Theft in the public library:
An investigation into levels of theft
and the impact it has on both service and staff

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This work is dedicated in loving memory to my grandfather Norman Cartwright

Abstract

The study investigates the level of theft in public libraries in England and tries to assess the impact that it has had upon the service and staff. The growing accountability of public library and information services (both in general and financial terms), the expanding diversity of stock and equipment housed in libraries, and the lack of recent work in this area are given as the principal reasons why the investigation was undertaken.

A research approach balancing both quantitative and qualitative methods was adopted. A questionnaire survey was used to gather information on the subject from a sample of libraries across England. Interviews were undertaken with staff in 2 case study authorities chosen from the sample, enabling more in-depth analysis of the situation.

A high awareness of the problem of theft was identified, but an inversely proportional amount of attention paid to the measurement and monitoring of the situation within LIS. Aside from the lack of data collected by authorities, the absence of training for staff in dealing with theft and the apparent shortage of strategic planning on the matter paints a far from positive picture.

In recent years the problem has been seen to increase with new stock and audio-visual (AV) material in particular being most prone. The impact of this upon staff appears, unsurprisingly, to have been 'felt' most on the shop floor as it were,

with many library assistants expressing frustration, anger, annoyance and

helplessness in relation to their experiences regarding theft.

With respect to security measures, a variety of options are introduced and

discussed, with comments offered on their effectiveness. Security measures were

generally found to have a positive effect in reducing levels of theft.

In conclusion, several areas of concern are raised, in particular with a view

to improving practice. The discussion places the study in the context of current

public library developments and highlights the difficulty of finding a balance

between increasing access and at the same time stepping up levels of security.

The study concludes with a number of recommendations for future research.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

"Only the librarian has, in addition to that knowledge, the right to move through the labyrinth of the books, he alone knows where to find them and where to replace them, he alone is responsible for their safekeeping." **Umberto Eco** The Name of the Rose (1984, page 37)

"Now why would anyone want to steal a library? It's not a particularly useful piece of architecture, if you're not into reading (as all of the more notorious criminals are not)." **Mark Anthony Young** Project Galactice Guide: Library Theft (1991)

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1.1 Background to the study

In light of the increasing levels of accountability in library and information services (LIS), the ever-tightening purse strings, the growth of non-book material, and the general rise in crime - the issue of theft in public libraries is of growing importance.   Generally the lack of resources and the drive towards 'best value' have resulted in the need to make stock work more for its money, and hence if that stock is being stolen on a regular basis, then it is 'costing' the library.   This is reflected in financial terms, for example in replacement costs, loss of income (from rental charges on some materials), administration costs, and the price of installing and maintaining security systems.   In non-pecuniary aspects, it is reflected in a reduction of services (e.g. when users cannot find the item they want), dissatisfied customers, the impact on staff (e.g. their morale, issues of personal safety, extra workload due to theft), and damage to the library's image e.g. in terms of it being considered a 'safe' environment.

Burrows and Cooper (1992) provided the first comprehensive study of the financial loss 'caused by' theft, and the measures being used to combat the problem; they found that book loss alone could account for annual losses in Britain in excess of £150 million.   This figure may be compared to the £100 million estimate made by Jackson two years previously (Jackson, 1990) and the estimate reported by the Library Association Record (1993) under the headline

"Thefts Cost £200m A Year". Regardless of the actual amount, if indeed an accurate total can be calculated, the financial implications of theft from libraries are clear.

The 'social' impact, i.e. the effect that theft has on the service and its users, has received, in comparison, seemingly scant attention in the past, with previous research concentrating on establishing quantitative data. Burns (in Burrows and Cooper, 1992:iii) noted that the problem of theft and mutilation of books and other materials was a matter of 'growing concern' for those responsible for library service provision. One can argue that this concern might, and should be extended to include those using library services. Two of the public library's 'foundation stones' are the provision of materials which people are encouraged to borrow, and free access to those materials and other resources. Both of these make the management of theft from libraries a far from straightforward issue and indeed highlight the somewhat paradoxical nature of the debate surrounding the security of stock and equipment (Burrows and Cooper, 1992), an issue that this study will address.

With the growing need to generate income, public libraries are increasingly turning to 'renting out' such items as digital video discs (DVDs), play station games, videos, compact discs (CDs), and CD ROMs. At the same time, recent, much-heralded national initiatives within the public library sector, such as the drive to close the digital divide (DTI, 2000), and 'New Library: the people's network' (LIC, 1997) seem to signal a significant rise in the number of computers and related equipment in public libraries. In the light of such changes and trends, one can argue that the 'current' research on theft from libraries, now almost a decade old could be seriously out of date. As the price of books has risen, and the library has diversified into other expensive 'non-book' material, while also being encouraged to fill any space it has left with the latest technology, the need to consider the security of stock has (or should have) grown in importance. As the public library forges ahead in certain areas, the question is whether it is falling behind on the issue of theft, and if so can it afford to?

1.2 Aims and objectives

The focus of this study was 'inspired' by personal experiences gained while working at Lincoln Central library, an initial scan of the literature (what little there was), and a perception that LIS do not place theft high on their agenda.   The overall aim is: To investigate theft in the public library and to ascertain the level of the problem and its impact.

The study objectives are:

1.   To attempt to determine levels of theft in public libraries.

2.   To examine the degree of problem recognition within the library service and canvas the attitudes of staff towards library theft.

3.   To explore the impact of theft on the public library service, in terms of the impact on both service and staff.

4.   To assess the effectiveness of current measures to prevent theft, and establish guidelines for best practice.

1.3 Basic structure of the report

The following chapter will discuss the relevant literature en masse, highlighting the key texts, and using them to support the direction that this project has taken.   The methodological framework that the project has used will then be reviewed.

Within the Results section both quantitative and qualitative data are presented and analysed side by side in a series of chapters that focus on the four objectives introduced above.   The study seeks thereby to follow a logical progression, by establishing the extent of the problem before investigating the impact, and then going on to address the subject of preventative measures.   The options for minimising theft will be covered relatively briefly as there is a depth of literature covering this aspect of the subject already (e.g. Stack, 1998a and b).

Finally, the study enters the evaluative and discussion stages, where evidence collected during the research is drawn together and used to formulate conclusions and inform suggestions for further research.

1.4 A problem of definitions

Lincoln and Lincoln (1986), when studying crime in British, American and Canadian libraries, asked about 8 specific kinds of theft, from incidents of breaking and entering and book theft, to the theft of audio-visual (AV) materials and equipment. Hence, before proceeding any further, one must address the issue of what constitutes theft and the areas where the border between theft and 'non theft' is blurred.

Perhaps this is best illustrated by also raising at this juncture the debate with regards to stock loss through non-return. It has long been established that an area where libraries have lost, and continue to lose, material is through users legitimately borrowing material and then failing to return it, for whatever reason. However, in these last three words ('for whatever reason') we have the crux of the issue. Can one establish definite reasons for non-return? Can one prove that someone joins a library to deliberately default, as many would suggest (as was found through the series of interviews carried out for this research), or, for that matter, simply forgets to bring an item (or two) back?

Many things may lead to stock being lost in this way, but the basic result is that libraries are left without, and one could argue that in some cases this is due to stock being stolen. Without questioning defaulters and gaining honest answers from them, one can only rely on intuition, instinct and supposition to make a claim of theft. Since such 'gut feelings' are inadmissible in a court of law, one would be ill advised to call certain instances of stock loss through non-return 'theft'.

Therefore, this research has shied away from studying the linkage between theft and non-return in detail, and instead concentrated on 'pure' theft. Rather than dwelling on the issue of establishing intent, one must also remember the core

fact that a book that goes overdue and is never returned is still on the records as being on someone's ticket. Therefore, this factor would have no effect in the case of calculating the total number of items missing presumed stolen from the figures for total stock, items on issue, and items on shelf. If books, or any stock for that matter, are written off due to non-return (although paradoxically they may well have been stolen) then that record will no longer be on the computer and thus would not need to be accounted for in any library stock count.

It was decided that an all-encompassing 'soft' definition of theft was most suitable for this study as, at this level of research, little would be gained by specifying and detailing specific types of theft. It was believed that a general approach would generate a large amount of raw data at the initial stage of collection, and that more detail could be requested, if needed, as the study progressed. Thus, the term 'theft' is used here broadly to refer to catalogued items which are not out on loan, but which cannot be found *and* other materials, equipment and library property, which cannot be accounted for.

1.5 Non-book material

The only distinction made at the data collection stage was with respect to the different types of stock which were prone to theft, and the theft of library property and equipment. Basically, this resulted in theft from libraries being studied from three main angles, i.e.:

- Book theft,
- Non-book theft (i.e., AV material including CDs, audio cassettes and records, talking books, DVDs, CD ROMs, and play station games) and,
- 'Other' theft (equipment and property).

Although the theft of personal property while patrons are within the library was obviously an issue, the author considered that it did not fall within the remit of this research, although the subject did crop up during interviews with library staff.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Literature Search

The aim of the literature search was to put the current research into context, gain insight into previous research, and provide a broad understanding and background to the study (Blaxter et al., 1996).   As already hinted at above, the basic scarcity of publication with a UK public library perspective in fact provided the study with a focus.

The literature that has been used in this study was found using a number of sources:

1. *Library Catalogues*.   The catalogues of the University of Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam University and the British Library were searched.   A visit was also made to Boston Spa British Library Document Supply Centre in February to have a look at a number of volumes of the journal '*Archival and Library Security*' and other material.

2. *Databases, and Subject Gateways*.   Including, Library and Information Science Abstracts (LISA), Bath Information and Data Services (BIDS), BUBL, COPAC, Current Research In Britain (CRIB), The Emerald Library, and NISS (all accessed via the Internet).

3. *The World-Wide-Web*.   A number of major search engines and meta-search engines including: AltaVista, Dogpile, Excite, Google, Infoseek, Lycos, Northern Light, SavvySearch, Yahoo, and WebCrawler.

4. *Contacting Professional Bodies*.   These included The National Preservation Office, The Library Association, and several library security firms.

5. *Other Sources*.   By scanning the lists of citations in material already gathered, and also from a bibliography of literature on library security by Switzer (1999).

The search terms used (often in conjunction with Boolean operatives to allow for combinations) were: *library*, *security*, *theft*, *UK*, '*public libraries'* and *book-theft*.   Once key authors had been identified, these were also used as search terms.   Ideally the literature search would have concentrated upon what had been

published in 'recent' years; however, because of a general shortage of literature on the subject this criterion could not be applied, as it would have been too restrictive.

General LIS literature was scanned for any mention of theft in public libraries.   Other evidence was gleaned through monitoring and posting a message on 3 LIS discussion lists via Mailbase: lis-link, lis-publib-research, and library-review.   The message asked for 'horror' and 'success' stories relating to theft and the ways in which libraries combat it, and other general information on the subject. Although there were only a handful of replies, these did provide useful supplementary information; and anecdotal evidence to add to the information found from other sources.

Also, through the survey (see section 3.2.2), a request was made for in-house publications, reports, memoranda etc. regarding theft, in the hope that the wider literature and survey data would be supplemented by internal documents.

2.2 General themes in the literature

There are two common recurring themes in the current literature on theft in LIS.   Much of the material comes either from the USA (e.g. Lincoln, 1984a), or from the academic library sector (e.g. Quinsee and McDonald, 1991), or is a combination of the two (e.g. Brand, 1984).   Although one can relate experiences within those environments to the situation in the UK public library service, they are not directly relevant to the topic.   The general lack of material (and in particular recent material) on theft in public libraries in the UK was a key factor behind the focus for this research.   The present study will fill a definite niche in the research, as supported by Ewing (1994) who described the need for further research as being 'vital', and who also recognised the shortage of literature and the need for 'greater awareness of theft'.

The other areas of concentration within the literature were identified as being general security issues (e.g. Chaney and MacDougall, 1992; Ewing, 1994;

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and Lincoln, 1984b), the security of archives and rare material (e.g. Antiquarian Booksellers Association, 1972), personal security (e.g. Pantry, 1996), and electronic security (i.e. the protection of electronically stored information, hardware and software through the use of passwords etc.)(e.g. Cox, 1999), and the effectiveness of security devices (e.g. Kearsley, 1975; Roberts, 1968; and Stack, 1998a and b).   Although, this material is not directly relevant, it has been used here to put the current research into a wider context, to compare and contrast experiences, and as a source of ideas for the prevention of theft.

