TELLING TALES: AN EXPLORATION OF THE LIBRARIAN'S ROLE AS
STORYTELLER

A study submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
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at

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by

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for Eric

for providing constant encouragement,

cups of tea and study biscuits!

Abstract

This report presents the findings of an exploratory study investigating public library storytimes for pre-school children in Sheffield. The study focused in particular on the training that library staff receive to carry out this activity. Four data collection methods were used. These were: **1.** A questionnaire survey of library staff who carry out storytelling **2.** A questionnaire survey of the adults who use the service **3.** Recorded observations of seven storytimes held at six libraries within Sheffield **4.** An interview with a member of Sheffield Library staff who has responsibility for training in storytelling. Within the limitations of the data collection methods used, the study revealed a number of interesting findings. Almost half the staff who responded to the staff questionnaire indicated that they had received no training for carrying out this activity and a number of staff expressed an interest in receiving training. Whilst all staff were aware of the objectives for holding storytimes, the majority indicated that this activity is not at present evaluated. The survey of the adults who use the service served to highlight the high value individuals place upon it. The observations of the storytimes identified a number of issues, including: the imposition of age restrictions, the existence of waiting lists, the different chaperone policies operating, the distinctive features which contribute to a storytime atmosphere and the pressure on staff. The difficulties that the present resource constraints impose on staff were highlighted in the staff training interview, the staff questionnaire survey and the observations of the storytimes. The study concludes with a small number of recommendations which serve as a guide to the actions that should be implemented when resources allow.

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2. Botten, T. 1988.   Sharing Stories, Rhymes and Finger Plays With Children.   <u>In</u>: *Under Fives Welcome! Libraries and the Youngest Child,* Library Association Course held at Manchester Polytechnic on Tuesday 5th July 1988.   Unpublished course notes.

3. Sheffield Libraries and Information Services. 1993.   Selected extracts from: *Policy Guidelines for Children and Young People,* Children's Policy Guidelines Working Group, Final Draft, March 1993, M2/GUIDEBK/LYP.

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Chapter 1: Background to this study

"Storytime is a valued service which we'd hate to lose!   As a child I enjoyed listening to stories on the radio in "listen with mother" but that no longer exists for today's children."

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1.0 Introduction

This dissertation project focuses on a range of aspects relating to children's storytimes in public libraries.   The inspiration for this project initially arose through the author's attendance at a number of children's storytimes held within Alton Public Library in Hampshire during the Summer of 1995.   Attending these sessions stimulated the author's interest in storytimes in public libraries and, in particular, how library staff gain the skills required to carry out storytelling activities.

During the course of considering an area to research for this dissertation, the author decided to follow up this interest and surveyed the literature to determine what work had been carried out in this area; a review of which is outlined within Chapter 2.   The author was surprised to find that little published literature existed which critically examined how staff acquire the necessary skills, particularly as a recently published report by the Library and Information Services Council on library services to children (Department of National Heritage 1995) identifies the "art of storytelling" as an area in which staff should receive specialist training.

The author's interest in this area was further drawn on reading two papers published in the Autumn 1995 issue of the "Youth Library Review" (Fairbairn 1995, Plummer 1995).   Fairbairn (1995) highlights the storytelling skills of French librarians, whilst Plummer (1995) questions the training that staff receive in "performance skills":

"And finally, telling and selling - what about performance skills? How well do we train our staff in giving presentations, storytelling etc. ? Or do we expect them to pick it up as they go along or do we even care at all whether or how well they are doing this work ?"

Plummer (1995)

Finally, the author heard anecdotal evidence from course colleagues and library staff which indicated that some staff receive little training for this activity. Taking all these factors into consideration the author decided that carrying out a study in this area would not only enable her to further her own interest in this topic but would also usefully contribute to the small body of work that has been carried out in this area.

1.1 Study location

For financial reasons a decision was made to restrict the investigation to storytimes within one library authority, namely Sheffield Libraries Services. Whilst this is a limitation of this study, the author was able, by focusing on the storytimes of one authority, to broaden the scope of the investigation and examine the activity in more depth. Therefore, in addition to seeking information on the views and experiences of staff who are involved in this activity (including staff responsible for training), the author also attended and recorded observations on seven storytimes for pre-school children at six libraries within the Sheffield area, and collected information from the adults who took the children to each storytime.

1.2 Aims and objectives

Due to the lack of published literature critically examining the aspects under investigation, the author decided that the planned study would be exploratory in nature. For this reason no specific hypotheses have been put forward by the author to be tested against the data collected. The main objectives of this study were to find out what training library staff receive for this activity and, in this context, what reasons library staff give for carrying

out this activity, how storytimes are structured and presented and how effective they are as a method of library promotion.

More specifically, the questions the author sought to address encompassed the following three areas:

Training

What training do library staff receive for storytelling (staff and employer's perceptions) ?   What skills are required to carry out storytelling ?   How can these skills be acquired ?

Staff

Why do staff carry out storytelling sessions in the library ?   What do they hope to achieve ?   What factors govern the selection of material ?   How are storytimes structured and presented ?   How does the structure, content and presentation of storytimes in practice compare with advice outlined within the literature ?

Audience

Why do children and adults attend ?   What are their opinions about storytime sessions ?   Do these sessions encourage/motivate children to use the library facilities ?

By addressing these questions the author sought to elicit the requisite information.   A more detailed account of the methodology used in this study is outlined within Chapter 3.

Chapter 2:   Review of the literature

"My children love it.   They meet other children of similar ages.   We enjoy the creative activities.   It's also a regular book borrowing time.   It's very friendly.   It's free.   Also mums can get together too!"

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2.0   The scope of this review

The literature pertaining to children, reading and libraries is vast and it is, therefore, not feasible within the timeframe of this project to critically evaluate all the relevant material.   This review focuses solely on published literature concerned with storytelling in a library setting and, in particular, the small number of studies that have highlighted staff training issues.

2.1   Sources of information

The author gathered the information to write this review from a variety of sources.   Searches were carried out on a range of CD-Rom databases namely, LISA, ERIC, International ERIC and BIDS.   Whilst a considerable number of references were generated from these searches, the synopses provided indicated that the information available would not be relevant to the focus of the present study.   The vast majority of articles located appeared to be uncritical descriptions of storytelling programmes in libraries with no reference to staff training issues.

The back issues of a number of education and library journals held by the University of Sheffield Library were also scanned for relevant articles. Journal titles examined included: "English in Education", "Journal of Research in Reading", "Language and Learning", "Language Matters", "Public Library Journal", "Reading" and the "Wilson Library Bulletin."   A number of useful monographs were also located by using the library 'STAR' catalogue and by browsing the library shelves.   The author also scanned the reference and bibliography listings of a number of dissertations carried out by past students of the Department of Information Studies which focused on library services to children (Keane 1992, Browning 1995, Stott 1995).

Several visits were made to the library of the Library Association and back issues of the following journals were scanned for relevant articles: "International Review of Children's Literature and Librarianship", "Journal of Youth Services in Libraries", "School Library Journal" and the "Youth Library Review". Information was also obtained from the Society for Storytelling who produce an "Education Booklist" factsheet for teachers on using storytelling in schools (Society for Storytelling 1996). Information for library staff carrying out storytelling activities was also obtained from two sets of course notes. Mr Alec Williams of Calderdale Library Services provided the course notes from a storytelling course run earlier this year for library staff within Calderdale (Calderdale Children's and Education Unit 1996), whilst Ms Kath Navratil of Sheffield Libraries Services provided the notes from a Library Association course on services to the under fives which included guidance on storytimes (Botten 1988).

The author also explored resources on the Internet and found a number of relevant sites. Unfortunately, time constraints prevented the author examining these sites in any depth and, therefore, the information they contain is not included within this review. The Internet also proved to be a useful vehicle by which to access library catalogues at a number of UK academic institutions. During the course of searching for information, the library catalogues of the Universities of Loughborough, Birmingham and Northumbria were examined. The University of Loughborough catalogue proved the most fruitful and listed a number of unpublished dissertations which the author felt would, from the title information, have been relevant to the present investigation. These included "Storytelling and the Lincolnshire Storyboat" (Williams 1990), "Right From the Start: A study of Provision for Under Fives in 2 Leicestershire Libraries" (Gill 1991), "Libraries and the Pre-School Child: A survey of Public Library Services in Derbyshire" (Renwick 1988) and "British Public Library Service and the Pre-School Child" (Rattray 1977). Unfortunately, time constraints prevented the author from visiting the University of Loughborough to examine these dissertations further. One dissertation (Williams 1990) was requested through the inter-library loan

system in May but did not arrive in Sheffield until July and, unfortunately, proved to be a descriptive account of a storytelling programme rather than a critical study. Therefore, it should be stressed that the information outlined within this review is drawn primarily from readily available published material.

2.2   The structure of this review

This review is divided into three sections. The first section briefly outlines the purpose of storytelling in libraries, draws attention to the lack of research in this area and highlights some reported attitudes to this activity. The second section describes the small number of studies that have highlighted staff training issues with respect to storytelling in libraries. The third section provides brief details of the advisory literature on storytelling that the author used to inform her analysis of the library storytimes she observed during the present study.

The reader should bear in mind that the literature surveyed within this chapter does not encompass all the aspects that the present study is examining. Literature relating to other aspects is referred to during the results and discussion chapter as pertinent points arise.

2.3   Storytelling in libraries

According to Greene (1982) the development of storytelling in libraries in 19th Century America arose out of "a desire to introduce children to the pleasures of books and reading":

> "The early library storytellers believed that storytelling was the best way of motivating children to open the door to reading. But they realized that children would only be motivated to turn to the printed page if what they heard orally from books was worthwhile and so they chose wisely and told stories with artistry."

That storytelling is as an activity that the library profession still perceives it should undertake is evidenced by the references made to this activity within a range of guidelines for library services to children (see for

example, Department of National Heritage 1995, Youth Libraries Group 1991, Esson and Tyerman 1991).   The guidelines published by the Association for Assistant Librarians for example, state quite clearly that "the purpose of telling stories in libraries is to generate a love of story and thus encourage the desire to read" and outline the benefits that storytelling confers on children:

- "it expands their vocabulary and can provide models for new sentence structures

- it widens experience and reassures children that difficult situations and emotions are not unique to them

- hearing stories, particularly when told rather than read, allows children to develop skills in listening

- besides being a direct way of promoting the stock, using picture books to tell stories educates children in the way in which books work and the relationship between text and illustration."

Esson and Tyerman (1991)

Moreover, these benefits are now well documented within the educational literature (see for example, Meek 1988, Rosen 1988, Chambers 1991, Hislam 1996).

Unfortunately, however, despite the acknowledgement that storytelling receives within library guidelines, the majority of the published research concerned with the impact of storytelling on children is set in the context of the school or home environment.   The absence of research in a library setting is highlighted by Short (1995) who draws attention to the lack of research on the effects of reading aloud to children by librarians:

> "Most of the articles on read-aloud were found in reading education journals, and a few were obtained from English education journals.   None, however, were located in library journals."

> "....More research needs to be done on children reading aloud to their classmates and on individuals other than classroom teachers who read aloud to children. School libraries make extensive use of read-aloud in their library programs; however, there is an absence of research in this area."

Moreover, the role of the children's librarian in the promotion of reading generally has been given scant attention in the educational literature as Shepherd (1988) highlights:

> "What then, is this real work of the children's librarian ? It is depressing to have to admit that, in the many investigations and surveys on reading and use of books in children's education and personal development, there is little mention of the librarian. In Bullock,[1] Whitehead,[2] Southgate,[3] Davies[4] and many other sources clear evidence is given to support the concept of the importance of children's reading, and credit is paid to the use of libraries and to the good work of parents and teachers but there is little recognition of the role of librarians as interactive in the process."

The image that storytelling in particular has as a method of promotion within the library profession may, however, have contributed to the lack of research into this activity. In this context, it is interesting to compare the reported views of John Cotton Dana (Head of the Newark Free Public Library) in 1908, with the more recent comments made by Ling (1979), Shepherd (1988) and Dunne (1995):

> "Dana....considered storytelling a poor use of a librarian's time and energy. In a 1908 article in *Public Libraries,* Dana labelled library storytellers "altruistic, emotional, dramatic, irrepressible child-lovers who do not find [that] ordinary library work gives sufficient opportunities for altruistic indulgence.""

> Greene (1982)

> "Some library authorities, if not all, assume that telling stories is a job for the youngest, most enthusiastic, but least experienced staff, and even untrained assistants."

> Ling (1979)

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[1] Bullock - see Department of Education and Science 1970 in the 'References' Section.
[2] Whitehead - see Whitehead 1977 in the 'References' Section.
[3] Southgate - see Ingham 1981 in the 'References' Section.
[4] Davies - see Davies 1986 in the 'References' Section.

"The idea that children's work is a good grounding and most suited to young librarians, who have sometimes been left to do their own thing with little guidance or support, may have helped to give rise to the confusion between children's librarianship and library child minders. The assumption that *ad hoc* story reading and cutting out paper dragons is fun, and therefore provides a welcoming and caring profile for the service, may be as far as many library managers have troubled to go."

Shepherd (1988)

"Library services for children and young people have always been an important aspect of public library provision and yet some of the values inherent in these services have been called into question by some colleagues. There has been general admiration for our ability to review and evaluate new material and more importantly, to promote it in a positive way. *However, some of this promotion, through storytimes and holiday activities, has been frowned on by some colleagues and is not considered as **real** librarianship."*

Dunne (1995) *(my emphasis)*

The next section describes the small number of studies that have highlighted staff training issues with respect to this activity.

2.4 Staff training

According to the Library and Information Services Council (Department of National Heritage 1995) storytelling is one of a range of specialist skills that staff working with children should receive training in. This view is also supported within the guidelines for library services to children produced by the Library Association (Youth Libraries Group 1991) and the Association for Assistant Librarians (Esson and Tyerman 1991). However, precisely what type of training staff should receive in this activity is not elaborated upon although Esson and Tyerman (1991) observe that:

"Usually library staff tell stories using books. Storytelling without text is a different experience and requires other techniques."

Mortimer (1982) lists the components of a storytelling training programme that community librarians in Edinburgh undertook for "reading aloud" sessions as follows:

> "Components of the session included the structuring of story-reading sessions, the choice of material for including in such programmes, and the techniques of reading aloud: voice-projection, posture, breath-control, and the necessity of a thorough knowledge of the materials selected. Practical sessions of reading aloud to children have provided the necessary opportunities for monitoring of performance and progress, with recommendations regarding areas of progress."

An article by Moorehead (1974) however, describing storytimes run by Wandsworth and Lambeth Library Services highlights how staff differ in their views on the type of storytelling service they should offer:

> "Mrs Doris Aubrey, Senior Children's Librarian at Wandsworth, bases her story telling programme around the 13 Wandsworth libraries. "I think the children should know the library, come and see what it is like in here", she says. Her approach is to part read, part tell a story, holding the book upside down so that the audience can follow the pictures, to link firmly in the children's mind the ideas that stories come from books, and that there are plenty more stories where the one she is telling comes from. (Other tellers prefer to talk without books, relying on the immediacy of the telling, and feel that books come between them and the children.)"

> "....Lambeth, which probably has the best story telling service in the country, prefers to take its stories out to find listeners. "We feel we can't wait in the library for people to find us" says John Vincent, Assistant Children's Librarian, "We go and look for them in youth clubs, the parks, playgroups and shopping centres.""

Staff in Lambeth told stories orally and Moorehead's article describes the differing views held by individuals on whether the technique of oral storytelling can be taught or whether people have to have a natural aptitude for it:

> "Nor is Brian Alderson, at the school of librarianship at the North London Polytechnic, which includes story telling in its Children's Librarianship course, convinced that training is necessary. Like many people he feels that story telling is something you either can or cannot do, a gift that cannot properly be taught. Dr Hadley, however, insists that given the proper training anyone can tell a story well. "I never found anyone I couldn't train however unpromising they seemed," she says, "Who wants to watch an amateur ? Performance is the key to it." "

A more detailed account of the community storytime programme run by Lambeth can be found in Hill (1973) and Vincent (1979).

Whilst all the aforementioned articles highlight aspects relating to staff training, a search of the published literature revealed that few studies have been carried out which critically investigate the training staff receive for storytelling. To date, one study has been located which specifically examines the acquisition of oral storytelling skills by library staff (Sierra 1990) whilst a study by Fearn (1982) on promotional activities for children describes the staff training issues that arose from two storytelling events.

Sierra (1990) surveyed the children's specialists at Los Angeles Public Library to identify those staff who told stories orally without a book. The storytelling practices of these oral storytelling librarians were then compared with the reported practices of traditional storytellers in order to "objectively describe and analyze the similarities and differences between the two" (Sierra 1990). Amongst the findings reported upon, Sierra (1990) found that the librarians telling stories orally had been children's librarians longer than other members of library staff who either did not tell stories or read stories from a book. Moreover, the tales favoured by oral storytellers were different:

> "Nor do these favored stories come from popular or critically acclaimed, in-print books that have a type size suitable to young readers, as one would expect if the goal of storytelling is truly to motivate listeners to read the same story from a book. On the contrary, many appear only in collections which have been out of print for many years..."

From this Sierra (1990) concluded that:

"The story-to-book link, insofar as it is deemed an essential part of library storytelling, might better be established at a thematic level, so that a told story leads into booktalks for books with similar themes at the children's reading level."

Sierra (1990) also drew attention to problems encountered by children's librarians who are new to the job:

"My research suggests that if new children's librarians are to become storytellers, appropriate training is a necessity. Feelings of frustration at not being able to control groups and not knowing enough good stories were expressed on the questionnaire by many respondents with two years or less on the job."

This aspect is highlighted in an article by Tabuchi (1994) which reflects on the authors first year working as a children's librarian following library school. Reviewing the library school course she undertook in the context of her first year's work experience, Tabuchi (1994) comments that:

"I feel I would have benefited from a storytelling course and more practical applications of theories and techniques, particularly as they relate to children's services."

The need to provide staff with appropriate training on storytelling also emerges from the study carried out by Fearn (1982). Fearn (1982) conducted an investigation into the impact of promotional activities on children's use of an inner-city branch library in Nottingham. The study focused in particular on the impact that two storytelling sessions had as a method of promoting the library, in addition to examining the effect that different methods of publicity had on children's attendance at these events. From interviews with library staff Fearn (1982) reported that:

"Storytelling sessions were felt by one librarian to be the least popular with some staff because "they are petrified of telling stories to a group, they just don't know how to cope and what's going to happen." "

The importance of involving non-professional staff in the planning and implementation of storytelling sessions also emerged as an issue (Fearn 1982):

"In a team-management structure, where day to day contact with children is inevitably delegated to non-professional

assistants, and these are not involved in the planning or execution of activities, the continuing impact of the activities on relationships between library staff and children is inevitably impaired. Storytelling sessions where non-professionals continue to deal with routine counter work cannot be translated into suggestions over a choice of books, when a child approaches the issue desk to find only an assistant who has had no opportunity to participate in reading-related promotion."

From the results of this study, Fearn (1982) concluded that from a staff perspective:

"Professional staff found activities at once tiring and rewarding aspects of work with children, and their enthusiasm for this area of the library service was a marked feature of the project. As a means of developing both professional and personal skills, activities were rated highly by the staff who took part in them, which contrasted with the attitudes of the non-professionals, who did not take part, and saw activities more in terms of extra work, than pleasure of fulfilment. Training of both professional and non-professional staff should include sessions on controlling groups of children; interaction with individual children and the organisation and implementation of activities."

The next section provides a brief overview of the advisory literature on storytelling which the author used during the present study.

2.5 Guidance literature

The purpose of this section is to briefly highlight the references the author used to inform her analysis of the library storytimes during the present study.

During the search for literature relevant to the present study, the author found many articles offering advice on how to tell stories. However, the majority of references were concerned with techniques for oral storytelling as opposed to telling stories with picture books. This factor was of particular relevance to the present study as all the staff observed by the researcher used picture books during their storytime presentations.

The author felt that the published references of most relevance to library staff in the context of the present study were those by Weir (1988) and

Colwell (1991).   Both authors offer practical advice on storytelling using picture books and on running storytimes for young children.   The monograph by Colwell (1991) also provides guidance on oral storytelling.

However, during the course of carrying out the present study the author was also provided with the unpublished notes from two storytelling courses run specifically for library staff (Botten 1988, Calderdale Children's and Education Unit 1996).   Both sets of notes contained many useful points of relevance to the present study and the notes obtained from Calderdale Children's and Education Unit (1996) were particularly comprehensive.   As both sets of course notes are unpublished and may not be widely available they are included within this thesis for the reader to refer to (see Appendices 1 and 2).   In addition, the author also obtained details of the guidelines for library promotional activities for children produced by Sheffield Libraries Services and these are outlined within Appendix 3.

2.6 Conclusion

A number of points emerge from the literature surveyed.   Whilst it is clear that storytelling is a skill which staff working with children should possess, few studies have examined what training staff receive for this activity or how staff acquire this skill.   However, that training is an issue is clear from the problems that are highlighted within the literature surveyed.   There is, therefore, a clear need to carry out research in this area and the next chapter outlines the methodology of the present study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

"Richard enjoys "sticky-time" too and very proudly takes home his creations for Mummy and Daddy to look at, then displays them on his 'gallery'. There are many happy hours spent in playing with his "creations." "

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3.0 Methodological approach

The review of the literature outlined within Chapter 2 has highlighted the lack of published research in the area this study focuses upon. For this reason it was decided that primarily a qualitative approach would be used when collecting data for this exploratory study. By following this approach the author sought to collect data which would provide insight into the area under investigation and a more richer picture of the views and opinions of the individual respondents (Hakim 1987). However, alongside the qualitative techniques used a range of quantitative data was also collected which it was felt would provide useful background information on the sample under study. Further details on the data collection methods used are outlined within the relevant sections.

3.1 Study location and conditions

This study was conducted on the library services in Sheffield and the author sought to ensure that data was collected from staff and libraries drawn from a range of different geographical and social areas. All respondents and libraries who participated in this study were (unless otherwise agreed) assured anonymity in the present dissertation report. For this reason no further descriptive details are provided of the sample the data is drawn from.

3.2 Data collection methods

In order to fulfil the aims and objectives of this study outlined within Chapter 1, data was collected from a range of individuals using a variety of techniques:

1.   A questionnaire survey of library staff who carry out storytelling sessions.

2.   An interview with a member of staff responsible for training.

3.   Observation of library storytelling sessions and recording of key features of them.

4.   A questionnaire survey of the adults who took the children to the storytelling sessions.

Details of each of these data collection methods will now be discussed in turn.

3.2.1   Library staff questionnaire survey

A survey of staff who carry out library storytelling sessions was conducted in order to find out what training individuals had received for carrying out this activity and to elicit the views of the staff and their experiences of it.   A self-completed questionnaire was selected as the method by which to collect the data from the staff for two reasons.   Firstly, with the present level of staffing within Sheffield Libraries Services it was felt that it would be difficult for the staff to make time available to be interviewed. Secondly, many of the questions within the questionnaire required more than a one word answer.   By providing the staff with a questionnaire which they could complete at their own pace the author felt that this would facilitate more considered responses to the questions which required a fuller answer.

3.2.1.1   Questionnaire format

An initial list of questions to be included within the questionnaire were drawn up by the author and subsequently revised following discussions with the dissertation supervisor and course colleagues.   A copy of the final draft of the questionnaire together with the covering letter which accompanied it are shown in the final format on pages 32-37.

The questionnaire was divided into four broad sections.   The first section of the questionnaire (Section A), was concerned with the respondent's

involvement with storytime activities.   Within this section, Question 2 clearly indicates that the questionnaire is directed primarily at staff who have been involved with storytelling activities within the last year.   The author felt that this restriction was necessary as she wished to collect the views of staff involved in storytime activities in the recent past and not the views of individuals who had carried out activities some time previously (e.g. five years ago), when the working environment, staffing levels and approach to storytimes may have differed from present conditions.   However, within this restriction, the questionnaire was structured so that anyone who was not presently involved with storytime activities but who wished to make a comment on them could do so as instructed within Question 2.

Questions in the second section (Section B), were concerned with the training that the staff had received for this activity and staff training needs.

The third section of the questionnaire (Section C), focused specifically on storytimes regularly held within the environs of the public library.   The author chose to focus on this type of storytime activity as it was felt that the objectives for other storytime activities (e.g. storytelling activities by library staff within schools) might differ from regular storytimes held within the library.   As this was an initial study of an area that had not been investigated before it was felt that it would be sensible to focus on one type of storytelling activity.   Questions within this section were concerned with the objectives, evaluation and enjoyment of this activity, in addition to questions relating to choosing and telling stories and the structure of storytimes.

The final section of the questionnaire requested general information about the respondent in order that the author could assess the range of backgrounds of the individuals surveyed.   This was followed by a 'Further Comments' section for individuals to outline any points they wished to make.

Questionnaire Survey - Children's Storytimes in Public Libraries

Dear respondent

I am a student on the postgraduate librarianship course at Sheffield University.   One of the requirements of this course is to carry out a research project of three month duration.   The project I am conducting is concerned with children's storytimes in public libraries.   I chose this topic for three reasons:

1.   I enjoy children's stories and I am very interested in storytimes and storytelling.

2.   Very little research has been carried out on the opinions and experiences of library staff involved in   this activity.

3.   I am interested in working with children when I have completed my course and I felt that by carrying out this project I could learn much from the experience of others.

The attached questionnaire forms one part of this project and I should be extremely grateful if you would complete it.   The questions are concerned with the training that staff receive for storytimes and their views and experiences of this activity.   Whether you occasionally assist colleagues at storytimes or actually tell stories I would be most interested to hear from you.   All responses will be treated in confidence and the identity of both individuals and the libraries they work within will remain anonymous in the final project report.

As the time allocated for the project is very short I have set **July 5th** as the **closing date** for returning completed questionnaires.   I would be extremely grateful if you could return the questionnaire by this date in the attached envelope which is addressed to me c/o Broomhill Library.

The research report will be submitted to the University on 2nd September 1996 and at some point after this date a copy will be sent to Sheffield Libraries Services for staff to read.   I also intend to send copies of a short summary of the findings to all the libraries from which questionnaires are returned from so that all staff have an opportunity to know what the main findings of the project are.

Therefore, should you choose to complete the questionnaire you have the opportunity not only to outline your views and experiences but also to find out the views and experiences of others when the final report is completed.

I thank you in advance for taking the time to complete the questionnaire and look forward to hearing from you.

With best wishes,

Angela Rogan

Questionnaire No: **Children's Storytimes in Public Libraries**

SECTION A: About your involvement with library storytimes

Information from the following questions will enable me to find out what library storytimes you have been involved with. **Please note:** 'involvement' can be at any level. For example, assisting a colleague with the children during a storytime can count as 'involvement'.

