THE ROLE OF THE BRANCH LIBRARY
IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
AND COMMUNITY REGENERATION

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Contents

Abstract

This dissertation sets out to investigate whether the branch library has a role in community development and community regeneration, with the ultimate aim of providing a model of what services public libraries can provide beyond basic community information. The basic premise is that the community role of the branch library is not explicit in either the community librarianship or the community development / regeneration literature. After describing the research methodology and introducing the concepts of community development and community regeneration, this hypothesis is tested through a literature review which considers the subject from various perspectives. These are the perspectives of local government (especially in terms of the "enabling authority" and decentralisation), of voluntary and community groups and of community librarianship. The conclusion reached from these different perspectives is that there is an underlying consistency between the approaches of community development / regeneration and community librarianship. A further view arrived at is that changes in local government present particular opportunities for libraries, for instance in taking on an "information broking" role. These initial views about the actual and potential roles of the library are then investigated in the case study, which looks at two branch libraries in Rotherham in South Yorkshire, and considers how effective the library is, and could be, in the development and regeneration of individual communities. The comparison between these two libraries supports the findings of the literature review in suggesting that a model of what the branch library can, or should, do in community development / regeneration is not a feasible objective, because the role of the library depends on the particular needs and characteristics of individual communities. At the same time, conclusions about the appropriateness of, and potential for, the branch library contributing to community development / regeneration - for instance because of its neutrality, its "localness" and its association with information and advice - are made. Finally, a limited number of specific recommendations, of areas for future discussion in Rotherham, are suggested.

1.   Introduction

1.1   Aims and Objectives

This dissertation sets out to investigate whether the branch library has a role in community development and community regeneration. It focuses on the public library's role in providing access to power and influence, and acting as a focal point for the community. The primary emphasis is on the development and regeneration of the whole community, rather than at the level of the individual user. The means of meeting these objectives is to review the relevant literature, and to use a case study to look at the role of the branch library.

Following from these objectives, the dissertation's ultimate aim is a to provide a model of what services public libraries can provide beyond basic community information.

The reason why it is felt that this subject merits investigation is that there appears to be a "gap" in the literature. The basic premise here is that the community role of the branch library is not made explicit in either the community librarianship or the community development / regeneration literature. This dissertation considers whether this basic hypothesis is true.

The literature review aims to reach an initial conclusion about the actual and potential roles of the branch library. The case study then considers how effective the library is, and could be, in the development and regeneration of individual communities. It does this by looking at the use, relevance and perception of the library by key stakeholders and participants in community development and regeneration. The case study addresses the incentives and

disincentives to the library pursuing a role in this area. The measurement in the case study is against the community role(s) identified through the literature review.

1.2   Background

This dissertation looks at the role of the branch library within the context of changes taking place in the delivery of local authority services and authorities' relationships with voluntary and community groups.

The subject derives from a discussion with the head of the Library Service in Rotherham in South Yorkshire. The local context is that council organisation has been reoriented from a departmental structure into new programme areas. A specific part of the council reorganisation is "Rotherham Area Action," initially based in four geographical locations, which aims for local people to work with the Council and other agencies to improve services and shape the future of local communities. (Rotherham Libraries, 1995, p.53,184)

1.3   Contents Overview

The research methodology is described in the next chapter. The approaches of community development and community regeneration are introduced in chapter three. The wider policy and social context of community development and community regeneration approaches is considered from the perspectives of local government (especially in terms decentralisation and the concept of the "enabling authority") and of voluntary and community groups (in chapters four and five). Chapter six looks at the concept of community librarianship, and

attempts to relate it to the earlier discussion, to reach an initial view about the actual and potential roles of the library which are then investigated in the case study.

Chapter seven reports the findings of the Rotherham case study, in which some comparisons are also made with the adjoining authority of Sheffield. Conclusions from the project, as well as recommendations for Rotherham Library Service, are made in the final chapter.

## 2.	Methodology

### 2.1	The Literature Search

The intention was to use the literature search to establish the current "state of the art" for the role of libraries in community development / regeneration for metropolitan districts in England and Wales. However, it became apparent that this was not an entirely realistic objective because of the dearth of literature specifically dealing with the role of public libraries in community development or community regeneration. This was demonstrated by a search of the LISA (Library and Information Science Abstracts) database only containing a handful of records referring to community development.

A somewhat oblique approach therefore had to be taken. This "indirect" approach involved looking at the subject from two different perspectives. The first of these involved looking at the more general literature in the fields of community regeneration and community development (as found, say, in the *Community Development Journal*) and of local government policy. The second perspective is from the literature on public libraries, and specifically on the related themes of community librarianship and community information. Although dictated by necessity it was hoped that this two-stranded approach would be helpful in teasing out an essential "core" of issues. The thinking here was that the relevance of such a set of issues could be demonstrated by their being common to the literature of both disciplines.

In carrying out these two discrete strands of the literature search, more emphasis was placed on the broader community development / regeneration, and local government, component. To some extent, this was because this part of the search cut across different subject areas (for instance community and social policy,

government and politics and planning). Additionally, there was more familiarity with the librarianship literature, and therefore more awareness of key resources.

Looking first at the community development and community regeneration part of the search, the Social Sciences Citation Index and the BIDS / British Library Information Service were used. As already suggested, there was a dearth of references to libraries and information, although these searches did yield some helpful general references. These online searches were supplemented by manual searches of *Local Government Policy Making* and the *Community Development Journal.* The references contained in an earlier dissertation (Brewster, 1995) were used as a starting point for material on local government and the voluntary sector. This "citation chain searching" method, of tracing from material already found, was used quite extensively for this part of the literature research, and proved an effective means of finding relevant material.

For the community librarianship / community information strand of the search, the main tool was LISA. As stated above, this contained very few references to community development / regeneration. Because this database, which was held on CD-ROM, was some months out of date, this search was supplemented with manual searches of the *Public Libraries Journal* and the *Library Association Record.*

2.2　The Case Study[1]

2.2.1　Scope

Timing

The interviews for the case study were carried out between 20 June and 23 July 1996. Prior to this, three preliminary interviews were carried out. The purpose of these is explained in the section covering the conduct of the research.

Location of the research

The location of the research was discussed at the preliminary stage - both with the Library Service, and with an officer working in the Community Regeneration Programme Area. Because the aim was to get an in-depth feel for the subject, it was decided, given the length of time available, to concentrate on just two areas in Rotherham.

Given the subject of the project, it was decided to look at the role of the Library in an Rotherham Area Action area, and then compare it with a locality where this approach towards service delivery and community regeneration had not yet been taken. All four of the Corporate Areas also had Community Development Workers within them, as did some other parts of Rotherham. It was decided to compare one of these areas with a location that was both outside of the Area Action Initiative and did not have a Community Development Worker.   It was hoped that this approach would provide the widest possible range of responses.

Kiveton Park was selected as the Rotherham Area Action area to be looked at, but any of the other three areas could have been selected.   At the preliminary stages, I was also told about a local advice centre based in Kiveton Park Library, which suggested a

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[1] The structure of this section draws on Stone and Harris (1984c.)

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measure of community orientation in the library. Another factor in choosing Kiveton was because it was felt to be a discrete "manageable" area which made it more suitable (compared to, say, the larger area of Maltby), for this kind of small-scale project.   Kiveton was also an "opportunistic" choice in that an initial interview with the Area Action Manager, suggested, directly and indirectly, several other interview subjects in the area.

The Aston area (i.e. Aston-cum-Aughton with Swallownest) was chosen as the other location to be looked at. Aston met the criteria of not having a Community Development Worker. The fact that Aston was managed in the same group of libraries as Kiveton was felt to help the underlying consistency of a comparison between the two areas. This was because it was considered more likely that differences between the two libraries could then be attributed to their different communities, rather than differences in managerial approach. Aston was described in one case study interview, as a "mixed" area with "pockets of deprivation" - thus although it had not been identified as the focus for particular community regeneration initiatives as in Kiveton Park, neither was it an area that had nothing in common with Kiveton.

More of the research was carried out in the Kiveton area.   This was an inevitable outcome of comparing an area where specific initiatives in community development and community regeneration had been started with one where this approach was not being pursued in the same deliberate way.   Therefore, when I interviewed the Community Development Worker and representatives of Kiveton Park Area Action and the South Rotherham Rural Development Area, there were no equivalents based in Aston.

To gain a further level of comparison, two Sheffield Libraries, Park and Upperthorpe, where initiatives with a community development orientation had been established over a number of years, were also looked at. These were looked at in much less detail, with the emphasis

being on what Rotherham could learn from the work done in these two libraries.

Who was studied

Decisions on who was studied were rooted in the nature of the subject. For instance, at the onset of case study my understanding of community development in the local authority context, was that community development is about how the authority helps *groups* express their needs. (Broady and Hedley, 1989, p.10) This emphasis on groups, and their relationship with the local authority, meant that it seemed more appropriate to look at voluntary and community groups, and relevant local authority employees. This differed from one aspect of my original research design - that is, surveying individual library users and non-users about their community information needs.

The research subjects chosen represented a "purposeful" rather than a statistical sample, as the aim of the case study was not to a "representative picture," but to draw out possible roles for the library, and to make comparisons between the two main areas in the case study. (Stone and Harris, 1984a., p.15)

The original intention was to obtain a cross-section of Council employees (library staff and those working in community development and community regeneration) and paid and unpaid voluntary sector workers (ideally representing different stages on the continuum of voluntary activity set out at 4.2) in the relevant localities. In practice, this categorisation was not as neat as originally envisaged because recent job changes and complex funding arrangements meant these distinctions were not entirely clear in some cases. Nonetheless, the nineteen individuals interviewed can be categorised as being in the following roles:-

- **Unpaid voluntary workers** in Kiveton and Aston.   Most or all of these groups can be characterised as representative of community

groups (as defined at 4.4 below), although Kiveton Park Independent Advice Centre was established on a self-help basis. The voluntary worker from the Advice Centre had recently taken up a paid local authority post, in the advice field, which is an example of the sort of overlaps between the voluntary and public sectors described above. One of the Aston voluntary workers was on Aston Parish Council, and also provided information from this perspective.

- **Paid voluntary workers** - the Co-ordinator, South Rotherham Community Safety Project, based in Kiveton Park, and the Co-ordinator, Rotherham Voluntary Sector Forum (VSF). These groups can be seen as representative of "voluntary organisations" as defined at 4.5 below.

- **Council workers** in community development and community regeneration in the Kiveton area; one of these worked in the wider South Rotherham Rural Development Area, and received joint funding from the council and the Rural Development Commission.

- **Library staff** in Rotherham - across a wide spread of organisational levels, but all with a current or recent role in local libraries and mostly based at Kiveton Park and Aston. Linking to the interview with the Voluntary Sector Forum Co-ordinator, I also spoke to the Community Librarian who had been responsible for the "Help in Hand" Community Resource Directory.
- Outside of Rotherham, to get other ideas as to what libraries could do in this field, I spoke to Sheffield-based **library staff**, all of whom had considerable experience in the areas of community development and community information. One of these librarians was responsible "Help Yourself," the Sheffield equivalent of "Help in Hand."

In addition to this core of interviews, I also spoke to a team meeting of the Rotherham Community Development Workers.

