

FLAG IT UP, CASCADE IT DOWN: AN INVESTIGATION INTO  
THE MANAGEMENT OF TRAINING AND LEARNING IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES.

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## **Acknowledgements**

At this juncture it is customary to acknowledge and thank people, however I could probably write a dissertation on this subject alone...

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This study is dedicated to my pappy, Harry Manning who always made me laugh, and continually triumphed over adversity.

## **Abstract**

This study investigates the concept of the learning organisation in English public libraries. The idea of a learning organisation has been popular in management texts since the early 1990's, however little research has been done on its uptake in the public library domain. The research aims to ascertain what 'a learning organisation' means, whether the concept is being recognised and used in library authorities through their management of learning and training, and draws the findings together to create a recipe for best practice.

An inductive research approach is used, with a reliance on both quantitative and qualitative methods. An e-mail questionnaire survey was sent to a sample of libraries in England and from this, three case study library authorities were chosen. Within these case study authorities staff from different levels of the organisation were interviewed to gain further insight into the subject and the attitudes and opinions of employees.

There were several areas of study in which clear differences were found between professional and para-professional staff, these included an awareness of the term 'learning organisation', the training methods used for different levels of staff, and attitudes towards several aspects of learning and training within their organisations. Information communication technology training, cascade training, and continual professional development were all chosen for further focus and discussion.

No all-encompassing definition of a learning organisation could be found from the research, however several themes from the literature seemed to be missing from the library's view of one entailed. The library's service sector background and inertia appeared to be the major stumbling blocks. The situation with regards training in public libraries seems riddled with disparities, many of which are recognised by staff.

Several areas for improvement were identified, and obstacles to the progress of a learning culture in a library environment were highlighted. Although the theory is 'business-based', evidence to suggest that it could have a positive effect on the public library was strong, and staff were enthusiastic with regards their library becoming, or continuing to be, a learning organisation.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Background

When we discuss training, it is widely recognized that ‘flagging up’ needs to come before ‘cascading down’; this basically means that one has to identify training needs before putting any programme into practice. This study will address the situation regarding training in public library and information services, and the attitudes and awareness of ‘the learning organisation’ or ‘learning culture’ (Pedler et al., 1991, Senge, 1990). The importance of training in the library and information service (LIS) is widely recognised, indeed, the Library Association Working Party on Training (LAWPT) (1977, quoted in Luccock, 1986:10) commented that “Training is not a luxury or an optional extra, it is a necessity”.

This study has been largely inspired by personal experience gained whilst working for a public library and information service last year. It was interesting to see how training needs were identified and the number of courses that were available to different ‘levels’ of staff. As a result of discussions with academic staff and reading literature on the subject, the researcher was keen to investigate training methods and strategies, and the idea of ‘learning organisation’ and in particular its relevance and transferability into the public LIS sector.

## 1.2 Learning Organisations

A key aspect of the learning organisation idea is that training is only a small part of the learning process, ideally the whole organisation should be aware of the organisational aims and objectives and knowledge should be passed throughout the whole organisation equally and effectively. Senge (1990:4) suggests that, “Learning organizations are possible because, deep down we are all learners”. He goes on to state that, “The organizations that will truly excel in the future will be the organizations that discover how to tap people’s commitment and capacity to learn at *all* levels in an organization” (Senge 1990:4). Therefore a major concern within this area, and a key focus for this study is how far do these ideals translate into practice. To become a ‘learning organisation’ is a major undertaking and requires all members of the organisation to embrace the idea of continuous learning and work towards an environment which enhances learning (Whetherly, 1994). Whether this is the case in practice is a question that this study will address.

Recent literature suggests it is beneficial for an organisation to adopt a learning culture; (Senge 1990, Pedler et al. 1991), indeed, staff training should encompass learning and development (Whetherly, 1998). This involves providing employees with opportunities to develop new skills. Staff development entails creating learning opportunities for people in the workplace and integrating learning with work to create a ‘learning organisation’ (Irons, 1997). Jones et al. (1999:63) comment, “It is important that the phrase ‘learning organisation’ is not treated simply as management jargon or a

current fad. It is an approach that builds on existing good practice, recognizing how learning can help libraries raise skill levels”.

### **1.3 Training and Learning in libraries**

Allan (2000:7) explains “the late 1990’s saw a shift in UK government policy as learning became a key issue in terms of the future well-being of the country. This resulted in a proliferation of reports and policy statements such as the Learning Age (1998) on the importance to develop workplace learning and lifelong”.

One of the key objectives of public library and information services, especially in recent years, has been the promotion of lifelong learning. It could be assumed that as advocates of this idea, this principle would and should extend to LIS employees themselves, highlighting the public library and information services’ own recognition of the importance of training and the need to adopt a learning culture.

### **1.4 Aims and Objectives**

With these issues in mind the following aims and objectives have been compiled:

The dissertation aims to:

- Investigate the extent to which libraries recognize the value of the management of training and learning
- Investigate what is meant by the term ‘learning organisation’.

- Explore attitudes with regards to training in library and information services.

Leading on from these broad aims, there are four key objectives:

- To investigate and define what a learning organisation/culture entails.
- To assess the extent to which public libraries recognize and attempt to implement a learning culture.
- To identify and evaluate the current training/learning strategies and programmes of public libraries.
- To identify and describe best practice for public libraries wishing to become 'learning organisations'.

## **1.5 Dissertation Structure**

The dissertation structure mirrors the aims of the study and follows their logical progression, i.e. from defining what a learning organisation is, through to recommending best practice in LIS. This initial chapter introduces the research topic, outlines the aims and objectives of the dissertation and provides background information on the subject matter.

Subsequently, a literature review will highlight and discuss the key literature relating to the study, and the chapter following that addresses the study's research approach and methodology. It will discuss the methods used to carry out the investigation and review their effectiveness in achieving the aims and objectives of the study. The research's data will then be presented and analysed. The project will move

from general statistics and broad-based statements taken from the analysis of the quantitative data, to a more in-depth picture of the situation regarding training in LIS gained from the qualitative information. Obviously, this type of information is very important to the research, as it is the intention of the study to focus on perceptions and attitudes.

This will lead the study to a discussion based mainly on objectives 3 and 4, and a section in which some recommendations will be made for public libraries trying to become learning organisations. The discussion will also try to gauge from all the data, just how great an interest there appears to be for this idea. Finally, the study will draw conclusions from the evidence, and discuss areas for future research.

## **1.6 Problems of definition**

Before moving on to introduce the literature it is necessary to address a key issue on which the research is based i.e. the definition of a 'learning organisation'. No learning organisation theorists can agree on one definition of a 'learning organisation'. Hence for the purposes of this study, it was decided to use the following definition:

Pedler et al. (1991:1). "An organisation that facilitates the learning of all its members *and* continuously transforms itself".

This definition was chosen as it encompasses aspects that are covered in a lot of the other descriptions of a 'learning organisation' and does so in a succinct yet comprehensive manner.

It is not the aim of this study to concentrate on an in-depth analysis of learning organisation literature or to test various theoretical and conceptual structures against public libraries - It is the researcher's intention to take the broad term/definition described above and investigate whether it works in an LIS environment.

For note: the terms public libraries and libraries and information services (LIS) will be treated/used synonymously throughout the project.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### 2.1 Literature Research

The main methods used to obtain the literature were:

- **Library Catalogues.** A number of catalogues were searched. These included The University of Sheffield, University College Northampton and The British Library.
- **The Internet.** The search engines used were: Alta Vista, Excite, Google, Hotbot, Infoseek, Northern Light, Yahoo and Webcrawler.
- **Databases.** A number of databases and subject gateways were searched. These included: Library and Information Science Abstracts (LISA), BUBL, Bath Information and Data Services (BIDS) (now known as MIMAS, Web of Science) and The Emerald Library.
- **Professional Library and Information Journals and Management Journals.** These included titles such as: Library Association Record, Public Library Journal, Libri, and People Management.
- **In-House Documents/Information.** Documents obtained during the author's time spent in employment with a public library and information service in 1998-9 were used to gain a basic insight into training methods, subjects and practices. In-house documents were also requested through the questionnaire sent as part of the study. It was envisaged that any documents and reports received as a result of the request could be used alongside the literature found.

The same search terms were used for each of the different search strategies. The keys words and phrases were: **training, library, training in public libraries, learning and development, learning cultures, learning organizations and UK and learning organisations (the British spelling).**

In preparation for the dissertation research the author subscribed to the mail base electronic mailing lists: lis-link and lis-publibs, this was done with the intention of keeping abreast of developments and discussions in public libraries and the library and information sector. As a result, a number of training courses offered to Librarians and current trends in topics and the scope of training courses etc. were identified.

Finally, it had been the intention of the researcher to visit the British Library Document Supply Centre at Boston Spa, this would have enabled the author to 'fill' any gaps in source material or provide more evidence to support literature already located. However, due to unforeseen circumstances this was not possible.

## **2.2 Themes of the Literature**

An in-depth literature search resulted in the identification of a range of useful references. These encompassed material on training in all service environments and literature specifically relating to training and learning in the library and information service. Source material relating to learning organisations and research methods was also located and all the literature that was found to be relevant to the study has been placed in the bibliography.

## 2.3 The Main ‘Players’

The term ‘learning company’ (the preferred term of Pedler et al., 1991) originates from a business stand point, the wider term ‘learning organisation’ was developed as it was felt that this could be applied to other sectors, for example the public sector, and other essentially non-profit organisations (Jones & Hendry, 1992). However, although the term has moved on, the majority of examples are still from the business context.

Descriptions of the concept of a learning organisation can be found in the work of a number of authors these include: Swieringa & Wierdsma (1992), Lessem (1991), Argyris & Schön (1996), French & Bell (1995), Hayes, (1988), and Dixon (1994). One of the main authors on the ‘learning organisation’ is Senge (1990 and 1994); he is widely regarded as one of the leading protagonists in this field.

Senge (1990) proposes that there are five main areas of criteria involved in becoming a learning organisation, these include: personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, team learning and systems thinking. This work proved to be a valuable source of information on the concept and theory of a learning organisation, however its tendency towards stories about ‘boiled frogs’ and other such oddities, and its concentration on the concept from a business stance were identified by this author as notable criticisms of the text.

Pedler et al. (1991) described the ‘vision’ of a learning organisation, and discuss how it is not brought about purely by training individuals, and it can only happen as a

result learning taking place at the ‘whole organisation level’. Pedler et al’s (1991) study attempted to provide some practical ways to become a learning organisation, and the author’s overriding message was that a learning organisation has to be realised from within, and that the key word to achieving this is ‘transformation’.

Within the literature there was no universally agreed definition of a learning organisation. This is one of the areas that this study will look into, because with no agreed definition one can but question what is a learning organisation? As fore-mentioned the definition that this study uses comes from Pedler et al. (1991) and it is a definition also cited by many other authors, for example Jones & Hendry (1992), Beardwell & Holden (1997), Daft (2000), Harrison (1997) and Rowley (1997).

There has been a lot of literature produced from the business sector as far as learning organisations are concerned; notable amongst these were Garvin (1993) and Jones & Hendry (1992).

## **2.4 Learning organisation theories**

The author found Garvin’s text to be insightful and thought provoking; he identified three key unresolved issues regarding learning organisations – the ‘3 M’s’. This study has concentrated on the first two, ‘Meaning’ and ‘Management’. The third issue ‘Measurement’ is an area that requires further investigation; unfortunately time constraints prevented the author from investigating to any great extent in this study.

Jones & Hendry (1992) reviewed both the learning organisation literature and practice. They suggested a five-phase model to becoming a learning organisation. They suggested that the five stages were dependency, transitional, independency, transformation, (a theme also commented on by Pedler et al. (1991) as mentioned above) and finally the transfiguration stage, “a phase at which an organisation and the individual learner would have the capacity to cope with all and any change” (Jones & Hendry, 1992:29). These works proved to be useful, but again the examples are almost exclusively from the business sector, as were the majority of key texts on learning organisations e.g. Senge (1990).

Furthermore, within the literature there are those that recognise that the transition from theory into practice is a far from easy journey and is far from being realised on a large scale. Indeed, Burgoyne (1999:39) came to the conclusion that “to change any organisation into a learning organisation in one grand project is utopian and unrealistic, at least with the current theory and methods”. He suggested that the learning organisation had not lived up to its full potential or people’s aspirations, and that a second generation of learning organisations could now be developed. Whilst authors such as Dolan (1995) and Pearn et al. (1995) have gone further and argued that the theory of the learning organisation is useful but has limited practical application and that the writers on learning organisation have good ideas but are noticeably weak when it comes to providing practical tools that organisations can adopt to promote learning in their organisation.

## **2.5 The learning organisation in the public sector**

Another area of literature identified was that relating to the use of learning organisations in the public sector. The author found a number of useful articles and texts on the subject. These included work by authors such as Smith & Taylor (2000), and Cook et al. (eds.), (1997). These particular texts provided balanced arguments on the advantages and disadvantages of the learning organisation concept being adopted by the public sector. In the latter case, contributors came from various departments and directorates of the public sector and provided examples of the learning organisation ethos in practice and discussed its relative uses and the issues that required attention (Cook et al., (eds.), 1997).

## **2.6 Learning organisations in an LIS environment**

The author was interested to see whether or not there was material with a focus specifically on the learning organisation and libraries. One major source was Jones et al. (1999), which looked at training in public libraries and placed some importance on the idea of a learning organisation in an LIS context. However, the author felt that the study was too short; it lacked any form of depth, made too many sweeping statements and was too prescriptive. Furthermore, its concentration on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) at the expense of other aspects of LIS training one could argue restricts its wider application. Although, ICT is clearly important in the public library sector, especially at present, (DTI, 2000) it is by no means everything

about LIS and training/learning and it could be suggested it is a 'specialised' or 'unique' aspect of the equation with regards funding, historical aspects of LIS and ICT, and political pressure/emphasis – themes which were born out by the results of Jones et al. (1999).

Two other sources of information with regards learning organisations and libraries were identified; these were Van Reenen (1995) and Rowley (1997). Van Reenen (1995) provided some valuable ideas on the use of learning organisation theory in libraries, however it lacked any examples of the effectiveness of the ethos and failed to substantiate his arguments with hard data or information. Rowley's (1997) article highlighted the need for libraries to become learning organisations. It provided some useful arguments and interesting recommendations with regards learning organisations in an LIS environment. However, she failed to give ideas on 'how' this could be achieved or public LIS case studies to illustrate her case, furthermore, the majority of examples Rowley did provide all came from a business background.

## **2.7 Training**

The final area of relevant literature identified by the author was that on training. There was a plethora of literature on training in libraries, for example, Levy & Usherwood (1992), Allan (1999), Baker (1986), Blanksby (1988), Parry (1993), Baker (1991) and Lobban (1997). However, these tended to concentrate on practical aspects of training delivery rather than an assessment and evaluation of current practice, the area in which this study aims to shed some light. Some use was made of these references to

provide background information on training methods and initiatives, which then in turn provided a strong base on which to build this research's findings.

All of the sources mentioned above provided a solid background of literature to integrate into the study and use alongside the author's findings to provide a wider picture of learning organisations in a public library environment.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **3.1 Research Approach**

An inductive approach to the research was used, where the conclusions of the study were based on the information and data found during the research process (Bell, 1987). A deductive approach was considered, for example testing a hypothesis 'against' the data, however the researcher felt that the topic could best be explored impartially by using the results themselves to direct the findings.

### **3.2 Research Methods**

#### **3.2.1 Quantitative and qualitative methods**

The study utilised a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods to produce the necessary scope of information to, in turn, satisfy the stated aims and objectives. Quantitative data, for example, was collected to gain a basic insight into the awareness in library services of the term 'learning organisation', information on library policies, and the take up of training initiatives, and to investigate the pattern of training opportunities across LIS staffing levels. Qualitative data helped illustrate people's perceptions of the training provided, and their views on training needs. It was also used to obtain an in depth picture with regards definitions of a 'learning organisation', and to delve more generally into the attitudes of staff from different levels of the organisation.

Both quantitative and qualitative methods have obvious strengths and weaknesses, however in order to obtain as fuller picture as possible it was necessary for the research to balance the two styles (Gorman & Clayton, 1997). Indeed, the use of both approaches enabled data to be compared and contrasted, furthermore, it provided, a balance of both 'scientific and personal dimensions' (Gorman & Clayton, 1997).

This study, in particular, aimed to get behind the facts and figures, which were provided, to a great extent, by a questionnaire, and thus it was important to give weight to qualitative data, which, by large, was mainly provided via interviews. Strauss & Corbin (1998:11) underline the benefits of integrating qualitative methods:

“Qualitative methods can be used to obtain intricate details about phenomena such as feelings, thought processes and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about through more conventional research methods.”

As mentioned above, for the purpose of this study, a questionnaire survey was designed and distributed; this provided quantitative data, whilst in-depth semi-structured interviews provided more detailed information encompassing people's perceptions and attitudes. Both Gorman & Clayton (1997), and Robson (1993) recommend 'triangulation', i.e. the use of several techniques to increase the breadth, depth, and accuracy of a study. Obviously, information provided by library authorities, and gleaned both from the literature and previous personal experience also helped the 'triangulation' process.

### 3.2.2 Questionnaire

An e-mail questionnaire was constructed and sent to a large number of public library and information services in England (see Appendix 1). A questionnaire survey was chosen, as a large distribution sample was required. Both Busha & Harter (1980) and Heather & Stone (1984:2) explain that when a large number of standardised responses are required and the population to be reached is large and geographically scattered, and then self-completed questionnaires are an ideal collection instrument. A questionnaire also allowed the respondents to complete their survey at their own convenience and without hopefully demanding too much of their time. A large sample of public library and information services was selected by consulting the Library Association directory of libraries in the United Kingdom (LA, 1999). The questionnaires were ideally sent to the member of staff responsible for training in each organisation, e.g. the training officer or some such related title.

Initially, an e-mail questionnaire for external training providers was going to be undertaken. An 'extra' aim of this survey would have been to establish how many library-training programmes are available, and the number of library and information services that subscribe to various courses. However, a decision was made not to conduct this questionnaire, as it was not deemed possible with the current time constraints. It was also felt that this questionnaire would move the research in a 'different' direction, leading to a broader, less-focused study, and therefore with these points in mind it was decided to concentrate solely on LIS staff.

