An Evaluation of the Extent to which Branch Libraries may Contribute to Community Regeneration through Information Technology

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to evaluate the extent to which branch libraries may contribute to the regeneration of coalfield communities, with particular reference to information technology. Three Nottinghamshire coalfield communities are studied, all with varying levels of IT, including an Open For Learning centre and an 'Opportunities Database' aimed at those seeking employment. The study involves investigating the information needs of these communities and the extent to which branch libraries are meeting those needs. The benefits experienced by users of IT resources are addressed as well as the factors which may enhance or detract from the branch libraries' contributions to regeneration. A qualitative approach is adopted, centred on structured interviews with users of the three libraries and one resource centre studied. In addition, data obtained from semi-structured interviews with library staff and the Assistant Director of Nottinghamshire Libraries, Archives and Information Division is used, as is that received from the business community in one location in the form of postal questionnaires.

It is suggested that the structure of the local authority may affect the extent to which the branch library is able to contribute to regeneration, in terms of the way the authority is perceived by other organisations, and the priorities afforded to regeneration by library staff. The data also indicates that branch libraries may have some impact on community regeneration through the information they provide, particularly when this provision is viewed holistically among community organisations. The value of IT to individual members of communities is investigated, with evidence suggesting that IT in itself is not sufficient as a means of promoting use. However, it is concluded that when supported effectively, IT resources in branch libraries may promote feelings of confidence, community empowerment and inclusion, which may have a positive impact on the regeneration process. This may be due in part to the benefits associated with the library as an effective learning environment. Partnerships are found to be fundamental to community regeneration as is the extent to

which IT facilities are publicised. The evidence suggests that, in terms of the small business sector, branch libraries seem to contribute little to regeneration and that issue based performance measurement may inhibit the contribution branch libraries are able to make in this area. The report concludes that, contrary to evidence presented in the literature, branch libraries are ideally placed to make a significant contribution community regeneration.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aims And Objectives

The overall aim of this study is to establish the extent to which branch libraries can contribute to the regeneration of coalfield communities at an individual level, with particular reference to information technology. As public library funding has been progressively eroded, it seems pertinent to try to establish how libraries may be able to contribute in areas of importance to policy makers and elected members such as regeneration. In doing so, the value of the branch library may be seen to go beyond that associated with a leisure resource and be recognised as a vital element of community regeneration. Because information technology is also becoming a more prevalent feature of public libraries, it seems appropriate to focus the study in this area. It will be necessary to:

- investigate the information needs of members of three coalfield communities and the extent to which branch libraries are meeting these needs

- assess the benefits to regeneration associated with the branch library's provision of information technology

- investigate the factors which may enhance the branch library's contribution to regeneration, particularly through IT, and also to identify barriers which may limit this contribution.

1.2 Rationale

The Coalfield Areas

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s the British coal industry has suffered near terminal decline. In 1981, there were 161 collieries in England employing more than 200 000 people. Now, only 20 pits remain, with a work force of around 10 000 (Coalfields Task Force 1998, p.8). The effects on Nottinghamshire coalfield communities has been devastating, with the number of direct and indirect job losses estimated to be over 11 100 (Nottinghamshire County Council 1992, 5.9). However, it would be misleading to measure the impact of

the pit closures purely in statistical terms. The Coalfields Task Force (1998, p.11), for example, is also concerned with less obvious areas of need such as the lower than average educational levels in these areas and loss of social cohesion brought about by pit closures. In *Making the Difference* (The Coalfields Task Force 1998, p.8), it is stated that:

> The way of life that was focused on the local pit offered a high degree of social cohesion and resilience within communities, and a strong work ethic. There was a tradition of team working and mutual support both underground and above ground....The impact of the sudden withdrawal of this support network has been enormous and has not been adequately supported by regeneration programmes.

Nottinghamshire County Council also acknowledges the damaging effects of 'loss of self-confidence, depression, [and] missing the social life of work' (Nottinghamshire County Council 1992, 7.8). It is these 'softer' areas of the regeneration process which will form the basis of this study. It seems appropriate to investigate the extent to which the *branch libraries* in three coalfield communities contribute to the regeneration process for a number of reasons.

The Significance of the Branch Library

Firstly, as illustrated in the literature exemplified above, pit closures can have a significant effect on individual members of communities. It is very much in the ethos of branch libraries to operate at the level of the individual user; organisations involved in regeneration are often based in larger towns and have access to alternative information sources. The lack of other facilities in smaller communities, (such as job centres, colleges and shopping centres) also make it less problematic to establish the extent to which the branch library *itself* is contributing to regeneration in the time available. Indeed, the local library is often the only representative of the local authority in a community and for this reason, the importance of their potential contribution may be increased.

Funding

Secondly, library services countrywide have experienced diminished funding for many years and Nottinghamshire is no exception. There is a need, it seems, to familiarise elected members, 'opinion formers and decision makers' (Worpole 1992, p.117) with the activities of libraries beyond their capacity as a leisure resource. If branch libraries can be seen to be contributing to the regeneration of communities and their real value to individual members of those communities be established, the case for improved funding is made stronger.

Contacts

Thirdly, being familiar with the structure of Nottinghamshire County Council and having established contacts within the Libraries, Archives and Information Division facilitated the development of positive relationships, links with other organisations and access to other resources and departments which may not otherwise have been possible.

Information Technology

Finally, by concentrating on the branch library's use of information technology in the regeneration process, it is possible to bring focus to a broad and complex issue and address an area not covered in Linley's work on the role of the branch library in community development and regeneration (Linley 1996). The public sector is at the threshold of a huge programme of IT development, assisted by the impact of documents such as *New Library: The People's Network* (Library and Information Commission 1997). It seems a pertinent time, therefore, to begin to assess the real value IT may provide to individual members of communities.

The Literature

There is also an opportunity to test the divergent opinions in the literature which offer conflicting opinions about the suitability of the branch library to

contribute to regeneration and to draw together areas of thought which have previously remained unconnected.

1.3 Terms

Regeneration

The term 'regeneration' has long been associated with 'hard' economic factors such as the creation of jobs and training opportunities, the re-development of derelict land and the acquisition of funding from beyond the confines of the communities themselves, for example from the European Union. This can be seen in earlier publications such as *Urban Regeneration and Economic Development: The Local Government Dimension* (Audit Commission 1989), which deal largely with such issues, and which assess their effectiveness in a quantitative way. However, publications dealing specifically with the regeneration of coalfield areas have begun to take a more subjective approach to regeneration. *Making the Difference* (The Coalfields Task Force 1998), for example, highlights some of the less obvious consequences of pit closures which also need to be addressed through the regeneration process, such as social exclusion. For the purposes of this dissertation, therefore, the 'softer' aspects of regeneration will be highlighted, which will give a distinctly qualitative dimension to the study.

Community

For the purposes of this study, the terms, 'community' will refer to a geographically distinct group of people rather than a community of interest.

Day's definition (1998) seems appropriate:

> Communities consist of individuals, families, groups, organisations and institutions, all of which contribute to and affect the development of the whole. Often, they are sources of

untapped skill, expertise and knowledge which, if encouraged

and stimulated, can contribute not only to the development of an

individual community itself, but to society in general.

For the purposes of this dissertation, the individual members of communities
will provide the focus. 'Community regeneration' will therefore describe the
process of regeneration at a predominantly individual level.

Information Technology

Throughout the dissertation, information technology (IT) will refer to
resources based around a personal computer (PC). This will encapsulate both
the *state of provision* in the public library sector, which is still, on the whole, of
a limited nature, and the *state of the art* as frequently referred to in the
literature and which, in addition, incorporates information and communications
technology (ICT). Only Calverton library has an open public access catalogue
(OPAC) and for this reason, the term 'IT' will exclude both this facility and the
CD-ROM facilities offered for children at this location. It was believed at the
beginning of this research that neither facility would have a significant bearing
on the regeneration process.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Much of the literature relating to this topic is peripheral and, while providing valuable contextual information, does not address the issue directly. However, it is important in establishing the 'state of the art' from which potential areas for investigation may be derived. This chapter will be arranged according to the most significant issues arising from the literature. It will attempt to establish whether specific to coalfield communities are recognised and documented and whether the public library, through its use of IT, has a role to play in the regeneration of such areas. The extent to which library's contribution in this area is considered significant will be discussed, as will the ways in which IT has been utilised by libraries (and to an extent other information providers), to address regeneration issues.

Literature dealing with information technology is, by its very nature, obsolescent and as such I found works relating specifically to this topic were of little value prior to 1995. For this reason, some key texts are cited frequently throughout this report. It was possible when considering literature dealing with other issues to use older material.

2.2 Coalfield Communities

Nottinghamshire County Council (1992), Nottinghamshire Rural Development Coalfield Partnership (1990) and The Coalfields Task Force (1998) have published material which discusses problems associated particularly with former mining areas. These include poor levels of education, inadequate infrastructure, a need for the re-skilling of the work force, limited opportunities and loss of confidence. *The Net Result* (IBM 1997) also acknowledges that communities where traditional industries have closed are at particular risk of being disenfranchised from society and argues that such social exclusion is, 'fundamentally...an economic phenomenon'. While all these publications

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advocate the development of community resource centres as one-stop-shops for information, branch libraries are not mentioned at all and their potential contribution seemingly overlooked. It seems there is also a tendency among the literature to concentrate on structural and logistical issues such as land reclamation, funding programmes and legislation, rather than on individual concerns such as loss of confidence and social exclusion

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2.3 Regeneration

It can be seen from the literature that regeneration may conform to one of two models. The 'top-down' approach was traditionally interventionist and adopted by local authorities and other organisations, with communities adopting a passive rather than pro-active role. Information was directed outwards, for example, to firms considering re-location in a regeneration area and one-off financial grants were made. Traditionally, the library service (and to a lesser extent information itself) was invisible to the administrators of 'top-down' regeneration projects (Greenhalgh and Worpole 1995) and is noticeably absent from earlier urban regeneration initiatives (for example, the Audit Commission's report, *Urban Regeneration and Economic Development: The Local Government Dimension* (Audit Commission 1989)). The literature suggests that this is still the case and it is an area for further investigation to discover the extent to which such information services are needed in this area. In recent times, the top-down model has been criticised for failing to facilitate sustainable regeneration.

Harris (in Kinnell 1992) points to the fact that information providers are arrogant in their assumption that they are aware of the needs of communities. This leads to individuals being satisfied with what they are given, rather than articulating what they actually *need*, and does not encourage community involvement in regeneration. As will become apparent, such involvement is currently regarded as the most effective means of sustaining regeneration. This arrogance is further exemplified when information technology is brought into

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the equation. *The Net Result* (IBM 1997) argues that some local authorities regard the Internet only as the latest devise for the one way transmission of information, rather than as a tool for facilitating community involvement in regeneration, and criticises the library for adopting a similar stance. However, it is not clear how widely librarians were consulted in the production of this report. Certainly none are acknowledged specifically, so while the publication does offer a contemporary, interesting and alternative perspective to the debate concerning libraries, IT and regeneration, it is by no means an infallible or unbiased text.

There seems to be a lack of consistency between local authorities as to whether the public library should aim to contribute to the regeneration process. For example, Linley and Usherwood (1998) refer to the situation in Newcastle, where it is a part of the library's remit to address this, and Somerset, where it is not. The question arises as to whether the branch library does have a role to play in this area and the nature of this role. There is a similar inconsistency of approach to IT, with levels of provision being decided locally. As a result, many writers have advocated the creation of a national body to co-ordinate library activity and policy, for example, The Library and Information Commission (1997b). It would be interesting to obtain the views of both librarians and users of libraries with regard to this issue.

The 'top-down' model seems to have been superseded by a 'bottom-up' approach to regeneration which involves providing communities with the capacity to regenerate themselves. Fordham (1995) states that aid shouldn't simply be a handout and acknowledges the transience of many such initiatives. The document recognises the need for regeneration to be sustainable. However, the library service and indeed information itself, remains absent from Fordham's recommendations. Taylor (1995) mentions information as a pre-requisite for participation in the regeneration process, but fails to discuss the form this information should take or the means by which it could best be

obtained. Line (1997) claims that it is the information itself which is important to economic prosperity, not the means by which it is disseminated. In this scenario, the branch library could be almost redundant. Indeed, Schubert (1993) acknowledges: 'Too often it [the library] gets a superficial acknowledgement or is entirely unnoticed in the plans and reports of governments and the consulting bodies they engage'.

Linley (1996) examines the role of the branch library in community development and community regeneration. Her focus is on the use of the branch library by professionals working in organisations which are actively participating in community development and regeneration programmes. Little mention is made of the use of IT in this context, although it is acknowledged that its use would perhaps add to the library's role in regeneration. A clear area for further investigation is therefore apparent. It is intended to adopt an alternative perspective in this study by researching the impact the public library's use of IT has on individual members in each community and in turn the community as a whole.

Recent literature has acknowledged the importance of IT to successful regeneration. Day and Harris (1997) state that the potential of technology to contribute to economic development is considerable and Mulquin (1998) suggests that developing IT skills within a community can generate employment. Day (1998) suggests that IT can lead to the creation of, 'a local skills-base which can be harnessed by public and private sector alike for economic development purposes'. Evidence of either a qualitative or quantitative nature is not provided, however, and as such, the actual contribution made by information technology remains largely unproved and an area in need of further research. The Library and Information Commission (1997a) has brought IT and the public library's role in redressing the inequalities of the information-rich and information-poor into the public eye. It

seems an appropriate time, therefore, to relate these exciting yet essentially theoretical ideals to real situations of need.

Grimethorpe Electronic Village Hall is cited by Day and Harris (1997) as an example of the successful use of IT in furthering a community's regeneration, but no reference to libraries is made and specific details pertaining to the form the regeneration took is not given. A large proportion of the literature documenting the role IT can play in regeneration makes reference to the library only as a means of obtaining secure funding (for example, Day and Harris (1997) and *The Net Result* (IBM 1997). Indeed, the former acknowledges very strongly the absence of libraries from community driven initiatives, suggesting implicitly that their presence would be desirable. Taylor (1997), however, states that even the library's funding role is limited in times of local government cutbacks. The question of why the library is not included in such initiatives, even at a this very limited level, therefore arises.

Literature emanating from a library perspective invariably recognises libraries' real and potential contribution more readily. Greenhalgh and Worpole (1995) and Linley and Usherwood (1998) suggest that libraries located in shopping areas *can* generate economic activity, and that the promotion of tourism through libraries can lead to similar outcomes. It is not clear whether in such circumstances the library serves simply to sustain existing levels of activity or whether they can be an effective means of promoting regeneration. The Library and Information Commission (1997a) focuses on the role the library service as a whole *can* play in providing information to businesses, but is not explicit how branch libraries may become involved, the nature of the information to be provided or the means of promoting this service. However, Kerslake (1997) identifies the primary reason for the failure of 75 per cent of small businesses as a lack of information. It seems there is scope for the public library to address this issue. The question is, whether it is willing and ultimately able to do so.

Traditionally, regeneration has been measured quantitatively, in terms of jobs created or training hours, for example. Recent literature seems to adopt a broader perspective into which more qualitative factors, such as the confidence and information capability of individuals, are incorporated (Day and Harris (1997) and *The Net Result* (IBM 1997), for example). The Library and Information Commission (1997b) states that, 'knowledge underpins all successful economic activity', and that as such, the library and information sector plays a substantial part in the UK economy. Similarly, Astbury (1994) considers development in economic terms to be fuelled by training, literacy and the free flow of information. Again these works are produced from a library perspective and no concrete evidence to support such claims is offered. Indeed, the literature makes little attempt to discuss exactly the types of information required for effective regeneration, or whether in fact libraries serve merely to complement the work of existing organisations, such as colleges, Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) and community groups. Thus, an area for further research is uncovered. Such works demonstrate the role information and communications technology (ICT) can play in contributing to individuals' self confidence and improving their employment prospects. The implication is that regeneration is contingent upon all these factors, but once again, this is not overtly stated and the library's real or potential role in this is largely ignored.

2.4 Information Technology

The Library and Information Commission (1997a) acknowledges that IT is a major force for change in many important areas which already have links with libraries, such as commerce and industry. However, there is no evidence presented in this document or any other which has been read to support the idea that such links exist. Indeed, the balance of opinion seems to be that the library service has 'missed the boat' with such IT initiatives. For example, Batt (1998) points to the fact that in response to the government's 'Information Society' initiative, only Croydon library is currently involved.

The government's response to The Library and Information Commission's report, *New Library: The People's Network* (Department for Culture Media and Sport 1998) affirms the economically vital role libraries play in the UK and suggests that increased adoption of IT can further enhance this. Other works point to the need for IT to be relevant to the needs of the communities into which it is installed. *The Net Result* (IBM 1997), for example states that, 'without a demonstrated purpose for communicating, for generating or sharing information, few people will make the effort to explore the information highway, especially if they have not made use of conventional information sources'. This supports the view that it is first necessary to assess the information needs of a particular community before IT initiatives can be successfully applied. The gap which exists between technology and people's ability to use it is also recognised in *The Net Result* (IBM 1997) and by Day (1998), but the publications seem to exclude libraries from any potential solutions.

As I have already stated, it is more recently acknowledged, that IT can promote economic development, but that most people feel by-passed by it. Thus, whether IT is a contributory factor in successful regeneration is in need of further research, as are the reasons for feelings of such exclusion from the 'information society'. Measures are urgently needed to increase awareness and provide access to IT; people on particularly low incomes or not in employment or education have been singled out as those most likely to feel excluded from society and the regeneration process (IBM 1997). However, *The Net Result* (IBM 1997) makes no mention of the part libraries, as existing and well used institutions, can play in such projects, and it is left to the literature produced by information professionals to highlight this. This point will be discussed later in this literature review. However, it seems important to note that, despite the enthusiasm inherent in the majority of the literature devoted to use of IT, some reservations are still harboured.

For example, *The Net Result* (IBM 1997) states:

> To suggest that the role and influence of technology is so dominant that it can trump the multiple factors which contribute to exclusion - poverty, unemployment and poor housing, for example - seems naive.

While this is not directly related to the issue of regeneration, it is an important consideration to make when assessing the value of IT in a community context. In addition, the installation of networked IT resources is a recent development and as such, effects on regeneration have yet to be considered in full. The library's role in this area is also yet to be clarified. It seems appropriate at this stage in IT development to assess the *actual* contribution made by libraries to regeneration through the use of information technology.

2.5 Community Resource Centres

There is now a large body of predominantly electronic literature documenting the success of Community Resource Centres (CRCs) in aiding community regeneration in its broadest sense. Such centres are diverse in their exact aims, provision and sources of funding, but generally seek to address community information needs and training issues through the use of IT, particularly networks (Day and Harris 1997). For this reason, they are a useful benchmark against which IT provision in public libraries can be measured. *The Net Result* (IBM 1997) is explicit in its reluctance to involve the library in such IT initiatives: 'We would certainly not recommend under their present culture that public libraries take responsibility for Community Resource Centres'. Library culture is perceived, outside the library sector, as a barrier to involvement in community based initiatives. Indeed, even in the Coalfields Task Force report (1998) commissioned by central government, the need for such resource centres is acknowledged, but branch libraries are notably absent from the document.

2.6 Open For Learning

It is interesting to note that there is no mention of Open For Learning material in the literature pertaining to CRCs. The converse is also true. Open For Learning packages are primarily focused on employment and training related topics and targeted at those disadvantaged in the labour market (Department for Education and Employment 1996). The Coalfields Task Force (1998) acknowledges the need in coalfield areas to breakdown educational barriers by regarding education in its broader, community context. The benefits of such schemes are well documented in library based literature (for example, Allred 1994) but lacking from that concerned with networked resources or regeneration initiatives. For example, *The Net Result* (IBM 1997) regards the institutional nature of public libraries to be prohibitive, and ineffective as a base for community-led initiatives. Thus, there is a significant difference of opinion within the body of literature which will be investigated throughout this dissertation.

2.7 Partnerships

There is a general consensus among the literature that partnerships between organisations involved in regeneration initiatives are valuable. Taylor (1995) states that, 'partnership is the keystone of urban regeneration in the 1990s', and the Library and Information Commission (1997b) suggests that, 'a holistic rather than sectoral approach is necessary in order to realise fully the potential value of library and information services in society'. Comedia (1993) asserts that forming links between information providers themselves and with other organisations is an effective way of reducing risk and sharing skills, and Batt (1998) points to the fact that partnerships, and particularly ICT networks can help reduce duplication of services and promote economies of scale. The literature indicates that while the library and information sector acknowledges the potential benefits brought about through partnerships (The Library and Information Commission (1997a), for example), the public library service is not always engaged in such schemes. IBM (1997) assert that there is a lack of understanding and experience of working in partnerships in the library sector. Similarly, Ormes (1998) identifies several barriers to library co-operation,

namely a tendency for libraries to be competitive rather than co-operative and the reluctance of politicians to believe in the economic benefits of co-operation. The latter re-iterates the point that partnerships are a significant factor in the regeneration process and that more conclusive evidence is needed to support such a claim.