2.3 Theft in the public library: A UK perspective

Lincoln and Lincoln (1986), Burrows and Cooper (1992), and Ashcroft and Wilson (1992) provide the benchmark for work on theft in UK libraries, although only the former concentrated on public libraries, the others adopting a cross-sector approach.   Lincoln and Lincoln (1986) found that theft was the most common crime in British libraries, reflecting general crime rates.   They also found that within Britain, English libraries in particular were most prone to high levels of theft.   Borrows and Cooper (1992) found that rates of loss were highest in the public library (5.3%, as compared to 2.1% for academic LIS, and 2.4% for special LIS).

As mentioned above the only major work in the last 2 decades specifically on theft in the UK public libraries was by two Americans, Lincoln and Lincoln (1986). However, by choosing a sample which concentrated solely on larger libraries (only central services and every third regional library were surveyed), their findings cannot be taken as being representative of the situation across the whole of the public library service (Burrows and Cooper, 1992).   They looked at the impact of theft on the institution and the individual; and the present research examines the issue from a similar perspective.   If one can level another criticism at Lincoln and Lincoln's work, it might be the case that 'crime' in the library was too broad a focus, and that almost each subtitle in their book warranted a complete study, let alone a whole chapter instead of only a paragraph or two.   There is no concentration on individual cases or aspects of crime and no specific examples

from practice to illuminate the discussion. The authors 'simply' relate crime levels to basic variables such as the number of issues and city size; a more stratified sample of libraries might perhaps have uncovered contrasts and given more depth to the study.   Nonetheless since this work is the only publication in recent years to have concentrated on theft in the British public library, it is referred to a great deal within the present text.

The research of Lincoln and Lincoln was set against a backdrop of budget cutbacks for libraries (Lincoln and Lincoln, 1986:1).   The trend that they found in the libraries of the late seventies and the early to mid-eighties, was one of technological changes and stock diversification, and this movement has not shown any signs of abating.   As advances have carried on apace, the financial situation of many libraries has not improved, the same climate of cuts being experienced well over a decade ago still prevails (Lashmar and Oliver, 2000).   The modern public library is under increasing pressure to get the most from its resources, and is becoming home to a vast array of information technology and equipment, audio-visual material etc.   This research aims to bring the knowledge and awareness of the subject of theft in public libraries up to date.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Research Approach

The study adopted an inductive approach, i.e. conclusions were drawn from the empirical data (Bell, 1987).   The practical nature of the subject being studied suggested that this type of approach would be most suitable, in contrast to a more theoretically based deductive methodology.

Since the research objectives covered both 'objective' and 'subjective' aspects of library theft, e.g. levels of theft, attitudes towards the issue and the impact it has on service and staff, and the effectiveness of security measures both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods were adopted.   A quantitative approach was required largely to establish the level and patterns of theft, and qualitative data was thought to be more appropriate for giving a fuller impression of the situation, especially in relation to perceptions of theft and its impact (Glazier and Powell, 1992).

By using a 'twin approach' one was able to compare and contrast data (thus highlighting discrepancies, or emphasising trends); and could also bring to the study a balance of both scientific and personal dimensions (Gorman and Clayton, 1997). Morgan (1995:138) notes the 'continuing dialogue' within academic circles with respect to the 'quantitative versus qualitative debate', however one can argue that such a contest serves little purpose.   The two sets of methods have widely recognised strengths and weaknesses, and together can be considered as being complimentary in terms of providing a well-rounded and effective research tool-kit.

In terms of this study, this basically translated into the use of a questionnaire survey to collect general quantifiable data, and case study-based interviews to provide more in-depth information.   As recommended by Gorman and Clayton (1997), the use of more than one technique allows 'triangulation', and thus increases the scope, depth, and 'accuracy' of a study.   It should be noted that,

further to the data gleaned from primary evidence, other information is taken from the literature collected on the subject. This helps put the current research into the wider context of previous work on the subject, and thereby adds to the triangulation process.

Robson (1993:169) recommends combining strategies, e.g. complementing a survey with 'a small number of case studies to throw further light on the associations found in the survey', and this study has done just that. By using two research strategies the range of information has been increased (i.e. through the survey) without compromising the depth of study (i.e. by exploring relationships and trends in more detail through the case studies).

3.1.1 Case study approach

Clearly one aim of a case study is to concentrate in more detail on the research subject in a specific situation, but on reflection to draw from these findings some more general inferences which could have wider significance and use (Bell, 1987; Blaxter et al., 1996; Gorman and Clayton, 1997). Hence, two case study authorities (Case Study Authority (CSA), A and B) were selected from the questionnaire respondents and within these authorities a stratified sample of libraries was chosen for further study so that such a process could take place.

3.1.2 Choice of case studies

The choice of the two authorities was clearly restricted by logistics; travelling requirements and cost in particular affected the decision. Also, personal work experience and established contacts were important and influential in the decision, as is often the case for this scale of study. This could bring into question the representativeness of the sample and thus also the findings of the study (Robson, 1993); yet, ultimately, the sample reflected a wide range of libraries and thus satisfied the research objectives and at the same time arguably gave the study more depth and opportunity by exploiting previous contacts and experience. Thus it was an 'opportunist' or 'convenience' sample, which is recognised in the literature as being both practical and efficient (Robson, 1993; Bell, 1987).

Authority A is situated in one of the largest metropolitan districts in the country and provided the study with a major urban focus. Authority B, in contrast, covers a mainly rural county, and gave the author the opportunity to study a small city and a village. As mentioned above previous research in England concentrated on major cities and the largest service points within library authorities (Lincoln and Lincoln, 1986); hence the present research attempts to redress the balance by incorporating a wider range of libraries in its sample - urban, rural, large, medium, and small.

Prior knowledge of both authorities facilitated more effective and efficient research. The aspect of experience was useful in identifying a broad range of service points to look at within each authority and also meant that key contacts were easily identifiable and arguably more willing to help and more open with their comments.

3.1.3 Stratified sample

Twelve libraries were chosen to be studied in more detail, eight from Authority A and four from Authority B. The criterion for selection were a desire to cover a range of library types (e.g. central, branch), size - both of which would obviously be reflected in stock dimensions, and also socio-economic environment. The resulting sample covered the central service point in each authority, inner-city libraries, district, and community libraries, including service points in a suburban or rural environment. Clearly, at one end of the scale, the outlying rural districts are covered by mobile services but owing to constraints, theft from this service has not been analysed as part of the current research.

Robson (1993) advocates this type of stratified sample on the grounds that it can be more efficient than simple random sampling. For the given sample size the picture can be more representative of the population as a whole, and by adopting this sampling method one can illuminate diversity within the data-set and generally aid comparison by recognising the structures that are imposed upon the data from the start. (Robson, 1993). Sampling is practically unavoidable with this scale of

study and although the rationale behind the choice of libraries might perhaps have been more refined, it serves a clear purpose, i.e. to investigate theft from a broad range of public libraries. Such a stratified approach was also taken when choosing which stakeholders to interview, as will be discussed below (section 3.2.8). Several strata of staffing within the public LIS were identified and to get as balanced coverage of opinions and attitudes as possible, and this mode of sampling matched the needs of the research (Robson, 1993, Gorman & Clayton, 1997).

3.2 Research Techniques

3.2.1 A general overview of techniques

A questionnaire survey was chosen as it allowed the study to cover a wide distribution of sample. It also facilitated the collection of a large amount of data in a standardised form and in a relatively short space of time (Heather and Stone, 1984; Busha and Harter, 1980). Also, a self-completed questionnaire allows respondents to complete the survey at their own convenience and in their own time and is ideal for providing a breadth of coverage (Heather and Stone, 1984).

As questionnaires cannot generally be used to reveal causes or investigate the reasons behind responses, perceptions, actions and attitudes, interviews were carried out with stakeholders identified through the survey (Stone, 1984). The two key research techniques will now be discussed in more detail

3.2.2 Questionnaire Survey

The study used a structured questionnaire as the author wished to keep the survey as quick and as easy to answer as possible, thereby hopefully increasing the number of responses (Heather and Stone, 1984; Fink, 1995). A copy of the questionnaire was sent out to a sample of English public library authorities in early June (see Appendix 1).

The main aims of the survey were to discover what records of theft are kept, what strategies LIS are adopting or have adopted in the past to combat theft, and to investigate perceptions regarding the problem of theft and its impact upon the public library and its staff. It was also used to request information on the

authorities' policies regarding prosecution, and to ask for any in-house publications and data on the subject; it was hoped that the analysis of automated management systems information would go a long way to helping establish levels of theft. Responding authorities were asked if they would be willing to give further assistance with the study.

3.2.3 Electronic-mail survey

Initially, it was intended that all public library authorities in England (150 in total) would be surveyed, as with electronic mail it was felt that such a 'sample' was both manageable and logistically possible (in terms of financial and time constraints). A combination of e-mail and postal questionnaires would have avoided the need for sampling, and its inherent flaws (Fink, 1995). Although, for this scale of project, such a survey might have been considered a little ambitious, the results could then have been truly said to reflect the national picture. However, as the study progressed a decision to limit the survey to an e-mail based questionnaire was made on the grounds of speed, cheapness and the fact that the subsequent sample (107 authorities) was still a considerable size. There were unfortunately problems with this 'opportunity' sample and these will be discussed below (section 3.2.7).

There were a number of perceived advantages that supported the choice of this distribution method. The literature suggested that multiple contacts increase response rates, and the choice of delivery method facilitated a number of 'contacts' (the pilot survey, the actual survey and two reminders) (Mehta and Sivadas, 1995; Roselle and Neufeld, 1998). It also allowed for informal discussions with a number of respondents. Both Mehta and Sivadas (1995), and Schaefer and Dillman (1998) indicated that response rates were comparable between postal and electronic delivery, but in terms of response time and the quality of survey responses results were in favour of an e-mail version.

A mixed mode strategy (i.e. using both postal and e-mail systems) was considered but discounted on the grounds that the number of authorities which

could be reached via e-mail provided a large enough sample by itself.   It was felt that the 'discrimination' against authorities that were without e-mail did not lead to an unrepresentative or unbalanced sample, as the range of authorities with e-mail seemed to be diverse.

Recent scares concerning computer viruses being transmitted through e-mail attachments led the author to decide to send the questionnaire within a 'standard' e-mail.   The covering letter headed the message and the questions that followed were split into sections (see section 3.2.6).   In the eventuality that recipients might not be technically able to return their response by e-mail, the option to print out the questionnaire and return it by post was given.

A database was constructed using *Microsoft Access* to organise responses, and a field was set up to separate authorities that had responded, from those which had not and this information proved particularly useful when sending reminders. A polite reminder was sent after 10 days and again a week before the deadline for responses (14th July 2000), as recommended by Roselle and Neufeld (1998).

3.2.4 Survey recipients

The choice of who to 'deliver' the questionnaire to was a difficult one.   In some cases, authorities only had one contact mailing address, others had a list of contact e-mail addresses.   The decision was made to send the questionnaire to the most senior member of staff, as it was felt that they would be able to answer the survey or delegate its completion to the most appropriate person.   A note was included in the questionnaire instructing the reader to pass on the questionnaire to whoever it was felt was the most appropriate person to deal with it.   As the questionnaire was about an authority as a whole, rather than each of the constituent libraries, in the majority of cases the recipient was the principal librarian of the authority.   As the subsequent interview sample was designed to cover a range of LIS professionals and para-professionals, and the interview schedule contained a number of replicated questions, the author considered the decision to send the survey to the 'highest level' to be justified.

3.2.5 Pilot questionnaire

As recommended in the literature (e.g. Bell, 1987) a pilot questionnaire was sent out prior to the actual questionnaire so that ambiguous questions and jargon could be avoided. The questionnaire was sent to senior library staff in two library authorities and their response was largely positive, therefore only minor adjustments were made to the pilot questionnaire before it was sent out.

3.2.6 Structure and content of the questionnaire

The questionnaire used a blend of closed specific questions, options and Likert scale measures, and followed general guidelines offered by Bailey (1994), Bell (1987), Busha and Harter (1980), Fink (1995) Foddy (1993), and Wilson (1997b) amongst others. The medium of electronic mail did not have any influence on the questions asked; although the format of the questionnaire did take into account practical aspects of this delivery method. However, the number of questions, and the overall structure of the questionnaire was not affected.

To minimise ambiguity and mis-understandings a set of instructions and notes headed the questionnaire. These explained how to fill out the survey and also drew attention to the fact that the survey was only interested in theft, and not the related aspect of stock loss through non-return (both terms were explained) (Bailey, 1994). One problem with self-completed questionnaires is that the meaning of questions and terms cannot be clarified but the notes and the pilot questionnaire stage were designed to reduce this problem (Heather and Stone, 1984). More generally, attention was paid to the level of wording and the inclusion of filter questions helped to avoid double-barrelled questions (Foddy, 1993).