The Kiveton voluntary groups were identified through my interviews with the VSF Co-ordinator and with Council staff working in the Community Regeneration Programme Area. The Aston community groups were identified by looking through the "Help in Hand" Community Resource Directory. (Rotherham Libraries, 1995, p.54; 142)

2.2.2 <u>Data Collection</u>

Methods Used

Taped interviews formed the basic method of data collection, although they were supplemented by a relatively small amount of written material provided on some visits. The only discussion that was not taped was that with the team meeting of the Rotherham Community Development Workers, as this not considered appropriate at an internal meeting; however, an individual taped interview was carried out with the Community Development Worker based in Kiveton Park. In most other instances, the interview was with just one individual. The exceptions to this were an interview carried out with two library staff, and with three members of the White City Action Group, one of whom addressed the questions from the perspective of the Kiveton Park Community Development Trust, in which he also had a designated role. In both these cases, joint interviews were carried out for the convenience of the subjects, and did not have any detrimental effect on the quality of the data, when compared to the individual interviews.

The nature of the subject suggested a qualitative approach. Quantitative research techniques, focusing on measurement, are unsuitable for projects aiming to understand inherently complex subjects and studies of relationships within institutions. (Walker, 1985, p.3) In the case of this project these relationships were within and

between institutions and groups, but, they were without doubt, inherently complex. A particular factor in this complexity was the recent re-structuring of Rotherham's services, which inevitably meant that many of the roles and tasks addressed were still evolving.

Despite the qualitative nature of the research, a semi-structured interview guide was used so that the same issues were discussed with all the interview subjects, to ensure a basic level of comparability between all the interviews.

Using a semi-structured interview guide is described as "having a checklist of topics to be covered but… having the freedom to ask these questions on those topics in a way and an order which seems appropriate to the situation." (Stone and Harris, 1984b., p.9, 1984) This meant that topics of interest were covered and that respondents were able to respond in their natural language. The disadvantages of this interviewing are said to be that responses are not standardised, so reducing their comparability, and that respondents may cover different topics to different degrees. (Stone and Harris, 1984, p.9, 1984) On the first of these points, the response is that, by covering the same topics in the interview guide, there was still an essential level of comparability, which was important in providing a basis for the data analysis. On the second point, different emphasises of this kind only reflected the relative importance of different topics to interview subjects.

How the research was conducted

The three preliminary interviews were used to gain a feel for work going on in the Community Regeneration Programme Area. From these interviews, I was given the contacts I needed, in Rotherham, to carry out the Case Study. One of the three interviews entailed a visit to the Rawmarsh and Parkgate Area Action Office, and although time did not allow for the case study to consider community regeneration and community development in that locality, it was

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invaluable in giving me a grounding in decentralised working in Rotherham. Of the Sheffield library staff, one had already been approached during a course visit, and he suggested two further individuals to speak to.

All the case study research was carried out in the normal working environment of the groups and organisations concerned (for two of the community groups this meant members' homes).

Nobody approached declined to take part in the case study.

2.2.3 <u>Data Analysis</u>

The basis of the data analysis was the transcribed interview material. The basic method of data analysis was derived from the process outlined by Bogdan and Taylor (1973) - that is reading the notes, coding key topics, constructing typologies of the different attitudes of research topics and then reading the relevant literature. (Bogdan and Taylor, 1973, p.82-84) It has to be said that this process was not followed in an exact way - the literature had been read before the data analysis (though it was re-read afterwards) and the construction of typologies was not carried out as a separate stage, as the gradations of opinion between the different subjects were discernible at the "coding" stage.

As to the mechanics of the data analysis, even whilst transcribing the material particular points from each interview were noted, and cut and pasted into a working document. These points were placed into categories, which were similar but not identical to the subject areas in the interview guide. The transcripts were then marked up again with reference to these subjects in the interview guide. The material was then looked at again, with the aim of discovering the key

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underlying themes - these are reflected in the breakdown of the findings.

2.3   Limitations of the Research

2.3.1   Insufficient Focus

A significant part of the research premise was that I was looking at an area where there was relatively little material directly covering the subject - what might almost be described as a lacuna between the librarianship and community development / regeneration literature. This gap was reflected in the somewhat indirect nature of the literature search. It was intended that this initial lack of focus would be resolved, through the literature found, before the beginning of the case study.

The literature review only partly succeeded in this. It increased the understanding of relevant concepts (as outlined in the following chapters). However the "professional" Librarianship perspective (for instance from the Community Services Group of the Library Association) was neglected; this aspect is discussed further at Appendix B (the dissertation as a learning experience). The result was that the initial interview guides contained very "open," general questions (see Appendix A). Specifically, there was a lack of focus on library management and practical service delivery. This meant that the balance of the data collected was perhaps more based on opinion, and less on practice, than it should have been. More emphasis on the organisational aspects (specifically on the local library's managerial relationship with the centre) might have resulted in more detailed conclusions regarding a model of the delivery of branch library services. However, it is not considered that this shortcoming invalidates the research results as a whole. Indeed, the relatively

"open" nature of the questions contained in the interview guide, meant that it was possible to "talk around" issues, and this yielded interesting material which might not have arisen from a more directed approach (for instance on the importance of the location of the library).

2.3.2 Case Study Location

Retrospectively, Aston was a poor choice as one of the two main locations of the case study, because of the atypical nature of Aston Library. As a dual use library, with exclusive school use up to 2pm every weekday, there were inevitable restrictions on its potential community use. This was particularly unfortunate because, as suggested earlier, the research was, from the outset, slanted in favour of Kiveton, because of the Community Development / Community Regeneration initiatives in the area.   Another relevant point is that Aston Library serves a very geographically diffuse area, consisting of three "villages" - this aspect was brought out in the case study, with one respondent describing it as a commuter area. It was therefore very difficult to get an overall feel for the nature of the community and its needs. In this it contrasts with Kiveton, until 1994 a pit village, with all that that implies about a close-knit community - for instance, housing development in the 1950s reflected the needs of the coal mining industry. (White City Action Group, 1996, p.4; case study interview)

2.3.3 Validity of Responses

There were, in fact, two issues here. The primary one relates to people's unwillingness to speak "on the record" about certain issues. Initially this was attributed to people being inhibited by the tape recording of interviews, as these points were made after the tape

recorder was turned off (or in one case, when someone was giving background information, before it was turned on). Although this may have been (and probably was) a factor, it was also true that these responses were mainly found amongst Rotherham Council employees, and were suggestive of some tensions in the Authority. Some very general points about this reticence, are made in the conclusions to the case study. The most that can be said here is that it is possible that this local subtext <u>may</u> have affected what council workers (including library staff) said about the role of the library in community development and community regeneration. However, <u>all</u> the responses seemed to derive from genuinely held viewpoints based on individuals' work experience and knowledge.   Also, even if this subtext <u>did</u> affect what Rotherham Council staff said about libraries, the effect of this would have been offset by the following factors:-

- This aspect only appeared an issue for <u>some</u> of the Rotherham Council staff interviewed; it appeared to have no bearing on the majority of the individuals in the case study.
- The views of staff in the Community Regeneration Programme area would have counterbalanced those of staff working in libraries.
- Many of the case study subjects were completely outside of these aspects - that is, the representatives of the voluntary sector and the Sheffield library staff.

The secondary issue about validity of responses could be said to relate to respondents being polite about libraries. Respondents knew that I was undertaking a librarianship dissertation, and may therefore have felt that they were being "helpful" in suggesting particular roles for libraries. However, I can think of only one interview where (I felt) this happened (and this was taken account of in the data analysis); leading questions were avoided.

2.3.4 <u>Subjectivity</u>

The issue here is the effect of being a librarianship student had on how I carried out the research. This is raised at this stage as it seems to be the most appropriate place to do so, although it is not seen as an actual shortcoming of the research design as it is essentially unavoidable. All that can be said is that I did have pre-conceived ideas about the role of the library, but I was disabused of most of these by the time I had finished the first interview in the case study.

3. Community Development and Community Regeneration

3.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to explore the meaning of the terms of "community development" and "community regeneration." This is followed by definitions of "empowerment" and "enabling," which are included because of the frequency with which these concepts are encountered in the fields of community development and community regeneration.

3.2 Community Development

An insight into the term "Community Development" is offered in the following "statement" from the Standing Conference on Community Development[2]:-

> "Community Development is crucially concerned with the issues of powerlessness and disadvantage: as such it should involve all members of society, and offers a practice that is part of a process of social change.
>
> Community Development is about the active involvement of people in the issues which affect their lives. It is a process based on the sharing of power, skills, knowledge and experience.

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[2] Reproduced in the ACW (Association of Community Workers) Skills Manual (1994).

Community Development takes place in both neighbourhoods and within communities of interest, as people identify what is relevant to them."

(Association of Community Workers, 1994, section 3, page 3)

This statement goes on to say that the first priority of the community development process "is the empowering and enabling of those who are traditionally deprived of power and control other their common affairs." (Association of Community Workers, 1994, section 3, page 3) These concepts of empowering and enabling are described at 3.4. Community development involves the development of individuals and groups. (Association of Community Workers, 1994, section 3, page 3)

The above statement is in many ways consistent with other definitions of community development, for instance in this from the Director of the Community Development Foundation:-

- "involving local people in identifying issues, needs and potential solutions
- enabling local people to take the initiative by helping them to develop their capacity, skills, knowledge and confidence
- empowering local people to gain a voice within decision-making and political systems."

(McConnell, p.1-2)

However, this description could be seen as less "political" than the Standing Conference on Community Development definition (Association of Community Workers, 1994) in that there is not the same overt emphasis on social change. A similar point is brought out in a National Council for Voluntary Organisations publication, which regards the Standing Conference standpoint as "only one specific and partial justification of this field of activity." (Broady and Hedley, 1989,

p.16)   Speaking within the context of local authorities, it is argued that community development needs to be placed in a broader framework. Encouraging effective participation of local groups "in order to achieve their own purposes" is a desirable goal whether or not it leads to social change; equally, it is desirable that local authorities' services are better attuned to meet local needs whether or not those needs exist in deprived areas. (Broady and Hedley, 1989, p.16-17)

Their much broader definition of community development, within a local authority context, is that it includes "both local groups defining and meeting *their* needs as they perceive them and local authorities seeking to make their services more responsive to local needs." (Broady and Hedley, 1989, p.13, their italics)   This definition is helpful in placing community development within the local authority context and in injecting the voluntary and community group perspective (an important aspect given the significance of the voluntary sector, as considered in chapter 5). However, in seeking breadth, this definition, arguably, is both woolly and prosaic - especially in that the important concepts of empowering and enabling are no longer highlighted as they were in the two previous definitions. (Association of Community Workers, 1994; McConnell, 1994)   For this reason, the two earlier definitions may be preferred - although the role of voluntary and community groups (highlighted by Broady and Hedley, 1989, p.13) will be considered further in chapter 5.