2.8 Training

On the whole, the literature demonstrates an overall lack of training in IT on the part of library staff. In addition, Ormes (1998) asserts that 'librarians must be willing to take on many new roles, for example, WWW manager'. Whether staff are willing and able to respond positively to this demand is an area for further investigation. The Library and Information Commission (1997a) stresses the potential of librarians in training the work force in ICT skills, which seems to be particularly relevant to areas where traditional industries have closed and the work force is in need of new skills. However, there is an issue here about whether the library is an appropriate place for such initiatives to take place, and the possibility of the convergence of organisations into a 'one-stop-shop' for both information and training. Clearly, further research is required.

2.9 Barriers and Opportunities

Possible barriers to the library's use of IT and its take up by users are documented predominantly in non-library literature, and include the library's 'image problem' and strong association with middle-class leisure interests (IBM 1997). The latter, however, is contradicted by the findings of research conducted into library closures, which suggests that it is poorer, less educated communities where the library is more noticeably missed (Proctor et. al. 1996). Harris (in Kinnell 1992) asserts that, 'libraries as institutions...tend to erect barriers to protect their own interests and to represent stability at the expense of accessibility and flexibility and responsiveness'. This confirms the feelings expressed in more recent reports that the purpose of libraries is to act as a

secure source of funding rather than as a catalyst for change. The potential of IT to exacerbate existing barriers is expressed in earlier library-based works, but counteracted by more recent reports which acknowledge the potential of IT to break down such barriers (Library and Information Commission (1997a), for example).

Writers within the library field acknowledge the potential of the library as a 'resource used by a wider cross-section of the local population than any other public, commercial or retail institution' (Comedia 1993). Greenhalgh and Worpole (1995) state that failure to acknowledge the potential of the library, 'represents a major missed opportunity for urban regeneration and for the library world'.

This lack of consensus between the two fields of literature leaves the door open for further research and suggests that libraries and IT providers are possibly engaging in a self-justification exercise rather than a genuine regeneration debate.

2.91 Conclusion

It can be seen from the literature that the documented relationship between public libraries and regeneration is at best tenuous. What literature there is regarding the impact of the public library on economic development generally makes little attempt to collate the findings of different studies and makes little comparative analysis. Information technology brings focus to the discussion and makes more concrete the potential value the public library has in this area. However, it also highlights the need for a review of the role of public libraries in terms of IT provision and training as a means of promoting regeneration. It is clear that while librarians may be aware of their contribution, real or potential, to regeneration, opinion-formers and policy makers are not (Worpole 1992). This issue is beginning to receive attention with the publication of The Library and Information Commission's report, *New Library: The People's*

Network (1997) and the subsequent commitment from central government to the future of the public library service. However, a gulf still exists between the fields of information and regeneration which obviously needs to be addressed.

Much of the recent literature focuses on the potential of the library to equip individuals and communities with the IT skills and confidence necessary to have full participation in the 'information society'. However, the exact means by which this potential may be realised is unclear and its subsequent effect on regeneration inconclusive. Indeed, whether this potential will be accepted by librarians and library users requires detailed investigation. There is no national statement which makes clear the overall aims of the public library service and for this reason, involvement in regeneration seems to be determined at local level. By bringing together the currently distant areas of regeneration, libraries and information technology, a more effective regeneration strategy may be created.

3. COMMUNITY PROFILES

3.1 Introduction

In keeping with the aims and objectives of the study, it was decided to base the research at three libraries in coalfield communities in Nottinghamshire, each with various levels of IT. These were:

- Bilsthorpe

- Blidworth

- Calverton

These communities were selected because they are part of the same local authority (Nottinghamshire County Council) and as such are subject to identical policy decisions, methods of funding and issues regarding resource provision. This limits the number of variables present in the study and offers a degree of uniformity. Nottinghamshire incorporates many coalfield communities and therefore is an appropriate authority in which to base the research. Bilsthorpe library has IT facilities perhaps disproportionate to the size of the library and the catchment population. Blidworth library has recently installed a job and careers database, and although Calverton library contains OPACs and CD-ROM facilities for use by children, it has no IT concerned with learning opportunities or for use specifically by adults. Therefore, it is likely to have little bearing on regeneration issues and is not evaluated in this study. By comparing the impact of each differently equipped library on community regeneration, it is possible to examine the extent to which IT influences the library's contribution in this area.

3.2 Bilsthorpe

Bilsthorpe is a relatively isolated, rural village with a population of only 3 087 (1991 Census). It is divided into two quite distinct areas, one of older properties and one of relatively new, council owned accommodation. Few people move into the village and people tend to have to travel for work and further education. Access to nearby towns is limited and the facilities within

Bilsthorpe itself, including shops, leisure resources and public transport are minimal. The library is the only local authority presence in the village. In addition, there is a post office, a miners' welfare, a small number of shops as well as a community resource centre called CHUB (Centre to Help the Unemployed in Bilsthorpe), which was set up with a view to addressing the increasing unemployment problems of the village. 99.2% of the population is white, a characteristic of many Nottinghamshire coalfield areas, and 50% of the population is female (1991 Census). According to the 1991 Census, which pre-dates the pit closure, unemployment in the village is 5.2%.

The colliery in Bilsthorpe closed in 1997 after 72 years in operation. Approximately 70 people living in Bilsthorpe lost their jobs as a result of the final closure, although the impact has been much more wide reaching as the capacity of the pit had been reduced considerably for a number of years previously.

Bilsthorpe library lies at the edge of the village but in close proximity to the shops, miners' welfare and CHUB. There seem to be strong links between the library and CHUB and the library is highly valued by the community, as illustrated throughout this report. It was recently refurbished with a grant from the European Union and is spacious when compared with other libraries serving similar sized communities. It is open sixteen and a half hours per week. There is no computerised issue system but there is an on-line enquiry terminal. The library houses an Open For Learning facility and a PC for word processing. Open For Learning in Bilsthorpe is supported by North Nottinghamshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and West Nottinghamshire College. Packages include 'Computers for the Terrified', 'How to Master Bookkeeping' and 'All About the Internet'. The facilities are situated within sight and sound of the issue desk which enables the library staff to offer easily help and encouragement. Of the three libraries in the study, it is the most well equipped

in terms of IT, but in terms of issues is the least busy, in 1997 issuing a total of 31 055 items.

3.3 Blidworth

Blidworth could be described as an archetypal coalfields village. There is a below average level of education and employment in the community and the infrastructure is in need of repair. One library user commented that there are *'a lot of demoralised young people in Blidworth'* and, in contrast with Bilsthorpe, lots of *'transient families'* who are also on low incomes. The population of Blidworth is 4 206 (1991 Census) and, although expensive and infrequent, there are public transport links with Nottingham and Mansfield. There is a greater number of shops than in Bilsthorpe and a small industrial estate established with European funding to try to combat the effects of the pit closure in 1989. There is also a community based 'job club' in Blidworth called BLUES (Blidworth Local Unemployed Schemes), which is of a similar nature to the resource centre in Bilsthorpe but with less of an IT focus. However, the links between the library and BLUES are not particularly formal or strong.

The library in Blidworth is set back from the main road, of a reasonable size and open twenty two hours per week. 38 414 items were issued in 1997 via a manual system, although there is a computerised enquiry terminal. In addition, the library contains the Opportunities Database, a computerised facility giving details of job vacancies in the region, careers advice and ideas about which career to choose. This was installed in 1996 with the support of Greater Nottinghamshire TEC and is clearly targeted at those in Blidworth seeking employment. It is situated in the reference section of the library out of hearing distance of the issue desk. According to the library staff, it is not yet well used. The Citizens' Advice Bureau hold a surgery in the library one afternoon per week.

In describing the user population in Blidworth, the librarian states:

> *In Blidworth you tend to get the elderly using it [the library]*
> *and children. It tends to be mainly leisure reading, mainly*
> *fiction.* [Member of library staff]

This comment is substantiated by the issue statistics which show that 79% of issues are fiction. The library is highly valued by its users, and, according to a survey by the Parish Council, 51% of the population use the library (Blidworth Parish Council 1993).

3.4 Calverton

Calverton is the largest village studied, with a population of 6 686 (1991 Census). It is situated within travelling distance of Nottingham and the public transport, although expensive, is better than in either of the other two villages. Calverton Parish Council (1995, p.3) states, 'mining areas tend to consist of small communities which are isolated from the wider economy by inadequate roads. Calverton is well served by roads and public transport. Also, some 75% of households within the parish have access to a car or van'.

There are a number of shops in Calverton, but as a member of library staff commented, *'people work in Nottingham, they do their shopping there. We haven't got a big supermarket here, we haven't got banks, so unfortunately they do tend to go out of the village to do those sort of things'*. There is also a Community Resource Centre in Calverton called CORE (Calverton Oasis Resource and Education) which provides support and advice for those looking for work. As in Blidworth, the relationship between the library and resource centre is amicable but not particularly strong or formalised.

The library in Calverton is situated in the shopping area and is well used. In 1997, 71 914 items were issued. 75% of these were fiction. It is open twenty six hours per week. A member of library staff compared Calverton's users with those at Blidworth:

> *Calverton has a much more diverse clientele coming in to use us...It is mainly fiction that is used, but there are more people coming in who are pursuing further education, higher educational courses.* [Member of library staff]

In terms of IT, the library has a computerised issue system and two OPACs as well as a CD-ROM facility for children. However, because it was thought that these would have little bearing on the regeneration of Calverton as a coalfield village, they were not included as part of this study.

3.5 Sources of Data

Preliminary Visits

Informal meetings were arranged with the Area Co-ordinators of each library. General information pertaining to the village itself, background to the IT in each library and its potential contribution to regeneration was gathered. In addition, an overview of the issue was gained and potential areas for investigation established. The meetings were also an opportunity to explain the nature of the study and, through face-to-face contact, develop good relationships.

Library Users

Because the aim of the study is to assess the contribution each library can make to community regeneration at an individual rather than organisational level, it was appropriate to speak directly with users of each library and the resource centre in Bilsthorpe to gain first hand evidence and experiences. This would yield a large quantity of both factual and anecdotal evidence. In turn, an overview of attitudes and perceptions in each community could be established from which the most significant issues could be assumed. Because of limitations of time and the particularly strong relationship between CHUB and the library in Bilsthorpe, it was only possible to speak to non-users in this one location. However, it was possible to derive from library users in the other two

communities their involvement with other community organisations and make some assumptions about possible relationships between them and the library.

By speaking with users of CHUB in Bilsthorpe, it was possible to test some of the opinions and assumptions outlined in the literature as to the level of co-operation between the library service and other community organisations and the extent to which this may affect the library's contribution to regeneration. To add a further dimension to the study, it was decided that, as the IT in Blidworth library had been targeted particularly at the small businesses in the village, a sample of opinion from these companies be collected. Blidworth is the only community in the study which has such an industrial estate and it seemed appropriate to assess the extent to which the library could be contributing to regeneration by addressing the information needs of small businesses through IT.

Senior Library Assistants and Area Co-ordinators

It was decided to interview the Senior Library Assistant (SLA) in each library, as they are responsible for the day-to-day running of each branch. This allowed a more detailed and coherent picture to be constructed as the SLA has both frequent and personal interaction with users in addition to some knowledge of the aims, structure and processes of the library. The interviewees were:

- Sue Truman: Bilsthorpe Library

- Lynda Baker: Blidworth Library

- Lesley Sneen: Calverton Library

Area Co-ordinators (librarians, each with management responsibility for a group of branch libraries in Nottinghamshire) proved to be the most information-rich interviewees as they had a detailed knowledge of the day-to-day running of each branch as well a thorough insight into planning and development issues.

The Interviewees were:

- Carol Campbell-Hayes: Bilsthorpe Library

- Sheena MacCulloch: Blidworth and Calverton Libraries

Assistant Director

In order to gain an additional strategic perspective and an awareness of the vision of the county library service, it was necessary to interview the Assistant Director of Nottinghamshire County Council Libraries, Archives and Information Service, David Lathrope. Together, these sources provided the most holistic perspective possible into the contribution each branch library could make to community regeneration through the use of information technology.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 A Qualitative Approach

It is evident from the literature concerned with regeneration that over the last decade, a shift in emphasis has occurred. While previously the success of regeneration strategies was assessed quantitatively, according to the number of jobs created, for example, it has now been acknowledged that this in itself is an unsatisfactory measure. A more qualitative dimension is deemed necessary in order to evaluate regeneration initiatives at an individual level, suggest Fordham (1995) and Taylor (1995). Regeneration issues are complex and cannot, as a result, be reduced to a collection of statistics. Mellon (1990 p.20) states that a qualitative approach facilitates the 'exploration of human situations, settings, attitudes and emotions that are impossible to study using rigidly defined statistical methods'.

It is the nature of branch libraries to operate on a very personal level, with staff very often knowing users individually. To conduct a quantitative study would therefore deny the essence of their existence and produce misleading results. In addition, qualitative research is a long established tradition within the social sciences and is appropriate as a means of assessing the potentially 'softer' contribution branch libraries can make to regeneration through information technology.

4.2 Collection of Data

It is the nature of this research to be exploratory, to investigate issues as they arise and for the most significant areas to evolve throughout the process of data collection. As such it is an example of a Grounded Theory approach. Bailey (1994, p.55) explains:

> Grounded Theory begins at the empirical level and ends at the
> conceptual level, because the only concepts used are those that
> are generated throughout the analysis of empirical data.

Bailey (1994, p.58) goes on to state that such an approach 'may make the findings difficult to generalise to another time or place'. Therefore, the Grounded Theory approach is compatible with the aims of this research, which are to investigate the contribution to regeneration made by three specific branch libraries through the use of IT, rather than to produce generalisations or a model of best practice.

4.3 Research Methods

It was decided that a number of methods were necessary to collect data, as each source would be providing information of different types and degrees of detail. As Stone and Harris (1984 *CRUS Guide 2*, p.20) explain, 'often the best approach to understanding a problem is to use more than one method'.

The Sample

It was decided that because of limitations of time, the relatively small number of users who visited the library each day and because it was not an aim of the research to produce a theory which could be applied in different situations, a purposive sample should be selected. Stone and Harris (1984 *CRUS Guide 1*, p.15) state that:

> [Statistical] sampling is not always possible, or indeed appropriate. It may be that a study is not intended to paint a representative picture, but to illustrate something more specific....then sampling would be a matter of selecting cases purposefully to suit the needs of the study.

Indeed, after interviewing several elderly library respondents, it was decided that although they represented a large proportion of users at each location, the information they could provide about their experiences with IT were, on the whole, limited. It was also likely that because they were retired and outside the labour market, their contribution to regeneration would be less significant than that of other adults. Thus, the purposive model outlined by Bailey (1994, p.96)

was adopted, where 'the researcher uses his or her judgement about which respondents to choose and picks only those who best meet the purposes of the study'.

Structured Interviews

Structured interviews were used to collect data from users of each library and CHUB. Questions were based on issues arising from the literature and from the preliminary interviews with Area Co-ordinators. The aim was to collect a range of opinions from users of different ages, professions and genders in order to gain a broad overview of IT and regeneration issues in each community. At the end of each interview was the opportunity for interviewees to give their name and telephone number in order that more detail could be derived at a later date through follow-up telephone interviews. However, because of the volume of valuable evidence extracted from the initial interviews and limitations time, it was decided not to contact respondents again.

The structured interviews contained both open and closed questions in order to obtain factual answers which could be compared between libraries and more qualitative expressions of opinion to gain a more detailed insight into the issues.

Interviews took place on one Saturday morning and one whole weekday in each library branch to facilitate contact with as wide a range of users as possible. CHUB was visited for one and a half weekdays as it is open for much shorter periods than the library. Although this approach was time consuming, it was felt that by conducting face-to-face interviews the response rate would be optimal. Nicholas (1996) states that interviews are a more effective way of establishing information needs rather than demands, and it was thought that anecdotal evidence would be more forthcoming if interviewees could build up some relationship with the researcher and did not have to write down their opinions. As Mellon (1990, p.18) states, to be effective, the researcher must

'be able to gain the confidence of individuals from all walks of life'. Similarly, Heather and Stone (1984 *CRUS Guide 5*, p.5) suggest that:

> A structured interview may be more appropriate than a questionnaire in situations where the respondent may have difficulties in reading through illiteracy, language problems, physical handicaps and so on; where the schedule is long and involved or where it may be necessary to clarify both questions and responses. In addition, an interview study usually increases the likelihood of a good response rate.

As each interview was quite lengthy to gain the broadest perspective possible, and because it had been suggested by members of staff that the educational background of each community was often low, this seemed to be the most appropriate means of data collection. The schedule was piloted among colleagues of a library and non-library background in order to assess its effectiveness and the time it would take to conduct each interview. Although the schedule included open questions it was decided that to tape record responses may intimidate respondents rather than improve recording accuracy. A total of 67 interviews were performed.

It was necessary to produce a slightly different schedule for each library and the resource centre as circumstances and levels of IT provision varied. This was time consuming but allowed the collection of more relevant data. It was possible to conduct 15 interviews with respondents from CHUB, 16 from Bilsthorpe library, 17 from Blidworth library and 19 from the library in Calverton. These figures reflect the number of users entering each location during the allocated time periods.

Semi-Structured Interviews

It was decided to use semi-structured interviews using the interview guide approach to gather data from Senior Library Assistants, Area Co-ordinators and the Assistant Director of the Library, Archives and Information Division of Nottinghamshire County Council. Mellon (1990, p.47) explains that an 'in depth interview provides rich, relevant data to supplement or expand the researcher's understanding of the research situation'. This approach also allows the researcher to cover topics of interest, for the respondent to reply in their natural language and for the interviewer to 'form questions on topics and ask them in an order which seems to arise naturally from the context' (Stone and Harris *CRUS Guide 2*, 1984 p.9). As the research topic is broad and complex it was felt that too structured an approach would fail to uncover areas previously unthought of or not covered in the literature. Similarly, as the research is focused on individuals rather than organisations, it was felt that anecdotal evidence would be more easily gathered using a less rigid framework. Questions could be added where necessary and more detail obtained. However, the interview guide meant that all the central issues were covered in each interview to facilitate some degree of comparison between each communities. Tape recording the interviews allowed the information to be gathered thoroughly and without the respondent being distracted by the researcher's note taking.

As research experience and confidence were gained throughout the interviewing period, it was possible to probe for more meaningful information on topics unanticipated in earlier interviews. The interviews were transcribed soon after they were conducted in order to retain clarity.

Postal Questionnaires

It was decided that small businesses in Blidworth would be surveyed as they were targeted for publicity by the library when the Opportunities Database was launched and may offer an alternative perspective on regeneration issues. As the type of information required was predominantly factual and the amount

relatively small, it was decided that a postal questionnaire would be the most appropriate means of data collection. This also accounted for the fact that small businesses are very often limited to the time they can give to such research, particularly when it has no obvious benefit to them. As Bailey (1994, p.148) states, one advantage of mailed questionnaires is that 'the respondent is free to answer a question or two whenever he or she has a spare moment. The respondent is also able to answer the easy questions first and take time to think about the answers to the more difficult ones'.

Anonymity was assured and a covering letter explained the nature of the research. The response rate was fair, with 7 out of 12 being returned. Two of these said they would be willing to offer further information in a telephone interview should it be required. However, as the research began to focus increasingly on benefits to individual members of each community and because of time limitations, this was not followed up.

Printed Information

In addition to obtaining data from the library users and staff, it was necessary to use supplementary evidence from relevant documents such as the census, coalfield strategies from the Nottinghamshire Rural Coalfield Partnership and Nottinghamshire County Council, and issue statistics from each branch. This provided a concrete framework around which the main body of the research could be conducted.

4.4 Data Analysis

The collection, analysis and writing up of data occurred almost simultaneously throughout the study, an approach suggested by Mellon, (1990, p.89). Quantitative data from structured interviews with users and non-users and postal questionnaires was collated using tally charts and recorded manually. Qualitative data from these interviews and those conducted with members of

library staff was transcribed onto index cards which were then coded thematically. This facilitated the comprehensive inclusion of data and a more coherent analysis of the findings.

4.5 Limitations

Time restrictions limited the research in a number of ways. Firstly, it would have been desirable to interview a greater number of library users as well as non-users of the library service in each community. In addition, with the recent threat of library closures in Nottinghamshire, users may have felt that to express a less than favourable opinion would jeopardise the future of their library. Similarly, users of CHUB, because of its charitable status and unstable sources of funding, may have felt obliged to offer exaggerated praise of the centre.

Secondly, to gain a more detailed impression of the situation in Nottinghamshire, further libraries in coalfield areas could have been used as case studies if time had been available.

Thirdly, it would have been beneficial to expand the study to cover a greater number of local authorities in order to evaluate the extent to which the local authority structure, policy and vision affect the contribution libraries could make to regeneration through IT.

It was only possible to interview library staff during working hours and as such, there were instances of interruptions and noise which may have affected the coherence and quality of the interviews. However, staff and users gave freely and generously of their time and for that, gratitude must be extended.

The value of supplementary evidence was also limited. The census is now seven years out of date and was produced prior to the closure of the collieries in Bilsthorpe and Calverton.

5. THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

5.1 Aims

The extent to which the branch library is able to contribute to regeneration seems dependent upon whether it is the *aim* of each branch to contribute in this area. While the Libraries, Archives and Information Division in Nottinghamshire considers regeneration to be one of its core purposes, it is an area for further investigation to assess the extent to which the overall commitment of the local authority affects the branch library's contribution. This would involve a comparative study of local authorities. When asked whether regeneration was an aim of the library service in Nottinghamshire, one respondent explained:

> *I think it's the aim of the service to contribute to a strategy which deals with regeneration generally, and that's part of the County Council's strategic plan...There are a number of other key components in that strategy-helping to improve the quality of life, improving social cohesion in communities, encouraging sustainable development, developing a learning community. Regeneration is clearly stated as a programme area and as such I think it is relevant to the library service.*
> [Assistant Director]

However, it seems there is a disparity between branches and individual members of staff within the library service as to how this commitment is interpreted. In Blidworth and Calverton, priorities seem to lie in educational areas, while in Bilsthorpe, one member of staff commented:

> *Yes, I think is has to be the aim of any library where you're in a community where regeneration is an issue. If it's not [an aim], you're not actually answering the needs of the community...That's what they need here more than anything else, for people to believe they're a viable community again.*
> [Member of library staff]

Thus, an issue arises regarding the effectiveness of local authority structure in ensuring that a commitment clearly prioritised at the highest level is effectively filtered down to other levels of the service. Similarly, the structure of the local authority may affect the extent to which branch libraries can contribute to regeneration through working effectively with other departments and agencies.

As the literature states:

> Urban regeneration policy...is as much about organisational structures as it is about programmes of action themselves. Re-arranging the institutional landscape becomes a sign of action at least as important as changes in the level of funding. (Skelcher et al. 1996, p.1)

5.2 Individual Library Staff

The literature acknowledges the significance of individuals in regeneration networks, for example, Skelcher et al. (1996, p.17) state, 'the qualities of the individual seem to be divorced from the attributes of a particular agency' and 'individuals' values are central to the success and failure of networks'. It seems that the activities of staff in the different locations in this study affect the contribution the branch library is able to make to community regeneration.

Blidworth

The contribution to regeneration in Blidworth is, according to one member of library staff, *'more passive than active, really. It's not an active strategy that I'm aware is being developed'*. The presence of the Opportunities Database, (despite the staffs' acknowledgement that one of the reasons for its installation was to address problems of unemployment), is not ostensibly recognised as a factor which may affect the library's contribution to community regeneration. It seems that the commitment to regeneration which exists at a central level has not been successfully disseminated throughout the library service, and that the

priority given to involvement in regeneration initiatives rests with individual branch library staff.

In Blidworth, it appears that priority lies with the provision of services to children and the educational and social roles of the library. The latter may have some bearing on regeneration as explained in Chapter 6, where the library may act as a kind of 'informal intermediary' between library users and sources of information. The data also suggests that the strong social role of the library makes users feel more at ease than perhaps they would in more 'closed' organisations such as resource centres for the unemployed.

Calverton

The contribution made to regeneration in Calverton is similarly incidental. One member of staff stated:

> *I think it's the force of the philosophy behind us and our reason for being, but not something that has been properly formalised yet, I don't think.* [Member of library staff]

The role of the library in Calverton as perceived by library staff is also primarily educational. There are strong links in Calverton between the library and schools, and the contribution the library can make in terms of literacy are considered by staff to be unique. When asked which information needs were the most significant in Calverton, one member of staff replied:

> *Educational needs, I would say. I think the children, I'm not biased towards the children, but I think the children are missing out if we haven't got the right books for them.* [Member of library staff]

These priorities and perceptions may affect the way in which the library is seen by users, non-users and other community organisations. If regeneration is regarded by the County Council and library staff as a priority, the branch library is perhaps more likely to be seen as an agency suitably equipped to contribute

to an overall regeneration strategy. If it is not, the contribution in this area seems to be less significant. However, this remains an area for further research, as the scope of this study does not take into account perceptions made of the library by other community based organisations involved in regeneration projects.

There is a suggestion that the presence of the CORE centre in Calverton may reduce the need felt by library staff to make a direct and intentional contribution to the regeneration process:

> *Somehow or other they will have found alternative work by now. It wasn't something that we were aware of, they weren't all knocking on the library's door to tell us about it. That was one of the reasons CORE was set up by those other agencies, to help people find jobs or get back into training to develop new skills.*   [Member of library staff]

However, this suggestion is also made tentatively and requires further investigation.

Bilsthorpe

Respondents in Bilsthorpe identify that individual staff members can affect the library's contribution to community regeneration:

> *It can be different members of staff. It can be their characters, can't it, individual characters. But we are well trained now to...know that this [contributing to regeneration] is part of our service. We're not to just stand behind the counter and stamp books, and my personal ideas is that in a community library like this you're a friend, so if somebody comes in and they've got potential to take a course, or to encourage them to take a course, then you will do it, won't you.* [Member of library staff]
>
> *I could give you a very glossy answer about the core skills we require of librarians working in communities, but at the end of the*

> *day the pragmatist in me would say that they're all different people and some, for whatever reason, are more tuned in to the community agenda than others.* [Assistant Director]

Regeneration is clearly an issue on the agenda of staff at all levels in Bilsthorpe library, and it is in this location that the library's contribution to regeneration through IT is perhaps most evident. It seems that whether it is regarded as an aim of the library to contribute to regeneration initiatives can affect the level of this contribution.

Being known at an individual level within the community also seems to be a factor affecting regeneration issues. In Bilsthorpe, members of staff at different levels have been members of regeneration forums and CHUB, in both a professional and personal capacity. This has served to familiarise other individuals and groups with the remit and resources of the library and the core skills of the staff. One staff member stated:

> *Most of the agencies wouldn't just ask you because you're the librarian. It's based on what skills base you can offer them according to who's in post at the time, so it's not just linked with the post, it comes down to people as well.* [Member of library staff]

Tuning staff into this 'community agenda' is seen clearly as a policy issues:

> *I think that's got to be done through policy and management processes. The building blocks are there to be used and it's down to the key managers in the service to work with staff and change their view of what the function and purpose of what the library service is.* [Assistant Director]

In times of limited resources, therefore, it seems that individual staff in different locations are forced to make difficult choices. While one librarian may perceive that the best use of these resources could be made by consciously contributing to community regeneration, another may feel that other organisations are better placed to offer support in this area and that resources should be concentrated

elsewhere. An issue regarding the effect of organisational structure on the priorities of individual library staff arises; what may be high on the agenda at a policy level may not, without the development of suitable channels, be disseminated effectively throughout the County Council.

5.3 County Council Structure

Within the last year, the library service in Nottinghamshire has ceased to be part of Leisure Services and become a division of the Community Services Department. Without comparing Nottinghamshire County Council with other authorities or assessing its effectiveness in terms of regeneration before and after re-organisation, it is impossible to assess the impact of this change. However, there has been some evidence generated within this research to suggest that the effects may have been positive.

Apart from potentially altering perceptions of the library service's role in the eyes of other County Council departments, elected members, community agencies and possibly even users and non-users, this change in emphasis may have other benefits in terms of regeneration:

> *Previously there were things happening with P and ED [Planning and Economic Development Department] initiatives that I only read about in their report...We got better at it in the nineties, but I think the formal structural change has made it much easier and I think because of that...we've got a much stronger focus and are able to build on linkages. I can say to the Fast Forward Programme, have you thought about using the resources in X, Y and Z libraries instead of struggling to find other community organisations to run them.*   [Assistant Director]

Prior to this re-organisation, there is an admission that the potential of the library to contribute to regeneration was affected by poor communication between and within departments:

I have to say that sometimes teams have been left a little adrift because we weren't put in the picture by other departments of the County Council about specific activities they were pursuing in communities. [Assistant Director]

Thus, by forming stronger structural links with other departments involved in the regeneration process, the library is more able to get involved in regeneration projects. This seems to be at the level of improving awareness of the resources the library service is able to offer at a local level. In addition, by briefing branch library staff about the activities of other departments concerned with regeneration in their communities, a more holistic approach to community based regeneration may be achieved.

A further consequence of re-structuring the County Council has been the formation of Local Area Forums. One member of staff explained:

We've got things now that the County Council has set up called Local Area Forums and part of their remit is to bring all the departments together along with people from the community and from district and parish councils that link in and actually find out what the community needs of all these agencies and departments and work together in finding out what the vision for that community is and how we can all move forward together towards it. [Member of library staff]

It seems that the formation of these forums potentially allows branch libraries to be more responsive to regeneration initiatives which arise:

They've re-organised, re-structured the library service so that we can respond to local area forums as and when they occur. [Member of library staff]

As Local Area Forums are a recent development, it is not possible to assess their overall impact on the extent to which branch libraries are able to contribute to community regeneration. However, they do seem to be one way of formalising the networks proposed in the literature as offering, 'possibilities of greater information exchange and the development of a shared perspective among diverse groups' (Skelcher et al. 1996, p.12).

There is evidence to suggest that the branch library is viewed by other agencies involved in regeneration as a department of the local authority concerned primarily with leisure activities (IBM 1997). If this were the case, the contribution the library could make to the regeneration process would be limited as there would be an inadequate grasp of the part it could play. In Bilsthorpe at least, the staff are aware of this potential problem and are actively seeking to amend perceptions of the library in the eyes of other community organisations to some degree of success, thus increasing the contribution they can make to the regeneration process. This issue will be addressed in more detail in Chapter 10.

It is clear, that the library's involvement in regeneration initiatives must comply with the overall policy objectives of the County Council:

> *There is no doubting that it [regeneration] is a priority. It's just a case of where it fits in with what's actually happening with the group, whether it's particularly relevant to the library service at that particular stage.* [Member of library staff]
>
> *I can't see any point in getting involved in a regeneration initiative which is infrastructure-a big reclamation of an old colliery site or new roads. But if there's a relevance to our core programmes and our core purposes I would expect us..at the very least to put a marker down in the community initiative that we're here, this is what we can do and we're always happy to talk to you about what else we might be able to do which we're not doing at present.* [Assistant Director]

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Therefore, it seems that the stance of the local authority and specifically the Library, Archives and Information Division will influence the extent to which the branch library is able to contribute to regeneration.

5.4 Views of the Local Authority by Individuals

There is evidence to suggest that among the library users surveyed, and in line with the opinions expressed in the literature, (for example, IBM 1997), a degree of cynicism exists regarding the will and ability of the local authority to promote regeneration. One respondent in Bilsthorpe suggested that the local council's reluctance to cut the grass or paint the fences in the village *'breeds contempt among the community'*. Similarly, a staff member at Blidworth library related comments from users: *'Their comments would be, well , instead of cutting your opening hours they should cut some of them up at the top who don't do any hard work'*. The library is therefore considered to be part of the community and somewhat removed from the auspices of the local authority.

In an informal conversation, one librarian noted that in the minds of many users, the library is considered to be a part of the Parish rather than County Council and most strongly associated with the community in which it exists. In light of the recognition within the literature that community based regeneration initiatives are more likely to succeed than 'top-down' initiatives, it seems that as a focal point in each community, branch libraries are ideally placed to make a sustainable contribution to the regeneration process.

5.5 Library Use

However, the literature states that because of negative views of the local authority and the library's association with it as a local government institution, branch libraries are not best qualified to contribute to the regeneration process, (for example, IBM 1997). This dissertation, however, indicates that there is no

widespread negative feeling expressed against the library in any of the communities studied. Indeed, the contrary seems to be the case. Public support for the library service when closures were threatened is evidence to suggest that the local library is a much valued resource. A member of staff in Calverton related that at the threat of closures, even non-users of the library asked to sign a petition as they simply valued the fact that the library was there.

The data suggests that branch libraries are well used and highly valued community assets:

> *Our own analysis has shown that there is a strong use made by ordinary working people and in some communities you can't find anything other than ordinary working people and they still use the library.* [Assistant Director]
>
> *Our users, they rate the service very highly....they mark us highly-helpful, friendly staff, their knowledge and expertise. We're doing the right things.* [Member of library staff]

The body of evidence from library users questioned also supports these views. Of course, this dissertation has not been able to include opinions from non-users who may offer alternative and potentially negative opinions about the branch library. However, in Blidworth, for example, (Blidworth Parish Council 1993, p.48), 51% of the community use the library. The Assistant Director of Nottinghamshire Libraries, Archives and Information Division views this as a position of strength:

> *You show me any other community organisation in Blidworth that's got that level of involvement. There isn't one. So I think relatively speaking, it's a position of strength, not weakness.* [Assistant Director]

On the basis of this evidence, it seems realistic to suggest that the branch library's association with the local authority is not significantly detracting from its potential to contribute to community regeneration. Indeed, it seems that the

converse is true and because of the value ascribed to the library in all the villages studied, it is having a positive impact on the regeneration process.

5.6 Chapter Summary and Conclusions

- The structure of the local authority may affect the extent to which the branch library is able to contribute to community regeneration by:

  Facilitating effective links with other departments and agencies involved in the regeneration process

  Filtering central aims and objectives concerning regeneration to staff at all levels.

- The priorities afforded by individual members of staff may have a bearing on each branch library's contribution; where individual staff appear most committed to regeneration, the contribution in this area seems most evident.

- While views of the local authority among individuals in each village are not necessarily favourable, the libraries are valued community assets. As such, they may be ideally placed to contribute to community based regeneration initiatives.

- There is some evidence to suggest that by raising awareness among other community organisations, the actual contribution the branch library could make to regeneration may be increased.

6. INFORMATION NEEDS

6.1 The Importance of Information

As the literature forcefully illustrates, we are now very much part of the 'Information Society'. Particularly with the growth of IT in recent years, information has become regarded as a commodity pivotal to the lives of all citizens. Without access to information, claim IBM (1997), there is a danger that individuals will experience 'social exclusion' and the gap between the 'information-rich' and 'information poor' will inevitably grow wider. In coalfield areas, where the risk of social exclusion is greater still, (The Coalfields Task Force (1998) and Nottinghamshire County Council (1992)), the importance of providing information to individual members of communities becomes a more acute priority and perhaps a significant aspect of the regeneration process.

6.2 Assessing Information Needs

Harris (in Kinnell 1992) points to the fact that information providers are arrogant in assuming they are aware of the needs of communities. This leads to individuals being satisfied with what they are given, rather than articulating what they actually *need*, and does not encourage community involvement in regeneration. Such involvement is currently regarded as the most effective means of sustaining regeneration. Whenever an attempt is made to assess the information needs of a community there is a danger that what are actually being established are the *demands* of a particular group of respondents. In addition, particularly in communities with low levels of education and confidence such as many coalfield areas, there is the possibility that information needs remain unexpressed or unrecognised by individuals. The small sample of responses gathered at each location and the absence of data from non-users because of time restrictions are further limitations specific to this study. Some suggestions can be made however, concerning the extent to which the branch library can contribute to regeneration through information provision.

The way in which information needs are assessed may affect the extent to which the problems cited above can be overcome. According to one member of library staff, information needs in Blidworth are assessed by:

> *Looking at what their demand is in terms of the kind of stock that they use and the requests that we have and the requests that we can't satisfy with our stock...It's a case of monitoring the demand and looking whether we've got the resources to satisfy it.* [Member of library staff]

A similar method is used in Calverton. There is the potential, therefore, that the needs of those who do not use the library are missing out, or that by responding to the majority of demand for fiction, for example, contributions to regeneration are minimal. Of course, this approach is, to a large extent, a result of using issue statistics as a measure of library performance. This will be discussed in Chapter 12. Suffice is to say here that this method of assessing information needs may lead to a tailoring of the library service to the needs only of users rather than the wider community. In this way, the contribution the library can make to regeneration through information provision is limited.

In Bilsthorpe, information needs are assessed differently, potentially increasing the contribution made to regeneration. A member of library staff explains:

> *We do it in a number of ways really...we get a lot of feedback through the staff themselves and by working with local community groups. We assess what the demand is within the building but then by involving yourself with the community groups we find out what other areas they're actually looking for information for, what things people are going to them for, how our hours differ with theirs....and build up a pattern from that, of what is actually important in this community.* [Member of library staff]

Thus, the informal networks which Skelcher et al. (1996, p.9) acknowledge as being fundamental to successful regeneration initiatives come into play.

The table indicates patterns of expressed information need as a total for all the communities studied. Further breakdown of the figures will occur in the subsequent analysis.

Table showing expressed information needs in Bilsthorpe, Blidworth and Calverton

	Do not need				Essential
	1	2	3	4	5
Public Transport Timetables	26	10	14	4	13
Information about Community Groups	24	10	19	6	8
Training Opportunities/Courses	24	4	10	10	19
Information about Job Vacancies	29	3	6	11	18
Information about Leisure Activities	13	7	20	16	11
Information about Local Government	24	11	20	8	4
Business Information	49	9	4	3	2
Housing Information	42	2	7	10	6
Health Information	11	3	11	17	25

The shaded areas indicate particularly significant findings. As the statistics reveal, there is little expressed demand for information pertaining to local government, housing or businesses, while the types of information needed most relate to training opportunities and courses and job vacancies. The importance of the business information will be evaluated in Chapter 9.

6.3 Training Opportunities and Courses

Bilsthorpe

As the table indicates, respondents expressed a need for information about training opportunities and courses. In Bilsthorpe, this is most strongly expressed by respondents from CHUB, with 9 out of the 11 respondents who deemed it essential in the village being from there. This suggests that those needing this kind of information are more likely to request it at CHUB than the library, presumably because CHUB has a specialist role in this area and is able to offer advice to supplement the information available.

The number of people expressing a need for this information in Bilsthorpe *library* is noticeably less than in the libraries in Blidworth of Calverton. This may indicate that in Bilsthorpe a more holistic approach to the provision of information has been achieved, where people would look to CHUB for this information rather than the library. While it cannot be said that Bilsthorpe library is contributing to regeneration through the provision of information about training opportunities and courses, it is making the best use of limited resources by avoiding undue duplication of services. When describing the relationship between Bilsthorpe library and CHUB, the librarian is emphatic:

> *It's very clear that our service is totally complementary to theirs. It is in no way duplicating theirs; it's not on the same basis at all.* [Member of library staff]

Blidworth

In Blidworth over half the respondents recognised a need for this type of information, with 5 out of the 17 respondents stating that is was essential. This suggests that by providing such information, the library is engaging in the process of regeneration, to the extent that established library users are able to take advantage of the information offered about training opportunities. 51% of the population in Blidworth use the library (Blidworth Parish Council 1993), a figure which the Assistant Director of the Libraries, Archives and Information Division of the County Council regards as a *'position of strength'*, stating that no other community organisation is likely to have such a high number of users.

The respondent suggests that similar statistics exist for many other branch libraries, including Bilsthorpe and Calverton. Thus, the evidence suggests that by providing information about training opportunities and courses, the branch library is able to reach a significant proportion of the community and effectively contribute to the process of regeneration. The provision of information about training opportunities seems important, for as The Coalfields Task Force (1998, p.34) acknowledges:

> Regeneration programmes...must now focus on empowering communities and raising their aspirations so that they can take full advantage of new opportunities.

The exact extent of the library's contribution, however, is not easy to determine as the value of a single piece of information is difficult to assess.

Calverton

The data suggests that in Calverton, the need for this type of information is not so great, with 10 respondents saying they do not need it at all (almost half of the total number of respondents who expressed this view). While it would be impossible to offer conclusive reasons for this disparity, the data does indicate that in terms of regeneration, coalfield communities cannot be regarded simply as an homogenous group about which generalisations about need can be made. Each community is distinct and therefore the extent to which the branch library is able to contribute to the regeneration process through the provision of information of this kind is likely to vary.

6.4   Job Vacancies

Bilsthorpe and Blidworth

There is some indication that this type of information is needed in Bilsthorpe and Blidworth, with 11 out of the 31 respondents in Bilsthorpe saying it was essential to them. In Blidworth, approximately one third of respondents said that information about job vacancies was essential. In Bilsthorpe, it seems that it is CHUB which is primarily meeting this need, (9 of the 11 respondents who said this type of information was essential came from CHUB). In Blidworth, with the absence of a strong relationship between the library and the BLUES Centre, the library has recognised this need and attempted to meet it through the installation of the Opportunities Database. However, as evidence presented later in this report suggests, this computer based resource is not particularly well used and therefore the extent to which the branch library is able to contribute to regeneration by providing this type of information may be limited. However, it is also worth noting that in all locations, the local library is said to be the most useful location for acquiring a range of information. Therefore, despite the fact that non-users were not extensively surveyed, in accordance with figures reflecting library use in these communities, the branch library may well be contributing to the regeneration process by providing specific types of information.

Calverton

In Calverton, the library is able to make a less significant contribution to regeneration through the provision of information about job vacancies. Only 2 out of the 19 respondents said that this type of information was essential and over half said they do not need it at all. Without investigating the needs of users of the CORE centre and other organisations in Calverton, it is impossible to ascertain whether these results indicate a smaller level of need in this village, or whether the library is not being used by those who need this information because the provision is inadequate. However, the employment statistics from the 1991 census suggest that the former possibility is likely, as the number of people unemployed in the village is less than in Bilsthorpe and Calverton:

Employment statistics from the 1991 Census:

Bilsthorpe:	Unemployed: 5.2%	Employed: 61.5%
Blidworth:	Unemployed: 8.4%	Employed: 54.3%
Calverton:	Unemployed: 4.8%	Employed: 62.3%

Information Sources

There is an obvious need for information regarding job opportunities and training in all the villages studied. However, with the absence of a job centre in any location, the role of the library in meeting this need is accentuated. Results of the structured interviews with users indicate that the job centre, because of its location several miles away from each community, is not rated particularly highly. 44 out of 67 respondents asked did not find it useful at all, while only 6 said they did not find the library at all useful.