Q1.   Please list the library or libraries you work at. Alternatively if you are a manager responsible for the libraries in a particular group please state which group (e.g. North Group).

Q2.   Have you had any involvement with storytimes in the library/libraries you work within in the last year i.e. June 1995 - June 1996 ? YES/NO

        If YES **go to Q3**

make   If NO please do not complete this questionnaire unless there are particular points you wish to which are relevant to this study. If this is the case **please complete Section D** and outline the points you wish to make in the **'Further Comments' section.**

Q3.   Please indicate the type of storytime activities **you have been involved with** in the last year by ticking the appropriate boxes below and overleaf. You may tick more than one box.

        Regular storytime for children under five held within the library   ☐

        (i.e. held weekly, fortnightly or monthly. May include a craft)

        Regular storytime for children over five held within the library   ☐

        (i.e. held weekly, fortnightly or monthly. May include a craft)

        Any other library activities which include a story   ☐

        Please give details:

Q4.   Please try to give reasons why storytimes are held for the particular age groups you have stated.

        If you do not know the reason please state 'don't know'.

SECTION B: About training for storytimes and your experiences

Q5.   What skills and qualities do you think library staff need to carry out storytimes ?

Q6.   What training have you received on storytimes ?

Q7.   What training, if any, do you think you need ?

Q8.   Are there any aspects of storytimes you have experienced difficulties with which you can relate to
a   lack of training?   YES/NO
            If YES please provide examples.

SECTION C: Regular library storytimes

These questions relate specifically to **regular storytimes** held in libraries (see Q3 Section A).   If you

did not tick either or both of the first 2 boxes in Question 3 Section A **please go to Section D.**

Q9.   Do you know what the objectives for holding storytimes at the library/libraries you work within

            are ?   YES / NO / DON'T KNOW

            If YES please state these objectives. If NO or DON'T KNOW please outline what you feel you
            should be trying to achieve.

Q10. Are the storytime sessions evaluated ? YES / NO / DON'T KNOW

If YES how are they evaluated ? If NO please try to give reasons why.

Q11. How enjoyable do you find the storytimes ? Please tick one box.

Very enjoyable ☐

Enjoyable ☐

Neither enjoyable nor unenjoyable ☐

Unenjoyable ☐

Very unenjoyable ☐

Q12. Listed below are a range of tasks running a storytime at a library involves. Please indicate which task(s) you have been involved with by ticking the boxes below. You may tick more than one box.

Assist colleague(s) with organisation of children ☐

Plan the storytimes ☐

Choose stories ☐

Telling stories (with or without a book) ☐

Any other task(s). Please give details: ☐

- If you ticked choosing and/or telling stories please answer the relevant sections below then **go to Section D.**

- If you did not tick choosing and/or telling stories please **go to Section D.**

Choosing stories

Q13. What qualities do you look for in a story to use for storytimes ?
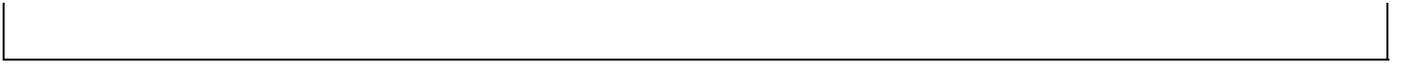
Telling stories

Q14. Approximately how long have you been telling stories at storytimes ?

Q15. Have you ever told stories without a book ? YES/NO

If YES how did you acquire this skill ?   If NO is this a skill you would like to acquire ?

Q16. Please describe the format of a typical storytime session and try to give reasons why it is organised   this way.

SECTION D: About yourself

This information is asked for as it enables me to assess the range of backgrounds that the people I have surveyed come from. **Please note:** All information provided is confidential and you will not be identified in the final report.

Q17. What is your job title ?

Q18. How long have you worked in a library ?

Q19. How long have you held your present post ?

Q20. Do you hold a library qualification ? YES/NO

If YES please give details.

Q21. Please indicate what age and sex you are by ticking the appropriate boxes below:

Age					Sex	
under 19	☐	40 -49	☐		Male	☐
20 - 29	☐	50 - 59	☐		Female	☐
30 - 39	☐	60+	☐			

FURTHER COMMENTS

As this is an exploratory study there are many aspects I could have asked about but time and space do not permit!   If you would like to expand on any of the comments you have made in this questionnaire or raise any other points not covered in the questionnaire please feel free to outline them here.

3.2.1.2 Distribution of the questionnaire

As the author was uncertain of the precise number of individuals who were involved in storytelling activities and who they were, the questionnaires were distributed to staff by members of library staff designated as "Children's Co-ordinator" for each area group within Sheffield Libraries Services.   The Children's Co-ordinators were able to distribute the questionnaires to the relevant staff within the area they were responsible for.   The author instructed the Children's Co-ordinators to give the questionnaire not only to staff responsible for children's work who carried out storytimes, but also to any staff who worked in other areas of the service (e.g. adult services) who had carried out storytime activities when the regular storyteller was unavailable.

The questionnaires were individually numbered so that the author could gauge the response rate.   A total of thirty five questionnaires were handed out to the Children's Co-ordinators to distribute.   In addition, the author herself also handed out five questionnaires to staff (see Section 3.2.3).

The questionnaires were given to the Children's Co-ordinators on the 14th and 15th June in order to allow sufficient time for them to be distributed to the relevant staff.   The deadline for returning the questionnaires was set for the 5th July, allowing respondents approximately three weeks in which to complete them.   However, during the course of carrying out the project, the author was made aware that in one area, three staff had not received questionnaires by the 1st and 2nd of July.   These staff were provided with copies of the questionnaire by the author and the deadline for completing and returning them was extended to the 15th July.

3.2.2 Staff training interview

Mr Andrew Milroy, Group Manager for Learning and Young People within Sheffield Libraries Services kindly agreed to be interviewed concerning the training that staff receive for storytime activities.

3.2.3 Observation of storytimes

In order to examine the structure, content and presentation of storytimes the author attended seven storytimes at a range of libraries within Sheffield Libraries Services.   In addition to carrying out observation work the visits enabled the author to gather information from adults attending the storytime via a questionnaire (see Section 3.2.4).

3.2.3.1   Selection of libraries

Arrangements to attend the libraries selected for observation work were made through staff at Sheffield Libraries Services.   The author did not set out to choose any particular library storytimes to observe although some effort was made to ensure that libraries from a range of areas within Sheffield were represented.   Some libraries were automatically eliminated as no storytimes were held at them.   Of the remaining libraries, a large number of them held storytimes on Monday or Tuesday afternoons and this factor restricted the number of storytimes that the author could attend over the timeframe of the project.   Hence, arrangements to observe a particular storytime were made on an ad-hoc basis as the author made contact with different groups of library staff.   One library was visited twice as the initial visit was used to pilot the observation methodology.

3.2.3.2   Age range of children attending storytimes

During the timeframe of the project, the majority of regular library storytimes being run were for children aged five years old or under.   For this reason, all the storytimes that the author observed were for this age group.

3.2.3.3   Pilot work

The author originally intended to use an evaluation schedule developed and used successfully by Fearn (1982) to record the behaviour of the librarian presenting the storytime and the children's responses during the activity. Table 3.1 overleaf outlines this schedule.   However, following an initial visit to

Table 3.1   Activity Evaluation Schedule (Fearn 1982)

Evaluation Schedule: Librarian

Initiation

1   Tells/reads story with involvement - (eye-contact, body movement, gestures to indicate course of story, use of pictures or other visual aids).

2   Tells/reads story without involvement (lack of eye-contact, no or little use of visual aids).

3   Asks question/invites participation.

4   Develops activity from story/encourages participation.

Response

5   Answers question willingly and with enjoyment.

6   Answers questions unwillingly and discourages active participation from children.

Evaluation schedule: Children

Response

1   Concentration/active (answers questions, smiles, laughs in response to story, constant eye-contact with librarian).

2   Concentration/passive (eye-contact not always maintained, some loss
of   attention, lack of obvious involvement with librarian).

3   Inattention (no eye-contact, talking to neighbours, moving restlessly, disruptive behaviour).

4   Leaves activity.

Initiation

5   Asks question

6   Suggests course of action

observe a library storytime the author decided that this schedule was not suitable for use in the present project for the following reasons:

(i) The difficulties encountered recording the behaviour of the children

During the first storytime observed, the author discovered that the children were free to move around during the storytime and did so.   The author found that the active and diverse behaviour of the group of children observed made it difficult to classify and record the behaviour that they were adopting according to the evaluation schedule developed by Fearn (1982). The difficulties encountered using this schedule could, however, be attributed to both the age and size of the group of children that the author observed in contrast to those observed by Fearn (1982).

The two storytimes observed during Fearn's study were for children aged between seven and eleven years old.   Moreover, at both storytimes a large number of children attended; twenty five at the first storytime and ninety eight at the second.   In contrast, the storytimes that the author observed were for smaller groups of younger children.   Fearn (1982) makes no reference to the size and age of the group in terms of the influence that these factors had on the children's physical behaviour.   However, the author suspects that given the age and size of the group observed by Fearn (1982), there would have been less physical movement by the children during these storytimes in comparison to the storytimes observed during the present project.

(ii) The resources available

In Fearn's study, two researchers were present to record observations. Each researcher recorded the behaviour of two children within the group and the behaviour of the group as a whole as well as the librarian's behaviour.   In addition, the activity was tape recorded and photographs were taken by two photographers at two minute intervals.   In contrast, the author of the present project had only herself to record both the children's behaviour and the staff's behaviour.   The author was unable to record the behaviour of the group as a whole for reasons outlined within the first point (i).   However, it was also felt

that recording one or two children's behaviour would not provide an overall representative picture of the storytime.

(iii) The frequency of recorded behaviour

The behaviour of the children and staff were recorded every minute during the storytimes observed by Fearn (1982). The author found this impossible to do and tried to apply the rating scale every three minutes. However, it was observed that events which happened within the storytime could change from minute to minute and, therefore, recording every three minutes did not provide a representative picture of the activity taking place.

(iv) Other interesting factors

The author felt that recording activity by using Fearn's (1982) scale did not enable her to record other factors which she felt were of equal value and interest and contributed to the atmosphere and character of a particular storytime. For example, during the pilot visit, the author was particularly struck by the way in which the storyteller used a variety of props throughout each story.

For all the aforementioned reasons, a decision was made not to use the rating scale by Fearn (1982). Consideration was given to developing another type of observation method and Slee (1987) was consulted for information. However, within the timeframe of the project the author felt that there was insufficient time to develop a more appropriate rating scale with sufficient reliability. A decision was, therefore, made that a descriptive factual account of each storytime would be written up which included the recording of a range of factors from which the author could compare and contrast the differences (if any) observed between different storytimes. The factors selected for recording can be divided into two groups. The first group are "general factors" which include, for example, the day and time that the storytime is held, the age range that the storytime is intended for and so on. The second group of factors relate specifically to the particular storytime that the author observed and include for example, the number of children and adults who

attended, the storytime format and the background noise levels during the storytime.   The total number of factors recorded are listed in Tables 3.2 and 3.3.

Table 3.2   General factors selected for recording at storytimes

1. The day and time that the storytime is held.

2. The age range of the children that the storytime is held for.

3. The maximum number of children permitted to attend the storytime.

4. The waiting list; i.e. whether there is a list of children waiting to attend storytimes and, if there is, the approximate size of this list.

5. Register; whether a register of the children attending is taken at the storytime.

6. The number of library staff running the storytime.

7. The chaperone policy; i.e. whether adults have to stay with the children   during the storytime or whether they can leave them with the library staff and collect them later.

8. Refreshments; i.e. whether drinks are provided for either or both the children and adults.

9. The location of the storytime; i.e. whether the storytime takes place in
a   separate children's library, the children's corner of a main library or some other location within the library.

Table 3.3   Factors relating to the observed storytimes

1.   The attendance figures; i.e. the number of children and adults attending.

2.   The seating arrangements; i.e. the type of seats (if any) that the children   and storyteller and adults sat on.   The position of these seats in relation   to each other.

3.   Storytime format; i.e. the order in which the storytime activities occur.

4.   Storytime theme.

5.   Stories selected.

6.   Nursery rhymes (if selected).

7.   Poems (if selected).

8.   Use of props; i.e. if the storyteller used any props within the storytime e.g. handpuppets.

9.   Details of the craft that was made.

10.   The storyteller's reading technique; i.e. whether staff tell the stories without reference to the book text or whether the stories are read, and the position the books are held at by the storyteller.

11.   The background noise level; i.e. whether books are being issued during the storytime, whether the telephone rings, whether other adults are talking in the background etc.

12.   Unusual aspects; the author asked each storyteller whether anything had   taken place during the observed storytime that did not normally occur.

13.   A brief summary of the storytime which includes the approximate length of each activity and highlighting any interesting features that the author felt contributed to the character of the storytime.   The latter might include, for example, particular phrases or actions that the storyteller uses during the storytime.

3.2.3.4 Procedure

Following the necessary arrangements with library staff, the author arrived at each storytime at least ten minutes before the activity was due to start.   During this period the author handed out questionnaires to the adults attending or bringing the children to the storytime (see Section 3.2.4) in addition to talking to the member of staff running the storytime.   The author made it clear to staff that she was not there to judge their performance and was simply there to observe what went on during the storytime.   Inevitably, during the course of carrying out observations the author noted differences between members of staff in the skills that they possess for this activity.   However, it is the intention of this report to highlight the differences between storytimes rather than comment upon the skills of the staff involved.

Prior to the storytime beginning the author selected an area in which to sit and take observations during the activity.   Wherever possible an area on the periphery of the storytime activity was chosen in order that the author remained as unobtrusive as possible whilst recording observations. Inevitably, however, due to the size of the groups of children present and the location they took place within, this was not always possible.   Therefore, it should be borne in mind that staff running the storytimes were aware that they were being observed throughout the activity.   Observations were recorded using a pen and paper and a checklist was used to ensure that all the factors selected for observation were recorded.   A wristwatch was used to record the approximate duration of the events that took place within the storytime.

3.2.3.5 Limitations of the observation method used

The author appreciates that the method of recording observations and the choice of factors to record during the storytimes was a highly subjective one and this is clearly a limitation of this method.   However, it was found during the course of recording these observations that distinct differences did emerge between particular factors at different storytimes, thus enabling a discussion of the issues raised by these differences to be made (see Chapter 6).

3.2.4 Adult questionnaire survey

A survey of the adults who brought the children to the storytimes was conducted in order to determine their reasons for attending storytimes and their views on them. The author originally intended to gather this information from the children attending as well. However, this idea was abandoned due to the young age of the children attending and the number of libraries which were being surveyed. It is appreciated that meaningful data from the children attending could have been obtained if a case study approach had been used, whereby the storytimes at one or two libraries were visited over a period of time, thus enabling the author to establish a relationship with the children. However, this approach fell outside of the present project design, this survey being conducted at the six libraries which the author attended to record observations on the storytimes (see Section 3.2.3).

The fact that the questionnaire represents the views of the adults rather than the views of the children is, therefore, a limitation of this method. However, the author felt that as adults largely determine the activities that children under five participate in, it is valid to collect the views of these adults in terms of the reasons for attending storytimes. Moreover, to the best of the author's knowledge, data of this type had not been collected within Sheffield Libraries Services prior to the present study.

3.2.4.1   The structure of the questionnaire

In contrast to the questionnaire designed for library staff (see Section 3.2.1), the author decided that the questionnaire for adults should be very short. The author recognised that adults accompanying the children might be in a hurry to leave the children at the storytime (if they were not themselves staying) or might have their attention occupied with the children they were bringing to the activity. It was, therefore, important that the questionnaire could be completed rapidly and preferably before the storytime started.

An outline of the questions included within the final draft of the questionnaire is shown on pages 48-49.   The format of the actual

questionnaire handed out differed only in respect of the spacing allocated for the answers to each question.

As the questionnaire needed to be completed rapidly the majority of the questions within it are quantitative in nature and are concerned with, for example, the frequency of attendance at storytimes, the age of the children attending and so on.   Of the questions requiring a fuller answer, the author decided to focus on two aspects.   Firstly, the reasons individuals gave for attending the storytimes and, secondly, whether the stories read during storytime influenced the choice of books the adults selected for their children. The author decided to focus on the latter factor for two reasons.   Firstly, the author felt that a library storytime provides an opportunity for library staff to draw the children's and adults's attention to stories by a range of authors, some of whom may be unfamiliar to them.   It would, therefore, be useful to find out whether the stories read did influence the adults choice.   Secondly, the author had read a recent study by Weinberger (1996) which highlighted the influence parents have on children's choice of reading material and the impact that this has on children's literacy.

3.2.4.2 Distribution of the questionnaire

At each of the six libraries visited, the questionnaire was distributed to adults prior to the start of the storytime.   Every effort was made to ensure that adults who did not stay for the storytime completed a questionnaire before leaving the children in the library.   The majority of adults approached were happy to complete the questionnaire, few refusing to do so.   A total of forty questionnaires were completed by adults during the course of carrying out the survey within the six libraries selected.

Children's Storytimes in Public Libraries

1. How did you first hear about the storytimes ?

2. How often do you come to storytimes ?

        Very regularly (every week)   ☐

        Regularly (at least twice a month)   ☐

        Occasionally (once every 2 months)   ☐

        Not very often (once every 3 months or longer) ☐

3. Approximately how long have you been coming to storytimes ?

4. Why do you come to the storytimes ?

5. Do you attend storytimes at other libraries in Sheffield ?   YES/NO
      If YES which libraries ?

6. How old is the child/ children you bring to storytime ?

Under 1 years old   ☐
Please give age in months:

1 year old   ☐

2 years old   ☐

3 years old   ☐

4 years old   ☐

5 years old   ☐

Over 5 years old   ☐
Please state age:

7. Do you choose or help choose library books for the child or children ?
YES/NO

If YES do the stories read at storytime influence what books you choose or help choose ?

Optional Questions

The following questions are optional - you do not have to answer them but it would be helpful if you would.

Please indicate your age and sex:

Age				**Sex**	
Under 19	☐	40 - 49	☐	Male	☐
20 - 29	☐	50 - 59	☐	Female	☐
30 - 39	☐	60+	☐		

What relation are you to the child or children ?

Parent	☐
Step-Parent	☐
Grandparent	☐
Aunt/Uncle	☐
Family friend	☐
Other - please state:	☐

Any Other Comments

Chapter 4:   Results and Discussion - The staff questionnaire

*"...It is very rewarding (to be stopped in the street like I was by a parent -
10 years on from taking a child in a storytime session, and thanked for what
I had given her child, it was wonderful!)."*

Member of library staff (S12)

4.0   The structure of the results and discussion sections

A large amount of data was collected during the course of the present project.   For this reason, it was decided that the reader would find the results from each data collection method used within this project easier to follow if the points raised by the data collected were discussed immediately following the presentation of that data.   Hence, the present chapter outlines the results of the staff questionnaire and a discussion of the findings.   Subsequent chapters present and discuss the findings of the other data collection methods used in this study.

4.1   The staff questionnaire

4.1.1   The return rate

Of the forty questionnaires distributed during the course of this project, the author had received twelve back by the 22nd July.   This represents a return rate of 30%.   However, this figure should be treated with caution for a number of reasons.   Firstly, as the author was unable to determine the precise number of individuals involved in storytelling activities, it was difficult to judge how many questionnaires should be given to the Children's Co-ordinators to distribute.   The author subsequently discovered that at least one Children's Co-ordinator received more questionnaires than they required. Few of the surplus questionnaires were returned to the author so it was not possible to exclude them from the total number distributed to enable a more accurate return rate to be calculated.

A record was, however, kept of the total number of questionnaires distributed to each of the Children's Co-ordinators together with the individual numbers of these questionnaires.   For example, twelve questionnaires

numbered one to twelve were allocated to the Children's Co-ordinator in Area 1. Each Co-ordinator represented one of the four area groups within Sheffield Libraries Services. Table 4.1 shows the number of questionnaires that were given to each Children's Co-ordinator to distribute and the number that were returned from each area. The four area groups are only referred to by a number in order not to identify them.

Table 4.1   Questionnaires returned

Area	Total No. of Questionnaires Allocated	Total No. of Questionnaires Returned
1	12*	6*
2	10	2
3	13	3
4	5	3

Two of the six questionnaires returned from Area 1 were returned uncompleted; presumably surplus to requirements. If these two are deducted from the return column the return rate for Area 1 is 4.

Another factor to consider in relation to the return rate is whether staff received the questionnaire in the time period allocated to complete it. In one area the author was made aware of the fact that three staff had not received the questionnaire by the beginning of July (see Section 3.2.1.2). Hence, in this area the author is uncertain whether all the relevant staff received the questionnaire within the timeframe for completion.

Given the aforementioned conditions, it is impossible to ascertain the return rate with any degree of accuracy, although the author would accept that

the return rate is low. In addition to the points already mentioned, the low return rate can also, in the author's opinion, be attributed to three other factors:

- The nature of the questions asked both in terms of the sensitivity of some of the information individuals were being asked to disclose and also in respect of the detailed answers many of the questions required.

- The overall length of the questionnaire which meant that it could not be completed quickly and required individuals to make an effort to set aside some time to complete it.

- The fact that response rates for self-completed questionnaires are acknowledged to be low (see for example, Heather and Stone 1984).

4.1.2 Presentation of findings: explanatory notes

The following points should be borne in mind when examining the presented results:

(i)   Whilst twelve questionnaires were returned to the author, not all respondents chose to answer all the questions. Moreover, the questionnaire was designed to enable individuals who were not presently involved in storytime activities to express their opinions (see Section 3.2.1.1). One of the eleven subjects fell into the latter category (S18) and, therefore, only completed a small number of specified sections of the questionnaire. The majority of the findings are, therefore, based on data collected from eleven subjects. However, for each of the findings presented, the number of subjects that completed the question are clearly indicated in either or both the text and the results table.

(ii)   From examining the completed questionnaires, the author concluded that one individual (S46) had interpreted the questionnaire solely in the

context of school class visits. However, the author decided to include the responses of this individual in the present analysis for completeness.

(iii) Where subjects' comments are quoted to illustrate a particular point of view, the individual is identified solely by the subject number allocated to the questionnaire they completed. For example, quotes taken from questionnaire number ten would be attributed to subject number ten; shown as S10 next to the quote. A similar system of referencing is used when referring to particular subject numbers in the text, as points (i) and (ii) illustrate. Aside from spelling alterations, subjects' comments are quoted as they originally appeared in the questionnaire. However, in situations where the original word or words in the statements are illegible, square brackets are used to indicate where the author has inserted a word.

(iv) Any problems that particular questions presented to respondents are highlighted within the discussion of the findings for that question.

(v) Many of the questions incorporated in the questionnaire required a descriptive answer. Details of all subjects' responses to these particular questions are outlined within Appendix 4. Hence, within the present chapter only a summary of subjects' views are presented.

(vi) Due to the small number of individuals who completed the questionnaire, the author decided that it would be inappropriate to calculate percentages and, therefore, the findings are presented in terms of numbers of subjects.

The findings from each question are now presented and discussed in turn.

4.1.3 (Q1) Libraries respondents worked within

Of the twelve questionnaires received only seven indicated which library or group that the individual worked for. Moreover, the author quickly realised after receiving the first four questionnaires that individuals were clearly not happy to provide this information despite assurances that the identity of these libraries would be concealed. In retrospect, the author realised that the information being collected was of a more sensitive nature than anticipated. For this reason it is felt that the inclusion of this question may have deterred individuals from completing the questionnaire and contributed to the low return rate. Where possible, the author took steps to encourage staff to complete the questionnaire by telling them that they did not need to complete this question.

This question was originally included in the questionnaire for two reasons. Firstly, to enable the author to assess whether there were variations in staff views and experiences between libraries in different areas of Sheffield Libraries Services. Secondly, to enable the author to link the information collected from this questionnaire with other data collected during the storytime observations and the questionnaire survey of the adults carried out at these storytimes (see Chapters 6 and 7). However, as the data collected from this question is incomplete the author decided not to use it in the present analysis.

4.1.4 (Q2) Involvement in storytimes during the last year

Only eight of the twelve subjects completed this question and all eight indicated that they had been involved in storytime activities within the specified time period (June 1995 - June 1996). However, of the remaining four individuals who did not complete this question, the author felt that it was safe to conclude that three of these individuals met the criteria specified. Two of the subjects had personally handed the questionnaire back to the author, whilst the comments of the third indicated that they had been carrying out this activity in the last year. The remaining individual (S18) could be safely identified as not being directly involved in recent storytimes for the reason outlined in Section 4.1.2 (i).

4.1.5 (Q3) Types of storytime activities

Table 4.2 overleaf shows the numbers of individuals involved in regular storytime activities. Eleven people responded to this question and, of these, two were involved in activities for both under five and over five age groups.

Seven of the eleven subjects also indicated their involvement in a range of other library activities involving a story as Table 4.3 overleaf illustrates.

The author was particularly interested to hear of an individual who cited storytelling in playgroups and nurseries. Anecdotal information gathered through talking to staff had indicated that storytelling within playgroups, nurseries and other community organisations had been curtailed due to cutbacks in staff and funding.

4.1.6 (Q4) Reasons for holding storytimes for the stated age groups

Nine of the twelve respondents outlined reasons why storytimes were held, with three individuals choosing not to complete this question (S18, S23, S48). Of the nine providing reasons, eight outlined similar points, emphasising the role storytimes play in encouraging the use of libraries and the promotion of books and reading. Two typical responses were:

> "Under 5's - to actively encourage reading for enjoyment, develop useful skills, and promote use of libraries in the future." **S14**

> "It proves an excellent way of introducing young children to the library service and the wealth of children's literature available to them." **S34**

One individual also referred to the social benefits adults gain:

> "Introduces young children to the library in an exciting and enjoyable way. Mums also benefit by being able to join in the

activity, meeting other mums and encouraging their child to enjoy books." **S33**

Table 4.2   Regular library storytimes

Type of Storytime Activity	No. of Respondents Citing Involvement in this Activity (n=11)
Regular storytime for children aged under five held within the library	8
Regular storytime for children aged over five held within the library	5*

One subject, S46, has been included in this category for completeness although they appeared to the author to have interpreted the questionnaire solely in the context of school class visits.

Table 4.3   Other library activities which include a story

Type of Activity	No. of Respondents Citing Involvement in this Activity (n=7)
School class visits	5*
Seasonal holiday activities e.g. Christmas, Easter	4
Playgroups and nurseries	1
Special events and festivals	1

This total also includes S46; see also earlier note under Table 4.2. The author appreciates that by including S46 in the 'school class visits' category this is effectively counting the same activity twice and this point should be borne in mind when examining the results.