3.3   Community Regeneration

Community regeneration is a term which, although referred to
(for instance by Skelcher, 1996, p.10), is not accompanied with a
corresponding definition in the way found with community development.
For instance a publication entitled "Involving Communities in Urban and
Rural Regeneration," which offers definitions of many terms in the area
of government-sponsored regeneration initiatives, does not define the
term community regeneration, or regeneration in general. (Department
of the Environment, 1995, p.244-248)

One reason for this might be that the term community
regeneration may be linked up with other terms such as economic,
urban, rural, neighbourhood or estate regeneration, as in a discussion
of local communities' involvement of urban regeneration. (McArthur,
1993, p.305-307)   Perhaps then, the emphasis in community
regeneration is on the <u>level</u> at which regeneration takes place. For
example, virtually all Department of the Environment sponsored
regeneration initiatives aim to benefit defined areas:

> "Those people living or working within those target areas are, in
> general, the people intended to benefit from regeneration
> initiatives. They constitute the community as far as that
> particular programme is concerned."
> (Department of the Environment, 1995, p.7)

This emphasis on defined geographical areas (or communities)
is seen in the "growing recognition…of the importance of directing
programmes to tackle deprivation and disadvantage specifically at
those neighbourhoods where the characteristics of disadvantage are
concentrated." (Fordham, 1993, p.12) Following on from this is the
view that:-

"There are many places in which we now have to recreate an economic momentum and social cohesion that have died. This means we must adopt a community-based style of operation, which gives people who actually experience and suffer the problems a voice in what happens."
(Fordham, 1993, p.18)

A further reason for the term's lack of precise definition of the may be that, unlike community development work, there does not appear to be a corresponding discipline or profession of community regeneration.   A specific example of this would be in Rotherham, the location of the case study, where there are designated Community Development workers, and Community Development forms (with Social Policy Research and Welfare and Benefits Services) part of the Community Regeneration Programme Area. This organisational structure suggests that community development can be regarded as a process or activity to achieve the end or aim of community regeneration. This view also seems implicit in some of the literature in the field, with one commentator stating that there is "considerable evidence" that community development can be a component in urban regeneration strategies to address "multiple deprivation and relative political powerlessness." (McConnell, 1993, p.1)

Key aspects relating to community regeneration that can be singled out from the above discussion are the focus on specific deprived areas and community involvement. One description, although taken from a discussion of urban regeneration, brought together these and other aspects, and offered a good basis for a working definition of community regeneration. (Skelcher et al, 1996, p.5-6) In addition to referring to the themes of enhancing localities' physical condition and stimulating the local economy, this draws out the social and community aspects of regeneration, for instance community safety, adult literacy and pre-school provision. (Skelcher et al, 1996, p.6)   The final theme

refers to both sustainability, and also the community's potential for self-government:-

> "An emphasis is placed on stimulating community-based organisation and engaging in a process that will lead to greater influence by the locality on the key decisions that affect them."
> (Skelcher et al, 1996, p.6)

In this conception of community regeneration the links with the above description of community development can be seen.   Also relevant are the concepts of empowerment and enabling, both of which are described in the next section.

3.4   Empowerment and Enabling

These are two key processes relevant to community development and community regeneration.   Of these, **empowerment**:-

> "Makes it possible for people for people who are disempowered to exercise power and have more control over their lives. This means having a greater voice in institutions, agencies and situations which affect them."
> (Department of the Environment, 1995, p.245)

The concept of **enabling**:-

> "Implies helping people achieve their aims at an agreed level of involvement. It involves helping people understand and take part in the decision-making process, or participate actively in some initiative."
> (Department of the Environment, 1995, p.245)

Empowerment is considered further in Chapter 5, looking at it within the voluntary sector context of self-help. Both enabling and empowerment are concepts referred to in the section on local government decentralisation. The related concept of the enabling authority is introduced in the next chapter.

4.   The Local Authority Context

4.1   Introduction

The following quotation encapsulates the changes in local government, of which the public library service is a part, since 1979:-

"Local authorities are in the throes of a revolution. The immediate cause is a wave of legislation changing their methods of raising revenue, their ways of working and the range of their functions.   But this, like all revolutions, has deeper roots. The political, financial and social environment in which local government operates began to change some time ago." (Audit Commission, 1988, p.1[3]. Quoted in Stewart and Stoker, 1995, p.1)

As Stewart and Stoker go on to say "[w]hen auditors write of a revolution in local government then clearly something unusual and significant is happening!"   (Stewart and Stoker, 1995, p.1)   As suggested by the above quotation from the Audit Commission, changes have occurred at various levels.   These include changes in a society in which people increasingly question the solutions offered by professional experts, for instance in housing and education, whilst, at the same time, central government has sought restraint in public expenditure. (Leach et al, 1994, p.33-34)   Local authorities have responded by reconsidering the relationship between the organisation and provision of services, with a recognition "that there is a need to make the services more responsive to those for whom they are intended." (Leach et al, 1994, p.35)   Amongst legislative changes was the Local Government Act 1988, which required local authorities to put certain services out to a compulsory competitive tendering (CCT)

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[3] Audit Commission. 1988. *The Competitive Council.*   Management Paper No. 1. London: HMSO.

process, after which the local authority might no longer directly provide the service. (Leach et al, 1994, p.35)

Symptomatic of this revolution in local government, and arguably originating from the idea of contracting out services, is the concept of the "enabling authority." The idea of "enabling," in the context of community development and regeneration, has already been introduced. In the next section, it will be argued that the enabling authority (at least in one of its manifestations) is consistent with the community development approach. This is followed by a section asserting that there is also a consistency between local government decentralisation and community development and regeneration.

4.2   The Enabling Authority

The enabling authority is described a "much abused phrase" which, in the mid-to late 1980s, brought together new approaches to local authority management. (Elcock, 1994, p.284)   Commentators (such as Cochrane, 1993, p.69-80; Leach et al, 1994, p.37-44) seem to agree that the enabling authority means very different things to different people. For instance, Elcock (1994) characterises it as a concept conveying two very different approaches to local government. The first of these is that envisaged by the late Lord Ridley[4] where the local authority's role was to put contracts for local services out to tender (that is, corresponding to the CCT aspect, referred to above). The second was that used by Stewart (1986)[5] in which a new approach to service provision, although possibly including contracting out, would also involve consumer awareness by local authority staff, decentralisation schemes (as discussed below at 4.3), and being

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[4] This view is found in Ridley, N. 1988. *The Local Right: Enabling not Providing.* London: Centre for Policy Studies. Quoted in Cochrane (1993, p.69).

responsive to citizens' demands for participation and for "good quality, sympathetic and accessible public services." (Elcock, 1994, p.284)

Leach et al (1994, p.39) see the meaning of the phrase "enabling authority" as covering a "spectrum" of different meanings. However, the ends of this spectrum can be seen as broadly similar to the two approaches outlined above. One end of this spectrum can be seen as making explicit links to "the community":-

> "The local authority accepts that its direct provision of services is but one means of providing for the community among many. Its role as an 'enabling' council is to use all the means at its disposal to meet the needs of those who live within its area. It will produce some services itself. It will work with and through other organisations - in the public, private and voluntary sectors - adding, stimulating and guiding their contributions."
> (Clarke and Stewart, 1988, p.1[6]. Quoted in Leach et al, 1994, p.39-40)

It is in this manifestation of the enabling authority that the links with community development can be seen - for instance in terms of "empowering" local people and of working with voluntary and community groups (this aspect is discussed in the next chapter).

The local authority's relationship with voluntary groups is also one of the aspects brought out in a more practically-oriented discussion. (Brooke, 1989, p.11) Here, the local authority will not be the main or only provider of services; its role will be in "ensuring local choice" through the establishment of local networks and relationships, with bodies including contractors, suppliers and external agencies (including supporting voluntary bodies). (Brooke, 1989, p.11)

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[5] Stewart, J.D. 1986. *The New Management of Local Government.* London: G. Allen and Unwin. Quoted in Elcock (1994, p. 284)

Also linked with the kind of enabling authority outlined above by Clarke and Stewart (1988), is the concept of "community government." (Stewart and Stoker, 1988; Stewart, 1995)   In an argument for moving towards community government, the local authority's strategic role, in expressing the community's concerns about how meeting its (the community's) needs is highlighted. (Stewart and Stoker, 1988, p. 9) This role has already found some expression in some authorities' economic development and anti-poverty strategies. (Stewart and Stoker, 1988, p. 11) This seems suggestive of the links with community regeneration. In addition to working with others to meet the community's needs - that is, as an enabling authority - local authorities also need to develop new ways of working to ensure "responsive" service delivery and "a renewed basis for accountability in local democracy." (Stewart and Stoker, 1988, p. 9-10)

In the above representation of the enabling authority as community government, there are striking links with a community development approach. An instance of this is in the local authority's role in ensuring the articulation of the community's needs. (Stewart and Stoker, 1988, p. 9)   The links with community regeneration have already been noted. The basis of this underlying consistency between community government, on one side, and community development and regeneration, on the other, is in local authorities moving towards defining their role "by reference to the problems and issues faced by their communities." (Stewart and Stoker, 1988, p.11)

However, a key issue is whether the enabling authority as community government really exists, or if it is just a goal to move towards. Much of Stewart and Stoker's (1988) argument is predicated on changes in central government's attitude to local authorities (Stewart and Stoker, 1988 p.19-20, 24, 26-28) In a more recent work,

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[6] Clarke, M. and Stewart, J.D. 1988. *The Enabling Council.* Luton: Local

Stewart (1995) states that establishment of community government will depend partly on legislation and partly on action by local authorities themselves. (Stewart, 1995, p. 258)   Local authorities have already developed some new patterns of organisation and service delivery including decentralisation of neighbourhood services, user control of leisure centres and devolved management. (Stewart, 1995, p. 262-3) Nonetheless "[m]uch of the writing on the enabling authority is still about what might be, rather than what it is."   (Cochrane, 1993, p. 79) This certainly appears the case with the work on community government in that it has already been noted that central government support will be needed to fully achieve it. (Stewart and Stoker, 1988; Stewart, 1995)   Having said this, it can also be argued that various existing models of authority decentralisation, discussed in the next section, represent "facets" of community government. (Gaster, 1996, p.59)

What seems to emerge from the entire debate about the concept of the enabling authority, is that it represents a "broad direction of change." (Leach et al, 1994, p.2)   From this point, Leach et al go on to say that there is still "an important *area of choice* as to what *kind* of enabling authority particular local authorities wish to become. " (Leach et al, 1994, p.2, their italics)

A specific way in which discussion of the enabling authority is helpful is that it highlights:-

> "the extent to which each local authority is increasingly one agency among many at local level.   … It emphasises the need for those working in and elected to positions within local government to work for the right to be seen as representative of their communities and to be the agencies around which others should cluster."

Government Training Board.

(Cochrane, 1993, p. 79)

It should not be taken for granted that local authority politicians or managers already play this role. (Cochrane, 1993, p. 79)   This contrasts with the view of Leach et al, quoted above, that local authorities will choose what *kind* of enabling authority they wish to become. (Leach et al, 1994, p.2, their italics)   Cochrane's view can be summarised as authorities needing first to win the argument that they are best placed to take the lead. (Cochrane, 1993, p. 79)

The conclusion, then, from this consideration of the enabling authority is that it is, at least in its "community government" manifestation (Stoker and Stewart, 1988; Stewart, 1995), theoretically consistent with the community development and regeneration approaches. The extent to which it is, in practice, relevant to the local authority's role in community development and regeneration, will be considered amongst the conclusions drawn from the case study.

Another aspect of change in local government will now be addressed.

4.3   Decentralisation

Working at a sub-authority level is not new. Parish government goes back for centuries, and area-based initiatives started with the Community Development Projects in the 1960s, and are currently seen in urban regeneration. (Gaster, 1996, p.57)   Over the last fifteen years, local authorities have also developed more "geographically comprehensive models…initially focusing on direct service delivery and on democratic processes and accountability." (Gaster, 1996, p.58) These research-based models include:-

- **Service delivery**, with local outlets for services for which the local authority is still directly responsible.

- **Contracting and enabling**, in which local teams might be either the purchaser or provider of local services, or the partner or networker in working with other agencies.

- **Policy and strategy**, in which local teams work with other departments and the community to develop local plans based on local needs, within the wider authority framework. This model may be linked to the economic, physical or *social regeneration* of the community.

- **Democratic**, based on a changed representative role for councillors, for instance through area committees, and participation by local people, by means such as neighbourhood forums, user groups and *community development*.

(from Gaster, 1996, p.58-9)

From this categorisation, explicit links between some models of decentralisation and community development / community regeneration have been made (as highlighted, in italics, above).

