third most frequent extended opening time period after Saturday afternoons and Sunday opening. However only 10 (10.8%) authorities reported that any of their libraries opened in this time period, which can be considered to be a low figure nation-wide.

4.5.2 Future opening plans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current level of commitment to extend opening hours to include weekday opening after 8.00 pm by authorities currently closed at this time</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitely (plans are in place)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provisionally (aim to implement within 2 years)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideally (no formal commitment currently)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No intention</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>60.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total no. respondents to question</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

( x9 nil responses received)

Table 4.11 Future plans for weekday opening after 8.00 pm

There appears to be limited support to extend library opening hours into the late evening in the future. Only 5 respondents who do not open currently at this time stated that they were committed to introducing late opening. This would give a total of only 15 authorities providing late evening access to libraries within the next two years. A total of 45 authorities reported that they had no intention of extending library opening to include late evening opening.
4.5.3 Variations in opening patterns between categories of public library authority

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of authority</th>
<th>Libraries open on weekdays after 8.00 pm</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met. District</td>
<td>1 (7.7%)</td>
<td>12 (92.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County</td>
<td>2 (20%)</td>
<td>8 (80%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London Borough</td>
<td>2 (14.3%)</td>
<td>12 (85.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Unitary</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>24 (96%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welsh</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>10 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish</td>
<td>3 (17.6%)</td>
<td>14 (82.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
<td>3 (75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.12 Variations in opening patterns between categories of public library authority

Responses to the questionnaire indicated that Scottish library authorities currently have the highest actual number of authorities with libraries open later than 8.00 pm on weekday evenings (3.) Two additional Scottish authorities (7 and 14) are planning to introduce evening opening beyond 8.00 pm within the next two years. These figures reflect the results of the study by Proctor et al on reductions in library opening hours. This study showed that Scottish authorities had been able to preserve a relatively high level of evening opening during a time of cut backs in comparison with other authorities (Proctor et al 1998).

The same study identified that only two library authorities had libraries open after 8.00 pm in 1998. By 2003 this figure has now risen to a total of 10 in this sample of 93 authorities, and this figure seems likely to increase further. The latest identified closing time by Proctor et al in 1998 was 9.30 pm. In 2003 this has now advanced to 10.00 pm, at Paddington Library in the London Borough of Westminster (Westminster City Council 2003.)
4.6 **Bank holiday opening**

### 4.6.1 Current opening practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of library authorities currently offering bank holiday opening in:</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All of the libraries in the authority</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some of the libraries in the authority</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the libraries in the authority</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>92.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>93</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4.13 Current opening practice – general picture*

This study identified that there are currently a very low number of authorities that open any libraries in their authority on a bank holiday. Over 92% of authorities allow all of their libraries to remain closed.

### 4.6.2 Future opening plans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current level of commitment to extend opening hours to include bank holidays by authorities currently closed at this time</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitely (plans are in place)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provisionally (aim to implement within 2 years)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideally (no formal commitment currently)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No intention</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>73.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total no. respondents to question</strong></td>
<td><strong>79</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(x7 nil responses received)*

*Table 4.14 Future plans for bank holiday opening*
4.6.3 Variations in opening patterns between categories of public library authority

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of authority</th>
<th>Libraries open on a bank holiday</th>
<th>Total no. of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met. District</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London Borough</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Unitary</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welsh</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish</td>
<td>4 (23.5%)</td>
<td>1 (5.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.15 Variations in opening patterns between categories of public library authority

Bank holiday opening occurs predominantly outside of English authorities. Only one English PLA respondent reported currently opening on bank holidays. This contrasts with 5 (29.4%) Scottish authorities that stated that they open on bank holidays and 1 (25%) “Other” authority.

The single example of bank holiday opening within England is an un-staffed self-issue “express library service” within a shared facility. Holiday opening only appears to occur at this site on the two May Day bank holidays.

Bank holiday opening occurs to a greater extent in Scotland, with 5 (29.4%) authorities reporting “some” or “all” of their libraries open. This reflects the different nature of bank holidays in Scotland. Local holidays, as distinct from bank holidays, are not dictated by statute in Scotland. Traditionally, these have been decided by local authorities in consultation with local business interests. The dates chosen therefore reflect the circumstances and wishes of the individual communities. Some places of work may observe these local holidays rather than those days on which the banks are officially closed (Scottish Executive Publications 2003). Therefore libraries in Scotland do not necessarily close in a uniform pattern on bank holidays.
Two authorities stated that they were provisionally intending to introduce bank holiday opening within the next two years (Scottish authority 8 and Unitary PLA 16.) However overall there appears little general support for bank holiday opening outside of Scotland. 58 authorities, which currently remain closed on bank holidays, stated that they had no intention of opening.

4.7 Which authorities provide the greatest range of extended opening hours?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLA</th>
<th>Net expenditure (per 1000 population)</th>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Saturday (pm)</th>
<th>Weekday before 9 am</th>
<th>Weekday after 8 pm</th>
<th>Bank holiday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other 1</td>
<td>&gt;£20,000</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland 9</td>
<td>£10 - £20,000</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unitary 7</td>
<td>£10 - £20,000</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan 12</td>
<td>£10 - £20,000</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London Borough 13</td>
<td>£10 - £20,000</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London Borough 14</td>
<td>&gt;£20,000</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County 7</td>
<td>£10 - £20,000</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County 9</td>
<td>&lt;£10,000</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(X denotes “all” or “some” libraries in authority open in this period)

Table 4.16 Public library authorities providing the greatest range of extended opening hours

Eight public library authorities reported that they currently open libraries in three or more of the extended opening periods investigated in this study. All of these involve Saturday afternoon opening, with six of the authorities opening on Sunday as well. Two authorities offer the most extensive range of opening outside of core library hours. London Borough 14 offers access to some or all of its libraries on Saturday afternoons, Sundays, before 9.00 am weekdays and after 8.00 pm on weekdays. County PLA 7 offers weekend opening, late evening opening and access to a limited library service on specific bank holidays. It is difficult to identify any common feature between the eight PLAs that provide the greatest range of access.
outside of traditional library hours. The net expenditure (per 1000 population (excluding capital charges)) ranges from less than £10,000 to over £20,000 (CIPFA 2002). The number of static libraries within each authority ranges from nine to sixty. The authorities reflect a range of rural and urban communities with a variety of ethnic mix. The common feature is perhaps a commitment to prioritise extended opening hours in the authority in order to ensure maximum public access.

4.8 Extended opening hours: a question of priorities

This study was designed, as stated earlier, to investigate the current level of opening beyond the core opening hours, defined as 9.00 am to 8.00 pm weekdays and Saturday 9.00 am to 1.00 pm. However it should be noted that a significant number of respondents made particular note on the questionnaire that they considered it a high priority in their library authorities to increase library opening times throughout the traditional working day (i.e. 9.00 am to 5.00 pm weekdays.) Many respondents reported that smaller or part time libraries within the authority currently have limited opening hours which may include closing over the lunch period or for part days during the week. In addition it was noted that there were also efforts to be made to increase opening into the early evening (between 5.00 pm and 8.00 pm) before considering the question of further increases to opening hours.

“In our own authority… filling this gap (5.00 pm – 8.00 pm) on days when it is currently not available is going to be the first step in reaching both family and working customers (or non customers.) Also, how many of us have managed to get rid of lunchtime closing – I have to admit to four libraries still closing…and how many still reflect long-gone “early closing days”? It would seem important to make sure we have these opportunities in place as well as looking further forward to even later hours and bank holidays.”

(Metropolitan PLA 3)

“A number of libraries still close on one, two or even three day a week, excluding Sundays – and some have lunchtime closures. Before extending hours on either side of core provision we would look at opening on current closed days or at lunchtimes – these are the things most in demand.”

(London PLA 2)
“The policy is to extend opening hours in accord with the wishes of local communities. This has led to an increase in Saturday afternoon openings but also more in-filling of lunchtimes and weekdays that are currently closed.”

(Unitary PLA 7)

Rural authorities in particular emphasised that the introduction of extended opening hours may not be the most appropriate service to their communities.

“Most of the councils libraries are part time libraries in rural areas. Our priority would be to extend day time hours.”

(Unitary PLA 12)

“In some libraries opening longer would not achieve anything but opening different (more convenient) hours would. This is especially true in small rural communities where demand does not exist for late night opening, but users would prefer Saturday afternoons instead of Tuesdays (or whatever.)”

(Welsh PLA 9)

Respondents emphasised that their overriding priority was the provision of appropriate library services to the local communities. This did not mean that the same approach to extended opening hours would be considered desirable or appropriate to different communities.

“We are trying to fit hours to local need ... One size does not fit all.”

(Unitary PLA 19)
4.9 Summary of chapter

**Figure 4.1 Current extended opening hours practice in public library authorities (totals.)**

- Public library authorities are currently heavily committed to providing Saturday afternoon opening. 78 (83.8%) authorities currently provide access to “all” or “some” of their libraries at that time.
- Sunday opening is currently less widespread, with “some” libraries open in 26 (28%) library authorities.
- Weekday closing after 8.00 pm is found infrequently, occurring only in “some” libraries in 10 (10.8%) of library authorities that responded to the questionnaire.
- A similar figure is found for weekday early opening, which occurs in “some” libraries in 8 (8.6%) of public library authorities.
- Bank holiday opening occurs rarely across the country. However 4 (4.3%) authorities state that “all” of their libraries are open at this time and 3 (3.2%) have “some” libraries open.
Figure 4.2 Future public library authority plans to extend library opening times

- There is a significant commitment to increase the level of access to public libraries over the weekend period. Over 90% of respondents either already offer Saturday afternoon opening or plan to introduce it within the authority by 2005. Almost 40% of authorities stated that they already offered Sunday opening or that they aimed to introduce “some” Sunday opening in their libraries within the next two years.