The remaining ninth respondent, S46, simply stated "school class visits" as the reason for holding storytimes.

The author had originally included this question in the questionnaire as anecdotal information had suggested that services to children under five years old were regarded as a priority by Sheffield Council and that this was one reason why storytimes for children under five were more in evidence than those for older children.   The author felt it would, therefore, be of interest to see whether staff involved in storytime activities highlighted this factor in their responses.   However, this point was not drawn out from the responses gathered from this question with subjects interpreting the question in a more general way.   One subject, (S14), did indicate in the 'Further Comments' Section that children under the age of eight were considered a council priority, but no other reference to this policy was made by any other respondent.

4.1.7   (Q5) Skills and qualities library staff require for storytimes

Ten of the twelve respondents completed this question with two subjects choosing not to (S18 and S48).   A range of skills and qualities were identified with many subjects making similar comments.   The importance of good communication skills were emphasised by all ten subjects, both in terms of the ability to relate to children generally and be sensitive to their needs, in addition to possessing appropriate vocal skills for storytelling.   The responses of three subjects illustrate this:

> "Love of stories, enthusiasm, patience, sense of humour, sensitivity to the needs of young children and their carers. Imagination and confidence." **S12**

> "Ability to relate to children at their own level.   Good communication skills.   Appropriate personality. Commitment.   Perhaps they should like children!   Understand long term purposes and benefits." **S14**

> "Patience, sensitivity, ability to read with enthusiasm, ability to relate to children - warm and friendly approach." **S45**

Other skills and qualities cited by more than one subject include:

- enthusiasm
- interest in children and/or like children
- patience
- ability to control children

From the comments made, the attitude and personal approach that individuals adopted was an important consideration for a number of respondents.

4.1.8 (Q6) Training received on storytimes

Table 4.4 outlines the results for this question which eleven of the twelve respondents completed.

Table 4.4   Training received on storytimes

Response	No. of Respondents (n=11)
Received training	6
Have not received training	5

Of these eleven subjects, five stated that they had not received any training for storytime activities, whilst a sixth stated that they had received no training when they first began carrying out the activity:

> "At the beginning none, I was left to my own devices and mistakes. In-house training. Workshops on 'storytelling'."
> **S36**

The type of training that the remaining five individuals had undertaken varied as their responses illustrate:

"Mostly observing other staff, children's library staff from other authorities, their styles, adapting other people's skills to suit your own ideas.   Training days organised by Y.L.G and L.A.   Talks by authors and librarians."   **S12**

" 'Sitting next to Nelly' - watching others!   Listening to well known authors narrating."   **S14**

"Years of telling stories to my own children.   Helping out at [location] library's storytime."   **S33**

"Storytelling workshops.   Drama workshops."   **S34**

"Training from another Children's Library Assistant."   **S48**

4.1.9 (Q7) Staff training needs

Eight of the twelve respondents completed this question with four choosing not to (S18, S45, S46, S48).   Of the eight individuals who responded, two highlighted the usefulness of refresher courses (S34, S36), whilst a third said they would like some training on telling stories without a book (S10).   The responses of the remaining five were varied:

"Plenty of practice with playgroups, schools - outreach."   **S12**

"None, personally - but, an induction into presenting stories to an audience would help."   **S13**

"Further development - should never stop learning and adapting."   **S14**

"Depends on the type of person you are."   **S23**

"Hopefully storytelling comes naturally, but watching professionals gives you plenty of ideas.   Experience is the best training of all."   **S33**

4.1.10 (Q8). Difficulties with storytimes

Table 4.5 outlines the results for this question which eleven of the twelve respondents completed.

Table 4.5   Difficulties with storytimes

Response	No. of Respondents (n=11)
Yes	4
No	6
Other (see text)	1

Of these eleven subjects, six indicated that they had experienced no difficulties with this activity which they could relate to a lack of training.   Of the remaining five, two subjects referred to problems relating to the control of children:

> "Controlling a group of five year olds to keep their attention."
> **S23**

> "Controlling very naughty under 5's!"   **S36**

One subject mentioned school class visits:

> "School class visit needs - familiarity with needs in classroom
> and how libraries are expected to perform by teachers."   **S14**

One subject mentioned a practical point:

> "Just the practical point that every child wants to be able to see
> the book."   **S10**

The remaining subject did not indicate whether they had experienced problems but simply highlighted the importance of experience and practice:

> "Training can give you techniques of storytelling and helpful visual aids - but mastering an audience of under-five's and interaction only comes with experience and practice!!" **S12**

4.1.11   (Q9) Storytime objectives

Table 4.6 highlights the responses to this question with the majority of the eleven respondents indicating that they were aware of the objectives of holding storytimes at the library they worked within.

Table 4.6   Awareness of the objectives of holding storytimes

Response	No. of Respondents (n=11)
Yes	9
No	1
Don't know	1

Of the nine individuals who stated 'Yes' to this question, two did not elaborate further and outline these objectives.   Of the remaining seven, two referred the author to the answer they outlined for Question 4 (see Section 4.1.6) and the remaining five outlined similar answers to those provided for Question 4, emphasising the encouragement this activity provides to using the library, books and reading.   Similar reasons were outlined by the two individuals who answered 'No' and 'Don't know' respectively to their awareness of storytime objectives.

However, all the reasons provided by respondents for holding storytimes in libraries concur with those outlined within the literature (see for example, Esson and Tyerman 1991).

This question was included in the questionnaire as the author was interested not only in whether individuals knew why storytimes were held but also as to whether the consideration of local factors specific to a particular library would be evident.   The only reference to the latter factor was by S36 who highlighted demand: "same as Q4 plus a demand".

4.1.12   (Q10) Evaluation of storytimes

Table 4.7 below highlights the responses to this question with the majority of the eleven respondents, six subjects, indicating that storytime sessions are not evaluated

Table 4.7   Evaluation of storytimes

Response	No. of Respondents (n=11)
Yes	3
No	6
Don't know	1
Other (see text)	1

Of these six subjects, two did not elaborate further, whilst the remaining four individuals made a variety of comments:

"There is noone designated to oversee children's storytimes as far as I am aware."   **S10**

"We all know the value of storytimes, we discuss stories and themes, and keep a record/program of subjects and themes." **S12**

"Only the child's parents evaluate my storytime, and by the response I am given by both children and parents." **S33**

"Over the past few years certain aspects of the children's service have had to go i.e. school visits and activities for older children. Also Children's Library assistants are no longer recognised and valued for their special skills and other attributes. I don't feel that storytimes are regarded as important and therefore not evaluated." **S34**

Of the three subjects who indicated that the storytime sessions were evaluated, attendance numbers were mentioned by two individuals. The responses from these three subjects were:

"Attendance numbers. Comments procedure in place to analyse. Discussions with staff." **S14**

"Did they achieve the objective. Is it worth doing again in the future. Was the time spent in preparation worth the result." **S36**

"Numbers attending - Children's attention span. Children's behaviour, response and enjoyment." **S45**

One subject who indicated that they did not know whether the storytimes were evaluated did not elaborate further on this response, whilst another subject, S23, did not specifically indicate 'Yes'. 'No' or 'Don't know' but simply stated:

"Only by myself - could I have done it better etc." **S23**

The findings presented here suggest that whilst respondents appear to be aware of the general objectives for holding storytimes in libraries (see Section 4.1.11) they are less clear on how to evaluate this activity and this is reflected in the variety of methods cited. In view of these findings the author

feels that it would be helpful if this area was clarified with staff and a system of evaluation implemented.

This question was originally included in the questionnaire as the paper by Greene (1982) drew the author's attention to the different views that library staff have had on measuring the effectiveness of storytimes. Greene (1982) outlines the contrasting views of Frances Jenkins Olcott and Anne Carroll Moore, two early advocates of storytelling in libraries. According to Greene (1982):

> "Olcott looked on storytelling as a way of advertising books, and the success of the program at Carnegie was determined by the number of circulations of the books used in the story hour."

In contrast, Anne Carroll Moore is reported to have (Greene 1982):

> "...believed a story hour program was justified "even if the story hour created in the children no desire to read the books in which the stories are to be found." Moore was never overly concerned about circulation statistics. One of the first things she did when she went to NYPL was to establish Reading Room collections in each children's room. These collections, consisting of the "best and most appealing books," did not circulate but were available to children and adults alike for browsing and reading in the library."

During the course of this project the author searched the literature to see whether any library had evaluated storytime activities and, if so, what measures had been used. Within the conditions under which the literature search was conducted (see Sections 2.0 and 2.1) the author located one study which outlined an evaluation of children's services at a small public library in Chicago (Franklin and Hamil 1992). These authors refer to the use of evaluation forms for story hours but, unfortunately, few details of the measures used to evaluate this activity are provided.

4.1.13   (Q11) Enjoyment of storytimes

Table 4.8 overleaf outlines the findings for this question which show that the majority of respondents rate the storytimes as very enjoyable.

Table 4.8   Enjoyment of storytimes

Response	No. of Respondents (n=11)
Very enjoyable	9
Enjoyable	1
Neither enjoyable nor unenjoyable	1
Unenjoyable	_
Very unenjoyable	_

Table 4.9   Storytime tasks

Task	No. of Respondents (n=11)
Assist colleagues	9
Plan storytimes	11
Choose stories	11
Telling stories	11
Other tasks	8

4.1.14 (Q12) Tasks involved in running a storytime

Table 4.9 on the previous page shows the number of respondents who undertook each of the storytime tasks specified within the questionnaire.

Eight of the eleven respondents indicated that they carried out other tasks for storytimes of which the most frequently cited was a craft activity. Table 4.10 outlines the number of respondents who undertook this activity together with details of the other tasks cited.

Table 4.10   Other storytime tasks

Task	No. of Respondents (n=8)
Craft activity	7
Publicity	2
Organising funding	1
Buying materials required (in own time)	1
Training	1
Songs, rhymes	1

4.1.15 (Q13) Choosing stories

A wide range of factors were cited in connection with the choice of stories for storytime by the eleven subjects who completed this question. The comments made can be broken down into five broad areas:

- The length of the story.

- The suitability of the story for a particular age group.

- The adaptation of the story for a craft activity.

- The story illustrations.

- The story content.

Four subjects (S10, S14, S33, S48) mentioned the length of the story, indicating that it should not be too long although none of the respondents cited a specific time length. Subjects related the length of the story to the children's attention span (S48), the length of the storytime session (S10) and the age of the children (S33). For example, S33 stated:

> "Because of the age of my children, under five's, the stories I choose are usually not too long. I tell about three different stories and then try to base the activity on one of the stories. Stories where the children join in are very popular e.g. flapbooks, making faces and counting." **S33**

The suitability of the story for the age group it is directed at was referred to by four subjects (S10, S12, S14, S33) and the adaptation of the story for a craft activity was also a consideration (S13, S23, S33, S36).

Four subjects mentioned the story illustrations (S12, S23, S45, S46) indicating that they should be "bold" and "clear" (S12), "attractive" (S46) and "good" (S23, S45).

In terms of the story content, respondents used a wide range of descriptors as the following statements illustrate:

> "Bold, clear illustrations, subjects younger children will identify with. Text (not too much) repetition of sayings/rhymes - noises, for active participation." **S12**

> "Something to hold the children's attention e.g. an exciting or funny story. A storybook with good illustrations. A book that can be adapted to craft making." **S23**

"Stories which relate to everyday things (mostly) in a child's life.   Lively and humorous.   Simple and effective. Comprehension level; this varies throughout the year." **S34**

"Stories that are fun, have a message, introduce children to different cultures experiences.   Stories I will enjoy reading. Stories on themes, that will fit in with a craft idea." **S36**

Many of the comments made by respondents concur with those outlined in the literature.   For example the guidelines produced by Esson and Tyerman (1991) advise:

"If you like a story the chances of success are much greater. The story should be appropriate for the age and interest level of the children and should be of a length to suit their attention span.   Clear illustrations supported by a relevant text using lively and evocative language are essential features.   A story which is good for telling will have a distinct structure or plot with a satisfying conclusion.   For younger children stories containing repetition and opportunities for participation, such as joining in with animal noises or guessing what is hidden behind a flap, are especially enjoyable."

4.1.16   (Q14) Telling stories

Table 4.11 overleaf outlines the length of time respondents have been telling stories.   These results show that the majority of respondents have been telling stories for over ten years.

4.1.17   (Q15) Oral storytelling

Table 4.12 overleaf shows that over half the respondents had experience of telling stories without a book.

However, of the six subjects who indicated experience in this area, three subjects (S10, S12, S45) qualified their statements with the term "occasionally" (S12, S45) or "not often" (S10).   Moreover, the latter subject indicated that this was a skill they would like to acquire.

Table 4.11   Length of time telling stories

Length of time (years)	No. of Respondents (n=11)
20	3
18	1
15	1
14	1
Over 12 years	1
10 + years	1
8	1
3	1
1	1

Table 4.12   Oral storytelling

Experience of Oral Storytelling	No. of Respondents (n=11)
Yes	6
No	5

In terms of how they acquired this skill, two subjects did not provide details (S10, S12) whilst three cited "experience" and/or "practice" (S13, S45, S48). The remaining respondent reported that it was a skill gained through their own interest in storytelling clubs and workshops (S36). The five people who had no experience of this activity gave a variety of responses when asked whether they would like to acquire this skill as Table 4.13 illustrates.

Table 4.13   Would you like to acquire oral storytelling skills ?

Subject Number	Response
S14	"Not carried out at work with large groups of children. In the past only to small numbers in other settings."
S23	"Yes"
S33	"Not really. I feel children like the illustrations. I am not dramatic enough."
S34	"Don't know"
S46	No response

The association made by S33 between oral storytelling and the requirement to be dramatic is interesting.   Greene (1982) reports that the increasing use of professional performance storytellers in libraries has left many library staff feeling inadequate:

> "The emphasis is on the storyteller rather than on the story, and after the story hour the children scramble for an autograph rather than sit "lost in wonder".   What is most troubling is that many librarians and teachers tell me they feel inadequate when they compare their low-key storytelling styles with these high-powered, one-person performances, and so are less inclined to tell stories to children."

The style of oral storytelling that library staff should adopt has also been the subject of debate by other authors (see Chapter 2, Section 2.4).

Moreover, whether library staff see oral storytelling as a skill they should acquire is also an issue. The comment made by S33 regarding illustrations also concurs with anecdotal information the author heard during the course of this project. In this context, Weir (1988) makes an interesting point:

> "Storytelling through picture books is one of the most used ways to introduce children to a large number of stories, and yet, some may contest that it is not *real* storytelling! I would strongly argue that provided a few basic techniques are used, telling stories through picture books can certainly be just as effective and, on some occasions, *more* effective than traditional storytelling."

As an example of the latter point, Weir (1988) cites the use of picture books at storytimes as a way of encouraging older children and less able readers to read:

> "Having heard a picture book read to them, children will often clamour to borrow it to read for themselves."

Probably the ideal situation, as Weir (1988) notes, is for individuals to possess oral and picture book storytelling skills, enabling them to use either method well, or a combination of both, at storytimes.

4.1.18 (Q16) Storytime format

This question was originally included in the questionnaire as the author was interested to find out the reasons staff gave for the structure of the storytime and the inclusion of particular activities. However, an analysis of the comments made in response to this question revealed that the majority were largely descriptive in nature with few subjects providing reasons why the storytimes were structured in a particular way. As one subject commented "I've always carried out storytimes like this" (S34) whilst another more jokingly stated "Settle children down. Read story. Do an activity - it works!" (S45). One subject did attempt to provide reasons as the following statement illustrates:

"Informal, relaxed, but structured.   Stimulating, topical. Participative - so can be used as a base to work from [and ?] home by carers.   Refreshments - social aspect.   Craft - development of appropriate skills needed for reading." **S14**

In retrospect the author appreciates that more guidance should have been provided on the type of information the author was seeking and/or the question should have been more specific in the information sought.

As regards the structure of the storytime activity, the majority of respondents reported that the storytime format comprised a story followed by a craft.   Appendix 4 provides details of all the subjects' responses.

4.1.19 (Q17 - 21) Respondents backgrounds

A limited disclosure of the data collected on respondents' backgrounds is presented for two reasons.   Firstly, the author does not wish to inadvertently reveal respondents' identities since the individuals who participated in this study were assured anonymity in the final report. Secondly, it was realised that some of the data collected does not provide any additional insights beyond that already gathered from previous questions. Data from Questions 17 and 19 concerned with respondents' job titles and the length of time worked in the present post are, therefore, not presented.

Information collected from Question 18, concerned with the length of time respondents had worked in a library, showed that eleven of the twelve individuals had worked for this type of organisation for ten years or more. The average length of time worked in a library was calculated at eighteen years.

Data collected in Question 20 was concerned with the library qualifications held by the respondents.   The findings indicated that only three of the twelve respondents did not have a library qualification.   The most frequently cited qualification was a City and Guilds Certificate.

Tables 4.14 and 4.15 below provide details of the age and sex of respondents.

Table 4.14   Age of respondents

Age Group (years)	No. of Respondents (n=12)
Under 19	-
20 - 29	1
30 - 39	6
40 - 49	3
50 - 59	2
60+	-

Table 4.15   Sex of respondents

Sex	No. of Respondents (n=12)
Male	2
Female	10

4.1.20 Further comments

Six respondents made additional statements in the 'Further Comments' section at the end of the questionnaire.   The comments made cover a range of areas, drawing attention to the value that staff place on storytimes and the impact that the cuts in Sheffield Libraries Services have had on this activity. The comments are reproduced in full as follows:

"I have many school classes visiting the library - 3 or 4 a week on average.   I never have a class visit without offering to read a story, so most class instruction sessions usually end with a story session."   **S10**

"Storytimes are important to libraries and their staff.   Children are the borrower's of the future, to give them a love of stories, social skills, communicating with others at a very young age will give them a headstart in life before they even start school. It is very rewarding (to be stopped in the street like I was by a parent - 10 years on from taking a child in a storytime session, and thanked for what I had given her child, it was wonderful!)." **S12**

"Certain aspects of skills in storytime cannot be 'taught'. Many of the staff have children of their own.   This is an obvious help.   Maturity in ones approach to life is vital. Personality is also relevant; with an ability to express, without an authoritarian 'air' in one's manner, being of paramount importance.   The need to integrate parental involvement is also helpful/very important, so that an extension of the activity can carry on at home.   All of these aspects, and more, contribute [to ?] an underlying theme - <u>The need to read</u>!" **S13**

"1. Council priority = Under 8's.
2. Effect of Children Act.
3. Community funding originally established toys, cups etc. to facilitate.
4. Aim to attract isolated/minority groups/non regular users.
5. Multicultural and equal opportunities acknowledged.

The above items are an integral part of the purpose behind sessions.   Reading is needed as a life skill, libraries are free

and available to all, promotion of this encourages future social advantage to the user, and long term to libraries. Children should be regarded as an investment opportunity and the value of language and communication cannot be underestimated." **S14**

"Story times are an important way of attracting children (and often their parents!) into libraries, and introducing them to books, other materials, and the reading habit. Hopefully all this will be of use to them in later years. Also story-times can have a particular significance in areas or communities where the children might not otherwise have much access to books and other reading material

Unfortunately in recent years, Sheffield Libraries have faced such drastic budget cuts that some of our core services and activities - including the provision of regular story-times and activities - have inevitably suffered. Where we have been able to continue with such activities in our libraries, it has been largely because of the commitment, enthusiasm, skills and good-will of our staff." **S18**

"Unfortunately for me, with the current constraints in our work place i.e. being very short staffed, storytimes are proving extremely difficult to carry out. Consequently storytimes, which I regard as an integral part of our service to encourage and invite children to the wealth of children's literature, may have to go completely from our service point." **S34**

4.1.21 Summary

The findings from this survey can be summarised as follows:

- Twelve staff responded to the forty questionnaires distributed to the four area groups within Sheffield Libraries Services. Eleven of the twelve respondents had been involved with storytime activities in the last year and therefore the bulk of the data collected is based on the information provided by these eleven individuals.

- The majority of respondents were female, aged between 30-39 and had worked in a library for ten years or more, with the average length of time worked in a library calculated at eighteen years.

- Respondents cited a range of storytime activities that they had been involved with, including: library storytimes for children under and over five, school class visits, seasonal holiday activities, playgroups and nurseries and special events and festivals.

- A number of personal skills and qualities were identified by staff with respect to carrying out storytime activities. These included: good communication skills, vocal skills, enthusiasm, an interest in children, patience, and the ability to control children.

- Five of the eleven respondents indicated that they had received no training on storytimes and a number of staff expressed an interest in receiving training for this activity.

- Despite the lack of training, only four out of eleven respondents indicated that they had experienced difficulties with storytimes. Problems relating to controlling children were cited by two individuals.

- Whilst all staff were aware of the objectives for holding storytimes, the majority indicated that storytime activities were not evaluated. Moreover, a range of criteria were cited by staff who did evaluate the storytimes.

- The majority of respondents rated the storytimes as very enjoyable.

- In addition to planning the storytimes and choosing and telling stories, respondents identified a number of other tasks which were carried out for this activity. These included: the craft activity, publicity, organising funding, training and buying any materials required.

- A wide range of factors were cited in connection with the choice of stories for storytime. These included: the length of the story, the suitability of the story for a particular age group, the adaptation of the story for a craft activity, the story content and illustrations.

- The majority of respondents have been telling stories for over ten years with six out of eleven having experience of telling stories without a book.

- Staff comments emphasised the benefits provided by running this activity and also highlighted the impact that the cuts have had on this service.

Chapter 5:   Results and Discussion - The staff training interview

"I feel the library is very important and am very worried about the lack of funding for Sheffield Libraries."

Parent, Library 2

5.0   Background to the interview

In order to find out the nature and extent of the training received by library staff in Sheffield for storytelling, the author interviewed Mr Andrew Milroy, Group Manager for Learning and Young People, on this subject.   The author was aware prior to the interview that cuts in the funding of Sheffield Libraries Services had affected the running of the service including staff training.   Within the interview, therefore, the author sought to find out what the situation regarding training and storytelling was prior to the cuts, what the present position was and ascertain what Andrew would like to see happen in the future.   Whilst these areas were the main focus of the conversation, a range of other subjects were covered during the course of this interview and these are referred to where the author considers them to be relevant.

The interview took place at Bannerdale Education Centre, to where the Schools Library Service has recently relocated.   The conversation was taped using a portable cassette recorder and lasted approximately ninety minutes. The conversation was transcribed and excerpts are quoted in this chapter in the colloquial form in which they took place.

Within these quoted sections the following points are of note:

(i)   Pauses in the conversation are shown as dots i.e. ...   However, all "ums" and "ers" and other similar phrases have been omitted from the quoted text.

(ii)   Any words the author is uncertain of are shown in square brackets with a question mark after them.   For example, [school ?].   Square brackets are also used in situations where the author has inserted words to make

the meaning of the conversation clearer or to avoid revealing the identity of a location. In these instances a question mark is not included within the brackets.

(iii) Care has been taken to ensure that the punctuation incorporated into the text for ease of reading does not alter the original meaning or focus of the conversation that took place.

(iv) The order in which the quotes are presented does not necessarily reflect the order in which subjects were discussed during the conversation.

5.1 The interview

5.1.1 The past and present situation

The interview began with Andrew outlining the background to the present situation as regards staffing for children's services, storytelling and staff training. The conversation highlights the impact that cuts in staffing and library opening hours have had on the service as a whole and on staff training in particular:

> "If I start at a period of about five years ago because I think that was the time when probably we had the maximum staffing in the Unit and posts filled and also the public library situation wasn't as acute as it is now. By that I mean we had a service where service points had Children's Library Assistants even for part-time or full-time. But there has been a reduction in opening hours and a reduction in staffing. Those CLA's (which is what we call Children's Library Assistants) have either left because they've taken severance or early retirement or they have had to cover for other duties within the branch and children's work has been diluted as a result of that. That's meant that time for activities which may well include storytelling is not always there or doesn't happen as frequently. The situation with the opening hours is also a problem because if they're [the libraries] closing days or closing early it means that the times to be able to do that are not always there as well. If you're doing things at weekends then you've got minimum staff on anyway and it is a difficult thing.
>
> The other thing is that because we work on a group staffing basis, ... staffing and moving around groups quite a lot now, ...

it means you don't always have a person wedded to a branch in the same way who could pick it up in that way.

In terms of storytelling in the past, when we had Children's Library Assistants, we did have a procedure whereby there were regular activity sessions both during a week on an evening and also in the holiday period. The evening ones were the first to go because not many branches are open many evenings. We have got associated problems .... in terms of parents perceptions of going to a library in darkness and with things like traffic, and just this sort of general feel of being not safe to go out is something that I've noticed has been quite acute recently...."

The problems relating to traffic and dark evenings have also been highlighted within the literature (see Shepherd 1988). In order to compensate for this problem work can be carried out with schools but this, in turn, raises further issues as Andrew highlights:

"....I think maybe where we can compensate for that is by trying to work more with schools [through] classes, visits, library school inductions - that sort of thing. And then with my other hat on, in terms of the Schools Library Service, I've had to say to them be careful about the amount of work you do with individual schools because of, if you like, the nature of the School Library Service. Its work provides for a service level agreement that anything above the norm or the basic contract we will charge for .... and public libraries need to be mindful of that as well because schools will pay for services from any other organisations [so] why should public libraries be any different ? And while we want to encourage children to use libraries we don't want to be taken for a ride on it as well. There are one or two things happening around the City that I'm a bit uneasy about but at the moment I'm unsure as to how to progress with it because I don't want to stifle the initiative and stifle work. I think it's just a question of being realistic about what you can take on and making sure we spread the work we do with schools around all the schools in the area and not just one or two. So that's one of the things that is an issue at the moment."

The work the department carries out is complicated further by the difficult balancing act that staff have to perform between work for schools and work in the public library service as Andrew notes:

"One of the issues about a joint job i.e. public and schools is .... (I'm sure you've talked to other people about this) .... is that

school is somewhat of a magnet in terms of the amount of work it generates and I think one of the things that's suffered is the services to the public library service. I would be the first to admit that. The issue really for me is that if you don't put that work into schools then you lose the money for education and the whole thing goes belly-up. But that does need to be addressed within the public sector at the moment - I realise that."