A great deal of attention was paid to the structure and content of the questionnaire. Presentation was an important factor, as a neat layout and an easy to follow structure and content is important in maximising the level of response (Wilson, 1997b). The literature suggested that the ideal number of questions should be between 15 and 20 and in the final draft the questionnaire used by the study had 17 questions in all (Wilson, 1997b).

The order in which the questions were asked was carefully considered, and the questionnaire was divided into four broad sections.   The first set of questions were general in nature, the second referred to data, the third pertained to security measures, and the fourth section explored how respondents felt about certain aspects of the subject.   This provided the questionnaire with a logical progression, and a clear structure that was hopefully simple to follow.   A number of filter questions were used to guide respondents and help the survey flow (Foddy, 1993).   These generally took the form of a Yes/No response leading to a more detailed question focussing on the reasons behind the original answer (using 'go to' instructions to direct respondents)(Oppenheim, 1992).

Closed questions, in comparison to open questions, produce data that is 'easier to code and analyse', simple to compare, and represent quantifiably (Bailey, 1994).   Also, by limiting responses, it is easier to build up a general picture of the situation across the sample (Fink, 1995).   Both these factors were clearly important in the design and content of the questionnaire.

The measurement of perceptions and attitudes was an important function of the survey, and an attempt was made to garner this information using Likert scales.   These were also used to measure the impact of theft on both staff and service, and the scales used were matched to the question as far as possible (Wilson, 1997b) and the number of intervals and categories offered followed guidelines offered by Oppenheim (1992) and Bailey (1994).   Taking into account the format of an electronic mail message and the problems that were envisaged with the variety of reader software, the questionnaire used vertical scaling. Response options were 'piled' one on top of the other in a descending/ascending order of gradation and respondents were asked in the majority of cases to place a cross beside the option which best conveyed their opinion.   The terms used were based on examples taken from the literature (Oppenheim, 1992, Wilson, 1997b).

In one case (question 8) respondents were asked to give a numerical indication of their perception of the 'seriousness' of the problem of theft in a

number of categories (books, videos, compact discs etc.). Respondents gave 'marks' on a scale of 0-5 where 0 indicated that theft was not perceived to be a problem in that area and 5 indicated that the theft in that specific category was considered to a major problem. The number of options was set at a possible 6, as research has found that such a number encourages respondents not to simply pick the 'middle position' (Robson, 1993).

In its final form, the questionnaire was estimated to take around 7 minutes to complete (this included the reading of the instructions etc.). The predominance of closed questions (many which only required the selection of a single option) contributed to this, and was deemed a positive aspect of the survey with regards to the wish to maximise responses.

3.2.7 Problems encountered with the questionnaire

The mailing list for the questionnaire was compiled using information published in the Library Association directory of libraries (LA, 1999b). However, several addresses were incorrect; in fact, 21 out of 108, i.e. c.19 %, were undeliverable. A minority was due to personnel changes, but largely the failure was simply a result of erroneous addresses. Syntax was double-checked, and alternative electronic addresses were sought, but this provided little relief, and eventually the sample was cut to 87 authorities.

The differing software used to read electronic mail was known to be problematic in terms of the questionnaire's retaining its format on delivery; however the advantages of the method were considered to outweigh this minor cosmetic factor. On return all of the responses were indeed clearly legible.

More generally, several constraints had to be considered when planning the questionnaire. Obviously time and cost were major limiting factors with regard to this scale of study; however, the availability of data and confidentiality were two other particularly significant issues due especially to the subject matter. These factors were considered when designing the questionnaire. To ensure as high a

response rate as possible the questions were carefully judged, and the general tone took into account the sensitive nature of the topic.

3.2.8 Interviews

Once libraries within the case study authorities had been identified, the data collection at this juncture involved interviews with identified stakeholders from within the library service (senior management to para-professionals). Semi-structured interviews were chosen for all but the interviews with the library systems managers and the legal clerk, because they combined aspects of both structured and unstructured interviews (Stone, 1984). This form of interview allowed a greater flexibility and meant that 'extra' questions could be added if needed and 'original' questions could be left out (if felt to be inappropriate) or modified, or given explanation (Robson, 1993).

It was hoped that through semi-structured interviews the research would get behind the reasons decisions (with regards to security) were made, and explore attitudes towards theft. Also it would cover stakeholders from within and around LIS who were 'ignored' by the questionnaire etc., and generally gain comparative information from a range of sources (Gorman and Clayton, 1997, Wilson, 1997a). Robson (1993) says that a key advantage of the interview over the questionnaire is the former's flexibility and adaptability, as the interviewer can modify his/her line of enquiry, follow up interesting leads and investigate underlying motives.

Ideally the interviews would all have been conducted face-to-face; however, a number were carried out over the phone owing mainly to difficulties in arranging a face-to-face interview. In a couple of cases, where contacts were too busy to arrange meetings, they were persuaded to answer a few questions and an impromptu interview was held over the phone. Basically, interviews were only conducted over the phone in the few instances where meetings could not be arranged and research time was at a premium. Or in the case that the odd 'quick' follow-up question was drawn up after an initial interview (the author having previously gained the interviewees permission to contact him/her if any extra

information was required) (Wilson, 1997a).   Research has shown, however that there is little, if any, difference observed in the answers given on telephone interviews and face to face interviews (Bailey 1994).

The interviews were carried out according to general guidelines offered by Bailey (1994), Mellon (1990), Oppenheim (1992), Robson (1993), Stone (1984), and Wilson (1997a).   A Dictaphone was used to record the sessions and the dialogue was transcribed from tapes and brief notes made by the author as soon after the interview as was possible, i.e. when the interview was still 'fresh in the mind'.   Interviewees were asked for their permission to record, and in cases where permission was not granted as detailed notes as possible were taken during the interview.   Unfortunately, time constraints did not allow transcripts of the interviews to be sent to interviewees for verification.

3.2.9 Interview content

Three different schedules were designed to cater for the range of library staff who were interviewed - one for senior management, one for middle management and one for front-line staff (see Appendix 2).   The interviews carried out with the library system managers and a legal clerk did not follow a specific set of questions. They were therefore unstructured in nature, and their purpose was primarily to gather supporting data, and to gain an overview of library management systems and their capabilities, and the situation with regard to prosecuting library thieves respectively (Bell, 1987).

The ability to gather easily-comparable data, owing to consistency in the questioning, has been identified as one advantage of questionnaire surveys, and a number of questions from the survey were repeated in the interview schedules with this factor in mind (Robson, 1993; Stone, 1984).   It should be underlined that the three semi-structured interview schedules themselves included questions which were the same, again to aid comparison.

More open-ended questions were included in the interview schedule (compared to the questionnaire) to allow respondents to express opinions in their

own words, and to cover more complex motivational, and attitudinal influences (Fink, 1995). Interviewees 'answered' questions relating to their perceptions and attitudes on a given scale and then were asked to explain the reasons behind their choice.

3.3 A summary of the main limitations of the methodology

It is arguable that the questionnaire sample was restricted by the use of e-mail as the single delivery method. However, as argued above, the sample seemed to represent a fair coverage of the public library authorities in the country, and the need to cull a sample in the first place (due to constraints) imposed certain restrictions on the methodology that had to be overcome.

Ideally, the number of case study authorities would have been higher, as by only investigating 2, one decreased the possibility of the results reflecting the national picture. Also, by using an opportunistic sample one did not choose the 'best' authorities or indeed the 'worst', and by adopting a more random method of selection or by using more structured criteria for choosing the case study authorities the research approach could have been more 'transparent'.

Obviously, interviewing several assistants from particular service points could have led to an artificial reinforcement of certain issues particular to that library, and therefore have led to interpretations on a more general scale that might have been inaccurate owing to this 'weighting'. Since one of the study objectives was to gather as broad a scope of opinions and attitudes as was possible, where there was more than one post holder at a service point (which was often the case with library assistants) it was important to interview as many people as possible. Since these 'results' were not going to be analysed using any statistical techniques the possible imbalance was deemed unimportant. Also, one highly positive aspect of this methodology was the fact that by carrying out interviews across a staffing level one raised the possibility of uncovering differences in opinion, which in itself was valuable in gaining the most accurate reflection of the situation possible.

Chapter 4: Presentation and Analysis of Data

4.1 Structure of results section

The 'results' section will take a dispersed format and be spread across the next 5 chapters. Firstly, in this chapter, the data-set as a whole is introduced and briefly examined. Data from the questionnaire and interviews are then presented and analysed together in relation to the each chapter's subject, i.e. levels of theft, attitudes towards theft, the impact of theft, and finally security measures.

Where the comments of various individuals have been used to support or illustrate an area of focus, these comments have been placed in a box or italicised in the text, and attributed to the appropriate level of LIS personnel (with due respect to the aspect of confidentiality). The comments have been chosen to reflect, as objectively as possible, the range of feelings on a specific subject. However, where one point of view was found to be over-riding this will obviously be shown in the weighting of the commentaries. A conscious effort has also been made to reflect attitudes and perceptions from as wide a range of LIS staff as possible to give a balanced view (Harris and Stone, 1984).

4.2 Questionnaire response rate

The initial response rate was far from encouraging. It was expected that the majority of responses would come in the first few days, as the electronic format allows a quick and 'easy' method of reply. However only 9 out of a total of 87 questionnaires were returned in the first 14 days. A number of reasons may have caused this 'poor' initial response:

- Owing to the subject matter and the likelihood that no one member of staff would have responsibility for dealing with issues regarding theft, the questionnaire may have been passed from person to person.
- While most authorities have simple borrower or issues statistics to hand data relating to theft can be assumed to be more difficult to gather, and less likely to be waiting in an office file.

- Linked to the previous point, it could also be taken as an indication of the scarce level of data kept on theft, and the lack of consideration given to the problem by LIS.   These suppositions are discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

- Lack of prior warning.   Questionnaires were sent out cold, without the respondents having previously been contacted; although each questionnaire was sent with a full covering letter.

With respect to this last point, in hindsight a letter should have been sent to each authority in the sample prior to the questionnaire being sent out.   Bell (1993) stresses that it is important to gain permission to carry out a survey from sample groups at an early stage in the research process.   It was felt, at the time, that this would be a needless 'extra layer' of communication as it were, the questionnaire e-mail was headed by a covering letter, and this was deemed sufficient.   However, a preliminary letter could have been used to ascertain which authorities would be willing to fill in the questionnaire, and what format they would have preferred the questionnaire in (e-mail, postal, web-based) all of which, it might be assumed, would have increased the overall response rate.   Also, it might have been advisable in terms of general courtesy to prepare respondents for the forthcoming survey.

The problems could also have been caused by the method of delivery. Some recipients may have been unfamiliar with e-mail and might have preferred a postal questionnaire.   However, full instructions on how to complete and return the questionnaire were given, as well as the option to print out and post back responses.   Owing to the large number of e-mails received these days, perhaps the 'spam' effect (i.e. the Internet term for junk mail) caused a number of recipients to delete the message.

However, after two reminders were sent (see section 3.2.3) the number of responses rose quite sharply and in fact the final tally was 44 out of a possible 87, i.e. just over half of the authorities that received the questionnaire replied.   Over

half of the replies (23 responses, i.e. c. 52 %) were returned by post; this might also help to explain the slow initial response rate.

4.3 Range of authorities that responded to the questionnaire

The 44 public library authorities were geographically spread across the country and included responses from a number of London boroughs (4 in total), several metropolitan districts (22); the remainder (18) were county council authorities (this categorisation follows the CIPFA public library statistics format). It should be noted that, CSA A is a city council and CSA B is a county council.

4.4 Profile of libraries studied within the 2 case study authorities

As already mentioned twelve libraries were chosen for study in more detail, eight from Authority A and four from Authority B.   The case study authority sample included 2 central services, 9 district libraries, and 1 community library. Table 1 shows the size of each library in the sample and the authority in which it is located.

Library Type	Authority	Number of Items in stock
Central Libraries	CSA A	310,575
	CSA B	230,749
District Libraries	CSA B	24,552
	CSA B	23,854
	CSA A	c.20,000
	CSA A	16,704
	CSA B	12,465
	CSA A	12,245
	CSA A	12,045
	CSA A	11,483
	CSA A	11,228
Community Library	CSA A	6,925

Table 1: The size of libraries covered in the case study authority sample

The sample includes an outlying 'village' library from each authority, but the majority of service points are situated in various inner city locations.   Although this group of libraries are all based in an urban environment, the socio-economic

background and make-up of the areas they are in differ from library to library; when the situation in a particular library is described attention will be paid to these differences.