- There is a much lower level of commitment from PLAs with regard to extending library opening hours during the week or during bank holidays. Of those authorities that do not currently offer any opening in these time periods:
  - 60.8% stated that they had “no intention” of extending library opening times to include weekday evenings after 8.00p.m.
  - 73.4% do not plan to extend library hours to open on bank holidays
  - 80.5% stated that they had “no intention” of introducing early morning opening.

- London Borough authorities offer a high level of access to their library services. All London respondents reported access to “some” or “all “ of their libraries on a Saturday afternoon. In addition London Boroughs account for 40% of all Sunday opening reported nation-wide.
• In contrast Welsh public library authorities currently offer very limited extended hours opening. 30% of respondents reported Saturday afternoon opening. There was no reported Sunday opening.

• An examination of the statistics established the identity of eight authorities that provide the greatest range of extended opening hours. Six of these authorities provide extended opening in three of the time periods specified in this study. Two authorities provide extended opening in four of the time periods. However it was not possible to identify any common feature between the eight authorities. They represented a range of rural and urban based communities with contrasting levels of expenditure and a variety of ethnic mix.

• This study focuses on identifying the nation-wide picture of extended opening hours in public libraries. However it is relevant to note that a number of authorities stated that it was a priority for them to increase library opening times throughout the day. The overriding priority of the public library authorities was to provide the most appropriate library service to the local community.
Chapter 5 - An examination of the reasons and motivations for the selection of the extended opening hours

5.1 The existence of an explicit policy regarding extended library opening hours

In order to identify the issues that influence the authorities’ selection of opening hours the questionnaire asked authorities to state if they had an explicit policy statement regarding extended opening. It was judged that such a statement would express the primary aims of the library authority in relation to extended opening, and would reflect their reasons for the selection of the extended hours. The existence of such a statement was also judged to show a level of formal commitment to, and consideration of, the issue of extended opening hours.

Of the PLA sample that responded to the question, a total of 27% (25) stated that they had an explicit formal policy regarding extended opening hours. The highest occurrence of an extended opening hours policy occurred within the English Unitary authorities 11 (44%) and London Boroughs 5 (20%). This is unsurprising, as these categories of authority showed a relatively high overall level of extended opening hours. More surprising perhaps is that out of the eight authorities with the highest level of extended opening hours, only four reported the existence of a formal policy (this included the two authorities with the widest range of extended opening.)

The questionnaire respondents were asked to give details about the aims of their policies. These fell into five main subject areas which are listed in the table below.
Explicit extended library opening policy | Total no. of respondents
---|---
To increase library use by a specific target group (e.g.: families, young people, ethnic minorities.) | 7 (28%)
In order to attain Public Library Standard | 5 (20%)
To increase general library use | 4 (16%)
To address Life Long Learning agenda | 2 (8%)
Library opened in response to demand from local community | 2 (8%)
Other | 5 (20%)
Total | 25 (100%)

(% of total no. of respondents to question in brackets)

**Table 5.1 Reported aims of extended library opening hours policies**

Saturday afternoon and Sunday opening were identified as particularly popular times to encourage library use by family groups.

“Sunday opening …was very popular, attracting many people who were unable to access the library during the week. Also popular with Dads and kids.”

(County PLA 1)

“Sunday opening … to encourage children and families to use the service together.”

(Metropolitan PLA 7)

“A key objective is to open our Central library on Sundays, and it is intended that activities organised would promote this as a family day and especially a family learning day.”

(Metropolitan PLA 4)
It is surprising that only 25 of the respondents to the questionnaire stated that they have a formal policy, as the Public Library Standards declared in 2001 that library authorities were required to:

“report in their Annual Library Plans on their policy for opening hours outside of 9am – 5pm weekdays and on their aggregate opening hours that fall outside the core.”

(DCMS 2001:10)

5.2 What factors inform PLA plans for the extension of opening hours?

Questionnaire respondents were asked to identify the factors that informed their plans for the extension of hours. Respondents were asked to identify the main factors for each separate extended opening period as it was considered possible that differing factors may affect more influence on certain opening periods. The range of influencing factors listed were: “social trends”, “council policy”, “user demand”, “needs of local community” and “Public Library Standards.” It was judged, as a result of earlier research, that these issues would be the most influential on the choice of extended opening hours.

There was a wide variation in the level of response to this question. This ranged from a 77.4% (72) response rate for the question identifying factors influencing Sunday opening, to a 46.2% (43) response rate for factors influencing weekday morning opening and bank holiday opening. This may have been influenced by respondents only submitting responses to those parts of the question which they felt were directly relevant to them: i.e. if a PLA has no intention of opening libraries on a bank holiday they may have disregarded that section of the question. Alternatively the extended opening periods which generated a low response may signify that these are considered to be a low priority the by public library authorities.
### Extended opening period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extended opening period</th>
<th>No. of PLA responses</th>
<th>1st ranked factor</th>
<th>2nd ranked factor</th>
<th>3rd ranked factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday-anytime</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>Needs of local community</td>
<td>User demand</td>
<td>Social trends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday-after 1pm</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>Needs of local community</td>
<td>User demand</td>
<td>Social trends/ Public Library Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekdays-before 9am</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>User demand</td>
<td>Needs of local community</td>
<td>Social trends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekdays-after 8pm</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>User demand</td>
<td>Needs of local community</td>
<td>Social trends/ Public Library Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank Holidays</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>User demand</td>
<td>Needs of local community</td>
<td>Social Trends.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 5.2 Factors informing public library authority plans for the extension of opening hours**

Public library authorities consider “user demand” and “the needs of the local community” to be the most important influences to shaping plans for opening hours. This highlights the priority that the authorities place on providing a service most appropriate to the needs of those they serve. The high ranking given to “user demand” and “needs of the local community” are supported by evidence of extensive user consultation by many PLAs in the planning and implementation of extended opening hours.

“Public need – Our surveys ...of users/non users will indicate this and ultimately “public need” will determine which hours and where.”

(Unitary PLA 8)

“We are at this moment consulting with customers via questionnaires, focus groups and forums and hope to carry out a survey (in consultation with Mori) to find out the views of customers.”

(London Borough PLA 1)
The consultation process will be considered in detail in chapter 6.

5.2.1 Social Trends – the influence of Sunday trading

Social trends appear as the third ranked factor for all extended opening periods. This suggests that library authorities are responsive to national trends, such as the advance of Sunday trading, which impact on their decision making.

The impact of Sunday trading was identified as a direct influence on library opening hours in two case studies. Case study C is a small branch library that was selected to pilot Sunday opening in the authority because of its location close to a large supermarket that attracts a high number of customers on a Sunday. Case study B does not currently open on a Sunday. When the local council investigated the possibility of encouraging Sunday trading in the town, retailers were reportedly reluctant to open. As a result the library made a decision not to introduce Sunday opening as there would be little to attract the public into the town centre. Scottish authority 14 decided to pilot Sunday opening in a library situated in a large shopping centre, in order to take advantage of the number of people in the locality. London borough 7 reported that a local shopping centre “loves the library being open on Sunday” as it ensures guaranteed footfall in the centre. This reflects a statement from Greenhalgh et al that suggests:

“City centre libraries attract people. They generate a flow of people through the library doors from the moment they open until they close.”

(Greenhalgh et al 1995:75)

5.2.2 Public Library Standards

Public Library Standards are shown, from the responses to the questionnaire, to significantly influence the decision to expand public library opening on Saturday afternoons and late weekday evenings. The standards may exert a significant influence on these specific opening times as these are hours that can be expanded in order to fulfil PLS 3(ii) with minimum impact on current staffing and management issues.
“To meet library standards and demand from the public, we are assessing more Sat. pm opening in branches and possible late night (10.00 pm) opening.”
(Unitary PLA 5)

“There is some pressure from the public library standards for improved weekend and evening opening.”
(Metropolitan PLA 4)

The target of meeting Public Library Standards was identified as the primary influence in the decisions made by two authorities to introduce extended library opening hours when the consultation processes had shown minimal public or staff support (case study A and London Borough 7.)

5.3 Summary of chapter

- 25 of the 93 respondents to the questionnaire (27%) reported that they currently have a formal policy regarding extended opening hours.
- The most common aim of such a policy is to extend opening hours in order to encourage a specific user group to increase their use of the library (such as young people or ethnic minorities.)
- The second most common aim of such a policy is to extend library opening hours in order to meet Public Library Standards.
- The main factors that inform the plans of public library authorities, in regard to the extension of library opening hours, are the needs of the local community and user demand.
- Social trends and Public Library Standards also have significant influence.
- The occurrence of Sunday trading in an area is an influential factor for authorities in their decision whether to introduce Sunday opening.
- The objective of achieving Public Library Standards may override other influential factors. In order to attain Public Library Standards authorities may introduce extended opening hours which public consultation does not identify a demand for.
Chapter 6 - Management issues resulting from extended opening hours in public libraries

6.1 The Consultation Process

Questionnaire responses highlighted that user demand and needs of the local community are highly influential in affecting PLAs decisions to extend library opening hours. This was verified through the additional comments of service managers that detailed a range of consultation exercises undertaken by authorities. These were undertaken in order to ascertain an accurate picture of the opinions of library users and the local community.