### **3.2.3 Electronic mail survey**

The decision to carry out an e-mail questionnaire was based on several factors. Firstly, the speed at which they can be sent, secondly, it allows a receipt to be attached to each one and thirdly, it is cheaper than postal questionnaires that incur the costs of paper and postage. Schaefer & Dillman (1998:379) suggest that “Electronic mail and the Internet provide a promising means for conducting surveys as the proportion of people accessible through e-mail or the Internet continues to rise”.

From the Library Association directory (1996) one can see that in 1997 relatively few public library authorities had e-mail and even academic e-mail addresses were not easily accessible; however, the 2000 edition of the directory showed that the situation had changed dramatically and therefore this opened up the opportunity for ‘wide-spread’ research via this mode of communication.

Schaefer & Dillman (1998) found that comparable response rates could be obtained for e-mail surveys and postal surveys. A mixture of both e-mail and postal delivery could have been employed this would have enabled organisations without e-mail addresses to participate. However it was decided to concentrate solely on electronic delivery for the reasons given above, and also because it was simpler to manage one method, rather than juggle two.

A covering letter was sent with the questionnaire (see Appendix 2), as these are recognised as being a useful way to try and motivate and increase the response rate (Fink, 1995, Bailey, 1994). E-mail reminders were also sent to recipients of the

questionnaire two weeks after the initial delivery of the survey, (see Appendix 3), the researcher attached another copy of the questionnaire in case the original had been misplaced this proved effective in increasing the response rate (Roselle & Neufeld, 1998, Robson, 1993).

One difficulty with an e-mail questionnaire is that the meaning of questions cannot be clarified to the recipient. However, a pilot questionnaire was conducted before the distribution to the main sample; thus enabling problems with the questionnaire design or language to be identified and corrected (Gorman & Clayton, 1997).

#### **3.2.4 Pilot Questionnaire**

Robson (1993:250) suggests that, “The wording of the questions is of crucial importance. Pre-testing is essential”. A pilot copy of the questionnaire was sent to a local library authority where a senior manager looked through and completed the survey, and then returned it with additional comments. The manager was complimentary about the survey as a whole, and suggested only minor adjustments to the layout and the wording of two questions. He commented on the effective sign-posting of the questionnaire, and the fact that it was not a time-consuming exercise – this was particularly pleasing to note as a lot of time and effort had been taken on this aspect of the survey (see below). The small alterations suggested by the senior manager were made, and a final draft composed.

### **3.2.5 Content and structure of the questionnaire survey**

Information from the survey concentrated on data relating to awareness of the term 'learning organisation', and the range of training methods used in library and information services. A few open-ended questions were included in order to gather the training officer's opinions and more detailed descriptions as they provided an important opportunity to gain an insight into the issues of training. However, the questionnaire responses were analysed to identify issues for discussion during the subsequent interviews where conditions were more suited to open-ended questions.

The study used a semi-structured questionnaire to enable the use of open-ended questions, however, the majority of questions were closed in order to give a strong set of basic background information and data that was easy to code and analyse, and also to compare and present quantifiably (Bailey, 1994). Care was taken to ensure that the survey was not too long and that the number of questions was kept below twenty as recommended by Wilson (1997a). At the same time the survey obviously needed to be sufficiently detailed to cover the key themes of the study.

A number of the questions utilised a sliding scale response, where a semantic or numerical indication of the depth of feeling was required from the questionnaire respondent. These questions were designed taking into account guidelines offered by, amongst others, Busha & Harter (1980) and Fink (1995).

The presentation of the questionnaire was an important consideration. It was essential to find ways of maximizing the level of response by making the questionnaire

quick and easy to complete (Heather & Stone, 1984). Questions were carefully worded, with any 'difficult' terms explained or defined. Filter questions (Foddy, 1993) were used to direct survey respondents and make the questionnaire flow better. Also the questions were grouped into sections that were designed to tie in directly with the study objectives, and were used, with the respondent in mind, to break up the 'monotony' of one question after another.

The questionnaire was sent as an attached Microsoft Word document, instructions on how to open the document and complete the questionnaire were included in the email covering letter. The option to send the completed survey back via email or alternatively through the post was provided. The researcher appreciated that the questionnaires may have been disrupted or altered due to differences in email reading facilities, hence the survey respondents were asked to contact the researcher if there were any problems and a postal copy of the questionnaire would be sent.

Once the completed questionnaires were returned the data was inputted into result tables using the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet package. This software allowed the results to be collated, analysed and displayed both simply and effectively.

From the questionnaire survey, three case study libraries were selected for the next stage of the data collection, which involved a number of interviews.

### **3.2.6 Case studies**

All authorities were asked whether or not they were willing to help further with the study by agreeing to participate in interviews. Ideally, the most interesting authorities would be chosen, however, the choice of case studies was influenced by such factors as travelling distance and financial costs, common constraints with this scale of study. Fortunately, a high response rate gave a wide and varied selection of library services to choose from. The use of case studies provided useful and detailed information that enhanced the data collected from the survey.

### **3.2.7 Choice of case studies**

3 authorities were chosen. One was a county council, one was a unitary authority and the other was a metropolitan authority. The criteria behind this choice was:

- Geographical location, and ease of access.
- The range of authorities covered.
- The library service's willingness to help, and the author's positive 'feeling' with regards to the authority's initial survey responses. And that the chosen authorities gave a useful and interesting range of responses to the questionnaire survey.

### **3.2.8 Stratified sample**

Within the case study authorities interviews were carried out with members of staff from five levels of the organisation. These were identified prior to the survey – senior manager, middle manager, first line manager, senior library assistant, and library

assistant – and questions within the survey were directed to these specific levels.

Hence, by interviewing at these various levels within the case study authorities gave the study continuity and allowed comparisons and contrasts to be drawn, which would be of obvious benefit (Stone & Harris, 1984). Staff from each of the five levels of the LIS were interviewed in each of the case study authorities allowing for a well rounded, balanced and equal picture; this stratified approach is recommended by Robson (1993) for these very reasons.

Hence forth the three authorities chosen will be referred to as case study authority A (CSA A), case study authority B (CSA B), and case study authority C (CSA C). As fore-mentioned, after the three case study authorities were identified, a series of interviews was undertaken.

### **3.2.9 Interviews**

The benefit of follow-up interviews after a questionnaire is that it allows the researcher to investigate areas that have arisen from the survey and that are of particular interest, or which could be explored in more detail. Indeed Robson (1993:229) explains that, "...face to face interviews offer the possibility of modifying one's line of enquiry, following up interesting responses and investigating underlying motives".

Face-to-face interviews were carried out with a number of members of staff from different levels of the organisations; this technique enabled a better cross section of opinions and perceptions. Training officers from each of the three authorities were also interviewed, bring the total number of interviewees to eighteen.

Within the literature a number of possible benefits of face-to-face interviews are identified, including the fact that the interviewer can encourage the interviewee with eye contact, body language, showing interest and putting people at their ease (Gorman & Clayton, 1997). Robson (1993:129) suggests that not only does "...the presence of the interviewer encourage participation and involvement but also the interviewer can judge the extent to which the exercise is treated seriously". Alternatively, if, for example, the case study libraries had been too far away and travel costs are too expensive, telephone interviews could have been carried out instead (Oppenheim, 1992).

Indeed, Bailey (1994:201) suggests that, "the information gained from telephone interviews is in no way inferior to face to face". Telephone interviews compare favourably with face-to-face interviews, particularly when verbal cues are used to develop rapport. In actuality, there was only a need to do one telephone interview in a case where the interviewee had been unable to attend the original session. On a personal note, the author found no difficulty or difference carrying out this interview, in contrast to Garbelotto (1999:19) who commented that she found it "...difficult to develop rapport with the respondent due to the lack of eye contact". All the other interviews were carried out face-to-face, and indeed back-to-back, as the sessions were organised to follow on from one another, this was useful for identifying and following up any key themes from the interviews.

### **3.2.10 Content and structure of the interviews**

The study used in-depth semi-structured interviews. Stone (1984) suggests semi-structured interviews combine aspects of structured and unstructured interviews, and allow for a balance of closed and open-ended questions. Where possible open-ended rather than closed questions was being asked, in order to provide interviewees with an opportunity to describe situations in their own words and share their attitudes and perceptions (Busha & Harter, 1980). A semi-structured interview allowed key questions to be posed but provided flexibility to pursue any interesting comments made by the respondents. This style of interview also provided a good cross section of both factual and attitudinal information from various levels of staff and therefore gave a lot of useful evidence to support the study.

The interview schedule for the library staff (not including training officers) was kept the same, so that the answers given could be compared and contrasted across and between staffing levels (see Appendix 4). In the case of the three training officers, the schedule was altered slightly (see Appendix 5) as they were responsible for training and, as such, could be expected to have more expertise on the subject.

Some of the questions from the survey were duplicated in the interview schedules. This mirroring was adopted so that the researcher could again see whether or not responses varied or remained the same within and between authorities. This was particularly important in identifying levels of awareness and disparity across library staff and highlighting differences in response from the authority's original survey reply.

As with the questionnaire schedule, the questions were grouped in themed sections – which was explained to the participants prior to the interviews. Again these tied directly to the study objectives, and were particularly focussed on objectives one and three as these necessitated more detailed qualitative information.

The wording of questions was kept as simple as possible and definitions used within the questions were provided on a separate sheet for the interviewee's convenience as suggested by Robson (1993). Prompts were prepared to encourage a more in depth response when interviews gave a short reply, i.e. 'yes' or 'no' or 'don't know'. Although the questions were designed to be open in nature, not all respondents could be presumed to be 'naturally chatty' (Wilson, 1997b).

Each interview took between twenty to thirty minutes. This duration was deemed suitable as the workload of the interviewees was recognised and respected. Also, it was felt that such a length was apt for retaining the interest of the interviewee and therefore, hopefully, increasing the effectiveness of the method and the quality of the information collected. Interviews were recorded, after the permission of the interviewees had been gained; supplementary notes were also taken and the interviews were transcribed, as soon after the dialogue as possible, while the responses and information gained was still fresh in the mind of the interviewer.

### **3.3 Limitations of the methodology**

A number of possible limitations have been identified and will be discussed briefly below.

Due to unforeseen circumstances the questionnaires and interviews were carried out in the autumn when England was hit by fuel and railway crises, and major flooding. As a result the number of responses and authorities available for further research was perhaps reduced. One major factor in the choice of case study authorities was the need for transport to be available to and from the area and thus these constraints limited the author to authorities within a specific radius. The railway delays and flooding also affected the postal system, however, this potential difficulty was overcome by using an e-mail questionnaire.

A further area of potential concern was the targeting of the correct members of staff required to complete the questionnaire; many of the members of staff responsible for training have different titles or were unobtainable directly through e-mail. One solution to this situation was to broach this topic in the covering letter and obviously by targeting the training officers in the subsequent interviews it was hoped that their opinions and expertise was sufficiently tapped.

Another area of limitation was the number of case study authorities interviewed, ideally it would have been advantageous to have perhaps increased the number of authorities to four or five. This would have given a greater cross section of authorities

perhaps, including a London borough, however the criteria behind the choice of the three case study authorities tried to guarantee a varied selection. Clearly issues of time management played a major part in the decision-making process.

## Chapter 4: Presentation and analysis of results

### 4.1 Structure of results section

The data collected during this study will be presented and analysed in the following chapters. A dispersed format has been adopted for the results section so that the quantitative and qualitative data can be used collectively to provide a rounded analysis of particular subjects within the overall study. These chapters will address key aspects of the research and mirror the aims and objectives, as detailed in chapter 1. Although some sections will rely almost solely on data collected from either the questionnaire survey *or* the interview transcripts, throughout the section as a whole data from both will be integrated as fully as possible.

Staff comments provided a valuable source of data; the opinions and attitudes relayed during the interview process gave an important first-hand insight into training and learning in the public library. A conscious effort has been made to reflect the range of opinions and attitudes offered by staff from all levels of the library service in order to give a balanced viewpoint. Comments will be attributed to the appropriate level of staff – thereby respecting anonymity, but at the same time allowing the researcher to highlight contrasts in perceptions, attitudes and experiences. Staff comments will be italicised in the body of the text, or presented in a table. Obviously, where there is an over-riding view the number and concentration of comments will reflect the strength of feeling. The ‘level’ of the member of staff who made the comment can be identified using the following key:

TO = Training Officer	SM = Senior Manager
MM = Middle Manager	LM = Line Manager
SLA = Senior Library Assistant	LA = Library Assistant

## 4.2 Questionnaire response

Initially, it had been intended to send out around 100 questionnaires, however several factors prevented this and as a result the total number of surveys distributed was 85. These factors included:

- E-mail addresses provided in a number of cases were incorrect and subsequent enquiries, unfortunately, provided no further help in this matter. 10 surveys in all were returned to sender.
- ‘Noah factor’- At the time of distribution there was a period of severe flooding across the country and a number of library authorities replied that they were not in a position to respond to the survey at that juncture as they were too busy *‘keeping their heads above water’*.
- Worryingly, staff shortages were also identified by 4 authorities as being the reason why they were unable to help with the study.

However, all this considered, the response was very encouraging. Forty questionnaires were returned by the closing date, which translates into a response rate of 47%. Replies came from across the country, without any identifiable geographical concentration. A range of authorities was also represented. e.g. county council, unitary,

metropolitan, and London borough councils. The case study authorities chosen from the responses consisted of:

- Case Study Authority A (CSA A) - A reasonably affluent county council authority in the South of England.
- Case Study Authority B (CSA B) – A relatively ‘new’ unitary authority in the South Midlands.
- Case Study Authority C (CSA C) – A metropolitan authority in the North of England, located in an area recognised nationally as having socio-economic problems.

## **4.3 General results**

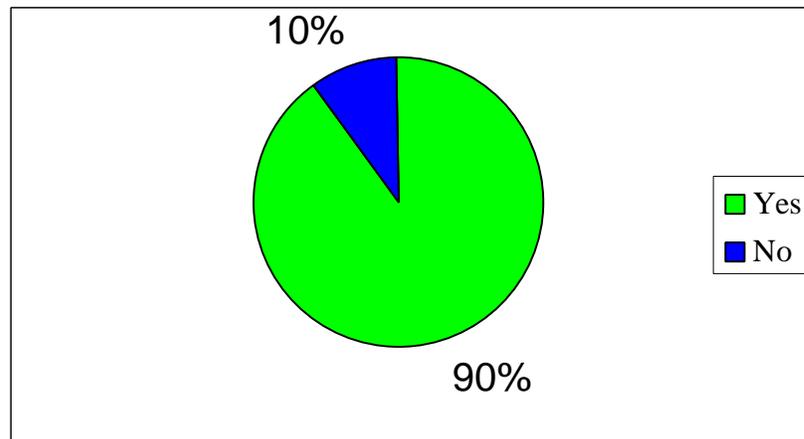
### **4.3.1 General background information**

Background information was collected from all the authorities surveyed to put the discussion of results into a wider context. This included, for example, information concerning whether or not the authority had a specific training budget, if so how much, which areas of training were currently receiving the most attention, and what training initiatives the authorities were taking up. This basic data allowed nationwide comparisons to be made and helped the author get a picture of the general situation before further analysis of the case study authorities allowed the situation to be investigated in more depth.

### **4.3.2 Training budget**

Ninety percent of the authorities surveyed had a training budget (see Figure 1 below), and this included all three case study authorities. It should be underlined that

this does include authorities that had a budget, but did not want to disclose how much it was (for fear of embarrassment perhaps) as authorities were asked whether or not they had a specific training budget in the questionnaire before being asked to provide a figure.



**FIGURE 1**

**The percentage of authorities surveyed who had a training budget**

The difference in budget allocation was substantial. On average each authority spent in the region of £15,960 a year on training but this figure masks the range across the country. The annual amount spent on training varied from £1,000 to £100,000. CSA C had the third lowest training budget of the responding authorities (£2,473), whilst CSA A had the third highest (£30,000). For the record CSA B's training budget was just above the average (£18,400).

It was never the intention of this study to compile a league table of budgets but it was felt that this area may have an impact on the findings and was an important variable

to cover. Whether or not the amount of money spent on training was related to the philosophy/strategy of the authority with regards training and the learning organisation has not been analysed as it was felt that the data collected was not sufficient to determine any cause/effect relationships. However, at the same time it was interesting to look at the amounts in relative terms. Although not all authorities provided their budget as a percentage of the total LIS budget the majority did, and the figures ranging from 0.01% to 2.7% again highlighted the major differences across the country, the average percentage equalled 0.79%. CSA C again appeared to be one of the 'poor relations' with a percentage total of 0.09%, whereas CSA B spent 0.65% of the total LIS budget on training – which was one of the higher fractions. For reference CSA A could not provide any data concerning this as their statistics were calculated per capita.

### **4.3.3 Job Titles**

Authorities were asked to give the title(s) of the post(s) responsible for training within their library service; it was thought that this could provide a valuable insight into the importance of training in public libraries. The results produced some interesting findings, and provided 'food for thought'. Only twelve out of the forty survey respondents employed staff whose sole responsibility was training staff development. The majority of other authorities surveyed had members of staff in charge of training whose job titles did not indicate any form of responsibility to this area. It was interesting to note that the percentage of the LIS budget spent on training in authorities that had a member of staff specifically 'in charge' of training was 1.08% (0.3% higher than the average).

Most of those identified held multipurpose positions, which included a number of different responsibilities. Hence, training strategy and implementation was ‘just’ one of jobs they carried out along side their library work responsibilities as District Librarian, Principal Librarian etc. It was interesting to note the diverse range of staff in charge of training in public libraries; this is perhaps due to the lack of finances restricting the employment of a full time training officer.