It is also worth noting that Blidworth, the only village in which a Citizens' Advice Bureau is located one afternoon per week, is the only library location at which this service was particularly valued as an information source. This suggests that by offering the building as a venue for this service, the library in Blidworth is contributing indirectly to the process of regeneration.

In Blidworth particularly, but in the other locations as well, respondents found friends, colleagues and family members to be valuable sources of information. This reliance on the informal network , or word-of-mouth, suggests that the very personal service offered in libraries may facilitate the successful dissemination of information and therefore contribute to the regeneration of the village. Thus, the library may contribute to regeneration by fulfilling the role of an informal intermediary between users and information, particularly in areas where the population is perhaps less articulate and less likely to approach more formal information providers directly.

6.5 Local Government

There is evidence in the literature to suggest that information about local government can facilitate greater involvement in the democratic process (for example, Kinnell (1992) and Day (1998)). This, coupled with the recognised need to promote community involvement in regeneration initiatives and for community empowerment, suggests that the provision of information about local government can potentially contribute, somewhat indirectly, to the process of community capacity building and, in turn, regeneration.

However, despite what is suggested in the literature, there is little expressed need for this type of information. Only 4 out of a total 67 respondents said it was essential, while 24 out of the 67 said that they did not need it at all. By providing this type of information, therefore, is seems unlikely that at present the branch library is making a meaningful contribution community regeneration. However, it remains an area for further research to investigate the effects IT could have on this situation. At present, paper based resources necessarily lead to a one way flow of information and opinion from the local authority to the public. Given previous evidence which indicates that there may be a degree of cynicism about the local authority within communities, the use of such information may be minimal.   Information and Communications Technology could revolutionise this situation and facilitate a two way information exchange. This would overcome the problem cited by IBM (1997) suggesting that local authorities are primarily concerned with the one way transmission of information *to* the public. The Assistant Director of Nottinghamshire County Council Libraries, Archives and Information Division is confident that, *'people will feel comfortable...about going into a library environment and eventually using technology to make their views known'*. However, as discussed later in the report, the literature has a tendency to overstate the IT capabilities of communities, making the present installation of on-line democracy in many places only a distant possibility.

6.6 Chapter Summary and Conclusions

The literature states that within coalfield communities, the risk of social exclusion from the 'Information Society' is high. Of course, it is incredibly difficult to assess the exact impact a piece of information can have on an individual and therefore on community regeneration, and there are no entirely effective means of monitoring this. However, a number of issues are raised from the data:

- The way in which information needs are assessed may affect the contribution branch libraries can make to regeneration.

- There is evidence that wide use is made of branch libraries for information about job vacancies and training opportunities, and that they are regarded as useful information providers within their communities. By providing certain types of information, therefore, the branch library can go some way to contributing to the regeneration of coalfield villages.

- There is little expressed need for information about local government, in contrast to views included in the literature.

- The extent to which the branch library engages in partnership with other information providers can affect the level of its contribution to regeneration. Where partnerships are stronger, the library itself seems to contribute less to the regeneration process in a direct sense.

- However, the high levels of use made of branch libraries suggests that, particularly in areas where partnerships with other information providers are limited, they are making a significant contribution to the regeneration process

- In communities where information provision is viewed holistically, there is evidence to suggest that the contribution to regeneration as a whole is greater.

7. THE LIBRARY ENVIRONMENT

7.1 Evidence

There is a strong feeling in the literature that the library environment is an unsuitable setting for IT use. IBM (1997, p.49), for example, state:

> They [libraries] are significantly under-used by certain socio-economic groups, for whom they may lack relevance and appeal and who may well feel uncomfortable with the 'institutional' atmosphere of many library buildings. Therefore we would certainly not recommend, under their present culture, that libraries take responsibility for CRCs [Community Resource Centres].

This is a view strongly contested by almost all respondents in this study. One interviewee argued:

> *That report seemed to me to be fed with the prejudice that a lot of elected members have of libraries, being middle-class partisan institutions. And it's a load of rubbish. I could take anyone, anywhere in the county to any community, even one dominated by B1s and A1s....and show you C and D users of that library that haven't got any other choices. You know they're users, but people have a prejudiced view of libraries which astonishes me.*   [Assistant Director]

Users of the branch libraries included in this study and users of CHUB who, as the respondent stated, tend to be on low incomes and have lower than average educational opportunities, find the library an appropriate place for IT resources in terms of its atmosphere and friendly staff:

> *The library is accessible and familiar.*
>
> *It's a meeting place.*
>
> *It's quiet and the facilities are very good.*
>
> *I'd rather come here than use the ones [computers] at the community centre which is noisy. The library is relaxed.*

> *There's always someone on hand to give advice if you need it.*
>
> *There are people you can ask for assistance.*
>
> *There's always someone on hand to give help.* [Library users]

Of the 67 respondents asked, none said that the library was an extremely inappropriate location for IT facilities and only 4 said it was inappropriate. It is noticeable that half of these were from Calverton library where there are no IT facilities specifically for use by adults, which may suggest that the presence of IT in branch libraries can affect people's perceptions of it. It may cease to be something regarded as valuable but outside their sphere of existence (see also Chapter 8) and instead become something with which they feel confident and as part of the fabric of libraries as books.

Despite the fact that the majority of respondents were library users, evidence suggests that a significant proportion of each community uses the library regularly. Therefore it seems that the literature is somewhat hasty in its condemnation of the library environment as a venue for IT.

The consensus of opinion from both library users and users of CHUB is that the location of the branch library is incredibly important, as many members of the community are unable to travel further afield because of financial restrictions and poor transport. This fact was highlighted when library and CHUB users were asked to rank a series of possible locations for IT training in order of preference. In all branches, colleges were the least preferred locations because the distance from home was prohibitive. The library was the most preferred location in all communities, although the fact that mainly library users were surveyed may have affected this result.

However, it also became apparent that respondents often felt more confident and relaxed in a library environment:

Because it's an open access point as opposed to going into a shop or a business of anywhere like that, people can actually come in and wander round and not feel intimidated because they are under no presume or obligation to use it.   [Member of library staff]

The library also seems to be an appropriate place to house IT facilities because it is a location with which people are already familiar. Libraries in communities are well used and therefore to use IT, individuals do not have to make a special journey to a location with which they may not be familiar. When asked whether the branch library was a suitable place to have IT facilities, respondents commented:

It's a place you go already.

It's [the library] in the middle of the village-everyone comes here to the shops so it's not out of anybody's way.

People use the library anyway-it's not somewhere else I've got to go. If it was I probably wouldn't go. ..[Library users]

They're used to coming in the library and something new, it takes a bit of getting used to

They're used to coming in and asking for information and using the resources...If IT was sited somewhere else in communities, that may not be as appropriate to their needs as the library would be. [Member of library staff]

7.2 Learning and the Library Environment

The government (in Coalfields Task Force 1998) has acknowledged that levels of education in coalfield areas tend to be considerably below the national average and that life-long learning is a central element of any strategy developed to regenerate these areas. Libraries have long been associated with life-long learning. The IT resources in Bilsthorpe and Blidworth libraries are an extension of the traditional book-based learning materials, allowing users to benefit from computer based tutorials. This informal, person-centred approach

to learning may be particularly appropriate in coalfield areas where there is a need to break down barriers between individuals and the formal education structures:

> Much of the evidence put to us has emphasised the current gulf between coalfield communities and the formal learning systems. We regard it as essential that this gulf is effectively bridged Coalfields Task Force (1998)

This research suggests that despite their absence from the Coalfields Task Force report, libraries are contributing to bridging that gap. Library staff describe the role branch libraries are playing in this area with regard to IT provision:

> *What we provide...can be for people who actually don't like tutor based learning, who don't want watching and checking how they're getting on, for people who don't want to work at someone else's speed, for people who don't like a two hour block of sessions that they have to do, or for people who want to taste something to see if they're vaguely going to like it before they go on to something which is tutor based.* [Member of library staff]
>
> *A lot of people wouldn't do a basic computer course at college because, despite the fact that it isn't necessary, their belief is that it's necessary to have at least some knowledge before you go and so they might come in here and do, for instance, the Computers for the Terrified programme...so they feel that they're getting the absolute basics without anyone looking at them and thinking that they don't know what they're doing or, "why have they come if they can't even do that", which they probably wouldn't get, but that's their perception of teachers and that's still how they'll see adult education.* [Member of library staff]

Similarly, one respondent said that it was because she had no knowledge of computers that she chose to use the library to learn, while another remarked, '*I don't mind paying [to use the computer] but I don't want to do exams-you feel such a fool if you don't know*'. There was also some evidence to suggest

that the library in Bilsthorpe, because of its environment and the opportunities available for users to work at their own pace, has given individuals the confidence to take up more formal courses at CHUB, which they may not have done had the library not provided that lead in. One respondent stated, *'I started to get to know about computers through the library...the library gives you a feel for computers before you decide one way or the other to carry on'*. By working in partnership, the branch library and CHUB are able to offer the widest range of learning opportunities and therefore maximise the overall contribution made to community regeneration through IT. These issues are discussed more fully in Chapters 8 and 10.

In a practical sense, providing Open For Learning packages or information via the Opportunities Database, can contribute to the process of re-skilling the work force or by giving information about courses which are available. This may in turn contribute to the regeneration of coalfield communities. As one respondent stated:

> *The learning process can actually contribute to a sort of economic regeneration-people improving job skills, the re-training issue, especially in coalfield communities, where old skills are no longer as relevant as they were, people needing opportunities to find different skills that are more relevant to the job market. so that's an area where the learning process actually contributes to regeneration, and by trying to be inclusive...we can provide opportunities for people which are not always readily available through other institutions.*
> [Assistant Director]

IT is a key factor in this learning process, for it enables individuals to pursue life-long learning opportunities within their communities. This is particularly important in the regeneration of coalfield communities which may be geographically isolated or lacking an effective transport network.

7.3 Chapter Summary and Conclusions

- Contrary to views expressed in the literature, the branch library environment seems a venue conducive to learning and IT use

- The presence of IT in branch libraries may improve people's perceptions of IT

- The library environment is successful in breaking down barriers between individuals and formal education, and in offering individuals an alternative route into life-long learning and skills development

- By providing life-long learning opportunities in an appropriate environment, branch libraries may be contributing to the regeneration of coalfield communities.

8. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

8.1 Background

Bilsthorpe

Each of the three libraries in this study have different levels of IT: Bilsthorpe is the most well equipped, housing an Open For Learning centre which allows users to undertake IT based learning packages on many subjects, including introductions to computers as well as more general subjects. The packages are designed to allow people to work at their own pace in their own time. In addition, there is a stand alone PC which allows users to word-process and print their own documents. These facilities are within sight and sound of the issue desk, adjacent to the children's area and publicised formally and by word-of-mouth frequently. They were installed to complement to the IT resources at CHUB which take the form of tutor based IT classes.

Blidworth

Blidworth library houses an Opportunities Database. This too is a PC based resource designed specifically to help those seeking work to find jobs in the region, make the most of their current and potential skills and find the career to which they are best suited. The facilities were installed in response to the high levels of unemployment in Blidworth. They are situated in the reference section of the library some distance away from the issue desk. A launch was held when the database was first installed, but the facilities are not continually publicised.

Calverton

Calverton library has no IT resources which are intended to promote adult learning or development.

8.2 IT Strategy

At a policy level the Libraries, Archives and Information Division of the County Council is actively pursuing an IT strategy based on proposals set out in *New Library: The People's Network* (Library and Information Commission 1997), which ultimately advocates the installation of a PC terminal with Internet access in every public library by 2002. However, it seems the way Nottinghamshire's strategy is translated at each branch library is varied and dependent on a range of factors, including the level of partnerships with other organisations, the priorities of staff and the situation of the IT within the library itself. There is room, it seems, for the development of a more effective means of disseminating this policy throughout the library service. The issues highlighted in Chapter 5 therefore also seem relevant to IT.

8.3 Expectations

Expectations in Bilsthorpe are generally low, a factor identified by Nottinghamshire County Council (1991) as symptomatic of coalfield areas. The presence of IT resources in Bilsthorpe library may instil a greater sense of pride among members of the community and promote recognition that they are a valued community. Comments included:

> *It's good that we have the facility here for such a small community*
>
> *The facilities are excellent for such a small community*
>
> *Bilsthorpe is very well served for computers and courses* [Library users]

In being made to feel like a viable community again it is possible that individuals may use this positively by getting more involved in community based regeneration initiatives. A member of staff suggests:

> *People were feeling very damaged by the closure of the colliery... it was also as if, if we don't go into this [IT], we'll be left behind. And they needed to know that statutory*

authorities...actually cared enough to bring in the things that would actually help them move forward in their community. [Member of library staff]

8.4 The Value of IT

Awareness

From this research emerges evidence to suggest that the presence and support of IT in branch libraries can contribute to the regeneration of communities. However, in the same way that it is almost impossible to measure the impact a piece of information may have on an individual, and therefore the regeneration process, it is similarly difficult to measure quantitatively the value of IT to its users. A more qualitative approach is therefore necessary. By speaking with library users and staff, it was possible to assess the extent to which the presence to IT in branch libraries may affect regeneration at an individual level. It was also possible to establish factors which may potentially enhance or prohibit this contribution

The table below illustrates that proportionally, IT is regarded as most important in Bilsthorpe and less so in Blidworth and Calverton:

Table to show the importance attached to IT by respondents

	Never use it 1	2	3	4	It's Vital 5	Total
Bilsthorpe Library	4	1	2	4	5	16
CHUB	2	1	5	3	4	15
Blidworth Library	11	2	2	2	0	17
Calverton Library	9	3	3	4	0	19

Of course, a study of community attitudes prior to the installation of IT resources would have been a more effective method of assessing whether

attitudes to IT had changed because of its presence in the library. Similarly, in Bilsthorpe where IT is judged to be most important to respondents, it is difficult to separate the impact made individually by CHUB and the library, especially because in terms of IT provision, the two operate very much in partnership. However, as the figures for Blidworth library illustrate, it is not sufficient that IT is simply present in the library in order to encourage use and awareness. Factors such as the location of the resources in the library, publicity and staff training may also affect the value placed on IT by the community.

Despite evidence which indicated low levels of IT use by respondents from Blidworth library, (only 4 out of 17 respondents had used the library facilities), there is recognition that IT is an increasingly important factor in everyday life:

> *Computers are an everyday thing now*
>
> *Computers are very important in all areas of life*
>
> *Computers are really useful.* [Library users]

None of the respondents who made these comments had used the Opportunities Database, however, and felt that computers, while important to others, were inaccessible to them. The following comments are representative:

> *Computers don't appeal to me at all. I can't afford to be part of it*
>
> *I've never found the need for them and I don't understand computers*
>
> *Computers are not really for my age group*
>
> *Computers aren't really for me. IT would be OK in town, but it doesn't really merit it here-it's too small.* [Library users]

In addition, there was a consensus among respondents at the library and CHUB in Bilsthorpe that the Internet would be a useful information resources, suggesting some degree of awareness about computer based facilities. In Blidworth and Calverton, however, the majority of respondents said they would not find the Internet useful at all and many were unfamiliar with the ideas of World Wide Web pages or E-mail. This is perhaps a further indication

of the lack of IT awareness felt by many respondents in these locations and that the literature such as that produced by IBM (1997), is perhaps over-estimating the IT capabilities of communities. This latter point is further exemplified in that within the literature, the production of on-line information about community groups is advocated as a means of promoting community based initiatives. In the villages surveyed for this study, however, only 3 out of 67 respondents belonged to groups which made such information available via computers.

Thus, it can be seen that in Blidworth, where computer based resources exist but are not particularly well used, there is an 'awareness raising' issue to be addressed. While the literature seems primarily concerned with the development of relatively sophisticated ICT resources, including links with local government officials, etc., there remains a need in some areas for a more basic approach. This may serve to dispel some of the fundamental reservations respondents in Blidworth seemed to face regarding IT, and in turn overcome resultant feelings of disempowerment and social exclusion. In Bilsthorpe, perceptions of IT are different. The following comments reflect the consensus of opinion:

> *Computers are part of everyday life, including work, and I'm out of work and need computer skills to get a job.*
>
> *Computers keep my brain going*
>
> *IT is vital to everyday life. I use it for everything, for my job and for general interests.* [Library users]

IT use here seems more widespread and respondents more confident in using such facilities. IT is not regarded as something beyond the scope of the community as seems to be the general feeling in Blidworth. Rather, by pursuing an holistic IT strategy at a local, community level, staff in Bilsthorpe library and CHUB seem to have instilled in users a sense of confidence, achievement and possibly empowerment. This may, in turn, impact positively

in terms of community regeneration, as suggested by evidence presented later in this chapter.

Opportunities

There is a suggestion that the presence of IT in branch libraries may broaden personal horizons and the opportunities available to individuals, and go some way to alleviating feelings of isolation and lack of confidence associated with the coalfield areas (Nottinghamshire County Council 1991). Respondents commented:

> *Enriching your life is a major benefit of IT*
>
> *Computer facilities are convenient-they enable you to widen your horizons*
>
> *Computers broaden people's horizons...young people need to be trained*
>
> *I started to get to know about computers through the library...the library gives you a feel for computers before you decide one way or the other to carry on*   [Library users]

The suggestion that placing IT in branch libraries may broaden opportunities was emphasised by staff members:

> *Our role is to open up the opportunities for people and be a window so people can see where their opportunities are, to allow people to do their learning at their own speed.*
>
> *I think that if we're really going to say that one of our aims as librarians is to help people to discover themselves, discover their potential, make the most of their learning abilities and make the most of the opportunities, then if we don't have IT we're fooling ourselves, really.*   [Member of library staff]

As the Coalfields Task Force (1998, p.34) explain, maximising the opportunities available to members of coalfield communities is a fundamental aspect of the regeneration process:

> Regeneration programmes...must now focus on empowering communities and raising their aspirations so that they can take full advantage of new opportunities.

By providing IT resources which give people the opportunity to develop new skills and interests and broaden their personal and educational horizons, branch libraries are contributing to the community regeneration process.

Confidence

Confidence was considered by respondents to be the greatest benefit experienced from using library based IT resources. Comments from library users included:

> *[I gained] confidence in being able to use it [IT]. I think it was nice, you know, that you know a bit about it, not to be frightened of it and not feel that you have to ask someone all the time*
>
> *Women especially can be scared of computers. When they do use them, they find out that they can and there's nothing to be scared of. This builds self-esteem*
>
> *Most jobs now require you to use a computer. I feel confident enough now to apply for a job.* [Library users]

Library staff agreed:

> *I think it can build their confidence in using a keyboard and a mouse. It can be the starting point for them on a journey.* [Member of library staff]

> *Many mothers who want to return to work feel that they're really out of touch, and even if they don't have to be mega-proficient in 'Exel' for instance, the mere fact that they've done the course and they are proficient in it gives them a great boost of confidence to know that if*

they go to a job where there's something else that they're not yet proficient in they can overcome it. [Members of library staff]

In coalfield areas, where the literature states that confidence is particularly low and an issue in need of attention, this seems particularly significant. Similarly, the Nottinghamshire Rural Coalfields Partnership (1990) suggests that among coalfield communities, there is a high incidence of women returning to work to combat wage reductions encountered when collieries were closed. That women particularly seem to benefit from the IT resources in libraries, from an increase in confidence and ability to be able to re-join the labour market, is evidence that the branch library can contribute to community regeneration. It is also acknowledged within the literature that community empowerment is often a pre-requisite for community based regeneration initiatives (for example, Coalfield Task Force 1998). In addition, the evidence presented earlier in this chapter suggests that confidence can encourage individuals to actually apply for jobs which previously, they may have felt were beyond them. It is possible that by improving confidence at an individual level through IT provision, branch libraries could be making a significant contribution to the regeneration process. Linley and Usherwood (1998) made similar suggestions in their social audit of public libraries, stating that 'there was much evidence to suggest that [the library] built confidence in individuals which might then have had an effect on the wider community'. Their evidence is supported by the findings of this research.

Improving confidence may go some way to overcoming feelings of disempowerment present in some respondents who acknowledged the importance of IT within society but felt unable or unwilling to use it themselves. These feelings seem to be more prominent in Blidworth, suggesting that the mere presence of IT in a branch library is not sufficient in itself to enable the branch library to contribute to the regeneration process. The library's involvement in partnerships, the location of the IT in the library in order that staff are able to encourage people in its use, the training of library staff and publicising the facilities seem also to affect the extent to which IT can

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make a difference to community regeneration. These issues are addressed in the latter part of this chapter.