“Changes are being introduced …after extensive consultation of library users and non users.”
(Metropolitan PLA 5)

“We have consulted with the local community… and amended opening hours in line with local needs.”
(County PLA 1)

“We are at this moment consulting with customers via questionnaires, focus groups and forums and hope to carry out a survey…to find out the views of customers.”
(London PLA 1)

The range, scope and extent of the consultation process varied greatly between library authorities. As a result it can be suggested that some of the approaches would produce a more accurate and representative result than others.
Methods of public consultation undertaken by public library authorities

Mori survey Consultation with local community groups
In branch survey Consultation with “Friends of the Library”
Questionnaires Community Forums
Focus groups Surveys of lapsed users /non users

Three London Borough authorities reported that they employed the professional consumer survey group “Mori” to undertake some part of their consultation process. In London Borough 14 this involved surveying two thousand individuals (both library users and non-users) through questionnaires and the use of focus groups. Metropolitan PLA 5 reported that, in partnership with the council “Corporate Resource Services” team, they undertook a total of eight separate approaches to staff and public consultation. This wide-ranging approach resulted in a detailed picture of user and non-user opinions across the city. As a result a range of new opening hours are currently being introduced, including the Sunday opening of three libraries, and a number of libraries opening between Christmas and the New Year for the first time.

London Borough PLA 7 undertook a postal survey of 2000 lapsed users in order to ascertain their preferred library opening hours as part of a library strategic review. Lapsed users were asked to identify their preferred opening hours from a range of times between 8.00 am to 10.00 pm weekdays and 10.00 am to 6.00 pm on Sundays. A similar questionnaire was undertaken in the authority’s libraries at the same time in order to identify user preferences. Results from both consultation exercises were very similar, with early morning or late evening opening being requested by less than 10% of respondents. An external consultancy undertook a similar telephone survey in a neighbouring borough at the same time and, once again, produced very similar results. It is interesting to note that the different approaches produced a uniform picture of preferred opening hours. This suggests that the results are an accurate representation of the views of the local community.

Consultation with a range of stakeholders in an authority may produce contrasting result. In London Borough PLA 9 consultations with a “Citizens Panel”
identified the public’s top priority, in regard to opening hours, to be adjustment of opening hours in order to ensure a greater level of consistency between libraries in the borough. This contrasted with the opinions of elected members who considered the removal of lunchtime and part-day closures to be the most important issues.

In some authorities the consultation exercise was less likely to produce accurate, representative results. One authority (Scottish authority 12) made use of results from a general council survey of services. This survey was not specific to library services or to the immediate locality. As a consequence, the responses to the survey reflected the opinions of a much wider population than was appropriate for the authorities requirements. A pilot scheme for Saturday afternoon open was developed as a result of the user opinions given in the survey. However the pilot was disappointing in its level of take up by the public and only gained ten new library members in a three-month period. Another authority undertook a non-user survey as described below:

“We are in the process of carrying out a non user survey specifically relating to opening hours. Originally it was going to be undertaken by each library but problems arising mean we will be doing general county wide survey (via our council intranet) using county council staff as representative of the general population.”

(Welsh PLA 9)

One other particularly honest statement admitted:

“There is no perceived need (for extended opening hours) from the public, because they haven’t been asked.”

(Scottish PLA 5)
6.1.1 Staff Consultation

Muir and Douglas suggest that it is important to consult with frontline library staff about the level of use of library services.

“If access is to be improved libraries must address reasons for the non-use of their services. And the best people to improve procedures are the employees delivering the service, who have first hand knowledge of what works and what does not work.”
(Muir & Douglas 2001: (online))

This study identified limited efforts made by some authorities and library managers to include staff consultation when considering the issue of extended opening hours. Interviewees from case study A reported that staff had been involved in the consultation process prior to launching Sunday opening. Staff in case study C reported that they were not involved in the initial planning process for Sunday opening. However, they were fully involved in the planning and management of Sunday activities during the pilot scheme, and had taken the opportunity to develop creative activities and events within the library. Metropolitan PLA 5 took the opportunity to use placement students to meet with library staff and ascertain their opinions before introducing changes to opening hours. Overall, however, there currently appears to be little formal staff consultation undertaken before the introduction of extended library opening hours.

6.1.2 The consultation process – does it affect the outcome?

Evidence gathered shows, however, that the decisions taken by the PLA are not always based on the information collected through the consultation process. A staff member from case study A reported that a decision was made to extend library opening hours despite a negative response being given by staff and public as a result of the consultation process. It was suggested that this decision was made in order to fulfil the requirements of the Public Library Standards. In another example a London Borough chose to increase opening hours despite public consultation showing an apparent lack of public interest. A decision was made to open the main
library seven days a week in order to fulfil the requirements of the Public Library Standards.

“When planning the increase of opening hours last year, we undertook public consultation with users and ...lapsed users. The public showed almost no interest at all in longer days and were ambivalent about Sundays. We are currently operating a Sunday pilot which is proving to be very successful – with about 1000 visitors each week.”

(London PLA 7)

In addition, users will not always react to the extension in opening hours as predicted through the consultation process.

“A pilot for Saturday (afternoon) opening was run in X library – expected demand did not materialise, nor did an increase in use – no increase by families or young people, which were the main targeted groups, despite the fact that a survey of library users had identified a public desire for extended Saturday opening.”

(Scottish PLA 12)

Such comments highlight the need to consistently evaluate the level of library use during the introduction of extended opening hours in order to judge the level of use and the impact on staffing, management and issues of service provision.

“Opening hours need to be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of the community.”

(Unitary PLA 10)

London Borough 9 reported that, following limited Sunday opening at two libraries over the last two years, they were about to undertake a significant review of the service in order to judge if it was appropriate to users needs. This action reflects the recommendation made by Muir and Douglas who suggest that libraries should plan to survey citizens at least once every two years in order to meet the needs of the community (Muir & Douglas 2001).
6.2 The benefits and weaknesses of pilot schemes

Many authorities reported the use of trial or pilot schemes to measure public response to extended opening hours before considering a permanent commitment to such hours. This was found to be particularly common when considering the question of Sunday opening. This practice reflects the suggestion, made by O’Sullivan in her study of opening hour practices in Irish libraries, that library authorities should consult and pilot opening hour changes before permanent implementation (O’Sullivan 2001). A great benefit of undertaking a pilot scheme is that it may raise awareness of potential obstacles that require resolution before the introduction of a permanent scheme.

Pilot schemes were reported to range from “a couple of pilot (Saturday) afternoons” (Unitary PLA 19) to an eight month Sunday opening trial scheme (case study C.) Metropolitan PLA 1 reported that their experience of a twelve-week pilot Sunday opening scheme had a low level of take up initially. They believed that this was due to the poor promotion of Sunday opening in the locality. In addition they judged that the level of staffing they committed to the pilot scheme was too high for the number of users. (This was a statement repeated by a number of other authorities.) The pilot scheme therefore produced valuable information for the authority, which may contribute to a significant saving of resources if permanent Sunday opening is introduced in the future.

Comments reported in interviews suggest that pilot schemes may not always accurately represent issues related to staffing. Short-term pilot schemes, related to extended weekend opening, are often staffed by volunteers from the regular staffing pool. These staff members already have a wealth of experience and knowledge related to the activities of the library. Though they may be happy to volunteer work hours beyond their normal contract for a limited time period they may not be as willing to work these hours permanently. In this case it is necessary to recruit new staff to cover the extended hours which will introduce recruitment and training issues not addressed in the pilot scheme.
A manager from case study C reported that one of the greatest benefits gained from their six month Sunday opening pilot scheme was the opportunity to give less experienced staff an opportunity to take on greater responsibility as Sunday supervisors or by managing and directing Sunday activities. The pilot was staffed through current library staff and from relief staff in the authority. The manager considered that the experience of Sunday opening had made a positive contribution to staff development. The introduction of Sunday opening had, in her opinion, helped to improve staff morale, confidence and enthusiasm.

6.3 Marketing and promotion of extended opening hours

“Many library authorities, ourselves included, are rightly placing a greater emphasis on marketing strategies in an effort to maximise the potential inherent in longer opening hours.”

(Unitary 4 PLA)

One of the most important features of a public library is for it to be relevant to the community it serves. In order to do this information about library services should feature frequently in people’s daily lives (Orava 1997). Promotion of the opening hours of the library service is central to increasing the communities awareness of their opportunities to visit the library. By introducing extended library opening hours the library service faces severe competition for users’ time from other leisure, retail and sporting activities. In these circumstances the effective marketing of library services assumes even greater importance.

6.3.1 To promote of not to promote?

The introduction of extended opening hours in public library authorities resulted in a range of different approaches to the promotion of the hours to the public. This included the conscious decision of several authorities to choose not to promote the new hours at all.

One manager (County PLA 9) detailed an extensive promotional campaign, designed to increase public awareness county-wide, of the imminent opening of all the county libraries on a Sunday. Sunday opening was deliberately branded as
having an entirely distinct identity from other open days and was referred to as “The Sunday Experience.” Food, drink and music were to be made available in order to enhance the more relaxed atmosphere in each library. Extensive efforts were made to promote the service in anticipation of its launch via local radio stations, web sites, competitions and more traditional methods such as poster campaigns and the use of the local press. This was undertaken in order to increase the likelihood of a successful launch of Sunday opening. (The level of uptake by library users could not be gauged at the time of this study.)