4.5 Profile of non-book stock kept in libraries

All the authorities sampled had collections of talking books (TKBs) and CDs/Audio Cassettes (AC) for loan, and 93% (41 authorities) also had entertainment videos for hire (no distinction was made between 'blockbuster' titles and standard tapes).   The level of non-book materials across other categories was far less standard with the next largest stock available on loan being non-fiction videos (71%) and CD ROMs (66%).

This is perhaps a predictable spread as the other specific categories - play station games (PSGs) and digital video discs (DVDs) are emerging areas of stock and one must expect a certain lag period before such materials find their way on to library shelves.   Also, there is a general debate as to the 'appropriateness' of placing such stock in libraries, but also a growing recognition that, on grounds of income generation especially, libraries cannot ignore such developments in the entertainment market.   There was an 'other' category to cover such materials as pictures and jigsaws etc. but these were not a major area of concern and no authorities indicated that theft of these items was a major problem.

As can be seen from the Figure 1 (overleaf), the number of authorities stocking DVDs and PSGs was 20 (45%) and 11 (25%) (respectively and exclusively); the number of authorities that stocked both was 6 (14%).   The number of authorities that had material for loan in every one of the categories was 3 (7%).   CSA B was one of the authorities that offered the 'full range' of stock, but not from each of its service points; only the central branch had everything. The other 3 service points covered did not have either CD ROMs, play station games or DVDs for loan, and one (the village service) also did not stock CDs.
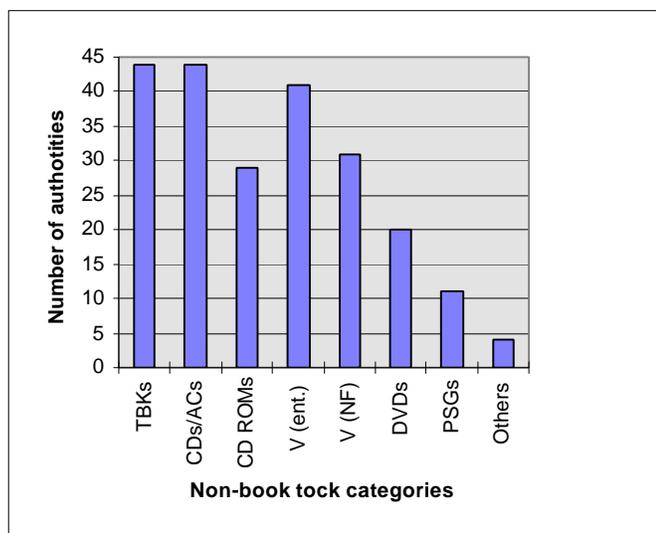
Figure 1: The range and size of non-book stock in the sample authorities

CSA A did not stock CD ROMs, PSGs or DVDs for loan in any of its branches, although there is a plan to have a collection of DVDs in the central branch. One service point did not stock CDs for loan but this was not due to the size of the library and more will be said of this matter in section 5.5.1

4.6 Profile of stakeholders interviewed

A total of 38 people were interviewed for this study, as is shown in Table 2. The range of personnel interviewed reflects the general LIS management hierarchy, e.g. there are more library assistants than senior librarians. The actual job descriptions for each 'title' are relatively unimportant; the point is that the various staffing levels within a library organisation were covered.

Post Title	Number of staff interviewed
Head of Services (H of S)	1
Group Manager (GM)	3
Senior Librarian (SL)	3
Community Librarian (CL)	6
Senior Library Assistant (SLA)	4
Library Assistant (LA)	18
Library Systems Manager (SM)	2
Legal Executive (LE)	1
Total	**38**

Table 2: The range of staff interviewed

4.7 Summary

1. The response rate to the questionnaire was just under 51% and although the initial response was poor, the rate increased significantly after reminders were sent.

2. The 44 public library authorities that responded to the survey were geographically spread across the country and included county and city authorities, and London boroughs.   A range of libraries within 2 case study authorities have been studied in more detail

3. All the authorities sampled had collections of talking books (TKBs) and CDs/Audio Cassettes for loan, and 93% (41 authorities) also had entertainment videos for hire.   The survey also found that libraries are beginning to stock DVDs and play station games for loan.

4. A range of stakeholders within each authority have been interviewed.

Chapter 5: Levels of Theft

"A clever theft was praiseworthy amongst the Spartans; and it is equally so amongst Christians, provided it be on a sufficiently large scale." **Herbert Spencer** Social Statics (1850, part 1, chapter 16, section 3)[1]

_____

5.1 Missing presumed...

As discussed in the introductory chapter, what constitutes actual theft is open to debate, and the lack of any hard and fast definition perhaps exacerbates the problem by deflecting attention away from the core issues (Burrows and Cooper, 1992).   There are several 'in house' problems which need to be covered before the data analysis proceeds, including the sensitive issue of 'theft' by staff, the 'black hole' effect (and/or excuse), and deceptive 'missing' traps.

5.1.1 Theft by staff

Before implying that a major concern with regard to library theft is a library's own staff, it should be noted that this research has found no evidence to support any such claim; however, the subject must be addressed.

Probably the only way to investigate whether theft by staff is a major issue would be to interview staff and boldly ask them about their 'borrowing habits', or encourage members of staff to 'tell' on their colleagues.   This study did cover the topic with a number of interviewees, although there were no specific questions directly related to the subject.   Several of the 'middle managers' expressed concern that, as one put it, '*internal problems'* might be the reason for some of the stock which is designated '*missing presumed stolen'*, although all were quick to defend their staff.

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[1] **Taken from Partington, A. (ed.)(1993). *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*. London: BCA.**

> *- 'Occasionally new stock has not made it to the branches; videos and books have been processed but have never arrived at their point of destination and this loss cannot be attributed to the public, however the problem is felt to be small.'* **(GM)**
>
> *- 'We have internal problems. Obviously we send out items to other branches and generally 1 or 2 go missing a month while on inter branch loan and not through the fault of borrowers. There is also the problem of mis-shelving leading to us suspecting that stuff has been stolen, when in actual fact it is still in the library.'* **(SLA)**

Under this umbrella of 'internal problems' one has to look beyond theft by staff and take into account the 'unintentional' theft – staff taking a book and meaning to bring it back but never getting round to it, borrowing a book without first actually issuing it on your ticket etc. New books are bound to be as attractive to staff as they are to borrowers and the temptation to 'take' them before they are put out on the new stock trolley, or before they have gone through the complete book processing procedure is understandably tempting.

Bahr (1989, in Switzer, 1999:87) suggested that staff committed 25% of all library theft, but this proportion would seem to be extraordinarily high considering the levels of loss in some libraries. Also, this figure does not correspond with the findings of Burrows and Cooper (1992) that 77% of libraries surveyed said that theft by staff was no problem, and a further 21% said that the problem was 'minimal'. Nor does it relate to the impression given by staff interviewed for the present study. A cynical observer would suggest that a case of 'protecting one's own' might explain this attitude, but the author genuinely feels that theft by staff, although it certainly occurs, is not a major issue in terms of the levels of loss from public libraries.

5.1.2 The 'black-hole' effect

We also need to consider items that mysteriously disappear 'somewhere' in the '*black hole*' as one senior library assistant remarked, or as another interviewee said '*through administrative incompetence*'. It would be foolish to suggest that an item has been definitely stolen when it is not on loan yet not on the shelves, items do go missing in the system in a number of ways. One example is when a

book is not correctly issued i.e. the issue is not registered on the computer (because it was not scanned properly, for example) although the book was 'borrowed' legitimately in the eyes of all involved.

Books go for binding without any indication left to denote that this is where they have gone; the same may apply to books waiting repair, stock that has been discarded but not deleted from the catalogue, items waiting to be catalogued, or on a shelf behind another pile of books, or underneath a pile of paperwork, or on the coffee table in the staff room.   There are many possibilities regarding the whereabouts of a missing item as is further emphasised by this quote:

> -'... *Some of them (missing items) could be on shelves in the office, or some could be misplaced, in other areas of the library and haven't yet been checked. Some of them could have been issued but not issued, if you know what I mean, not gone through the issue system, so when the customer brings them back they are found in that way. I believe that it is really very difficult to actually say categorically that this is the number of items that have been stolen because you actually have bad stock management to take into account, stock that is misplaced and eventually turns up.'* **(SM)**

However such an array of choice should not deflect from the fact that a 'simple' reason why someone cannot place his or her hands on an item that should be on the shelf is that that item has been stolen.   To underline this point, the more detailed section of the results begins with a stark illustration of theft in the public library from within one of the case study libraries.

5.1.3 The 'New' Library

The library in question is located in case study authority A, and was opened in October 1999.   It is situated in an area of predominantly 1930s housing estates, with higher than average unemployment for the city, and a higher number of people living below the poverty level too.   Within the catchment area a number of libraries have closed down and this library has recently moved to a more central location near the local shopping centre.

When the library was opened, the majority of stock was new.   The library authority bought around 20,000 items, - around 6,000 non-fiction, 8,000 fiction, a large amount of junior material to cater for the high number of young families in the area, and also a range of non-book materials (videos, talking books and CDs).

A stock check of the adult book material was carried out after 6 months and the results were passed on to the present author.   A smaller stock check exercise was also done at this service point as part of the present study (with the assistance of the community librarian) and concentrated on several areas of stock that the community librarian thought were 'in danger' from theft.

Figures for the size of stock across a range of categories, the number of books on loan, and the number found on the shelves (for the 'original' stock check) were given to the author.   The number of books missing was calculated from these figures and the deficit as a percentage of the total stock in that category was found (see Figure 2, p.33).   The results were far from positive with the percentage loss ranging from 5% to 48%.   It is clear that several categories have lost a sizeable number of books over half a year.

Within non-fiction, crime, health, know your rights (i.e. welfare books), local, and sport have lost a large quantity of stock. The relatively small 'know your rights' section has lost almost half of its 27-book collection, which clearly effects the range of choice left for borrowers.   The health section lost 126 books (19%) and local studies 132 books (23%); also, the home section lost over 70 books (11%).   Overall, in non-fiction, the average loss across the board was 13.4%.   In the fiction section the picture was worse, the average percentage loss through suspected theft here was 14.4% with the science fiction and fantasy section losing
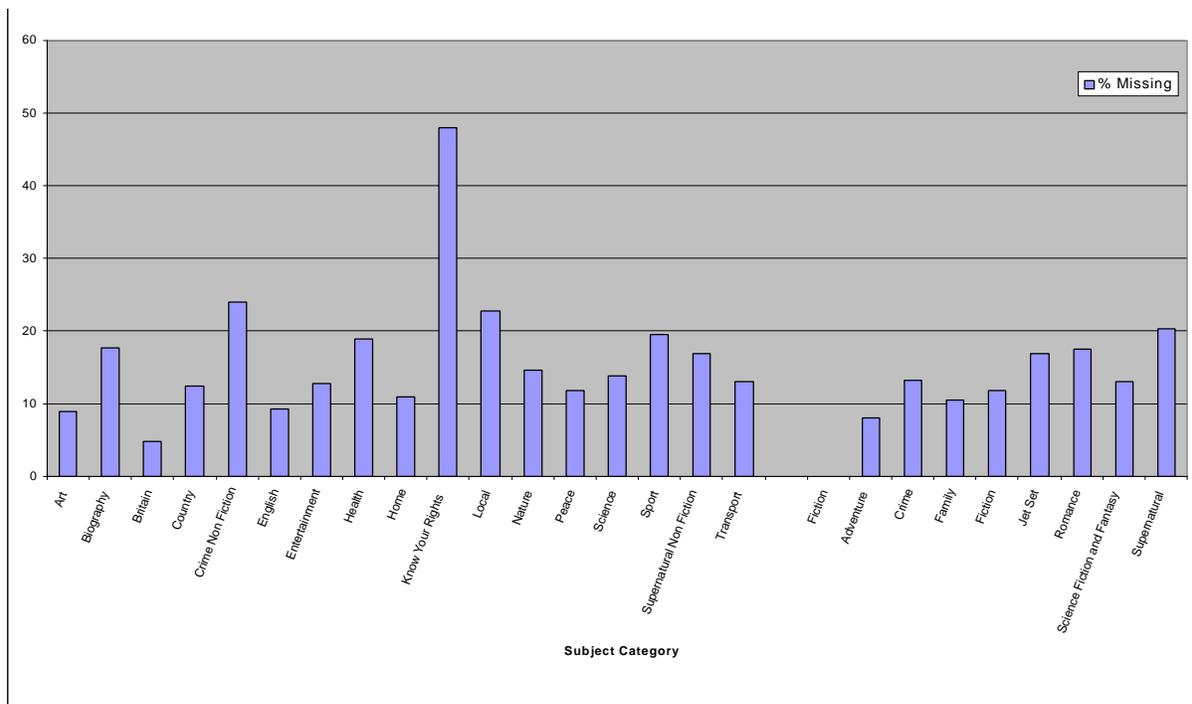
Figure 2: The percentage loss in various categories of books from 'x' library

over 20% of its stock (this is supported by library staff who reported that a large number of the Terry Pratchett novels had disappeared; a fact recorded in more than one of the other libraries in the sample).   However, although the percentage loss is higher for fiction than for non-fiction which goes against the trend found by Keele (1987) who found that non-fiction was far more vulnerable to loss than fiction, the actual numbers of books which have gone missing is the particularly worrying factor.   1260 fiction books have 'disappeared' from 8 categories, including 267 from Crime, 150 from Family, 383 from Fiction, 139 from Romance and 113 from Science Fiction and Fantasy.