Whatever model is employed in a particular locality, it is important to consider this kind of decentralisation. In local authorities that have decentralised services, it is at that local level that much community development and regeneration activity would be expected to take place. This is illustrated by one of the two main locations of the case study being a locality where "area working" has been introduced as a vehicle for the regeneration of the community. Some of the connections between decentralisation and community development are brought out by Gaster and O'Toole (1995), who suggest that, from being mainly about accessibility of services in the 1980s, decentralisation in the 1990s is increasingly about:-

- "responsiveness

- tailoring services to local needs
- the efficient and fair allocation of ever scarcer resources
- making links at the local level with other organisations

(including, in particular, community and voluntary organisations)"
(Gaster and O'Toole, 1995, p.5)

In other words, the last of these points suggests the relevance of decentralisation to the local authority's community development role. It is suggested that area working can be "an important building block in developing communities and furthering local interests in the broadest sense." (Lowndes, 1994, p.3) Another crucial link with community development and regeneration is that some local authorities are, through decentralised organisational structures, "trying to enable (empower?) 'people to argue.'" (Gaster, 1996, p.57) Gaster (1996) argues that that if "empowerment" is to be achieved, then the *whole* organisation, not just the front-line staff, need to be "oriented towards the public." (Gaster, 1996, p.63) These models of decentralisation can also be seen as aspects of community government in that they reflect that local government can no longer work alone; councillors and council workers now have to act in co-ordinating, networking, enabling and community leadership roles. (Gaster, 1996, p.59)

A final point to note is that although there are many "forms" of decentralisation (for instance as categorised above by Gaster, 1996, p.58-59), two main "routes" to decentralisation can be identified:-

"1. Managerial decentralisation, involving the devolution of service delivery responsibilities to area offices.
2. Political decentralisation, involving the devolution of decision-making authority to area committees or forums."
(Lowndes, 1994, p.1)

This distinction is relevant to the case study as it is clearly the latter route which has been taken in Rotherham. It is also the advantage of being an absolute, "either/or" distinction. In this it differs from the models outlined above (Gaster, 1996, p.58-9); area working" in Rotherham (as described at 8.1) appears to combine elements of at least the first three, of possibly all four, of these models.

One possible use of libraries is as a location for decentralised services - it is suggested that they may represent a "non-stigmatised service base" for neighbourhood offices. (Gaster and O'Toole, 1995, p.21) This, of course, links to the library being seen as a "neutral" space (as stated, for instance, in Greenhalgh and Worpole, 1995, p.52) An example of this neutrality being cited by users was in Bradford (where libraries have been used as preliminary contact point for council information), who contrasted this with the "hostile" atmosphere of council offices. (Clipsom, 1987, p.123, in Gyford, 1991, p.110)

Irrespective of the possible use of library buildings, decentralisation has implications for local libraries whose staff have considerable experience of service delivery at a "community" level. This point derives from the statement, written in a community information context:-

> "During the course of the last twelve years in this country, many more public services have decentralized and yet others have developed a community role for the first time. Librarians now need to work together with other professionals serving the same community … in an integrated way. In order to achieve this successfully, the librarian's response must focus on using our unique skills and resources."
> (Coleman, 1992, p.302)

This leads Coleman (1992, p.302) to suggest that decentralisation will help librarians to develop an "information broking" role, a role referred to in chapter six (on community librarianship).

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5.   The Voluntary Sector Context

5.1   The Voluntary Sector in the 1990s

Just as there has been a "revolution" in local government, there has also, in the 1990s, been a change in the perception and expectations of the voluntary sector, which corresponds to major social concerns. (Hedley and Davis Smith, 1992, p.32)   Thus, in the 1990s, there has been consideration of the voluntary sector's contribution to Community Care in the "contract culture" introduced into health and social service provision. (Hedley and Davis Smith, 1992, p.24-25) One of the voluntary groups looked at (WeCare), which provides a "drop-in" centre for older people, is an illustration of this shift. The other key issue in the 1990s has been the voluntary sector's contribution to "active citizenship," in which the active citizen is someone who can do something purposive about a problem rather than complaining about lack of government money. (Hedley and Davis Smith, 1992, p.26) In this development in the nature of volunteering, common ground can be seen with the desired outcomes of community development in terms of people identifying problems and solutions for themselves. This point is especially pertinent to "self help" and community groups, which are each discussed after a brief consideration of the overall range of voluntary sector activity.

5.2   The Scope of Voluntary Sector Activity

Voluntary sector activities can be placed on a continuum ranging from the formal or "bureaucratic" world of organised volunteering to private and informal self-groups. (Rochester, 1992, p.120-121)   In the former type of group, described in more detail at 5.5, the volunteer will

have defined rights and responsibilities, and will receive supervision, support and training. In self-help groups, typically formed of people with a particular condition or problem, there "are few 'rules' and little, if any, differentiation of roles. " (Rochester, 1992, p.121) Lying between these two models are community groups. (Rochester, 1992, p.121) These are discussed at 5.4, after the following discussion of self-help groups.

5.3   Self Help Groups

There has, over the last two decades been a vast expansion in groups devoted to self help and mutual aid, which implies "helping oneself as well as - and through - helping others." (Wann, 1995, p.1-2) Self help without mutual aid would be a purely private activity, so the more familiar term is used here to refer to a combination of self-help and mutual aid. (Wann, 1995, p.2)

Although connections between community development and self help can be seen - for instance in self help groups supported through community health projects - Wann's view is that the former is both more outward looking and "more concerned with bringing about practical change in local services." (Wann, 1995, p.20) Although this is true, it can be seen that involvement in a self help group might well, in the words of one definition of community development, help people to "develop their capacity, skills, knowledge and confidence." (McConnell, 1993, p.2) It could be argued that this sort of individual development is more consistent with the aims self-help groups, than with other parts of the voluntary sector because, because "[t]hey are about people making their own choices and taking control over their own lives." (Wann, 1995, p.101)   A related argument, made by Adams (1990), is that an effective working relationship between social workers and self help groups will (in addition to empowering social workers to

do their work) develop "the empowerment of self-helpers themselves, in furtherance of the wider aim of empowering others in the community." (Adams, 1990, p.139)

A final point is that there can be practical limits on the effectiveness of self-help groups, for instance because of other demands on members or physical distance between them:-

"People with few resources and little access to information may not be able to bring into the group what it needs in order to develop. These limitations are more marked in self help groups in rural areas and among disadvantaged communities."
(Wann, 1995, p.2)

Such factors need to be borne in mind when looking at the information needs of self-help groups. This need for information is part of the struggle for resources which "features prominently in the lives of most self-help groups." (Wann, 1995, p.68)

5.4 Community Groups

Community groups are defined as:-

"local groups or organisations which include a substantial element of activity and control by local residents (or people who work in the locality) in a voluntary capacity. These groups may or may not also have some paid staff and/or be formally constituted, for instance as a charity or a company limited by guarantee. They do not include organisations consisting primarily of paid staff using volunteer help."

(Community Development Foundation,[7] 1995)

Examples of such groups might include community associations or community based youth projects. (Rochester, 1992, p.123-127) Amongst the main features of these groups' volunteers is that they are drawn from the community served, have a share in the group's "ownership," can be involved in defining the its purpose and their own roles, and may receive an exercise in "practical democracy" as well as training in skills. (Rochester, 1992, p.131) In all these senses community groups seem nearer to self-help groups than to formal voluntary organisations. When looking at self-help groups, an argument for the consistency between the aims of these groups and of community development was made - an equivalent argument can be made for community groups. The following quotation describes the motivation for the establishment of a community group:-

"it had long been felt that 'something needed to be done' about both the conditions on the estate and the lack of community spirit."
(White City Action Group, 1996, p.5)

This illustrates an underlying similarity between self-help and community groups - they represent a mutual coming together around a common problem, issue or interest. The aims of this group - "to try and do something about the estate and to try and bring people together" (White City Action Group, 1996, p.5) - demonstrates the way in which such groups may be a vehicle for community regeneration.

5.5   Voluntary Organisations

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[7] Community Development Foundation. 1995. *Guidelines to the Community Involvement Aspects of Rural Challenge.* Quoted in Department of the Environment (1995), p.9)

These can be distinguished from community groups in that they are:-

"groups whose activities are carried out other than for profit but which are not public or local authorities. These organisations would normally be formally constituted, for instance, as a charity or a company limited by guarantee. They may or may not use volunteer help."
(Community Development Foundation,[8] 1995)

As community groups are also in some sense voluntary organisations, this description goes on to say that the term "professional voluntary organisation" may be useful in referring voluntary organisations other than community groups. (Community Development Foundation,[9] 1995) There may also be "bridging groups" which have characteristics of both voluntary organisations and community groups. (Department of the Environment, 1995, p.9)

An example of the role voluntary organisations may have in community regeneration is illustrated by the South Rotherham Community Safety Project, whose co-ordinator was interviewed in the case study. This is an independent charity which aims "to reduce crime and the effects of crime from a community end, rather than a criminal justice end." (case study interview)   Community safety has already been referred to as an aspect of social and community regeneration. (Skelcher et al, 1996, p.6)

6.   Community Librarianship and Public Library Purpose

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[8] *Ibid.*

6.1   Introduction

"Community librarianship" will be discussed here in the context of its relevance to community development and community regeneration. The conclusion reached is that many of the tenets of community development and community regeneration approaches discussed above, also underpin community librarianship.

Before this, the theory and practice of community librarianship is discussed.

6.2   Community Librarianship

The period of the growth of community librarianship has been identified as 1970 -1985. (Muddiman and Black, 1993, p.12) There is therefore a certain irony in considering a concept which has since been in decline. This irony is even greater when it appears that community is, in the words of one of the case study respondents, the "buzzword for the 'nineties" (as evidenced by terms like community care as well as community development and community regeneration). In other words, it could be said that public libraries have got off the community bandwagon, just as other public services were getting on.

Three roots of community librarianship are identified by Muddiman and Black (1993, p.12). The first of these is the argument for priority services targeted at disadvantaged groups. The second "argued for community development as a new focus for the local library's activities and the deinstitutionalisation of the library involving in only an arms length relationship with the 'local state.'" The third pointed to figures for the non-use of the library, especially by working

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[9] *Ibid.*

class people, and therefore argued for a redirection of services to non-users, and needs identification through community profiling.
(Muddiman and Black, 1993, p.12)

It can be argued that the identification of these three different strands which are not attributed to any particular sources, (Muddiman and Black, 1993, p.12) is somewhat schematic. For instance, an argument for meeting the needs of "the disadvantaged" - that is, the first strand - is based on a view that is also consistent with the third strand:-

 "If libraries were serving the whole community, as they are legally bound to do, their provision would automatically encompass the disadvantaged."
(Coleman, 1981, p.70)

Similarly, Martin's (1989) argument for the deinstitutionalisation of the public library - i.e. the second strand above - cites Coleman's view that disadvantage does not result from the inadequacies of the individual, but "is the result of structural forces preventing the equitable distribution of resources throughout society." (Coleman, 1981, p.11, quoted in Martin, 1989, p.73)   This would suggest that community librarianship is a more coherent philosophy than Muddiman and Black (1993, p.12-13) suggest.