Case studies A and C were both examples of libraries that had made deliberate decisions not to promote the introduction of Sunday opening hours initially. Interviewees from case study A reported that the decision had been made in order not to be overwhelmed by the number of library users at a time when staff were new to the role and when routines were still being “bedded in.” After a nine month period without any promotion, the library plans to start promoting Sunday opening in the near future. In the meantime a number of the staff interviewed reported that the level of usage of the library on a Sunday was low and that, in their opinion, did not justify opening.

Case study C did not undertake any initial promotion of Sunday opening outside of the library, relying on “word of mouth.” It was reported that management had wanted to view how successful the opening period would be without any significant promotion. After a slow take up initially, library use has increased significantly and is now reportedly as high as on Saturday morning. One of the roles assumed by Sunday staff was to visit local areas that attracted a high number of visitors on a Sunday, such as a supermarket, a leisure centre and the local football pitches. The staff then handed out leaflets and talked to the public about the Sunday opening hours and the activities on offer in the library. This was judged by staff to be an effective and an enjoyable method of promotion in a small community.

An interview with London Borough 7 also reported a decision not to promote a pilot scheme for Sunday opening. This decision was made “in order not to gain a false impression of user numbers” (i.e. the authority wanted to ascertain what the level of library use would be without any special events or promotion to affect user figures.) A press release was released prior to the pilot commencing, after which the
library relied on “word of mouth” to inform users. User numbers rose from an initial level of approximately 395 to a peak in May of around 1100, before reducing slightly over the summer period.

6.3.2 The importance of consistent and co-ordinated opening hours

The existence of consistent and co-ordinated opening hours can contribute to the successful promotion of library services. Responses to the questionnaire highlighted the importance of the public being able to rely on consistent opening hours in order to predict when they may find a library open. Consistency of opening hours within an individual library was considered important, as was the co-ordination of library opening times within an area in order to ensure maximum access to library resources.

“Opening times of libraries should enable access every evening to at least one library in the Borough... …Some of our branches are currently open less than 20 hours a week so the priority is to get all the small branches open for a minimum of 23 hours. This will give more consistent patterns of opening times when communities want them.”

(Unitary PLA 10)

“Overarching policy is to open libraries at times that suit the needs of the local communities, opening hours that are robust and reliable...”

(London PLA 4)

This supports research by Proctor et al (1998) which suggests that

“a consistent pattern of opening hours, common to a number of libraries, may succeed in retaining use more effectively than one determined by community needs, especially in urban areas where people may use more than one library.”

(Proctor et al 1998:85)
6.4 Level of service provision outside of core hours

Telephone and case studies interviews all indicated that the level of service provision outside of the core hours was considered to be as high as during traditional working hours. The level of staffing may not be as high, however it was generally considered appropriate to the reduced numbers of users using the service. There was no evidence of restricted services being offered to users outside of the core opening hours of the library. There was no indication that a second class service was being delivered beyond core hours.

A number of library managers and staff commented on the fact that Sunday opening generated a different, more relaxed atmosphere into the library. Some authorities (for example County 9) made particular efforts to create this atmosphere in order to promote Sundays as separate to the normal library week. In other examples (case study C) it appeared to happen naturally and was considered to be a positive benefit to the library. This reflects results reported from earlier pilot Sunday opening schemes which stated that:

“The use of services reflects a relaxed/study atmosphere that is not apparent on other days.”

(Milton 1996:144)

6.5 Shared facilities: a blessing or a curse?

Shared facilities appear to bring with them a host of associated issues that impact on the effective and efficient management of the library. It was considered possible that shared facilities would impact on the range of extended opening hours selected by the library. In order to investigate this issue the library managers contacted by telephone were asked about the opening hours of shared facilities within their authority. Their responses highlighted that the issue of opening hours is only one of the issues that must be addressed within a shared facility. The demarkation of staff roles, the shared management of the facility, and the selection of appropriate opening hours are all significant issues reported by library managers.
It appears that any such issues are only going to increase in significance as a number of PLAs mentioned the role of “joint service centres” in the future development of local library services.

“Any new (in some cases remodelled existing) libraries are very unlikely to be stand alone libraries but will be “Joint Service Centres”, shared premises with other services, and this may present opportunities for longer opening hours.”
(Metropolitan PLA 6)

“We have a total of six community centre shared facilities plus one new build... This is the way forward to attract people into the library.”
(Metropolitan PLA 1)

Responses to the questionnaire and to interviews highlighted that the placing of a library in a shared facility can significantly impact on the selection of the opening hours. Some of the earliest identified opening hours (8.30 am and 8.45 am) were in facilities located in schools or colleges (Unitary PLA 19 and 21.) However, the shared management of a facility can force service managers to reluctantly make compromises.

“Only one of our libraries is closed on a Saturday afternoon and this is a shared facility with a school and it is their decision that the library should be closed and we accepted the compromise. I would like to change this as there is clear user demand for extended Saturday opening.”
(Unitary PLA 21)

London Borough 9 reported that a library in a shared facility with a leisure centre opened on a Sunday because they felt they were obliged to rather than because of a genuine user need. The interviewee reported that it was not felt that the library had gained a significant number of users as a result. It was also commented that the success of such a scheme depends on the working relationship between the two bodies involved and the level of mutual support and promotion that they are willing to provide. Welsh authority 9 reported that the predominantly elderly population in
one area were found to be unwilling to use a shared library facility in a school when teenagers were around. There was a reluctance by the library service to introduce Peoples Network computers into the same library for fear of vandalism. In addition it was felt that the shared responsibility for the service meant that certain tasks were not completed accurately or reliably, such as the issuing of stock.

6.6 Book Issues

An interviewee from case study A raised the issue of Sunday possibly being classed as an “open” day on the library system in the future. To do this would mean that some library resources would be issued on a Sunday and would have a Sunday return date. If returned late, the borrower would incur fines. This was not currently the practice within the library, but it was reported that it was currently being considered. Telephone renewal services and web based user records now mean that many library users are able to check and renew their books remotely at any time. It is difficult to judge currently what impact such a move would have on library users. The practice of other authorities whose Sunday opening is already established is not known, and would be an area for further research in the future.

6.7 IT Support

All of the case study libraries reported heavy use of IT resources during extended opening hours. Library A reported that the majority of library users on a Sunday visited the library in order to use the web and access email facilities. Case study libraries B and C both reported there was a high level of use of IT resources outside of the core opening hours. However, only library A had any level of IT support during extended library opening hours. IT support was available during Saturday and Sunday opening hours, though not during late evening opening. No other example of I.T support being provided could be identified through this study.
6.8 Summary of chapter

- Public library authorities consider public consultation to be an important factor in deciding on appropriate extended opening hours.
- The consultation process may involve assessing the opinions of library users, non users, lapsed users, library staff and elected members.
- To produce an accurate and reliable result the consultation exercise must be location specific and be undertaken with a representative sample of the community.
- Currently there is very little evidence of extensive staff consultation occurring before the introduction of extended opening hours.
- The findings of any consultation process may not affect the final decision of the PLA. Other priorities, such as achieving the Public Library Standards, may have a greater influence on the decision to extend library opening hours.
- The public do not always act in the manner predicted by the consultation exercise. It is therefore important to have an ongoing evaluation process in order to judge the success of the extended opening period.
- Many authorities reported the use of pilot schemes to measure public response to extended opening hours before making a permanent commitment to the hours. This was found to be particularly common when considering the question of Sunday opening.
- The benefit of a pilot scheme is that it can highlight issues which may need addressing in order to provide the most effective and efficient library service. However pilot schemes cannot be relied upon to accurately reflect all staffing issues.
- The effective promotion of the opening hours of the library service is central to increasing the communities awareness of their opportunities to visit the library.
- Library managers reported a range of different approaches to marketing extended opening hours. A number stated that they took the deliberate decision not to promote at all. Others had comprehensive marketing strategies developed in order to launch a major new service.
- Consistent and co-ordinated opening hours were identified as a valuable promotional aid. These allow the user to successfully predict when they may find the library open and, as a result, encourages greater use of the service.
• The level of service provision outside of core library hours was consistently found to be as high as during traditional working hours. Staff numbers may be reduced in line with the number of people using the service at that time.

• The location of a library within a shared facility (such as a school or a leisure centre) was found to impact on the selection of extended opening hours. Two libraries, based in schools, offered some of the earliest reported opening hours.

• The shared management of such facilities can force the library service to make compromises (in the standards of service provision and in the selection of opening hours) which they are unhappy with.
Chapter 7 - The human resource implications of extended opening hours

7.1 Staffing

In 2001 over 55% of public library authority expenditure was spent on employee costs (CIPFA 2002). Staffing was identified a major concern to library authorities when considering the issue of extended opening hours. Increased hours demand increased staff numbers, which is reliant on appropriate funding being made available. Interviews with case study library staff echoed the comments of Goulding and Kerslake that permanent part time staff are responsible for providing the majority weekend and evening cover (Goulding and Kerslake 1995). There were a wide variety of different staffing arrangements between authorities that brought with them associated difficulties and benefits. In addition, staff in different authorities reported contrasting attitudes to the issue of working extended opening hours.