#### **4.3.4 Areas of training**

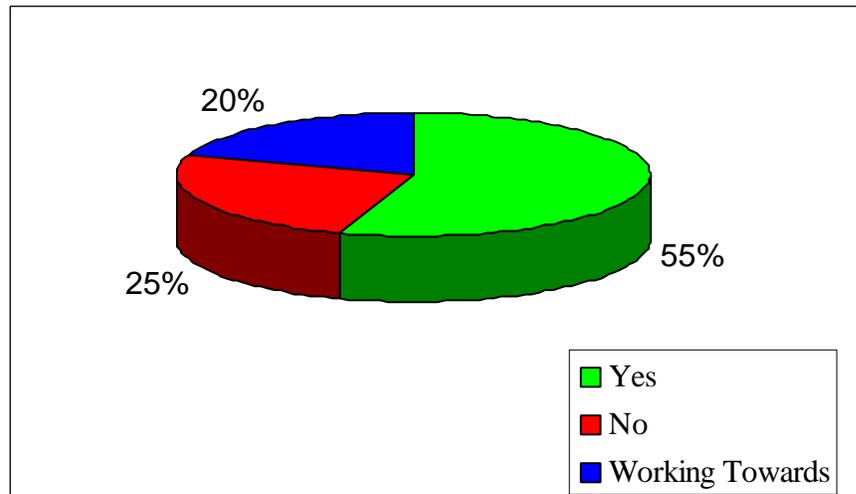
The results indicated that the areas in which public library services are currently providing training was varied; the total number of training areas given was 21. Survey respondents were asked to give their ‘top three’, and undoubtedly information and communication technology (ICT) training was the most important training area, as it was identified as being so by 26 authorities. 35 out of 40 authorities placed ICT training in their top three, other ‘popular’ areas of training were customer service and health and safety.

Within the case study authorities, CSA A and B stated that ICT was their top training priority, whilst CSA C placed it in second position; this clearly supports the general emphasis on ICT training in the current LIS environment.

#### **4.3.5 Investors in People**

The Investors in People (IIP) scheme was looked at briefly, as this initiative focuses on staff development, training, and organisations functioning effectively as a whole – all aspects of relevance to the current research. Authorities were surveyed as to

whether they had gained accreditation, and if so, when this had occurred, the results are shown in Figure 2.



**FIGURE 2**

**The state of IIP accreditation in LIS authorities**

As can be seen in the pie chart above over half of the LIS authorities surveyed had already been accredited for IIP, however a quarter hadn't. It was interesting to note that the majority of those already holding IIP had only been accredited in the last 3 years, even though the scheme has been in operation since 1994. "The surge of commitment to IIP in this period could be the result of public authorities reacting to the challenge and rhetoric of Best Value" (Goulding et al; 1999:40). Whatever, the motive for this increase in interest, it was encouraging to note that the remaining quarter of authorities surveyed were currently pursuing accreditation, which suggests that the scheme is gaining 'popularity' in the public LIS sector. This point is re-iterated in the

work carried out by Goulding et al. (1999), and Goulding (1995) who suggest that IIP is the one of the most utilised formal accreditation systems in the public library sector.

## **Chapter 5: Public Libraries and the Learning Organisation**

### **5.1 Awareness of the term - 'learning organisation'**

Thirty-nine out of the forty respondents, when asked if they had heard of the term 'learning organisation' replied that they had, this would seem to show that the term has entered common parlance in library authorities across the country. Yet when the same question was posed to the interviewees, this finding was clearly contradicted. All of the professional staff interviewed knew the term, yet at the para-professional level only one member of staff had heard of it. The interviewee in this case stated that her knowledge came from her time spent working in an academic library prior to taking a library assistant position in CSA B. The apparent disparity between professional and para-professional staff is undeniable and to a certain extent undermines the positive message carried by the questionnaire survey. Knowledge of the term 'learning organisation' is not spread evenly across the LIS, and in actuality it is concentrated in the upper strata of the organisation.

### **5.2 Learning organisation: A visible policy**

Three quarters of the library authorities surveyed (including all three case study authorities) had a policy or organisational objective specifically supporting continuous learning and/or the development of a learning culture. This implies that the apparent knowledge of the term 'learning organisation' did not simply stop there, but was being translated into policy within the LIS. However, again when this subject was looked at

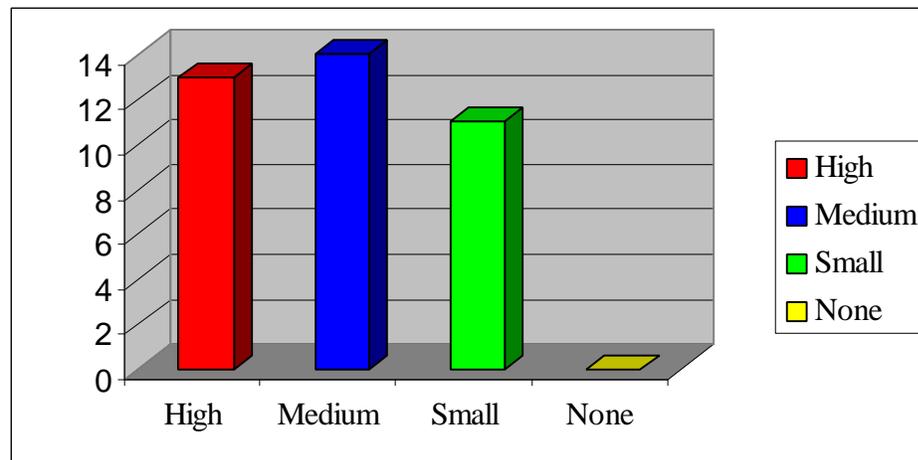
in more depth during the series of interviews the picture was not as positive as it first appeared. Staff from different levels of the organisation was asked if they were aware of any such policy and the responses were varied.

In CSA B it was slightly un-nerving to find that only the senior library assistant was aware of the policy related to training (as indicated in the questionnaire); the middle manager offering this statement: *“I am sure there is probably something in the library plan, but I don’t know, that’s a guess”*. The senior library assistant did however offer a reason as to why this might have been the case: *“ it [the policy] relates to the council and not the LIS itself. I only know this because when we were taken around the county council as part of an induction... the HR [Human Resources] officer emphasised the training objectives of the whole council”*.

CSA A was far more ‘enlightened’ as this comment from the senior manager shows: *“Yes, we are part of the ‘learning county’, we are all [council departments] signed up to that and the libraries have taken a leading role in this”*. However, this awareness had not made it down to the line manager, senior library assistant or library assistant. At these levels, the staff interviewed expressed that they thought there *was* probably a policy pertaining to continuous learning or the development of a learning culture, but they could not ‘name it’. This difference between library staffing levels was not so evident in CSA C, but the library assistant was again ‘in the dark’ as to the existence of any policy or objective. It should be noted that ideas relating to the form and content of any policy did vary within the authority.

### 5.3 Learning culture: Attention seeking

To explore further the attitudes surrounding library and information services and the idea of the learning organisation, survey recipients were asked what amount of attention did they feel was given to raising the awareness of a learning culture in their organisation, their responses are displayed in Figure 3.



**FIGURE 3**

#### **The amount of attention given to raising the awareness of a learning culture**

As can be seen in the diagram, there was no real consensus of opinion on the matter and the range of answers was spread evenly across three of the available options. Every respondent felt that attention *was* given, and responses were skewed more towards a high level of attention being given to the promotion of a learning culture within a public LIS. However, by no means is this weighting large enough to identify it as a standard response. Not one of the authorities indicated that *no* attention whatsoever was

being given to the matter, but more than a quarter of respondents did feel that the amount of attention being given was small.

As mentioned above, all three case study authorities had a policy relating to the development of a learning culture in their organisation. Two out of three of the authorities indicated that their LIS placed a high emphasis on raising the awareness of a learning culture, however as was seen in the previous sections this awareness was not apparent throughout the organisation.

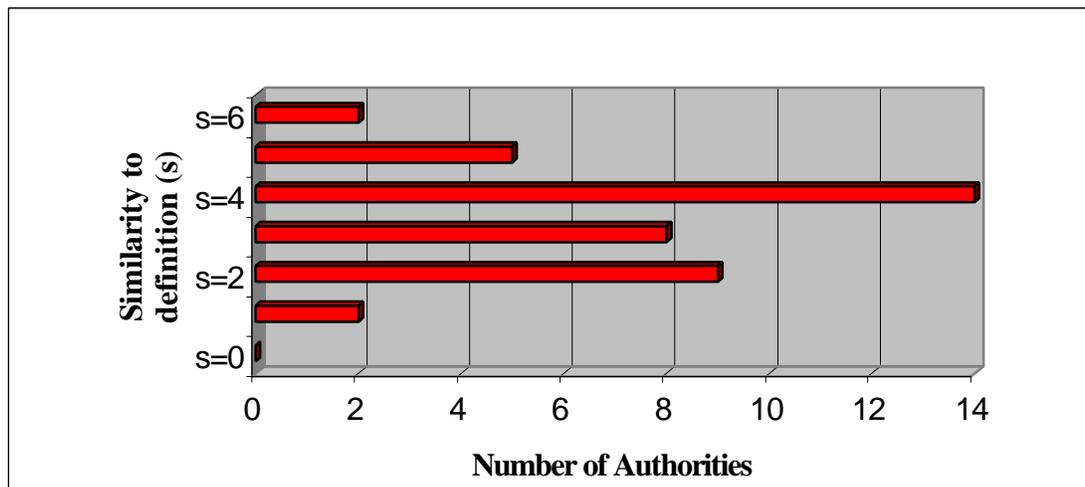
#### **5.4 Definitions of a ‘learning organisation’**

As discussed previously in the introduction, the author decided that, for the purpose of this study, Pedler’s definition of a learning organisation would be used throughout the research as a basic definition of the term, and one that the study would work with. So, as part of the questionnaire and interviews, respondents were asked to what extent they felt that the definition, included here again for ease of reference, described their organisation.

Pedler et al. (1991:1) define a learning organisation as “*an organization that facilitates the learning of all its members and continuously transforms itself*”.

In the questionnaire, the member of staff was asked to indicate the degree of ‘similarity’ on a sliding scale of 0-6, figure 4 shows that the responses ranged from 1-6, with the average ‘score’ being 3.4. The modal value was 4 indicating that the majority

of authorities felt that the definition *did* describe their LIS to a large extent; 14 authorities including CSA B and C gave this, and another 7 authorities gave an even more positive score of 5 or 6.



**FIGURE 4**

**The level of similarity to Pedler's definition**

During the interview sessions, staff were shown the definition on a sheet and asked to comment on the extent to which the definition matched their organisation. So, the question was very similar to the one asked of questionnaire respondents, however, instead of obtaining a numerical value response, the question was altered slightly to gain a qualitative response. The responses to the question did concur on the whole with the questionnaire responses, but as will be covered in more detail within the discussion chapter, there were elements of the definition and aspects of the responses that did call for further analysis and were of great interest to the researcher.

## 5.5 Is it important to have a culture of learning in an LIS environment?

To end this section on a positive note ...

*“Yes, I think with the service we provide we owe it to ourselves to be a learning environment.” (MM CSA C)*

*“Oh god yes, I think we [the library service] would grind to a halt if we didn’t.”  
(MM CSA A)*

*“Definitely.” (SM CSA C)*

*“Definitely in this day and age.” (SLA CSA B)*

*“Yes, it can provide a valuable ‘system’ that will benefit staff, the organisation and as a result the service to customers.” (TO CSA C)*

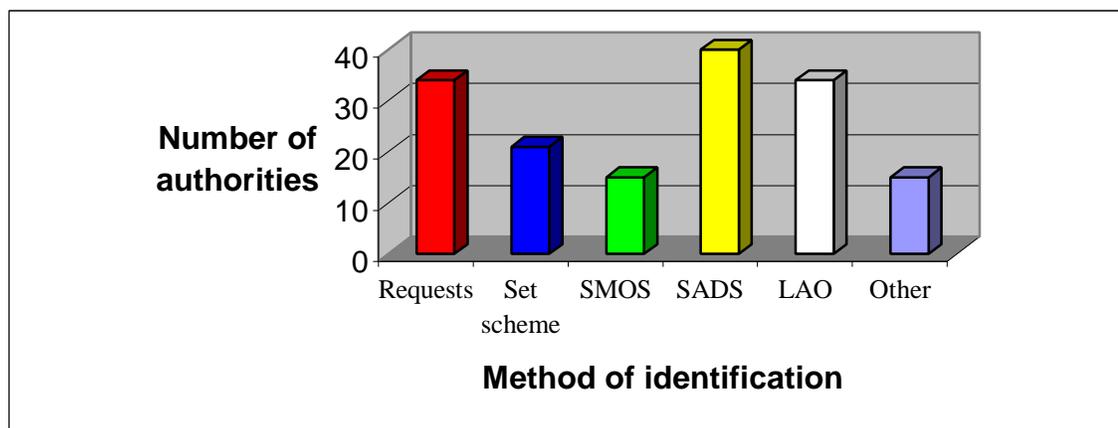
*“Definitely, there are always new things that you are going to be asked, you have to be on top of things.” (LA CSA A)*

As can be seen from the selection of quotes shown above, it is clear that staff from across the organisations in general felt that it was/would be important to have a culture of learning in their LIS. In the next section we will see if this importance is translated into training practice.

## Chapter 6: Current Public Libraries Training Strategies

### 6.1 Identification of training needs

Respondents to the questionnaire were asked to indicate the methods by which they identified training needs. As Figure 5 shows, every authority used staff appraisal or development schemes (SADS) to identify areas of training which required attention, and the majority of authorities used their staff's own requests and local authority objectives (LAO) to determine training needs. Whereas just over half (21 authorities) had a set training program for their staff, and 37.5% of authorities relied on senior members of staff (SMOS) to identify the training needs of their staff on an ad hoc basis.



**FIGURE 5**

**Identification of training needs**

An option was given to the respondents to indicate if any 'other' methods of training-needs identification were in place, and as it was interesting to note that the majority of these were linked to government related initiatives; and this theme will be revisited in a later section.

From personal experience, the author would have perhaps expected that more authorities would be reliant on their senior staff members identifying training needs on an ad hoc basis, yet this was surprisingly the 'least favoured option'. In fact the balance seems to be in favour of staff highlighting their own training needs via appraisal sessions or personal requests. Yet interviews with para-professional staff in particular suggested that they themselves did not feel that this was always the case in practice.

CSA A was one of only 7 authorities that assessed training needs through all five of the main options, whilst CSA B and C utilised 4 out of the 5. They were amongst the one-quarter of authorities that used this many methods, another quarter used 3 out of the 5 options and this shows that rather than rely on one single method, at least 75% of the authorities had at least 3 or above ways of ascertaining training needs.

It was interesting to note the comments made by para-professionals in the case study authorities. Worryingly, a number of library assistants felt that their opinions didn't count:

*“ I think my opinions are taken into account, if I have asked for something at my Training and Development Review they try to act upon it, but I think it is because they have to show so much information on such things for the Investors in People. I don't know if it is up for review again next year.” (SLA CSA C)*

*“ No I don't think they [staff opinions] are taken into account. They [management] have their own ideas, you have your induction and appraisals but you are only given the basic training and nothing else.” (SLA CSA B)*

*“No our opinions don't count for very much in any respect.” (LA CSA B)*

*“In my experience concerns are taken on board, however I doubt that our opinions would be as much.” (LA CSA C)*

Having looked at how training needs were identified, the results section will now focus on how staff were usually selected for training. The authorities had four categories to choose from and were asked to rank the options in order of the most common method of selection. The options given were – individual weakness identified by manager, group weakness identified by manager, self selection – i.e. when an individual member of staff volunteers for training, and compulsory training for all members of staff at a particular level. The ranked output showed that the order of options was as follows:

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Option</b>	<b>Average 'score'</b>
1	Individual Weakness	1.95
2	Group Weakness	2.575
3	Compulsory	2.725
4	Self selection	2.775

**Table 1**  
**Criteria used to identify staff for training**

The average 'score' was calculated by taking note of the rank given to each option by each authority (i.e. 1, 2, 3, or 4) and working out the mean value. Just under half the authorities ranked individual weakness as the major player in determining staff from training selection. Interestingly, one of the case study authorities placed individual weakness third on its list, although the other case study authorities placed this option at the top, which reflects the general trend. In contrast to the overall picture, group weakness came out very strongly as the least used criteria amongst the case study authorities, with two of the three ranking it at the bottom of the list, and the remaining authority placing it in third place.

As Table 1 shows there was not a lot of difference between the average 'scores' of the options ranked overall at 2-4, and hence it is clear that an individual's weakness in a specific area, or generally, as identified by a more senior member of staff was by far the most common criteria for selecting staff for training.

So it would appear from the questionnaire that members of staff themselves often identify training needs, however when it comes down to which members of staff are to receive training in a particular area the emphasis on self-selection is not so prominent. Which raises the question; why is it important to have staff identify training needs themselves, if when it comes down to it, it appears that ‘little’ importance is given to self selection with regards to attendance?

As was previously detailed above, interviews with library assistants added to this debate. One of the line managers interviewed indicated that she was aware of the concerns of some of the para-professionals. *“There are problems with this, [staff opinions being considered] for example the staff who work in the Reference Library here are in contact with a lot of IT when helping the public yet they don’t feel trained as well as they should be. They were not in the 1<sup>ST</sup> round of the NOF training and feel that their needs were not taken into account.” (LM CSA B)*

## **6.2 Training delivery**

One of the study objectives was to identify and evaluate the current training programmes, and as a result questions relating directly to this aspect were included in the survey and interview schedules. To do this it was first necessary to gain an insight into the different training methods used by authorities. In particular the author was interested in ascertaining *which* of the different training methods were used for *which* ‘levels’ of staff in the LIS.

A table was devised illustrating different types of training initiatives. Five key levels of staff were identified and the questionnaire respondents were asked to indicate in the grid which levels of staff participated in which kind of training initiative. A series of graphs highlight some of the key findings from this question (see insert - Figure 6). Some of the training method options were not included in Figure 6 to avoid information overload, but the options picked for inclusion were chosen because they highlighted the major areas of interest.

At every level of staffing, in-house training was recognised as an effective training tool by authorities, as one can see, over 90% of all authorities used this method across their organisation; no other training method had such blanket coverage. If one looks at, for example 'attendance at meetings' it is clear that this is an important aspect of training for professional members of staff but tails off as you reach para-professional level. Over 90% of authorities utilised this form of training for their professional librarians, this level dropped to just over 60% for senior library assistants, and dropped a further 20% at the level of library assistant.