Irrespective of the extent to which they are intertwined all these strands of "community librarianship," have a similar philosophical basis to the concepts underlying community development and community regeneration.   This can be seen in this statement from the Community Services Group of the Library Association (which was formed in 1983), whose objectives include:-

"promoting library and information services to groups within the community whose needs are not adequately met at present by

traditional library services.   Among these are the elderly, the unemployed, adult literacy students, ethnic and cultural minorities and those who do not use libraries …   The need for close working links with other voluntary and statutory agencies will be emphasized, as will the need for combatting disadvantage…"
(*Community Librarian,* **3**(4)May 1986, p.18. Quoted in Martin, 1989, p. 71)

As well as demonstrating the links with community development - in terms of working with groups, as well as tackling disadvantage at a community level - this also stands as a typical definition of community librarianship. The validity of the library's role in community development is explicitly made in the argument that it (community development) is a practical option or the librarian seeking local involvement as it "seeks to bring about change through consensus and the patient application of local resources to local problems." (Martin, 1989, p.60)

As to the reality of community librarianship, Muddiman and Black (1993) argue that, because of the eclecticism of its roots, described above, it is, rather than being a "coherent and rigorously implemented philosophy of service," it is a "series of **practices**." Muddiman and Black (1993, p.12-13, their emphasis). Amongst the practices they list are:-

- "community profiling and needs analysis
- provision of special collections and services for 'disadvantaged' groups
- allocation of professional posts to 'neighbourhoods' or 'communities' as opposed to functional tasks
- 'outreach' activity involving provision of materials outside library buildings

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- grant aid or other support to community / voluntary groups
- community information provision."

(Muddiman and Black, 1993, p.13)

Of these aspects of the practice of community librarianship, it appears, from the literature review, that it is community information which is covered in most detail and most frequently. At the same time, it should, however, be noted that community information is "not only, or even primarily, a library function." (Usherwood, 1992, p.2)

Quoted here is what Usherwood (1992, p.1) describes as the most widely quoted and generally accepted, seminal definition of community information:-

"Community information services can … be defined as services which assist individuals and groups with daily problem-solving and with participation in the democratic process. The services concentrate on the needs of those who do not have ready access to other sources of assistance and on the most important problems that people have to face, problems to do with their homes, their jobs and their rights."
(Library Association, 1980, p.12)

From this definition, the links with community development seem clear - for instance in the references to participation and in directing help to those with fewest means of support.

The Comedia Report attempted to find qualitative measures of the role of libraries in a case study of two libraries serving "large and relatively disadvantaged housing estates." (Comedia, 1993, p.36) It concluded although the kind of newer services associated with community librarianship were important (such as community information and the provision of meeting rooms) the most significant part played by the library was in its "traditional" role. It is suggested

that whereas many public agencies working in disadvantaged areas aim to counteract or diminish "negative" aspects of community life (such as unemployment, youth disaffection, alcohol and drug problems) the library "supports the positive aspects and the positive people." (Comedia, 1993, p.37) This Report goes on to say "other research shows that there is a strong correlation between people who use libraries and people involved in voluntary organisations,[10] this seems to confirm some of the assertions made in the Cleveland study." (Comedia, 1993, p.37)

The conclusion reached from the Cleveland case study was that:-

> "perhaps the greatest role that the library plays in disadvantaged areas may not necessarily be through 'compensatory' or welfarist activities (important though these are), but in providing a friendly library with a good and varied book stock, in effect a local institution that dignified and
> legitimised the interests and aspirations of the carers, the
> activists and the volunteers."
> (Comedia, 1993, p.37)

Here, then, a somewhat different slant on the library's role in the community is offered. The use of the word "institution" is also interesting given the 1980s argument for the de-institutionalisation of the public library (Martin, 1989; also explained, but not necessarily advocated, by McKee, 1987, p.53). Perhaps then, in a community context, the debate has moved on - the issue is not the deinstitution-alisation, of the library but its being a decentralised, local institution, as suggested by the Cleveland case study:-

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[10] Unfortunately - as it would be highly relevant to the subject of this dissertation - details about this "other research" are not cited. (Comedia, 1993, p.37)

"In both [libraries], library staff had created a very warm, almost domestic ambience, a 'home from home,' and this made the library appear to be symbolically owned by - and belonging to - the community, unlike other forms of public provision such as job centres, youth clubs …and some community centres on the same estates."

(Comedia, 1993, p. 36)

6.3   Public Library Purpose

The concept of community librarianship can be seen as part of the debate about the "purpose" of the public library. For instance, one discussion of public library purpose considers it to be a "challenge to the prevailing orthodoxies." (Muddiman and Black, 1993, p.1)

That the library can, or does, play both the kind of roles outlined above (that is for information and as a valued focus for the community) is suggested here:-

"In principle, libraries could become (and in some instance have become) centres for all kinds of activity, stretching from an information to a caring role. Libraries cannot become schools, cinemas, CABs and so on, but they can take on the role of information brokers or even information assessor. The library then becomes the funnel through which a town's information flows. Perhaps information broking has become the substitute for learning, one of the library's initial missions, which is now the central role of other institutions."

(Landry, 1993, p.11)

This information broking role becomes particularly relevant to branch or community library when the decentralisation of local

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government is taken into account, a point already made in the above section on decentralisation. (Coleman, 1992, p.302)

This suggests then that the role of the library is not something that can be determined from a pre-ordained model, but that librarians should:-

"concentrate on networking with other professionals serving the same community before determining what the exact nature of their role should be. It may be that the librarian's specialist skills of information collection, organization, retrieval and dissemination are best utilized to support others to provide direct public service. "
(Coleman, 1992, p.312)

It is, then, these sort of considerations which have influenced the open nature of the questions asked in the interview guide.

7.   Case Study Findings

7.1   Introduction

The ensuing sections correspond to the broad areas of discussion, as identified through the data analysis. Inevitably, given the qualitative nature of the research, these findings represent a selection of the data collected, but it has been attempted, given the limits of space and the need to summarise, to let the research subjects speak for themselves. General conclusions and recommendations are made in the final chapter of this report.

Before focusing on the library and information related parts of the data, the wider role of the local authority is looked at to determine the extent to which the kinds of changes to local government, outlined in chapters 3 and 4, have had an effect.

7.2   The Local Authority Context

Voluntary Sector Workers

The need for responsive, decentralised Council services came over very strongly from the unpaid voluntary workers. All the unpaid workers from Kiveton Park felt that the area had been neglected by the council, and generally there was a feeling of being isolated from Rotherham (about ten miles away[11]):-

> *You just get a little bit sick in villages like this of being poor*
> *customers of Rotherham Borough. I mean, when we had that*

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[11] This distance also needs to be considered in conjunction with the nature of public transport in an area where "the experience of bus deregulation has not been

*unemployment group we met with … local councillors and it was
…'we can give you a bus pass to go to Rotherham' when we
were talking about facilities that the village needed.*
(Kiveton Independent Advice Centre)

It can therefore be seen that was a perceived need for changes
in the Council's attitude to the Kiveton Park area. However, it was
probably too early to say whether Rotherham Area Action was meeting
this need (as suggested later in another interview). The White City
Acton Group's view was that so far little had changed:-

*"All they do is have meetings. Nothing constructive comes out
of them. They just put forward another sub-group from that
meeting to the next meeting instead of … buckling down and
getting some hard work done. They're just going round in circles
- and I hope you let them listen to this tape!"*

Although less overtly critical, the Kiveton Advice Centre
representative's view was that these changes were not necessarily
permanent ("they could pull the plug at any time").

In Aston, the lack of a council district office was referred to. The
council had responded to this by arranging training for parish council
staff, who now provide advice and referrals on a sessional basis.   This
was described by the Aston Parish Councillor as a development which
she hoped would expand and which was "badly needed."

Of the two paid voluntary sector workers, the Community
Council Safety Co-ordinator identified the importance of working with
Rotherham Area Action:-
*"A major part of the job is to work with anybody and everybody I
can. Key within that are representatives of other agencies and*

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positive," resulting in both gaps in, and a lack of co-ordination of, services.

the council departments, be that housing, or libraries, or whatever, [the Corporate Area Manager] in Rotherham Area Action, and so on."

The other paid voluntary sector worker, the VSF Co-ordinator, has a role covering the whole of Rotherham and a key part of this involved working with the Council:-

My role has become more of a strategic role working with the Council, with the Economic Partnership, with the Health Authority etc. Making sure that voluntary groups are taken seriously and they are incorporated into any future proposals ..."

He went to make the point that it was too early to make any judgements about the Council's work in community development / community regeneration, whilst at the same time putting some limitations on the extent of joint working between the council and the VSF :-

Community and economic regeneration at the council's new - it's still in quite a lot of turmoil itself and they're still not quite sure when it's going to settle down ... We have a meeting with the [community] development workers … to fill them in a bit on where we're at and to find out what they want from us. It's difficult because our job is to work with voluntary groups and organisations and they're members, and they pay us, and that's how we work. So there's times when it can be a bit awkward with certain council employees because we don't have that many resources and we don't want to end up doing the council's job for them.

This quotation seems an illuminating view of the enabling authority - in that it could be argued that the enabling authority is (or

(Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, 1994, p.10).

can be) about voluntary groups "doing the council's job for them," but that voluntary groups are unwilling or unable to do so.

Community Development and Community Regeneration Staff

As with the paid voluntary sector staff, there was considerable evidence of multi-agency working, as demonstrated by this description of the work contacts of the Rural Development Area Manager:-

"They come from a variety of backgrounds, from the Training and Enterprise Council, from the different departments of the Borough, from the Employment Service, the Health Authority, all service deliverers in the area."

The Corporate Area Manager worked with a similar range of groups and organisations. Asked about whether the regeneration process was then genuinely "bottom-up" he replied:-

Yes, because what's headed up all this, and one of the other main parts of my work, is the Community Development Trust idea. The Community Development Trust is only in its infancy. Rotherham Area Action has actually facilitated the process of getting local people together to form a board…. The Community Development Trust will actually manage [the] … funding to improve the local area - the economy, the environment and that sort of thing. And the CDT, the Community Development Trust, is going to be representative of the formal community - the full spectrum. For example … there are four local residents - just local interested people, there are members of a local action group, White City Action Group, again representing local people. So it's very much locally-based, community-led, and I facilitate that."

He also made the point that regeneration was a long-term process, saying that it could take up to ten years to create sustainable regeneration.

The Kiveton Community Development Worker had identified working with the White City Action Group as a "central piece of work" in which his role has been to "support them and <u>enable</u> them to do what they want to do in terms of regenerating the area."

<u>*Library Staff*</u>

There was generally a high awareness of the Community Regeneration Programme Area, although it is probably fair to say that this was greater amongst the staff in "professional" or managerial roles. A view of the opportunities for libraries was put forward here by a Community Librarian in Rotherham:-

> *"We want to start looking at working more in partnership with local people… We want to examine what the role of the library is and make contributions to community development… We're just …beginning to formulate thoughts on that… There is a suggestion that we might establish a consultative group of local people to help in the planning of … library services. And we're going to try and provide more community information, which will be a useful tool … for community development workers, many of whom are new in post….*
>
> *"I am very much aware of those new policy initiatives. They are priorities that have been set by the Council and they are also priorities, obviously, that resources will follow. So it's important that the library does sharpen up its role and works out how it can contribute to those policies…"*

7.3 Community Development and Community Regeneration: Information Needs and Resources

<u>*Voluntary Sector Workers*</u>

For the voluntary workers from the White City Action Group and Kiveton Park Community Development Trust (CDT), the main method of information seeking was going to meetings attended by other community groups and via their local Community Development Worker. Most of this activity related to the White City Action Group (which had been established longer), but the following example relates to the CDT:-

> *We were talking about constitutions and things - and we needed some company acts and things like that. And there was just nothing there in our library, so I had to go all the way into the middle of Rotherham to find out what I wanted. And it just seemed to take them forever to find out what I needed - it just took all my day up. And then I thought, well, this is ridiculous, so I ended up phoning Companies House. So I didn't bother [using the Library] after that.*

In terms of the White City Action Group, they referred to a Workers' Education Association group which had been helpful in giving them information about how to run a group, although they felt that they had mainly learned by experience.   This group was at a stage where funding information was important.