The Function of Employment

As the literature states, the closure of collieries can deprive miners of the some of the functions associated with work (Nottinghamshire County Council 1991). One respondent suggested that, '*Having a PC...fulfils the functions of work. It stretches your brain and makes you concentrate*'. There is also evidence to suggest that the library fulfils a strong social function, acting as a meeting place for members of the community, particularly the unemployed and elderly. Therefore, by placing IT in libraries, users of the resources may feel more inclined to use the resources than if they were placed in more formal settings such as colleges or CRCs. Similarly, by providing a social setting, it is possible that branch libraries are helping to combat some of the negative consequences, such as loss of confidence and social networks, associated with colliery closures. This may have some bearing on individuals' ability to play a part in community regeneration.

8.5 Factors Affecting the Value of IT

Encouragement

The data suggests that the mere presence of IT in a branch library is not sufficient for it to be well used: IT *in itself* seems unlikely contribute significantly to the regeneration process. However, there is evidence to suggest that by encouraging individuals to use IT, staff can perhaps improve the contribution libraries can make in this area.

The data has shown that greater use is made of the IT resources in Bilsthorpe library than in Blidworth. In addition, over half of the respondents in Blidworth felt that insufficient knowledge of computers had prevented them using the IT facilities in the library. It seems, therefore that when users are encouraged to 'have a go', levels of IT use may increase. While in Blidworth,

for reasons possibly associated with staff training or the location of IT resources, encouragement of users seems fairly limited. However, in Bilsthorpe, the following attitude is representative:

> *If somebody comes into the library, you find a lot of people lack confidence to start with. When we first had it, we said, 'have you ever thought of using a computer?' and they said, 'ooh no', this kind of attitude, which I had to start with. It's fear of the unknown, isn't it? But if you provide that little bit of encouragement just to get them actually to sit on the chair and start pressing the keys...they suddenly realise they can do it. So it's the encouragement as much as anything that people want.* [Member of library staff]

This encouragement may be one reason why respondents in Bilsthorpe seem to feel more confident in their use of IT resources. This in turn may affect the extent to which the branch library is able to contribute to community regeneration through IT provision.

Training Staff in IT

There is evidence to suggest that the training given to library staff in IT is not uniform and may affect the degree to which staff feel able to offer encouragement to users. Staff in Blidworth commented:

> *Training tends to be done in such a piece-meal fashion. One library acquires a CD-ROM and they train their staff, and then another library has that, but that training experience and knowledge isn't passed on to another library, so the other library's starting from scratch, really*
>
> *[Training] can always be better and we're all very keen, so obviously we'd like more, but it's the restrictions on budgets and time and everything else*
>
> *I think our training could be improved. Yes, it's not wonderful*   [Members of library staff]

However, the situation in Bilsthorpe, where IT use is greater, is different. A staff member explains:

When we brought the word-processor in, the staff here wanted to go on a course to make them proficient because they felt that if they didn't do that, because neither of them were IT based at all, that people would have problems, get stuck and want help and that they wouldn't be able to give it. And understandably, that that would make them look and feel inadequate...What we ended up with was that we paid their fees and they went and did a part-time course through CHUB.
[Member of library staff]

This disparity may have an impact on the confidence of staff members in terms of their own IT abilities and the degree of encouragement they feel comfortable offering to users. In Bilsthorpe, a staff member stated:

It's really boosted her [a staff member's] confidence about her ability to pick up IT and that's encouraging for others too, because she can say well, look, I started from where you are. I knew absolutely nothing and you can go through and do it
[Member of library staff]

The latter part of this remark may be a factor which explains why there is a higher level of IT use in Bilsthorpe library than elsewhere, for as a respondent using the facilities in Blidworth stated, *'libraries should be staffed with people skilled in IT. Librarians aren't suitably skilled to pass on IT skills to others, so it's futile'*. There is clearly an issue to be addressed regarding the IT capabilities of library staff, which may affect the extent to which the branch library is able to contribute to regeneration through IT. It also appears that this would be most effectively addressed at a strategic level, where training, experiences and expertise may be shared.

Resources

The financial resources available to the library service for buying IT equipment are limited and represent a factor affecting the contribution branch libraries are able to make to the regeneration process. One respondent states:

> *One [barrier] I think is resource based, which is to a large extent,*
> *lack of money, in that what I would like to see ideally is every library*
> *in the county connected to an intranet within the county and the*
> *wider Internet. And you need money to do that.* [Assistant Director]
>
> *It comes down to resources, doesn't it? The budget...has been cut*
> *year after year and the money to buy stock is woefully inadequate, so*
> *that's one way in which we're severely hampered. And similarly*
> *with IT, there's plans, but it depends on the money.* [Member of
> library staff]

However, according to IBM (1997), it is the stable funding received by
libraries as a statutory service which seems to render them attractive to other
community organisations. Thus, while among library staff and users, resources
are regarded as inadequate, among other community organisations, they may be
regarded as at least stable. It seems therefore, that resources may be
maximised if a holistic approach to regeneration was nurtured, an issue
discussed in more detail in Chapter 10.

Members of library staff go on to speak of the limitations in branch libraries
concerning human resources:

> *Blidworth, Calverton and Ravenshead have only got me as their*
> *librarian...so there's obviously a limit to what I can be involved in*
> *any one community in going out and promoting the library, making*
> *contacts. That's the dilemma.*
>
> *There has to be some limit to how much time you can spend totally*
> *out of the service in the regeneration of the community.* [Members of
> library staff]

However, this limitation does not stop with direct levels of involvement in
regeneration issues. The evidence suggests that in single staffed libraries,
individual employees are perhaps not able to devote as much time as would be
desirable to encouraging people to use IT. One respondent explains:

In a single staffed library, you've got to recognise pressures...library staff have an obligation to guide people through technology, but if you've got a single person there and they're trying to deal with other business in the library, it really does fail in several ways. [Assistant Director]

This seems particularly apparent in Blidworth library where, although the staff offer an excellent, personal service to users, the Opportunities Database is out of range of the issue desk and offering help and encouragement to new or hesitant users becomes more difficult. In Bilsthorpe, on the other hand, single staffing represents less of a barrier to IT use, as the facilities are within sight and sound of the issue desk. Not only are users more likely to see the computers on an ordinary visit to return or borrow books, but it may be easier for staff to identify users who require help. This help may be administered without detracting so much from other responsibilities as would necessarily be the case in Blidworth. Similarly, potential IT users who may appear apprehensive could be more easily encouraged by a member of staff who notices them while performing other counter based duties. As previous evidence suggests, encouragement of users may have some bearing on the extent to which the branch library contributes to community regeneration and consequently so may the location of the resources.

Opening Hours

The factor most frequently expressed by user as representing a barrier to library use was limited library opening hours. Over a third of library based respondents found this to be true. In addition, when asked how the library environment might be improved, a significant number of respondents in each location suggested that library opening hours be extended. Staff and users alike feel that the continual reduction in opening hours can affect the contribution the library can make to the regeneration process:

> *In a village like this, this is one of the main community areas, and to cut back, it's ridiculous.*
>
> *I think there is a potential [to contribute to regeneration], but there's always the issue that you've got IT but you're not open or you're not open at the right times for people.*
>
> *If libraries continue to have their hours cut then they're not going to be accessible to people, so maybe that needs to be brought home to the powers that be.* [Members of library staff]
>
> *IT will collect dust in libraries because of the reduction in opening hours.* [Library user]

One solution to this problem may be the promotion of networked IT services perhaps by housing terminals such as those in Bilsthorpe and Blidworth libraries, in supermarkets or the foyers of banks. However, discounting even the logistical problems associated with such a proposal, it seems likely that until performance indicators are developed to reach beyond issue statistics, such suggestions will remain outside the library agenda. In addition, by placing terminals elsewhere, the advantages associated with the library environment could not be exploited.

It would be to oversimplify the issue to suggest that the fewer hours a library is open, the less it is able to contribute towards the regeneration process. The evidence presented in this study suggests that it is in Bilsthorpe where the greatest contribution to regeneration is being made, yet here the library is open for the fewest hours. CHUB too is open only nine hours per week, so this seems not to compensate in this area. Thus, while opening hours are felt by respondents to be a prohibitive factor to library and IT use, it seems that in terms of the entire regeneration picture, other barriers may be more significant.

8.6 Chapter Summary and Conclusions

- The County Council IT strategy is variously interpreted within different branch libraries, suggesting the need for the more effective dissemination of policies.

- The literature may overstate the IT capabilities of some communities. There may be a need in some communities for increasing awareness of IT among individuals.

- The mere presence of IT in a branch library is not sufficient in itself to promote IT usage of awareness.

- Factors affecting the importance placed on IT by members of communities may include:

  the ability of library staff to offer encouragement, which itself may be determined by their own training and the location of IT in relation to the issue desk;

  resources;

  opening hours;

  effective County Council structure in terms of disseminating IT strategies to all levels of the library service.

- Individuals may benefit from library based IT resources by:

  being able to make better use of the opportunities available;

  feeling more confident about themselves and their abilities. This may be particularly important for women returning to work;

  fulfilling the functions of employment.

- The benefits associated with having IT in branch libraries are summarised by a member of library staff:

  I personally think its [IT] been a lot more beneficial [than just improving IT skills]. I really believe that when people move into something like IT, that what they actually gain is a great deal of personal confidence about what they can do, about other options, about just ways of thinking, different ways of

looking at life and ways of thinking about it. And I think its one of those things that helps people to move on. [Member of library staff]

- The effective promotion and use of IT by branch libraries may lead to a greater sense of social inclusion and empowerment

- The evidence suggests that the presence and promotion of IT resources in branch libraries can have a positive impact on the community regeneration process

9. THE SMALL BUSINESS SECTOR

9.1 Evidence

There is a consensus among the literature concerning the regeneration of coalfield communities that the development of the small business sector is vital. Kerslake (1997) identifies the primary reason for the failure of 75 per cent of small businesses as a lack of information.   Publications such as *Making the Difference* (Coalfields Task Force 1998) and the *Nottinghamshire Rural Coalfield Strategy 1991-2 Programme* (Nottinghamshire Rural Coalfield Partnership 1990) also acknowledge that in coalfield communities, there is little history of small business activity or self employment and as a result, it is an area which needs to be addressed. From the structured interviews with individual library users it can be seen that there is little demand for business information. 49 out of the 67 respondents said that they did not need business information at all, with only 2 respondents saying that it was essential to them. Thus, in providing business information in a general, untargeted way, the branch libraries which form the basis of this study can contribute little to the regeneration process. It was decided that in order to gain some insight into this broader situation, however, postal questionnaires would be sent to the businesses in Blidworth which were contacted by the library when the Opportunities Database was launched. This would serve to gauge the extent to which the branch library, through the provision of IT, could contribute to the regeneration process by targeting local small firms.

9.2 Awareness

Awareness of the Opportunities Database was not particularly widespread, and only one of the responding companies said they were made aware of the IT facilities by the library.

Indeed, 6 out of the 7 responding companies said that they did not use the library in Blidworth at all, with only one stating that they sometimes requested

books about web site design. A member of library staff commented, *'it amazed me that there was such a small response to the Opportunities launch, because there's nothing else like it available and it's on their doorstep'*. An interest in Internet resources was prevalent among the responses, with the majority indicating that IT was either vital or important to them, and that their customers often demanded correspondence via e-mail. This evidence may suggest that such resources would better serve the business community in Blidworth than those available through the Opportunities Database. This is further exemplified by the fact that most respondents stated inconvenient opening hours or lack of time as reasons for not using the library. The Assistant Director of the Libraries, Archives and Information Division acknowledges:

> *What I think the problem is, is persuading them that any time spent finding out about libraries will produce a dividend. I think time is precious with small businesses and if they've got to work hard at getting information, they're probably not going to look at the library sector to help them.* [Assistant Director]

By providing IT resources which local businesses could access remotely may therefore be one way in which the branch library in Blidworth may counteract this problem.

9.3 Relationships

There is consensus within all the libraries surveyed that the relationship with the small business sector is a tentative one. One staff member in Bilsthorpe observed:

> *We hoped a lot of the local businesses would use the Open For Learning stock. They haven't. We did two lots of leaflet drops and even the smallest firms, I literally went round and pushed them through the door and we only had one come in and enquire. It's a real shame.* [Member of library staff]

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A further reason for lack of response from small business may be their need for advice rather than information per se. Both the Coalfields Task Force (1998) and Nottinghamshire County Council (1992) suggest that advice rather than information is what is needed. The businesses surveyed in Blidworth also suggested that their primary information needs were concerned with the legislative and financial aspects of work and most usefully obtained from the Health and Safety Executive, banks and business colleagues. These specialist sources may be more able to supply advice than branch libraries; indeed, the evidence suggests that the library is not considered useful by any responding companies. There is a gulf, it seems, between the services needed by small business and those offered by branch libraries.

In this area, therefore, branch libraries seem able to contribute little to the regeneration process, and may be more successful operating at an individual rather than corporate level. One member of library staff remarked, *'I think that if resources are tight we might think that such lack of interest is a lost cause, which is a bit sad really'*. However, the evidence does suggest that in terms of information and advice, such organisations as the Health and Safety Executive, banks and government departments are well used by the small businesses surveyed. It is therefore open to question whether it is necessary or effective for branch libraries to focus resources on the small business sector. This is in contrast to the fact that for many individual respondents, the library may be the only local provider of a wide range of information.

9.4 Chapter Summary and Conclusions

This area of the study is limited due to restrictions of time. It would have been desirable to interview in more detail companies in all villages in order to investigate more thoroughly their information needs and reasons for not using the branch library.

However, from the evidence available, a number of conclusions are suggested:

- There is a demand within the business community in Blidworth for information technology, predominantly Internet based resources. As small businesses are very restricted in the amount of time they have to spend on obtaining information, and library opening are said to be prohibitive to businesses using the IT resources in the library, remote access to data may be desirable

- In terms of information needs, respondents suggested that financial and legislative information was most needed. In a branch library, this type of specialist information is not always immediately available, making their contribution to regeneration through providing information to businesses limited. However, there may be a role for the library in providing access to a wider information network, if barriers to businesses' physical access to the library can be overcome.

- There is a widespread lack of awareness of the IT facilities in Blidworth library among the companies who responded to questionnaires, suggesting the library may need to accentuate publicity to firms. This area is discussed further in Chapter 11.

- There may be a tendency for small businesses to require advice rather than simply information, which may limit the role the branch library is able to play in this area of regeneration.

10. PARTNERSHIPS

10.1 Introduction

Within the literature it is acknowledged that partnerships are fundamental to regeneration initiatives as a means of maximising resources, expertise and ideas and facilitating a holistic approach to community regeneration. In addition, Skelcher et al. (1996, p.5) recognise that more informal 'networks', an extension of the notion of partnerships, may serve a similar purpose:

> [Networks] rely on informal contact and voluntary effort while [partnerships]...are more formalised. Networks and partnerships are not alternative ways of organising urban regeneration. Partnerships may arise from networks where it is expedient to give the relationship greater formality, but they will still need the process of networking in order to operate effectively.

The literature also claims that, because of their reluctance to form partnerships with the private and voluntary sectors, libraries are falling short of their potential to contribute in this area:

> Libraries have staff, resources, expertise, facilities and space to contribute. In some cases all that is lacking is a grasp of the nature of partnership in the community and the need to move away from traditional service models. (IBM 1997)

Similarly, Ormes (1998) identifies several barriers to library co-operation in partnerships, namely a tendency for libraries to be competitive rather than co-operative. This is not necessarily the case in the libraries studied for this dissertation. What this study does suggest, however, is that differing attitudes to partnerships on behalf of both library staff and other organisations such as TECs and community resource centres (CRCs) can affect the extent to which the library is able to contribute to regeneration through the provision of IT resources. These differences seem to be fostered from within each branch library rather than at a central, strategic level.

10.2 At A Strategic Level

Within the Libraries, Archives and Information Division of Nottinghamshire County Council, the commitment to engaging in partnerships is apparent, particularly in relation to the TECs. The Assistant Director stated, *'my view is that...the relationship with the TECs, even Greater Nottingham TEC has to be a strategic one'*. However, it seems that responsibility for specific community based initiatives is designated to individual members of library staff:

> *We have to show as a library service how we deliver strategic policies. But from the centre, I can't legislate for every single local initiative because I don't know. And there are all sorts of partners who come and go at a local level, where the community and voluntary sectors are involved, which in fact can only be built upon making the most of the opportunity at a local level.*   [Assistant Director]

Thus, once again it seems that the contribution branch libraries are able to make to regeneration at a community level is affected by the priorities and focus of individual staff and local partners. This becomes evident when the involvement of each branch library in regeneration based partnerships is compared.

10.3 Bilsthorpe

In Bilsthorpe, where the library's contribution to regeneration seems strongest, there is active involvement in partnerships. A member of library staff explains:

> *We actively promote and advertise the Community Forum. We take in their minutes and have their notes and things here so people can come in and look at them. We were part of the group that set up the Bilsthorpe Resource Directory...which lists lots of different agencies and all the things available in*
>
> *this area. I was one of the trustees of CHUB for a while. And there's the Bilsthorpe Community Forum which Sue...has gone to some of the meetings of.*   [Member of library staff]

One member of library staff noted, however, that the image of the branch library can affect the extent to which other agencies consider libraries as appropriate for contributing to regeneration initiatives. This was a barrier they felt it was vital to overcome:

> *People don't have the perception sometimes of the role the library could play in all this so they blank it. And there is a marketing and awareness raising issue there for us to get hold of.*   [Assistant Director]

Perhaps one of the reasons for the success of Bilsthorpe library in terms of its contribution lies with the fact that the staff are pro-actively attempting to engage in this *'awareness raising issue'*:

> *I think it's about getting out and being known...there's a reality that unless we go out and actually tell other agencies what we can do that often they will look somewhere else first.*
>
> *There's a lot of room for us explaining the other agencies what we can do and provide.*   [Member of library staff]

Certainly, it is in Bilsthorpe that involvement in regeneration issues is most evident and the branch library most actively contributing through partnerships.

10.4 Blidworth

It has already been noted that in Blidworth and Calverton, priority seems to be given to educational and children's issues. Partnerships with local schools seem strong in both cases and it would be misleading to suggest that a 'grasp of the nature of partnership in the community' (IBM 1997) is lacking. However, these partnerships are less prevalent with regard to regeneration initiatives, possibly because of the strong priorities granted to other areas. While relationships do exist between the CRC in Blidworth and the branch library, it is described by a member of library staff as being:

> *...Only a sort of tentative one at the moment. I went to chat with them to find out what they've got there, about the time*

> *when we were going to get the Opportunities Database. I told them about the resource we'd be getting. I haven't followed that up.* [Member of library staff]

This is in contrast to the situation in Bilsthorpe, where the library staff recognise a need to explain to those at CHUB the aims and nature of their Open For Learning resources and counteract potential feelings of competition. As one respondent explained:

> *Most community agencies, if a statutory agency says they're going to do something that's quite similar to what they're doing, there is instant fear that they may end up with their funding being withdrawn.* [Member of library staff]

By engaging in meaningful partnerships and a holistic approach to IT provision, Bilsthorpe may be more effectively contributing to regeneration.

The relationship in Blidworth, on the other hand, seems to be one of referral rather than one involving pro-active co-operation, and the staff do not seem entirely sure of the facilities offered by the community centre:

> *We're quite independent. They know what our facilities are and we know what their facilities are and, I mean if we haven't got anything then we're the first ones to say, 'well if you try the community centre, they might be able to help you'* [Member of library staff]
>
> *They've got software that allows people to do their CVs, they've also got Virtual Village. I think that's a Rural Development Council Scheme...but I've not used that yet so I'm not sure whether it's complementary.* [Member of library staff]

By limiting the extent to which partnerships concerned with regeneration are entered into, the library staff (and possibly staff at the CRC) may be in danger of duplicating services and missing out on opportunities to offer and publicise complementary resources. However, without speaking with users and staff of the CRC in Blidworth, it is impossible to establish the extent to which only library staff are responsible for this, and it remains an area for further research.

10.5 Calverton

The relationship between the library in Calverton and the CRC also seems to be one of referral, yet there is some evidence to suggest that the relationship between the two organisations there is stronger than in Blidworth:

> *We've had some contact with them when they were first setting up. Because they were working mainly with volunteers, the co-ordinator contacted us to see if we would be interested in looking at their training needs and whether there was any expertise that we've got we could help them with. So we actually ran a couple of sessions for them, so we looked at their skills in dealing with enquiries, interpersonal skills that were needed and the different kinds of resources you might access and specifically how they might be arranged.*
> [Member of library staff]

In this instance, traditional library based skills have been shared and expertise exploited. In doing so, the library is likely to have made an indirect contribution to regeneration through the CRC. However, this relationship does not seem to have been developed beyond this initial stage and the contribution therefore, remains limited. It may be that by networking and gaining further insight into the aims and resources of each other's organisation, staff may be able to develop a more holistic regeneration initiative within the community.

It is also worth noting that although they were more than glad to offer their help, library staff do not seem to have been pro-active in forging the relationship which does exist. This may be for a number of reasons, from inadequate local authority structure in terms of disseminating regeneration strategies to all levels within the library service, to lack of staff time or a tendency to focus on issue based services in order to create favourable performance indicators All these issues are addressed throughout the course of this report.