Stewart and Stewart (1982) characterised an “ageing organisation” as one which is staffed by employees who have remained in the same post for many years, with a long average length of service. The perceived norms and traditions of the workplace make it difficult to introduce change successfully. The current nature of the library profession is one of low staff mobility. Some libraries may be viewed as “safe havens” in which to work and therefore may experience low staff turnover (Green, Chivers and Mynott 2000). A number of library managers stated that the number of long serving staff in their authority limited the amount of flexibility they had in introducing extended library hours. Many of these staff are on time and location specific contracts. This contrasts with newly recruited staff whose contracts generally allow greater flexibility in the range of hours and locations in which they may be asked to work.

Two service managers, in predominantly rural areas (Wales PLA 9 and Scotland PLA 12), referred to the fact that when some staff were employed it was not a pre-requisite of the job to have access to a car. As a result it may be that the staff member cannot drive and therefore relied on public transport to commute to work. Any alteration to opening hours beyond the normal working day may cause the employee significant transport difficulties in a rural area where public transport links are poor or non-existent.
This contrasts with experiences of library managers elsewhere in the country. London Borough 14 (which offers the widest range of extended opening hours in the country) reported no problems in recruiting staff to work extended hours and said that “people are happy to work strange contracted hours.”

7.1.2 Staffing Sunday Opening

Library authorities report a number of different approaches to staffing Sunday opening. As stated earlier, pilot schemes are often staffed by current library staff who are willing to commit to a limited trial scheme. Sunday opening which is considered as “permanent” requires a different approach.

The most successful approach to staffing Sunday opening appears to be to employ staff who have contracted hours elsewhere in the week. A number of authorities created part time positions that involved Sunday working plus additional weekday working (County PLA 9, case study A, case study C.) In advertising for permanent Sunday staff, library managers reported a high response rate from their current staff members (Metropolitan PLA 5, case study A, case study C.) By employing Sunday staff, who are also involved in the weekday running of the library, a greater continuity of service can be ensured. In addition, there are more opportunities to ensure that adequate staff training is undertaken.

There did not appear to be any evidence of current library staff being pressurised to work on Sundays. However, a significant number of staff chose to do so voluntarily. Sunday working did not appear to be a significant issue with younger staff. Some older staff reported that they reluctant to work it themselves but recognised the value of the library opening at that time(case study library A.)

One London Borough (London Borough 9) reported that they recruited “Sunday only” staff which, as a result, led to problems with adequate staff training and with involving staff fully in the employee development scheme.
The recruitment of staff who are willing to work on a Sunday did not appear to be an issue. Indeed case study C reported that they had a large response to their advertisements for staff. Staff retention was not considered to be a problem by public library authorities.

As noted earlier a number of managers reported that, with hindsight, they had over-staffed pilot Sunday opening schemes. A number of staff from case study A suggested that they considered Sundays to be overstaffed for the level of use referring to “more people our side of the counter than the other” and spoke of receiving “twice the pay for half the work.”

7.2 Staff training

Training issues very closely related to the manner of staffing. Adequate staff training only appears to be a significant issue when “Sunday only” staff are employed. By ensuring that staff are involved in the weekday running of the library staff and managers reported that they did not consider training to be a problem area.

7.3 Communication Issues

Effective communication and management systems are required at all times within a library. This is especially important in order to communicate effectively with part-time staff who may rarely work the core library opening hours. Clear procedures need to exist on how to locate reference and management material efficiently in order for staff working extended hours to provide a professional service. Effective communication between all staff can contribute to the level of staff morale. Staff who have received appropriate training, and who are fully aware of current library issues, may feel more valued, motivated in confident of their ability to provide a quality service. A Sunday manager from case study A reported that

“Poor communication between Sunday and weekday staff can leave the Sunday staff feeling undermined because of the limit of knowledge they have.”
A service manager from a Unitary authority reiterated the importance of ensuring high staff morale in order to deliver a professional service.

“There are needs for investment to make not only expansion of hours viable but the need to boost staff morale to really make any extension work. Running a skeleton service could be detrimental overall and staff solely employed for extended hours does not give continuity of service.”

(Unitary PLA 7)

Case study library A highlighted a number of communication issues that were not specific to staff working extended opening hours. However these issues had greater impact on those staff as there were limited methods of finding out essential information during extended opening hours.

An ineffective staff email system within the library resulted in many Sunday staff failing to check their accounts regularly. In addition it could take up to eight weeks before for a new starter was able to access their account due to the number of security and training procedures which had to be undertaken. Both of these factors impacted on the number of library communications that the staff were able to access readily. Information on shared access files on staff computers was not ordered in a consistent manner. This created difficulties for all staff in locating information readily.

These are general management issues that are not specific to extended opening hours. However it becomes particularly important that they are undertaken effectively and efficiently in order to ensure that library staff can provide the most professional, appropriate service to the user outside of core hours.

No significant communication issues were raised by staff in case study C, but this may be due to the much smaller size of the library and the lower number of staff involved in extended opening hours.
7.4 Summary of chapter

- Extended opening hours are staffed predominantly by permanent part time staff.
- The contracts of long serving staff are often location and time specific which can limit flexibility to cover extended opening hours. This contrast with the contracts of more recently recruited staff which may allow greater flexibility in staffing arrangements.
- The most successful approach to staffing Sunday opening appears to be to employ staff who have contracted hours elsewhere in the week. This allows them the opportunity to receive adequate training and to be fully involved in the daily routines of the library through the week. They are then able to bring that knowledge and experience to Sunday opening, when there may be less support available.
- There was no evidence of current staff being pressurised to work on a Sunday. However, a significant number of staff chose to do so voluntarily. Sunday working did not appear to be a significant issue with younger staff. Some more mature staff were reluctant to work it themselves but recognised the value of the library opening at that time.
- Effective procedures for communicating information are particularly important for staff working during extended opening hours. The lack of effective communication can lead to a lower standard of service to the public. In addition it can affect the level of staff morale.
Chapter 8 - Examining the barriers to extending opening hours

8.1 Introduction

Five major issues were identified as potential barriers to extending opening hours within public library authorities. These were:

- Staffing issues
- Existing staff contractual agreements
- Security and Health and Safety issues
- Funding
- No perceived from public

Questionnaire respondents were asked to indicate how significant they considered each issue to be as a barrier to extending opening hours, by ranking them in order of importance.

Responses to the PLA questionnaire showed that, perhaps unsurprisingly, the most significant barrier to extending opening hours was funding. 46 out of the 63 respondents (73%) ranked “funding” as the most important issue. 18 out of the 55 respondents (32.7%) indicated that “staffing issues” were the next most significant barrier. “Security/Health and Safety issues” were consistently ranked the lowest of the five issues by respondents.

8.2 Funding

A number of respondents commented that an increase in funding would enable any other barriers to be overcome and thus funding would always be the most significant limiting factor.

“Really (the issue) is funding...Security etc. and Staffing are just facets of budget availability.”

(Metropolitan PLA 6)
“Staffing issues are part of funding issues.”
(London PLA 4)

“We are not complacent of…health and safety issues…but where we extend opening hours we have a policy to avoid lone working. Therefore this becomes primarily a funding issue.”
(Unitary PLA 6)

The lack of available funding frustrated those authorities that acknowledged a need to increase library opening.

“We recognise that there is a need to extend opening hours. We would like to meet this need. There is no budget available to do this at the moment and the authority had made no movement to support this aspiration wish with cash to achieve it.”
(Unitary PLA 14)

“The number of existing service points makes it difficult to fund increases despite demand.”
(London Borough PLA 3)
8.2.1 Does the level of funding influence the level of extended opening in public library authorities?

Referring to CIPFA figures (2002) for net expenditure per 1000 population (excluding capital charges) it was established that there is a general pattern indicating that the public library authorities with the highest expenditure levels are more likely to offer extended opening hours over the weekend period and on weekday evenings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period of extended opening</th>
<th>No. libraries open in PLA</th>
<th>&lt; £10K</th>
<th>£10K -£20K</th>
<th>&gt; £20K</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday-anytime</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(10%)</td>
<td>(29.3%)</td>
<td>(42.9%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(90%)</td>
<td>(70.7%)</td>
<td>(57.1%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday-after 1pm</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(22.7%)</td>
<td>(28.6%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(90%)</td>
<td>(58.7%)</td>
<td>(71.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(10%)</td>
<td>(18.7%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekdays-after 8pm</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(10%)</td>
<td>(8%)</td>
<td>(42.9%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(90%)</td>
<td>(92%)</td>
<td>(57.1%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(Figures unavailable for x1 PLA therefore total number of respondents is 92)*

*Table 8.1 The impact of expenditure levels on extended opening hours (a)*

Public library authorities with a net expenditure per 1000 population of over £20,000 have the highest percentage level of Sunday opening (42.9%). None of the libraries in these authorities remain closed on a Saturday afternoon. In addition 42.9% of these authorities offer weekday opening after 8.00 pm in some of their libraries.
This contrasts with those public library authorities with a net expenditure per 1000 population of less than £10,000. Only 10% of these authorities offer any Sunday opening of libraries. Only 10% provide any evening opening after 8.00 pm. However 90% of these PLAs provide access to “some” libraries in the authority on a Saturday afternoon suggesting that they consider this to be a priority opening period.

However it must be noted that this is only indicates a general trend. As established earlier a number of individual authorities, across the range of expenditure levels, currently offer the most extensive range of opening hours.