The impact that staffing changes and cuts within the Learning and Young People's Unit have had on the amount of training that staff within the Unit have been able to organise is also an issue as Andrew reports:

"I had, about five years ago, a staff, when this Unit was restructured, which included three Senior Librarians and two Support Librarians. At the moment I'm down to two Senior Librarians and one and a half Support Librarians but even within that for the last two to three years I have never had a full establishment [of staff]. I haven't got one now .... [as a result of] a combination of staff leaving and maternity leaves. For example, I don't have the same Senior Librarians that I had five years ago. I also don't have the same Support Librarians that I had five years ago either. I had a situation two years ago when I had out of those five [staff], [for] six months I had a half of a Support Librarian post and there is also myself running public and schools. So that has been a real difficulty for us.

The issue connected with that is that when you get someone appointed in post eventually you've then got to follow them up in terms of their training and what their priorities are and because of the way local government is at the moment you're only recruiting - if recruiting is the right word - in-house. So you may well get somebody coming to you that is not a children's specialist and has not the faintest idea of working with children and it's very difficult to sort that out.

Around about that time when we had that staffing I had a Senior Librarian and a Support Librarian who was responsible for working solely with the public side. That was their job. They manned the training, they did training and they did work in reading promotion. At the moment, I have a half Support Librarian and myself who dabbles into it but that Support Librarian is also running this year's Sheffield Children's Book Award as well, so there isn't really a lot of opportunity to do that and I have to say that the Book Award is a high profile event that we like to give some priority to because of the other spin-offs we have.

Storytelling was quite active about four or five years ago. I've just taken out of my drawer, just to remind me, the Society for Storytelling membership card. We're in that .... and we did run quite a number of workshops for people and we had a number of staff attending those. Hopefully, that went back into the branches. It was oral storytelling without actually looking at books - it was basically off the top of the head and we ran that for about twelve sessions.

....So, effectively, what I'm saying is that we've not really done a lot of training since then, if any at all. We have sent people on external courses from time to time but it's an area of work we've not picked up for all the reasons I've talked about."

Two external courses which were specifically mentioned by Andrew were "The Alternative Display Course" and "Here's One I Made Earlier." The display course was held in Sheffield in November 1995 and fifty people attended it. The course was run by Pauline Carr. According to Andrew the course was well received and he would like to repeat it this year. The "Here's One I Made Earlier" course was run by the Youth Library Group of the Library Association and held in Doncaster in June of this year. Staff from a number of library authorities attended and the purpose of the course was to enable staff to swap ideas on craft activities for children in libraries. Ten people from Sheffield attended this course and "got a lot out of it" according to Andrew.

However, the situation is complicated further by the structural changes which have taken place within the Unit as Andrew explained:

"....one of the things I haven't said is that the schools and the public service were two separate entities up till about five years ago. We had the Schools Library Service, which had a Senior Librarian and three Support Librarians, and then we had a Youth Team which worked on the public side, which had a Senior Librarian and two Support Librarians and a Library Assistant, as well as an overall Education Liaison Officer, as well as a separate User Education Unit. Probably if I add those up .... three, ... four, ... six, ... nine .... I had ten professional librarians equivalent to what I've got now which is five. Then, when I gave you the whole story of me and the half Support Librarian we were down to one and a half. That's what we have to do. And that often isn't seen, I'm afraid, in the department, and that's where you get the problems of staff

on the counter doing work last minute in their own time ....
hurried .... and what effects that has is quality. It's not good.
I mean, I've just done the launch of this [Libraries in the Year
2050 Project] on Tuesday afternoon. It could have been a lot
better if I'd had the time to put into it. It clashed with me
moving here, ... it clashed with somebody being ill. We could
have put more work into liaising with the Curriculum Service,
for example, but it wasn't a total disaster or anything like that.
We didn't have the number of schools applying to it that we
would have liked, but we learned some lessons from it."

The low levels of staff have also had other effects, notably on the
effective use of money made available for children's activities as Andrew
highlights:

"For example this year we've got a thousand pounds from the
department to do a Summer activity programme. The problem
is because I've had nobody in post I've had nobody to organise
it. So what I'm having to do is devise another way of trying to
spend the money - that is to effectively take bids from the
groups so that we don't lose that money and don't get it not fed
into children's work. But that's not the best way of doing it
and what I'm a bit concerned about is that we have no means
with that route of actually seeing what an impact spending that
money has. Now I'm sure a lot of that money will be used for
storytelling sessions linked to other activities but, in some
ways, the people on the ground i.e. Children's Library
Assistants, are very much on their own in terms of what they do
there. With each of the groups, as you know, there is a
Children's Co-ordinator. The problem for them is that co-
ordination of children's work is one of a number of other jobs
that they do. We don't have children's specialists and it's
shown in their inability to come to book selection sometimes as
a group or attend a regular meeting."

This point was given further emphasis by Andrew later in the
interview. He stated that although finding funds to carry out activities was a
problem for some people he did not find it a difficulty. Rather, having
obtained the money from the department or through sponsorship, the problem
was finding the staff to carry out the activity, thereby preventing the funds
from being spent effectively.

5.1.2 Future developments

In spite of the aforementioned cuts, a number of developments are planned which should improve the situation. It is intended that a series of activity days will be held at the end of December 1996, one of which will be devoted to storytelling. For this activity, Andrew intends to arrange for a number of individuals to be brought in to provide some tips on storytelling and this will be linked with information on recommended books for storytelling.

In addition, the report on library services to children produced by LISC has resulted in the department receiving a central amount of money dedicated to children's services and it is intended that a strategy plan for children's services will be drawn up this year. Andrew stated that the purpose of the plan will be to integrate all the department's work with children and enable some realistic aims and objectives to be set for the future.

An activity programme will be mentioned within this strategy plan and, in this context, Andrew elaborated on the developments he would like to see happen with regard to storytelling:

> "Well there will be something in that [the strategy plan]. I mean, storytelling to some extent is an element within the activities we produce - it's a product of what we would produce. I think that if you're talking about storytelling in that way you need the staff to be able to deliver that. You need to be quite clear in your own mind as to why you have storytelling sessions, the age groups you're doing them to, the sort of groups that you want to aim at and evaluating what the point of doing that was. That's not always clear in some staff's minds I don't think. Sometimes I think they just think we've got to do that because we want to be seen to be doing something or it's an activity that we enjoy doing and, if they get two or three people along, well, that's fine, but maybe we need to be looking at .... perhaps .... more at that.
>
> There's the idea do we do it just in the library or do we actually take the show on the road and then have we got the staffing to do that ? So, what I would like to see happening is that, first of all, we can retain our Children's Library Assistants because they are dropping off. We do need a training programme to look at storytelling, warts and all, i.e. what's expected, why we do it and just the reasons I've gone through. We need to work out some sort of informal, if you like, idea, as to the best times to do that, the best way to do it. We need to look at some good

practice, in terms of materials that we use, and then we may then extend further on to oral storytelling off the top. Then, also, at times like in the Summer holidays and Easter holidays we need to look at bringing in, perhaps, some storytellers as well. It would have been the easiest thing to do in the world if we had that time to do it over the Summer .... [to] invite Taffy Thomas and others who are well known to us and have been here before.

And, of course, it needs somebody to co-ordinate. It's not ducking the issue but it's just a number of other things that we would have to do .... and it hasn't been done because there hasn't been anyone to do it. I think the training programmes are really important. I think there's quite a number of staff who would be interested in following that up because they enjoy doing it. I think also there's a way of trying to devise a [training programme so that training can be cascaded down as well ?]."

5.1.3 Evaluation of storytimes

The author was particularly interested in Andrew's view on how storytimes should be evaluated in view of the preliminary findings from the staff questionnaire (see Section 4.1.12). Andrew was asked whether storytimes were evaluated and how he felt they should be evaluated. Andrew stated that evaluations of storytimes are not at present carried out. However, he felt that it was something that should happen and identified a number of factors that should be considered when evaluating this activity. These included the ability to hold the activity on a regular basis in order to encourage the children to get into a pattern of attending, which was something he felt that they were not always able to do.

The ability to hold the children's attention and interest during the storytime and minimise distractions was another factor Andrew mentioned and, in this respect, he felt that the length and structure of the storytime activity was important. For example very young children would require short storytelling sessions broken up with other activities.

Andrew emphasised the need to identify and work on good practice and channel any good ideas that one library might have around to others. He

stated that he himself was always looking out for ideas from other library authorities and cited as an example, the recent "Library in the Year 2050" poster project which was a "Library Power" project originally carried out in Southwark.

5.1.4 Storytimes and library service priorities

The author was interested to find out where storytelling fell in the overall list of priorities of the library service and Andrew responded as follows:

> "It should be very important, particularly for that age group that we are trying to prioritise .... but I think I would refer you back to a lot of the things I've said. Everything's a priority till we actually come around to do it and you'll find, particularly in the branches, often as not the manager's view about his or her priorities [is] in [terms of] keeping a service point open, and that's where I have problems with managers that if there's a problem in the branch the first thing that gets cut is the storytime activity sessions. And, often as not, I don't know about it till afterwards. Another example is where you've got two service points within a library. [Location] is probably a very good example, maybe. [In] a staff shortage the first thing that gets shut is the children's side, not the adult. There's no real reason, often as not, but that's the way .... it always happens.

Andrew indicated that he felt that storytelling was a priority in many people's minds. However, whilst this type of activity is taking place in many branches there are some branches where staffing difficulties prevent this. The latter situation arises particularly in cases where individuals with the skills have left and where Children's Library Assistants are not appointed. In these instances, Andrew stated that the only solution to the problem was to move Children's Library Assistants from other groups in to do sessions or, alternatively, to do some storytelling training with existing branch staff who are not Children's Library Assistants. However, this latter point presented difficulties where staff are not happy to carry out the activity.

5.1.5 Conclusion

Overall, the impression the author gained during this interview was of staff trying to do their best under difficult circumstances. This picture also emerged during observations of the storytimes (see Chapter 6). Andrew's concluding comments highlight the difficulties that the present situation places on staff:

> ".... I think a crucial thing to say is that, when you're short of staffing and time, things go wrong because you're not making sure things are right and that everybody's genned up about it .... and so many things go wrong and that has a knock-on effect in that people feel let down .... they feel deflated because it's not worked. I mean, I am usually very optimistic but I have to say after three months of trying to move into here I've felt very down the last fortnight because things did not go the way I wanted .... and I felt let down [emphasises] and I'm sure that CLA's feel let down sometimes [by] the fact that they don't have that support that they really should have."

Chapter 6:   Results and Discussion - The observation of storytimes

"Unfortunately in recent years, Sheffield Libraries have faced such drastic budget cuts that some of our core services and activities - including the provision of regular storytimes and activities - have inevitably suffered. Where we have been able to continue with such activities in our libraries, it has been largely because of the commitment, enthusiasm, skills and goodwill of our staff."

Member of library staff (S18)

6.0   The storytime observations

This chapter presents the results of the storytime observations carried out at six public libraries in Sheffield.   The observations made on each of the storytimes are outlined on pages 91-118 as a series of record sheets.   The libraries visited are identified by a number in order to preserve their anonymity, and the number assigned to each library relates to the order in which each library was visited for observation purposes.   One library was visited twice in order to pilot the observation methodology (see Section 3.2.3.3).   A record of this pilot visit is included within the present record sheets and it is identified as 'Library Visit 1'.   A subsequent visit to this library is identified as 'Library Visit 4'.   Hence there are record sheets for seven library visits.   Following these record sheets, a discussion of the results is presented (see Sections 6.2 and 6.3).   Within this discussion, library visits 1 and 4 are referred to as Library 1/4, whilst all other libraries are referred to by their visit number e.g. Library 2, Library 3 etc.

6.1   Presentation of the findings: explanatory notes

The following points should be borne in mind when examining the record sheets:

(i)   The member of library staff carrying out the activity is referred to as the 'storyteller'.

(ii)   Every effort has been made to record a factual account of what the author observed taking place during the storytime activity.   For this reason the author has not made any reference to the levels of

enjoyment exhibited by the staff running the activity or of the children and adults attending it. The author would like to stress that all the storytimes attended were extremely enjoyable affairs and this fact is borne out in the comments made by adults within the questionnaire on reasons for attending storytimes (see Section 7.5).

(iii) The level of background noise noted by the author during the storytime activity should only serve as a guide to the background noise levels observed. The author did not in any way attempt to quantitatively measure the noise levels present and this is clearly a limitation. Rather, a record of any noise that occurred during the activity was simply noted down. For example, "2.30pm telephone rang". The level of background noise at some storytimes was noticeably higher and/or for a longer duration than at others, and this factor is also noted where relevant.

(iv) The level of participation and attentiveness present during the storytime activity were both factors which the author sought to take into consideration and report on and reference is made to these factors throughout the records. However, the terms used should only serve as a guide to the behaviour being exhibited as the author did not attempt to measure either factor quantitatively and this is clearly a limitation. With respect to participation, the author's view of the level of participation was based on the level of interaction that took place between the storyteller and the children. This was based on the author's perception of the number and type of questions the storyteller asked the children and the number and type of responses elicited from the children during the storytime activity. Similarly, the level of attentiveness was based on the author's perception of whether the children focused on the storyteller and the story during the activity or appeared distracted.

However, it should be emphasised that whilst the author perceived some differences in the levels of participation and attentiveness present

at different storytimes, this should not be taken as an implicit criticism of the storyteller's style or technique.   Rather, it reflects the particular set of conditions that the storytime activity took place under (see point v) and the relative as opposed to absolute judgements that the author made when comparing storytimes observed.

(v)   The author would like to stress that the records presented represent a subjective 'snapshot' of what occurred at a particular place at a particular time with a particular group of children and adults.   This point was emphasised to the author following a second visit made to the first library visited.   Although both storytimes took place at the same library they were distinctly different (see the record sheets for 'Library Visit 1' and 'Library Visit 4').

(vi)   The amount of information recorded within the 'Brief Summary' section of the record sheet for each library visit varies considerably. The author would like to stress that this is not in any way a reflection on the performance of the storytellers observed.

The record sheets for each library visit now follow.

<center>**Library Visit 1**</center>

General Points

Day and time held:	Monday 1.30 - 3pm
Age range:	Under 5 years old.
No. of children permitted:	No maximum specified. According to staff average attendance recently has been 17 children. One member of staff stated that the library would consider up to 25 attending before imposing limits.
Waiting list:	None
Register taken:	No
No. of library staff:	1 (other staff present in the library).
Chaperone policy:	Adults must stay with children.
Refreshments:	Yes. Refreshments provided for both children and adults.
Location:	Children's library. The storytime was held in the play area of the library. A playpen, slide and toys were all within reach.

Storytime Observed

Attendance - children:	12 toddlers, 1 baby.
adults:	6
Seating arrangements:	The children sat on small chairs arranged in a semi-circle around the storyteller. The children did not always stay sat on these chairs and were free to move around throughout the storytime. The adults sat on larger chairs some distance from the children.
Storytime format:	Refreshments were provided first, followed by three stories and a craft.
Storytime theme:	Bears

Library Visit 1 continued

Stories selected: **1.** "Where's my Teddy ?" (Alborough 1994). Large sized version used.

                                    2. "Old Bear" (Hussey 1995). Pop-up version used.

                                    3. "A Little Pandamonium"
(Hughes and Sutherland 1979)

Use of props
A large bear and a small bear were used during the first story. A handkerchief parachute was used during the second story. A panda hand puppet and green plastic bamboo shoots were used during the third story.

Craft
A yellow card teddy bear was given to the children which they coloured in with crayons and stuck coloured circular discs on to represent paws.

Reading technique
The storyteller held each book centrally outwards so that the children could clearly see both pictures and text. The stories were told in the storyteller's own words with occasional reference to the text. In discussion, the storyteller also indicated that they had changed some words deliberately in order that the children would understand the meaning of them. For this reason, the storyteller chose to use the word 'crying' rather than 'sobbing' in the first story.

Background noise
The telephone rang a number of times during the storytime. Background noise also arose from other adults talking (both to children and other adults), books being issued, and from the children themselves talking and playing with toys.

Unusual aspects:

1. Cable television had arranged to film this storytime and during the filming the storyteller was asked to repeat one story ("Where's my Teddy ?") for filming purposes. According to the storyteller, the children sat for far longer than normal during the storytime for the benefit of the cameras.

2. Prior to this storytime, the storyteller had not carried out a storytime for a year as they had been on secondment to another library working in adult services.

Unusual aspects continued:

3. This was the first storytime within Sheffield Libraries Services which the author attended, and was a 'pilot' visit to test the methodology to be used and to identify factors to record. A second visit to this particular library was subsequently made (see Library Visit 4).

Brief Summary

Although scheduled to start at 1.30pm, the storytime actually began at 2pm. In discussion, staff indicated that the starting time was flexible and that they generally waited until everyone had drifted in before starting. In addition, the start of this storytime was delayed as the camera crew set up their equipment.

As the storyteller had not carried out a storytime for a year, the storytime began with the storyteller introducing themself to the children and asking them their names. The children responded. The storyteller then informed the children that the stories chosen for this session were all about teddy bears, and asked the children whether they had teddy bears of their own which prompted more discussion.

The first story ran from 2.03 - 2.16pm. The second story ran from 2.17 - 2.25pm. The first story was then repeated for the benefit of the film crew and ran from 2.26 - 2.30pm. The third story ran from 2.33 - 2.39pm. The craft activity ran from 2.40 - 3pm.

For the author, there were a number of distinctive features to this storytime:

1. The storyteller's use of props throughout all three stories
For example, prior to the first story the storyteller began by pulling two bears out of a bag. One bear was very big and one was very small. The children were asked which bear they thought a big bear would have, and which bear they thought a little boy would have. Much discussion followed as the children responded. Some of the children thought that the little boy would have a big bear and the storyteller asked whether they were really sure as would they be able to get a bear that size into their bed ? More discussion followed.

During the story, the bears were passed around, and each child took it turn to hold them. At the end of the story, where the bear and the boy take their own bears home, the storyteller asked each child holding a bear to lift it above their head as each bear was talked about.

During the second story, the storyteller threw a handkerchief parachute up in the air several times to mimic part of the story.   In the final story, the storyteller used green plastic bamboo shoots and a panda hand puppet.   The latter was used with particular effect at the beginning of the story to quieten the children down.   The storyteller began by holding the puppet with its back to the audience and told the children that the panda was very shy and that they would have to be quiet if he was to look at them.   The storyteller covered the panda's eyes and face with it's 'paws' when turning the panda to face the children and pretended that the panda was taking a quick look at the children though his 'paws'.   This was repeated several times and set the tone for the next story which was about a shy panda.

2. The level of participation between storyteller and children
Despite other attractions (see point 3.), the level of interaction between the storyteller and the children was high.   Throughout the storytelling, the storyteller invited participation both by asking the children questions and by encouraging the children to take part in the story where possible.   For example, when telling the second story with a pop-up book, the storyteller encouraged the children to pull the pop-up flaps on each page and make noises where appropriate.   On one particular page a flap is pulled which reveals a bear by torchlight.   Every child in the group pulled down this flap and made a growling noise as they did so.

The storyteller's use of gesture also encouraged the children to respond.   For example, prior to reading the final story, the storyteller asked the children who had been to the zoo ?   As this question was asked the storyteller raised their hand in the air to indicate that they had been to the zoo.   The children responded in a similar fashion and began to tell the storyteller what animals they had seen at the zoo.   Later on during this story, the panda rocks backwards and forwards.   The storyteller got the children to copy these movements, rocking backwards and forwards in their seats.

3. The storytime atmosphere
Staff emphasised that the storytime sessions are "very informal", and indicated that the children are free to move around as it is difficult to get small children of that age range to sit still for long.   Moreover, the author observed that the adults accompanying the children chose to sit at some distance from them in contrast to the close sitting posture adopted by adults and children in Library Visit 2.   Thus adults at this storytime were not within reach to restrain the children's movements (should they have wished to do so).

<u>Library Visit 1 continued</u>

The author did however, notice that some of the children's movements were related to the presence of toys within the storytime area.   For example, one child played with a dumper truck and at one point manoeuvred it in between the storyteller and the other children, temporarily interrupting the story.   Another child walked in front of the audience to reach a toy slide situated behind the storyteller prior to actually using it.   The storyteller remained unperturbed by these interruptions, children moving around and the general level of background noise.

<u>Library Visit 2</u>

<u>General Points</u>

Day and time held: Monday 2 - 3pm

Age range: 3 - 5 years old

No. of children permitted: 12, although currently 13 children are on the
of   register as one mother brings 2 boys one
                          whom is 2 years old.

Waiting list: Yes. Approximately 25 children of the
appropriate age range are on the waiting list.
However, children can be placed on the waiting
list from 18 months upwards. Taking these
children into account the present waiting list has
approximately 100 names.

Register taken: Yes

No. of library staff: 1 (although one of the adults attending is also
designated an official 'helper').

Chaperone policy: Adults do not have to stay with children.
However, the present set of adults choose to.

Refreshments: No

Location: Children's library. The storytime was held in a
large open carpeted area away from the corner
of   the library where a large wooden train, playpen
and toys are located.

<u>Storytime Observed</u>

Attendance - children: 11 toddlers, 1 baby.
             adults: 8

Seating arrangements: Children and adults sat on the floor in a semi-
circle arrangement around the storyteller who
sat   on a small child's chair. Children and adults sat
very close to the storyteller.

Library Visit 2 continued

Storytime format: Register taken followed by two stories and a craft.

Storytime theme: Road construction/transport.

Stories selected: **1.** "The Line Up Book" (Russo 1989).

                                 2. "William King of the Road" (Newton 1987).

Craft
The craft related to the theme of "The Line Up Book", where a small boy lines up objects to make a line through the house, finishing with himself. The children were provided with a sheet of wallpaper which they lay down on whilst an adult drew around them. These drawings were then filled in and decorated using crayons and stick-on coloured shapes. The children were then asked to "line up" with their completed drawings to see how long a line they could make in the library. A line of children lying on their drawings was made from one corner of the room to the entrance door.

Reading technique
The storyteller held each book outwards from one side. The children could clearly see both pictures and text. The storyteller told each story staying faithful to the words from the text, although later stated in discussion that a few "mistakes" (i.e. different words from the text) were made.

Background noise
The telephone rang once during the storytime. A child making a clapping sound was quickly restrained by an adult. Aside from participating in the story, the children and adults were quiet and attentive during the story readings. In contrast to Library Visit 1, noone entered the children's library during the storytime period and therefore there was no noise from adults or children entering the library, returning books or having books issued.

Unusual aspects
The storyteller stated that they had had little time to prepare the storytime due to their morning being taken up by a meeting.

Brief Summary

The storytime began with the storyteller asking the children whether they had enjoyed their half term holidays, after which a register was taken. At the storyteller's request, all the children and adults then 'shuffled' closer to the storyteller. The first story ran from 2.10 - 2.14pm. The second story ran

Library Visit 2 continued.

from 2.15 - 2.18pm.   The craft activity ran from 2.19 - 2.48pm.   Throughout the storytelling, the storyteller invited participation, asking the children questions throughout each story and the children responded.

For the author, a distinctive feature of this storytime was the way in which the children and adults sat together around the storyteller, completely absorbed in the stories.   Few uninvited interruptions occurred, the level of background noise was low, and the children and adults appeared very attentive throughout.

Prior to the craft activity, the storyteller asked the children how Sam (the boy in the first story) finished his line.   The children answered stating "himself" and the storyteller then linked their answer with the theme of the craft i.e. that the children were going to draw themselves and make a line.

Children and adults appeared very involved throughout the craft activity.

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<u>Library Visit 3</u>

</div>

<u>General Points</u>

Day and time held:	Tuesday 2 - 2.45pm
Age range:	Under 5 years old.
No. of children permitted: they	No maximum specified. According to staff prepare crafts for 16-17 children which is the usual attendance. However, if more children attend, staff quickly prepare more craft material.
Waiting list:	No
Register taken:	No
No. of library staff: the activity. staff	1 (although staff said that everyone around helps out including the adults attending). On the day the author attended staffing levels were twice normal level due to the health promotion In addition to the storyteller, three other were present in the library.
Chaperone policy:	Adults must stay with children.
Refreshments:	Yes. Provided for children only.
Location: the	Storytelling and nursery rhymes take place in children's corner of the main library, where a large wooden slide, Wendy house and toys are located. Craft activities take place on large tables in the main section of the library across from the children's corner.

<u>Storytime Observed</u>

Attendance - children: **adults:**	14 plus one baby. 9
Seating arrangements: these chairs storyteller	The majority of children sat on small chairs arranged in a semi-circle around the storyteller who also sat on a small child's chair. Some children also sat on the floor behind huddled in front of a large Wendy house. The children did not sit close up to the

Library Visit 3 continued.

Seating arrangements continued.	and there was some distance between the two parties. The children were free to move around throughout the storytime and did so. The majority of the adults stood slightly to one side of the storyteller leaning against the book cases.
Storytime format:	Three stories followed by a craft followed by refreshments followed by nursery rhymes.
Storytime theme:	Health
Stories selected:	**1.** "Brinkworth Bear Goes to the Dentist" (West, no date available). **2.** "The Boy with Square Eyes" (Snape and Snape 1989). **3.** "Going to the Hospital" (Civardi and Cartwright 1992).
Nursery rhymes selected:	**1.** I'm a little teapot. **2.** Five fat sausages. **3.** Twinkle twinkle little star. **4.** Baa baa black sheep. **5.** Speckled frogs.

Craft
The children were each given paper skeleton pieces comprising a head, ribcage, pelvis, arms and legs. Each piece had to be glued together to make a complete skeleton. The children then decorated their skeletons with crayons.

Reading technique
The storyteller held each book outwards from one side and the children could clearly see the pictures and text. The storyteller appeared to the author to tell each story staying faithful to the words from the text. However, the author did not verify this with the storyteller at the storytime.

Background noise
A loud blasting noise from the alcohol free cocktail bar temporarily interrupted the first story. The adults standing by the storyteller chatted to each other throughout the storytelling although the storyteller's voice was audible over this chatter. In discussion, the storyteller confirmed that the adults usually chat to each other at storytime. The storyteller indicated that they did not mind the chatter as they felt that the storytime was as much an opportunity for

Library Visit 3 continued.

Background noise continued
the adults to get together as for the children.

Unusual aspects
The storytime coincided with an area health promotion week which the library was running.   A wide range of activities and exhibits were taking place within the library.   On the day the author attended, there were a number of exhibit stands, a video player showing a fitness video (with the sound turned down), and an alcohol free cocktail bar run by the British National Temperance League.   Adjacent to the bar were a number of tables and stands showing a display of 'healthy' food.

During the storytime the children were served alcohol free cocktails, allowed to sample the 'healthy' food, and given hats and stickers which had been obtained from a variety of organisations for the health promotion.   The adults attending received sun monitor spots to use on the children together with sample sizes of suntan cream and toothpaste and leaflets about suncare.