This trend is also clearly apparent when considering guided reading, Library Association (LA) run courses, and those courses run by other library authorities and private companies (although this last category was not included in Figure 6). Taking the LA courses as an example, the percentage figures underline the situation: Coincidentally, 95% of authorities sent both their senior and middle management on these courses, yet the figure for both senior library assistants and library assistants was dramatically lower – 25%. This trend was reversed for 'on the job' training and training

leading to a vocational qualification. The percentages in these cases rose sharply as one progressed from senior to middle management, from first line managers to library assistants.

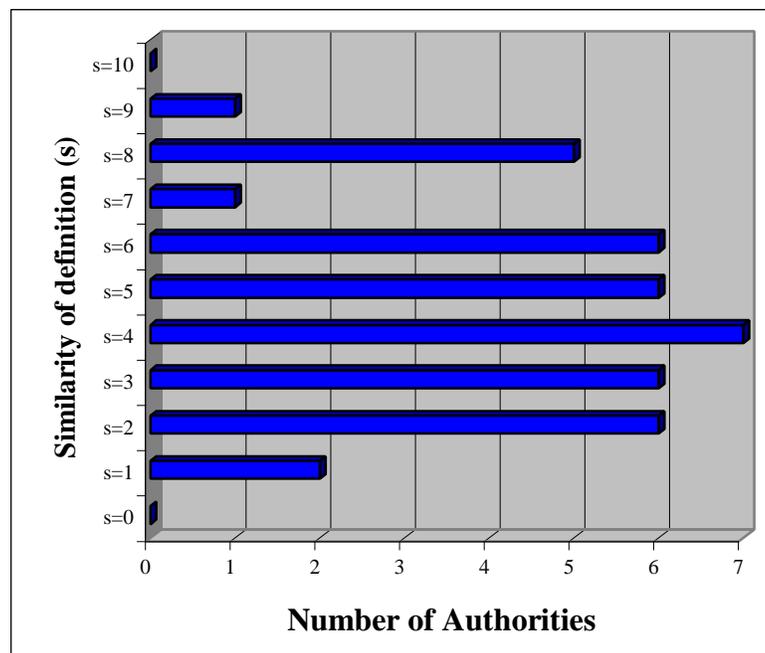
The only training method that showed any form of ‘consistency’ was action learning. The percentage of authorities using this method only ranged between 22.5% and 30%. Although senior library assistants and library assistants accounted for the two ‘top scores’, senior managers were numerically on a par with library assistants and there was no real noticeable difference across staffing levels. Generally however, it is very noticeable that there is a disparity between professional and para-professional staff with regards their apparent training options.

Two particular training methods were chosen for further investigation as it was hoped that they would provide valuable insight into the research topic, these shall be discussed in the following two sections. The first one of these concerns the cascading down of training, which was mentioned in the title of this study and is of personal interest to the researcher.

### **6.2.1 Cascade training**

Library Authorities were asked whether their LIS used cascade training, i.e. the passing of information from a member of staff ‘down’ to others where it was not practicable for all to attend a training course. If they gave a positive answer to this filter question they were subsequently asked to indicate on a sliding scale the emphasis their

current training strategy placed on the cascading down of information. If their training relied almost completely on the cascading down of information they gave a score of around 10, whereas if their mode of training weighed more heavily towards other methods they gave a score closer towards '0' (the score indicating that none of the authority's training took the form of the 'passing down' of information). Every authority used this form of training, but the amount of emphasis placed on this mode of training did vary as Figure 7 shows.



**FIGURE 7**

**The emphasis placed on cascade training**

Most of the results were in the range of 2-6, one anomaly is the 'low' number of authorities that gave a score of 7 – aside from that the distribution of results was 'normal' or 'bell-jar' i.e. the results were spread evenly either side of a central point. The 'centre' of the distribution in this case was around the modal value of 4, which might seem low, but one must remember that this indicates, in rough terms, that the authorities surveyed relied on cascading for around 40% of their entire training

provision. There was a broad range of results with, for example, 5 authorities giving a rating of 8, and 6 authorities giving a rating of 2, overall calculations showed that just under half of all training carried out by the authorities was done via cascading.

CSA A and C gave scores *below* the survey average and CSA B gave the average score, this implies that the case study authorities did not rely as heavily on cascade training as many of the authorities surveyed; however, it will be seen in the discussion section that this may not necessarily be the case in practice.

The issue of cascade training was carried on to the interviews where staff from the case study authorities were asked what they thought were the pros and cons of cascade training, and a selection of staff comments are given here. Below these comments, for convenience, the main points have been tabulated (see Table 2).

A number of comments on the positive aspects of cascade training were highlighted by staff:

*“If you cascade down you get a more personal approach tailored to the person receiving the training in the department.” (LM CSA C)*

*“ It is relatively inexpensive, tends to work quite well, it is fairly rapid and trains a lot of people.” (SM CSA A)*

*“It is a good way of using limited resources and I think it is a good way of getting commitment among cascaders and getting staff to learn.” (TO CSA A)*

*“It is a good way of keeping contact and communication flowing amongst staff.” (TO CSA B)*

However some members of staff were also aware of the ‘pitfalls’ of the cascade training method:

*“It is often useful for staff to get the direct training as opposed to passed down information all the time.” (LM CSA B)*

*“I think you also lose part of the ‘whys’ when you cascade.” (MM CSA C)*

*“I don’t think cascade training is necessarily consistent as a training method.” (SM CSA B)*

*“I think it depends upon the ability of the person cascading the information.” (SLA CSA C)*

<b>PROS</b>	<b>CONS</b>
<i>Personal Touch</i> – More often than not staff know the person delivering the training.	<i>Chinese Whispers</i> – Information can be diluted, distorted or left out all together.
<i>Cost-effective</i> – It can be a cheaper option to cascade train rather than send every body on the original training course.	<i>Time</i> – It can take a long time to train everyone.
<i>Quick Delivery</i> – Several staff commented that it was a quick way of training a lot of people at once and disseminating information.	<i>Training Expertise</i> – Not everyone asked to cascade training might be well versed in training delivery.
	<i>Second Best</i> – Staff always receiving cascade training instead of having the chance to receive the training first hand.

**Table 2**  
**The pros and cons of cascade training**

Generally, most staff felt that this training method worked reasonably well, however the recurring phrase throughout the interviews was ‘Chinese whispers’ with almost everyone recognising this drawback. One interesting point to note was that a number of staff at the para-professional level felt that it would be nice to have the training first-hand for a change as opposed to always getting ‘second best’ - an issue that was recognised by several senior members of staff.

### **6.2.2 Continuing Professional Development**

The Library Association (2000) describe, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) as crucial to those working in a library environment. They highlight the fast changing conditions in libraries; the developments in ICT, and flatter management structures and strategies as having an affect on the skills and knowledge that staff require in order to carry out their jobs effectively. This particular framework was mentioned by Redfern (1993) who describes it as working in a learning organisation, where organisational culture supports and encourages the spirit of development. In the library environment, all but one of the authorities surveyed were aware of the Library Association’s CPD initiative, however only 55% had CPD as part of their LIS training strategy.

Interviewees were questioned as to their feelings regarding the integration of CPD into library training strategy. Work carried out by authors such as, Doney, (1998), Noon, (1994) and Usherwood et al; (1999), inspired this question. Staff were asked:

To what extent do you **agree/disagree** with the statement:

‘The Continual Professional Development’ (CPD) framework should be compulsory and should carry accreditation towards a recognised qualification?’

Examples of some of the interviewees responses are illustrated below:

*“I have no problem with continual professional development at all although I don’t know whether the Library Associations CPD is the best way to take it forward.” (MM CSA C)*

*“I think the existing system isn’t of much value it’s too ‘woolly’ and not practical enough.” (TO CSA A)*

*I think CPD is important as there needs to be some evidence of your development within the professional field.” (SM CSA B)*

*“I agree with the statement, it would be lovely if it did.” (SLA CSA B)*

*“That would be lovely in an ideal world.” (LA CSA B)*

CPD as an initiative links training and learning, and places continual learning in an organisational context which itself is a keystone to the idea of a learning organisation/culture. The interviews provided some interesting additional information on staff attitudes to CPD, and on issues surrounding CPD at all levels of staff. These themes will be picked up during the discussion in (section 7.4.7).

### **6.3 Evaluation of training**

To look at the effectiveness of training strategies survey recipients were asked how training was evaluated. All but one of the authorities had feedback mechanisms in

place. 62.5% had evaluation forms and recognised appraisals as a useful evaluation tool, other popular methods were one to one feedback sessions and other mechanisms adopted by authorities included learning agreements, happy sheets, and de-briefing sessions where suggestions on how training could be improved could be 'flagged up' to those in authority.

## **6.4 Importance of training**

To close the results section, attention will be turned to the final question of the e-mail survey, where respondents were asked to comment on the importance of training and development programs in public libraries in general. Not surprisingly, 37 out of the 40 authorities indicated that it was important to have a programme in place; two authorities said it was reasonably important, whilst only one felt that it was necessary, but not a top priority.

All the case study authorities indicated along with the majority of the survey authorities that training programmes were important. Although one could suggest that such a question would receive this predictable response, it was felt that it was important to pose it nonetheless as it would be wrong to make assumptions, and the answers could be used as a benchmark, i.e. further investigation could look at whether these responses were perhaps 'hollow' or idealised.

## **Chapter 7: Discussion**

### **7.1 Format of Discussion**

First of all it is important to provide a sound base on which to build one's arguments, so the discussion begins with a look at the definition of a learning organisation. The various ideas and theories expounded in the literature will be brought in alongside the findings of the current research to see whether public libraries are currently, or could become, learning organisations.

Secondly the discussion will centre on the present state of play, with regards to the development or implementation of the learning organisation ethos in public libraries. The varying attitudes and interpretations of staff surveyed and interviewed during this study will be highlighted, and then the discussion at this stage will move on to explore current training strategies in the public LIS sector.

Finally the discussion will bring together all the findings of this study to recommend best practice, and highlight identified obstacles to 'progress'.

### **7.2 What is a learning organisation?**

"The learning organisation is the organisation of the 21<sup>st</sup> century". (Daft, 2000)

One of the main aims of this study was to investigate what was meant by the term 'learning organisation'. In the introduction and the literature review we briefly

touched on key aspects of this concept and now the primary evidence gathered as part of this research shall be discussed.

### **7.2.1 Definition**

Staff were asked directly for their own definitions of a learning organisation and a selection of these have been included below to illustrate the diversity of understanding which was found by the researcher.

*“An environment where on-going learning is encouraged.” (LA CSA A)*

**“Is it about learning techniques in the workplace?” (LA CSA C)**

*“I imagine it is a company coming into the workplace and offering workplace courses as an extra to the day-to-day learning that we do in the workplace.” (LA CSA B)*

*“An organisation that it is committed to training and believes that learning and training is essential so the organisation can grow and serve the needs of the community it serves.” (TO CSA B)*

*“The original concept of a learning organisation is an organisation that learns by experience and is able to disseminate information very quickly. It seems to have been taken over by the training and learning establishments to mean lots of people going on courses all the time.” (TO CSA A)*

*“An organisation that positively encourages learning.” (LM CSA A)*

One of the first things one notices is how far some of these definitions stray from Pedler's idea of a learning organisation. Several members of staff have clearly got a very different idea of what a learning organisation entails, some focussed almost completely on the aspect of training, which the majority of theorists in this field do not often explicitly mention. Although it is obviously an integral part of a learning organisation it is by no means the central theme to the concept. Change, opportunity for all, and a shared vision are major defining aspects that were not significantly mentioned by staff. Rowley (1997:88) suggests that Pedler's definition has two important elements, individual learning and organisational learning and transformation. She argues "A learning organisation concerns itself with individual learning, but this alone is not sufficient. Individual learning must be harnessed to create organisational learning".

Jones & Hendry (1992:3) give a selection of definitions from the literature and these were as diverse as those of the staff cited above; clearly there is no all-embracing definition, and therefore it is very hard, if not impossible, to tie down from the research a working definition of the term. There are too many ideas, and too many different concentrations to include, and this study has not been able to find 'one' meaning of the term – but has uncovered a spider's nest of ideas (Garvin, 1993, Stewart, 1997, Daft, 2000). Indeed, Rowley (1997) agrees with this point and concludes, "that there is no recipe for creating a learning organisation". Perhaps the definitions provided in the literature are too idealised, and that to work in a public LIS environment a definition needs to be more practically-based and to include training somewhere near its centre.

Returning to Pedler's definition, there are other areas of the definition that also 'sit like a round peg in a square hole'. The quote below encompasses two major findings of this study with regards the definition of a learning organisation and its place in a LIS:

*"I wouldn't go so far as to say our library service continuously transforms itself, I don't think that it is continuously changing, in fact it is quite static. I don't think it facilitates learning either, you learn only what is strictly necessary to carry out your job properly." (LA CSA B)*

If we analyse this statement in two halves we can see that the first remark is directed at the definition's focus on transformation, and the second emphasises the dichotomy between a definition from a business-centred standpoint and its interpretation into a service-based organisation.

### **7.2.2 '...continuously transforms itself': A stumbling block?**

The training officer of CSA A stressed the importance of libraries transforming themselves: *"...the whole world is changing, take IT training, it is the last chance saloon for us, if we don't transform ourselves we will gradually decay and become a wreck"*. This was a key aspect of the definition of a learning organisation that this study has adopted, however it was a part of the definition that many of the other staff who were interviewed recognised as being 'foreign' to their LIS. Rowley (1997:88) places the idea firmly in the context of current developments in LIS; she stressed that

there was a "...the need for libraries to become learning organisations to enable them to survive by responding appropriately to change".

One can argue that the idea of a learning organisation is rooted in business, and thus the definition has come from this background. Businesses tend to move to pre-empt change and to keep ahead of the competition, whereas this study found, unsurprisingly, that libraries are less proactive and tend only to *react*, and sometimes slowly in the opinion of their staff. Indeed, Senge (1994:11) suggests that, "If there is one single thing a learning organisation does well, it is helping people to embrace change". He argues that people in a learning organisation react more quickly when their environment changes as they identify how to anticipate changes that are going to happen. "People in learning organisations will be able to look forward to creating, instead of merely *reacting* to, the new world that emerges" (Senge, 1994:12). This 'reactiveness' was often seen to be the case in the case study authority libraries.

An anomaly to this general view was offered by the training officer of CSA A who thought that his organisation could, and did, transform and change itself, but he did raise the problem with Pedler's definition surrounding the public library's emphasis on service and its widely recognised inertia: "*Any public service has more problems with change because it doesn't have the big stick of profitability, a private company has to change to survive. I sometimes go and look at other library services and notice that they haven't changed at all and have the same sets of targets, objectives, and policies they had about twenty years ago*". He further commented that a learning culture works well in practice where external forces are influential and the problem with public

services is that the market place doesn't give a direction and "...*there is a natural inertia by the system*". Cook (1997a:225) argues that to "survive as a learning organisation, public services have to change. To change requires an understanding of the pressures from both internal and external environments".

The senior manager of CSA A also noted that libraries are basically driven from outside and a great deal of the way in which they are transformed is in response to that, rather than the library changing for, and through, itself. This sentiment was shared by the training officer of CSA C who, defining a learning organisation, said: "*[It is] an organisation that seeks to develop its staff is always conscious of the new skills and needs required to carry out their work effectively and **reacts** accordingly to develop and make change*". The middle manager of CSA C also recognised that often changes were imposed upon her organisation as opposed to the organisation transforming itself. She gave as an example the case of central government dictating the ideas as to where libraries are going, and expressed the opinion that libraries were meeting that view instead of the profession saying, "This is libraries, this is where we are going".

When the middle manager of CSA C was interviewed she offered the following idea: "*I think once we know where we are going, then we can put those things [organisational objectives] in place, but otherwise what you end up doing is developing people and expecting and running with change but ultimately you are not actually getting to an end result, you are moving but not in a known direction*". This sounds as if it is a warning to authorities that they have to have a shared vision of where their libraries are going and how they want them to get there (Senge, 1990).

Jones & Hendry (1992:28) expanding on the work of learning organisation theorists put forward a five-stage model how an organisation can become a 'learning organisation'. They suggest that phase four is the transformation stage, a level at which an organisation is concerned with "making a complete change in form, appearance and character, changing structures, and also attitudes and perceptions and learning how to be different in its thoughts and values". One could argue that libraries are not at this stage yet and perhaps have quite a lot of work to do before they can attain it. Jones & Hendry (1992) identify a further stage of development 'above' that of transformation. The transfiguration phase is the 'ideal stage' it sees the person or organisation achieve the status 'fully developed'. Public libraries are a long way from reaching this target, however the researcher suggests this would be difficult for many organisations to achieve and one could question whether this is possible practically.

### **7.2.3 The public library: A service culture**

The definition of a learning organisation, as fore-mentioned, is rooted in the business sector, yet the defining concentration, from a library perspective, is one of service, as the following selection of quotes show:

*"I think that we are a service organisation not a learning one." (LA CSA B)*

*"You feel you like you are taking a step backwards when you arrive here [public LIS] compared to working in a Academic Library, there you are encouraged to learn for yourself and develop and not purely to improve the service you provide." (SLA CSA B)*

Perhaps the crux of the matter is that it is about finding a balance between providing a service and being a service organisation, and being an employer, concentrating on the needs and development of staff as part of a learning organisation.

The middle manager of CSA B felt that “...*service has to come first, so if the delivery of the service is affected by something then learning will be based and concentrated around that*”. This is obviously an important point but it is getting away from the personal development focus that learning organisation practitioners advocate. Also it brings us back to the proactive/reactive debate visited earlier – public libraries reacting to changes imposed on the service, rather than the public library altering its mode of service in light of a direction determined by the library itself, one which meets the needs of both its users *and* staff. Wallace (1997) remains cynical as to the extent to which the learning organisation concept, with its vision of learning and a way of being as an organisation, might become reality throughout a *public service*. Indeed, a proportion of the public sector literature suggests that, “the pursuit of a learning organisational ideal offers potential to improve organisational performance in this sector, but is limited by a range of constraining features particular to it” (Smith and Taylor, 2000:195).