Figures for other extended opening time periods do not appear to suggest that there is a significant relationship between them and the level of expenditure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period of extended opening</th>
<th>No. libraries open in PLA</th>
<th>&lt; £10K</th>
<th>£10K - £20K</th>
<th>&gt; £20K</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekdays-before 9am</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>1 (10%)</td>
<td>6 (8%)</td>
<td>1 (14.3%)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>9 (90%)</td>
<td>69 (92%)</td>
<td>6 (85.7%)</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank Holidays</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>3 (4%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (2.7%)</td>
<td>1 (14.3%)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>10 (10%)</td>
<td>70 (93.3%)</td>
<td>6 (85.7%)</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 8.2. The impact of expenditure levels on extended opening hours (b)*

### 8.2.2 Prioritising Resources

A number of respondents highlighted the importance of prioritising resources in order to provide the most appropriate service to the community with limited funding available. Any increase in library opening hours may impact on the resources available for stock and other library commitments. For some authorities this resulted in decisions by staff and library users to limit library opening times in order to protect the quality of library stock.
“Limited resources have to be spent wisely and carefully and where there is a demonstrable gain for the local community.”

(Unitary PLA 8)

“With the current decline in library loans it might be better if we considered improving the loan product available from our libraries as priority rather than extension of opening hours offering a reduced level of stock provision...Perhaps we are too obsessed with the 24 hour culture and the real problem with declining use lies in our failure to understand what our customers want when we are currently open.”

(Scottish PLA 11)

“Additional funding to extend library opening hours has been explored and is not available at present. Focus groups have stated that they would not wish to have opening hours increased at the expense of the range and condition of books brought for the libraries.”

(London PLA 4)

8.2.3 The need for the creative management of resources

The pressure on funding led a number of respondents to highlight the need to maximise current resources. A number of (mainly rural) PLAs commented on the expansion of online services offering the user increased access to library resources without the need for increased opening hours.

“With the expansion of online databases and other online library services it is not necessary for the building to be physically open for a service to be offered to customers.”

(Scottish PLA 11)

“With advances in technology it is now possible to give 24/7 access to certain library functions...This would achieve longer hours in all but a physical sense.”

(Welsh PLA 9)
“X has been at the forefront of developing an ICT strategy which provides 24/7 library access to users in some of the remotest parts of the County. This links very much to X’s overall strategy of increasing access to services/taking services to people.”

(County PLA 6)

Other authorities reported the need to use current resources in the most efficient manner in order to allow limited extended opening to occur.

“There is currently no further funding available. Senior managers are currently looking at innovative ways of extending hours e.g. how much non-public time is it necessary for staff to be on duty, would it be better to have the library open instead?”

(Unitary PLA 13)

“We have undertaken expansion of opening hours without additional funding...We have looked at working practices and invested in self issue, quick return, 24 hour automated renewals etc to facilitate expansion in opening hours i.e. these measures help to free staff up so that their time can be better utilised in serving the public e.g. with extended opening hours.”

(Unitary PLA 1)

These statements suggest that creative management and a commitment to increasing access to library resources can, in some cases, find additional opportunities to expand library opening hours in the face of financial restrictions.

Two authorities stated that inadequate funding may make increasing total library opening hours impractical. As a practical alternative they were considering the possible adjustment of current opening hours in order to provide more convenient access times for users within the current budget restrictions.
“The main factor is financial. We have a standstill budget (again) and for the next three years. It may be more realistic to think of re-timetabling the existing number of hours so that libraries are open at times local people want, rather than expecting to be able to add extra hours.”

(Metropolitan PLA 6)

“If no additional funds are forthcoming to pay for the extension of opening hours and if there is demand for such, we will look at revising times within the existing budget – i.e. reallocating hours rather than extending them. E.g. open Sunday morning but close one afternoon midweek to compensate.”

(Metropolitan PLA 11)

8.3 Staffing Issues

Staffing issues were ranked as the second most important barrier to extending library opening hours in the questionnaire. Issues of recruitment and training have been examined in an earlier chapter. The issue of lone staffing was highlighted as concern to a number of authorities and was shown to be an issue when considering the introduction of extended opening hours.

“Most of our libraries are staffed by one or two people only: this limits the flexibility of increasing hours.”

(Scottish PLA 15)

“Lone workers in particular feel vulnerable ... and do not always welcome longer hours.”

(Welsh PLA 9)

A member of staff from case study library B highlighted some of the difficulties which may arise when extended opening hours occur in branches with lone staffing. A number of local branch libraries in the town, staffed by lone library assistants, currently remain open beyond the opening hours of the central library. If an untoward event occurs in a branch library, such as a fight, there is no support available to the staff member. This may leave them feeling threatened and isolated.
8.4 Summary of chapter

- The most significant barrier to extending opening hours in public library authorities was identified by 73% of respondents as funding. Staffing issues were also a major concern.
- A number of authorities reported that an increase in funding would enable any other barriers to be overcome, therefore funding would always remain the most significant factor.
- There is an indication that, in general, the PLAs with the highest expenditure levels are more likely to offer extended opening hours over the weekend period and late evening opening. PLAs with the lowest levels of expenditure have low levels of Sunday and late evening opening. However, this is only a general trend. As identified earlier a number of individual authorities, across the range of expenditure levels, currently offer the most extensive range of opening hours.
- The relationship between expenditure levels and extended opening hours does not extend to bank holiday or early morning opening.
- Limited funding demands the prioritising of resources in order to provide the most appropriate service to the local community. An increase in opening hours may impact on resources available for stock. Increased opening hours may not be a priority for all library users. Where insufficient funding is available some library authorities may chose to adjust their opening hours rather than to increase them.
- Lone staffing is a concern for a number of authorities when considering the introduction of extended opening hours.
Chapter 9 - The impact of extended opening hours on the level and pattern of library use

9.1 The impact of extended opening hours on the level of library use

Muir and Douglas suggested that:

“If longer lending periods are introduced, this will surely mean fewer visits per head.”
(Muir and Douglas (on line – no page number) 2001)

One service manager warned:

“ We must be careful that extending opening hours does lead to increased use and does not just spread current use over more hours.”
(Unitary PLA 18)

However this study found little evidence to suggest that extended library opening hours impact significantly on the level of library use elsewhere in the week. When asked, library staff and managers found it difficult to accurately assess if the level of library use had been affected by the introduction of extended opening hours. Two members of staff from case study C thought that library users made additional use of the library on a Sunday rather than altering their visiting patterns in the week. London PLA 9 stated that usage had increased in two libraries which had been opening on Sunday for two years. The increase was not judged to have affected patterns of usage elsewhere in the week. London PLA 7 commented that they thought that their Sunday pilot scheme had attracted additional users. However a 10% year on year rise in user figures coincided with the introduction of the Peoples Network computers and they found it impossible to identify the specific impact of different factors on the figures.

Library managers were generally of the opinion that they had not identified an alteration in the level of usage elsewhere in the week, but they acknowledged that this was a difficult issue to assess accurately.
9.2 The impact of extended opening hours on the patterns of library use

9.2.1 The use of I.T. facilities

The availability of Peoples Network IT resources in public libraries has attracted heavy use since its introduction. IT use appeared to be one of the major attractions of the library outside of the core hours. Interviews with staff in case study A reported that the majority of library use on a Sunday was IT related and that little borrowing of books took place on a Sunday. Case study C reported that there was a high level of use of the IT facilities on a Sunday in addition to other library activities.

9.2.2 The public perception of staff availability

Interviews with library staff (case study A, B and Metropolitan PLA 1) reported that a number of users appeared to specifically visit the library during extended opening hours with particularly complex or protracted enquiries. The staff believed that this occurred as the users considered them to be more accessible and under less pressure during these time periods, and thus more able to assist in locating the information they required.

9.2.3 Videos and DVDs

Two public library authorities reported increased borrowing rates for videos and DVDs as a result of extended opening hours. London Borough 14 reported that special promotions, such as “two for the price of one”, were particularly successful in a library that is open late on Friday evenings until 10.00 pm. Metropolitan PLA 1 reported that a Sunday pilot scheme had contributed to a significant increase in income generation from videos and DVDs.

9.2.4 Use of the library in extended hours by ethnic minorities.

Case study A reported that the library use on a Sunday was predominantly by users from ethnic minorities. It was reported that these users took particular advantage of the IT facilities in order to email family abroad, to read own language
newspapers, to look for employment and to improve English skills. London PLA 14 reported the opening of a particular branch library on a Sunday in response to the needs of the local Chinese community. It also reported that a library in an area with a large Arabic community was heavily used into the late evening. Unitary PLA 1 stated that

“Sunday opening reflects a large use by the ethnic minority population.”

As a result of these responses it was considered relevant to examine whether extended opening hours are more prevalent in areas with a relatively high ethnic minority population.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extended opening hours</th>
<th>Level of opening</th>
<th>% of population of ethnic minority origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Less than 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday – after 1pm</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>6 (8.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>50 (71.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>14 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>14 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>56 (80%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(\% of population of ethnic minority origin unavailable for x3 respondents. Total number of respondents therefore 90.)