At the end of the storytime, the storyteller accompanied by the children and adults, released a large net of helium filled balloons outside the library.   All these activities were unusual and were related to the health promotion.

In addition, immediately prior to the storytime the storyteller and other library staff were busy preparing the craft activity as they had been "busy".

Brief Summary

The storytime began with the storyteller holding up a completed skeleton to the children and indicating that this was the craft they were going to make that day.

The first story ran from 2.01 - 2.03pm.   The second story ran from 2.04 - 2.09pm.   The third story ran from 2.10 - 2.12pm.   The craft activity and refreshments ran from 2.13 - 2.40pm approximately.   This was followed by five minutes of nursery rhymes before the children followed the storyteller outside to release the balloons.

Less interaction and attentiveness were observed between the children and the storyteller during the first three stories at this storytime compared to that observed on Library Visits 1 and 2.

The children's attraction to the Wendy house, slide and toys during the storytime was evident, one child using the slide during the storytime.   A similar factor was highlighted at Library Visit 1.

<u>Library Visit 3 continued</u>

Following the stories, the children moved to a number of large tables across from the children's corner to carry out the craft activity.   The adults stood behind the children and supervised them.   Both children and adults appeared absorbed in the craft.

For the author, a distinctive feature of this storytime was the nursery rhymes. The storyteller and all the children and adults participated in them and there was a high level of interaction and attentiveness evident.   The author inadvertently missed observing the first two nursery rhymes and cannot comment on them.   However, all the children and adults sang the next two and the final one ("speckled frogs") required the children to carry out actions in time to the rhyme. The children had to line up along one side of the storyteller and each had to jump into the centre of the storytime area at the appropriate point in the rhyme.   The number of "speckled frogs" decreased each time the rhyme was repeated.   Not all the children jumped at the relevant point but their active participation was evident.

<center>**<u>Library Visit 4</u>**</center>

<u>General Points</u>

See details outlined for Library Visit 1; the present visit was the second visit to the same library.

<u>Storytime Observed</u>

Attendance - children:	9 toddlers, 1 baby
adults:	8

Seating arrangements: The children sat on small chairs arranged in a semi-circle around the storyteller. Although the children were free to move around throughout the storytime, the majority of children during this storytime remained seated. The majority of adults sat on larger chairs some distance from the children.

Storytime format: Refreshments were provided first, followed by two stories, two poems and a craft.

Storytime theme: No overall theme was evident. The craft related to one of the poems selected which was about a butterfly.

Stories selected: **1.** "Where, Oh Where, is Kipper's Bear ?" (Inkpen 1994). Pop-up version used.

2. "Beryl's Box" (Taylor 1993).

Poems selected: Two poems were read from "Mini Beasties" (Rosen 1991):

1. "Ladybug" (Anglund 1991).
2. "The Butterfly" (Collymore 1991).

Craft
The children were each given paper cutout shapes to make into a butterfly. The butterfly shapes comprised purple wings, yellow body, black strips (used to decorate the body) and shiny red foil antenna.   The body had to be glued to the wings and the antenna were then glued to the body.   The children decorated the butterfly body with black strips of paper which were trimmed to size and used crayons to colour in the eyes and decorate the wings.

Library Visit 4 continued

Reading technique

The storyteller held each book outwards from one side and the children could clearly see both pictures and text.   The storyteller was familiar with the first book and told the story staying faithful to the words of the text.   The second book, which was a longer story, was read and so were the poems.

Background noise

The author felt that the level of background noise at this storytime was lower than the level heard at an earlier storytime visit to this library (Library Visit 1).   Background noise arose from adults chatting and some children talking. However, no background noise arose from the telephone or books being issued.

Unusual aspects: None.

Brief Summary

Although scheduled to start at 1.30pm, the storytime actually began at 2pm as staff waited until everyone attending had arrived (see Library Visit 1).

The first story ran from 1.57 - 2.03pm.   The second story ran from 2.03 - 2.11pm.   The poems ran from 2.11 - 2.13pm.   The craft activity ran from 2.13 - 2.25pm.

Throughout the storytelling, the storyteller invited participation, asking the children questions throughout each story and the children responded.

For the author a number of useful points emerged from this storytime:

1. "Are you sitting comfortably ?   Then I'll begin"

The storyteller preceded each story with the above phrase which was a useful device to capture the children's attention.   Each time the storyteller waited until the children responded to their question in the affirmative before starting the story.

2. The type of questions asked by the storyteller

Throughout the first story the storyteller not only asked the children questions about the story in terms of the plot, or what the children could see in the pictures, but also more general questions about the characters in the story. These questions both extended the story and increased the level of interaction between the storyteller and the children.   For example, on one page of the first storybook a group of mice are pictured.   The storyteller asked the children

<u>Library Visit 4 continued</u>

what the favourite food of mice was and the children responded with the answer "cheese".   During another part of the story a number of animals are revealed including a monkey, duck and elephant.   The storyteller asked the children what noises each animal made and the children responded with the appropriate noises.

3. The use of gesture
The storyteller's use of gesture also encouraged the children to respond.   For example, during the second story the storyteller drew attention to the grumpy expression of one of the characters by pulling a face themself and asking the children to do likewise.   In the process of asking the children to do so, the storyteller told the children to imagine they were eating cabbage.   This created an amusing incident with one child who responded by telling the storyteller that they didn't have to eat cabbage.

Another gesture noted on Library Visit 1 was the storyteller's use of a raised hand to encourage children to respond.   During the second story milkshakes are mentioned.   At this point the storyteller asked the children who liked milkshakes and raised their hand to indicate that they did.   The children responded in a similar fashion.

4. The use of clapping
A device that was used during this library visit and noted by the author during Library Visit 1, was the storyteller's request to the children to clap at the end of each story.   The storyteller would usually say something along the lines of: "Now you've sat all the way through that story give yourself a clap".   The author felt that this action usefully broke each segment of the storytime up so that it did not appear overly long to the children.

5. Storytime atmosphere
For the author, this storytime illustrated how the atmosphere at a particular storytime can vary considerably from one occasion to the next, and served to emphasise how each storytime observed was very much a 'snapshot' of what was happening at a particular place at a particular time with a particular group of children and adults.

At this storytime the children were quieter and virtually all of them chose to stay seated throughout the storytime; fewer moving around compared to those observed at Library Visit 1.   Similarly one only one child was observed playing
with a toy (a toy telephone) and then only briefly.

Whilst the storyteller was different from the one observed in Library Visit 1, it should be emphasised that the differences the author observed between the two storytimes did not appear to the author to relate to the degree of control the

Library Visit 4 continued

storyteller was exerting on the group; simply that the children's mood seemed different.   In discussion, one staff member described how factors such as the weather can have an effect on how children behave at a storytime.

At this storytime there were slightly fewer children that at Library Visit 1 and there were no television cameras.   Both factors would have had some impact on the children's behaviour.

Library Visit 5

General Points

Day and time held: Tuesday 2 - 3pm

Age range: 3 - 5 years old

No. of children permitted: 12

Waiting list: Yes. Approximately 50 children of all ages are on the waiting list. Children's names can be placed on the waiting list from birth upwards.

Register taken: Yes

No. of library staff: 2

Chaperone policy: Adults do not have to stay with children and at this library do not generally do so.

Refreshments: No

Location: Children's corner of the main library. Storytelling and crafts take place within a small alcove in the children's corner. At the session observed by the author a game also took place in the main floor area of the children's library where a roundabout and seesaw are within reach.

Storytime Observed

Attendance - children: 5
             adults: 0

Seating arrangements: At the beginning of the storytelling session the children sat on bench type seating running around the alcove. During this period the library staff chatted to the children about general topics of interest, took a register and gave out name badges. During the period when the story was told the children sat huddled up together on a large cushion which resembled a turtle. The storyteller sat on the alcove seating facing the children whilst the other member of library staff sat just to the side of the children.

Library Visit 5 continued

Storytime format:	Register taken followed by one story, one game, a letter and photographs and a craft.
Storytime theme:	Bears
Story selected:	"Old Bear" (Hussey 1995). Pop-up version used.
Game selected:	A Teddy Bear Race.
Letter and photographs:	The letter and photographs were from one bear to another outlining what they had done on their holiday.
Use of props:	All the children had been asked to bring their teddy bears to this session for the 'Teddy Bear Race' and they did so. In addition, library staff had brought along a number of characters from the "Old Bear" story. These were: "Small
Ted",	"Rabbit" and "Bramwell Bear".

Craft
Children were given a white paper card with a teddy bear on both sides which they coloured in with crayons. Envelopes were provided so that the children could send the card to someone.

Reading technique
As two members of staff were present one read the story and the other read the letter and showed the children the photographs. The first storyteller held the book outwards from one side and the children could clearly see both the pictures and text. The storyteller read this story.

The second storyteller held the letter outwards so that the children could clearly see it whilst reading the letter to the children. At the same time photographs were held up to the children illustrating the activities the letter outlined e.g. making sandcastles.

Background noise
As the storytime was held in an enclosed alcove very little background noise was apparent. In addition the children's corner in this library is sited well away from the issue desk which the author felt minimised any noise arising from books being issued and enquiries being dealt with.

Library Visit 5 continued

Unusual aspects
Far fewer children attended this storytime. A number of children had recently stopped attending and staff also stated that during the holiday period numbers tend to be fewer. Another factor which may have affected attendance was the weather which was very hot on the day the session took place. Staff emphasised that once the vacation period was over the number of children attending would increase.

The 'Teddy Bear Race' game that took place within the library, took longer than staff had anticipated and for this reason a second story reading did not take place. Staff stated that the format of the storytime is more usually two stories followed by a game or rhymes followed by a craft.

The author's presence was more obtrusive at this storytime due to the size of the group and the location of the storytime. In addition the storyteller introduced the author to the children and provided name badges. The author also brought along a teddy bear and participated in the 'Teddy Bear Race'.

Brief Summary

The storytime began at approximately 2.05pm with initially one member of staff present who chatted to the children about general topics of interest. For example, one child had been to see their new school whilst another had got some new 'stick-on' earings. The children and staff also talked about the bears they had brought. The author was introduced to the children and name badges were given out prior to a register being taken. One storyteller then showed and talked about the characters in the first story which had been brought along by staff (i.e. "Small Ted", "Rabbit" and "Bramwell Bear").

The story began at 2.14 and finished at 2.20pm. The game ran from 2.23 - 2.46pm. The letter and photographs ran from 2.48 - 2.49pm. The craft ran from 2.50 - 2.59pm.

Throughout the storytelling session both storytellers invited participation and the children responded.

During the reading of the story the second member of staff pointed and/or held up the characters as the storyteller mentioned them in the story.

The 'Teddy Bear Race' took place in the main floor area of the children's library. Sheets of paper with the numbers one to twenty were placed on the ground. The children had to throw a large rubber dice and move their teddies along the numbers according to the number on the dice thrown. The first

<u>Library Visit 5 continued</u>

teddy to reach the number twenty won the race.   The game took longer than anticipated, and as the numbers ran around a roundabout situated in the children's corner some children played on this between dice throws.

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Library Visit 6

General Points

Day and time held: Monday 2 - 2.45pm

Age range: 3 - 5 years old

No. of children permitted: 10

Waiting list: Yes. Approximately 30 children on the waiting list. Children can be place on the waiting list from 18 months upwards.

Register taken: Yes

No. of library staff: 1

Chaperone policy: Adults do not have to stay with children and generally do not choose to do so.

Refreshments: No

Location: Children's corner of the main library. In contrast to previous libraries visited, this library had no playpen of toys or large objects like a slide or Wendy house within the children's area. A few knitted toys were perched along the top of one book shelf. Otherwise the children's corner was simply furnished, with several sets of child sized tables and chairs and a number of freestanding storage boxes on castors (containing picture books) in addition to the usual wall shelving.

Storytime Observed

Attendance - children: 5

          adults: 0

Seating arrangements: Craft activities were carried out at tables in the children's corner. During the story reading the children sat on small red plastic seats in a line in front of the storyteller who sat facing them sitting on a larger sized chair.

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Library Visit 6 continued

Storytime format:	Craft followed by three stories followed by two games followed by a nursery rhyme.
Storytime theme:	Dogs and in particular "Spot".
Stories selected:	**1.** "Spot Goes to the Park" (Hill 1991). Pop-up version used.
	2. "Harry by the Sea" (Zion 1965).
	3. "Spot Goes on Holiday" (Hill 1985). Pop-up version used.
Games selected:	Two games were played. Both games were taken from a party tape (details unknown):
	1. Guess the sounds.
	2. Musical bumps.
Nursery rhyme selected:	Peter Hammer's

Craft
The craft involved children pasting square shapes of brown fabric onto cream card cutouts of "Spot" the dog. Each child pasted fabric onto two cutouts. Each dog was then stuck on either side of a cardboard toilet roll by the storyteller using self adhesive tape. The storyteller then drew on eyes and a mouth for each "Spot". Once the glue had dried the children were able to put their fingers inside the toilet roll holder and move "Spot" around; making him 'walk'.

Reading technique
The storyteller held each book outwards centrally and the children could clearly see both the pictures and text. The storyteller told the "Spot" stories staying faithful to the words from the text. The storyteller appeared familiar with the words of these stories and in later discussion verified this with the author. The second longer story ("Harry by the Sea") was read to the children.

Background noise
Although the storytime took place in the children's corner of a main library there was very little background noise even though a number of adult borrowers were present in the library over the storytime period.

Library Visit 6 continued

Unusual aspects

Fewer children than normal attended the storytime which the storyteller attributed to the Summer holidays and the fact that two children had begun to attend school at Easter. The storyteller said that although the maximum number of children permitted was ten more recently there had been seven children regularly attending. The storyteller indicated that numbers would increase once the Autumn term began.

The storyteller had been in a meeting prior to the storytime and indicated that they were a little rushed preparing for this activity.

At this library there are usually only two staff present during the storytime; one member of staff on the issue desk and the storyteller. On the day the author attended there were three staff present in the library; two on the issue desk and the storyteller.

Brief Summary

In contrast to other storytimes observed by the author, this storytime began with the craft activity rather than ending with it. The storyteller stated that the reason for this was that the children tended to arrive at different times at the beginning of the storytime and therefore if the storyteller had been reading a story they would have been a series of interruptions with each new arrival. By starting the storytime with the craft activity first this problem did not arise.

From observation of the children's behaviour, the author felt that this approach was very effective and that after the initial chatter greeting each new arrival, the children quickly became absorbed in the craft activity.

The craft lasted from 1.58pm (when three children arrived) to approximately 2.15pm (by which time there were five children present).

The storyteller indicated that those children who completed the craft first were then allowed to put out the children's chairs for the storytime. The author observed that this approach enabled the children who had finished the craft activity first to be usefully occupied whilst other children were completing their crafts.

The story reading began at approximately 2.19pm. The first story ran from 2.20 - 2.22pm. The second story ran from 2.23 - 2.30pm. The third story ran from 2.30 - 2.33pm. The first game ran from 2.33 - 2.36pm. The second game ran from 2.36 - 2.42pm. The nursery rhyme ran from 2.43 - 2.45pm.

Library Visit 6 continued

The story reading began with the storyteller asking the children which story they would like first; "Harry by the Sea" or "Spot". The children asked for a "Spot" story and the storyteller began with "Spot Goes to the Park".

Throughout the storytelling, the storyteller invited participation, asking the children questions throughout each story and the children responded. Both the
"Spot" story books had pop-up flaps and the storyteller encouraged the children to take it in turns to pull the flaps up.

Following the stories, the storyteller put a party tape on and the children played two games. The first game involved the children guessing a series of sounds on the tape. These were: the sound of a cow mooing, the sound of a sheep bleating, seaside sounds, the sound of wind and the sound of a train.

The second game was a form of musical bumps where the children jumped up and down until the music stopped. When the music stopped the children sat on the floor in a variety of specified postures. For example, with their hands on their heads or behind their backs etc. This was followed by a nursery rhyme which the children chose and required them to carry out actions in time to the rhyme.

For the author, a distinctive feature of this storytime was not only the order of the storytime format in terms of placing the craft activity at the beginning, but also the way in which the storyteller kept all the children occupied and how each activity smoothly followed on from the previous one.

Library Visit 7

General Points

Day and time held: Tuesday 2 - 3pm.

Age range: 3 - 5 years old

No. of children permitted: 16

Waiting list: Yes. Approximately 10 children of the appropriate age range are on the waiting list. However, children can be placed on the waiting list from birth upwards. Taking these children into account the present waiting list has approximately 40 names.

Register taken: No

No. of library staff: 2

Chaperone policy: Adults do not have to stay with children. Some of the current adults choose to stay but the majority do not.

Refreshments: No

Location

The storytime took place in one corner of a 'back room' leading off from the children's library. This room is not generally accessible to the general public. Staff stated that the reason for this was due to the need to keep the children's library clear for other children to use as a place to do their homework. This particular library is heavily used by children to carry out their homework.

The corner of the 'back room' used was an open carpeted area which had a long sausage shaped dragon cushion running alongside the two walls of the storytime corner. Another smaller cushion resembling a crocodile lay at one end of the dragon cushion. Two sets of child sized tables with eight chairs around each were located at the outer edge of the storytelling corner. Three soft toys were also present within this corner; a small rabbit and koala and a very large sized teddy bear.

Adjacent to the area used for storytimes within this room, were a number of offices and what appeared to the author to be storage space for the processing and repair of books. Another room also led off from this 'back room'.

Library Visit 7 continued

Storytime Observed

Attendance - children: 10
            adults: 1

Seating arrangements: Children sat side by side on the dragon and crocodile cushions. One of the storyteller's also sat on the dragon cushion with their arms around the nearby children. When reading the story, both storyteller's sat facing the children. The first sat on the floor, the second on a small chair.

Storytime format: A story followed by a craft followed by a second story.

Storytime theme: Fish

Stories selected: **1.** "Rainbow Fish to the Rescue" (Pfister 1995).
                               2. "Enzo the Wonderfish" (Wilcox 1993).

Craft
The craft related to the overall storytime theme of 'fish' and more specifically one of the characters in the first story, a small stripey fish. The children were provided with a fish shaped blue card cutout. A number of slits had been made in the 'belly' of this fish and through these the children had to weave strips of yellow and pink paper. The ends of these strips were then secured to the body of the fish with glue and any overhanging sections of paper strip were cut off. A pre-cut shiny gold foil eye and tail were then glued onto the fish body.

Reading technique
Both storyteller's held each book outwards from one side and the children could clearly see both the pictures and text. Each storyteller appeared to read the story.

Background noise
Some background noise from children within the library was evident at certain points during the storytime. The children's library is closed during the storytime period so the author presumes that this noise arose from the main library but has not verified this view with staff.

Unusual aspects
For a period of approximately just under one year staff have had one child who can behave disruptively attending the storytime. The library staff and the parent of the child both feel that the child's behaviour has improved

considerably since first attending the storytime although disruptions during the storytime still occur on a regular basis. During the storytime the author observed, this child did exhibit disruptive behaviour on a number of occasions but the periods inbetween were marked by an attentiveness to the stories being read. The author felt that the disruptions were dealt with effectively by staff. Staff felt that the presence of the author, an adult who the child was unfamiliar with, encouraged the child to "play up" more than usual and the author agreed with this observation.

Brief Summary

During the period when the children began to arrive for the storytime one of the storyteller's played with the children in the library encouraging them to do jigsaws. Once all the children had arrived, they were led behind the issue desk and into the storytelling corner within the 'back room'.

The first story ran from 2.15 - 2.21pm. The craft ran from 2.23 - 2.46pm. The second story ran from 2.49 - 3pm.

Throughout the storytelling, both storytellers invited participation, asking the children questions throughout each story and the children responded. Inbetween interruptions from the child with disruptive behaviour, the children appeared attentive and absorbed during the story reading period and the craft.

For the author, there were a number of distinctive points to emerge from this storytime:

1. The pace at which the stories were told
One of the distinctive characteristics of this storytime was the pace at which both storyteller's read the stories in comparison to other storytimes the researcher had observed. Both individuals appeared to the author to carefully pace the story and despite interruptions nothing was rushed in the telling of these stories. The author felt that this helped to engage the children's attention and was responsible for the high levels of attentiveness evident during the storytime.

2. The handling of disruptive behaviour
The author felt that the staff exhibited careful control in the way in which they reacted to any disruptive behaviour which in turn minimised the impact of this behaviour on the overall storytime and the rest of the children present. Wherever possible, staff appeared to ignore the disruptive behaviour of the child and this in itself encouraged the child to stop this behaviour as they were receiving no attention for it. For example, at one point during the storytime,

the child took their shoe off and wandered around drawing attention to this. Staff ignored this behaviour and the child settled down and became attentive. Another incident where one child hit another was dealt with in a similarly efficient manner. One staff member quickly taking care of the child who had been hit whilst after a brief pause, the other continued to read the story.

3. The seating arrangement
The author felt that the cushion seating arrangement created a cosy atmosphere at the storytime.

6.2   General factors selected for recording at storytimes

Table 6.1 overleaf provides a summary of the information collected under the 'General Points' Section of each record sheet. Each of the factors listed are now discussed.

6.2.1 Day, time and duration

As Table 6.1 highlights, all the storytimes the author observed were held on Monday or Tuesday afternoons. The author did not ascertain the reasons why storytime activities were held on these particular days and times. It would be interesting to find out whether local community factors were taken into account when arranging the day and time the activity was held or whether it is determined by other internal factors, for example, staffing levels within the library concerned.

The majority of the storytime activity sessions observed ran for sixty minutes. One library (Library 1/4) had a scheduled time of ninety minutes for this activity. However, in practice the first half hour of the scheduled time was the period in which adults and children arrived at the library for the storytime activity which began at 2pm.

6.2.2 Age range of the children attending

Four of the six libraries visited stipulated that children attending the atorytime should be between three and five years old (Libraries 2, 5, 6 and 7). The author did not clearly ascertain from staff the reasons why these restrictions were in place at particular libraries. Anecdotal discussion seemed to indicate to the author that the restrictions were governed by staff perceptions of what children of a particular age could do and staff preferences for working with a particular age group. For example, some individuals indicated that very young children would be unable to carry out the craft activity which appeared to the author to be seen as an integral part of the storytime. However, these perceptions are based entirely on a few informal comments made to the author by staff, and so this aspect needs to be examined

Table 6.1   Summary of storytime observation general points section

Details	Library Visit					
	1 and 4	2	3	5	6	7
Day	Mon	Mon	Tues	Tues	Mon	Tues
Time (p.m.)	1.30 - 3	2 - 3	2 - 2.45	2 - 3	2 - 2.45	2 - 3
Scheduled Length (minutes)	90 (see text)	60	45	60	45	60
Age Range (years old)	Under 5	3 - 5	Under 5	3 - 5	3 - 5	3 - 5
No. of Children	No max.	12	No max.	12	10	16
Waiting List No. (see text)	No	Yes 100 (25)	No	Yes 50	Yes 30	Yes 40 (10)
Register Taken	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
No. of Library Staff	1	1	1	2	1	2
Chaperone Policy	Adults must stay	Adults do not have to stay	Adults must stay	Adults do not have to stay	Adults do not have to stay	Adults do not have to stay
Refreshment	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
Location	CL	CL	CC	CC	CC	BR

Key to location abbreviations:
CL *= Children's Library*   **CC** *= Children's Corner within the library*   **BR** *= Backroom*

Please note: Library Visits 1 and 4 were to the same library and therefore the details for each visit are the same.

further to determine the real reasons why these restrictions are in place.   It would be interesting in this context, to find out whether these restrictions reflect the needs of the community the library serves, or whether large groups of very young children and accompanying adults are excluded from a service that they would wish to attend.

The author does not seek to imply any criticism of the libraries operating this policy.   Rather it is raised as a issue for discussion and to clarify the reasons why storytimes for particular age groups are held at particular libraries and include specific critieria in policy guidelines for this activity.   In this respect it would also be interesting to examine how many libraries within Sheffield place restrictions on the age range of the children attending.

Of the libraries that did not specify the age range of the children attending (Libraries 1/4 and 3), a more diverse age range of children attended (see Table 7.6, Section 7.7).   This raises a second issue for discussion which is how staff run a storytime for children of a more diverse age range and at different stages of development.   Again, the author feels that this is an area which needs to be addressed within policy guidelines.   For example:

- In terms of children's age, what is the most effective policy to operate for storytimes ?

- Should all storytimes at libraries within Sheffield be for carefully specified age groups or should there be storytimes for a range of ages ?

- If storytimes for specified age groups are operating (i.e. 3 - 5 years), then should storytimes for younger children (i.e. 2 years and under) also be organised ?

- How many children in particular areas of Sheffield are excluded by age restriction policies ?

During the course of carrying out this project, the author interviewed Ann Staniland (presently Children's Co-ordinator for North Group) about the storytimes for babies and very young children which she had successfully instigated and run at Limpsfield Library.   In the light of this example, should libraries who are at present excluding children younger than three years old run additional storytimes for children aged two years and under ?   Whilst the author appreciates that the present service operates within difficult conditions and relies heavily on staff goodwill, it is felt important that these issues are raised in order that in the long term a clear and effective strategy is developed.

6.2.3   Attendance and waiting lists

The same four libraries that specified the age of the children attending (Libraries 2, 5, 6 and 7) also placed limits on the number of children attending as Table 6.1 illustrates.   In these four libraries waiting lists existed for attendance at the storytime and approximate waiting list figures are outlined in Table 6.1.   Two sets of figures are given for Libraries 2 and 7 as the staff at these libraries made the distinction between children who were of the appropriate age to attend the storytime at present and children who's name had been placed on the waiting list but who had not at present reached the appropriate age.   For example, at Library 2, one hundred children's names were on the waiting list, of which twenty five fell within the appropriate age range as children can be placed on the waiting list from eighteen months upwards.   Similarly, for Library 7, forty children's names are currently on the waiting list of which ten are within the appropriate age range.

The author was surprised at the size of the waiting lists and some staff indicated in discussion that, whilst they would like to run more storytimes, current constraints on time and staff available prevented them from doing so.

Of the two libraries who did not place limits on the number of children attending, staff at one library (Library 1/4) said they would consider allowing up to twenty five children to attend before imposing limits.   Staff at Library 3 indicated that 16-17 children usually attend the storytime sessions but that if

more turned up then, in terms of the craft activity, more material would be quickly prepared.

6.2.4   Registration

Three of the four libraries who place restrictions on the number of children attending take a weekly register (Libraries 2, 5 and 6).   However, whilst Library 7 does not take a register, staff indicated that, as at the aforementioned libraries, they do follow up children who do not attend.   This is a particularly important point given the length of the waiting lists to attend this activity.

Staff at the two libraries who do not place such restrictions (Libraries 1/4 and 3) do not take a register but stressed that they were aware of the approximate number of children attending the activity each week.