### **7.3 The recognition and implementation of a learning culture in LIS**

It is the intention of this section to examine how the definition is being translated into practice – firstly through ‘environmental factors’ i.e. the culture within the LIS, how well does the definition fit those libraries researched as part of this study. Furthermore, to investigate how staff believe it ‘works’ in their organisation, and how staff attitudes

differ on this subject. Following this, attention will be turned to seeing if the idea has, or how it has, translated into library training practice (see section 7.4).

### **7.3.1 Awareness of the ‘learning organisation’**

*Before looking at the existing culture within public libraries and how it conforms to the ideals of a learning organisation, we must first briefly revisit the subject of the level of knowledge of the term, and its recognition within the LIS.*

The definition of a learning organisation has already been discussed, however the level of awareness across staffing levels is worthy of further comment at this stage to reiterate an important point, which is that knowledge of the term clearly differs within an organisation. The fact that the term hasn’t filtered down to the para-professional level is a major point to reinforce especially considering that the concept is based on facilitating the learning of all the members of an organisation. All the case study authorities showed the same pattern as far as term recognition was concerned with almost all the senior and professional staff being aware of the concept, and the least senior, para-professionals ‘in the dark’.

A learning organisation is one where the whole organisation recognises the need to involve staff irrespective of their level in the organisation (Cook, 1997b). If some members of staff are unaware of the term ‘learning organisation’ it could be suggested that it is difficult for them to embrace the idea, furthermore, the organisation is a long way from being a learning organisation for as illustrated above, it hasn’t involved all its staff (no matter what level they are in the library service).

We could spend pages discussing why this is the case, and what should be done, if anything, to address the balance, however bearing in mind the various constraints upon this research it is perhaps sufficient to merely highlight this disparity and leave it to those who continue to investigate the professional/non-professional debate which has been on-going within the library sector for many years.

As well as differences within an authority, this research found that differences in knowledge and attitudes also, unsurprisingly, exist between authorities and this will be discussed below.

### **7.3.2 Pedler's 'learning organisation': A definition in practice?**

Once staff had been introduced to the term and presented with this study's adopted definition of it, as detailed above, staff were asked how closely the Pedler definition matched their own organisations, the following set of answers from staff in the case study authorities highlights that a lot of the interviewees felt that there was a degree of similarity, which in several cases was very large:

*"They [the interviewee's LIS] do encourage taking up training and learning opportunities. At the moment the majority of staff are doing their NVQ level 3 and we have been encouraged to that." (SLA CSA C)*

*"Quite accurately, we are always having training of all different sorts and at all different levels. I think they do strive to keep abreast of everything that is going on to do with libraries. They seem fairly quick to introduce new ideas. If employees are trained and having their skills updated all the time then it is transforming, be it very subtle at times, but it does transform." (LA CSA A)*

*"That's pretty much what usually happens within our library." (LA CSA C)*

*“[The definition] sums us up quite well, over the last few years we have made great strides in training staff and developing them, enabling them to learn not only for their own benefit but also for the benefit of the organization and its customers. We have also become used to transforming ourselves, because we need to in order to meet the changing environment we operate in.” (TO CSA C)*

Pedler’s definition was definitely misunderstood by some members of staff; however, the point of this question was not to ‘score’ members of staff on their understanding of the definition but rather to see whether or not people actually identified with the definition. The researcher was at pains to not prompt or to explain to such an extent that staff’s ‘natural’ responses would be influenced. This primary data is valuable in so far as it shows that such a term is open to a range of interpretations, and on a larger scale, what one person might concentrate on, might be missed by another, or what one person might see as a valuable concept might be dismissed as jargon by another. These differences in interpretation sit well with the differences in opinion that were covered in the preceding sections.

Bearing in mind the definition’s concentration on ‘learning for all’ – a theme which will be re-visited later in the discussion, it is perhaps pertinent to point out that it is arguably important that all the organisation should be abiding by the same definition, understanding the same aspects and, if possible, valuing the concept to the same degree.

It should also be noted that none of the quotes shown above come from CSA B where from the senior manager down to LA, all agree that their LIS is not a learning organisation. Furthermore, everybody, other than the training officer, was unaware

whether or not the LIS had a policy or objective with regards to a culture of learning in their organisation. It is perhaps disconcerting the depth of feeling across this authority:

*“It doesn’t describe this LIS at all.” (SLA CSA B)*

*“No, I don’t think it does, it [LIS] goes some ways towards it... but doesn’t allow all its staff to have access to learning in work time, or encourage staff to learn.” (SM CSA B)*

This last quote is particularly emphatic coming, as it does, from the senior manager, it shows that access to learning is not uniform across the organisation – a finding that will be discussed in more detail below. Having said that, this quote, although not altogether positive for obvious reasons, is encouraging for the mere fact that senior management have recognised this as being a problem. They have realised that there are problems that need to be addressed and that it could be suggested that this is half the battle to overcoming them.

### **7.3.3 Differences in attitudes between authorities**

This author would put forward the idea that perhaps some authorities have a more positive outlook than others, and that, in some instances, part of the organisation’s ethos is creating and working towards a learning organisation as opposed to wanting it, but doing little to make it happen. As the old saying goes ‘actions speak louder than words’. One of the reasons for the differences in attitude and the take up of the learning organisation concept in authorities could be to do with the ‘type’ of council and how much that affects them and the degree to which they are governed by council policy etc. as the following two quotes illustrate:

*“At the moment I think we have a scatter approach to training but because we have gone through so many restructuring within the council it is difficult to make more specific focus.” (TO CSA C)*

*“The LIS has got the objectives and everything but as far as the library is concerned I think it is on a different planet to the council itself.” (SLA CSA B)*

The middle manager of CSA C commented that a lot of the changes that her library authority had gone through in recent years were council-led rather than library led, so her organisation had little opportunity to decide on what path they wanted to take and how they were going to get there. Ironically one area in which CSA C wanted to make changes, but were being ‘weighed down’ by local government directives was learning and training. The senior manager of CSA A re-iterated this point when commenting that the training priorities of his LIS were determined largely by a county – led initiative which he felt meant that training wasn’t always honed to meet the needs of library staff because training from other sectors of the council had to be taken on board: *“In a disparate organisation, fitting everybody’s training priorities into your own department’s training system is very difficult”*. Rowley (1997:91) suggests “there remains a tension between public service, political agendas and business efficiency which leaves the public sector with an ambiguity in their mission that might undermine effective learning ...it requires a carefully honed learning that incorporates and recognises these competing tensions and agendas”. This sensitive position in which public libraries find themselves is also recognised by Whetherly (1994).

We will now look at one specific area of organisational culture that this research found gave an insight into the attitude of an authority with respect to the concept of a learning organisation.

#### **7.3.4 Lifelong learning, but not in libraries**

What do you understand the meaning of a 'learning organisation' or 'learning culture' to be?

*An organisation or company that is committed training and learning as an ongoing procedure, it isn't just coming to a company, learning the job, and that's it; its a lifelong thing." (SM CSA B)*

A concept organisations have to understand in order to become a learning organisation is lifelong learning. "Basically this is creating a culture in which all employees accept the idea of continuous learning and development as the norm" (Towler, 2000:49). Furthermore, Makin & Craven (1999:428) comment that "lifelong learning is not just about equipping workers with skills to enhance their employability. It is also concerned with encouraging people to undertake learning in order to develop on a personal level".

The senior manager of CSA A, as part of his definition of a learning organisation, said "*It's basically a new look at training, making the learning process a life-long learning process*". This focuses on the individual member of staff, a view, which contradicted slightly with the training officer in this authority, whose understanding of the term centred on the organisation's ability to learn, and all parts of

the organisation learning as a result of what happens. This is a valuable point to note as the senior manager recognises the value of his staff's life-long learning, yet at the same time the manager and his training officer have different ideas of what a learning organisation entails.

Within an authority, one of the first ways in which one can identify a positive attitude and awareness of the importance of a learning culture in an LIS environment is through its appearance within organisational policy and objectives. As we saw in the results (section 5.2) three quarters of authorities had policies concentrating on achieving a learning culture. But, from the findings, one could say that lifelong learning is not making it beyond theory or policy within many library authorities. A number of staff implied that the theory was not becoming part of library practice, except from the perspective of the users: "*Policy does say that it isn't just work but self improvement/development as well, but that doesn't seem to come into it all*" (SLA CSA B).

Usherwood et al. (1999:61) asked respondents to a public library authority survey what three factors they considered to be the most important areas of training over the next two years, worryingly, "staff development was the least frequently cited training area".

The focus on the individual's personal development and learning which is at the core of the ideals surrounding the learning culture was not evident, to a large extent, in the case study authorities:

*“Most people would personally like to be more involved, it helps you become more confident and equips you better at work. I think we all get a bit stagnant here, once you have worked your way through all your jobs there is nowhere else to go or opportunities to develop after that.” (LA CSA B)*

*“I think it would be good to provide a broader area of training for people, to provide more development, training at the moment tends to be very specific to the job, I think it would be advantageous to provide a wider picture.” (TO CSA C)*

Senge (1994:7) identifies that learning organisations are based on five ‘learning disciplines’, to practice these disciplines one must be “a lifelong learner on a never-ending developmental path.” Although part of the Senge’s idea of a learning organisation is based on ‘team learning’, self-development is also recognised as being a necessary and vital part of the equation (Senge, 1994). This view was also shared by a middle manager from CSA B who also offered this view, with respect to the contradictory practice in many libraries: *“Part of the concept of a library is encouraging people to learn and to self develop, so we should probably be reflecting that”*. A view given further support by a middle manager from CSA C who commented that the library was very involved in its users learning but that it had to also understand that the learning and development of its own staff was of paramount importance: *“Each person should see themselves as learning, developing and changing; this has all sorts of implications because it is staff taking on responsibility for their own actions and development”*.

Meggison & Pedler (1992) suggest that it is essential to create a climate that supports learning; self-development is for *all* members of the organisation irrespective of the grade or scale of the employee. Whilst Mumford (1994) advocates the importance of the commitment of individuals to their own learning and development. He suggests that an essential ingredient of the learning organisation is the manner in which the organisation seeks to improve the capacity of individuals not only to identify learning opportunities but also to benefit from them. From this study's results, one can see that there is little evidence to suggest this is the case in public libraries at the present time. One could argue there is still the misconception (in some quarters) that learning is merely staff going on training courses; rather than it being a continuous learning process for all.

### **7.3.5 Learning organisations in practice**

With regards to learning organisations in practice, attitudes range from the very enthusiastic, to the almost apathetic, for example:

*"It works quite well really because through the Training and Development Review we are able to highlight areas we think we need training in and these are recorded and followed up within reason." (LM CSA C)*

*"I don't think the organisation would survive at the moment if we didn't have a learning culture." (MM CSA A)*

*"I think it would help if things were moving more here, it would help staff morale and enthusiasm and get a much better service as well." (SLA CSA B)*

*"I think it works, well I hope it works." (SM CSA C)*

*“The idea is a nice one.” (TO CSA B)*

*“I think it can work in practice but I think it needs to be well thought out and organised and I am not sure that’s what happens here.” (LM CSA A)*

*“The extent to which that works here is patchy.” (MM CSA B)*

*“We try hard, there are bits of it I think we are quite good at, but other areas we are still less certain about.” (MM CSA C)*

*“I think you can only aim towards it I think that our LIS tries to work towards that goal but doesn’t succeed.” (SM CSA B)*

*“I don’t think it can do any harm to have a learning culture.” (TO CSA C)*

It is perhaps best to let these comments talk for themselves, however it would be wrong to leave this section without covering the apathy and scepticism which was conveyed by other members of staff. The reason for this may be rooted in feelings that the term is merely jargon, and will soon be passed over in favour for a new ‘en vogue’ term. This sentiment is shown in the following quote from the senior manager of CSA A. *“I don’t think a learning culture does work in many ways...I think it is the current in term...Overall I think it is just a development that has come along, a learning culture is just a phrase to explain where we are at the moment...I suspect that in two years time the learning culture will be a thing of the past and there will be something else that will be the driving force behind everything and we will go back to a less intensive system”.*

The above comment is pertinent to worries held by a number of authors. Pearn et al. (1995:197) comment there is a danger of a learning organisation “being seen as a passing fad, whose time will come (all too quickly) and that therefore nothing needs to be

done because interest will soon blow over”. Jones et al. (1999:vii) counter-argue that, “This [learning culture] is not simply managerial jargon”. Indeed, it is an ideal that must be taken seriously and as Whetherly (1998) notes, although learning organisations do not happen overnight, they take time to plan and work towards, libraries should still aim to create this ideal in an LIS environment.

### **7.3.6 Investors in People**

Investors in People (IIP) is another area of interest; in Britain the ‘learning company’ and Investors in People “sprang from the same seed” (Franklin, 1997:151). IIP is a Government initiative aimed at trying to improve British training practices and to make certain that organisations attempt or ultimately become learning organisations (Foot & Hook, 1996). IIP is only given to organisations that demonstrate a real commitment to continuous improvement and development of staff (Goulding, 1995). Taking this point on board, of the three case study authorities interviewed, two had gained IIP accreditation and both of these had been members since 1998. Only CSA B had no IIP status and wasn’t working towards it at the present time. It could be suggested that if an organisation has gained IIP then it is a learning organisation.

Cook (1997b:21) suggests that “Investors in People sets out various criteria to be achieved in the areas of training and communication with employees...However, IIP has limitations with regard to developing the whole culture of an organisation towards learning”. Investors in People is a nationally organised scheme that can help organisations working towards becoming a learning organisation, but, the misconception would be to assume that this initiative alone results in a learning organisation (Smith & Taylor, 2000).

## 7.4 Training strategies in LIS

Training is only part of a learning organisation, although Griego et al. (2000) maintain that it is one of the key facets of the concept, there are many different aspects, levels, and layers to the concept. However in terms of this study the training area has been concentrated upon because it is an integral ingredient to the learning organisation recipe. It is also an area in which hard data could be collected and much of this has been presented in the results section. At this stage we will look at current training strategies and practice in terms of the influence of the learning culture idea on their development and implementation.

### 7.4.1 Current state of training

Allan (2000) discusses the strong tradition of training staff; and she suggests there is an increasing demand for library staff to have training, learning and development skills. The three case study authorities staff were asked to comment on whether or not they felt the training that they received was adequate, and the key finding to come from this question was that although the majority of staff seemed happy with 'their lot', at the level of senior library assistant and library assistant (aside from in CSA A where both felt it was "good enough") all thought that training could be improved.

*"It could be higher if you were given more training on a one to one basis." (LA CSA C)*

*"I think it is just adequate for example, new members of staff get the bare minimum of one to one training in the first week then they are put into the library on the 'frontline' and it is left to the other members of staff to really train them and help them along."*

*(LA CSA B)*

*“It’s adequate. At the moment they [LIS] doing this ECDL training and it is going to take 3 years to complete all the training because of time etc, that horrified me when I realised how long it would take for some people to receive the training.” (SLA CSA B)*

*“The initial training isn’t enough to half equip someone to work in the library and you do wonder what the general public think when staff can’t answer their enquiries and have to continually ask other members of staff, I doubt they are impressed.” (LA CSA B)*

*“I think a lot of staff have been here a long time and you tend to find that you get the bare minimum of training.” (LA CSA B)*

#### **7.4.2 Staff training: Equal opportunities?**

It was interesting, if somewhat depressing, to note that in CSA B the line manager felt that: *“Staff might not be interested [in training], they may not want to develop themselves”*; especially worrying when one finds that the library assistant and senior library assistant in this authority were very interested in training opportunities but felt that they weren’t given enough of them! Yet at the same time the line manager felt that she had received a lot of encouragement to go for Chartership and that ‘others’ were *“...supported and encouraged to go on NVQs etc”* – it is unfortunate that this support and encouragement had not filtered down to the level of library assistant in this authority.

The disparities in training between professional and para-professional have already been covered in results chapter 6, and there is no need to go over old ground here, but merely re-emphasise the points that, with regards training needs being identified and met, and the actual training methods used, there were distinct differences between staffing levels. This finding is re-enforced by Lobban (1997) and Goulding

(1995) who comment that a major issue, which faces library assistants in relation to training, is the perceived imbalance between professional staff and library assistants.

The Audit Commission (1997, quoted in Jones et al., 1999) found that all staff, regardless of level, gain from training in the areas of ICT and Customer Care, however staff are selected for training on a hierarchical basis. This study has found evidence to substantiate this argument; it is true that most staff tend to receive the same core training, however some 'lower' levels of staff may be waiting for months or sometimes even longer to receive the training. Furthermore, in other areas of training staff do not benefit equally and do not have the same equality of training opportunities professional staff are privy to, yet a learning organisation supposedly encourages the ongoing learning and development of *all* its members (Whetherly, 1994). However, in some cases it is fair to say that more senior staff did want to change the situation as these quotes illustrate:

*"I would like to see opportunities to link training to the improvement of status for some of the junior members of staff." (SM CSA A).*

*"It's patchy, in terms of IT, it is adequate now but in other places its not and is inadequate. We can't physically provide the amount of training to all members of staff that we would like to offer. I would say the willingness is there but not necessarily the means to put it into practice." (SM CSA B)*

It could be suggested that what makes the discrepancies identified bleaker is that managers are only a small proportion of library staff members. One could argue that

library assistants perhaps get the cheapest training options because there are greater numbers of staff at that level. Hence, the frequency of training at this level is probably higher than that received by, for example, a senior manager. However, when one considers that individual learning is a central component of the learning organisation, and that the majority of staff employed in libraries are non-professionals, the idea of a learning organisation seems further away from the public libraries grasp than ever (Rowley, 1997).

The disparities highlighted above can be further exacerbated if employees are 'flexible workers' i.e. part time workers, Saturday assistants, casual workers etc. Kerslake & Goulding (1997) argue flexible workers have fewer training opportunities than other workers. Although no part time workers were interviewed during the research, senior managers and training officers did identify the training of part time workers as being occasionally problematic and that there was often little opportunity for them to practice training. Part time workers tend to be lower down on the training priority list behind full time employees. Also, time constraints restrict full time employees from training practice, and unsurprisingly part time workers have less time available to them than full time staff.

One aspect the study looked at was the training subject matter – training in ICT was, at the present time, clearly being given priority for understandable reasons. Recent research and literature have accorded a greater emphasis on ICT training requirements, in lieu of training in core skills (Jones et al., 1999). For this reason, and ones directly relevant to the research topic, this area has been chosen for particular concentration.