Unlike the two Aston groups (Aston Community Action and WeCare, a local group aiming to develop community care services for older people), all the Kiveton groups were members of the Rotherham Voluntary Sector Forum (VSF), which aims to:-

> *"look at ways of just developing the voluntary sector across the borough and to look at building networks, offering training, acting as a focus point that people can just - a sort of one-stop shop and contact us, we can offer advice and information, put them in touch with whoever's the most suitable person to deal with what they were looking for."* (VSF Co-ordinator)

The VSF has a core membership of 50 or 60 groups, but also has a wider distribution list of about 500-600 voluntary and community groups. This list is provided by the Library, and the VSF Co-ordinator detailed other instances of co-operation with the Central Library.

WeCare's Secretary described how the group was established following an approach by the Social Services Department, which had helped set up the Rural Planning Forum to look at the needs of older people in the area. The group was in a situation where:-

> *"After we were given all this money, we didn't really know where to start at first - we were floundering in the dark. So we got various people to come and talk to us - community groups from other places."*

WeCare needed information about setting up a group, which was obtained from Rotherham Council for Voluntary Services. They had been able to commission work from Sheffield University about the needs of the local elderly population, and were currently drawing on the expertise of Age Concern in developing services.

Aston Community Action's information needs were very wide-ranging in nature. In the past, they had needed information on how to set up a group. The Secretary was currently researching how to make funding applications, including a National Lottery application.

For the Kiveton Advice Centre the main information need was for up-to-date information for the Centre's day-to-day work; this was mainly met by subscribing to the National Association for Citizens' Advice Bureaux files.

For the paid Voluntary Sector Worker, from the South Rotherham Community Safety Project, the main information source

was the Social Policy Unit at the Council, and, because of the nature of the work, the Police and the Home Office.

Community Development and Community Regeneration Staff

The Area Action Manager also saw the Social Policy Team as an important information resource in terms of "looking at bringing funding into the area."   The Standing Conference on Community Development was another important source of information.

This group was one of the national organisations mentioned by Kiveton's Community Development Worker, the other being the Association of Community Workers.   Locally, he used the Planning Department for "hard" (statistical and census) information, and also Housing and Social Services for information relevant to their policy areas, as well as the Training and Enterprise Council.   He went on to say:-

> *"I've started to tap into the library locally - and as part of the community profile, of auditing the area, and looking at the history of the area, I've tapped into the Local Studies section of the Central Library. So I think the resource of the library may be something that I could make more use of locally."*

The Area Action Support Officer had also used the Central Library, but particularly highlighted the importance of the "Help in Hand" Directory in identifying local groups that it would otherwise be difficult to find out about:-

> *"It's amazing - we've got one copy in this whole building, and it's always being used by someone… I mean a lot of the information we want is very difficult to come across in that, say, we're wanting to know about community groups in this area - often it's impossible. I mean, how do you know apart from unless you see a poster promoting them.*

The Rural Development Area Manager was "working with all service deliverers in the area… working up projects, looking for funding and that sort of thing to help draw in more investment to the area."

7.4　The Role of the Library

Library Staff

Aspects of the library's (or librarian's) community involvement in Kiveton Park were noted by the Area Action Support Officer:-

"She was part of the Training, Education and Employment sub-group which were working on the Community Regeneration Awards. She also came along to all the Council Service Delivery meetings. I mean she was really a known face at a lot of the meetings. …she came along to the Community Development Trust to see that getting starting up, advised that; all sorts of stuff really. So I think she was part of the library, but she really she was extending it to the whole of Kiveton, and trying to not just push the library, but she was becoming involved in other things."

This librarian herself identified the importance of the information function; here the advice centre was important in terms of meeting the community's needs, especially "with the Pit closing and the changes in benefits." She also characterised the library as "a community facility in each village," saying:-

"You could describe each of the locations of our libraries as villages, as identifiable communities. Certainly at Kiveton Park up until the Corporate Area initiative the Library, apart from a 'made-do-with' Youth and Community Centre, was the only council facility out there."

The "community" aspect was emphasised by one of the Sheffield Library staff:-

"…we long dropped 'Branch Library' and moved to 'Community Library.' …we weren't a branch of something that was in the centre. …we mirrored the needs and demands of that community."

At the same time, the library was different from other community buildings, not just in that it loans materials and provides information for local people, but also that:-

"we have this wider aspect in that we are a neutral space - where anybody can come in. We don't put up barriers, other than behavioural barriers… Anybody can use us, and they use us for whatever they want - we don't tell them what they use us for- which I think is incredibly important, and incredibly rare."
(Sheffield librarian)

This point about the "neutrality" of libraries was also identified as very important by the former librarian for Kiveton, and is returned to in the next section (on the perception of the library).

Sheffield, like Rotherham, has an "Area Working" initiative, and the same Sheffield librarian said that library had staff had two roles in this. The first was being an intermediary between the different groups of workers providing Council Services through activities like producing directories of local services. The second role was in providing "one-stop" information services, a function which could be carried out only if Library staff received the appropriate training. He referred to a pilot project, providing information services in Tinsley Library, the only council outlet in that area, so local people do not always have to use the Council Office in Burngreave, some miles away.

Voluntary Sector Workers

Amongst the voluntary groups interviewed, there were quite divergent views on the role of the library.   The individuals from the White City Action Group and Kiveton Community Development Trust perhaps saw the least possible role for the library in community development and community regeneration.   One of these groups' representatives thought that libraries should provide "more information," for instance on what other local groups were doing, but another could not envisage a role for the library in regenerating the area, although she would "go there if I wanted any information."

The White City Action Group were also against the development of meeting facilities in Kiveton Park Library, fearing competition between local venues (something which was also mentioned as a concern by the Area Action Manager).   Their feeling was that when their Community House, on the White City, was open then this would meet the needs of local people - both for information and as a meeting place.

This contrasted with the view from Kiveton Independent Advice Centre:-

> *"Kiveton Library to me is performing a dual role - it's not only there to lend books and papers etc., it's there providing a good service to the public, i.e. regarding advice sessions and that sort of thing, and it is a good service and it's a popular service..… We've only been able to carry on because of the Library staff and service. There would have been nowhere else suitable in Kiveton to go for many years"*

He went on to say:-

> *"…people know that they associate Citizen's Advice and advice centres with libraries anyway. I mean I don't know what it is, but*

> *its Borough-wide and everybody latches onto this Library*
> *Service thing."*

This association between libraries and information and advice was echoed by the Sheffield library staff involved in community development and community information work - with a particular example being the very popular advice centre at Upperthorpe Library.

In terms of the Aston community groups, although WeCare's Secretary had not used the library to meet the group's own information needs, the library had been used to publicise WeCare. The librarian had been to meetings of the Rural Planning Forum, and also said that:-

> *"We have been an information point for the local directory that*
> *they brought out… My own feeling is that every community*
> *initiative like this that springs up, the library has to be in there as*
> *the information point - either helping collate it, or displaying it or*
> *disseminating it or something."*

The library is included amongst the services referred to in this Directory.

Aston Community Action's Secretary used both Aston Community Library and, especially, the Central Library. She said it would be "easier" if more information was available in Aston, but equally thought that it was not realistic for Aston Community Library to provide all the information the Group needed :-

> *"I appreciate it's a local library and serving the community, and*
> *that some of the things that that I want are what I call in-depth*
> *and a national sort of list…The Unitary Development Plan, you*
> *can see that at the local library…and there'll be… statistics for*
> *the local area, but there won't be the sort of national statistics,*
> *that you'd get to make comparisons for your area."*

Nonetheless, she did think that the local library did have a role in supporting any group working in the community, particularly mentioning that it should provide information about meetings of local groups. The VSF Co-ordinator had mainly dealt with the Central Library, and said that "we ought to publicise meetings through libraries....which we haven't done in the past." He saw a possible future role in terms of future work on providing access points for community groups:-

> *"If we find out that we've got five, six groups within half a mile of Maltby Library, rather than equipping every group with a computer...we might just do it in the Library...."*

The Community Safety Co-ordinator saw libraries as "a good way of publicising stuff to a <u>section of the community</u>...not the whole community."

This point was put to one of the Sheffield Libraries staff. His response was that:-

> "*if you go back to the figures, you find that it's the one that's often quoted as the best service they receive… I think about fifty percent of the people use us. And that's only recorded on issues of books some people just use us for information.*"

He went on to say the library had particular strengths, such as its neutrality, which were worth developing even though all the population did not use the library, and that:-

> *"…if there is a better alternative, so fine - it doesn't have to be within the library building. Libraries aren't about buildings."*

Community Development and Community Regeneration Staff

Of the Council employees, individual Community Development Workers did see a role for the library, for instance in adult literacy work. They saw the library as having a role in outreach (providing trained workers were available to do this) to help local people in using information. They also referred to the isolation of certain communities, and suggested a role for the mobile libraries in this (a point outside the scope of this dissertation). They also suggested "localising" what was in the 'Help in Hand' Directory. They were also positive about the library being used as a meeting space, and generally about events where the library aimed to reach out into the community. The Kiveton Community Development Worker, who was interviewed in more detail, thought the overridingly important thing was that "any local service needs to reflect what the needs are of that community" - for example in the materials selected.

Kiveton's Community Development Worker also mentioned a possible future role for libraries relating to technological developments. He said that the focus for the Youth and Community Centre (in Kiveton) was on training and accreditation in this area, whereas:-

> *"maybe there's scope, or it's more appropriate, for the library to look more at the knowledge stuff.   I suppose I've got a vision in my head of being able to download stuff from around the world…"*

The Area Action Manager focused on the role of the Library as an information point:-

> "*The idea of the library as the sort of place where you can just read a book and then swap it, is really old-hat. In Kiveton Park, the library is very much in the centre.. . there's a crèche with some kind of a story-time reading - so it offers quite a lot of facilities for the community, but as far as regeneration, I think it could be a point of information, and that is it. But, I think as far*

as information - an outlet for information - it would be the perfect venue for Kiveton Park."

The point about the community value of children's activities was also made by the Kiveton Park Community Development Worker, and was indirectly or directly supported in many of the other interviews. The value of the library for displays and publicity was also highlighted by the Rural Development Area Manager.

7.5   The Perception of the Library

Voluntary Sector Workers

As already noted the representatives of the White City Action Group generally felt alienated from council services, although they made some exceptions to this, most notably the Community Development Worker. This view did not particularly extend to libraries, but this could be attributed to their general lack of interaction with the branch library.   They saw the library as marginal to lives (although they saw it as a "good thing" for children) and to their community work.

However, the representative of Kiveton Independent Advice Centre distanced the Library Service from other council services. He said:-

"some of the clients that you do get, they can't differentiate between us and the particular agency that they've got their beef with - say the council or the unemployment office. …I'm sure that if we were based in some office next door to or in the council, as such - a council office building - then I'm sure people would be a little bit reluctant to come to us…"

This can be seen as an endorsement of the "neutrality" of libraries, a point that was also made by the three Sheffield-based library staff.

The Community Safety Co-ordinator saw libraries in general as having an image problem - in terms of being "rather fusty…even though most libraries I've been to aren't" and having nasty seventies buildings (points echoed in one or two other interviews), and suggested that libraries, and librarians, could be used more imaginatively to help overcome this. However, he also referred to other aspects of the image of libraries (speaking within the context of young people):-

> *"It's got a feeling of public ownership; it's got - possibly all the work that's been done over the past fifteen, twenty years, in getting libraries into schools, and schools into libraries, and the connection that it's actually probably quite warm and cosy in some ways, there's something familiar about it."*

Library and Community Development / Community Regeneration Staff

The Kiveton Area Action Support Worker, who had previously been based in the library, was able to give a (presumably objective) view of how "a lot of local people use it as a meeting place." This concurred with the view of the library assistant, who said that older people, in particular, saw the library as "a community point." Again, the (former) librarian for the area said Kiveton Park Library was used for people "to meet up and have a chat." She contrasted this with Aston Community Library which was "perceived as much more… in a more traditional role.