6.2.5   Library staff numbers

At the majority of libraries visited, staff carried out the storytime activity on their own although, in some cases, other library staff and/or adults were present in the library during the activity.   It is interesting to note that the number of library staff running the storytime does not, if all the libraries visited are considered, seem to be linked to the number of children who attend. In this respect, it would be useful to find out whether any guidelines exist on how many children an individual member of staff is considered to be able to cope with on their own.

6.2.6   Chaperone policy

Only two of the six libraries stipulated that adults must stay with the children during the storytime activity (Libraries 1/4 and 3).   At the four remaining libraries, only one group of adults at present specifically choose to stay (Library 2), whilst a few adults sometimes stay at the other libraries (Libraries 5, 6 and 7).   Staff at one library where adults must stay indicated that this was stipulated for safety reasons i.e. the adult would be present should anything untoward happen to the child at the storytime.

This seems a reasonable point to make and the author is puzzled as to why some libraries operate one policy and others another. Related to this issue is another, which is, whether adults should be present in order to encourage their involvement with the children's reading ? For example, one individual indicated in the adult questionnaire that the books read at storytime did not influence the choice of books they helped their child to choose as they did not stay with their child during the storytime (see Section 7.8).

Moreover, if adults are simply dropping the child off at the storytime before going shopping is this an example of the library being used as a child minding service ? If so, are staff happy for the library to perform this role ? Again, the author does not seek to criticise the libraries where few adults attend, merely to highlight an issue for discussion. A related factor may also be staff feelings as regards adults attending storytimes. For example, one staff member indicated that they did not feel comfortable reading stories whilst other adults were present.

6.2.7 Refreshments

Two of the six libraries offered refreshments at the storytime activity (Libraries 1/4 and 3). Both libraries offered children drinks, whilst Library 1/4 also offered adults tea or coffee. Staff at the four remaining libraries indicated that refreshments were provided on special occasions, for example, at Christmas.

6.2.8 Location of the storytimes

Three of the six libraries held the storytime in the children's corner of an adult library (Libraries 3, 5 and 6) whilst two were held within a separate library specifically for children (Libraries 1/4 and 2). The remaining library, Library 7, held the storytime in a backroom off the children's library.

Within the literature, a number of authors (Botten 1988, Colwell 1991, Calderdale Children's and Education Unit 1996) mention the importance of holding the storytime in a quiet comfortable area free from interruptions.

However, as Calderdale Children's and Education Unit (1996) note "in practice, open-plan libraries can pose problems....".

From the observations the author made it was clear that storytimes held in a children's corner of an adult library were potentially more likely to be disturbed by background noise. For example, a storytime held in a children's corner cited near a busy issue desk will be subject to the noise of books being issued, adults talking as the books are issued and telephone enquiries being dealt with. Whilst this layout was typical of one library the author visited, two other factors also need to be considered. These are the position of the children's corner relative to the issue desk and the size of the library. For example, in one library the author visited, the children's corner was sited well away from the issue desk and the area was very quiet on the day of the visit.

In respect of size, the author noticed that the background noise in the children's corner of one small library was considerably less than that present in a large busy children's library. However, the author observed that staff holding storytimes in separate rooms were, in discussion, more able to provide examples of actions that they carried out to minimise noise. For example, in one library, staff did not issue any books during the storytime, whilst at another library all telephone calls were dealt with by staff in the adult section of the library during the storytime.

The author appreciates that the changes that libraries can make in terms of the location of the storytime are very limited, with much depending upon the space available. Staff at one library for example, stated that they used to have a separate room to hold the storytime in, but this was now no longer available.

6.3   Factors relating to the observed storytime

Within this section, each of the factors pertinent to the observed storytimes are discussed.

6.3.1   Attendance

Table 6.2 shows the number of adults and children that the author recorded attending the storytime against the maximum number of children permitted to attend where restrictions are in place.

Table 6.2   Attendance at the storytime observations

Library	No. of Children		No. of Adults Present
	Permitted to attend	Actually attended	
1	No limit	13	6
2	12	12	8
3	No limit	15	9
4	No limit	8	8
5	12	5	0
6	10	5	0
7	16	10	1

Please note:
1. The number of children attending includes babies where present (please refer to the record sheets for details).
2. The number of adults present excludes the library staff running the activity.

The author found recording the number of children and adults present at the storytimes quite difficult at some visits where children and adults drifted in and out of the storytime session (Libraries 1/4 and 3).   The author counted the number of individuals present at least twice before the storytime began and several more counts were also carried out during the storytime.   The figures shown in Table 6.2 therefore represent the maximum number of children and adults that the author observed.   However, a comparison between these figures and the number of children reported attending by the adults who completed the questionnnaire (see Section 7.7, Table 7.6) does reveal some discrepancies as Table 6.3 illustrates.

Table 6.3   **Differences between the number of children the author observed and the number of children reported attending the storytime**

Library	No. of Children Observed Attending	No. of Children Reported Attending
1	13	Not recorded
2	12	11
3	15	10
4	8	13
5	5	5
6	5	4
7	10	8

The most reasonable explanation for the discrepancies at Libraries 2, 3, 6 and 7 is that not all the adults using the storytime service completed the questionnaire and this concurs with the authors view of what occurred at these storytimes. However the discrepancy for Library 4 is less easy to explain. Either the questionnaire was completed incorrectly or the author made an error when counting the children.

The results outlined in Table 6.2 show that at the libraries where numbers are restricted the number of children attending fell short of the maximum number permitted to attend. However, staff indicated that fewer children attended the storytime regularly during the Summer months as it was the holiday season.

Table 6.2 also shows that fewer adults were present at the storytimes for Libraries 5, 6 and 7, a point that has already been touched upon within Section 6.2.6.

6.3.2 Seating arrangements

A range of seating arrangements were observed at the libraries visited and Table 6.4 summarises this information from the record sheets.

Table 6.4   Seating arrangements

Library	Seating Arrangement
1	The children sat on small chairs arranged in a semi-circle around the storyteller, who also sat on a small chair. The children did not always stay sat on these chairs and were free to move around throughout the storytime. The adults sat on larger chairs some distance from the children.
2	Children and adults sat on the floor in a semi-circle arrangement around the storyteller who sat on a small child's chair. Children and adults sat very close to the storyteller.
3	The majority of children sat on small chairs arranged in a semi-circle around the storyteller who also sat on a small chair. Some children also sat on the floor behind these chairs huddled in front of a large Wendy house. The children did not sit close up to the storyteller and there was some distance between the two parties. The children were free to move around throughout the storytime and did so. The majority of the adults stood slightly to one side of the storyteller leaning against the book cases.
4	The children sat on small chairs arranged in a semi-circle around the storyteller, who also sat on a small chair. Although the children were free to move around throughout the storytime, the majority of children during this storytime remained seated. The majority of adults sat on larger chairs some distance from the children.
5	At the beginning of the storytelling session the children sat on bench type seating running around an alcove. During the period when the story was told, the children sat huddled up together on a large turtle cushion. The storyteller sat on the alcove seating facing the children whilst the other member of library staff sat on alcove seating just to the side of the children.
6	The children sat on small red plastic seats in a line in front of the storyteller who sat facing them sitting on a larger sized chair.
7	The children sat side by side on a long dragon cushion and a smaller crocodile cushion. One member of staff also sat on the dragon cushion with their arms around the nearby children. When reading the story, both storyteller's sat facing the children. The first sat on the floor, the second on a small chair.

Within the literature, a number of points are made regarding seating arrangements (Botten 1988, Colwell 1991, Calderdale Children's and

Education Unit 1996). A semi-circle arrangement is recommended over formal rows and where cushions or chairs are provided care should be taken to ensure that there are enough for all the children attending otherwise they may be fought over or used as weapons. Should children sit on the floor for the storytime it is important that they are given the opportunity to stretch or move around between stories in order to minimise discomfort and avoid fidgeting during the storytelling. The storyteller should be able to see, and be seen by, all the children during the storytelling and should take care not to sit behind a table or desk as this creates a barrier between them and the audience. As regards seat height, it is recommended that the storyteller sits either on the floor or on a low chair.

From the observations recorded (see Table 6.4) all the storytellers followed the majority of these guidelines. However, one point which appears to have been given little attention in the literature, is the seating arrangements of the adults who accompany the children during this activity, and this emerged as a particularly interesting issue during the observations made by the author. In this respect it is useful to contrast the seating arrangements at Library 2 with those observed at Libraries 1/4 and 3. The author was particularly struck by how the adults who attended the storytime at Library 2 were completely absorbed in the stories and felt that the seating arrangement, where adults sat on the floor with their children very close to the storyteller, was one factor which contributed to this atmosphere.

Whilst not all adults might be happy to sit on the floor with the children, the position at which the adults sat relative to the children and the distance from them were noticeably different at the storytimes held at Libraries 1/4 and 3.

At the two storytimes observed at one library (Library 1/4), adults sat together on groups of chairs around tables dotted around the library which were some distance from where the children sat. Some interaction took place between adults although the author felt that the majority of adults appeared to

be watching the children during the storytime even though they were seated some distance from them. This distance between the two groups also meant that the children were less easily within reach should the adults wish to restrain their movements and the children at these storytimes moved around more than those observed at Library 2.

At the storytime held at Library 3 the majority of the adults stood to one side of the children and the storyteller and appeared to the author to be less involved with the storytime, seeing the activity as an opportunity to socialise with other adults.

This latter point is an important consideration and one which a number of adults referred to in the adult questionnaire (see Section 7.5). However, the author feels that this is an interesting issue which raises a number of questions. For example:

- What is the role of the adults that attend the storytime with the children ?

- How story-focused should the storytimes be ?   i.e. should adults be actively encouraged to participate in the storytime and, if so, what are the best ways to encourage this ?

The author does not seek to imply any criticism of the seating arrangements at the aforementioned libraries, merely to raise a point for discussion and consideration.

6.3.3 The storytime format
Table 6.5 provides a summary of the format of the storytimes observed.

Table 6.5   Summary of the format of each observed storytime

Library Visit	Format	Approx. Duration of Activity (minutes)

1	Refreshment Story 1 Story 2 Story 1 (repeated) Story 3 Craft	NR 13 8 4 6 20
2	Register Story 1 Story 2 Craft	NR 4 3 37
3	Story 1 Story 2 Story 3 Craft and refreshments 5 Nursery rhymes	2 5 2 27 5
4	Refreshments Story 1 Story 2 2 Poems Craft	NR 6 8 2 12
5	Register Story Game Letter and photographs Craft	NR 6 23 1 8
6	Craft Story 1 Story 2 Story 3 2 Games Nursery rhyme	17 2 7 3 9 2
7	Story 1 Craft Story 2	6 23 9

Please note: *NR = Not recorded*

Within the literature (Botten 1981, Colwell 1991, Calderdale Children's and Education Unit 1996), it is recommended that storytimes for pre-school children should ideally last no longer than thirty minutes and should be broken down into a variety of activities. For example, Colwell (1991) advises:

> "I have found it advisable to break up the storytime for young children into three parts: a picture book, an interval of participation, and a second story, with a concluding rhyme to round things off."

Although all the storytimes observed lasted longer than the recommended thirty minutes, all were structured to encompass a variety of activities as Table 6.5 illustrates. Apart from Library 5, where a game laster longer than planned, the craft activity formed the longest section of the overall storytime activity, whilst the average story was just over five minutes in length.

6.3.4 Material selected

A range of stories, poems, nursery rhymes and games were selected by staff for the storytimes as Table 6.6 overleaf summarises.

The factors to consider when selecting a story for storytime have already been mentioned within the section of this report outlining the results of the staff questionnaire (see Section 4.1.15). These showed that the factors staff identified concurred with the guidance outlined within the literature and this was also evident in the choice of materials selected for the storytimes observed as outlined within Table 6.6. Calderdale Children's and Education Unite (1996) for example, list the following qualities that stories that "tell well" will have:

- "An inviting opening sentence. "Lewis skidded down the stairs, and into the living room. 'I can't have a bath', he announced, 'there's a beast in the bathtub!" (From 'The beast in the Bathtub').

- A quickly-moving narrative. A clear storyline, with a minimum of sub-plots, works best.

- A minimum of description.

Table 6.6   Material selected

Library	Theme	Material Selected
1	Bears	**Stories:** "Where's My Teddy ?" (Alborough 1994). Large sized version used. "Old Bear" (Hussey 1995). Pop-up version used. "A Little Pandamonium" (Hughes and Sutherland 1979).
2	Road construction/ transport	**Stories:** "The Line Up Book" (Russo 1989). "William King of the Road" (Newton 1987).
3	Health	**Stories:** "Brinkworth Bear Goes to the Dentist" (West, no date available). "The Boy With Square Eyes" (Snape and Snape 1989). "Going to the Hospital" (Civardi and Cartwright 1992). **Nursery rhymes:** I'm a little teapot; Five fat sausages; Twinkle twinkle little star; Baa baa black sheep; Speckled frogs.
4	No overall theme.	**Stories:** "Where, Oh Where, is Kipper's Bear ?" (Inkpen 1994). Pop-up version used. "Beryl's Box" (Taylor 1993). **Poems:** "Ladybug" (Anglund 1991); "The Butterfly" (Collymore 1991).
5	Bears	**Story:** "Old Bear" (Hussey 1995). Pop-up version used. **Game:** A Teddy Bear Race. **Letter and photographs:** The letter and photographs were from one bear to another outlining what they had done on their holidays.
6	Dogs and in particular "Spot".	**Stories:** "Spot Goes to the Park" (Hill 1991). Pop-up version used. "Harry by the Sea" (Zion 1965). "Spot Goes on Holiday" (Hill 1985). Pop-up version used. **Games:** Guess the sounds; Musical bumps. **Nursery rhymes:** Peter Hammer's.
7	Fish	**Stories:** "Rainbow Fish to the Rescue" (Pfister 1995). "Enzo the Wonderfish" (Wilcox 1993).

- Plenty of action. No matter how pretty the pictures, 'something must happen' in the story.

- Amusing incidents.

- Direct, colloquial speech.

- A feeling of spontaneity.

- A climax at the end, and a satisfying ending."

In addition to meeting these criteria, the author felt that the way in which individuals presented the stories encouraged the children to participate (see Section 6.3.7).

As Table 6.6 illustrates, a range of nursery rhymes, poems, games and other material were presented in addition to the stories. These broke up the storytimes and added variety to them.

6.3.5 Use of props

At two of the library storytimes observed a number of props were used (Libraries 1 and 5), most strikingly with handpuppets at Library 1. In discussion, staff at many of the libraries visited indicated they used props during storytimes and a range of props were cited including, at one library, a live rabbit for an Easter storytelling session!

6.3.6 Craft

Table 6.7 overleaf summarises details of the variety of crafts that were carried out at the library storytimes observed.

The majority of the crafts carried out at the storytimes could be directly related back to a character within one of the stories or poems read during the activity. A variety of practical skills were required to carry out the crafts as Table 6.7 illustrates. At Libraries 1/4, 2, 3 and 7 where adults were present, all helped the children with the craft and this was one area where the adults actively participated in the storytime.

Table 6.7   Storytime crafts

Library	Storytime Theme	Practical Skills Required	Craft
1	Bears	Colouring, Sticking	A yellow card teddy bear was given to the children which they coloured in with crayons and stuck coloured circular discs on to represent paws.
2	Road construction/ transport	Colouring, Sticking	The craft related to the theme of "The Line Up Book", where a small boy lines up objects to make a line through the house, finishing with himself. Children were provided with a sheet of wallpaper which they lay down on whilst an adult drew around them. These drawings were then filled in and decorated using crayons and stick-on coloured shapes. Children were then asked to "line up" with their completed drawings to see how long a line they could make in the library. A line of children lying on their drawings was made from one corner of the room to the entrance door.
3	Health	Colouring, Sticking	The children were each given paper skeleton pieces comprising a head, ribcage, pelvis, arms and legs. Each piece had to be glued together to make a complete skeleton. The children then decorated their skeletons with crayons.
4	No overall theme. The craft related to a poem about a butterfly.	Colouring, Sticking	The children were each given paper cutout shapes to make into a butterfly. The butterfly shapes comprised purple wings, yellow body, black strips (used to decorate the body) and shiny red foil antenna. The body had to be glued to the wings and the antenna were then glued to the body. The children decorated the butterfly body with black strips of paper which were trimmed to size and used crayons to colour in the eyes and decorate the wings.
5	Bears	Colouring	The children were given a white paper card with a teddy bear on both sides which they coloured in with crayons. Envelopes were provided so that the children could send the card to someone.
6	Dogs and in particular "Spot"	Sticking	The craft involved children pasting square shapes of brown fabric onto cream card cutouts of "Spot" the dog. Each child pasted fabric onto two cutouts. Each dog was then stuck on either side of a cardboard toiled roll by the storyteller using self adhesive tape. The storyteller then drew on eyes and a mouth for each "Spot". Once the glue had dried the children were able to put their fingers inside the toilet roll holder and move "Spot" around; making him 'walk'.
7	Fish	Sticking, Weaving	The craft related to a character in the first story, a stripey fish. The children were provided with a fish shaped blue card cutout. A number of slits had been made in the 'belly' of this fish and through these the children had to weave strips of yellow and pink paper. The ends of these strips were then secured to the body of the fish with glue and any overhanging sections of paper strip were cut off. A pre-cut shiny gold foil eye and tail were then glued onto the fish body.

In contrast to the majority of storytimes observed, the storyteller at Library 6 began the session with the craft activity rather than instigating it after the stories had been read. The storyteller explained that this format enabled them to accommodate the different arrival times of the children and avoided the disruption which would have occurred if stories were read during this period.

One of the most frequently cited points to emerge from discussion with staff about crafts was the amount of work which they carried out in their own time and the lack of preparation time available. An example of work carried out in an individual's own time included buying materials for the storytime. In terms of preparation time, on a number of occasions the author found, on arriving at the library, staff rushing around preparing material for storytime just prior to the activity beginning. In one instance, all the staff on the issue desk were desperately trying to cut out and arrange a craft in between serving readers. Clearly this is a less than ideal situation. However, the author appreciates that staff are doing the best they can within the time available.

In terms of ideas for crafts, staff cited a range of sources. Some individuals referred to a recent Library Association course on craft activities held in Doncaster (see Section 5.1.1), whilst others identified craft books as an information source. One mentioned that they often got ideas from greetings cards, particularly those with an element of three dimensional construction. Some staff said that they thought up the ideas themselves, whilst another source cited were children's story books which include a craft idea within them.

6.3.7 Reading technique

The variety of ways in which staff presented the material and 'brought the story to life' were interesting to observe. All the staff were careful to ensure that the children could see the pictures within the storybook as the story was told. Only on one brief occasion did the author observe a storyteller reading a story with the book cover facing the audience. The

children at this storytime very quickly made it clear that they wanted to see the pictures and the storyteller altered the book position.

Staff were observed holding the picture book open in one of two positions; either directly in front of them or to one side.   The author felt that the latter position enabled staff to more easily refer to the text if they wished to.   Only one person was observed telling a story in their own words.   Most kept close to the words within the original text.   In discussion with staff, it was interesting to note that some felt quite comfortable changing the words when recounting the story whilst others referred to variations as "mistakes".

Whilst the majority of staff "read" the stories to the children, using this term in the record sheets is slightly misleading as it implies that staff were focused on the book and not the audience, as Weir (1988) highlights:

> "Whenever a picture book is used it should be thoroughly prepared - there is no worse description in my book than a staff being referred to as "the story readers".   To sit with head down, buried in the pages, completely defeats the purpose."

At all the storytimes the author observed, all the storytellers focused on the audience and a wide range of techniques were used by them when presenting the stories, poems and nursery rhymes chosen.   These included:

- Varying voice tone and doing different voices and noises.

- Using gestures and encouraging the children to copy movements (e.g. the actions carried out for nursery rhymes).

- Asking the children questions about the story in terms of:
    - (i)   the plot (e.g. what do you think will happen next ?)
    - (ii)   the characters (e.g. what do mice eat ?)
    - (iii)   the children's knowledge of everyday life (e.g. have you been to   the zoo ?)

- Encouraging the children to pull the flaps in pop-up books.

- Use of props.

The author felt that all the storytellers had taken care to familiarise themselves with the stories prior to the storytime despite the lack of time available for them to do this.

At a couple of the storytimes observed, the storyteller presented the audience with a choice over which story to be read. This worked well where the choice asked for was presented. However, on one occasion, the storyteller chose not to present the children's choice after directly asking them what they would like which is clearly less than ideal practice.

6.3.8 Background noise

Background noise during the storytimes observed arose from the telephone ringing, books being issued, adults talking and any unusual events taking place within the library. The author felt that the location of the storytime was one of the main factors which influenced the level of background noise during the storytimes observed and the reader is referred to Section 6.2.8 for a fuller discussion of this point. Details of any unusual aspects which were present at the storytimes observed are outlined within Section 6.3.9.

6.3.9 Unusual aspects

Following each storytime observation, the author asked each storyteller whether any aspect of the storytime differed from that which would normally occur. A range of points were cited, as Table 6.8 overleaf illustrates, and these factors, therefore, need to be borne in mind when considering all the points outlined within this chapter.

Table 6.8   Unusual aspects

Library	Unusual Aspects Cited
1	Cable television had arranged to film this storytime and during the filming the storyteller was asked to repeat one story for filming purposes. According to the storyteller, the children sat for far longer than normal during the storytime for the benefit of the cameras. Prior to this storytime, the storyteller had not carried out a storytime for a year as they had been on secondment to another library working in adult services. This was the first storytime within Sheffield Library Services which the author attended, and was a 'pilot' visit to test the methodology to be used and to identify factors to record. A second visit to this particular library was subsequently made (see Library Visit 4).
2	The storyteller stated that they had had little time to prepare the storytime due to their morning being taken up by a meeting.
3	The storytime coincided with an area health promotion week which the library was running. A wide range of activities and exhibits were taking place within the library and on the day the author attended a number of activities related to the promotion took place within the storytime (see record sheet). More staff were present in the library than would normally be present. Prior to the storytime the storyteller and other library staff were busy preparing the craft activity as they had been "busy".
4	None
5	Fewer children were present than would normally attend. The format of the storytime differed from the usual format due to the selection of a game, (the 'Teddy Bear Race'), which took longer than anticipated to complete (see record sheet). The author's presence was more obtrusive at this storytime due to the size of the group and the location of the storytime. In addition the storyteller introduced the author to the children and provided name badges. The author also brought along a teddy bear and participated in the game.
6	Fewer children were present than would normally attend. The storyteller had been in a meeting prior to the storytime and indicated that they were a little rushed preparing for this activity. More staff were present in the library than would normally be present.
7	For a period of approximately just under one year staff have had one child who can behave disruptively attending the storytime.

6.3.10 Other points to emerge

In addition to the points that have already been highlighted within this chapter, a number of other points emerged which the author feels would be useful to draw attention to. These are:

- The presence of toys during the storytime

- The pressure on staff

- The handling of interruptions and/or disruptive behaviour

6.3.10.1   The presence of toys during the storytime

The author very quickly noticed a distinct difference between those libraries where toys were present during the storytime and those where they were not. By toys, the author is not only referring to small items but also to large structures which are cited within the storytime location. For example, slides, Wendy houses and roundabouts. Where these items or smaller toys were present the author noticed that they often served to distract the children from the storytime. In contrast, at storytimes where toys were not within easy reach, the activity appeared noticeably more 'story-focused' to the author with the children paying more attention to the storyteller and the stories told. In this context, Colwell (1991) makes an interesting point:

> "In playgroups it is often difficult to persuade children to leave their activities and games to hear a story. Storytime must prove itself a pleasurable part of the day with something interesting and exciting to offer. Once established, this quieter period can become something children look forward to. The opportunity storytime provides to *look* and *listen* is invaluable to a child's development at this early stage."

The author appreciates that toys in a library serve a useful function but felt that their presence during the storytimes created an atmosphere which was not conducive to maintaining the children's attention. Clearly, different libraries will have different views on this issue and the kind of storytime atmosphere which they wish to create. By raising this point here, the author merely seeks to highlight this issue for further discussion and encourage staff

to question why particular conditions are present within the storytimes they run.

6.3.10.2   The pressure on staff

The tremendous amount of staff goodwill that the running of storytimes relies on was very evident during the observations and also emerged from the findings of the staff questionnaire (see Chapter 4).   In addition to carrying out preparation work for storytimes in their own time, the pressure on staff to man the issue desk as soon as the storytime was over was also evident.   For example, at one storytime the author observed, the storyteller returned to the issue desk within one minute of completing the storytime, leaving the remanants of the craft activity carried out to be cleared up later.

6.3.10.3   The handling of interruptions and/or disruptive behaviour

The author observed a range of staff responses to dealing with interruptions and/or disruptive behaviour during the storytime.   Some staff were clearly more skilled at handling interruptions than others.   The author feels that training in how to deal with interruptions and difficult behaviour would be beneficial.

6.4   Summary

The findings from this data collection method can be summarised as follows:

- All the storytimes observed were for pre-school children and were held on Monday or Tuesday afternoons.   The majority lasted for sixty minutes.

- Four of the six libraries observed placed age restrictions on the children attending.   At these libraries waiting lists for attendance at the storytime activity existed.   However, the author observed that at the majority of the storytimes where these restriction were in place, fewer children than the

maximum permitted attended. Staff attributed the lower attendance rates to the Summer holidays.

- The majority of staff ran the storytime activity on their own.

- Only two of the six libraries visited stipulated that adults must stay with the children during the storytime activity.

- Three of the six libraries held the storytime in the children's corner of an adult library. Of the remaining three, two held this activity within a separate children's library whilst the third used a backroom off the children's library.

- The author felt that the level of background noise within a library during a storytime was influenced by the location of the storytime within the library, the size of the library and any unusual events that were occurring there.

- A variety of seating arrangements were observed. At the storytimes where adults were present, the seating arrangements for them varied and this, in turn, drew attention to the issue of the role of adults at storytimes.

- All the storytimes observed were structured to encompass a variety of activities. Within this format, a craft activity was always included.

- The majority of staff observed kept to the original text of the book when telling a story. Only one storyteller was observed telling a story in their own words. All staff ensured that the children could clearly see the storybook pictures during the storytime.

- A wide variety of techniques were used by staff to 'bring the story to life'.

- A number of additional issues emerged during the observations. These concerned: the presence of toys during the storytime; the pressure on staff carrying out the storytime activity; the handling of interruptions and/or disruptive behaviour.

Chapter 7:   Results and discussion - The adult storytime questionnaire

"The craft activity is great for the children and they love bringing home something related to the story - I've still got things my first son made!"