Table 9.1 The current level of extended hours opening on Saturday afternoon and Sunday shown against the level of ethnic minority population of public library authorities

As can be seen from the above table there does initially appear to be increased access to libraries on Saturday afternoons and Sundays in library authorities which service communities that are characterised by an ethnic minority population of over 10% (as recorded in CIPFA statistics 2002.) The level of ethnicity does not appear to have any significant relationship with the level of extended library opening on weekday early mornings, late evening opening or Bank Holiday opening (see table below.)
### Table 9.2 The current level of extended hours opening on weekdays and bank holidays shown against the level of ethnic minority population of public library authorities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extended opening hours</th>
<th>Level of opening</th>
<th>% of population of ethnic minority origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Less than 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekdays-before 9am</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>91.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekdays-after 8pm</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank holidays</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However it must be considered that areas of high density population (i.e. urban areas) are also the same areas where a high number of ethnic minority groups are based. A comparison of the density of population, as calculated by CIPFA 2002 (resident population divided by area (hectares)), against extended opening patterns reflected a very similar result to those reported above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extended opening hours</th>
<th>Level of opening</th>
<th>Density of resident population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday – after 1pm</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>2 (3.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>41 (74.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>12 (21.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>9 (16.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>46 (83.6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 9.3 The current level of extended hours opening on Saturday afternoon and Sunday shown against the density of resident population of public library authorities
In addition two London Borough authorities contacted (who have particularly high levels of ethnic minority population) reported that there was no identifiable trend to the pattern of library use by ethnic minority users. Therefore it is not possible to judge from this information if it is the density of population or the level of ethnic minority population that is the most significant factor in affecting weekend extended opening hours.

9.3 Summary of chapter

- This study found little evidence to suggest that extended library opening impacts significantly on the level of library use elsewhere in the week. However, library managers acknowledged that this was a difficult issue to assess accurately.
- Anecdotal evidence suggests that many of the library users who make use of the library during extended opening hours are attracted by the IT facilities.
- Interviews with library staff reported that a number of library users specifically visit the library during the extended opening hours in order to request help with particularly complex or protracted enquiries. The staff believed that the public perceived them as being more accessible during extended opening hours.
- There was limited evidence to suggest that extended opening hours, such as Sunday opening, attracted a high level of use by ethnic minority users. When extended opening hours were examined against level of ethnicity (as recorded by CIPFA) there does appear to be increased access to libraries on Saturday afternoons and Sundays in authorities which service communities characterised by an ethnic minority population of over 10%. The level of ethnicity does not appear to impact on any other periods of extended opening. However a comparison of extended opening hours against density of population (as recorded by CIPFA) produced a similar result. Areas of high density of population often coincide with areas of high ethnic minority population. Therefore it is inconclusive which of these factors is the most influential.
Chapter 10 - Conclusions and recommendations

10.1 Introduction

This study was undertaken in order to identify the extent to which public libraries are now extending their opening hours beyond the core hours. The objectives of the study were:

- To identify a nation wide picture of the extent of extended opening hours in public libraries.
- To examine the reasons and motivations that led to the selection of those hours.
- To identify management issues resulting from the extension of the opening hours.
- To examine the human resource implications of extended opening hours.
- To identify barriers to extending opening hours.
- To examine the impact of extended hours on the level and pattern on usage.

10.2 Conclusions

10.2.1 A nation wide picture of extended opening hours in public libraries

Nation-wide public library authorities are heavily committed to providing access to library facilities on a Saturday afternoon. 78 (83.8%) authorities currently provide access to “some” or “all” of their libraries at this time. Of the 15 authorities that do not, 6 are committed to providing access within the next two years (stating that they had “definite” or “provisional” plans.) This suggests that over 90% of respondents to the survey aim to have some or all of the libraries in their authorities accessible to the public on Saturday afternoons by 2005. The London Borough authorities provide a particularly high level of access to their libraries on a Saturday afternoon, with the majority of authorities choosing to open all libraries at this time. In contrast Welsh public library authorities currently offer very limited opening on Saturday afternoons.

Sunday opening is currently less widespread, with 26 (28%) authorities currently offering limited library opening on this day. However there is support for increased Sunday opening in the future. Of the authorities that do not currently offer
any Sunday opening within their authorities only 20 (21.5%) stated that they had “no intention” of introducing Sunday opening in the future. 10 (71.4%) London Borough authorities open at least “some” of their libraries on a Sunday. This figure accounts for 40% of all Sunday opening currently reported nation-wide. In contrast Welsh public library authorities reported no Sunday opening at all, and only one Scottish authority reported any Sunday opening.

Extended opening hours elsewhere in the week had limited support in comparison. Weekday closing after 8.00 pm was reported in only 10 (10.8%) authorities (3 of these were Scottish authorities.) Weekday opening before 9.00 am was noted in only 8 (8.6%) authorities. The examples of early morning library opening occurred in specific locations that could attract a high number of potential library users at that time of day. Bank holiday opening occurs rarely, with 6 out of the 7 authorities that reported any library opening at this time being Scottish authorities. There was a low level of commitment from authorities with regard to extending library opening hours in the future during these opening periods. Of the authorities that do not currently offer any library opening in these time periods:

- 60.8% stated that they had “no intention” of extending library opening times to include weekday evenings after 8.00 pm.
- 73.4% do not plan to extend library hours to include bank holiday opening.
- 80.5% stated that they had “no intention” of introducing early morning opening.

Weekend based extended opening hours are currently the priority opening times for public library authorities. Within two years most library users should be able to visit a local library on a Saturday afternoon. Access to public libraries on a Sunday is increasing. It is encouraging to see a County PLA planning to introduce Sunday opening at all its libraries within a predominantly rural authority in order to meet community needs. The number of authorities offering late evening opening is increasing. The latest library closing time identified is now 10.00 pm.
It is apparent that there are contrasts between the range of extended opening hours offered by those authorities with mainly rural or urban based populations. Urban based communities appear to have greater access to library services on Saturday afternoons, Sunday and during late evening opening. Urban based communities as a result have a greater choice of when to use the library and (in some cases) of which library to use. This is a choice that does not occur in many rural authorities were transport difficulties may limit the users choice of library. Limited opening hours may dictate the user’s choice of when, or if, they are able to use the library. Limited extended opening hours in Wales will affect the level of use that can be made of the library service by the full time employed (Wadley et al 1997a). Scottish authorities provide a slightly higher level of access with some late evening and bank holiday opening, however this may still limit access by one of the largest potential user groups.

10.2.2 The management issues related to extended opening hours.

Public library authorities are greatly concerned with the needs of the local community and of user demand when considering the implementation of extended opening hours. Social trends and Public Library Standard also have a significant impact on the choice of hours. Authorities reported extensive consultation exercises with local communities and library users in order evaluate the most appropriate library opening hours. The priority objective of achieving Public Library Standards may override the influence of other factors and lead to authorities introducing extended opening hours which public consultation does not identify a demand for.

Only 27.5% of respondents reported that they currently have a formal policy regarding extended opening hours. The most common aim of such a policy is to encourage a specific user group (such as children, young people or asylum seekers) to increase their use of the library. There was not the time to investigate further but it would be interesting to identify if this 27.5% relates to the 27% of authorities that are currently meeting Public Library Standard 3(ii) (DCMS 2002).

Discussion of the consultation processes undertaken by public library authorities highlighted the need to ensure that the correct approach to public consultation is adopted in order to ensure an accurate and representative result that
will be of genuine value to the authority in their future planning for the service. Ideally this will involve consultation with library users, non-users and lapsed users in order to present a comprehensive picture of the needs of the local community. The level of staff consultation currently appears to be low. This may be due to other factors, such as the attainment of Public Library Standards, being a significant influence in the choice of extended opening hours. However in examples where staff have been closely involved in the planning of the detail of extended opening it has been found to be a positive and empowering experience for those involved.

The use of a pilot schemes allows library authorities the benefit of measuring the public response to extended opening hours before making a permanent commitment to such hours. Through undertaking such an exercise before the implementation of a permanent scheme a library service may be able to adjust staffing levels and opening hours in order to provide the most appropriate service to the community. This may, in turn, generate significant financial savings for the service. It is apparent, however, that pilot schemes cannot be relied upon to accurately reflect all the issues which may arise as a result of the introduction of extended opening periods.

The effective marketing and promotion of extended opening hours is central to increasing the community’s awareness of their opportunities to visit the library. However, there appeared generally to be a very low-key approach to the promotion of extended library opening hours. The limited amount of promotion that did occur, appeared mainly to be directed at current library users. The suggestion made by some authorities, that they did not want to gain a false impression of library user numbers, is difficult to understand. A reasonable presumption is that if they open the library at a specific time they want to attract the public in to use the facility! The best way to do this is to ensure adequate and appropriate promotion of the service to both current and potential library users. The low-key approach to the promotion of extended opening hours does raise the question of to what extent does the marketing and promotion of library services occur at all in some authorities?

The level of service provision outside of core library hours was consistently found to be as high as during traditional working hours. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some library users make particular efforts to visit the library during
extended opening periods in order to request help with particularly complex or protracted enquiries. The staff assumption from this action was that they were perceived by the public as having more time available to assist users at this time. Sunday opening hours were described by some respondents as a time when the library had a more relaxed atmosphere which was distinctly different from the rest of the week. Some authorities fostered this through the provision of a range of Sunday papers, special Sunday activities and the availability of food and drink. These are all positive images of public libraries that are ideal for incorporation into effective marketing strategies.