10.6 Community Resource Centres

There is also evidence to suggest that CRCs maybe equally responsible for the absence of effective partnerships. One respondent suggested that the ulterior motivations of those involved in CRCs could hinder the formulation of partnerships with the library, therefore diluting the criticism levelled against libraries in *The Net Result* (IBM 1997):

> *Now a lot of community groups come with an agenda and unless you're part of that group, you're excluded from it. And I think that organisations that were in that report [The Net Result (IBM 1997)], talking about advocacy, the pro-community stances, of the community venue being a much more positive force, it's not always true.* [Assistant Director]

The Coalfields Task Force (1998), IBM (1997) and Day and Harris (1997), suggest that one-stop-shops for information be set up as a means of promoting regeneration, but no mention is made of branch libraries in their work. The Assistant Director remarked:

> *You know, people like resource centre concepts but just re-invent the wheel and duplicate what the library has to offer. And we've had a few instances where that's been the case.* [Assistant Director]

Perhaps a greater contribution could be made to the regeneration of communities if greater understanding of organisations' aims and resources was reached, perhaps through informal community networks. This seems to be what happens in Bilsthorpe, where library staff are aware of the courses and resources available at CHUB and vice versa, something which is not so evident in other locations. Partnerships and networks may therefore help to establish an ethos concerned not with competition but with the promotion of complementary resources aimed at the overall regeneration of the community. However, without speaking with users and staff of the CRCs in all communities, it would be unfair to make judgements about who is responsible

for the absence of more effective partnerships. By the same measure, it is equally as unfair to lay the blame solely with the library sector when there is evidence from this research to suggest that in some cases there is a, 'strong grasp of the nature of partnership'. To examine the issue in more detail would involve investigating the role of the library at an organisational rather than individual level and therefore lies outside the aims of this study. It is, however, an area for further research.

10.7 Networks

As illustrated in Chapter 6, there is evidence to suggest that by networking with community groups, library staff are able to more effectively assess the needs of the community. This may affect the success of any attempt made to contribute to regeneration through the provision of information. In addition, such networks may help avoid this situation and help to inform library staff of local regeneration projects with which they might become involved. One respondent notes:

> *What is difficult is not knowing there is an initiative being planned before it actually starts and resources are committed. And there have been a few I can think of involving technology, the Virtual Village project...where we only found out about what was happening after we read it in the RDA newsletter. Now for a lot of communities that were being targeted we could have offered libraries as an access point .* [Assistant Director]

The development of networks may also enable those involved in the regeneration of communities to make the best use of limited resources by avoiding duplication. This seems to be particularly important regarding IT projects which can be costly. In Bilsthorpe, the IT resources of the library and CHUB have been developed to be complementary. In partnership, they are able to offer IT to the broadest possible range of individuals by offering alternative approaches to learning. In Calverton, on the other hand, one

respondent explained that the CRC has an Internet connection, but the staff there do not have the skills to use it and the centre is perhaps not as well used as the library. Perhaps by entering into partnership, more effective use of these resources could be made and a more significant contribution to regeneration achieved.

10.8 Other Partnerships

Of course partnerships are not only concerned with CRCs. There is evidence to suggest that good relationships with Training and Enterprise Councils can affect the extent to which branch libraries are able to contribute to regeneration through IT. It is worth noting that in the libraries at Bilsthorpe and Blidworth, where IT is present, relationships with North Nottinghamshire TEC are good and that in Calverton, where IT resources focusing on regeneration are absent, Greater Nottingham TEC is not so active. Respondents explained the consequences of partnerships with TECs:

> *North Notts. TEC have been so good and so innovative and wanted to develop that resource and put it in libraries where they've thought it's going to be really well used. I think we [Calverton] come under Greater Notts. TEC and they're not so advanced.* [Member of library staff]

> *[It's a] totally different relationship. One where I don't think we've had anything back which you can point to and the other where the partner and ourselves actually drive things forward.* [Assistant Director]

This suggests that effective partnerships are not only the responsibility of the library service but also depend on the willingness of potential partners to collaborate. However, as this research focuses primarily on the contribution the library can make to the regeneration of coalfield communities at an individual level, and because the issue has been previously addressed by Linley (1996), it will not be pursued in any further detail here. Suffice is to say that

the absence of partnerships in some areas is not solely due to the priorities of individual library staff.

It is possible that by entering into partnerships with colleges, branch libraries may be able to extend the contribution they can make to regeneration by offering themselves as a venue for tutor based IT learning. Indeed, this has occurred in some libraries throughout Nottinghamshire, where in partnership the two organisations have been able to offer IT awareness courses free of charge. However, one respondent, *'failed to see the added value such schemes could give'* to the library service in terms of its aims and objectives and possibly as a result, this practice is not widespread. As none of the communities studied for this dissertation have entered into such partnerships, it is not possible to assess the extent to which they may affect the regeneration process and therefore this remains an area for further research.

10.9 Chapter Summary and Conclusions

- Despite a commitment to partnerships at a strategic level, it seems that it is locally based relationships between branch libraries and TECs and CRCs which most significantly affect the library's contribution to regeneration through IT.

- Partnerships may help to combat potential competition and duplication between branch libraries and CRCs, thus promoting a more holistic regeneration strategy.

- Where partnerships and networks are not so well established, IT use and awareness is not so prevalent and as such the library is not so well positioned to impact on the confidence and skills of individual users.

- The evidence suggests that the extent to which branch libraries are involved in partnerships can affect their contribution to community regeneration at an individual level.

11. PUBLICITY

11.1 Evidence

In order that IT facilities installed in branch libraries are fulfilling their potential contribution to regeneration, it is vital that the community is aware of the existence of such facilities. This seems to be particularly important in Blidworth, where the Opportunities Database is not immediately visible to those entering the library to return books or browse other sections.

It has already been suggested that the IT facilities in Blidworth are not extensively used, something which may be due to the fact that their publicity is fairly sporadic. As respondents stated:

> *People don't know that it [the Opportunities Database] is there, I'm sure of that. We've got to publicise it a lot more.* [Member of library staff]
>
> *We could be told more about the facilities, to try to draw you to them. If you've never used computers, you're not likely to use them. They need promoting more.* [Library user]

7 out of 17 respondents who were aware of the Opportunities Database in Blidworth were not sure of its exact use and all these respondents said that they were made aware of it simply by seeing it. It seems that library users may be more likely to use IT resources if they knew something more about their scope and function. In Bilsthorpe, for example, respondents were more aware of the uses of the IT in the library and use of it was significantly greater than in Blidworth. Of course, this may be due to a range of other factors, from its location in the library to the priorities of staff, although the evidence does suggest that publicising the IT available may affect the extent to which the branch library is able to contribute to the regeneration process.

In Bilsthorpe, the data reveals that word-of-mouth, from library staff as well as friends, colleagues and family members was the most common method of

informing respondents about the presence of IT facilities and CHUB members about library facilities. Only 3 of the 31 respondents in Bilsthorpe were made aware of the library's IT facilities through leaflets or media publicity, while 12 were informed by library staff in a more informal way. This indicates that the most effective method of publicising IT facilities may be informally on a word-of-mouth basis through staff. In addition, this form of publicity seems to override the problems described by one member of library staff associated with publicising IT resources:

> *Because of the nature of the actual facilities we provide, the likelihood is that you're never going to have a consistent usership again and again...so it needs fairly constant publicity and we don't have the budget as such to do that...unlike attracting a reader who will come back, it's not really intended to be that type of service...you have to really keep getting new people interested.*   [Member of library staff]

A further problem, however, lies in the fact that by using only library staff to publicise library IT facilities, non-users of the library will be missed. It therefore seems appropriate to perhaps extend the function of the informal networks which are advocated in the literature (Skelcher et al. 1996) and which exist between the library and CHUB in Bilsthorpe, to include the mutual publicity of community resources. The evidence from this research suggests that this is the most effective method of informing individual members of the community about the complementary resources present in both the library and CHUB.

11.2 Chapter Summary and Concusions

- The mere presence of IT in branch libraries is not sufficient in itself to promote use. Facilities, particularly when located at a distance from the issue desk, need to be publicised continuously and effectively.

- Library users may be more likely to use IT facilities if they were made aware of their scope and function

- The most effective means of publicising IT resources may be by word-of-mouth, through informal community networks

12. DEMONSTRATING A CONTRIBUTION TO REGENERATION

12.1 Discussion

There is evidence to suggest that the way in which public library performance is measured can affect the extent to which library staff are willing and able to contribute to the regeneration of communities.

At present, assessment in Nottinghamshire is predominantly issue based; book funds are allocated according to the number of items issued in the previous year. This may lead to members of library staff concentrating on areas for which there is established demand, for example, fiction stock. The value of reference material and IT eludes measurement of this kind and may therefore be perceived to be less important by some staff. Indeed, one member of staff suggested that it is, *'more important to maintain book services because without issues the library would close'*.

As elected members ultimately take responsibility for allocating overall budgets to the library service, it seems essential that they are made aware of the value placed on branch libraries by their communities. Issue statistics seem an inadequate measure in communities where regeneration is a central issue. One respondent stated:

> *We have to be able to demonstrate that there are returns and I think that what will happen over a period of time is that the portfolio of indicators changes...[issues are] a proxy indicator for us...The benefits that it [IT] can actually contribute to the people that use it, that's the difficult bit...But I think we have to move more towards looking at outcomes rather than outputs...and try to do some tracking of how people have benefited from the sessions.* [Assistant Director]

As the respondent recognises, it would be more appropriate to adopt a qualitative approach when gauging the benefits experienced by individuals who have used IT. These benefits may include an increase in confidence and access to information about opportunities, both vital aspects of the regeneration process. However, such a qualitative approach may be too labour intensive for a service already under-funded. The Assistant Director suggested that focus groups may be used as a means of assessing the less discernible benefits associated with Open For Learning resources, for example, an increase in levels of confidence. However such groups are not yet running, as the resources with which to facilitate them are currently unavailable.

By conducting this predominantly qualitative study it is possible to assess the contribution libraries can make to community regeneration through the provision of IT resources and go some way discovering the real value placed on branch libraries by coalfield communities.

12.2 Chapter Summary and Conclusions

- Issue based performance measurement may inhibit the contribution branch libraries are able to make to the regeneration of coalfield communities. A more qualitative approach may be more appropriate.

- This becomes particularly significant when performance indicators are used by elected members when determining budgets.

13. CONCLUSION

13.1 Introduction

From the evidence presented in this report, it seems reasonable to suggest that all three of the branch libraries studied are contributing to community regeneration. However, the extent to which this contribution is intentional and facilitated by information technology is dependent on a number of factors.

13.2 The Local Authority

The structure of the local authority seems to affect the extent to which branch libraries are able to contribute to regeneration, although without a comparative study of other authorities, this conclusion remains tentative. The evidence does suggest, however, that by creating effective links between local authority departments and other agencies, and allowing central aims and objectives to be filtered to staff at all levels of the library service, the impact of branch libraries on community regeneration may be improved. Similarly, the priorities afforded by individual staff may have a bearing on regeneration. Where staff seem most committed to community regeneration, the contribution in this area seems most evident.

13.3 The Value of Branch Libraries

The evidence suggests that libraries are regarded highly within their communities and dissociated from the sometimes negative views expressed towards the local authority. They are therefore ideally placed to play a significant part in community based regeneration initiatives. Related to this is evidence to suggest that the library environment can be successful in breaking down barriers between individuals and formal education systems, an issue regarded in the literature as fundamental in the regeneration of coalfield areas. By providing an environment which promotes learning and skills development, branch libraries may be contributing significantly to the regeneration process.

13.4 Information Technology

It seems that the mere presence of IT in a branch library context is not sufficient in itself to promote IT use and the uptake of training and development opportunities. This report suggests that there are certain factors affecting the importance placed on IT by individual members of communities and therefore the benefits to be gained from using it. These include the ability of library staff to offer encouragement to users. This in turn may be determined by staff's own levels of IT training and the location of IT in relation to the issue desk. In addition, the limited opening hours of branch libraries may affect levels of IT use.

Perhaps the most important conclusions to be drawn from this report relate to the benefits gained from using IT in the branch library context. There is evidence to suggest that branch libraries, because of their community location and informal approach to learning, may encourage individuals who previously have been unable to take advantage of training opportunities, to use IT. Thus, there is a direct benefit to be gained through skills acquisition and development. In addition, the data suggests that IT use may fulfil some of the functions of work and therefore be of benefit to those left unemployed by pit closures. More significantly still is the evidence which indicates that by increasing confidence and self-esteem among IT users, Bilsthorpe library in particular may be able to promote feelings of social inclusion and empowerment. As the literature suggests, these elements are vital to community based regeneration initiatives and as such, it seems that the promotion of IT resources in branch libraries may have a positive impact in this area.

13.5 Partnerships

Despite a commitment to partnerships at a strategic level, it seems that it is locally based partnerships between branch libraries and CRCs which affect most the library's contribution to regeneration through IT. Where partnerships and networks are not so well established, IT use and awareness is not as evident and as such, the library is not so well positioned to impact on the

confidence and skills of individual users. Partnerships may help to combat potential competition and duplication between branch libraries and CRCs, thus facilitating a more holistic regeneration strategy. This seems particularly significant in relation to IT resources which can be costly, and the provision of information.

13.6 Information

The data suggests that by providing information pertaining to job vacancies and training opportunities, branch libraries may contribute to the regeneration of coalfield areas. Where partnerships between the library and other information providers are stronger, the library itself seems to contribute less directly. However, the high use made of branch libraries suggests that they are making a significant contribution to the regeneration process, and that by offering the library building as a venue for Citizens' Advice Bureaux surgeries, this contribution may be further increased. Thus, where information provision is viewed holistically and needs assessed via networks rather than by demand only, the contribution to regeneration is potentially greater.

13.7 The Small Business Sector

There may be a tendency for small businesses to require advice rather than simply information, and for needs to be concentrated in specialist areas such as finance and law, subjects perhaps not immediately accessible within a branch library. Despite being part of the wider library network, however, none of the libraries in this study are well used by businesses in terms of information and IT resources. Evidence from businesses suggests that IT capabilities are generally high and that more sophisticated networked facilities would perhaps make the library a more attractive resource. However, this is in contrast to the IT needs and capabilities of individual members of the community, which it seems have been over-estimated in the literature. It seems that either limited resources need to be targeted solely at individual members of communities because businesses are happy to gain their information from elsewhere, or that library

services need to be promoted more effectively in all areas. As this report deals largely with regeneration at an individual rather than organisational level, however, this remains an area for further investigation.

13.8 Performance Indicators

The evidence suggests that issue based performance measurement may inhibit the contribution branch libraries can make to the process of regeneration. As bookfunds are allocated according to the number of items issued in the previous year, it is possible that staff will be more concerned with areas of stock which promote higher issues than IT resources, which create none. There is a need, it seems, for more qualitative methods of assessing library performance which will allow elected members and others responsible for library budgets to recognise the real value of a community library. Linley and Usherwood (1998) have addressed this issue through the social audit process. It is hoped that this report will also go some way to meeting this need and that as a result, community regeneration may be placed even more forcefully on the library service's agenda.

AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

As well as responding to areas which the literature has uncovered as being in need of research, this report has brought to light several issues worthy of further investigation. These include:

- a more detailed inquiry into exactly what the information needs of individuals involved in community regeneration are;

- a comparative study of local authorities in order to investigate in more detail the extent to which local authority structure may affect the library service's contribution to regeneration;

- a more in-depth investigation of the ways in which CRCs and branch libraries may work together to provide the most effective regeneration strategy possible. This would involve a joint study of individuals and staff in both a library and resource centre context;

- further investigation of the way in which networked IT resources may help to provide an efficient service to the business community in coalfield villages;

- further study of the extent to which on-line democracy can assist the process of community regeneration;

- an investigation into the extent to which different *types* of information technology may affect levels of use and associated benefits in terms of community regeneration;

- discovery of more effective methods of measuring library performance which would incorporate the more qualitative aims and objectives of the service;

- the role of the branch library in offering IT based training in association with other educational establishments.

POSTSCRIPT

The nature of this research has led to a detailed investigation of three libraries in Nottinghamshire coalfield villages. This grounded theory approach means that the study is unique, and it would be misleading to try to derive any generalisations from it.

I have attempted to analyse the information obtained from each library carefully and to the best of my ability. However, I would like to emphasise that any conclusions drawn from the study must take account of my inexperience as a researcher.

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APPENDIX 1: BILSTHORPE LIBRARY USER QUESTIONNAIRE

I am conducting research at the University of Sheffield into the information needs of members of former mining communities. I would be grateful if you could spare me the time to answer a few questions, focusing on the way computers can be used to meet these information needs. These include questions about Information Technology and you, the computer facilities at Bilsthorpe library and the CHUB centre, and your own information needs. Thank you.

INFORMATION

1. Below is a list of different types of information. *Please circle the number which most closely matches your view, with 1 as that information which you do not need at all and 5 as that information which is essential to your needs.*

	Do not need				Essential
Public transport timetables	1	2	3	4	5
Information about community groups	1	2	3	4	5
Information about training opportunities/courses	1	2	3	4	5
Information about job vacancies	1	2	3	4	5
Information about leisure activities	1	2	3	4	5
Information about local government	1	2	3	4	5
Business information (please be specific)	1	2	3	4	5
....					
Housing information	1	2	3	4	5
Health information	1	2	3	4	5

2. Below is a list of sources for obtaining information. *Please circle the number which most closely matches your view, with 1 as the source you would not find useful at all and 5 as the source you would find very useful*

	Not very useful				Very useful
Job centre	1	2	3	4	5
The CHUB centre	1	2	3	4	5
Citizen's advice bureau	1	2	3	4	5
Friends/colleagues/family members	1	2	3	4	5
Local library	1	2	3	4	5
Relevant local authority department	1	2	3	4	5

3. Below are different <u>formats</u> for obtaining information. *Please circle the number which most closely matches <u>your</u> view, with 1 as the format you would <u>not</u> find useful at all and 5 as the format you would find very useful*

	Not very useful			Very useful	
Leaflets	1	2	3	4	5
Books	1	2	3	4	5
CD-ROM	1	2	3	4	5
The Internet	1	2	3	4	5
Ask staff	1	2	3	4	5

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND YOU

1. How important is information technology to <u>you</u> in your everyday life? *Please circle the appropriate answer:*

I never use it	It's not very important	It's important	It's very important	It's vital
1	2	3	4	5

1a). Please give reasons
....
....
....

2. Have you or a community group to which you belong produced information which is available via computer? *Please circle the appropriate answer:*   Yes   No

2a). *If yes*, please give details about the <u>nature</u> of the information and <u>reasons</u> for making it available via computer.
....
....
....

3. Would <u>you</u> personally find any of the <u>computer based </u>resources useful? *Please circle the number which most closely matches <u>your</u> view, with 1 as that resource which you would not find useful at all and 5 as that resource which you would find very useful.*

	Not very useful			Very useful	
The Internet	1	2	3	4	5
An e-mail address	1	2	3	4	5
Public transport timetables	1	2	3	4	5
Information about community groups	1	2	3	4	5
Information about education courses	1	2	3	4	5
Information about training opportunities	1	2	3	4	5
Information about job vacancies	1	2	3	4	5

3a). Please give reasons

....
....
....

BILSTHORPE LIBRARY

1. Are you aware of any computer facilities at Bilsthorpe library? *Please circle the appropriate answer:* Yes No

1a) *If yes*, please would you describe them ....
....
....

If no, please go to question 7

If yes:

2. How did you find out about the computer facilities available at Bilsthorpe library? *Please circle the appropriate answer.*

a) From a friend/colleague/family member

b) From promotional material displayed in the library

c) From promotional material displayed elsewhere (please give details)...

d) Other(s) Please give details..............................

3. Have you ever <u>used</u> the computer based facilities at Bilsthorpe library? *Please circle the appropriate answer:* Yes No

If no, go to question seven

4. Which computer facilities did you use at Bilsthorpe library? ....
....

5. For what reason(s) did you use the computer facilities at Bilsthorpe library? ....
....
....

6. What benefits have you experienced by using the computer based material in Bilsthorpe library? *Please circle the number which most closely matches your view.*

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree Nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Increase my confidence	1	2	3	4	5
Improve my skills generally	1	2	3	4	5
Improve employment prospects	1	2	3	4	5
Help with a new business	1	2	3	4	5

Help gain formal qualifications   1   2   3   4   5

7. Have you encountered any of the following problems which have prevented you using the computer facilities in Bilsthorpe library? *Please circle the appropriate response*

Did not know the facilities were available	Yes	No
I am not a member	Yes	No
The library is too far away from home/work	Yes	No
The opening hours are inconvenient	Yes	No
The <u>staff</u> do not have adequate computer knowledge to help me	Yes	No
I do not have enough knowledge of computers	Yes	No
It costs too much	Yes	No
Other(s) Please give details..	Yes	No

8. Have you used computer based facilities <u>anywhere else</u> for the reasons stated above? *Please circle the appropriate answer:*   Yes   No

Please give details ....
....

9. Which of the following best describes the extent to which you find the library environment suitable for computer based resources. *Please circle the number which most closely matches your view.*

Extremely	Inappropriate	Neither appropriate	Appropriate	Extremely
Inappropriate		nor inappropriate		appropriate
1	2	3	4	5

9a). Please give reasons ....
....
....