### 7.4.3 Information Communication Technology training and the New Opportunities Fund

As can be seen from the following quotes, the importance of ICT training is recognised by both government and practitioners.

“A comprehensive training initiative in information and communication technology (ICT) for the public library sector will be seen as an important component of the government’s plan to foster a learning society” (LIC, 1997).

*“The NOF programme ICT training for public library staff will dominate the training programme over the next 3 or 4 years.” (Surveyed Authority)*

*“The NOF funding money means people are too tied up and it is taking too much time, and everything is simply bulging at the seams.” (MM CSA A)*

*“NOF training will limit the amount of time spent on other training courses. For example, we wouldn’t be able to send 3 people on a post graduate course again because we are stretched with staff cover and time at the moment and it will not improve for the next 3 years. Some of the Library Assistants aren’t too keen on taking part in the training either, Professional staff tend to realise the importance of it more sometimes. Also it can be very daunting for staff that aren’t particularly comfortable or use to ICT.” (TO CSA B)*

*“We have been offering the NVQ process but with the constraints of the IT training programme we will have to restrict the NVQ process for the time being, which is a shame as I feel it is a good way of providing base level qualification within the*

*workforce, but we are just not going to be able to expand the programme at the moment because of the other training commitments and there isn't enough time to do everything.” (TO CSA B)*

The training officer of CSA A was clearly not the only person who suggested that an over concentration on ICT training was at the detriment of staff's overall development, as the authority was not able to take into account staff opinions and concerns with respect to training and instead were having to concentrate on ICT. This contrasts with Jones et al. (1999), who found that managers underestimated the depth and breadth of ICT skills front-line staff needed and were not placing ICT training at the forefront of their training strategy but concentrating instead on customer care instead. As fore-mentioned, one can understand why ICT training is very important at the present time, with all the library-focused government initiatives (LIC, 1997, LIC, 1998, DTI, 2000) however, these developments and the consequential training will be time-consuming, and as a result other training opportunities and necessities may have to be placed on the back-burner.

Although, Jones et al. (1999) and Biddiscombe (1997) advocate the importance of ICT in public libraries and its crucial role in LIS development, both for its staff and customers, at the end of the day, LIS work is not *just* about ICT, and authorities need to ensure that their staff don't lose their core-skills and knowledge base in the process.

Jones et al. (1999:75) also suggest that libraries could: “Use training budgets creatively to support ICT skill development, such as laptop computers for home study...”. This is a good idea in principle, however, the majority of public libraries are

working with small training budgets that have to cover all aspects of training in the service; hence these suggestions may not be viable for most authorities.

“A major step towards the completion of the New Library Network has been made with the launch of the New Opportunities Fund’s £20m programme of ICT training for all public library staff” (Library Association Record, 1999).

Another key area of concern is the funding behind the current training drive in this area. As can be seen from the comment above, money is being offered by the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) for the training itself, however the financial outlay in terms of staff time and cover is not met by these grants and thus leaves the LIS authority to pick up the bill, which in any major authority is bound to be substantial.

Thirteen authorities surveyed (well over a quarter) specifically mention NOF, and the repercussions of it, without being questioned about it, and it was a theme that re-occurred during the interviews as the following comment exemplifies: *“The NOF money we are going to get for IT training is wonderful but that NOF money doesn’t pay for staff cover, so in practice to get all those members of staff through that training is going to be difficult and not just for our authority but lots of colleagues in other authorities, so it’s the same all over; there are definite problems”.* (SM CSA C)

The level of money on offer is sizeable, the amounts listed here were offered voluntarily - £28,505, £48,000, £48,505, and certainly one can assume, judging from the number of comments, that in the majority of cases the ICT training being undertaken in authorities was reliant on the NOF funding. As fore-mentioned, staff hours have to

come out of the authority's (training) budget, which more often than not isn't particularly large to begin with.

The following quote brings another point into play: “...*The other thing that will be quite difficult, is that the NOF funded training is quite intensive training and we still have to run the library service at the same time; so we can only send 20 people at a time and that means inevitably there are always going to be people who will be behind waiting for their turn to receive the training*” (TO CSA B). Evidently there will be a pecking order, and as previously mentioned if the hierarchical structure is again mapped onto training patterns then many front-line staff may well be at the back of the queue, which has obvious repercussions on service provision.

Moving away now from this specific area of training, the concentration will now shift towards a discussion of the dual nature of several aspects of training in the public library. When you look beneath the surface, it is evident that there are several key areas where opinions and practice differ, and major disparities are apparent.

#### **7.4.4 Short term / Long term**

One area in which this is clear is the short term/long term emphasis of training at particular levels of staffing. An example of this was found in CSA A where the senior manager felt that the training he received focused almost entirely on longer term needs. The para-professionals in this authority also felt that their training addressed longer term needs as the following quotes show:

*“Both [long term and short term], some training is done because you need to know procedures etc. on an immediate basis, but there are elements of the training that involve a more long-term basis.” (SLA CSA A)*

*“Both, but I think that I am very lucky I have been on training courses where I perhaps haven’t used the skills I gained until later on.” (LA CSA A)*

However, in other authorities the para-professional staff thought that too much of their training simply focused on their immediate needs, and less attention was given to long-term training. Farago & Sykrme (1995) and Lawes (1996) suggest that one of the most common obstacles to becoming a learning organisation is reluctance to train staff or invest in training, other than for obvious immediate needs. Although, one could argue that in the public library context lack of money is a common factor rather than a reluctance to invest in training, this does not explain the disparities that exist between para-professionals and professional members of staff.

*“We would all benefit from in-depth ongoing training as opposed to a quick bit of training when a new computer system is introduced.” (LA CSA B)*

*“I think it concentrates on my immediate needs.” (LA CSA C)*

*“It [training] has concentrated on my immediate needs, it has tended to be the bare minimum to equip you to carry out the bulk of your work and then the rest is, if you don’t know ask.” (SLA CSA B)*

A middle manager from CSA B felt that she hadn’t done any form of professional development for some time and that the training she was receiving at

present was merely ‘plugging the hole’. A comment, which finds wider support in the literature from Muddiman (1995, quoted in Winkworth et al. 1999) who felt that: “2001 may well see in libraries the emergence of the jobber, who knows how but not why”. This implies that employees are being given the basic short term training they need to enable them to carry out their work on a day to day basis and are provided with the practical know how, but not the theoretical reason, or the encouragement to pursue further learning on and off the job.

#### **7.4.5 Current training methods**

Another area of interest where disparities were apparent was the aspect of training methods; this was covered in section 6.2. This is evident in the quotes shown below from CSA B, there appears to be a gap between what professional staff believe is on offer, and what para-professional staff feel they have access to. It is almost as if there is a sliding scale with professionals at one end, and para-professionals at the other.

*“I think we do provide quite a lot of training. We provide induction training, on the job training, and qualifications such as NVQs. We have 3 Library Assistants who we are paying for in terms of both time and money to do a post-graduate course. I know that the training is available although not everybody can do it at the same time but it is there for them. ...I am sure that they always feel, for example, Library Assistants are always trained last. But sometimes we have put the training in order of those who deal with the public on the enquiry desk first.” (TO CSA B)*

*“There are so many library assistants that the majority of us don’t get the opportunity to go on some of the in-depth training courses, but I think that we would personally get a lot out of them.” (LA CSA B)*

#### **7.4.6 Cascade Training**

One training method used to a high degree by the majority of authorities was cascade training and there were a number of interesting comments made by para-professionals on how it would be nice to have the training first hand for a change as opposed to having information and subject knowledge passed down all the time. However, it was interesting to note, that a number of professionals recognised this and also suggested that it would be nice for para-professionals to have ‘first bite of the cherry’ for a change rather than always feeling second best.

*“It is a good way of using limited resources and I think it is a good way of getting commitment among the cascaders and getting staff to learn.” (TO CSA B)*

*“If it is strictly factual training I think it works because you can’t ‘spin’ what you are doing but if you’re being told something about changes to the organisation as a whole there can be a temptation to put your own personal interpretation on it.” (MM CSA A)*

*“It can be quite an effective way of training but communication is an important part of it and I feel there is often a lack of it here.” (SLA CSA C)*

*“It would be better if individuals received the training rather than it being cascaded down to them.” (LA CSA B)*

Everybody recognised the same pros and cons of this method, as can be seen in section 6.2.1, but as can be seen from this selection of quotes, the opinions with regards the effectiveness of this method do seem to fit with the professional/para-professional 'split' apparent elsewhere. Although the professional training officer feels that the method is strong, the library assistant from the same authority clearly would prefer an alternative to cascade training and a re-focus on the individual.

One could argue that cascade methods are largely ineffective in teaching training skills, more often than not the training is carried out by managers who are not always trained to pass on their learning to others, but have had the opportunity to receive the training first hand and are left to cascade this information to others (Jones et al., 1999). 'This information' probably comes from Library Association courses; other library authorities courses and private company run courses that professionals seem to have more access to, in comparison with para-professional staff.

One of the negative aspects of cascade training mentioned by every person interviewed was the 'Chinese whispers' syndrome (Allan, 1999). It could be suggested that during the transfer of training skills 'down' through the organisation, information and knowledge is diluted, lost, or interpreted differently. This can/will result in a 'lesser'-trained workforce at the para-professional level, which in turn, has repercussions for service quality, as it is these members of staff who work daily on the 'front-line' as it were.

Another specific area of staff training that was focused on in the results section was continuing professional development, an area that will now be discussed further.

#### **7.4.7 Continuing Professional Development (CPD)**

There was a fair amount of ignorance surrounding CPD in the lower echelons of the staff interviewed, as the following couple of quotes show:

*“I’ve not heard of CPD.” (LA CSA C)*

*“I don’t know what CPD is.” (SLA A)*

In particular, the level of knowledge concerning the training initiative in CSA A was lacking; for example the line manager, when asked to comment on the scheme said that she didn’t know enough ‘about that’ to comment. Ignorance of CPD seemed to be more deep-seated in this organisation than in the other case study authorities, but this may have been due to the attitudes of senior staff towards the scheme in the first place.

Staff were asked whether they felt it would be beneficial to make CPD compulsory in their LIS, and as the selection of comments below highlights there were mixed feelings on this matter.

*“I disagree with it entirely, if you are a professional librarian you have a responsibility to yourself to continue your professional development and I don’t think it should be compulsory, if you don’t do it then more fool you.” (SM CSA A)*

*“I don’t think anything should be compulsory, and don’t think it should necessarily carry accreditation towards a recognised qualification.” (LA CSA A)*

*“Development should be a compulsory thing because you have to evolve. There are some staff that shy away from such things.” (SLA CSA C)*

*“I agree with it completely, it is essential that people develop in their work. We require staff to get NVQs but don’t require anything from Managers.” (TO CSA C)*

With reference to the first quote in the box above, the senior manager in this particular authority went on to admit that he felt that: *“There is a big problem with our professional librarians, they **don’t** keep abreast of developments in the profession...”*. But he did go on to re-emphasise that he didn’t think that making CPD compulsory was the answer, a view shared by Doney (1998) and Birkinshaw (1994), which begs the question ‘What is?’!

The majority of para-professionals were unanimous in their positivism to the scheme, for example: *“I agree with the statement, that would be lovely in an ideal world” (LA CSA B)*. They felt that if they had some kind of development for themselves, similar to that followed by professionals their efforts would be more widely recognised. Some suggested that NVQs have gone some way to filling this ‘void’ but the current concentration on ICT training was detracting resources (both financial and temporal) away from NVQ and *“...restricting the NVQ process for the time being.” (TO CSA A)* – a point made earlier in the discussion. Usherwood et al. (1999) suggest, some people see NVQs as having the potential to break down professional/para-professional divide.

This view was also found at the professional level, a middle manager in CSA B also recognised that CPD would benefit her, and thought that it would be great if some of the work she carried out on a day to day basis counted towards some formal recognition.

The middle manager of CSA C was one of a number of people who expressed doubts about the Library Association's CPD, but she did comment that she was happy with the theory of continual professional development. She mentioned that all her staff were working towards their NVQs, which were, in their eyes, 'professional development', but then went on to note that this qualification was not part of the Library Association's programme.

One of the authorities surveyed noted that the CPD training strategy in their organisation was for senior staff only; also in CSA B, the line manager thought that the idea of making the scheme compulsory was "*nice in theory, but some staff might resent it and even be scared*" even though the SLA and LA in this authority contradicted this whole-heartedly - this only serves to reinforce the disparities highlighted above.

Although staff did not agree on whether the scheme should be compulsory or not, there was an overwhelming consensus of opinion from 'lower' staffing levels, with support from elsewhere in the organisation's hierarchy in a number of cases, that some form of formal recognition, such as a qualification would be welcomed. This finding contrasts with Jones et al. (1999:34) who suggest that although most staff wanted

learning to be assessed and gain recognition from managers, there appeared to an apparent lack of desire for qualifications on the part of many staff.

#### **7.4.8 Team Learning**

“Team learning is vital because teams, not individuals, are the fundamental learning unit in modern organisations. This is where the ‘rubber meets the road’: unless teams can learn, the organisation cannot learn” (Senge, 1990:10). The majority of staff interviewed referred to their individual learning as opposed to any ‘team learning’. However, any team learning that did occur appeared to be ‘para-professional teams’ *or* ‘professional teams’ i.e. staff tended to learn with their own ‘level’ of staff as opposed to the two mixing. This could perhaps be as a result of the differing training methods used, for example, we have seen that cascade training, which is suited to team learning, is concentrated almost solely on staff at a para-professional level.

Alternatively, the reasons could be more deep-seated, but within the constraints of this dissertation it is not possible to discuss these here. However, whatever the motive for the team structures, what is clear is that team learning is an area that requires more attention. Towler (2000:52) underlines this conviction and suggests that: “It is a matter of principle that learning has to be developed through a team approach”.

#### **7.4.9 Action Learning**

Towler (2000:41) also suggests, “In order to become a learning organisation the first concept organisations need to understand is the Revansian concept of Action Learning. The reason for this is that action learning provides the underpinning process

which drives all other forms of learning”. Authors such as Allan, (1999), Harrison, (1997) and Mayo & Lank, (1994) all advocate this style of learning. Authorities surveyed were asked whether they used ‘action learning’ as a training method and were asked to indicate the different levels of staff that used this training technique. Only a small percentage of library authorities subscribed to this method although it was slightly heartening to see that there seemed to be no real disparity in the levels of staff using the technique.

However, what does cause concern are comments such as “*what is action learning?*”. A small number of survey respondents asked this question, whilst a number left the option blank at all levels in the survey grid, which leads the researcher to question whether this was because the authority didn’t use the training method at any level of it’s organisation, or perhaps respondents were unaware of what ‘action learning’ entailed. Lucas (1999:35) concludes, “that in general, local authorities have been slow to adopt some of the most innovative approaches to learning, such as action learning” and this study would seem to back-up this finding. Whatever the current situation, if ‘action learning’ does play such a large role in creating a learning organisation, this is clearly a training method that public libraries need to take on board in the future.

## **7.5 Best practice**

As previously discussed, Jones & Hendry (1992) provide a comprehensive five-stage model of how organisations can become a ‘learning organisation’; this provides criteria on which to improve your organisation and also how to identify ‘where you are’

at the present time. Using this model it would appear that the majority of public libraries are at present at the dependency stage. This is re-enforced by Jones et al. (1999) who claim there is a 'culture of dependency' in some public libraries, which they suggest may inhibit the development of more positive approaches and attitudes.

This section brings together the findings of the study to provide a record of areas in which attention has to be given if the concept of a learning organisation is going to work in practice in the LIS environment. A 'supporting' set of the main obstacles that have been identified is also given, as the author feels one can learn as much from these as one can from the prescriptive 'to-do' list. Although, even when taken together, one cannot claim this to be a comprehensive set, the important point to note is that the majority of the ideas discussed below have been taken directly from this study's data and are based on comments made by staff rather than prescribed by theorists. Ideas from the literature will be tied in, but the major focus will be on suggestions raised by the research itself.

- **Leadership**

Daft (2000:41) argues, "Leadership is the only means through which a company can change into a learning organisation". Leaders take 'control with' as opposed to 'control over'. They 'control with' others by facilitating teamwork, initiating change, and building relationships based on shared vision. Hence, senior managers have an important role to play in building a learning organisation; they have to champion the learning culture to all employees (Beardwell & Holden, 1997). However, there is little

evidence to suggest that senior managers are succeeding in their ‘leadership’ role with respect to this at the moment.

- **Shared Vision**

Line (1999:10) suggests that “people do not mind being in a rocking boat so much if they know where it is going and it is somewhere they want to go.” And he finds a lot of support for this idea in the literature concerning the creation of learning organisations. The need for a shared vision and strategy was recognised by several staff including the senior manager of CSA B: *“I feel that they only concentrate on small aspects, pockets of training and learning and that they need to take a more holistic approach”*.

Senge (1990) suggests people need to know that they have the freedom to say what they want, for everybody to work together to make a picture of a future they seek to create, to show where they are going and how they are going to get there. If all members of the organisation share the vision and work as a team to create it via a learning strategy/system, the vision gives shape to the organisation’s future, and people can work and learn together to set the goals to achieve it.

- **Communication**

*“...You can have a policy but if you don’t have all your managers, for example, pulling together... then it is difficult sometimes to ensure that Fred Bloggs out at X community library is getting the support he should have.” (SM CSA C)*

*“Communication needs to be improved, you need people to be aware of what people around need to be trained in.” (SLA CSA A)*

*“The main obstacle would be the lack of formal structures for communication in the library or between departments.” (LM CSA B)*

Clearly, from these quotes above, if the theory of a learning organisation has any chance of making it into LIS practice, lines of communication need to be improved, or indeed, established. Whether this is the communication of training opportunities, organisational policy statements or spreading the word and principles of the concept, generally the communication network is a key factor in making the LIS a learning organisation. In CSA A, we can see that this has not happened as the fact that the LIS has a policy to do with continuous learning was lost between the senior manager and the line manager. As Line (1999:10) said “communication is never as good as you think.” Complacency is definitely not an option!