Bearing in mind the fact that the library had only been open 6 months when this data was collected the likelihood that a great number of books would have gone for repair, or have been awaiting binding etc. is probably minimal.   This matter was discussed with the community librarian for this service point who estimated that indeed 'no more than 50-100 books maximum' would have been awaiting servicing at this point in time.   Therefore, it can be concluded that the alarming rate of loss is due to the fact that stock has been stolen.   This may come as an unpleasant surprise, as it runs contrary to the impression that the community librarian was under: ... *'I mean you look at the shelves and there is still a lot there, so I'm presuming that theft isn't a problem.'* **(CL)**

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As fore-mentioned, an effort was made to substantiate this data by undertaking a small scale stock management exercise in July, when 4 areas were chosen for a 'spot check'; these were the graphic novels, the science, and the supernatural (fiction and non-fiction) sections, chosen because it was perceived that stock in these categories may have been lost, and the librarian was interested to see if the data supported this perception. On a positive note, not a single graphic novel appeared to have gone missing; however, there were losses in the other sections. These losses, however, did not add up to those found in March; in each case fewer books were found missing, suggesting that books have 'returned' to the shelves in the last 5 months. This might suggest that the figures shown above are higher than the actual levels, i.e. they exaggerate the number lost through theft.

The Science section had lost 9% of its books, Supernatural Non Fiction 8.5%, and Supernatural Fiction 13%. This compares to the levels 14%, 17% and 20% respectively that were calculated from the March stock-take. The discrepancies do undermine the validity of the 'original' figures and may be due to counting errors, or the return of books that had not been issued properly, or that had been taken out 'illegally' and subsequently return, which as Kearsley (1975) and Foster (1996) note, does happen.

5.1.4 Missing figures

Both the library management systems used in the two case study authorities (Dynix and DS Galaxy) have the facility to mark stock as 'missing'. Both authorities also regularly shelf check for missing items before 'writing-off' stock, i.e. taking items off the computer once it has been 'decided' that they would not be found. Yet simply keeping note of the number of missing items is not sufficient and certainly cannot be taken as an accurate reflection of the situation for several reasons, some of which were intimated by the systems managers.

- Do you keep records of what is deleted and why?

- 'Yes, we keep a total of all that is deleted and also all that is missing, but we do not keep data on the combination of the two i.e. that which has gone missing and is subsequently deleted, the clearance of missing stock is the main issue. Whether people take note that a book was 'missing' when it was deleted is important, as is cleaning up the system of items which have been missing for a long time yet are still on the catalogue.' **(SM)**

- 'There are figures in the system but I have not been requested to deliver them. It might be possible to have a look at what has been discarded over a period at an agency that was at missing inventory status.' **(SM)**

- 'The numbers missing/lost are really a minimum value, videos don't show up as they are deleted without records being kept of how many have been deleted.' **(SM)**

This first quote is clearly supported by data provided by CSA B for stock that was on missing status; currently there are 11,758 items missing on their Galaxy system (over 6,000 adult non fiction and around 2,000 adult fiction). However, when one looks at Figure 3 (overleaf) it is evident that the number of missing items increases significantly over time as one would expect, and that the total nearing 12,000 probably took a number of years to accumulate.
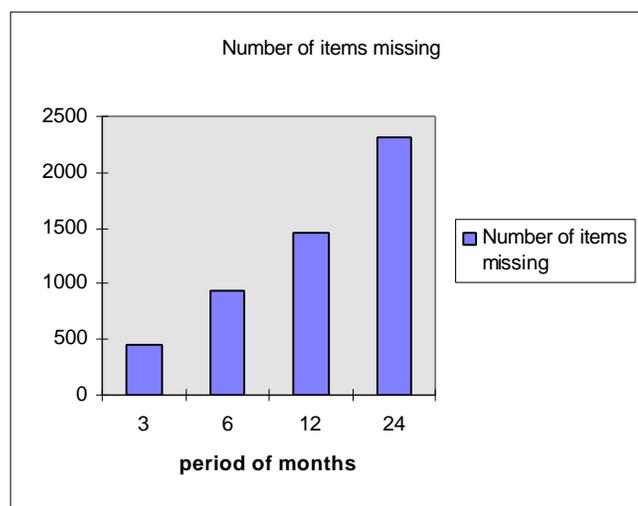
Figure 3: The number of items that have gone missing over a period of months

This would indicate that the 'total' missing number of items is perhaps as high as it is because the system has not been cleared of items that have been missing for a number of years.   Regardless of this, the total is still clearly a serious matter as, bearing in mind the prices of stock, one can imagine that this sum could translate into a financial loss of in excess of £100,000.

There are two inter-related factors to be taken into account in this situation. Firstly, the longer an item is tagged as missing, the more likely it is to turn up if it is simply a case of the item having been mis-shelved in the library.   The majority of libraries, if not all, have a tidy rota.   Many libraries in the case study sample actually undertook tidying duties on a daily basis; meaning that if an item was in the wrong place it would eventually be found.   Thus, it may be assumed that the longer an item is missing the less likely it is to re-appear within the system, and following this logic, the greater the likelihood of it having been stolen.

Another major factor needs to be considered with regards to the accuracy of missing figures.   Time and time again during the interviews (and in the literature, e.g. Ashcroft and Wilson, 1992; and Lincoln, 1984a) it was noted that losses only came to light when people requested an item, or when a user could not find an item on the shelf when they thought it should be.   In both cases a member of staff would almost definitely check on the shelves and if they could not find it notify whoever requested the item and/or apologise to the user.

The general procedure is then for the item to be marked missing, thus triggering a set of actions to be taken, or simply bringing attention to those using the catalogue that a search for this item will probably be fruitless.   However, in a busy service point, do staff always take the time to mark an item as missing on the circulation system, or do they rush back to a queue of enquirers and intend to do it later, or simply move on without thinking about tagging the entry?   The number of missing traps may therefore be a minimum value and the real total may be much higher owing to this 'house-keeping' oversight.

5.2 Data kept on theft

Lincoln and Lincoln (1986) found that 40% of respondents could not provide an estimate of how much stock had been lost through theft in the previous year.   Burrows and Cooper (1992) found that the percentage of libraries in their survey that carried out procedures to quantify losses (this includes academic and special libraries) was very similar (39%).   The present study's questionnaire survey found that only 9 authorities out of 44, a fifth of the sample (20%), kept data.   Unfortunately, this serves to reinforce the generally recognised lack of figures kept with regards to monitoring loss of stock through theft.

One of the questions in the survey asked if the authority could provide a figure, or an estimation, of the percentage loss through theft in various book and non-book stock areas.   Only 3 of the 9 authorities gave indications of loss, which may indicate that any data which was kept was too difficult (or would have taken too long) for the respondent to place their hands on.   Other reasons could be that it was felt to be too sensitive to divulge, or perhaps authorities did not calculate loss as a percentage of the total stock and therefore did not complete the question.

Another reason may have been one of embarrassment.   Through chance an internal e-mail was forwarded to me by mistake by one of the authorities that received the questionnaire.   The basic theme of the communication was that the authority had decided not to answer the questionnaire on grounds of embarrassment!   This highlights the taboo nature of the topic, and the fact that for obvious reasons authorities might not wish to broadcast facts regarding the amount and value of stock they lose through theft.   However, such 'secrecy' surrounding library theft and shortage of quantifiable evidence makes a study of the subject difficult and it could be argued that this in turn perpetuates the situation, for without evidence one cannot substantiate a claim, or back a cause, and (more cynically) one cannot be accountable for losses deemed unacceptable.

Lincoln and Lincoln (1986) judged levels on the number of incidences of theft.   This would seem to mask, to some extent, the 'true picture', as one incident could involve the theft of many items and therefore arguably a simple sum

of the number of incidences of theft would not represent the level of the problem. The present study hoped to ascertain levels of theft (in quantitative terms) from across the country from the survey data, to present an up-to-date picture of the issue; however the shortage of available figures makes such a report difficult. The present study has obviously produced its own data that will be presented in later sections.   From this data patterns and implications will be drawn, and, if possible, generalisations and recommendations, which could be applied on a wider scale, will be made.

There was awareness amongst library staff concerning the shortage of available/collected data on which to base policy and practice, and where data was available/collected there appears to be a distinct shortage of analysis.

-'Shops work to a margin, they expect to lose 5% or something. These systems are never foolproof but I think we are in the dark at the minute as to how serious the problem is. But at the end of the day it's tax-payers money and we are judged on issues and quality of book stock, so we should be looking into it more.' **(CL)**
- 'There is the incident book, and we make a note of the write-offs...there's also missing traps, but there is no hard analysis of the data which is available.' **(CL)**
- 'We could archive data through an Access database and store via a CD ROM, then the info would be always available monthly; I know one authority which is doing this.' **(SM)**
- Do you keep any data relating to theft? – 'No, Not specifically.'
Could you offer some reasons as to why not? – 'I've not been asked to keep any data on theft. Information can be produced if requested..' **(SM)**
-'Current work on security systems is based on data that is three years old, so it's probably a case of 'shutting the gate after the horse has bolted.' **(GM)**
-'We keep account of how much is written off through non-return for audit purposes rather than because we perceive a problem that we need to act on. Don't keep similar tally with regards stock loss through theft - to find information would be difficult and costly so the first thing that happens is that

there is a perception of a problem and then it is investigated, rather than there being any systematic trigger.' **(H of S)**

- In this authority two thirds of the libraries still operate on a brown ticket (manual issue) system and therefore their records are not covered by the computer statistics (off-line libraries).' **(SM)**

This last point is a key issue as one cannot assume that all library authorities are on-line, and have computerised management systems installed to cover all their service points.   Therefore, the availability of easily transferable data needs to be considered.   However, one cannot assume either that computers necessarily bring more useful information to bear:

- 'Manual records were kept in the past – so you could argue the case by subject as you would know that you had lost x amount from x category, we kept figures by Dewey number so we knew what we had lost . The computer is far quicker but information is not as helpful to substantiate claims; and it is not readily available at our finger tips. We need quantifiable evidence to make request for more funds.' **(LA)**

5.2.1 Reasons for not keeping data on theft

The survey requested authorities to indicate the reasons why they did not keep data relating to theft and Figures 4 shows the range of answers given.
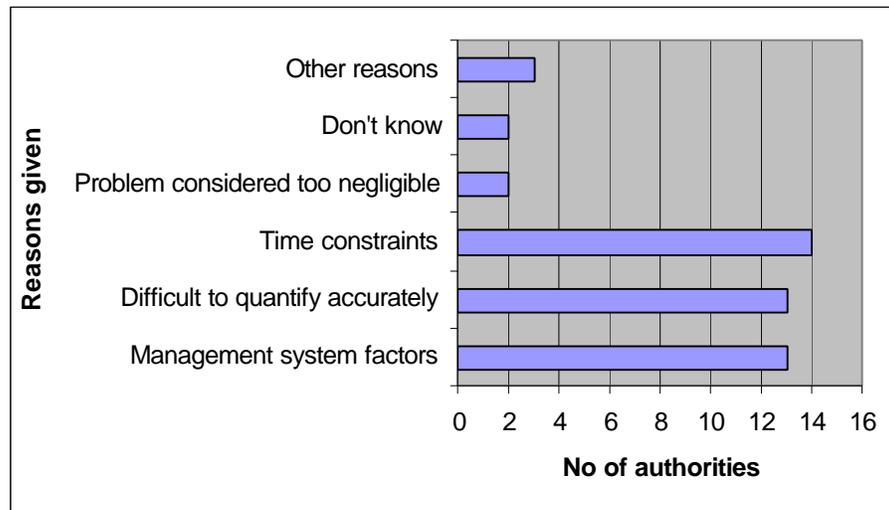
Figure 4: The reasons given by authorities for not keeping data on theft

Generally the most common reasons given were time constraints, the difficulty in actually calculating levels of theft and also the 'inability' of management systems to produce data of this nature. One authority offered staffing constraints as the reason why they were unable to have a planned programme of stock taking and subsequently were not able to assess the level of theft; staffing levels only permitted occasional stock checks in 'special' areas. The 'other reasons' given apart from this were both to do with the fact that the authority was in the middle of changing their circulation system and thus such stock taking exercises were currently on hold.