It is apparent that extended opening hours are staffed predominantly by permanent part time staff. The time and location specific nature of the contracts of long serving staff can limit flexibility of staffing arrangements for extended opening periods. Contracts for more recently recruited staff often allow greater flexibility in staffing arrangements. Current library staff may often work Saturday afternoon as part of their normal working week. However they are generally not contracted to work on Sunday. Authorities that offer Sunday opening have needed to recruit staff to cover the extended opening period. There was no evidence of current staff having experienced pressure from managers to work on Sundays. However a number chose to do so voluntarily. The most successful approach to staffing Sunday opening appears to be through employing staff who are contracted to work additional hours elsewhere in the week. This allows the staff the opportunity to receive adequate training and to be involved in the daily routines of the library through the week. They are then able to utilise that knowledge and experience on a Sunday when there may be more limited staff support available.

Effective procedures for communicating information to staff are particularly important for those employees working during extended opening hours when there may be less support available. Poor communication of procedures and management information may lead to a lower standard to service to the public. In addition it may impact on the level of staff morale.

Funding was identified by 73% of respondents as the most significant issue to extending library opening hours beyond weekdays 9.00 am to 8.00 pm and Saturday after 1.00 pm. It was suggested that any other barriers to opening could be overcome
if enough funding available, therefore funding would always remain the most significant issue. The issue of limited funding demands that public library authorities prioritise resources in order to provide the most appropriate service to the community. Appropriate public consultation can assist libraries in this task. It was apparent from questionnaire responses that longer opening hours were not necessarily a priority for all library users.

There is an indication that, in general, the public library authorities with the highest levels of expenditure are more likely to offer extended opening hours over the weekend and late evening opening than those with the lowest expenditure levels. This is only a general trend however. As identified earlier, a number of individual authorities, across a range of expenditure levels, appear to offer the most extensive range of extended opening hours. The relationship between expenditure level and extended opening hours does not appear to extend to bank holiday or early morning opening. This supports the evidence that suggests that these two opening periods are considered to be a low priority by the majority of public library authorities.

Little evidence was collected to suggest that extended library opening impacts on the level of library use elsewhere in the week. However library managers acknowledged that this was sometimes difficult to assess accurately. There was limited evidence to suggest that extended opening hours, in particular Sunday opening, attracted a high level of use by ethnic minority users. When extended opening hours were examined against level of ethnicity (as recorded by CIPFA) there does appear to be increased access to libraries on Saturday afternoons and Sundays in authorities which service communities characterised by an ethnic minority population of over 10%. However a comparison of extended opening hours against density of population (as recorded by CIPFA) produced a similar result. Areas of high density of population often coincide with areas of high ethnic minority population. Therefore it is inconclusive which of these factors is the most significant.
10.3 Recommendations for the library service

This study identified that public library authorities adopt a wide range of practices when planning for the implementation of extended library opening hours. The following recommendations are made in view of those practices that appeared to be particularly appropriate or successful when implementing extended library opening hours.

- Undertake extensive public consultation by a variety of approaches.
- Involve staff in the planning process.
- Undertake a pilot scheme in order to measure public response and to highlight any difficulties which may arise in implementing the scheme permanently.
- Support any extended library opening with an appropriate level of promotion to current library users and potential new users.
- When introducing Sunday opening, employ staff who are also contracted to work additional hours through the week. This can help to ensure that they receive appropriate training and are fully confident in library procedures.
- Identify opportunities where specific extended opening periods (such as early morning opening) may be particularly successful. For example, in those libraries that are located next to stations, schools or bus stations.
- Adopt a creative approach to identifying opportunities for extended opening hours, such as through increased use of self-issue machines to release more staff hours.

10.4 Recommendations for further study

- Library managers appeared to have difficulty in assessing if extended opening hours impact on the level of library use elsewhere in the week. It would be interesting to investigate library use by those patrons who are currently taking advantage of the extended opening periods. Are these library users who are making additional visits or do extended opening periods attract new users to the library? Do extended opening hours affect stock issue figures? What are users doing during their visit to the library?
• An investigation could be undertaken to establish if any public library authority has established Sunday as an “open” day on the library system and, as a result, expects loaned items to be returned on a Sunday (if appropriate.) If so, what issues has this raised and how have they been overcome?

• In the light of “Framework for the Future”(2003) and “Building Better Libraries” (2002), have extended opening hours actually encouraged non-users and lapsed users into the libraries?

• It appears that the marketing and promotion of extended opening hours by libraries is often low key and mainly directed at current library users. Further research could be undertaken in order to establish how libraries promote themselves to non-users, and to identify the most effective marketing strategies.

• Interviews with library managers indicated that the location of a library in a shared facility (such as a leisure centre, health centre or school) impacted significantly on the successful management of the library. In the light of more and more libraries being built as part of shared facilities it would be interesting to investigate the benefits and disadvantages of this development.
Bibliography


Rhodes, S.A. (2002). *A literacy hour each day keeps the library at bay? The impact of the national literacy strategy on children’s public library use*. MA, University of Sheffield.


Appendix 1 – Public Library Authority Questionnaire.

Open All Hours?
An investigation into the current expansion of opening hours in public libraries.

I am currently an MA Librarianship student, studying at the University of Sheffield. For my dissertation I am investigating the issues related to the current expansion of opening hours in public libraries. I would appreciate it if you could assist me with my research by taking a few minutes to answer six questions about weekend and evening library opening hours.

Alternatively, please forward this email and attachment to whoever you feel is the most able to complete the questionnaire.

Please open the enclosed attachment, insert your answers where indicated, save the file and then return the completed questionnaire as an email attachment to: by 09/07/03.

If you would prefer to print this questionnaire and return by post please do so to the address given below by 09/07/03.

If you require a paper copy of the questionnaire sending to you, please contact me and I will post one out directly.

Contact Details:

If you have any queries or comments please feel free to contact me.
Many thanks for your help,
Open All Hours?
An investigation into the current expansion of opening hours in public libraries.

- Please mark the appropriate response as [X].
- Please insert your answers where indicated, save the file and then return the completed questionnaire as an email attachment to:
  by 09/07/03
- If you would prefer to print this questionnaire and return it by post please do so to the address given below by the 09/07/03.

Name of authority

I do not wish my authority to be identified in the report. [  ]

1. Number of libraries in authority (static service points only.)

I would first like to identify the current extent of library opening hours in your authority.

2. Please indicate how many libraries in your authority are open on:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day Type</th>
<th>All [ ]</th>
<th>Some [ ]</th>
<th>None [ ]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday-anytime</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday-after 1 pm</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekdays-before 9.00 am</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekdays-after 8 pm</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank Holidays</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My next question focuses on your plans to extend opening hours in the future.

3. Do you have any intentions to extend library opening times to include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day Type</th>
<th>Definitely (Plans are in place)</th>
<th>Provisionally (Aim to implement within 2 years)</th>
<th>Ideally (No formal commitment currently)</th>
<th>No intention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday-anytime</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday-after 1 pm</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekdays-before 9.00 am</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekdays-after 8 pm</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank Holidays</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I would now like to investigate how you have decided on your policies regarding the range of library opening times.
4. Have you an explicit policy regarding extended library opening hours?  
(For example: to extend Saturday opening in order to encourage family use of the library.)

Yes [ ]  No [ ]

If yes, please give details including the specific opening times relating to the policy.

5. What factors inform your plans for the extension of opening hours on:  
(For example: council policy requires galleries, museums and libraries to open on Sunday.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Social trends</th>
<th>Council policy</th>
<th>User demand</th>
<th>Needs of local community</th>
<th>Public Library Standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday- any time</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday- after 1 pm</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekdays- before 9 am</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekdays- after 8 pm</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
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<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank Holidays</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If other factors, please give details below.

Finally, I would like to identify the issues that you view as barriers to extended opening hours in public libraries.
6. How significant do you consider the following issues to be as barriers to extending opening hours beyond weekdays 9 am - 8 pm, Saturday 9 am - 1 pm in your authority?

Please rank from:

(most important)   1    2    3    4    5   (least important.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staffing Issues</td>
<td>[    ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No perceived need from public</td>
<td>[    ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing staff contractual agreement</td>
<td>[    ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>[    ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security &amp; health and safety issues</td>
<td>[    ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other issues (please give details below)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other issues-please give further details.

Any other comments relating to the expansion in public library opening hours.

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* I would be very interested to receive any documentation associated with the decision to extend library opening hours. Please send any available information to me by email or post. In addition I would be grateful for a copy of library opening hours, if readily available.

* I am intending to undertake telephone interviews with a number of authorities in order to discuss further issues related to extended opening hours. If you are willing to assist in this please give your contact details below.

Name and Job Title:

Address:

Telephone Number:

Email:

*Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Your help is greatly appreciated.*

Please return this questionnaire as an email attachment to:
Appendix 2 – Interview Guide for Case Study Library Interviews.

Before interview: ascertain current opening hours of library.

Introduction.
Aims and objectives of study
Other research undertaken
Anonymity of interviewee assured
Questions
1  Position of interviewee
2  Nature of contract/ Normal working hours/Length of service
3  Current range of extended opening hours within library
4  Level of use of library beyond core hours
5  Are extended opening hours targeted at a specific user group?
6  Does level of library use justify the library opening?
7  Level of service provision outside of core hours
8  Level of available support (e.g. security/ I.T. backup) outside of core hours
9  Recruitment and retention of staff
10 Arrangements for staff training
11 Issues related to effective communication and management
12 Marketing and promotion of service beyond core hours
13 Has extended opening affected the level of usage/ pattern of usage elsewhere in the week?
14 Are any special promotional events put on outside of core hours
15 Any else you would like to add in relation to extended opening hours?

Thank you for your time.