9b). How might the library environment be improved? ....
....
....

CHUB

1. Have you used any of the computer based facilities CHUB?   Yes   No

If yes:

2. How did you find out about the computer facilities offered at CHUB? *Please circle one of the responses below.*

From a friend/colleague/family member

From promotional material displayed in the centre

From promotional material displayed elsewhere (please give details)...

Other(s) Please give details.............................

3. What initially attracted you to using the facilities at CHUB? *Please circle any of the responses which apply to you.*

a) Good computer facilities   b) Relevant computer based courses

c) Convenient opening times   d) Convenient distance from home

e) I wanted to work in a group   f) I wanted tutorial support

g) I wanted to work at the same time each week

h) The types of information available (please give details)
....

TRAINING

1. Below is a list of training opportunities. *Please circle the number which most closely matches your view, with 1 as that which you would not find useful at all and 5 as that which you would find very useful.*

	Not very useful			Very useful	
An introduction to the Internet	1	2	3	4	5
How to write your own world wide web pages	1	2	3	4	5
Basic word-processing skills	1	2	3	4	5
More advanced word processing skills	1	2	3	4	5
Introduction to spreadsheets	1	2	3	4	5
More advanced use of spreadsheets	1	2	3	4	5
Other (please state)........................	1	2	3	4	5

2. Below is a list of possible locations for this training. *Please rank them in order of your most preferred location, with 1 as that location you would most prefer.*

	Ranking
Local college (during college hours)	....
Local college (out of college hours)	....
Local public library	....
CHUB	....

Local school (during school hours) ....

Local school (out of school hours) ....

3. Please offer any further comments you would like to make about the provision of computer based resources in Bilsthorpe or any other matter which has arisen from this questionnaire?...
....
....
....
....

PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Sex: Female   Male

2. Age: 0-16   17-24   25-39   40-59   60+

3. Status: Employed (full time   Employed (part time)

                         Self-employed   Training scheme

                         Unwaged   Student

                         'Househusband/wife'   Retired

4. Education: No formal qualifications   'O' level/GCSE

                         Vocational (eg. NVQ)   'A' level

                         Diploma (eg. HND)   Degree

                         Professional   Other

5. Do you have access to a personal computer (PC) at home? Yes   No

                                            at work? Yes   No

It is possible that I may follow up some of these questionnaires with telephone interviews. If you would be willing to offer further information at your own convenience, please include your name and telephone number below.
....
....
....

Thank you very much for your time

APPENDIX 2: CHUB USER QUESTIONNAIRE

I am conducting research at the University of Sheffield into the information needs of members of former mining communities. I would be grateful if you could spare me the time to answer a few questions, focusing on the way computers can be used to meet these information needs. These include questions about information technology and you, the computer facilities at Bilsthorpe library and the CHUB centre, and your own information needs. Thank you.

INFORMATION

1. Below is a list of different types of information. *Please circle the number which most closely matches your view, with 1 as that information which you do not need at all and 5 as that information which is essential to your needs.*

	Do not need				Essential
Public transport timetables	1	2	3	4	5
Information about community groups	1	2	3	4	5
Information about training opportunities/courses	1	2	3	4	5
Information about job vacancies	1	2	3	4	5
Information about leisure activities	1	2	3	4	5
Information about local government	1	2	3	4	5
Business information (please be specific)	1	2	3	4	5
....	1	2	3	4	5
Housing information	1	2	3	4	5
Health information	1	2	3	4	5

2. Below is a list of sources for obtaining information. *Please circle the number which most closely matches your view, with 1 as the source you would not find useful at all and 5 as the source you would find very useful*

	Not very useful				Very useful
Job centre	1	2	3	4	5
The CHUB centre	1	2	3	4	5
Citizen's advice bureau	1	2	3	4	5
Friends/colleagues/family members	1	2	3	4	5
Local library	1	2	3	4	5
Relevant local authority department	1	2	3	4	5
Local shop/post office	1	2	3	4	5

3. Below are different <u>formats</u> for obtaining information. *Please circle the number which most closely matches <u>your</u> view, with 1 as the format you would <u>not</u> find useful at all and 5 as the format you would find very useful*

	Not very useful				Very useful
Leaflets	1	2	3	4	5
Books	1	2	3	4	5
CD-ROM	1	2	3	4	5
The Internet	1	2	3	4	5
Ask staff	1	2	3	4	5

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND YOU

1. How important is information technology to <u>you</u> in your everyday life? *Please circle the appropriate answer:*

I never use it   It's not very important   It's important   It's very important   It's vital

1   2   3   4   5

1a). Please give reasons ....
....
....

2. Have you or a community group to which you belong produced information which is available via computer? *Please circle the appropriate answer:*   Yes   No

2a). *If yes*, please give details about the <u>nature</u> of the information and <u>reasons</u> for making it available via computer. ....
....
....
....

3. Would <u>you</u> personally find any of the <u>computer based </u>resources useful? *Please circle the number which most closely matches <u>your</u> view, with 1 as that resource which you would not find useful at all and 5 as that resource which you would find very useful.*

	Not very useful				Very useful
The Internet	1	2	3	4	5
An e-mail address	1	2	3	4	5
Travel information	1	2	3	4	5
Public transport timetables	1	2	3	4	5
Information about community groups	1	2	3	4	5
Information about education courses	1	2	3	4	5
Information about training opportunities	1	2	3	4	5
Information about job vacancies	1	2	3	4	5

3a). Please give reasons ....
....
....

CHUB

1. Have you used any of the computer based facilities at CHUB? *Please circle the appropriate answer:*   Yes   No

If yes:

2. How did you find out about the computer facilities offered at CHUB? *Please circle one of the responses below.*

From a friend/colleague/family member

From promotional material displayed in the centre

From promotional material displayed elsewhere

(please give details)...

Other(s) Please give details..............................

3. What particularly attracted you to using the facilities at CHUB? *Please circle any of the responses which apply to you.*

a) Good computer facilities   b) Relevant computer based courses

c) Convenient opening times   d) Convenient distance from home

e) I wanted to work in a group   f) I wanted tutorial support

g) I wanted to work at the same time each week

h) The types of information available (please give details) ....

i) Other(s) Please give details ....

BILSTHORPE LIBRARY

1. Are you aware of any computer facilities at Bilsthorpe library?   Yes   No

1a) *If yes*, please would you describe them ....
....
....

If no, please go to question 7

If yes:

2. How did you find out about the computer facilities available at Bilsthorpe library? *Please circle the appropriate answer.*

a) From a friend/colleague/family member

b) From promotional material displayed in the centre

c) From promotional material displayed elsewhere

   (please give details)...

d) Other(s) Please give details.............................

3. Have you ever used the computer based facilities at Bilsthorpe library? *Please circle the appropriate answer:*   Yes   No

4. Which computer facilities did you use at Bilsthorpe library? ....
....

5. For what reason(s) did you use the computer facilities at Bilsthorpe library? ....
....
....

6. What benefits have you experienced by using the computer based material in Bilsthorpe library? *Please circle the number which most closely matches your view.*

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Increase my confidence	1	2	3	4	5
Improve my skills generally	1	2	3	4	5
Improve employment prospects	1	2	3	4	5
Help with a new business	1	2	3	4	5
Help gain formal qualifications	1	2	3	4	5

7. Have you encountered any of the following problems which have prevented you using the computer facilities in Bilsthorpe library? *Please circle the appropriate response*

Did not know the facilities were available	Yes	No
I am not a member	Yes	No
The library is too far away from home/work	Yes	No
The opening hours are inconvenient	Yes	No
The staff do not have adequate computer knowledge to help me	Yes	No
I do not have enough knowledge of computers	Yes	No
It costs too much	Yes	No

8. Have you used computer based facilities <u>anywhere else</u> for the reasons stated above?
Please circle the appropriate answer: Yes   No

Please give details ....
....
....

9. Which of the following best describes the extent to which you find the library environment suitable for computer based resources? *Please circle the number which most closely matches your view.*

Extremely Inappropriate	Inappropriate	Neither appropriate nor inappropriate	Appropriate	Extremely appropriate
1	2	3	4	5

9a). Please give reasons ....
....
....

9b). How might the library environment be improved? ....
....
....

TRAINING

1. Below is a list of training opportunities. *Please circle the number which most closely matches <u>your</u> view, with 1 as that which you would <u>not</u> find useful at all and 5 as that which you would find very useful.*

	Not very useful				Very useful
An introduction to the Internet	1	2	3	4	5
How to write your own world wide web pages	1	2	3	4	5
Basic word-processing skills	1	2	3	4	5
More advanced word processing skills	1	2	3	4	5
Introduction to spreadsheets	1	2	3	4	5
More advanced use of spreadsheets	1	2	3	4	5

2. Below is a list of possible locations for this training. *Please rank them in order of your most preferred location, with 1 as that location you would <u>most</u> prefer.*

	Ranking
Local college (during college hours)	....
Local college (out of college hours)	....
Local public library	....
CHUB	....
Local school (during school hours)	....
Local school (out of school hours)	....

3. Please offer any further comments you would like to make about the provision of computer based resources in Bilsthorpe or any other matter which has arisen from this questionnaire? ....
....
....
....
....

PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. **Sex:**   Female   Male

2. **Age:**   0-16   17-24   25-39   40-59   60+

3. **Status:**   Employed (full time   Employed (part time)

                       Self-employed   Training scheme

                       Unwaged   Student

                       'Househusband/wife'   Retired

4. **Education:**   No formal qualifications   'O' level/GCSE

                       Vocational (eg. NVQ)   'A' level

                       Diploma (eg. HND)   Degree

                       Professional   Other.............................

5. **Do you have access to a personal computer (PC) at home?**   Yes   No

                                                        at work?   Yes   No

It is possible that I may follow up some of these questionnaires with telephone interviews. If you would be willing to offer further information at your own convenience, please include your name and telephone number below.
....
....
....
....

Thank you very much for your time

APPENDIX 3: BLIDWORTH LIBRARY USER QUESTIONNAIRE

I am conducting research at the University of Sheffield into the information needs of members of former mining communities. I would be grateful if you could spare me the time to answer a few questions, focusing on the way computers can be used to meet these information needs. These include questions about information technology and you, the computer facilities at Blidworth library and elsewhere, and your own information needs. Thank you.

INFORMATION

1. Below is a list of different types of information. *Please circle the number which most closely matches your view, with 1 as that information which you do not need at all and 5 as that information which is essential to your needs.*

	Do not need				Essential
Public transport timetables	1	2	3	4	5
Information about community groups	1	2	3	4	5
Information about training opportunities/courses	1	2	3	4	5
Information about job vacancies	1	2	3	4	5
Information about leisure activities	1	2	3	4	5
Information about local government	1	2	3	4	5
Business information (please be specific)	1	2	3	4	5
....	1	2	3	4	5
Housing information	1	2	3	4	5
Health information	1	2	3	4	5

2. Below is a list of sources for obtaining information. *Please circle the number which most closely matches your view, with 1 as the source you would not find useful at all and 5 as the source you would find very useful*

	Not very useful				Very useful
Job centre	1	2	3	4	5
Citizen's advice bureau	1	2	3	4	5
Friends/colleagues/family members	1	2	3	4	5
Local library	1	2	3	4	5
Relevant local authority department	1	2	3	4	5

3. Below are different <u>formats</u> for obtaining information. *Please circle the number which most closely matches <u>your</u> view, with 1 as the format you would not find useful at all and 5 as the format you would find very useful*

	Not very useful			Very useful	
Leaflets	1	2	3	4	5
Books	1	2	3	4	5
CD-ROM	1	2	3	4	5
The Internet	1	2	3	4	5
Ask staff	1	2	3	4	5

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND YOU

1. How important is information technology to <u>you</u> in your everyday life? *Please circle the appropriate answer:*

I never use it	It's not very important	It's important	It's very important	It's vital
1	2	3	4	5

1a). Please give reasons ....
....
....

2. Have you or a community group to which you belong produced information which is available via computer? *Please circle the appropriate answer:*   Yes   No

2a). *If yes*, please give details about the <u>nature</u> of the information and <u>reasons</u> for making it available via computer. ....
....
....

3. Would <u>you</u> personally find any of the <u>computer based</u> resources useful? *Please circle the number which most closely matches <u>your</u> view, with 1 as that resource which you do would not find useful at all and 5 as that resource which you would find very useful.*

	Not very useful			Very useful	
The Internet	1	2	3	4	5
An e-mail address	1	2	3	4	5
Public transport timetables	1	2	3	4	5
Information about community groups	1	2	3	4	5
Information about education courses	1	2	3	4	5
Information about training opportunities	1	2	3	4	5
Information about job vacancies	1	2	3	4	5

BLIDWORTH LIBRARY

1. Are you aware of any computer facilities at Blidworth library? *Please circle the appropriate answer:*   Yes   No

1a) *If yes*, please would you describe them ....

....

If no, please go to question 6

If yes:

2. How did you find out about the computer facilities available at Blidworth library? *Please circle the appropriate answer.*

a) From a friend/colleague/family member

b) From promotional material displayed in the centre

c) From promotional material displayed elsewhere (please give details)...

d) Other(s) Please give details..............................

3. Have you ever used the computer based facilities at Blidworth library? *Please circle the appropriate answer:*   Yes   No

4. For what reason(s) did you use the computer facilities at Blidworth library? ....
....
....

5. What benefits have you experienced by using the computer based material in Blidworth library? *Please circle the number which most closely matches your view.*

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Increase my confidence	1	2	3	4	5
Improve my skills generally	1	2	3	4	5
Improve employment prospect	1	2	3	4	5
Help with a new business	1	2	3	4	5
Help gain formal qualifications	1	2	3	4	5

6. Have you encountered any of the following problems which have prevented you using the computer facilities in Blidworth library? *Please circle the appropriate response*

Did not know the facilities were available	Yes	No
I am not a member	Yes	No
The library is too far away from home/work	Yes	No
The opening hours are inconvenient	Yes	No

The staff do not have adequate computer knowledge to help me	Yes	No
I do not have enough knowledge of computers	Yes	No
It costs too much	Yes	No
Other(s) Please give details..	Yes	No

7. Which of the following best describes the extent to which you find the library environment suitable for computer based resources. *Please circle the number which most closely matches your view.*

Extremely Inappropriate	Inappropriate	Neither appropriate nor inappropriate	Appropriate	Extremely appropriate
1	2	3	4	5

7a). Please give reasons ....
....
....

7b). How might the library environment be improved? ....
....
....

COMPUTER FACILITIES ELSEWHERE

1. Have you used any of the computer based facilities at a location other than Blidworth library?   Yes   No

Please give details of where and why you used them ....
....
....

If yes:

2. How did you find out about the computer facilities offered at this other location? *Please circle one of the responses below.*

From a friend/colleague/family member

From promotional material displayed in the centre

From promotional material displayed elsewhere (please give details)...

Other(s) Please give details..............................

3. What initially attracted you to using the facilities at the other location? *Please circle any of the responses which apply to you.*

a) Good computer facilities

b) Relevant computer based courses

c) Convenient opening times

d) Convenient distance from home

e) I wanted to work in a group

f) I wanted tutorial support

g) I wanted to work at the same time each week

h) The types of information available (please give details) ....

I) Other(s) Please give details ....

TRAINING

1. Below is a list of training opportunities. *Please circle the number which most closely matches your view, with 1 as that which you would not find useful at all and 5 as that which you would find very useful.*

	Not very useful			Very useful	
An introduction to the Internet	1	2	3	4	5
How to write your own world wide web pages	1	2	3	4	5
Basic word-processing skills	1	2	3	4	5
More advanced word processing skills	1	2	3	4	5
Introduction to spreadsheets	1	2	3	4	5
More advanced use of spreadsheets	1	2	3	4	5
Other (please give details)	1	2	3	4	5

2. Below is a list of possible locations for this training. *Please rank them in order of your most preferred location, with 1 as that location you would most prefer.*

	Ranking
Local college (during college hours)	....
Local college (out of college hours)	....
Local public library	....
Local school (during school hours)	....
Local school (out of school hours)	....

3. Please offer any further comments you would like to make about the provision of computer based resources in Blidworth or any other matter which has arisen from this questionnaire?..
....
....
....
....

PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Sex: Female   Male

2. Age: 0-16   17-24   25-39   40-59   60+

3. Status: Employed (full time   Employed (part time)

                            Self-employed   Training scheme

                            Unwaged   Student

                            'Househusband/wife'   Retired

4. Education: No formal qualifications   'O' level/GCSE

                            Vocational (eg. NVQ)   'A' level

                            Diploma (eg. HND)   Degree

                            Professional   Other

5. Do you have access to a personal computer (PC) at home?   Yes   No

                                          at work?   Yes   No

It is possible that I may follow up some of these questionnaires with telephone interviews. If you would be willing to offer further information at your own convenience, please include your name and telephone number below.

....
....
....
....

Thank you very much for your time

APPENDIX 4: CALVERTON LIBRARY USER QUESTIONNAIRE

I am conducting research at the University of Sheffield into the information needs of members of former mining communities. I would be grateful if you could spare me the time to answer a few questions, focusing on the way computers can be used to meet these information needs. These include questions about information technology and you, the computer facilities at Calverton library and elsewhere, and your own information needs. Thank you.

INFORMATION

1. Below is a list of different types of information. *Please circle the number which most closely matches <u>your</u> view, with 1 as that information which you do not <u>need</u> at all and 5 as that information which is essential to your <u>needs</u>.*

	Do not need				Essential
Public transport timetables	1	2	3	4	5
Information about community groups	1	2	3	4	5
Information about training opportunities/courses	1	2	3	4	5
Information about job vacancies	1	2	3	4	5
Information about leisure activities	1	2	3	4	5
Information about local government	1	2	3	4	5
Business information (please be specific)	1	2	3	4	5
....	1	2	3	4	5
Housing information	1	2	3	4	5
Health information	1	2	3	4	5

2. Below is a list of <u>sources</u> for obtaining information. *Please circle the number which most closely matches <u>your</u> view, with 1 as the source you would not find useful at all and 5 as the source you would find very useful*

	Not very useful				Very useful
Job centre	1	2	3	4	5
Citizen's advice bureau	1	2	3	4	5
Friends/colleagues/family members	1	2	3	4	5
Local library	1	2	3	4	5
Relevant local authority department	1	2	3	4	5

3. Below are different <u>formats</u> for obtaining information. *Please circle the number which most closely matches <u>your</u> view, with 1 as the format you would not find useful at all and 5 as the format you would find very useful*

	Not very useful				Very useful
Leaflets	1	2	3	4	5
Books	1	2	3	4	5
CD-ROM	1	2	3	4	5
The Internet	1	2	3	4	5
Ask staff	1	2	3	4	5

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND YOU

1. How important is information technology to <u>you</u> in your everyday life? *Please circle the appropriate answer:*

I never use it	It's not very important	It's important	It's very important	It's vital
1	2	3	4	5

1a). Please give reasons ....
....
....

2. Have you or a community group to which you belong produced information which is available via computer? *Please circle the appropriate answer:*   Yes   No

2a). *If yes*, please give details about the <u>nature</u> of the information and <u>reasons</u> for making it available via computer. ....
....
....
....

3. Would <u>you</u> personally find any of the <u>computer based </u>resources useful? *Please circle the number which most closely matches <u>your</u> view, with 1 as that resource which you do would not find useful at all and 5 as that resource which you would **find very useful.***

	Not very useful				Very useful
The Internet	1	2	3	4	5
An e-mail address	1	2	3	4	5
Public transport timetables	1	2	3	4	5
Information about community groups	1	2	3	4	5
Information about education courses	1	2	3	4	5
Information about training opportunities	1	2	3	4	5
Information about job vacancies	1	2	3	4	5

CALVERTON LIBRARY

1. Would you like to see computer facilities installed into Calverton library for public use?   Yes   No

1a). Please give reasons ....
....
....

If yes:

2. What type of computer facilities would you like to see installed? ....
....
....

2a). Please give reasons **....**...
....
....

3. Which of the following best describes the extent to which you find the library environment suitable for computer based resources. *Please circle the number which most closely matches your view.*

Extremely Inappropriate	Inappropriate	Neither appropriate nor inappropriate	Appropriate	Extremely appropriate
1	2	3	4	5

4a). Please give reasons ....
....
....

4b). How might the library environment be improved? **.....**...
....
....

5. Have you encountered any of the following problems which have prevented you using the library in Calverton? *Please circle the appropriate response*

I am not a member	Yes	No
The library is too far away from home/work	Yes	No
The opening hours are inconvenient	Yes	No
It costs too much	Yes	No
Other(s) Please give details..	Yes	No

COMPUTER FACILITIES ELSEWHERE

1. Have you used computer facilities at another public library?   Yes   No

1a). Please give details of where and why you used them ....
....
....

2. Have you used computer based facilities at any other location in or near Calverton?

  Yes   No

2a). Please give details of where and why you used them ....
....
....

If no, go to page 5

If yes:

3. How did you find out about the computer facilities offered at this other location? *Please circle one of the responses below.*

From a friend/colleague/family member

From promotional material displayed in the centre

From promotional material displayed elsewhere (please give details)...

Other(s) Please give details..............................