5.3 The cost of theft

Lincoln and Lincoln (1986:51) suggested that financial loss caused by crime was one of the easiest indicators to measure. In their study respondents were asked to estimate total losses due to crime during the last year. Over half (60%) reported losses in excess of £250, 24% had losses >£2,500, and 12% had losses > £5,000. Quite how they worked out the financial losses is another matter – no explanation is given, and if they relied on libraries calculating their own losses one questions how they guaranteed that the same procedure was followed by each library. This study found that establishing financial losses due to theft was far

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from easy, and that none of the libraries in the case study authorities kept data on financial losses through theft in any form.

It may be reasonably easy, to calculate the amounts of fines owed and the replacement costs of books that have gone overdue. However, as stated above, the realm of stock loss through non-return is beyond the focus of the present study. We are interested in the value of stock that has been stolen or is missing presumed stolen, and that is a far more difficult sum to assess. Yet clearly the financial implication of stock loss through theft is a major aspect of the debate, and thus some effort should be made to ascertain the cost of theft.

Public libraries negotiate terms and discounts with individual suppliers, and there are also servicing costs to be taken into account when considering the cost of stock. With regards to the theft of equipment and rare books, for example, the range of costs one is dealing with obviously depends on what was taken, the make, age etc. Nevertheless, it is possible to put an estimated value on stock and therefore calculate the cost of what has been lost. Bearing in mind however that, as Keele (1987) pointed out, as far as book theft is concerned it is unreasonable to take an average book price as a value on which to base loss calculations. This is due to the fact that it is the newer stock, rarer items, and the generally more expensive reference stock that are more likely to be stolen and therefore an 'average price' underestimates the true financial loss incurred.

5.3.1 The cost of theft: A working example

Case study authority B supplied a set of current 'missing' figures for their authority, although it must be noted that these figures did not include off-line libraries (which account for around two thirds of CSA B's service points). They were analysed to calculate the value of the stock that was missing, in terms of how much the stock would cost to buy (see Table 3).

Price List – Average cost	(£)		No. of items missing		Cost of missing items
Adult Fiction HBK	£14.40		1064		15321.6
Adult Fiction PBK	£6.20		994		6162.8
Adult Fiction LP	£15.60		190		2964
Adult Non-Fiction	£11.20		6563		73505.6
TKB	£31.40		237		7441.8
Videos	£8.20		72		590.4
CD	£12.00		151		1812
DVD	£14.00		0		0
PSGs	£31.10		2		62.2
				Total =	£107,860.40p

Table 3: The cost of missing items in CSA B

(These are average figures based on information provided by a member of staff who buys stock for CSA A.   Figure have been rounded up or down to the nearest 10p)

Again, this is a minimum value.   As mentioned above the missing figures that the CSA A losses are based on are known to be low and that is before considering stock that is missing but has not had a missing trap put on it.   The average prices do not, for example, take into account servicing costs, staff time spent looking for lost books, ordering and processing replacements, and administrative costs.   Also, it must be noted that neither reference nor junior material is included in this total, and these are two areas that are often targetted by thieves, according to Keele (1987).

Ideally, one would be able to do a cost benefit analysis of the situation with respect to, say, the installation of a security system.   One would work out how much was lost through theft and then compare this with the cost of the security system and then make a decision based on the evidence.   On a wider scale, it might be possible to, perhaps, find a trigger point beyond which one would know that it was cost-effective to implement a specific security plan in a library of a certain size, range of stock etc.

A decision on whether or not to install security measures could be made as a result of a certain quantifiable level of loss, or indeed perhaps 'only' a perception

of the level of loss.   However, generally hard data and facts fuel such discussions as these, and one can speculate that it is unlikely that money would be released purely on the grounds of librarian's having a hunch that a fifth of new stock was being stolen.   Unfortunately such data and evidence would appear to be in scarce supply and thus this study can offer little in the way of benchmarks, but it does highlight that such data is often calculable from existing data or could be relatively easily found.

5.4 Equipment Loss

Figure 5 shows that the majority of libraries surveyed in the questionnaire had lost library equipment and property during the last year.   This ranged from 4 cases of petty theft where the computer mouse balls from had been stolen to a number of incidences where 'several' computers had been stolen from the library. The list of what has been stolen from libraries within the two case study authorities makes interesting enough reading in isolation.   From the theft of freshly laid turf from outside a library in CSA A and a microwave from the same library, to a clock worth £2,000 which was mounted on a wall 10 feet off the floor, and a keyboard from a library in CSA B.
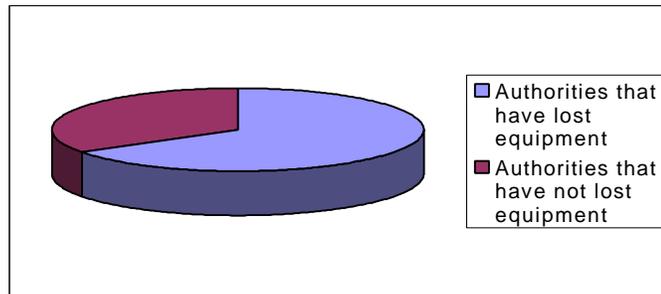
Figure 5: The proportion of authorities that have lost equipment during the last year

As can be seen from the chart, two thirds of authorities experienced theft of equipment from libraries in 1999.   And although, as mentioned above, four authorities indicated that the level of theft had been only minor, a total of 16 authorities out of 44 (over a third) had lost either computers or printers, or both!

This contrasts with the research of Lincoln and Lincoln (1986) who found that 59% of their survey returns indicated that NO equipment had been lost and

that an additional 30% had only had one or two episodes during the year. Comparing this data with the results shown above, there would seem to be a significant difference.   Since there are no obvious reasons as to why the figures should be so far apart, it may be that the rise in the amount of 'attractive' equipment housed in the modern-day library has led to a severe increase in the number of thefts in this category.   This echoes the feelings of Wrigley (1992) who speculates that as libraries move to more 'sophisticated' equipment for readers, the theft of equipment is likely to rise.

Such losses in isolation are obviously serious but when they are considered alongside the loss of stock that in terms of sheer quantity is still much higher than the theft of equipment, the implications for the service become apparent.

5.5 Levels of awareness

Within an authority, although there maybe a belief that stock is being lost, staff are not fully aware of how much, or indeed what, is going missing.   The lack of data keeps the true levels of theft masked in a great many respects.   For example, in the case of the 'new library' as discussed above (section 5.1.3) the community librarian was shocked at how much had gone missing in the short time the library had been open.

To emphasise the point, although staff know that stock is going missing and perceive theft to be a problem, the awareness is, in the majority of cases, limited to a qualitative assessment.   All but two of the library assistants interviewed said that they thought that theft was a problem in their library and many were aware that specific areas of stock were particularly effected; however, when it came to knowing the scale of the problem, information was not so forthcoming.   This picture was basically repeated at the level of library authority, where only 3 of the authorities sampled could provide figures for the percentage of stock lost through theft, and one of these was an average figure across the stock as a whole.

5.6 Perception of the changes in levels of theft

Survey respondents were asked to comment on how they thought levels of theft in the public library had changed (if indeed they had) over the last five years. This was aimed at ascertaining whether, since previous research and the growth of non-book stock, levels of theft had altered.

Not one of the 44 respondents indicated that they felt incidences of theft had decreased over the given period. Twenty-four said it had stayed the same, and the remainder (20 authorities) stated that theft had increased. Three of the authorities that indicated that the level of theft had remained the same commented that it had increased for audio-visual material (AV). In hindsight, the question from which this data is taken (Appendix 1, question 15) could have been better, as there was no 'don't know' option given so respondents only had a choice between three options (increased, decreased, stayed the same). This might have led to fewer respondents choosing 'stayed the same', as one can assume that it is unlikely they would have chosen one of the extreme values (i.e. increased or decreased) if they were not sure how levels of theft had changed.

During the interviews with staff from within the case study authorities several opinions were offered as to why the amount of theft has changed (or not) and a fair representation of the scope of feelings is included below:

-*'In terms of audio visual material, there has been an increase, but I've no perception of increase elsewhere.'* (**H of S**)
-*'The level of new stock has tailed off in recent years due to dramatic cuts in the book fund and therefore I am not sure whether theft has increased. As new books are not coming in,*
the quantities of the stuff people want to pinch isn't there - the target area has 'gone'. (**GM**)
-*'I think the increased range of materials has attracted theft (does attract theft) - videos, DVDs, due to the re-sale value of the items and this also has a negative effect in terms of income generation for the library.'* (**CL**)

> -*'Since CCTV, I think they (incidents of theft) have probably decreased, but generally I think they have increased. Having been in libraries for 30years, I know that there has always been a lot of theft but I think it's increased as you have filled libraries with more tempting things – like CDs, videos, play station games etc.'* **(LA)**
> -*'Increasing. Since we got the new computers in you can see how much stuff is going missing, if it was a private company they wouldn't let it happen, it is unacceptable, we need more staff and a security system'.* **(LA)**
> -*'Perhaps it's because we have become more aware, but I perceive it has increased. We have been made more aware through stock checking.'* **(LA)**
> -*'Increased, definitely. We are in a deprived area and we've come in with new videos and books and insufficient security.'* **(LA)**

This raises the problem as to whether levels are actually increasing, or, in fact, it is a case of staff becoming more aware of incidences of theft or suspected theft. To draw a parallel with crime rates in general, we see that over recent years crime appears to have risen, but many believe this is due to the fact that more people report crime nowadays than they did in the past.

By asking staff and respondents to recall past levels and compare them with more recent occurrences that are more likely to have remained fresh in the mind, an element of memory testing was also introduced into this aspect of the data collection. Clearly such a reliance on recollection is far from ideal but one has to trust that by asking a broad range of staff one would get a general perception of whether the level of theft had changed. Also by looking at these qualitative indications of change alongside more quantitative data it was hoped that one could be used to verify the other. In fact, the research came across little archived data regarding levels of theft and therefore it was difficult to 'cross-reference' as it were.

In most cases, there is a positive relationship between crime and the number of patrons who use the library on a daily basis and also the level of circulation (Lincoln and Lincoln, 1986). However, it has been widely documented that the

numbers of issues and borrowers has fallen over recent years (Lashmar and Oliver, 2000, and LIC, 1997) and this would seem to introduce an element of contradiction into the frame; but it may just simply reinforce the speculation of the author (backed by the collected opinions of stakeholders, and the literature – see Keele, 1987, and Ewing, 1994) that theft has increased due to other aspects such as the diversification in stock. Such a factor was intimated by an authority from the North of England: *'I think it's [theft] always been a problem up here, but the increase is probably due to the increased levels of desirable material in libraries'*.

5.7 The level of theft in the public library

A more in depth discussion of this subject appears in chapter 9, where the results of this study are put into the context of a critical evaluation of previous research. At this juncture, suffice to say, it was felt that the level of available data collected by this study was insufficient to make a valid addition to previous research into the level of loss in public libraries.

The overall reported loss rate in public libraries calculated by Burrows and Cooper (1992) was 5.3%, although the loss rate for libraries only able to provide data regarding their annual count was slightly lower at 4.2%. Ewing (1994) reports that the loss rate is almost certainly between 1 and 10%, and figures that were returned by three authorities through the survey fell in this bracket (2.5%, 6%, and 3.1%.) One has to note though, that these figures make up a very small sample and therefore cannot be taken as representative of the situation across the country. Also figures detailed above and below for libraries in CSA A (see sections 5.1.3 and 5.7.1) show that percentage loss is perhaps breaking the 10% threshold, as it were, in a number of libraries.