Rotherham Area Action had carried out a questionnaire-based survey on local service delivery, which suggested that although local people valued Kiveton Park Library, they did not, perhaps, feel "ownership" of it. Referring to the survey's findings, the Area Action Manager said that:-

*"I think people warm to the fact that Kiveton Park has got a
library and it's an information base and a lot of people use it.
But a lot of people take it for granted and the fact that building's
just there and, you know, it doesn't specifically shout out - this is
'from the council to the community' sort of thing. It's just taken
for granted."*

Contrasting with this point, one of the Sheffield library staff also
commented on their Service's research suggesting that the library was
seen as the "the local building." There, people, even non-users, felt an
"ownership" around the Library Service; in this sense, it was different to
other Council Services, like schools. Two of the Sheffield library staff
also expressed some concern about how possible future "community
management" of libraries might result in the library being seen as
owned by those individuals who were active on management
committees, rather than by the whole community.

Even if the Area Action questionnaire did not explicitly show this
kind of ownership, Kiveton Park Library did still come across as a focus
for the community. There seemed to be a high awareness of the
groups meeting there, of activities like the weekly story-time and of the
Advice Centre.

It was less easy to assess how Aston Community Library is
perceived, as I spoke to fewer people from the area and was not able
to develop as good a "feel" for the overall picture of community activity
as I did in Kiveton. As already stated, the demands of school use
affect the library's use by the community.

The very fact that the library is in the school may affect its
perception by the community - for example, it was mentioned when I
visited the library that there had, in the past, been an assumption, by
users, that the library was closed in school holidays. The library staff at
Aston said that the previous year's usage had suggested that local
publicity had overcome this problem. It is, nonetheless, suggestive of a

perception that, contrary to its name, Aston *Community* Library belongs to the school rather than the community.

7.6   The Location of the Library

Although not specifically covered in the interview guide, and therefore not mentioned in all the interviews, this aspect did emerge as a significant determinant of the role of the library as a community focal point.   Although "a long thin village" (as described in one of the case study interviews), Kiveton Park nonetheless has a discernible centre. The library's situation is, in the words of the Area Action Manager, "situated bang in the middle of the village, near the recreation ground where lots of the amenities are."

Similarly, the representative from Kiveton Park Independent Advice Centre saw the library's location as being a factor in the successful association between the library and the Advice Centre.

The location of Aston Community Library contrasts with that of Kiveton Park Library. Its catchment area was described by the former Librarian as a "very difficult to get a tag onto;" the diffuse nature of the area is reflected in the presence of the container library two days a week in another part of Aston. If the area does have a discernible centre, it is probably the Swallownest shopping area, some distance (and down a steep hill) from the Library at Aston Comprehensive School (which is in Aughton, the third "village" making up the overall Aston area).

8.   Conclusions and Recommendations

8.1   Conclusions

8.1.1 Overall Conclusion: The Role of the Library in Community Development and Community Regeneration

The literature review indicated that, from the perspective of the community development / community regeneration literature, there was little or no consideration of the role of the library. The local government literature looked at, although containing relatively few overt references to libraries, did suggest much that was of relevance to libraries.   This was particularly seen in the discussion of the delivery of decentralised services, and the potential for libraries to play a significant local role in this area.

The community librarianship literature does in fact suggest that there is a role for the library and community development, most notably by Martin (1989). An argument for the library's role in the regeneration of depressed communities does not explicitly come through from the literature looked at, but is perhaps implicit in, say, the conclusion from the Cleveland case study, that the public library supports both the positive aspects of community life, and the positive people. (Comedia, 1993, p.37)   The overriding conclusion from the literature review was that librarians should "concentrate on networking with other professionals serving the same community before determining what the exact nature of their role should be." (Coleman, 1992, p.312)   This suggests that a model of what the branch library can or should do in community development and / or community regeneration may not be either a feasible, or a desirable, objective. This judgement was confirmed by the case study, which showed that the role of the library was very different in two different communities. This is discussed in

the next section, and is followed by some more general conclusions, which emerge from both the case study and the literature review.

8.1.2 <u>The Community Role of the Library in Aston and Kiveton Park</u>

In terms of the two libraries looked at, much of the work done at Kiveton, in particular, with the volunteers from the Advice Centre and the various Area Action initiatives with which the librarian had been involved, suggested the potential for libraries to work with local voluntary and community groups. In Aston, the library had been involved with WeCare through the Rural Planning Forum.

Even after taking into account that more interviews related to the Kiveton area, it has to be said that the library's role was much more discernible there than it was in Aston. Before discussing the reasons for this it should be noted that this is only a broad judgement in relation to Kiveton, where both the Community Safety Co-ordinator and the White City Action Group saw the library, to a varying degree, as marginal to their groups' activities.[12] Looking broadly at all the Kiveton data, however, the library was repeatedly referred to as having significant roles in the local community - as an informal meeting place / community focal point, and for information and advice. This library then encompassed both the "information" and "caring" roles described earlier. (Landry, 1993, p.11) An interesting aside here is that the community meeting place, or caring, role was mainly put forward by library staff, and also by the Area Action Support Officer, who had worked from the library, whereas the information role was put forward more widely. In this, Kiveton Park Library differed from Aston

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[12] It is perhaps relevant to note that the librarian said "I had offered [the library] to the White City Action Group, but nobody took me up on it before I went - but I was quite keen to get them off the White City, to meet other residents of Kiveton Park in a neutral place."

Community Library, which, in the words of the librarian, was perceived as having a more "traditional" role.

Why then did the community role(s) of the library come across more strongly in Kiveton than in Aston? Many of the reasons for this were suggested by the librarian herself. She was based at Kiveton and "it's easier to get drawn into somewhere where you're based." As suggested earlier, Aston Community Library serves a large and diverse area, so she found it "very difficult to get a tag onto." As pointed out by both the librarian and the Senior Library Assistant at Aston, the school very much restricts the library's community use. This was in terms of both opening hours and limits on the library's use by local groups. A speculative point, not suggested in any of the case study interviews, is that perhaps its being a school library, with the consequent association with learning and "purposeful" use, may contribute to the library been seen in a more traditional role, rather than as a social or community meeting place.

Another relevant factor, is, of course, that the presence of Kiveton Park Area Action meant that there were initiatives underway in Kiveton which the librarian could feed into (for instance being involved in the Community Development Trust). However, the library was a focus for the community even before Community Regeneration staff moved into the area - a point made by the librarian and demonstrated by the long-term use of the library by the Advice Centre, and by local groups.

A factor which was mentioned by the librarian was that "there is nowhere in Kiveton where you can buy coffee, pubs but nowhere else." Coffee mornings were said to be very popular, and it can be seen that in a community which otherwise lacked a place to meet and chat, then providing this function might be a particular facet of Kiveton Park Library's community role. This ties in with a point, about meeting the needs of the community, made by one of the Sheffield library staff -

that is, in an area with no other community space then using the library as a meeting place might be important, in another area it might not be.

Kiveton Park Independent Advice Centre is also located in the library. The advice centre can be seen as meeting a particular community need, especially since the Pit closure, a point again made by the Kiveton librarian.

The differences in the two libraries' location and physical "visibility," or prominence, have already been referred to. Again, this may be a factor in their different community roles.

From the interview with the Senior Library Assistant at Aston, the overwhelming factor affecting the library's community role was its dual use. Clearly this is very significant. Having said this, and looking at all the relevant parts of the data collected, it is considered that the nature of the two communities themselves does have an effect on the role of their libraries. Kiveton Park seems, even after the blow of the pit closure, a close-knit community. Aston, though described in one interview as having a lot of "community spirit," is larger and feels much more of an aggregate, or even fragmented, community - a commuter area with no discernible centre.

This then supports the conclusion reached above - that the role of the library in community development / community regeneration can only be determined with reference to the nature, and needs, of the particular community.

8.1.3 Neutrality

The case study confirmed the view (quoted, for instance, in Greenhalgh and Worpole, 1995, p.12) that the library is a "neutral" non-exclusive public space. The Library Service was not associated with

Rotherham Council in the way that most other local authority services are. Unsurprisingly, this view was put forward most explicitly by library staff, but, as noted above, was also supported by the representative of Kiveton Park Independent Advice Centre.   The idea of the Library Service's neutrality was also suggested by the view of one of the Community Development Workers, who said she would rather get information from the Library, than from the Planning Department or the Social Policy Team, as she felt she was less likely to be asked <u>why</u> she wanted the information. Whether or not this view is correct, it does seem another example of how the Library Service is perceived as a "credible" source of neutral, non-value laden information (the term "credible" was used in this context by one of the Sheffield Library staff). This perhaps suggests that libraries are well-placed to provide more information for Council employees (as suggested by Coleman, 1992, p.302) as well as for voluntary sector workers, and as a local "information broker." (Landry, 1993, p.11)

8.1.4   A Local Service

Emerging very strongly was the "localness" of libraries - or, as it put in the case study, their being "a community facility for each village" - which is consistent with the localised approach inherent in both Community Development Work and the Area Action community regeneration initiative. Unlike what was reported to be the case in Sheffield, a sense of local "ownership" of libraries did not seem to come through especially strongly. It can only be speculative to consider whether this is because whether this is because of the more consciously community-oriented approach associated with Sheffield Library Service.

Experience of "Area Working" in Sheffield suggested two additional roles for the Library Service. The first, acting as an

intermediary between different Council service providers, by producing local directories of information, might be worth considering in Rotherham. It would build on existing work of "Help in Hand," (and the links built up between the Central Library and the VSF), but there would clearly need to be a clarification of roles between the Library Service and staff in the Community Regeneration Programme Area.

8.1.5 <u>Information and Advice</u>

The second of the additional roles suggested from experience of area working in Sheffield was in libraries providing "one-stop" information services. Whether this is feasible depends on various factors. The first of these is training as already suggested by the experience in Sheffield. Even if these training needs could be met, much would depend on the location and suitability of existing library buildings, and the alternatives available. For instance, in Kiveton Park the library has a much more central, and more visible, location than the Area Action Office. In this it contrasts with Rawmarsh and Parkgate Area Action, whose office is situated in the main shopping precinct. From the (admittedly limited) evidence of my preliminary visit there, this Area Action Office could be seen as already providing a one-stop shop for Council Services. This office certainly has a more central location than Rawmarsh Library, and would, in that sense, be better placed to provide a one stop shop for council services.

The data collected suggested a clear association between libraries and information and advice. This was seen most explicitly from the experience of the Kiveton Park Independent Advice Centre, and a comparable initiative at Upperthorpe Library (amongst others in Sheffield). However, even the Kiveton Park Community Development Trust, which failed to get the information it needed on setting up a group, had *tried* to use the Library for this purpose, and the White City Action Group representative, who saw the least possible role for the

library, "would go there if I wanted any information." This suggests that the library is a suitable point for the strategic placement of information in support of community development / community regeneration - although, of course, this does not preclude the use of other venues.

8.1.6 <u>Performance Measurement</u>

A key point emerging from experience in Sheffield was the need to develop other performance measures than just the number of books issued. Kiveton Park Library, for example, is doing much more than just issuing books.