One area where improvements would seem to be necessary is highlighted in the fact that there are many examples in the text of senior management mis-reading or simply not being aware of the opinions, attitudes, and situation of their para-professional staff – obviously this matter needs to be addressed before the holistic vision of a learning culture has any chance of success. Senge (1994:14) suggests “one of the attributes that twenty-first century companies will need is conversation. This is the single greatest learning tool in your organisation – more important than computers or sophisticated research”. Hence, organisations that still have apparent communication barriers have a lot of work ahead of them if they want to become a learning organisation (Farago & Skyrme, 1995, Daft, 2000, Jones et al., 1999, Hodgkinson, 2000)

- **Encouragement**

*“It is all about encouraging people to develop and learn rather than giving them the bare minimum of learning to carryout their job.” (SLA CSA B)*

*“ Staff need to want training as well, they need to be encouraged to continue to learn and develop and to see that the training is relevant to their needs.” (SM CSA B)*

*“I think there should be more staff involvement and staff ideas should be taken on board. I think the culture here is fairly low. If we were asked for ideas we [staff] could all come up with some pretty useful ones, that is if we thought they would be listened to and seriously considered.” (LA CSA B)*

As well as being encouraged to learn, staff also should be encouraged to participate and put forward their concerns and ideas with regards how to improve the learning culture in their organisation. An environment needs to be created that encourages learning at all levels and also individuals to seek learning opportunities for themselves (Foot & Hook, 1996, Hodgkinson, 2000). The learning organisation has constantly to check its polices and strategies to ensure that they are encouraging rather than restricting learning. A basic value in learning organisations is to question the status quo. Daft (2000:227) argues “Constant questioning opens the gates to creativity and learning”.

- **Empowerment**

Empowering is another area worthy of comment; learning organisations empower employees (Daft, 2000, Pearn et al., 1995). Indeed, “An empowering organisation and a learning organisation are, if not identical, then certainly close

cousins” (Pluse, 1998:235). Some members of staff (particularly at the para-professional level) suggested their opinions weren’t taken into account and that they are not part of the decision making process at an organisational or individual level. A learning organisation espouses the ideal of ‘empowering people’ but as can be seen from the comments above more often than not the attitude “they won’t let us do it” prevails (Senge 1994). Thus, it is pointless to suggest, “*people need to feel more empowered and take responsibility for their actions*” (TO CSA C); if at the end of the day the old ‘traditional’ culture of the organisation remains the same.

- **Policy**

The researcher is left in no doubt that public libraries have policies in place, however it is disconcerting the number of people within the organisations who are unaware of them. Firstly, it could be suggested that the communication mechanisms within the organisations need to be addressed. However, it is also important to note that not only do people need to be aware of their organisation’s policies and learning strategies but also according to learning organisation theorists, employees should be participating in the development of policy (Senge, 1990, Pedler et al., 1991). One foreseeable problem is offered by Wallace (1997) who suggests that the learning organisation ideal is not a useful notion to apply to a public service context because of such factors as a tradition of non-participative policy making.

- **Using a variety of training methods**

*“It would be good to receive training in the theoretical aspects as well as the practicalities sometimes.” (SLA CSA A)*

*“I think some of the things we have learnt could be produced in written form so you could refer back to your notes if you need to at a later date.” (LA CSA C)*

*Whether it is a practical suggestion (as in the latter quote) or a more principle-based comment (as in the former) many of the staff interviewed felt that they would benefit from more diverse training opportunities. Training is a very important aspect of learning, and it should be respected that there are many ‘tools’ in the training ‘box’ and one might suit a subject or situation better than another, or, simply by using a mix of methods one might revitalise a member of staff tired of ‘the same old training routine’. Perhaps there should be more variety on offer to para-professionals in particular, as was previously mentioned in the results section, the majority of para-professional training centred on ‘in-house’ and ‘on-the job’ training.*

- **Learning from outside influences**

The middle manager from CSA C suggested that it would be useful to have more knowledge about what’s done in the outside world and an awareness of what relevant private sector methods libraries could adopt. Certainly, considering where the concept came from, it would seem logical to see what the business sector had to offer by way of theory, advice and guidance.

**“With the lack of external drivers towards change, I do believe that we end up being reactive rather than proactive”.** (TO CSA A) – This sentiment was conveyed earlier in the text and it is obviously something that libraries need to address,

i.e. they need to take charge of their own development, not unlike a cutting-edge business, if they are to become learning organisations.

- Double loop learning

Double loop learning is crucial in a learning organisation. Mayo & Lank (1994:143) argue “Individuals must question the status quo, go back to root causes, always ask the questions ‘why?’ and ‘so what?’”. It enables the organisation to look for the root cause, if something is wrong not only do you decide how to ‘fix’ the problem but you also question why you were doing it in the first place. This can prevent organisations stagnating, or perhaps becoming complacent. One could suggest that this is an area that public libraries need to concentrate on and try to implement to improve their chances of becoming learning organisations.

- Learning contracts and learning logs

Allan (2000) suggests learning contracts can be a motivating process as it allows the participant to commit to the ‘learning process’, defines the desired outcomes, and can make learning more effective. A learning contract consists of a formal agreement drawn up by the learner, his or her trainer and manager that “sets out a clear set of specific learning objectives, explains how these will be achieved, the time it will take to achieve them and what the criteria of evaluation will be” (Pearn et al., 1995:127). One could argue that the continual movement of the learner between the learning activities of reflection, knowledge, planning and action is the ‘key’ to effective learning. Only one of the forty survey respondents highlighted learning contracts as a practice they used to support learning.

A learning log is a simple tool for recording, developing and structuring learning experiences. Writing up learning experiences from everyday work incidents can increase the probability of doing things better in the future. Another benefit of using learning logs is that it provides the “individual with unique and valuable insights into their own learning processes and enables them to establish what learning methods work best for them” (Pearn et al., 1995:137).

There are clearly many areas for improvement and a general plan for success could start by looking at the broad areas of human resource management (HRM), lifelong learning, and change management to begin with, as suggested by Pedler et al. (1988, quoted in Rowley, 1997:88) who highlight a learning organisation is one which:

- Has a climate in which individual members are encouraged to learn and to develop their full potential
- Extends their learning culture to include customers, suppliers and other significant stakeholders
- Makes HRM development strategy central to business policy, and
- Is in a continuous process of organisational transformation

As we have seen, a learning organisation cannot be defined in terms of specific structures, culture, or practice: “Processes and values are central. A learning organisation works to create values, practices and procedures in which learning and working are synonymous throughout the organisation. Learning is a core part of all operations” (Rowley, 1997:89). With this central focus in mind let us move on to those obstacles, which hinder the progress of a ‘learning library’.

## 7.6 Obstacles to libraries being learning organisations

*“We need more money to spend on training although even money wouldn’t help very much if we couldn’t physically find the time to send people on courses. Although we can do on the job training, I think people feel more valued if you send them away on courses and spend money on them but this is increasingly more difficult as you are continually trying to find people to cover those staff...”. (TO CSA B) –*

Unsurprisingly, money and time were identified as the major obstacles to the success of a learning organisation/ culture, a point reinforced by Senge (1994:199) who argues that: “to provide the conditions in which individuals can develop their capacity to create what they care about, organisations must invest time, energy, and money ...”.

- **Money**

Was recognised as an obstacle at all levels of all three organisations.

*“...It would be wonderful if we had a great big pot of money and if anybody wanted any kind of training we could just click our fingers and achieve that.” (SM CSA C).*

Money is an area that will probably always be a bone of contention with public libraries; libraries are continually looking for additional ways of obtaining funding e.g. Wolfson Bids etc. Where training is funded by the government there are often time scale restrictions, the line manager of CSA A suggested that training of this kind tended to be rushed.

- **Time**

*“No I don’t think there are any obstacles, I think enough staff and time are always available.” (LA CSA A)* – This was the only comment made suggesting that time was not an issue, everyone else had this somewhere near the top of their list.

The middle manager in CSA A commented that staff are never all in the same place at the same time – so time and work patterns are major obstacles to overcome.

*“Staff are keen but sometimes they are waiting for the training that would enable them to help the public with their enquiries more effectively.” (MM CSA B)*

The constraint of time, was widely recognised as being an obstacle to the implementation of a learning culture in the LIS environment, and the quote below from the line manager of CSA A is typical of the comments made: *“Time is the main factor. We need to make more time for learning which is difficult when you are working in an environment that is open to the public all day. I think the structure is there and the willingness is there but no time is given to do it”*. A number of members of staff commented that there was little time for training *“once staff arrive at work the library is opened, there is no closed time to carryout training”*. (MM CSA A). This case study authority opened at 9.00 am every day; a practical solution might be to perhaps open the library at 9.30 am every day and leave a training ‘window’ of half an hour each day for members of staff to learn new skills or practice training they have received.

Garvin (1993:91) argues that “Learning is difficult when employees are hurried or rushed; it tends to be driven out by the pressures of the moment. Only if top management explicitly frees up employees’ time does any learning occur with any frequency”.

On a positive note (Allan, 1999:47) suggests “increased pressures on staff time and on LIS budgets means that searches for alternative approaches to staff development are becoming increasingly important. Work-based learning offers an important route towards staff development”. Hence, although time and money still provide cause for concern, it is heartening to know that this does not necessarily mean that employee learning has to be pushed to one side, but that innovative measures can be found to ensure that opportunities are still available.

- **Resources**

Lack of resources is another obstacle to public libraries becoming learning organisations, it is obvious that if you don’t have the money to buy the resources required to obtain e.g. computers, learning packages, etc for staff, this can be problematic. Pressure on time and resources can leave many public libraries trying to keep abreast of new developments without regular training. Without the resources or with only a small amount of resources between a large number of staff, employees may not have equality of learning opportunity.

- *Staff shortages*

The training officer of CSA B commented that training took a lot of time, which was a problem with services to run against a backdrop of staff vacancies. The fact that

staff shortages existed in the authority (and could be assumed to exist elsewhere across the country) meant that time couldn't be dedicated to training and that the concentration was understandably focused on the provision of service.

*“It is a matter of too many people and not enough spaces. Getting on a training course is sometimes a matter of ‘chance’ rather than an opportunity for learning”.* (LA CSA C) – Far from shortages of staff, several of those interviewed commented on the ‘training waiting list’, where the sheer number of staff make ‘learning for all’ a difficult ethos to put into practice.

- **Managerial attitudes**

“Management attitudes are the main obstacle. I know in some respects their hands are financially tied but they are reluctant to involve us in things and they don't think that we should be involved in lots of decisions.” (LA CSA B)

“...I must also say, although I am sure it would not be a popular statement to make, management and staff attitudes can also be influencing factors.” (TO CSA C)

*Clearly the attitudes of staff at higher levels in the LIS organisation are vital to the success of a learning organisation ethos in practice, and it is worrying to find the above sentiments. Without wishing to solely ‘pick on’ management, one can see that in (some cases) attitudes across staffing levels are indeed a problem.*

- **Staff attitudes**

The senior manager of CSA C said that it was “sometimes difficult to get everybody on board, when times are hard staff can become a little cynical.

The other obstacle that can occur is attitudes, you can't improve training and other areas sometimes if people are unsupportive of the initiatives and unwilling to change or take on new challenges" (TO CSA C).

Training officer from CSA A concurred with his colleague in CSA C "...you always get a number of people who are willing to learn and you always get a core of people in the organisation who really do not want to learn...so you've got to take into account these individuals and the way they are managed...". It could be suggested that if members of staff aren't willing to participate in creating a learning organisation then the organisation's efforts to become one will be fruitless at worst, and problematic at best.

- **Organisational Structure**

*"The biggest problem is the set up of the service it is so diverse, with people all over the place, it is not just a little neat office" (SM CSA C).*

Library and information services can have staff working miles apart across the whole of a county and this can make ensuring everybody gains access to training and learning opportunities very difficult. Sometimes staff in branch libraries can feel detached and isolated from the rest of the library service and may not feel that they are an important part of the organisation. Learning organisations stress the importance of both individual and organisational learning, hence it is necessary to ensure that all members of staff have access to learning and feel their opinions are taken into account whether they work in the central library or a small branch library.

- **Geographical factors**

One middle manager commented that the Library Association (LA) courses seemed to be based in London and that it would serve staff better if they offered regional training. This would make the training they offered more accessible to more people. This opinion was shared by the senior manager of CSA C who said that not only were the majority of LA events in London, but also that very often they were too expensive to consider attending (especially once transport too and from the event, and accommodation had been taken into account).

Salaman & Butler (1994) identify some other obstacles to libraries becoming learning organisations; these include:

- Formal Learning on training programmes that conflict with informal day-to-day learning.
- Sectionalism and professional specialism, which may be used to defend the status quo.
- Learning being inextricably linked with the power and control associated with knowledge and information in organisations, and
- Group loyalties and consensus can conflict with the openness and challenges necessary to achieve learning and change.

This brings the discussion to a close; a number of interesting findings have been made during this study and have been examined alongside current literature on learning organisations and training. The next chapter will 'sum up' the dissertation subject matter and draw the study to its conclusion.

## Chapter 8: Conclusion

It could be suggested that there is no one definitive meaning of a 'learning organisation', although throughout the course of this study many of its components were found. Poell (1999:79) explains, "There is no such thing as *the* learning organisation, but a variety of learning organisations that can benefit from each other's experiences". The components include such aspects as learning, training, change, employee involvement, and development at all levels of staffing. To create a learning organisation that meets the needs of both the organisation and its employees, one could 'pick and mix' from this list and still you would not be able to please everyone, practitioners and theorists. Harrison (1997:405) explains, "Much is written on 'learning organisations' but there are inconsistencies and areas of ambiguity and uncertainty", and this study can only concur with this view.

The major problem identified by this study was that many of the learning organisation theories originate from the business sector, the current research found that library and information services have different priorities to those of business, and this in turn raises questions with regards the concepts compatibility for public libraries. Can learning organisation theory – rooted as it is in the business sector, be practised in a service organisation? A library and information service is always going to be 'just' that, i.e. a 'service', and service is always going to be the main focus of the public library sector. Hence, the fact that the learning organisation idea comes from a business background and the vast majority of previous work in this area has concentrated on this can be problematic. However, this study shows that libraries feel that they have a lot to

learn and benefit from the implementing the learning organisation ethos in a library environment, and ways in which this could be carried out have been discussed in the previous chapter. This view is supported by Cook, (1997a:229), who states that:

“The learning organisation has the potential to become an embracing, commonly understood concept, which can group a range of organisational activities and them meaning and priority. The ethos of the learning organisation is one which fits readily to the aspirations of many public services organisations and, it could be argued, is needed to maximise and target limited resources”.

In practice, this study found that the implementation of learning organisation practice in the public library is still very patchy.

Clear patterns were evident with regards recognition of a learning culture. In all of the case study authorities, the research discovered that all the professionals had heard of a learning organisation whilst practically all para-professionals had no recognition of the term. Thus, one can see that the state of play at present is not overly positive. It is important to stress that everyone in the public library (at all levels of staff) was very positive and enthusiastic about the idea of a learning organisation and the benefits such an ethos could bring. However one could argue on the whole that libraries fall short of being a learning organisation at this moment in time. Areas that need to be addressed were found throughout the LIS. Policy was one area worthy of note, if a library service did have a policy or objective for continuous learning or the development of a learning culture, staff in many instances were either totally oblivious to this fact, or could not name or pass comment on it.

Training budgets are also worthy of comment. The low levels of money that was available to authorities (money that must be shared across the whole library service and provide training and learning for all members of staff) came as somewhat of a surprise to the author. Money is not the answer to all problems, however it could be suggested that public LIS's, in having to continually struggle to provide the learning opportunities staff require, not only to develop for themselves but also to benefit the organisation, are hindered in their pursuit of becoming a learning organisation.

Major disparities in attitudes towards aspects of a learning organisation and the knowledge of what one entails were evident throughout the dissertation as a whole. The study also shows that there are glaring differences in several aspects of training strategies and programmes. An example of this is the concentration on para-professionals' short term training needs, a point that some para-professionals suggested was because they receive the bare minimum of training so they can carry out their day to day tasks, whereas most professionals interviewed indicated that the type of training they tended to receive concentrated on the long term. These disparities between the professional and para-professional staff interviewed with regards training methods, attitudes and awareness of a learning organisation provide much food for thought.

A worrying finding identified by some members of staff was that communication problems were at the heart of the public library's failings as learning organisations. It was interesting to note that some employees still felt that there was a lack of communication within their organisation, which manifested itself in areas such as

training opportunities not being 'advertised', and attitudes, opinions and the concerns of staff not being taken into account. In some cases, communication was mentioned by senior members of staff as a problem, they found it difficult to get staff on board to support and become involved in the library service and the direction it should take. These views seem to be contradicted by para-professionals 'complaining' about not being listened to, and their opinions not being sought after. Attention clearly needs to be directed towards improving communication within LIS organisations, only then would it seem possible for LIS's to be learning organisations.

One appreciates that public libraries are in a difficult position compared to businesses that only have shareholders and profits to answer to. Libraries are somewhat caught in the middle of accountability to both the public they serve and government at both local and national level, hence, there are obvious aspects that hinder the public library's progress towards becoming a learning organisation.

Libraries are currently in the grip of rapid change, (LIC, 1997) e.g. and are heavily involved in the governments move towards a learning society, however one could argue that although they are enabling their customers to learn and progress that this opportunity is not so noticeable for their own staff. Lucas (1999:35) explains, "It is essential that local government really begins to walk the talk in all aspects of the emerging learning agenda. It needs to make a reality out of a very important and complex new kind learning local authority". The public library needs to encourage everyone linked to the organisation to learn, as Van Reenen (1995:184) argues, "Libraries need to become learning organisations for both staff and users".

Furthermore, Pedler et al. (1991) suggest the 'members' of a learning company (sic organisation) include employees, owners, customers, neighbours, suppliers and even competitors and as their definition stated, "A learning organisation is one that facilitates the learning of *all* its members..." (Pedler et al; 1991:1).

If a learning organisation ethos is going to work in the public library sector, then this study has identified four major aspects for success in the future:

**Strategy** is the first major factor to be considered. There needs to be a visible policy to support training and learning for *all* members of staff at *all* levels of the organisation. If this already exists, which in most cases it did, there needs to be a positive effort made to promote the awareness of policy at all levels of the service. Mumford (2000:265) proposes that, “learning from strategy could and should be a crucial feature of a learning organisation”.