Assumptions that crime patterns are related to both the activity and the size of the library, the number of staff and the socio-economic class of the neighbourhood (Lincoln, 1984), and also that national crime patterns are

reflected in library crime patterns (Lincoln and Lincoln, 1986) are probably

well founded.   But the lack of data provided by authorities made any

substantiation of these findings difficult, and as the following section shows

even two libraries which are similar in the majority of aspects can have

differing problems with theft.

5.7.1 Small-scale comparative study between two libraries in case study authority A

Within case study authority A, a comparative study was undertaken between

two libraries that were identified by the researcher as being similar.   This similarity

was reflected in the number of users, the range and size of stock, and the number

of staff.   Both libraries receive the same budget for new stock and had the same

number of books bought for them originally. .   The social demographics of the

two catchment areas are similar, with library A having a slightly more ethnically

diverse population, and in geographical terms they are located only two miles

apart.   They are both situated in an inner city environment, in areas that receive

Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) Funding.

The only significant differences are in the physical size of the libraries

(Library B is significantly larger) and the number of issues that the libraries have

(Library A issues on average over 21,000 items every four months, whereas

Library B issues around 14,000 over the same period).   Findings that suggest

levels of crime are related to the activity and the size of a library (Lincoln &

Lincoln, 1984) as mentioned above, may be significant in light of these facts and

the differing levels of theft in the two libraries.

According to the community librarian who oversees the running of both

libraries, one (Library A) is not perceived to have a problem.   Only c.150 items

are written off each year through theft (although this figure may include items that

have gone missing in the system, or that have been discarded without being

officially taken off the computer etc.).   In total 596 books have gone missing from

this service point between 1996 and April 2000.   However, the situation at

Library B is not as positive. In a sample stock check of new books (100 fiction and 100 non-fiction) which was carried out August 1999 it was found that 29.3% of the fiction books were missing, and 25.3% of the non-fiction had 'disappeared'. In total, 43 out of the 200 books that were looked for were not found; taking into account possible errors that could lead to some alteration in these figures (which have been discussed in a section 5.1), this is still a significant amount.

In Library B, books on pets, especially exotic ones and breeds of dogs (such as Rottweilers) are known to have been taken in large numbers; the library does not have a CD collection for a number of reasons, one being concerns regarding security. This is not to imply that Library A has not experienced problems with theft; in the last three months they lost an 'arm' from their CD rack, resulting in a total of around 30 CDs being lost in one fell swoop. Estimating that each CD costs around £12, then this one incident cost the library c.£360 in stock; and this does not take into account loss of income from rental charges or the replacement costs etc.

The differing levels of theft influences the way the community librarian manages the stock; she puts more transfers into Library B to bring stock up to an adequate level and does not risk new books – *If they are going to nick stuff they can nick old stuff! We don't risk new stock, we transfer older stock because we perceive that items from certain subject areas will almost certainly walk out of the door.'* Clearly this has repercussions as far as service quality is concerned; if stock choice and placement is being 'manipulated' purely due to the expectation of theft then theft is directly effecting service, and is leading to a service differential.

5.8 Summary

1. There are a number of internal issues that cloud the picture of theft in the public library. Theft by staff, the loss of stock within the system by a variety of means (e.g. misplacement and mis-shelving of stock), and also misleading missing figures all serve to deflect attention away from the 'real' situation with regards to 'pure' theft.

2. The example of a new library opened October 1999 in CSA A is given to highlight levels of theft where the chance of stock having gone missing by any other means is minimal.   The rate of theft was found to be 13.4% for non-fiction and 14.4% for fiction, although these figures may be higher than actual levels according to research done by the present study in the last couple of months.

3. The questionnaire survey found that 9 authorities out of 44, just over 20% of the sample, kept data, compared to previous research which found the total to be 40% (Lincoln and Lincoln, 1986). This underlines the apparent lack of monitoring of stock loss through theft in English public libraries.

4. The main reasons given as to why authorities did not keep theft were time constraints, a difficulty in quantifying levels of theft accurately and the capacity of the management information system to produce suitable data.

5. The cost of theft is difficult to establish owing to the scarcity of data with regards to the true amount of loss and also the areas where that loss has come from.

6. 66% of authorities lost equipment through theft in 1999, and in 16 cases this constituted the theft of computers and computer equipment.   The variety of materials that are stolen from libraries is diverse, yet in terms of quantity the theft of books is still the largest single area of loss in terms of amplitude.

7. There is widespread awareness of the problem of theft although this has not been translated into an awareness of the need to collect data and monitor levels. The general perception is that the problem of theft has increased in the last 5 years.

8. It is difficult to judge the level of theft in the public library service, again, because of the lack of 'hard' information on which to base one's assessment.   It is also difficult to predict levels of theft according to certain variables, as the example of 2 'similar' libraries (from CSA A) with different experiences of theft shows.

Chapter 6: Attitudes Towards Theft

"You: Could you photocopy three pages out of this book, and two
out of the other one?
Photocopier: You'll have to fill out a copyright form.
You: Really?
Photocopier: It's the law.
You: Actually, these are my books.
Photocopier: Doesn't matter who owns them. It's the law.
You: No, I mean they're my books.
Photocopier: How would you feel if you'd written them and
somebody just came along and ran a load off? It's theft, that. You
can either fill out these forms, or you'll have to go somewhere else.
You: Where else is there?
Photocopier: Try the library. They're not bothered."
    Simon Armitage All Points North (1999, page 192)

"Opportunity makes a thief." **Francis Bacon** A Letter of Advice to the Earl of

Essex... (1598) in J. Spedding (ed.) (1862) *'Letters and Life'* (Volume 2, page 99).[2]

—————————————————

6.1 Range of attitudes regarding theft in public libraries

As one can see from Figure 6 (overleaf) most of the authorities that

responded to the questionnaire said that theft was a problem.   The author admits

that by using this as a filter question and subsequently asking: 'To what extent do

you perceive theft to be a problem in your authority?' - to which respondents

could have chosen one of a number of options ranging from 'not at all', to 'very

high', a more-detailed response could have been achieved.   However, the whole

survey was geared to gaining a general and basic picture of the situation, such a

'crude' question was felt to be appropriate, and also the number of questions that

were asked in the survey had to be limited.   Two of the respondents did specify

that theft was only a problem in a small number of their libraries, which was a fair

interpretation of, and response to, the question.   However, as already intimated,

the question at this point in the data collection was seeking a considered opinion

on behalf of the authority as a whole.

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[2] **Taken from Partington, A. (ed.) (1993).** *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*. **London: BCA.**
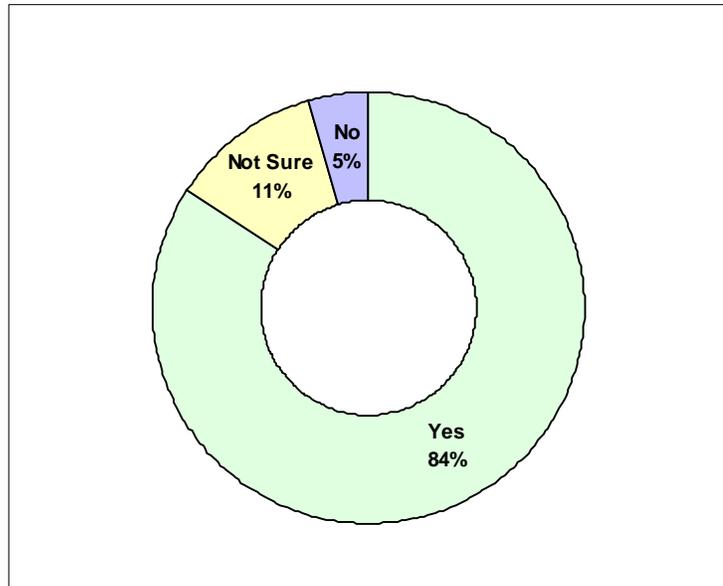
Figure 6: The responses of authorities when asked:
'Do you consider theft to be a problem in your library authority?

Within the case study authorities 10 out of the 11 libraries said that theft was a problem, only the central service in case study authority A stating that it was not.

Returning to the survey respondents, only 2 authorities said that theft was not a problem in their authority (37 authorities said theft was a problem, and 5 authorities indicated that they were not sure). It is interesting to note, however, that in both cases the authorities in question did not keep data on theft and they both had lost equipment from their libraries in 1999. Also, they both rated the seriousness of stock loss through theft of videos (and in one case CDs) to be at a level above the survey average (see section 7.2 for more detail). From this one could argue that, contrary to the authority's own opinion, theft *would* appear to be a problem.

Aside from the matter of whether theft was considered to be a problem, stakeholders who were interviewed as part of the data collection expressed more general attitudes concerning theft and a couple will be addressed here:

-*'It is the nature of the library system that the books that belong to the people of X become the property of library staff, they are merely kept by the library and are not the personal property of the librarians but of the borrowers.'* **(CL)**
-*'There is the perception in public libraries throughout the world that stock belongs to the library and so the stock is being stolen from staff 'personally', but the stock belongs to the people of X or whatever city, so they are actually stealing from themselves and their neighbours, because it is their council tax money. It is just depressing.'***(CL)**
-*'With non-return at least you have a chance of getting the stock back, with theft it is the last you have seen of those item,; and that deprives everyone of them.'* **(CL)**

The first point raises several pertinent issues. The library in very basic terms is simply a store for public property, although this very responsibility would seem to impose a guardian status on the librarian. Therefore, anyone who steals from the library, assuming they pay their taxes, is stealing from himself/herself, 'ipso facto, stealing a library book is not really stealing at all.' (Roberts, 1968:261). One can also perhaps understand confusion arising from the very premise on which the service is based, i.e. the fact that borrowers are allowed to take items (which essentially belong to them) out of the building without paying for them (although in the case of 'new' stock areas - videos, CDs, DVDs, etc. there is practically always a surcharge) and are simply trusted to bring them back. However, it is the fact that the library's resources are not the property of an individual but the community as a whole which is the key issue. The theft of stock, equipment and property from libraries by individuals or groups of individuals deprives everyone else of those resources. The cost of such actions can be seen both in terms of replacement costs and lost income for the library, and with regards to an item's 'shelf life'. It is impossible to gauge the value borrowers could have got from that item if it had remained in the library for loan.

The second point merely reinforces one of the justifications why the current research has chosen to 'ignore', to a large extent, the area of stock loss through

non-return. Aside from the aspect of intent and the fact that a book overdue is a book still intrinsically linked to a borrower, there is the practical aspect that stock stolen is stock that the LIS can, for all intents and purposes, say good-bye to forever. The possibility of retrieving stolen goods is recognised to be very low. In fact, all the incidents this author came across were linked either to police raiding a house and coming across library property which had been stolen, or people finding material dumped in one place or another and returning it to its rightful 'owner'.

Sentiments that were previously recognised by Lincoln and Lincoln (1986) were still evident. It is felt that many librarians are seen to be ignoring actions that managers and administrators of other facilities would not tolerate (Lincoln and Lincoln, 1986:16) and that generally library theft is not seen in the same way as other forms of theft. It is no wonder then perhaps that, as one library assistant put it: '*The library is seen as a soft target. We don't protect stock and we don't pursue prosecution.*'

Chaney and MacDougall (1992:217) identified two of the key messages conveyed by the National Preservation Office's (NPO) 1990 video entitled 'Library security: Who cares?' as being: Firstly, most librarians did not equate the words theft and security as pertaining to their role and library collection, and secondly, 'most librarians were unwilling to believe wrong of their users'. The present suggests that such attitudes no longer persist, and that, in fact, the opposite viewpoint was apparent amongst the majority of library staff interviewed. Theft is seen as part of 'every day life' for librarians, so much so in fact that many staff have become hardened to it and often think the worst of 'borrowers'.