8.1.7 <u>The Potential of the Library</u>

Whatever current performance, there is no doubt, to me, that the Council's Strategic approach to community development / community regeneration (which one of the Sheffield Librarians contrasted with the more piecemeal approach there) represents an opportunity for the Library Service in Rotherham to make a positive contribution.   A further point comes less directly from the data collected, but can be regarded as a response to the view, quoted above, that libraries only reach <u>a section</u> of the community.   Although they are, nationally, used by a slightly higher proportion of ABC1 than C2/DE social group users, they are also used, in disproportionately large amounts by women, the under-20s and over-60s.   (BML 1992 Survey, quoted in Greenhalgh and Worpole, 1995, p.40-41)   The interviews with library staff, and observations of local libraries, would seem to suggest that Rotherham broadly conforms with this national pattern of greater usage by these groups, who are amongst those which community development aims to "empower" or support. More generally, the breadth of the library's

usage may also be said to give it a key place in a community's cohesiveness. Whilst society has become "more fragmented and isolating," the library attracts users from all social groups and age bands, contributing to a "special atmosphere" which "may turn out in the future, to be its greatest asset." (Landry, 1993, p.10)

A further point on the potential of libraries has links with the above discussion of the library as a local service. Although it is well beyond the scope of this project to evaluate the success (so far) of Rotherham Area Action, it is axiomatic that regenerating whole communities <u>and</u> developing responsive local services represent enormous, and long-term, tasks. Other than schools and the Youth and Community Centre, the library was until the onset of Area Action, the only council facility in Kiveton Park. In the words of the librarian it was "a genuine community facility before [the Corporate Area Manager] moved in post." Similarly, the Community Development Worker was also relatively new in post. Although outside the Area Action initiative, similar general points could be made about Aston , where, other than schools the only council facility is the Youth and Community Centre (and which, according to one of the Aston case study respondents, is due to close). This suggests that library staff are better placed than many other Council workers to know about the delivery of a <u>local</u> service, to meet the needs of the local community. Therefore, library staff should be able to make a positive contribution within the new "corporate" working environment of co-operative working across programme areas.

8.1.8 <u>Information Needs</u>

The ultimate aim, at the outset of this project was to provide a model of what services libraries can provide beyond basic community information. Given the limited scope and scale of the project, this objective was perhaps unrealistic, especially as one message that

seemed to come through particularly strongly was that different communities may need different things from their library. An instance of this would be in the above example on the question of whether libraries should provide meeting rooms. In addition to different communities having different needs, so do particular voluntary and community groups within them. For example, the Kiveton Community Development Worker said that working with the White City Action Group is "a central piece of work in the village because the White City has been identified as an area of disadvantage and depression."

This priority means that the Community Development worker meets weekly with the Group's Chair, which effectively means that it has access to a resource at a level that would not be available to many other local groups. Similarly, this Community Development Worker said that:-

"The White City Action Group are quite far down the road in terms of what they want to do, and so they're actively looking at funding. It might be working with a young parents' group in the village - now they won't be looking at funding for some time."

This diversity of information needs and resources can equally be seen with all the voluntary groups considered.

8.1.9 Information Technology

As reported in the results section, two of the interview subjects specifically referred to the library's possible use of IT developments to help support voluntary and community groups. However, this is not commented on further, because it was not within the original scope of this project and, in any case there is clearly already work going ahead in this area.

8.1.10 <u>"It all depends who you know!"</u>

"It all depends who you know" is the title of a publication looking at community networks in urban regeneration. (Skelcher et al, 1996) This study refers to the importance of personal contacts in network development, as well as the general importance of networks in the regeneration process. (Skelcher et al, 1996, p.10-13)

Some similar conclusions can be drawn from the Rotherham case study.   An illustration of these would be the way in which the White City Action Group gathered information, developed contacts and generated ideas, through attending meetings (described above at 7.3). Another illustration would be the links built up between the Central Library and the VSF. That these links are in some ways more akin to an informal network rather than a formal work partnership (a distinction made in Skelcher et al, 1996, p.8) is that the VSF Co-ordinator expressed concern that these "links have died off a bit since [the Community Librarian responsible for the Community Resource Directory] left - and I think we need to re-establish that." Similarly, in Kiveton, even the White City Action Group, the voluntary group which seemed the most "removed" from the library, said the Kiveton librarian in the case study "was there at that time and she was ever so helpful if I needed any help." This is an indication of this particular librarian's visible presence in the community. It has already been described, in the case study findings, how, through involvement in local groups, she was a "known face" in the Kiveton area.

This sort of "added value" developed through individual contacts takes a long time to build up, but can, as in the above two examples of Rotherham library staff, be lost through reorganisation and staff moves. The challenge here is to find the appropriate balance between continuity and change.

8.1.11 <u>"Off the Record!"</u>

The reluctance of some respondents to make some comments "on the record" has already been noted. There was a striking contrast between the reticence of council staff, and the attitudes of those from the voluntary sector. Both of the paid voluntary sector workers emphasised the importance of the independence that their "voluntary" status gave them, especially in terms of being able to criticise council services. All the unpaid voluntary workers were notably forthright in their views, as illustrated by the comment above from the White City Action Group about the Rotherham Area Action initiative.

It is noteworthy that this reluctance to say certain things "off the record" was confined to Council workers (in fact, the Rotherham Council workers). It is not within the scope of this dissertation to attribute reasons for this. Equally, however, it is not an issue that is entirely tangential to the subject of this dissertation, in that it is, perhaps, suggestive of a culture difference between local authority employees and the voluntary sector. This is relevant in that it has implications for the way in which the objectives of community development and community regeneration are pursued by Council staff. It is perhaps suggestive of a mistrust between different groups of Council staff, which may affect their ability to co-operate - both with each other, and with outside groups - in the delivery of improved services.

8.2   Recommendations

A key conclusion of the case study was that different groups had very diverse information needs and also different resources to meet

these needs. For this, and all the other reasons discussed above, a generic model of what libraries should provide is not being put forward here. However, as the general conclusion is that there is (or should be) a role for the branch library in community development and community regeneration some suggestions for possible future discussion in Rotherham are put forward here.

- Establishing Library User Groups to help ensure that libraries reflect local communities' needs.

- Encouraging library staff to become involved with local community and voluntary groups.
- Developing performance measures to reflect community activity.

- Establishing links with other Council staff in the area, and especially with Community Development Workers to build up information about local groups.
- Assembling an information pack on how to set up and run a community group (as there appeared to be a particular need for information in this area).

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Appendix A: Interview Guides

Questions for Community Development / Community Regeneration and Voluntary Sector Workers

1. What is the role / aims of your organisation? What is your role within that organisation?

2. What are your key work relationships? With whom do you have important partnerships? What are your most important communications networks?

3. What information do you need to know to carry out your job? Who / where do you get it from? What uses do you put the information to? To whom is it disseminated?

4. What (if any) role do you think the public library can play in community development / regeneration?

5. What sort of community information does the library provide? What sort of community information should the library provide?

6. What community-oriented facilities (e.g. meeting rooms) does the library provide? What facilities (e.g. meeting rooms) should the library provide?

7. For voluntary sector workers: In what (if any) way does the public library support the aims of your organisation? Are there any further ways in which the public library can do this?

8. For council workers: How do you think the branch library is perceived by the local community?

For voluntary sector workers: How do you think the branch library is perceived by your local constituency?

Questions for Library Workers

1.   What do you think are the key roles / functions of the branch library?

2.   What do you understand by community development/ regeneration?   Are you aware of the council's work in this area?

3.   How do you think the branch library contributes to the area's regeneration / community development? Can it do more in this area? Should it? (i.e. is community development a legitimate role for the library?)

4.   What community information should the library provide? What does it provide? In what ways could the library's services be altered to make them more community oriented?

5.   What local groups use the library (e.g. for meetings, finding information, putting up notices)?

6.   Are there any other ways in which the branch library could act as a focus for the local community (e.g. as a meeting place?)

7.   How do you think the library is perceived by the local community?

Appendix B: The Dissertation as a Learning Experience

I was aware from the outset that the dissertation process would be a test of my ability to work independently. Above all else, it was an exercise in discipline and organisation. In this sense, I feel it would help me demonstrate "self-starting" qualities to an employer.

It reinforced the importance of preparation. After the first interviews had gone well, I became more casual about the ensuing interviews, which meant that I probably did not do justice do the people being interviewed. An instance of this was not listening closely enough so there were important points which I did not pick up on by asking supplementary questions. I was able, however, to remedy this in later interviews. The importance of both preparation and of listening to pick up verbal clues is a specific lesson that I will take forward into job interviews (and, I hope, future work). Relating to listening skills, I realised, on playing back the tape, that I was occasionally "talking over" the other person - again, this was something I was something that I was then able to remedy in subsequent interviews.

In terms of research design, the research methods and dissertation preparation lectures were helpful and relevant, particularly in terms of understanding the qualitative / quantitative dimension and of planning the research. What I learned through the experience of doing the work myself was the importance of preparation. I also learned that the literature review was crucial in providing a foundation for the rest of the research.

I learned that personal contacts do matter (which was also a finding of the project itself) - and that they can affect the emphasis of the research. The fact that I already knew a Rotherham Council officer in the Community Regeneration Programme Area, made it relatively straightforward establishing contacts with relevant staff working in community development and community regeneration. The fact that I did not have an equivalent contact with the Library Service meant that the "libraries" side of the preliminary work was comparatively

neglected. This was reflected, to some extent, in a lack of focus on libraries in the literature review. The other manifestation of this imbalance was in not seeking the input of national library and information groupings like the Community Services Group of the Library Association and the Community Projects Foundation; it is here that the significance of personal contacts is again reflected (or, in this case, a lack of them). Clearly the lesson learned here was to be more assertive about approaching relevant groups and individuals.

I learned quite a lot following these initial mistakes. Once the main writing up period was underway I built in my own internal deadlines, or milestones - generally these were realistic, and I was able to meet most of them. In this respect the lectures on dissertation preparation were very helpful, as they emphasised that work should be planned in this way.

From the start, I was aware of the obvious points that a dissertation involved both more originality and more profound analysis of the data collected, than was necessary for other coursework. What was less obvious to me was that this need to think about issues more deeply extended to the structure as well as the content of the dissertation. Whereas, with an essay, it is usually possible to "deconstruct" the question in such a way as to provide a guide to its structure, this could not be so readily done with the subject of this dissertation.

Pointing to the value of a student doing research in an outside organisation, I learned that real libraries can be very different to the picture painted in lectures and seminars. One illustration of the sort of assumption I had made from the lectures was that community profiling was an absolutely routine part of public librarianship which would self-evidently take place in all public libraries. I was disabused of this idea, when I was told, in one interview, that community profiling had "let slip" in Rotherham Libraries since the early 'eighties! Carrying out the case

study, then, taught me about the individual nature of libraries - and that very little should be taken for granted about the working of individual library services.

Finally, carrying out the case study made me think about the relevance of research to practice. A particular instance of this was when one of librarians interviewed said, of one of the questions I'd asked him, "that's a good point, really, nobody's ever asked that before." This is not to suggest that I was asking profound questions, but that research can have a role in re-examining existing practices, and in looking at things afresh - that there is a value in standing back from day-to-day activity, and reflecting on wider issues. This to me suggests the importance of research in a broad sense. It should not only be used to look at specific issues in an *ad hoc* way. A particular instance of this would be to input research findings - or, at least, an enquiring attitude - into the business planning cycle. Without this ability to stand back and ask basic questions (such as 'why do we do this?'), the next year's business plan may just become a re-statement of the present one (this a judgement based on past work experience!).

In summary, then, I <u>learned</u> about research management and techniques, and the relevance of research to practice. The more generic competences which I <u>developed</u>, related to organisation (specifically, in terms of preparation), listening and oral communication and analytical skills.