**Environment** is another important aspect that needs to be addressed. If an organisation wants to work towards and achieve a learning organisation, it is necessary to create a positive culture to learning. An organisation that is conducive to learning for everybody, both on an individual basis and as part of a team (Towler, 2000, Mumford, 2000). All staff learning or desire to learn should be encouraged and supported, not purely in a financial sense but also through ‘emotional’ support.

**Training** is the third aspect to success; this includes such factors as time, money and the importance placed on development. Obviously as has already been discussed time and money are continual sources of problems for public libraries however they still need to be addressed. Furthermore, the development of staff, and the methods used are worthy of comment. Development shouldn’t purely relate to managers and professionals; and training for para-professionals should be more varied rather than the continual emphasis there seems to be on training *just* about their job. Mayo & Lank (1994:139) comment that one cannot assume that just because you invest a great deal in

training, you have a learning organisation. Organisations have to realise that learning is continuous and not just employees going on training courses.

**Evaluation** is the ‘final’ component to success, not a great deal of the study has been spent on this aspect but it is obviously an important area and one that will be discussed in the future recommendations section. Elements to this aspect include, assessing training programmes, investigating what comes out of training, what comes out of the jargon and the idea of change from ‘within’ (rather than libraries being dictated to).

Library and information services have to learn about such things as double loop learning, which is the essence of learning organisation, and the foundation of its ethos (Rowley, 1997, Beardwell & Holden, 1997) - Learning from their mistakes and experiences, seeing how things could be done better and then doing something about it.

It is symptomatic of LIS culture to be reactive to change rather than proactive. Many of the staff interviewed were enthusiastic and positive about what the learning organisation ethos could do to improve and stimulate their organisation, staff were willing to take the ideas on board and ‘give it a go’. With this keenness in mind the inertia that the training officer of CSA C described as “*treading water*” and one library assistant called “*tired of playing catch-up*” needs to be addressed and libraries must rise to the challenge, recognise the value of the management of training and learning if they are to become learning organisations.

## Chapter 9: Recommendations for future research

This study has followed a number of aims and objectives, which in turn, have resulted in some interesting findings on the subject of public library training and the idea of a 'learning organisation'. During the course of the research other areas that require future study were identified.

One particular aspect that needs to be investigated was identified by the following comment:

*“At the end of each training session/course we always fill in a training evaluation form but whether the information you provide is acted upon or not I don't know.” (SLA CSA C)*

During the interview sessions some scepticism was expressed about the feedback mechanisms and the why's and wherefores of training. As previously mentioned, Garvin (1993) discusses three critical issues (the three M's) with regards to the development of a learning organisation. This study concentrated on the first two, 'Meaning' through focussing on the definition of a learning organisation, and 'Management'. The third aspect, 'Measurement' needs to be addressed. LIS staff are increasingly expected to be skilled in a wide range of areas and thus the pressure is on for library and information services to provide high quality, useful, efficient and ultimately effective training throughout the organisation. One could look “at better tools for assessing an organisation's rate of learning and level of learning to ensure that gains have in fact been made” (Garvin, 1993:79). This could be achieved by carrying out a Learning Audit in a public library environment. A Learning Audit has a five-part

structure designed to assess individual and group ability to encourage and sustain learning, aspects that are key to the learning organisation ethos (Pearn et al; 1995). Once the evaluation has been completed, a learning plan could be devised to address the organisation's learning needs and to provide a set of recommendations specific to an organisation.

Another possible area of future research would entail a working example of a 'learning organisation in practice, this would involve long-term research. Learning organisations do not happen overnight (Burgoyne, 1999), hence to truly monitor and evaluate the effect of the implementation of a 'learning organisation' policy/strategy in an LIS would involve more in-depth and 'continuing' research than the time allowed for the present study.

Garvin (1993) also offers a list of five activities that learning organisations should be skilled at doing. The list includes: "systematic problem solving, experimentation with new approaches, learning from their own experience and past history, learning from the experiences and best practices of others, and transferring knowledge quickly and efficiently throughout the organisation" (Garvin, 1993:81). He suggests that each is accompanied by a 'distinctive mindset', 'tool kit', and 'pattern of behaviour'. Future research could be carried out checking public libraries against this five-point plan to see how many of the points they adhere to and where they need to improve.

Due to time constraints, the author was restricted with regards the size of the survey sample and the number of case study authorities interviewed. Further research could involve, carrying out a larger statistical survey, incorporating all of the UK and increasing the number of case study authorities investigated. This could provide a deeper insight into the subject matter. Furthermore, with the government's continuing emphasis on learning and creating a learning society, more and more new measures and policies are coming into effect. Hence the role of libraries continues to expand as they take on board more responsibility as 'learning centres' in the community, it might be interesting to investigate on a larger scale the effect this is having on the public library workforce and if any of the government's learning ideals have been transferred into the library environment.

An alternative research approach could be adopted; this could involve testing public libraries against some form of construct, for example, to a service organisation adopting a learning organisation/culture is beneficial. This could also follow up on the findings of this study with regards to public libraries concentration on service and their tendency towards a 'service culture' as opposed to a learning one. The findings suggest this is an area that requires further investigation to provide a deeper insight into this aspect of the public library sector.

A further comment from the interviews carried out as part of the study that could provide a useful area of future research can be found below:

*“You feel like you are taking a step backwards when you arrive here compared to working in an Academic Library Service, there you are encouraged to learn for yourself and develop and not purely to improve the service you provide.” (SLA CSA B)*

This is an interesting point and one that requires further attention. Research could either concentrate on studying academic libraries in a similar vein to the way in which this study has concentrated on the public library sector. Alternatively, the study could survey and interview libraries from academic, workplace and public library services. The data collected could then be compared and contrasted to investigate the extent to which learning organisations work in these environments and whether there any lessons one could learn from the other with regards to becoming a ‘learning organisation’.

All of these recommendations for future research are viable and could provide interesting management studies for students looking for dissertation topics in the future.

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# Appendix 1.

## **TRAINING IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES QUESTIONNAIRE**

### **GENERAL INFORMATION**

1. What is the name of your library authority? (Please use the space provided below).

.....  
.....

2. Please give the title(s) of the post(s) responsible for training within your library service and indicate where it 'sits' in the library management structure.

.....  
.....

3. Does your library service have a training budget?

Yes (if Yes go to q.3b & 3c) ( )

No (if No go to q.4) ( )

3b. What was your library service's training budget for 2000-2001? (Please estimate if no exact figures are available).

.....

3c. What proportion of the library service's total budget does this represent? (Again, please estimate if no exact figures are available).

.....

4. Please indicate **below** the **three** most important areas of training for your service at the moment.

1.....

2.....

3.....

5. Have you achieved the Investors In People (IIP) Award?

Yes (if Yes go to q.5b) ( )

No (if No go to q.6) ( )

Currently working towards it (go to q.6) ( )

5b. When did you gain accreditation for IIP?

.....

.....

**LEARNING CULTURE/ORGANISATION**

6. Have you heard of the term a 'learning organisation' or 'learning culture'?

Yes (if Yes go to q.6b & q.7) ( )

No (if No go to q.8) ( )

**6b.** Does your organisation have a specific policy or objective that supports continuous learning or the development of a learning culture?

Yes ( )

No ( )

Don't know ( )

**7. What amount of attention is given to raising the awareness of a learning culture?**

**High** ( )

**Moderate** ( )

**Small** ( )

**None at all** ( )

**8.** Pedler et al (1991:1), define a learning organisation as “an organization that facilitates the learning of all its members *and* continuously transforms itself”.

To what extent do you think the definition describes your organisation? (Please indicate by placing a cross on the scale below to show how this definition ‘fits’ your library service. Where ‘0’ indicates it doesn’t describe your organization at all and at the other end of the spectrum ‘6’ indicates it fits the definition very well).

/ \_ / \_ / \_ / \_ / \_ / \_ /

**0 1 2 3 4 5 6**

## **TRAINING METHODS**

**9.** How are training needs identified?

Requests from members of staff themselves ( )

Set training programme followed ( )

By senior members of staff on an ad hoc basis ( )

Staff Appraisal/Development Scheme ( )

Local Authority Objectives ( )

Other (please specify below) ( )

.....

**10.** Does your authority have feedback mechanisms in place for training?

Yes (if Yes go to q.10b)            ( )

No (if No go to q.11)            ( )

**10b.** What feedback methods are used?

.....

.....

.....

.....

**11.** Within your library and information service, how are staff usually selected for training? (Please rank the options below by placing the numbers 1, 2, 3 & 4 in the brackets) i.e. '1' being the most common method of selection, '2' being the next most common etc.

Individual weakness/training need identified by manager

( )

Group weakness/training need identified by manager

( )

Self-selecting (individuals volunteer)

( )

Compulsory training for all members of staff at a particular level (e.g. Library Assistants)            ( )

## TRAINING PRACTICE

**12. Please indicate in the table below (by way of placing a tick in each appropriate box) which of the different training methods are used for which 'levels' of staff in your organisation.**

TYPE OF TRAINING INITIATIVE	LEVEL OF STAFF				
	Senior Managers	Middle Managers	First line Managers (Professional)	Senior Library Assistants	Library Assistants
In-house courses/sessions					
Attendance at meetings					
'Action Learning'					
On the job training					
<b>Guided Reading</b>					
Self learning packages					
Vocational Qualifications					
Library Association course/event					
Other Library Authorities' courses					
Private training companies					

**13a.** Does your library and information service use cascade training (i.e. 'Cascading down' is defined as the passing of information from a member of staff 'down' to others where it was not practicable for all to attend).

Yes (if Yes go to q.13b)

No (if No go to q.14)

**13b.** Please indicate below the emphasis your current training strategy places on the cascading down of information. If your training relies almost completely on the cascading down of information place a cross near the '10' if the mode of training weighs more heavily towards other methods place a cross closer towards the '0' (the score which indicates that none of your training takes the form of the 'passing down' of information).

/ \_ / \_ / \_ / \_ / \_ / \_ / \_ / \_ / \_ / \_ / \_ / \_ /

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

**14.** Are you aware of the Library Association’s Continuing Professional Development Initiative (CPD)?

Yes ( )

No ( )

**15.** Is CPD part of your library service’s training strategy?

Yes ( )

No ( )

**16.** Please comment on the importance of training and development programmes in public libraries in general.

Important ( )

Reasonably Important ( )

Necessary but not a top priority ( )

Low ( )

**ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**

Please add any further comments that you think would be relevant to the study in the space provided below.

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

I would like to interview respondents in a sample of authorities. If you would be prepared to participate further in the study please give your name and contact details below.

Name:

Telephone Number:

E-mail Address:

**Please Note:** If you have any literature/data on training in your organization i.e. policy documents, training programmes, guidelines etc that could prove useful in my study I would be grateful if you could send me a copy.

**Thank you very much for your contribution.**

**Amanda Boxford**

**Email Address:** [lip99ajb@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:lip99ajb@sheffield.ac.uk)

**Postal Address:**

3 Harvey Lane,

Moulton

Northamptonshire

NN3 7RB

**Tel:** (01604) 648719

**PLEASE RETURN BY TUESDAY 7<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2000**

## Appendix 2.

**RE: Training in Public Libraries Questionnaire**

Please reply to: [lip99ajb@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:lip99ajb@sheffield.ac.uk)

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am currently studying for a Masters in Librarianship at The University of Sheffield. My dissertation concerns the value and impact of training in public libraries. I would be grateful if you could take some time out of your busy work schedule to complete the questionnaire attached below. This questionnaire has been sent to public library authorities throughout England, all the questions relate to libraries in all of those authorities and not any one authority in particular.

All the information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence and used only as source material in my dissertation. No respondents to the questionnaire will be identified or named in the study. I would appreciate your input on this matter, however if this is not your area of expertise, please forward this email to the most appropriate member of staff in your organisation who can provide the relevant information. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Yours sincerely,

Amanda Boxford

**Address:**

3 Harvey Lane,

Moulton.

Northamptonshire.

NN3 7RB

**Tel:** (01604) 648719

## **INSTRUCTIONS**

Please note owing to the formatting of the survey it has been attached to this message as a word document and may be opened in the usual way. The file will then need to be saved on your computer or on a floppy disk to allow the questionnaire to be completed and returned to the email address as an attachment. Alternatively, if you would rather send a postal copy- open the attachment, print off and fill in a copy of the questionnaire, and then return the completed version to the postal address found above.

I apologise if the questionnaires layout is disrupted or altered due to differences in email reading facilities. If for any reason you are unable to open or read the attachment please contact me and I will send you a postal copy of the questionnaire.

Please place a cross (x) or number in the appropriate bracket (or brackets, where more than option is applicable). If you consider any question to be inappropriate or not applicable to your organisation please ignore it and move onto the next question.

## Appendix 3.

**RE: Training in Public Libraries Questionnaire**

Please reply to: [lip99ajb@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:lip99ajb@sheffield.ac.uk)

Dear Sir/Madam,

I sent an email to your organisation over a week ago asking for your assistance with a questionnaire I have compiled as part of my Masters in Librarianship Studies at The University of Sheffield. My dissertation concerns the value and impact of training in public libraries. If you have already posted the completed questionnaire to me please ignore this email and its attachment. However, if you have not had the opportunity to attend to this matter yet, I would be very grateful if you could take some time out of your busy work schedule to complete the questionnaire attached below. This survey has been sent to public library authorities throughout England, all the questions relate to libraries in all of those authorities and not any one authority in particular.

All the information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence and used only as source material in my dissertation. No respondents to the questionnaire will be identified or named in the study. I would appreciate your input on this matter, however if this is not your area of expertise, please forward this email to the most appropriate member of staff in your organisation who can provide the relevant information. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Yours sincerely,

Amanda Boxford

**Address:**

3 Harvey Lane,

Moulton.

Northamptonshire. NN3 7RB

**Tel:** (01604) 648719

## **INSTRUCTIONS**

Please note owing to the formatting of the survey it has been attached to this message as a word document and may be opened in the usual way. The file will then need to be saved on your computer or on a floppy disk to allow the questionnaire to be completed and returned to the email address as an attachment. Alternatively, if you would rather send a postal copy- open the attachment, print off and fill in a copy of the questionnaire, and then return the completed version to the postal address found above.

I apologise if the questionnaires layout is disrupted or altered due to differences in email reading facilities. If for any reason you are unable to open or read the attachment please contact me and I will send you a postal copy of the questionnaire.

Please place a cross (x) or number in the appropriate bracket (or brackets, where more than option is applicable). If you consider any question to be inappropriate or not applicable to your organisation please ignore it and move onto the next question.

**Please Return By Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> November 2000**

## **Appendix 4.**

### **Interview Questions**

#### **5 Levels of LIS Staff**

Hello my name is Amanda Boxford and I am currently studying for an MA in Librarianship at Sheffield University. I would like to ask you some questions about training in public libraries. All the information you provide will be treated in the strictest confidence and used only as source material in my dissertation. No interviewees or the authority they represent will be identified or named in the study.

**Name:**

**Job Title:**

#### **Learning Organisation**

1. Have you heard of the term a 'learning organisation' or 'learning culture'?

Yes ( )

No ( )

2. What do you understand the meaning of a 'learning organisation' or 'learning culture' to be?

**3. Pedler et al (1991:1) define a learning organisation as “an organization that facilitates the learning of all its members *and* continuously transforms itself”.**

To what extent do you think the definition describes your library service?

**4. Does your library service have a specific policy or objective that supports continuous learning or the development of a learning culture that you are aware of?**

Yes ( )

No ( )

Don't Know ( )

**5. To what extent do you think the idea of a learning culture **would work/works** in practice?**

**6. So all things considered, do you think it is important to have a culture of learning in an LIS environment?**

**7. How would you **improve/introduce** the learning culture **of/to** your LIS?**

**Follow up question (if they have an idea for q. 7) – What obstacles would there be to trying to change in this way?**

## Training & Best Practice

8. Do you feel that the level of training that your library service provides is high, adequate, or insufficient?

(PR) Could you comment any further on that?

9. What do you think are the pros and cons of cascading training?

10. With regards to training methods and training in general, do you feel that staff opinions/concerns are taken into account?

11. Would you say that the training you have received has concentrated on immediate needs or longer term needs?

(PR) Could you expand on that?

12. To what extent do you **agree/disagree** with the statement **‘The Continual Professional Development’ (CPD) framework should be compulsory and should carry accreditation towards a recognised qualification?’**

**13.** How do you think training in your organisation could be improved, what initiatives would you like to see in place?

**Follow up question (if they have an idea for q. 13)** – What obstacles would there be to trying to change in this way?

## **Appendix 5.**

### **Interview Questions**

#### **Training Officers**

Hello my name is Amanda Boxford and I am currently studying for an MA in Librarianship at Sheffield University. I would like to ask you some questions about training in public libraries. All the information you provide will be treated in the strictest confidence and used only as source material in my dissertation. No interviewees or the authority they represent will be identified or named in the study.

**Name:**

**Job Title:**

**Learning Organisation**

1. Have you heard of the term a 'learning organisation' or 'learning culture'?

Yes ( )

No ( )

2. What do you understand the meaning of a 'learning organisation' or 'learning culture' to be?

**3. Pedler et al (1991:1) define a learning organisation as “an organization that facilitates the learning of all its members *and* continuously transforms itself”.**

To what extent do you think the definition describes your library service?

**4. Does your library service have a specific policy or objective that supports continuous learning or the development of a learning culture that you are aware of?**

Yes ( )

No ( )

Don't know ( )

**5. To what extent do you think the idea of a learning culture **would work/works** in practice?**

**6. So all things considered, do you think it is important to have a culture of learning in an LIS environment?**

**7. How would you **improve/introduce** the learning culture **of/to** your LIS?**



**12.** How far do you **agree/disagree** with the statement  
**‘The Continuing Professional Development (CPD) framework should be compulsory and should carry accreditation towards a recognised qualification?’**

**13.** How do you think training in your organisation could be improved, what initiatives would you like to see in place?

**Follow up question (if they have an idea for q. 13)** – What obstacles would there be to trying to change in this way?