Parent, Library Visit 7

7.0 The adult storytime questionnaire

This chapter presents the results of the adult storytime questionnaire survey which was carried out at six public libraries in Sheffield.   A total of forty questionnaires were completed by adults during the course of the survey and Table 7.1 shows the numbers of questionnaires completed at each library visit.

Table 7.1   Questionnaires completed at each library

Library	No. of questionnaires completed (n=40)
2	8
3	9
4	8
5	5
6	4
7	6
Total	40

The libraries are identified by number in order to preserve their anonymity. The numbers identifying each library correspond with the order in which the libraries were visited for observation purposes (see Chapter 6). No questionnaire survey was conducted at the first library storytime visited and, therefore, the numbers run from two to seven. The numbering also enables the reader to cross-reference between this chapter and the chapter on storytime observations (Chapter 6).

7.1 Presentation of findings: explanatory notes

The following points should be borne in mind when examining the presented results:

(i) Appendices 5 and 6 contain details of all subjects' descriptive responses to Question 4 (concerned with the reasons for attending storytimes) and the 'Further Comments' Section. A short summary of subjects' comments in response to these questions is presented within this chapter. As the data collected via this questionnaire was largely quantitative in nature, the author decided not to distinguish between individual subjects within a given library. For this reason, any quotes used within this chapter and listed within the Appendices are not attributed to a specific subject but are simply identified by the library at which the questionnaire was completed.

(ii) Aside from spelling alterations, any subjects' comments quoted within this chapter are presented as they originally appeared in the questionnaire. However, in situations where the original word or words in the statements are illegible, square brackets are used to indicate where the author has inserted a word. Square brackets are also used in instances where the word stated would reveal the identity of the library or member of staff concerned. For e.g. [staff name] or [location].

(iii)   Where appropriate, percentages have been calculated from the data collected and are shown in the tables of results in brackets next to the original data.

The findings from each question are now presented and discussed in turn.

7.2 (Q1) Source of information on storytimes

Table 7.2 outlines the findings for this question which show that, overall, the highest proportion of the adults attending the storytime had first heard about this activity from a friend (42.5%).   However, there are some interesting variations between libraries and, in particular, Library 2, where the majority of individuals identify the library as the source of information on this activity.

Table 7.2   Source of information on storytimes

Source	Library						Total	
	2	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**n=40**	**(%)**
Employer	1	-	-	-	-	1	2	**5**
Friend	1	5	4	3	2	2	17	**42.5**
Library	6	2	1	1	1	2	13	**32.5**
Other (see text)	-	-	1	1	-	1	3	**7.5**
No response	-	2	2	-	1	-	5	**12.5**
Total	**8**	**9**	**8**	**5**	**4**	**6**	**40**	**100**

The category of 'employer' is reserved for the individuals who are employed by mothers to look after the children and who identified the mother as the source of the information on this activity.

Of the three individuals falling within the 'other' category, a variety of sources are identified.   One individual listed the "Sheffield Star" newspaper (Library 4), one individual used to be a member of the library staff (Library 5) and one individual referred to the "under 5's service" (Library 7).

7.3 (Q2) Frequency of attendance at storytimes

Table 7.3 shows that the majority of individuals indicated that they attended the storytime very regularly (82.5%). This was not an unexpected finding in view of the fact that four of the six libraries (Libraries 2,5,6 and 7) have a limited number of places available for this activity and there are waiting lists at these libraries (see Section 6.2.3).

Table 7.3   Frequency of attendance at storytimes

Frequency	Library						Total	
	2	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**n=40**	**(%)**
Very regularly	7	7	5	4	4	6	33	**82.5**
Regularly	1	2	2	1	-	-	6	**15**
Occasionally	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	**-**
Not very often	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	**2.5**
Total	**8**	**9**	**8**	**5**	**4**	**6**	**40**	**100**

Key:
Very regularly - every week
Regularly - at least twice a month
Occasionally - once every 2 months
Not very often - once every 3 months or longer.

One individual attended the storytime at Library 4 as a direct result of the author approaching them to complete a questionnaire. This individual ticked the 'Not very often' category because it was the first time they had attended.

7.4 (Q3) Length of attendance at storytimes

Individuals' responses to this question were categorised and the results are outlined in Table 7.4. These results show that the majority of individuals have been attending the storytime activity for a period of six months or less (45%). Moreover, if the total from this category is added to the next (i.e. 'Over 6 months - 1 Year'), then the results show that 67.5% of individuals have been attending this activity for a period of one year or less.

Table 7.4   Length of attendance at storytimes

Category	Library						Total	
	2	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**n=40**	**(%)**
0 - 6mths.	5	2	3	3	3	2	18	**45**
Over 6mths. - 1yr.	2	1	3	1	1	1	9	**22.5**
Over 1yr. - 2yr.	-	2	1	1	-	-	4	**10**
Over 2yr. - 3yr.	-	2	-	-	-	1	3	**7.5**
Over 3yr. - 4yr.	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	**2.5**
Over 4yr. - 5yr.	-	1	-	-	-	1	2	**5**
Over 5 years	-	-	1	-	-	1	2	**5**
No Response	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	**2.5**
Total	**8**	**9**	**8**	**5**	**4**	**6**	**40**	**100**

Key to abbreviations:
mths = months
yr. = year

7.5   (Q4) Reasons for attending storytimes

A range of reasons were outlined in response to this question as the detailed comments outlined within Appendix 5 illustrate.   From examining these comments the author identified four broad areas:

- Enjoyment of the storytime activity.

- Educational reasons e.g. to encourage reading and enjoyment of books; craft activities develop cutting and pencil skills.

- Promotes library use; introduces the child to the library and provides an opportunity for the adults to choose books.

- Social reasons e.g. development of children's social skills; opportunity for adults to meet.

By far the most frequently cited reason for attending the storytime activity was for the children's enjoyment as the following comments illustrate:

"Because the children enjoy it and I think that [staff name] who takes storytime makes it very enjoyable for everyone." **Library 2**

"Because the child I look after really enjoys coming. I feel the children learn new things each time they come. It's nice that it is structured." **Library 3**

"The children enjoy the storytelling and taking different books home with them." **Library 4**

"The children enjoy it." **Library 5**

"The children enjoy coming very much." **Library 7**

Respondents also stressed the educational value of this activity both in terms of the encouragement it provides for children to read and borrow books, and also in terms of the skills children acquire through carrying out the craft activities:

"Encourage my youngest boy to enjoy books + for his future reading enjoyment. Also I enjoy coming to storytime, I like to choose books to read to the children at home." **Library 2**

"Educational and it introduces small children to reading in a pleasant way." **Library 3**

"Because it encourages them to sit and listen to stories, to enjoy books and to play with other children of a similar age. It is very enjoyable and safe, and also introduces them to simple craft activities, with an end-product which they proudly take home." **Library 4**

"Because the children love stories and I want them to get an early appreciation of books. Also because of the contact with other children in a group. And it gives me half an hour to sit down! I also appreciate the help it gives them in sitting down, learning to sit quietly and listen and join in." **Library 7**

A number of respondents identified the storytime activity as an opportunity to introduce the children to the library and borrow books as the following comments highlight:

"1)   To have an activity for my daughter that is aimed at a child her age.
2)   To have a free, half day outing for us.
3)   To have an activity for my daughter that is encouraging her toward reading/educational.
4)   To give us an opportunity to get to the library on a regular basis to get new books for reading at home." **Library 2**

"My children love it.
They meet other children of similar ages.
We enjoy the creative activities.
It's also a regular book borrowing time.
It's very friendly.
It's free.
Also mums can get together too!" **Library 3**

"I think the children will enjoy it.
Introduce them to new books and ideas.
Something I can enjoy with them (i.e.: its a different activity to my reading with them).
Introduce them gradually to using the library, and the library as a friendly, accessible place." **Library 4**

The opportunity the storytime activity provides for children to develop social skills and for adults to socialise was another frequently cited reason:

"Children enjoy listening to the stories and doing the activity. Also I meet up with friends.   Helps them in mixing with other children and to become interested in books." **Library 3**

"I'm a Nanny who cares for 2 children aged 2 years and 5 years old.   Coming to storytime at the library encouraged the children to sit and listen to another adult not known to them which gave them confidence and good social skills.   Also a good opportunity to play with other children and feel part of a group." **Library 4**

"Gets my son used to sitting down in groups and listening to stories (doesn't really happen in pre-school playgroups).
Gets him used to relating to other adults - especially if there's continuity.
Good storytelling!
Good session making things afterwards (I take ideas home from this)
Reminds me to change library books regularly (and I can spend time choosing them while my sons occupied).
The only child-centred resource I've found in the [location]."
Library 4

"To let Lawrence mix with other children, to get him used to listening to stories in a communal setting, to enjoy the story and craft activity, because it's nice for someone else to plan an activity for us and a nice surprise to find out what we'll be doing." **Library 7**

Other points mentioned by a few individuals relate to the perception that the storytime activity is held within a safe environment and that the activity is free.

7.6 (Q5) Library storytimes attended in Sheffield

As Table 7.5 illustrates, the responses to this question show that the overwhelming majority of respondents are loyal to the library storytime they regularly attend and do not attend storytimes held at other libraries in Sheffield (92.5%). Of the two individuals who indicated that they did attend storytimes at other libraries only one identified the library concerned.

Table 7.5   Do you attend storytimes at other libraries in Sheffield?

Response	Library						Total	
	2	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**n=40**	**(%)**
Yes	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	**5**
No	7	9	8	5	4	4	37	**92.5**
No response	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	**2.5**
Total	**8**	**9**	**8**	**5**	**4**	**6**	**40**	**100**

7.7 (Q6) Age of the children attending storytimes

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Table 7.6 shows the ages of the children attending the storytimes, indicating that the majority are three or four years old. This is not an unexpected finding as four of the six libraries (Libraries 5,6 and 7) impose age restrictions on the children attending (see Section 6.2.2). In terms of age therefore, Libraries 3 and 4 have a more diverse range of children attending.

Table 7.6   Age of the children attending storytimes

Age (years)	Library						Total	
	2	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**n=51**	**(%)**
Under 1yr.	1	1	1	-	-	-	3	**5.9**
1	-	-	1	-	-	1	2	**3.9**
2	2	3	7	-	-	-	12	**23.5**
3	4	4	-	-	3	5	16	**31.4**
4	4	2	3	5	1	2	17	**33.3**
5	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	**2**
Total	**11**	**10**	**13**	**5**	**4**	**8**	**51**	**100**

7.8   (Q7) Influence of storytimes on choice of story books

The overwhelming majority of respondents indicated that they assisted the children with their choice of library books as Table 7.7 illustrates.

Table 7.7   Do you choose or help choose library books for the child or children ?

Response	Library						Total	
	2	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**n=40**	**(%)**
Yes	7	9	8	5	3	5	37	**92.5**
No	-	-	-	-	1	1	2	**5**
No response	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	**2.5**
Total	**8**	**9**	**8**	**5**	**4**	**6**	**40**	**100**

However, when individuals were asked whether the stories read at storytime influenced the choice of library books borrowed a more complex picture emerged as Table 7.8 illustrates.

Table 7.8   Do the stories read at storytime influence the books you choose ?

Response	Library						Total	
	2	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**n=37**	**(%)**
Yes	4	3	4	1	-	1	13	**35.1**
No	-	3	2	3	2	3	13	**35.1**
Sometimes	3	3	2	1	1	1	11	**29.8**
Total	**7**	**9**	**8**	**5**	**3**	**5**	**37**	**100**

A small number of respondents elaborated on the answers they gave. Of these, individuals who indicated that the stories read at storytime did influence the choice of library book borrowed made a variety of statements as the following examples illustrate:

"Only a little - they encourage us to choose other books in the same series i.e.: other Spot books or Old Bear stories etc.
Parent, Library 2

"Yes, they help me for future reference for books to take for the children."
Nanny, Library 4

"Yes, if the story has been about a dinosaur.   We like to get [one] about [that] one.   We get others besides as well."
Parent, Library 4

"On occasions yes.   When I have seen that my child has shown a particular interest in a particular style of book (e.g. pop-ups) then I have chosen similar books."
Parent, Library 6

Few individuals whose response fell into the 'No' or 'Sometimes' categories provided more than a one-word answer.   However, one individual who answered 'No' stated that:

"No, as I do not stay with my child during storytime."
Parent, Library 5

The author noted during the storytime observation work that few (if any) adults stayed during the storytimes held at Libraries 5, 6 and 7 in contrast to those held at Libraries 2, 3 and 4 (see Sections 6.2.6 and 6.3.1). This may be one reason why more individuals answered 'Yes' to this question at the latter libraries.

7.9 Background of respondents

Tables 7.9, 7.10 and 7.11 provide details of the age and sex of the adults who completed this questionnaire together with details of their relationship to the child or children they brought to the storytime. The results show that the majority of respondents were female, aged between 30-39 years old and are the parent of the child or children.

Table 7.9   Age of respondents

Age (years)	Library						Total	
	2	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**n=40**	**(%)**
Under 19	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	**-**
20 - 29	1	1	4	-	1	2	9	**22.5**
30 - 39	6	7	2	4	3	2	24	**60**
40 - 49	-	1	1	-	-	1	3	**7.5**
50 - 59	1	-	1	1	-	1	4	**10**
60+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	**-**
Total	**8**	**9**	**8**	**5**	**4**	**6**	**40**	**100**

Table 7.10 Sex of respondents

Sex	Library						Total	
	2	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**n=40**	**(%)**
Male	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	**-**
Female	8	8	6	5	4	6	37	**92.5**
No response	-	1	2	-	-	-	3	**7.5**
Total	**8**	**9**	**8**	**5**	**4**	**6**	**40**	**100**

Table 7.11 Relationship to child

Category	Library						Total	
	2	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**n=40**	**(%)**
Parent	6	7	4	4	4	2	27	**67.5**
Grandparent	-	-	1	1	-	-	2	**5**
Family friend	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	**2.5**
*Childminder	1	1	-	-	-	-	2	**5**
*Nanny	1	1	3	-	-	2	7	**17.5**
*Carer	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	**2.5**
Total	**8**	**9**	**8**	**5**	**4**	**6**	**40**	**100**

Please note:
1. The following categories listed in the original question are not included in Table 7.11 as no individuals fell within these categories: Step-Parent, Aunt/Uncle.

*2. *These are terms individuals used to describe themselves and it was decided to keep these categories separate.*

7.10 Further comments

A number of individuals made additional comments on the storytime activity at the end of the questionnaire and these are outlined in full within Appendix 6.   In addition to emphasising how enjoyable the activity is, respondents' comments related to the value individuals placed on the availability of this service and the staff that provide it.   One individual also expressed concern over the funding available for Sheffield Libraries Services. The following quotes provide examples of the comments made:

"I feel the library is very important and am very worried about the lack of funding for Sheffield Libraries." **Library 2**

"A valuable and much appreciated library service. Children learn to sit and listen to stories. Good craft sessions related to stories." **Library 2**

"[Staff name] is wonderful with the children, and makes an effort, also enjoys it herself, (I think)." **Library 2**

"Staff very friendly and prepare crafts for an interesting story time." **Library 5**

"I think the storytime sessions (and the 6-12 years activity sessions) are a valuable service provided by the library and my children have enjoyed very much participating in them for quite a number of years." **Library 6**

"Storytime is a valued service which we'd hate to lose! As a child I enjoyed listening to stories on the radio in "listen with mother" but that no longer exists for today's children." **Library 7**

"The craft activity is great for the children and they love bringing home something related to the story - I've still got things my first son made!" **Library 7**

7.11 Summary

The findings from this survey can be summarised as follows:

- Forty adults participated in this study which took place at six libraries. The majority of respondents were female, aged between 30-39 and were the parent of the child attending the activity.

- The highest proportion of the adults attending the storytime (42.5%) had first heard about this activity from a friend.

- 82.5% of individuals attended the storytimes every week.

- 67.5% of individuals had been attending this activity for a period of one year or less.

- The reasons for attending this activity could be categorised into four broad areas. These were: enjoyment; educational; promotes library use; social reasons.

- The overwhelming majority of respondents are loyal to the library storytime they regularly attend and do not attend storytimes at other libraries in Sheffield.

- The average ages of the children attending the storytimes are three and four years old.

- Whilst the majority of adults assist children with their choice of library books, the influence stories read at storytime have on the books that are chosen was less clear cut.

- Respondents emphasised the benefits that this valuable service provides.

Chapter 8:   Conclusions

"I think the storytime sessions (and the 6-12 years activity sessions) are a valuable service provided by the library and my children have enjoyed very much participating in them for quite a number of years."

Parent, Library 6

Within the limitations of the data collection methods used, this exploratory study has revealed a number of interesting findings.   The key points to emerge from this study can be summarised as follows:

- Almost half the staff who responded to the questionnaire indicated that they had received no training on storytimes and a number of staff expressed an interest in receiving training for this activity.

- Whilst all staff were aware of the objectives for holding storytimes, the majority indicated that this activity is not evaluated.   Moreover, a range of criteria were cited by staff who did evaluate the storytimes.

- The observations of the storytimes identified a number of issues, including: the imposition of age restrictions, the existence of waiting lists, the different chaperone policies operating, the distinctive features which contribute to a storytime atmosphere and the pressure on staff.

- The value of storytelling was emphasised by all the staff and adults surveyed.   However, the difficulties that the present resource constraints impose on staff were evident both from the staff questionnaire survey, the staff training interview and the observations of the storytimes.

Based on these conclusions the following chapter outlines a number of recommendations.

Chapter 9:   Recommendations

"Unfortunately for me, with the current constraints in our work place i.e. being very short staffed, storytimes are proving extremely difficult to carry out.   Consequently storytimes, which I regard as an integral part of our service to encourage and invite children to the wealth of children's literature, may have to go completely from our service point."

Member of library staff (S34)

The author is aware of the current constraints within which Sheffield Libraries Services operates.   This situation poses a particular problem with respect to making recommendations as the author appreciates that without more resources and, in particular, additional staff, the suggestions outlined will be difficult to implement.   The following recommendations should, therefore, be considered as a guide to the actions that need to be carried out as and when resources allow.

The recommendations are as follows:

1.   That a regular forum is set up for staff involved in the storytelling activity in order to facilitate the transfer of information on storytelling activities and dissemination of good practice.   This would also provide a support network for staff, enabling them to benefit from each other's experiences, and highlight issues of policy which would, in turn, assist with the development of a cohesive long term strategy.   A regular meeting would also enable staff to keep abreast of new developments, for example, newly published stories suitable for storytelling.   It is suggested that staff should meet at least once a year.   This forum could be incorporated within a wider event open to staff from other library authorities.   The recently held YLG course in Doncaster highlights the benefits of this approach and the author is aware of plans to hold a similar type of course in Sheffield later this year (see Section 5.1.2).

2. That a coherent system of evaluating the present storytime activities is implemented at the earliest possible opportunity. The author appreciates that evaluation of activities is an additional task to carry out by an already overburdened workforce. However, it is felt strongly that an attempt should be made to review the present situation. Where resources are scarce, there is little point in carrying out an activity if the impact and effectiveness of it are not monitored. A regular review might, for example, highlight deficiencies in the present methods of delivery and draw attention to more appropriate or effective ways of meeting the needs of the community the library serves.

A number of issues arise from this recommendation, not least what measures to use to evaluate the storytime activity and this point needs to be clarified with staff. In this context it would be useful to find out what other library authorities do with respect to monitoring this activity. However, the author would suggest that an initial start could be made by collecting details of the storytime attendance and waiting lists at all libraries in Sheffield - not just the small number detailed within the present project. This would enable a picture of the current pattern of demand by individuals who use the service to be established.

3. The third recommendation follows on from the first two in that it is recommended that a strategy is drawn up for the storytime service in the short and long term. This should take into account the constraints under which the present system operates. The author appreciates that the development of a cohesive strategy may be difficult under the present conditions and it is felt that it would be helpful to explore how (if at all) the present ad-hoc system of storytelling could be structured more effectively. The author feels that the present report has highlighted a number of policy issues which staff running that activity at individual libraries may not have consciously considered from an

overall service perspective.   For example, the age restrictions in place at a number of libraries.   It would, therefore, be useful to see whether present staff would be willing to adapt or change the type of storytime activities run in order to assist in the development of a more effective service.

4.   During the course of carrying out the observation work, the author was very aware that the opportunity to observe a range of different storytellers and storytimes was not something that staff running the activity had necessarily had the experience of.   The author feels that it would, therefore, be useful (if staff are interested and the suggestion is feasible to implement) to instigate a 'visiting storyteller's programme'. The intention of this programme would be to enable staff running a storytime at one library to attend another library storytime and subsequently, run a storytime at the library visited via a staff exchange. Staff would benefit from this in a number of ways.   Firstly, they would be able to experience first hand how another member of staff runs a storytime and, secondly, they would gain experience in running a storytime within a different community.

Chapter 10: Further work

*"There once was a duck who had the bad luck to live with a lazy old farmer. The duck did the work.   The farmer stayed all day in bed.   The duck fetched the cow from the field.   "How goes the work ?" called the farmer. The duck answered, **"Quack !"**....*

....The farmer got fat through staying in bed and the poor duck got fed up with working all day....

*....The hens and the cow and the sheep got very upset.   They loved the duck. So they held a meeting under the moon and they made a plan for the morning.   **"Moo!"** said the cow.   **"Baa!"** said the sheep.   **"Cluck!"** said the hens.   And that was the plan!*

From: "Farmer Duck" Waddell and Oxenbury (1991)

Many of the issues raised by the present project would be interesting to examine further.   The following suggestions represent some of the key points:

- The present work has been limited in that it has focused on the policies and practices for storytelling in one library authority.   It would, therefore, be useful to examine the policies and practices operating within other library authorities in order to identify and disseminate good practice.

- The present project has attempted to encompass all the libraries where storytelling takes place within Sheffield Libraries Services.   Whilst this approach is useful for an initial exploratory study, less details relating to individual libraries emerge from the results and not all aspects of the issues raised are examined in the context of the local community that the library serves.   Moreover, the observation results represent a snapshot of what occurred at one visit.   It would, therefore, be interesting to carry out a study examining all aspects of storytelling in one or two libraries over a period of time using a case-study approach.   Using this approach an attempt could be made to elicit the views of the children who attend and the contribution that this activity makes to the community as a whole.

- This study has focused on storytimes for pre-school children as these happened to be running during the timeframe of the project.   It would,

therefore, be useful to examine storytimes and other library activities that are held for older children.

- The present work has concentrated solely on storytelling within the library environment. However, a considerable amount of storytelling takes place within schools. It would, therefore, be interesting to examine this aspect to establish a clearer picture of the type of library-run storytelling activities that are held in schools or which feature as part of a school class visit to the public library. For example, do staff carrying out these storytime activities see the need to possess additional skills to those already identified in the present study ? What do library staff see as the role of storytelling activities held in schools ? How does this compare with teachers' and pupils' views ? How have the demands of the National Curriculum affected the running of library storytime activities within schools ?

- During the course of carrying out this project, the staff at one library drew the author's attention to the differences between pre-school children who had attended library storytimes and their attitude to the library compared to those of their peers who had not. In this context it would be interesting to examine the differences between pre-school children who have attended this activity and those who have not. This could, for example, include investigating the school's perceptions of what benefits (if any) attending this activity confers on pre-school children.

- The need to evaluate and monitor the performance of an activity to determine whether the aims and objectives are being met is important. In this context, it would be useful to explore how storytimes can be evaluated and monitored. What quantitative measures are appropriate to use ? What qualitative measures could be developed ? This investigation would, of course, include a review of the present state of the literature available; an aspect which has only briefly been touched upon within the present study.

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Appendix 1

Unpublished notes from a storytelling course for library staff produced by the Children's and Education Unit of Calderdale Libraries

Appendix 2

Unpublished notes from a Library Association course on library services for the youngest child

Under Fives Welcome!

Libraries and the Youngest Child
Manchester Polytechnic
Tuesday 5th July 1988

Sharing stories, rhymes and finger plays with children

Trish Botten, Deputy Youth Librarian

Southwark Libraries

Handy Hints for a Successful Story-Time

1.   Organise well beforehand.

2.   **Find out the age group of your audience.**
If you are doing stories in a nursery the children can often be organised by age.   IMP.   Always ask a nursery worker to stay with the group.
In the library or other types of -5s groups you are more likely to get a mixed age group, so be flexible and choose two to three books with wide appeal.

3.   **Don't choose your story books in a rush.** Give yourself time to read them from cover to cover so that you can familiarise yourself with the story.   This way your reading will be more flowing - no need to keep your eyes on the page all the time and you can make eye contact with the children.

It will also mean you know that you haven't chosen a real booboo - there is nothing worse than discovering a story is really boring when you are half way through reading it to children, or that some child has torn out the middle pages!

4.   Keep a little notebook with a list of the stories you have read and how well they have worked, also note who you have read them to.   It's embarrassing to hear the refrain 'We've had that one!'

5.   **Choose a quiet and comfortable area in the library for your storytimes.**   This is usually the picturebook area where there is carpet and cushions, unless you are lucky enough to have a story-pit or a special story-room.   In a nursery or playgroup choose a quiet corner or a separate room.   If you are doing storytimes out of doors, you will need a ground sheet, a rug and in some cases a small PA system.

6.   Make sure all the children take off their hats, coats and mitts before sitting down because if you don't they will certainly want to take them off in the middle of the storytime.

7.   **Make sure they 'are all sitting comfortably.'**
Sitting on the carpet in a semi-circle works well, near enough to you
for   them to feel part of the event and for them to be able to see the pictures.   Avoid having them sit on little seats unless there is enough for all of them.   You would then need extra big chairs for the parents and carers.   It's cosier sitting on the carpet and the parents and carers can sit close too.

8.   **Encourage parents and carers to stay with the children.**   This is
not   just for crowd control (which is useful!) but to encourage parents and carers to share books with their children.

9. Practice reading your story with the book held up at shoulder level, open with story and illustrations facing the children.

10. **What do you do if a child interrupts constantly ?**
-lean forward and maintain firm eye contact with the child whilst continuing to read the story. This often works because you appear to be acknowledging that child's interest and reading the story just for them. Pull back when they have settled down.

What if that doesn't work ?
-lean forward, gently but firmly put a cautioning finger on the child's arm and make a 'shh...' face. Pull back and continue story.

In extreme circumstances
-stop and ask the parent or carer to help in settling the child because they will spoil the storytime for the rest of the children.

But remember:
-a lot of apparent disruptive behaviour is an outlet for the natural energy level of the child, your job is to channel it into an enthusiasm for books - so try not to be too dictatorial!