4. What initially attracted you to using the facilities at the other location? *Please circle any of the responses which apply to you.*

a) Good computer facilities   b) Relevant computer based courses

c) Convenient opening times   d) Convenient distance from home

e) I wanted to work in a group   f) I wanted tutorial support

g) I wanted to work at the same time each week

h) The types of information available (please give details) ....

I) Other(s) Please give details ....

5. What benefits have you experienced by using the computer based material at this location? *Please circle the number which most closely matches your view.*

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Increase my confidence	1	2	3	4	5
Improve my skills generally	1	2	3	4	5
Improve employment prospects	1	2	3	4	5
Help with a new business	1	2	3	4	5
Help gain formal qualifications	1	2	3	4	5

TRAINING

1. Below is a list of training opportunities. *Please circle the number which most closely matches your view, with 1 as that which you would not find useful at all and 5 as that which you would find very useful.*

	Not very useful			Very useful	
An introduction to the Internet	1	2	3	4	5
How to write your own world wide web pages	1	2	3	4	5
Basic word-processing skills	1	2	3	4	5
More advanced word processing skills	1	2	3	4	5
Introduction to spreadsheets	1	2	3	4	5
More advanced use of spreadsheets	1	2	3	4	5
Other (please give details) 1	2	3	4	5

2. Below is a list of possible locations for this training. *Please rank them in order of your most preferred location, with 1 as that location you would most prefer.*

	Ranking
Local college (during college hours)	....
Local college (out of college hours)	....
Local public library	....
Local school (during school hours)	....
Local school (out of school hours)	....

3. Please offer any further comments you would like to make about the provision of computer based resources in Calverton or any other matter which has arisen from this questionnaire?

....
....
....
....
....

PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Sex: Female   Male

2. Age: 0-16   17-24   25-39   40-59   60+

3. Status: Employed (full time   Employed (part time)

Self-employed   Training scheme

Unwaged   Student

'Househusband/wife'   Retired

4. Education: No formal qualifications   'O' level/GCSE

                          Vocational (eg. NVQ)   'A' level

                          Diploma (eg. HND)   Degree

                          Professional   Other

5. Do you have access to a personal computer (PC) at home?   Yes   No

                                                         at work?   Yes   No

It is possible that I may follow up some of these questionnaires with telephone interviews. If you would be willing to offer further information at your own convenience, please include your name and telephone number below.

....

....

....

....

Thank you very much for your time

APPENDIX 5: QUESTIONNAIRE TO BUSINESSES

I am conducting research at the University of Sheffield into the information needs of businesses in former mining communities. I would be grateful if you could spare me the time to answer a few, brief questions, focusing on the way information technology can be used to meet information needs. It includes questions about the types of information used by your business and the means by which it is acquired, information technology and the provision of information by Blidworth public library. I would be grateful if you would complete the questionnaire from the point of view of *your business.*   Thank you very much for your time.

INFORMATION

1. Does your company employ specialist staff devoted to obtaining relevant information for your business? *Please circle the appropriate response*   Yes   No

2. Below is a list of different types of information. In order to establish the types of information needed by your business, *please circle the number which most closely matches the view of your company, with 1 as that information which you do not need at all and 5 as that information which is essential to your needs.*

	Do not need				Essential
Information about world markets	1	2	3	4	5
Information about the local area		1	2	3	4	5
Information about legislation		1	2	3	4	5
Information about patents		1	2	3	4	5
Financial information		1	2	3	4	5
Government information		1	2	3	4	5
Information about training		1	2	3	4	5
Other (please give details) 1	2	3	4	5

3. Below is a list of sources for obtaining information. *Please circle the number which most closely matches the view of your company, with 1 as the source you would not find useful at all and 5 as the source you would find very useful*

	Not useful at all				Very useful
Parent company	1	2	3	4	5
Colleagues	1	2	3	4	5
Bank	1	2	3	4	5
Local library	1	2	3	4	5
Relevant government department	1	2	3	4	5
Health and Safety Executive	1	2	3	4	5

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

1. How important is information technology to your company? Please circle the appropriate response:

 Never use it   It's not very important   It's important   It's very important   It's vital

     1   2   3   4   5

1a). Please give reasons ....
....
....
....

3. Would your company find any of the computer based resources useful? *Please circle the number which most closely matches the view of your company, with 1 as that resource which you would not find useful at all and 5 as that resource which you would find very useful.*

	Not useful at all			Very useful	
The Internet	1	2	3	4	5
An e-mail address	1	2	3	4	5
CD-ROMS	1	2	3	4	5

3a). Please give reasons ....
....
....
....

BLIDWORTH LIBRARY

1. Does your company use Blidworth library as a resource?   Yes   No

1a). *If yes*, in what way is the library used? ....
....
....

2.   Is your company aware of any computer facilities at Blidworth library? Yes   No

3. Have you encountered any of the following problems which have prevented your company using the computer facilities in Blidworth library? *Please circle the appropriate response*

Did not know the facilities were available	Yes	No
I am not a member of the library	Yes	No
The opening hours are inconvenient	Yes	No
The staff do not have adequate computer knowledge to help me	Yes	No
I do not have enough knowledge of computers	Yes	No
It costs too much	Yes	No
Other(s) Please give details..	Yes	No

If your company has used the computer facilities at Blidworth library:

4. For what purposes did your company use the computer based facilities? ....
....
....

5. How did your company find out about the computer facilities available at Blidworth library? *Please circle the appropriate answer:*

a) From a colleague/friend

b) From promotional material displayed in the library

c) From promotional material displayed elsewhere

    (please give details)...

d) Other(s) Please give details..............................

INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR COMPANY

1. Is your company part of a larger organisation?   Yes   No

2. Approximately how many staff are employed by your company in Blidworth?
Please circle the appropriate response: 1-5   6-10   11-20   21-30   31-50   51+

It is possible that I may follow up some of these questionnaires with short telephone interviews. If you would be willing to offer further information at your own convenience, please include the name of your company and of the person to contact, with an appropriate telephone number below. Thank you.

....
....
....
 ....

Thank you very much for your time

APPENDIX 6: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR HEAD OF NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY LIBRARIES: DAVID LATHROPE

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this discussion. My aim is to gain an insight into the strategic and planning side of the role libraries can play in the economic regeneration of coalfield sites. Information technology will be the focus for this discussion, but please feel free to include any other information you think is important. The discussion will include sections on economic regeneration in its broadest sense, information technology and training, partnerships and networks. Thank you.

REGENERATION

1. Is it an aim of Nottinghamshire County Council library service to contribute towards economic regeneration?

2. What part is the library service playing in this area?

3. What are the barriers to making a greater contribution?

4. Does the library service have a strategy in terms of its contribution to economic regeneration?

4a). Please explain.

Community based regeneration initiatives

1. To what extent is the library involved in community based regeneration initiatives?

2. Is the library proactive in this area?

REGENERATION AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

1. What is the real and potential role of information technology in the library's contribution to regeneration?

2. Is it more important for central libraries to have information technology than branch libraries?

3. What type of criteria are used in deciding on which libraries should house IT?

TRAINING

1. Is it the role of the library service to provide training in information technology to the public?

2. If no, whose role is it?

3. What are the barriers to providing such training?

4. Are library staff trained sufficiently in order to offer an IT service to the public?

ACCESS

1. To what extent is the library culture and environment suitable for information technology resources?

2. In light of recent cut backs in opening hours, to what extent is the library service able to offer adequate access to IT and information?

PARTNERSHIPS

1. To what extent is the library service involved in partnerships with the private and voluntary sector in terms of regeneration strategies?

2. Does this involve coalfield projects specifically?

3. to what extent is the library service proactive in forming these partnerships?

4. How, if at all, is the library service involved in regeneration initiatives involving other local authority departments?

5. If yes, how were these relationships formed?

6. What is the library's role in this involvement?

BARRIERS

1. To what extent is the library's contribution to economic regeneration determined by individual members of library staff?

2. What is the future likely to hold in terms of the library's contribution to regeneration?

3. How do you see the library's developing role in IT provision?

APPENDIX 7: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR LIBRARIANS BILSTHORPE AND BLIDWORTH

Thank you for agreeing to take the time to take part in this discussion. I would be grateful if you would answer the questions from your own perspective with regard to Bilsthorpe/Blidworth. The questions will be divided into sections, starting with the information needs of your library community and followed with sections on information technology and training, economic regeneration in its broadest sense, access to the library, partnerships and networks. I will use the questions as guidelines only, so if you would like to provide additional information about some of the points, then please feel free to do so.

INFORMATION NEEDS

Community profiling

1. How are the information needs of the community assessed?

2. To what extent is this approach successful?

3. What do you consider to be the most important information needs of the community?

4. To what extent are these needs specific to members of former mining communities?

Information needs and IT

1. What part does information technology play in meeting these information needs?

2. Does information technology make information more or less accessible? Please explain.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The library's role

1. Why does Bilsthorpe/Blidworth library have these computer resources?

2. To what extent are the facilities used by both individuals and organisations in Bilsthorpe/Blidworth?

3. What are the main reasons for people using the IT facilities in Bilsthorpe/Blidworth?

4. Is it more important for central libraries to have information technology than branch libraries, for example?

Promotion of IT facilities

1. How, if at all, were the facilities promoted to local organisations?

2. To what extent was this approach successful?

3. Have any groups been targeted particularly in terms of the IT facilities?

Further IT facilities

1. Are there any other IT resources you feel would be useful in contributing to the regeneration of this area? If yes, please explain.

2. Do you think the installation of the Internet in Bilsthorpe/Blidworth library would benefit the community?

3. In what ways?

4. What is the future of the public library service in terms of information technology and its contribution to the economic regeneration of communities?

TRAINING

1. To what extent is it the role of the branch library to provide training to the public in information technology?

2. What are the barriers to providing such training?

3. How willing are you as a librarian to accept the role of, for example, world wide web manager or systems support officer for your own libraries?

4. Is there adequate training for library staff in supporting the IT facilities available in Bilsthorpe/Blidworth library? Please explain

REGENERATION

Library's role in regeneration

1. Is it an aim of your library to contribute towards the economic regeneration of Bilsthorpe/Blidworth?

2. What is the role of Bilsthorpe/Blidworth library in the regeneration of this community?

Regeneration and information

1. What types of information, if any, do you feel are necessary for the economic regeneration of former mining communities?

2. How is the library providing this information?

3. To your knowledge, are the policy makers and politicians aware of the role you play in this area? (How is this important?/How might this be improved)

4. To what degree, if any, should this role be reduced or extended?

5. Does the library have a strategy in terms of its contribution towards the regeneration of Bilsthorpe/Blidworth? If so, please give details.

Community based regeneration initiatives

1. To what extent is the library involved in community based regeneration initiatives?

2. How did the library become involved?

REGENERATION AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

1. What is the real and potential role of **information technology** in terms of regeneration?

2. How does IT contribute to the regeneration process in Bilsthorpe/Blidworth?

3. (Probe about direct and indirect influence it can have)

BUSINESSES AND REGENERATION

1. What types of information, if any, is the library providing to support the businesses in this area? To what extent is this adequate?

2. To what extent is this adequate and how might it be improved?

3. How important do you think information technology is in providing a service to businesses?

ACCESS

Environment

1. To what extent is the library environment and culture suitable for IT resources?

Opening hours

1. In light of recent cut backs in opening hours, to what extent is the library able to offer adequate access to information and IT facilities?

PARTNERSHIPS

1. To what extent is the library involved in partnerships with the private and voluntary sectors in terms of regeneration strategies?

2. Please explain the nature of these partnerships.

3. Does this include partnerships with coalfield projects specifically?

4. To what extent was the library pro-active in forming these partnerships?

Other local authority departments

1. How, if at all, is the library involved in regeneration initiatives involving other local authority departments?

2. *If yes*, how were these relationships formed?

3. *If no*, is it the library's intention to become involved in these partnerships in the future? In what ways?

THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

1. To what extent is the library's involvement in partnerships supported by the local authority?

2. How is this manifest?

3. To what extent is the library's institutional nature a barrier to its use?

4. If so, how might his be overcome?

BLIDWORTH LIBRARY AND THE COMMUNITY CENTRE

1. What is the nature of the relationship between the community centre in Blidworth and the library in terms of IT provision?

2. How was this relationship formed?

3. How do you see the continuing relationship between the library and community centre in terms of IT provision and training?

BILSTHORPE LIBRARY AND CHUB

1. What is the nature of the relationship between the library in Bilsthorpe and CHUB?

2. How was this relationship formed?

3. How do you see the continuing relationship of the library and CHUB in terms IT provision and regeneration initiatives?

BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE REGENERATION

1. What are the barriers to the library's involvement in regeneration initiatives?

2. To what extent is the contribution of the library to regeneration determined by individual members of staff?

3. What is the potential of Bilsthorpe library to contribute towards regeneration in the future?

APPENDIX 8: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR LIBRARIAN AT CALVERTON

Thank you for agreeing to take the time to take part in this discussion. I would be grateful if you would answer the questions from your own perspective with regard to Calverton. The questions will be divided into sections, starting with the information needs of your library community and followed with sections on information technology and training, economic regeneration in its broadest sense, access to the library, partnerships and networks. I will use the questions as guidelines only, so if you would like to provide additional information about some of the points, then please feel free to do so.

INFORMATION NEEDS

1. How are the information needs of the community assessed?

2. To what extent is this approach successful?

3. What do you consider to be the most important information needs of the community?

4. To what extent are these needs specific to members of former mining communities?

Other information providers

1. Are there any other providers of information for the public in Calverton? Please explain their role and their relationship with the library.

2. Are there any other providers of IT for the public in the local area? Please explain their role and their relationship with the library.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The library's role

1. What are the reasons for Calverton library's lack of information technology for public use?

Further IT facilities

1. Are there any other IT resources you feel would be useful in contributing to the regeneration of this area? If yes, please explain.

2. Do you think the installation of the Internet in Calverton library would benefit the community?

3. In what ways?

4. What is the future of the public library service in terms of information technology and its contribution to the economic regeneration of communities?

Information needs and IT

1. Would information technology make information more or less accessible at Calverton?

2. Is it more important for central libraries to have information technology than branch libraries, for example?

REGENERATION

Library's role in regeneration

1. Is it an aim of your library to contribute towards the economic regeneration of Calverton?

2. What is the role of Calverton library in the regeneration of this community?

Regeneration and information

1. What types of information, if any, do you feel are necessary for the economic regeneration of former mining communities?

2. How is the library providing this information?

3. To your knowledge, are the policy makers and politicians aware of the role you play in this area? (How is this important?/How might this be improved)

4. To what degree, if any, should this role be reduced or extended?

5. Does the library have a strategy in terms of its contribution towards the regeneration of Calverton? If so, please give details.

Community based regeneration initiatives

1. To what extent is the library involved in community based regeneration initiatives?

2. How did the library become involved?

REGENERATION AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

1. What is the real and potential role of **information technology** in terms of regeneration?

2. How could having IT at Calverton library contribute to the regeneration process in Calverton?

3. Are there any plans for information technology to be installed into Calverton library?

CALVERTON BUSINESSES AND REGENERATION

1. What types of information, if any, is the library providing to support the businesses in this area? To what extent is this adequate?

2. What is the role of information technology in providing this information/service?

3. To what extent is this adequate and how might it be improved?

4. How important do you think information technology is in providing a service to businesses?

ACCESS

Environment

1. To what extent is the library environment and culture suitable for IT resources?

Opening hours

1. In light of recent cut backs in opening hours, to what extent is the library able to offer adequate access to information and IT facilities?

PARTNERSHIPS

1. To what extent is the library involved in partnerships with the private and voluntary sectors in terms of regeneration strategies?

2. Does this include partnerships with coalfield projects specifically?

3. Please explain the nature of these partnerships.

4. To what extent was the library pro-active in forming these partnerships?

Other local authority departments

1. How, if at all, is the library involved in regeneration initiatives involving other local authority departments?

2. *If yes*, how were these relationships formed?

3. *If no,* is it the library's intention to become involved in these partnerships in the future? In what ways?

THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

1. To what extent is the library's involvement in partnerships supported by the local authority?

2. To what extent is the library's institutional nature a barrier to its use?

3. If so, how might his be overcome?

BARRIERS

1. What are the barriers to the library's involvement in regeneration initiatives?

2. To what extent is the contribution of the library to regeneration determined by individual members of staff?

3. What is the future likely to hold in terms of Calverton library's contribution towards regeneration?

APPENDIX 9: INTERVIEWS WITH SLAs
BILSTHORPE AND BLIDWORTH LIBRARIES

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview. I would be grateful if you would answer the questions from your own perspective with regard to Bilsthorpe/Blidworth. The questions will be divided into sections, starting with the information needs of your library community and followed with sections on information technology, economic regeneration in its broadest sense, access to the library and partnerships with other organisations. I will use the questions as guidelines only, so if you would like to provide additional information about some of the points, then please feel free to do so.

INFORMATION NEEDS

1. What do you consider to be the most important information needs of members of the community in Bilsthorpe/Blidworth?

2. To what extent do you think these needs are specific to former mining communities?

3. How are these needs being met by the library?

4. To what extent is this approach successful?

Library users

1. Who are the main users of Bilsthorpe/Blidworth library?

2. In general, how do you think members of the Bilsthorpe/Blidworth community perceive the library?

3. Is information technology making information more or less accessible?

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Expectations

1. What are the expectations of members of the community in Bilsthorpe/Blidworth in terms of IT provision by the library?

The library's role

2. What is Bilsthorpe/Blidworth library's role in providing IT facilities to the public?

IT, businesses and community groups

1. To what extent do community groups and businesses make use of the IT facilities in Bilsthorpe/Blidworth?

2. How was this relationship formed?

3. What is the relationship of the library in Bilsthorpe/Blidworth with CHUB/the community centre in terms of IT provision to the public?

IT publicity

1. How are the IT facilities in Bilsthorpe/Blidworth publicised?

2. Are any particular groups targeted? Why?

3. To what extent is this approach successful?

4. What are the main reasons for people using the IT facilities in Bilsthorpe/Blidworth?

5. What *should* be the role of the public library in terms of IT provision and training for the public?

TRAINING

1. To what extent is it the role of the library staff to provide training to the public in IT in Bilsthorpe/Blidworth?

2. How happy would you be to take on the responsibility of providing additional training or more formal IT courses?

3. To what extent is the training provided to library staff in IT adequate?

REGENERATION

The library's role

1. What is Bilsthorpe/Blidworth library's role in the economic regeneration of the community?

2. To what extent is this approach successful?

3. How might it be improved?

Regeneration and IT

1. How does having public access to IT contribute to the regeneration process in Bilsthorpe/Blidworth?

2. Is this contribution always directly noticeable and related?

ACCESS

Environment

1. To what extent is the library environment and culture suitable for IT resources?

2. How might this be improved?

Opening hours

1. In light of recent cut backs in opening hours, to what extent is the library able to offer adequate access to information?

2. How will this reduction in opening hours affect the contribution the library can make in terms of the economic regeneration of this community?

PARTNERSHIPS

1. Which organisations, if any, are involved in regeneration initiatives in Bilsthorpe/Blidworth?

2. To what extent is the library involved in partnerships with the private and voluntary sector in Bilsthorpe/Blidworth in terms of regeneration initiatives?

3. What is the nature and purpose of these relationships?

THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

1. To what extent is the library's contribution to the regeneration of Bilsthorpe/Blidworth helped *or hindered* by their association with the local authority?

2. To what extent is the library's association with the local authority a barrier to its use?

APPENDIX 10: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR SLA CALVERTON LIBRARY

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this discussion. I would be grateful if you would answer the questions from your own perspective with regard to Calverton. The questions will be divided into sections, starting with the information needs of your library community and followed with sections on information technology, economic regeneration in its broadest sense and access to the library. I will use the questions as guidelines only, so if you would like to provide additional information about some of the points, then please feel free to do so.

INFORMATION NEEDS

1. What do you consider to be the most important information needs of members of the community in Calverton?

2. How are these needs being met by the library?

3. To what extent do you think these needs are specific to former mining communities?

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

1. Is information technology making information more or less accessible?

Other organisations

1. Are there any local organisations providing information or IT facilities for public use?

2. Please explain the nature of these resources and their relationship with the library in Calverton.

The library's role

1. What **should** be the role of the public library in terms of IT provision and training for the public?

2. To what extent do you think the lack of IT facilities for public use in Calverton library are limiting the service you can offer?

3. What benefits do you think any type of IT for public use could bring to members of the community in Calverton?

TRAINING

1. As a member of library staff, is it your role to provide training in IT to the public?

REGENERATION

The library's role

1. What is Calverton library's role in the economic regeneration of the community?

2. To what extent is this approach successful?

3. What are the barriers to the library's contribution to economic regeneration?

Regeneration and IT

1. Do you think that having IT in the library could help this process of regeneration? In what ways?

ACCESS

Environment

1. To what extent is the library environment and culture suitable for IT resources?

2. How might this be improved?

Opening hours

1. In light of recent cut backs in opening hours, to what extent is the library able to offer adequate access to information?

THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

1. How does the library's association with the local authority affect its contribution to regeneration in Calverton?

THE FUTURE

1. What is the future likely to hold in terms of IT in Calverton library?