11. **What if the children want to hear the same story again and again ?**
-Well what if they do? It means they have obviously loved the story. For many children rehearing a favourite story gives them a sense of security. For others the constant re-reading reinforces the story in their mind until they are virtually 'reading' themselves which gives them great confidence. So try and fit in their favourite at the end of the session.

12. **Create an atmosphere of something special around your storytime:**
-use glove puppets
-develop a theme e.g. clocks
-finish off with a simple craft activity
-finish off with orange juice and biscuits etc.

Good Books for Storytime

1. **Novelty books**
   e.g. 'How Many Bugs in a Box' by David Carter.   Publ. Orchard Books.
   'Dear Zoo' by Rod Campbell.   Publ. Abelard.

   Novelty books are a great way of breaking the ice especially with children you do not know well - fun and participative.

2. **Nursery rhymes, play rhymes, finger rhymes, action rhymes, songs and music.**

   e.g.   'Round and round the garden, play rhymes for young children' by Sarah Williams.   Publ. OUP.
   p6. Round and Round the Garden and finger play.
   p8. Five Fat Sausages and finger play.

   'Fingers Feet and Fun!' written and comp. Delphine Evans.
   Publ. Beaver Books.
   p52. Heads and Shoulders and music and actions.
   p58. The Wheels on the Bus and music and actions.

   'Bengali Nursery Rhymes' by Haringey Multi-Cultural Resource   Centre for -5s.

3. **Books to watch and listen to.**

   e.g.   'Rosie's Walk' by Pat Hutchins.   Publ. Puffin.
   'Dark, Dark Tale' by Ruth Brown.   Publ. Andersen Press.
   'Nandy's Bedtime' by Errol Lloyd.   Publ. Bodley Head.
   'Better Move on Frog!' by Ron Maris.   Publ. Julia MacRae.

4. **Good stories for older -5s.**

   e.g.   'Half a Moon and One Whole Star' by Crescent Dragonwagon Publ.
   'Abiyoyo' Pete Seeger's Storysong.   Publ. Hamish Hamilton.
   'Where the Wild Things Are' by Maurice Sendack.
   Publ. Puffin.
   'Tortoise's Dream' by Joanna Troughton.   Publ. Blackie.

5.   Storytime format:

-a good flexible format is:

A novelty book (Spot's Birthday Party by Eric Hill)
A more complex listening book (The Tiger Who Came to Tea by
Judith Kerr)
Finger or action rhyme or song (This Little Pig)
Simple craft activity (optional)
Orange juice and biscuits.

6.   Storytimes as a theme.

e.g. CLOCKS, TIME

'What's the Time, Mr Wolf' by Colin Hawkins.   Publ. Heinemann
       (Novelty)

'Peace at Last' by Jill Murphy.   Publ.   Macmillan (Longer, listening).

'Hickory, Dickory Dock' (finger rhyme).

**7.   Books for reading on a one-to-one basis e.g. at bedtime, with
       toddlers and babies.**

'Peepo' by Janet and Allan Ahlberg.   Publ. Kestrel.
'Holes and Peeks' by Ann Jonas.   Publ. Julia Macrae.
Board books.
Photographic books for the very young.
'What Happens Next ?' by Bill Gillham.   Publ. Methuen.

8.   Craft activities
       These should be done for experience with the medium.   Colouring,
       finger painting, stringing macaroni are all good.   Keep it very simple
to   keep the frustration level minimal.

9.   Creative dramatics
       Simple pantomime activities such as splashing in puddles, scrubbing
       with soap, even making apple sauce are fun and easy to do.   With
       parents participating and given reinforcement, children are willing to
do   a lot.

Appendix 3

Sheffield Libraries and Information Services. 1993. Selected extracts from: *Policy Guidelines for Children and Young People,* Children's Policy Guidelines Working Group, Final Draft, March 1993, M2/GUIDEBK/LYP.

6.4.4   Oral and visual promotion

Talks are particularly important with regard to this client group because:

- They offer a direct way of appealing to children.

- They offer the opportunity for children to meet local authors.

- They exploit the special opportunities afforded by working with schools and playgroups.

- The detailed literature knowledge of specialist staff creates unique opportunities to promote the stock.

- They offer contact with a high proportion of non-library users.

- They offer opportunities for immediate feedback and response.

6.4.5   Displays and exhibitions

For children's services particularly, displays and exhibitions offer exciting promotional opportunities.   Examples are:

(a)   To spotlight features of the stock such as fiction themes, recommended authors, topical subjects.

(b)   To enhance the library environment by producing bright displays.

(c)   To improve relationships with schools and other agencies by displaying their work.   This is valuable in attracting parents
and   children into the library.

(d)   Taking the library service out to non-users via displays and exhibitions.

6.4.6   Events/activities

Events and activities are a particularly significant element in library work with children.   Some events are directly book related (e.g. storytelling, book weeks) whilst other "entertainment" activities (e.g. puppets, magic shows) are designed to create a positive image of the library and to break down social and cultural barriers to library use.

Examples include:

- Promotion inside the library.

- Materials related activities:

Storytelling with all ages
Oral and drama work
Music sessions
Craft based activities
Creative writing
Celebrating festivals and cultures
Origami
Make-up demonstrations

- Entertainment:

Parties
Puppet and magic shows
Animals

-Promotion outside the library:

Exhibitions and events to demonstrate aspects of library work
Involvement in local community events
Library staff visiting and working in schools, nurseries, playgroups and community groups
Children's Book Fair - to promote books and reading

-Events may take the form of:

1. One off events
2. Regular activity sessions
3. System wide promotional events

All activities should meet the criteria in 5.2 and be critically evaluated in their local context.

6.4.7   The Media

The potential for media coverage on either a local or national scale should always be considered.   Effective promotion is still essential, however, if this interest is to be turned into a specific presence and resultant coverage.   Press releases can be sent but a personal approach to the media can be as effective.

6.5   <u>Who does promotion ?</u>

All staff are involved in varying degrees in the promotion of the library service.

System-wide promotions should be co-ordinated by the learning and Young People's Support Unit with input from the Group Young People's Co-ordinators, CLA's and other relevant staff.

Local promotion has to be tailored to the interests and expectations of the community but should meet criteria in 5.2.

The services of the Publicity Unit should be used whenever applicable.

6.6   <u>Funding</u>

Promotion should be seen as one of the essential core elements of any library service.   <u>It should receive a realistic and relatively constant percentage of the budget.</u>   This ....[the notes end here]

Appendix 4

Collated responses to the open questions in the library staff questionnaire

Collated responses to the open questions in the library staff questionnaire

The information outlined here represents the collated comments of all the subjects who completed the open questions on the staff questionnaire. Each response is listed with the questionnaire number (i.e. the subject number) of the respondent adjacent to it (e.g. S10).

Please note that Subject 18 wished to make a general point regarding storytimes and therefore completed the 'Further Comments' section of the questionnaire only.

Q4.   Please try to give reasons why storytimes are held for the particular age groups you have stated.

S10   "To encourage children from 6 years and upwards to use and enjoy coming to their local library."

S12   "Introduce children to books and libraries in a positive way.   Make libraries fun and good places to be."

S13   "Under 5's - to actively encourage use of the library by providing a pleasant environ."

S14   "Under 5's - to encourage reading for enjoyment, develop useful skills, and promote use of libraries in the future."

S23   No response

S33   "Introduces young children to the library in an exciting and enjoyable way.   Mums also benefit by being able to join in the activity, meeting other mums and encouraging their child to enjoy books."

S34   "It proves an excellent way of introducing young children to the library service and the wealth of children's literature available to them."

S36   "Promotion of books - libraries, for both pleasure and information. Encourage new readers."

S45   "To encourage children to read and use the library, for children's pleasure, to get children used to seeing and handling books."

S46   "School class visits."

S48   No response

Q5. **What skills and qualities do you think library staff need to carry out storytimes ?**

S10   "A pleasant speaking voice, and a clear voice.   Enjoy reading aloud - this comes over to the children.   Enjoy the book you are using for storytime - you can't be enthusiastic about a book if you don't like it."

S12   "Love of stories, enthusiasm, patience, sense of humour, sensitivity to the needs of young children and their carers.   Imagination and confidence."

S13   "Positive attitude - pleasant - communicative ease of reading stories - delivery skills for each type of story etc."

S14   "Ability to relate to children at their own level.   Good communication skills.   Appropriate personality.   Commitment.   Perhaps they should like children!   Understand long term purposes and benefits."

S23   "Patience, actually like children, being demonstrative, good clear
voice.   Able to control the children in a quiet way."

S33   "To be able to communicate well with children and to <u>enjoy</u> the work you do.   Children need to be at ease to enjoy."

S34   "<u>Skills</u>: Organization and management skills; storytelling skills. Communication and management skills with small children."
        <u>Qualities</u>: Patience; imagination; and friendly and gentle approach."

S36   "Enthusiasm.   Interest in children.   Clear voice."

S45   "Patience, sensitivity, ability to read with enthusiasm, ability to relate
to   children - warm and friendly approach."

S46   "Clear speech.   Interesting voice.   Firm manner."

S48   No response

Q6.   What training have you received on storytimes ?

S10   "None whatsoever."

S12   "Mostly observing other staff, children's library staff from other
       authorities, their styles, adapting other people's skills to suit your own
       ideas.   Training days organised by Y.L.G. and L.A.   Talks by authors
       and librarians."

S13   "None."

S14   " 'Sitting next to Nelly' - watching others!   Listening to well known
       authors narrating."

S23   "None."

S33   "Years of telling stories to my own children. Helping out at [location]
       library's storytime."

S34   "Storytelling workshops.   Drama workshops."

S36   "At the beginning none, I was left to my own devices and mistakes.
In   house training.   Workshops on 'storytelling'."

S45   "None."

S46   "None."

S48   "Training from another Children's Library Assistant."

Q7.   What training, if any, do you think you need ?

S10   " * I don't feel I need any now, but I would have appreciated training
in   the early days.   I would have liked help with purely practical aspects
i.e. how and where to sit, how to hold the book.

*I would like some training on telling a story without the book."

S12   "Plenty of practice with playgroups, schools - outreach."

S13   "None, personally - but, an induction into presenting stories to an
audience would help."

S14   "Further development - should never stop learning and adapting."

S23   "Depends on the type of person you are."

S33   "Hopefully storytelling comes naturally, but watching professionals
gives you plenty of ideas.   Experience is the best training of all."

S34   "Refresher courses are always useful."

S36   "Refresher courses are always useful.   If only to get new ideas for
activities."

S45   No response

S46   No response

S48   No response

Q8. **Are there any aspects of storytimes you have experienced difficulties with which you can relate to a lack of training ?**

YES/NO

If YES please provide examples.

S10   YES   "Just the practical point that every child wants to be able to see the book."

S12   NR*   "Training can give you techniques of storytelling and helpful visual aids - but mastering an audience of under-five's and interaction only comes with experience and practice!!"
(* No response)

S13   NO

S14   YES   "School class visit needs - familiarity with needs in classroom and how libraries are expected to perform by teachers."

S23   YES   "Controlling a group of five year olds to keep their attention."

S33   NO

S34   NO

S36   YES   "Controlling very naughty under 5's!"

S45   NO

S46   NO

S48   NO

Q9. **Do you know what the objectives for holding storytimes at the library/libraries you work within are ?**

YES / NO / DON'T KNOW

If YES please state these objectives.   If NO or DON'T KNOW please outline what you feel you should be trying to achieve.

S10	YES	"To encourage children to use the library."
S12	YES	"Promoting library stock, services to children, introducing children to books and using libraries, giving them social and interactive skills."
S13	YES	"To introduce children to a positive library atmosphere, that hopefully encourage reading and regular library visits."
S14	YES	"Atmosphere, usage encouragement, communication and other spatial and social skills. Participation by parents/carers - sharing and enjoying."
S23	YES	No response
S33	YES	"To encourage and develop young minds to the joys of books in a pleasant and enjoyable atmosphere."
S34	DON'T KNOW	"To enhance the library service and encourage more children to use the library ? To improve the link between user and library assistant."
S36	YES	"Same as Q4 plus a demand."
S45	YES	"See Q4."
S46	NO	"Interest children in books from an early age."
S48	YES	No response

Q10. Are the storytime sessions evaluated ? YES / NO / DON'T KNOW

If YES how are they evaluated ?
If NO please try to give reasons why.

S10   NO   "There is noone designated to oversee children's
                    storytimes as far as I am aware."

S12   NO   "We all know the value of storytimes, we discuss
stories   and themes, and keep a record/program of subjects and
                    themes."

S13   DON'T   No response
      KNOW

S14   YES   Attendance numbers.   Comments procedure in place to
                    analyse.   Discussions with staff.

S23   NR*   "Only by myself - could I have done it better etc."
                    (*No response)

S33   NO   "Only the child's parents evaluate my storytime, and by
                    the response I am given by both children and parents."

S34   NO   "Over the past few years certain aspects of the
children's   service have had to go i.e. school visits and
activities for   older children.   Also Children's Library
assistants are no   longer recognized and valued for their
special skills and   other attributes.   I don't feel that
storytimes are   regarded as important and therefore not
evaluated."

S36   YES   "Did they achieve the objective.   Is it worth doing
again   in the future.   Was the time spent in preparation worth
                    the result."

S45   YES   "Numbers attending - Children's attention span.
                    Children's behaviour, response and enjoyment."

S46   NO   No response

S48   NO   No response

Q13.   What qualities do you look for in a story to use for storytimes ?

S10   "Suitability for the age group (i.e. 6 - 10 years).   Holds the children's interest.   Not too long - if it is to be read at one session."

S12   "Bold, clear illustrations, subjects younger children will identify with. Text (not too much) repetition of sayings/rhymes - noises, for active participation."

S13   "Interesting informative - craft based [ideas ?] generating topical -"

S14   "Appropriate topic, length, format for age/situation."

S23   "Something to hold the children's attention e.g. an exciting or funny story.   A storybook with good illustrations.   A book that can be adapted to craft making."

S33   "Because of the age of my children, under five's, the stories I choose are usually not too long.   I tell about three different stories and then
try   to base the activity on one of the stories.   Stories where the children join in are very popular e.g. flapbooks, making faces and counting."

S34   "Stories which relate to everyday things (mostly) in a child's life. Lively and humorous.   Simple and effective.   Comprehension level; this varies throughout the year."

S36   "Stories that are fun, have a message, introduce children to different cultures experiences.   Stories I will enjoy reading.   Stories on themes, that will fit in with a craft idea."

S45   "Good illustration/ Good interesting storyline.   Something which is relevant at the time."

S46   "Interesting.   Attractive.   Easy to read.   Often choose pop ups etc."

S48   "Something that can be read outloud, and also not too long due to time span of children."

Q15. Have you ever told stories without a book ?   YES / NO

If YES how did you acquire this skill ?
If NO is this a skill you would like to acquire ?

S10	"YES, but not often.	I am not very confident to do this." S10 also stated that this was a skill they would like to acquire.

S12	YES	"Occasionally - but more often I will adapt/change a story to suit my style - or substitute a word for audience I have. I use finger puppets and then story my way."

the
retell a

S13   YES   "Life experience."

S14   NO   "Not carried out at work with large groups of children. In the past only to small numbers in other settings."

S23   NO   "Yes."

S33   NO   "Not really.   I feel children like the illustrations.   I am not dramatic enough."

S34   NO   "Don't know."

S36   YES   "Through my own interest in Storytelling Clubs and workshops."

S45   YES, occasionally.   "Practice."

S46   NO   No response

S48   YES   "Years of experience."

Q16. Please describe the format of a typical storytime session and try to give reasons why it is organised this way.

S10 "The storytime is usually part of an hour long activity session.   I usually read the story with the children sitting around me.   This is followed usually by a craft session."

S12 "General chat and getting to know the children (1-3 stories in 1/2 hour depending on age and concentration of children, rhymes songs and a craft)."

S13 "Informal chat to calm audience - story - craft session."

S14 "Informal, relaxed, but structured.   Stimulating, topical.   Participative - so can be used as a base to work from [and ?] home by carers. Refreshments - social aspect.   Craft - development of appropriate
skills   needed for reading."

S23 "I regularly run a children's club each Friday evening 5.00 - 6pm. Most Fridays we have a story with a craft related activity afterwards. The children are aged between 6 - 10 years."

S33 "3 short stories - to keep interest of the very young.   One to join in with, e.g. flapbooks.

Activity - based on one of the stories (hopefully).   Painting, making cards e.g. Christmas.   Hats, masks.

Drinks and biscuit and songs - finish off with songs, nursery rhymes. Always last being [particular nursery rhyme] song."

S34 "Storytime activity.   Drink and a biscuit.   Choosing books.

Children make something in relation to the story i.e. Postman Pat story - children will then make a Postman Pat van collage.   I've always carried out storytimes like this."

S36 "Looking at pop-up/novelty books with parents.   Stories.   Craft activity.   Games."

Q16 continued.

S45   "Settle children down. Read story. Do an activity - it works!"

S46   "Class visit - read a story at the end of choosing books."

S48   No response

Further Comments

Six individuals made additional comments:

S10 "I have many school classes visiting the library - 3 or 4 a week on average.   I never have a class visit without offering to read a story, so most class instruction sessions usually end with a story session."

S12 "Storytimes are important to libraries and their staff.   Children are the borrower's of the future, to give them a love of stories, social skills, communicating with others at a very young age will give them a headstart in life before they even start school.   It is very rewarding (to be stopped in the street like I was by a parent - 10 years on from taking a child in a storytime session, and thanked for what I had given her child, it was wonderful!)."

S13 "Certain aspects of skills in storytime cannot be 'taught'.   Many of the staff have children of their own.   This is an obvious help.   Maturity in ones approach to life is vital.   Personality is also relevant; with an ability to express, without an authoritarian 'air' in one's manner, being of paramount importance.   The need to integrate parental involvement is also helpful/very important, so that an extension of the activity can carry on at home.   All of these aspects, and more, contribute [to ?] an underlying theme - <u>The need to read</u>!"

S14 "1. Council priority = Under 8's.
2. Effect of Children Act.
3. Community funding originally established toys, cups etc. to facilitate.
4. Aim to attract isolated/minority groups/non regular users.
5. Multicultural and equal opportunities acknowledged.

The above items are an integral part of the purpose behind sessions. Reading is needed as a life skill, libraries are free and available to all, promotion of this encourages future social advantage to the user, and long term to libraries.   Children should be regarded as an investment opportunity and the value of language and communication cannot be underestimated."

S18   "Story times are an important way of attracting children (and often
their   parents!) into libraries, and introducing them to books, other materials,
and the reading habit.   Hopefully all this will be of use to them in later
years.   Also story-times can have a particular significance in areas or
communities where the children might not otherwise have much access
to books and other reading material.

Unfortunately in recent years, Sheffield Libraries have faced such
drastic budget cuts that some of our core services and activities -
including the provision of regular story-times and activities - have
inevitably suffered.   Where we have been able to continue with such
activities in our libraries, it has been largely because of the
commitment,   enthusiasm, skills and good-will of our staff."

S34   "Unfortunately for me, with the current constraints in our work place
i.e. being very short staffed, storytimes are proving extremely difficult
to carry out.   Consequently storytimes, which I regard as an integral
part of our service to encourage and invite children to the wealth of
children's literature, may have to go completely from our service
point."

Appendix 5

Adult storytime questionnaire: reasons for attending storytimes

Library 2

1. No response (questionnaire partially completed by a nanny who was attending the storytime for the first time).

2. 1) "My children enjoy it.
    2) Good grounding for independence.
    3) Enjoyment of books and understanding how a library works.
    4) Basic cutting and pencil skills.
    5) Being part of a group."

3. "As an introduction to libraries.
    Because it is an activity specific to child's age group."

4. "Because the children enjoy it and I think that [staff name] who takes storytime makes it very enjoyable for everyone."

5. "Social aspect, children enjoy stories and activities."

6. "By car."

7. "Encourage my youngest boy to enjoy books + for his future reading enjoyment.   Also I enjoy coming to storytime, I like to choose books
to read to the children at home."

8. 1)   "To have an activity for my daughter that is aimed at a child
her   age.
    2)   To have a free, half day outing for us.
    3)   To have an activity for my daughter that is encouraging her
             toward reading/educational.
    4)   To give us an opportunity to get to the library on a regular basis
             to get new books for reading at home."

Library 3

1.   "Educational and it introduces small children to reading in a pleasant way."

2.   "Enjoyable, interesting, nice to mix and good fun!"

3.   "My little boy enjoys the stories, also gives us chance to pick books and   videos."

4.   "My children love it.
        They meet other children of similar ages.
        We enjoy the creative activities.
        It's also a regular book borrowing time.
        It's very friendly.
        It's free.
        Also mums can get together too!"

5.   "Choose books.
        Meet other people/children."

6.   "The children enjoy the activities."

7.   "Because the child I look after really enjoys coming.
        I feel the children learn new things each time they come.
        It's nice that it is structured."

8.   "Great enjoyment for my children."

9.   "Children enjoy listening to the stories and doing the activity.
        Also I meet up with friends.
        Helps them in mixing with other children and to become interested in books."

Library 4

1. "Gets my son used to sitting down in groups and listening to stories (doesn't really happen in pre-school playgroups).
    Gets him used to relating to other adults - especially if there's continuity.
    Good storytelling!
    Good session making things afterwards (I take ideas home from this)
    Reminds me to change library books regularly (and I can spend time choosing them while my sons occupied).
    The only child-centred resource I've found in the [location]."

2. "Because it encourages them to sit and listen to stories, to enjoy books and to play with other children of a similar age. It is very enjoyable and safe, and also introduces them to simple craft activities, with an end-product which they proudly take home."

3. "So my daughter can play and chose some books and listen to a story. So I can have a coffee and a chat."

4. "The kids enjoy listening to the story and love the creative work afterwards."

5. "I think the children will enjoy it.
    Introduce them to new books and ideas.
    Something I can enjoy with them (i.e.: its a different activity to my reading with them).
    Introduce them gradually to using the library, and the library as a friendly, accessible place."

6. "Encourages children to sit still and listen to stories and enjoy books. Also a safe and quiet place for them to play."

7. "I'm a Nanny who cares for 2 children aged 2 years and 5 years old. Coming to storytime at the library encouraged the children to sit and listen to another adult not known to them which gave them confidence and good social skills. Also a good opportunity to play with other children and feel part of a group."

8. "The children enjoy the storytelling and taking different books home with them."

Library 5

1. "Lewis enjoys stories and visiting the library."

2. "It's a different interest for Jessica."

3. "To help my child love books and to bring reading alive."

4. "Because it is both educational and enjoyable for children."

5. "The children enjoy it."

Library 6

1. "Amanda learns to concentrate."

2. "Meeting other children in a friendly environment - very good for youngsters."

3. "Good learning for my child (meeting other children and socialising)."

4. "Because we do not have a 'nursery' facility in [location] and I feel the contact with other children, combined with the opportunity to participate in activities, has been of immense benefit to my child, aged 3."

Library 7

1. "To let Lawrence mix with other children, to get him used to listening to stories in a communal setting, to enjoy the story and craft activity, because it's nice for someone else to plan an activity for us and a nice surprise to find out what we'll be doing."

2. "Because the children love stories and I want them to get an early appreciation of books. Also because of the contact with other children in a group. And it gives me half an hour to sit down! I also appreciate the help it gives them in sitting down, learning to sit quietly and listen and join in."

3. "The children enjoy it."

4. "I find the children enjoy books and you get a different set of books than the ones at home! The activities provided by storytimes are also very enjoyable for the children."

5. "The children enjoy coming very much."

6. "Richard has a great love for books, but also because the staff at [location] are very caring and sincerely interested in their good work! Great for social skills and in learning to share and look after other people's books as well as his own."

Appendix 6

Adult storytime questionnaire: further comments

Library 2

Four people made further comments:

1. "I feel the library is very important and am very worried about the lack of funding for Sheffield Libraries."

2. "A valuable and much appreciated library service. Children learn to sit and listen to stories. Good craft sessions related to stories."

3. "[Staff name] is wonderful with the children, and makes an effort, also enjoys it herself, (I think)."

4. "The storytimes I've attended have used mixed [media] to sustain the children's attention, and I've found that to be very effective (i.e.: stories plus crafts, puppets, songs, videos or flannel board pictures)."

Library 3

Two people made further comments:

1. "Excellent facility."

2. "The storytime at our [location] is a very enjoyable time for myself and my children."

Library 4

One person made a further comment:

1. "Thoroughly enjoyable and well-prepared session. I do try and make a regular commitment to it. Bank holidays and school holidays have tended to disrupt the Monday 'routine' (but please don't change the day because I work all the rest of the time!).

Library 5

Two people made further comments:

1. "Staff very friendly and prepare crafts for an interesting story time."

2. Very good for children who don't always have books at home."

Library 6

One person made a further comment:

1. "I think the storytime sessions (and the 6-12 years activity sessions) are a valuable service provided by the library and my children have enjoyed very much participating in them for quite a number of years."

Library 7

Three people made further comments:

1. "Storytime is a valued service which we'd hate to lose! As a child I enjoyed listening to stories on the radio in "listen with mother" but that no longer exists for today's children."

2. "The craft activity is great for the children and they love bringing home something related to the story - I've still got things my first son made!"

3. "Richard enjoys "sticky-time" too and very proudly takes home his creations for Mummy and Daddy to look at, then displays them on his 'gallery'. There are many happy hours spent in playing with his "creations".

Appendix 7

Statement of the dissertation as a learning process

Statement of the dissertation as a learning process

As the author has experience of undertaking a variety of research projects from previous employment the process of conducting a research project was not a new one. However, every research project carried out presents its own unique challenges. The author felt that the present project provided her with useful experience in the following areas:

- Conducting research in a discipline and subject area which were new to the author. When undertaking previous research projects the author already had a strong basic knowledge of the relevant discipline which provided the experience necessary to carry out work in diverse areas of that field. The present project required the author to carry out a research project in a new area of study whilst continuing to assimilate many of the fundamental principles of information studies.

- Meeting and interviewing a wide range of people in the process of gathering information. This included establishing a rapport with individuals and persuading them to participate in the project.

- Developing an awareness of the role of the researcher in a people-orientated project and the importance of maintaining a professional detatchment when eliciting individuals' views on subjects.

- Designing two questionnaires appropriate to the area under investigation. The author gained considerable useful experience from carrying out the staff questionnaire survey in that the study revealed many interesting features concerning the nature of the questionnaire itself which could not have been forseen in advance. The author recognises that such deficiencies in the questionnaire survey might have been recognised at an early stage and rectified. However, this was not achieved due to the time constraints under which the project operated.

- Carrying out observation work and developing a data collection method by which to record observations.

- Maintaining the motivation and self-discipline to produce a thorough report of the research outcome.