6.2 Variation in attitudes across position of employment

There was a notable dichotomy between the views of senior management and those found elsewhere in the LIS organisational hierarchy.   This is illustrated below, where interview quotes have been broadly sorted by managerial status:

-*'There are pockets where it is a huge problem and there are pockets where there is no problem at all and to give a generalisation doesn't do either case any good.'* **(H of S)**

-*'Many staff see their prime purpose as being to guard stock and they have a protective nature. They need to be careful because their prime purpose is to make stock accessible.'* **(GM)**

-*'Staff feel very frustrated and annoyed - they get the idea that it is a bigger problem than it is in the broader picture/scope of things.'* **(GM)**

'Library Assistants are also aware of the fact that there is not a lot of money and sometimes they take it more seriously than we as managers take it because even though I think we should restrict loss, when it comes to tackling social exclusion... The more hard-line penal approach advocated by some of the library assistants isn't fully supported by library management. The remit is more important, and we have to accept that we lose a certain amount of stock.' **(GM)**

-*'Generally the concerns of staff are largely being ignored.'* **(GM)**

The range of opinions was more varied at the lower management strata. However, the attitudes 'predicted' by senior management were noticeable and in some cases overwhelming:

-*'We have this 'nice' reputation and sometimes I think it should be ditched because every time we lose something it puts the service in jeopardy. We need to have more positive action.'* **(CL)**

-*'Until people ask we don't know what has gone, it annoys the public but they accept it, but we ought to do more.'* **(LA)**

> *- 'I take the attitude that if the council can't be bothered to protect the stock why should I, and what do you do if you do notice someone? It's not our job to play detective.'* **(LA)**

Such a disparity in opinion is understandable as each level of staff has different responsibilities and priorities, however this polarity in attitude makes the management of theft in libraries difficult.   A more united approach would seem beneficial, where the concerns of staff on the 'shop floor' were seen to be recognised and respected by senior management, and yet at the same time the more holistic attitude of 'management' was understood and considered by frontline staff.

6.3 Attitudes to why people steal from libraries

> *'People steal to order - they find out if we have a book in stock - especially where obscure non fiction is concerned. But also book theft for profit is a problem in the system generally, members of staff have just happened to spot books at car boots sales.'* **(CL)**
>
> *'The 'causes' of theft include the value of an item, its rarity, its 'irreplaceability', also when an item is useful – for research etc.'* **(CL)**
>
> *- 'There is the malicious theft - theft for profit and then there is the theft because people genuinely want the book and feel they can't do without it and can't afford it - or just decide they want to steal it. There was a young lad where I used to work who stole a philosophy book because he desperately wanted it - he was so engrossed in the book that he took it home - genuine interest.'* **(CL)**
>
> *- 'Individuals who feel that an item should not appear within a public library because of the views/information that it contains may steal that item. Also those individuals who are already black-listed or who are unable to register as library members for various reasons. Generally, people don't really consider it to be on a par with shoplifting.'* **(CL)**

As can be seen from these quotations, there are a range of reasons given as to 'why' people are thought to steal from libraries, and a great many of them are

frankly obvious.   From this study's very basic data one can get a reasonably predictable reflection of the reasons behind the crime and thus take such 'reasons' into account when considering measures to combat theft.

In Souter's widely cited works (1975, and 1976), we come across the 'delinquent reader', 'a habitually selfish person', who does not consider *himself* as dishonest and believes the library is there to be exploited.   As no primary evidence interrogated, it would seem a little rash to make such sweeping statements, especially as no individual cases are taken in point either.

Keele (1987) identifies time and queues as motivators as well as embarrassment at having a book on a certain subject, or with a certain reputation, legally issued, and Tottie (1984) suggests the rising cost of books as another factor.   However perhaps most obvious of all is the fact that, as Keele (1987) remarks, we must consider that there is practically no risk involved in stealing from libraries.   Following this thread we will continue by looking at how libraries may be encouraging theft through current practice.   This fact is almost gleefully mirrored by Shuman (1997:2): 'The reasons are many and varied but, in general, here's why they do it: It's so easy!' a fact recognised and related to the present author by many of the interviewees.

6.4 Do libraries encourage theft?

-'I think libraries could actually be encouraging theft.' **(CL)**

The very fact that libraries allow people through their doors, and then let them back out with stock without having paid a penny (in the majority of cases) might be seen by some as part of the problem.   And the attitudes of several stakeholders who suggested that libraries might well exacerbate the problem of theft in various ways are now considered.

6.4.1 Library policy encourages theft

> *-[Re. Security systems]'We probably have enough barriers between us and the community by just being a library, and its getting a balance between barriers for use and protecting stock for everybody in the community to use.'* **(GM)**
>
> *-'Increased theft is the penalty of an open access policy, also the penalty for attempting not to socially exclude individuals (e.g. persons living in temporary accommodation).'* **(LA)**
>
> *Solutions suggested in the past (e.g. probationary membership, more rigorous registration procedures, denial of library use to non-members, blacklisted addresses, etc.) have been rejected on the grounds that they were not politically correct.'* **(CL)**
>
> *-'If people have been banned then they are not allowed in and then the only way they can take things out is illegally - and it is a lot easier to come here than go into a shop - because there is no security here. Everything should be tagged.'* **(LA)**

Ultimately the library has to run, if it is to run efficiently, by a set of rules; yet at the same time it tries ideally to put as few a barriers as possible between the public and 'its' resources. A person joining a library is generally required to show identification of name, address, and signature, and the library's policies and charges are (or should be) explained to new borrower. However, in cases where the library's rules are abused, it is sometimes necessary to blacklist or ban a user. In such cases it is generally accepted that the user loses his or her borrowing privileges and therefore is not allowed to use the service again until the matter is satisfactorily resolved.

Clearly there are those that cannot 'use' the library for a variety of reasons. Apart from being banned, it may be that a potential borrower does not have a permanent address or proof of address, or cannot understand the registration form, or feels too embarrassed to join the library for one reason or another. In such circumstances it may be argued that the person in question has practically 'no choice' other than to steal. Obviously, this is an extreme view and one unlikely to

find many supporters in the LIS; however it is a set of circumstances that one can understand, and could possibly, as the community librarian quoted above intimated, 'feel sorry for'.

On another level, perhaps, the limit on the number of books one can borrow means that a person may be tempted to take an item without legitimately borrowing it. Or there may be a long queue and a user is in a rush and decides to bypass the borrowing transaction, perhaps fully intending to bring the book back at a later date. Or someone wants desperately to borrow a book (particularly, perhaps, on a subject that may be considered 'sensitive' or potentially embarrassing) and does not feel comfortable taking the item to the counter and having the library assistant knowing that they read such material.

Situations like these probably occur on a daily basis and although one may consider them as being no excuse for what basically amounts to theft, one may be sympathetic. Or, indeed, one may not consider that taking an item out of the library 'illegally' in such a situation constitutes theft, especially if one believes that the user intends to bring back the item when he or she are finished with it. Essentially, although there is obviously a difference between someone running off with 10 videos in a hold-all to sell at a car-boot sale, and someone who forgets to have an item or two issued (whether intentionally or not), the two extremes still both constitute theft. It is this minefield of opinions and counter opinions that makes this topic such an interesting area of library management, and at the same time perhaps allows theft to go unnoticed and/or ignored

6.4.2 New stock attracts thieves

The purchase of new materials and the introduction of 'new lines' would seem to bring with them an increase in theft, especially when that new item is currently popular - if items are being stolen for re-sale this is clearly a determining factor with respect to what is taken. Stock such as CDs, videos, PSGs and DVDs are relatively expensive material with a high desirability and thus it seems 'natural' that they will be the target of attempted theft.

> -*'The number of incidences of theft has risen I think partly because of the increased range of materials, that has attracted theft; videos, DVDs etc. Books have far less sale value so people need books for other reasons, they generally are not for black market sale!'* **(CL)**
>
> -*'With the materials fund being stagnant, the reason to steal has been reduced - the opportunity has been taken away. I mean you have localised spates, linked to homework projects/syllabus issues where key texts/resources disappear, but no new books means not as much theft.'* **(CL)**-
>
> *'The problem goes in waves. I have found that when we do a launch then there is a rise in crime - It is my perception that a high profile launch brings them (thieves) in.'* **(GL)**
>
> -*'Now we sell old library books... it is practically impossible to spot a deliberate discard from a theft when they steal the rubber stamp we use to mark discards. And a car boot sale may be selling-on old discards bought in a library and passed on, and not' stolen goods' as it might seem to the observer.'* **(LA)**

6.5 Summary

1. The vast majority of authorities that responded to the questionnaire said that theft was a problem.

2. The attitudes of staff regarding theft from libraries would appear to change as we move between management hierarchical levels. Generally the more senior the level of management the less importance and concern is expressed regarding the topic. In comparison feelings from 'the frontline' are far more aggressive and staff are often keen to take a more proactive approach to the problem.

3. People would appear to steal from libraries for a number of reasons including profit, a genuine interest in items, 'need', embarrassment, and even an over-active sense of decency (i.e. removing 'indecent' material from the public forum).

4. A range of attitudes concerning theft were expressed by the interviewees, most notably perhaps the fact that several felt that libraries were encouraging theft with particular policies that were in place, and the very fact that new materials were on open access with little security to stop them being stolen.

"Thieves respect property. They merely wish the property to become their property that they may more perfectly respect it." **G.K. Chesterton** The Man who was Thursday (1908, chapter 4)[3]

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7.1 The impact of theft on library services

When Lincoln and Lincoln (1986:55) surveyed libraries about their opinions on how crime affected services to the public 13% said that there was no effect whatsoever, and most (59%) responded that crime affected services 'very little'. Just under 20% were affected moderately and 5% were affected greatly.   That is, approximately, one quarter of the sample indicated that the impact of crime on services was 'moderate' or 'severe'.   The present research found a broadly similar pattern, but in general terms, compared to those surveyed by Lincoln and Lincoln (1986), staff felt that theft had 'more' of an impact on the service as proportionally more staff indicated 'higher' categories of response.
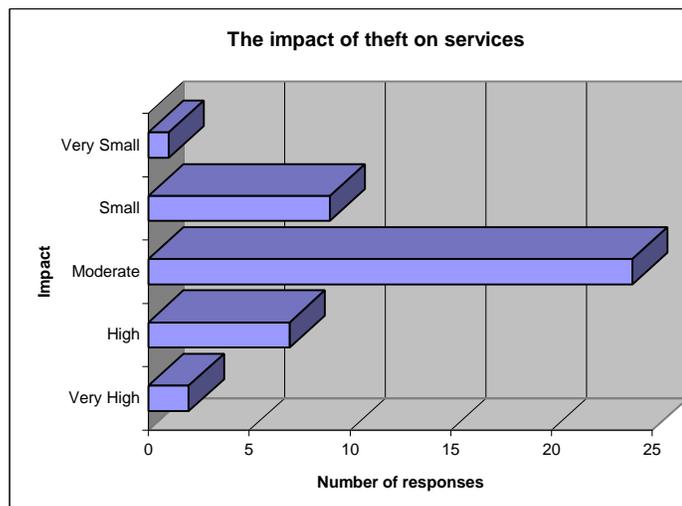
Figure 7: The impact of theft on services

[3] **Taken from Partington, A. (ed.) (1993).** *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*. **London: BCA.**

Figure 7 shows that over 20% of authorities felt that theft had a high or very high impact on the service and a further 55% said that theft had a moderate effect. As far as the actual impact was concerned, the CSA staff were asked about the ways in which theft affected the library service and the following quotations represent the main views expressed:

-*'It frustrates the borrowers and diminishes their view of the service as a whole, increases their disappointment in society – especially that it [theft] happens in libraries. They view libraries through rose tinted spectacles, they are considered serene places where this sort of thing doesn't happen – some people hold the organisation (staff and system) partly to account – the fact that they don't do more to remedy the situation.'* **(CL)**

-*'Depends on whether they [the users] know about it. When a person asks for something you look on the database and then when you intimate that it has been stolen they are not very happy. Especially with popular items, it deprives borrowers. Some people are resigned to it, and then there are others who get quite angry – but then some don't want to get angry at the staff they realise it is not the staffs fault. If they knew how much went missing over the years...'* **(LA)**

-*'We aren't in a position to replace stuff, so other borrowers come in wanting to borrow it or use those resources - they are denied.'***(CL)**

[re: diminished resources] - *'If people can afford to go elsewhere then they will and those who can't are stuck with a second class service'* **(GM)**

There seems to be a definite financial impact on the service, which has clear repercussions on the quality of service, as it basically means that the LIS has less to spend on materials or that money is spent on replacing rather than buying new stock so in effect choice is reduced.   As stock rotation practice becomes more widespread the effects of theft also stretch wider and deeper e.g. items can go missing while on loan to a branch library without security and with a high level of theft, or replacements do not get placed in the service point from which the original was stolen and therefore leave that library's stock deficient (as was intimated by a SLA in CSA B).

-'There is the monetary end of it –i.e. replacement, or something in the same area/ on the subject will have to be purchased – although there is no standard policy as to what is replaced. Depends on whether the attention is drawn to loss - attention of stock buyers.... With stock rotation, stock is becoming very flexible and is not necessarily designated for a specific branch and therefore it is difficult to cover gaps left at a particular service point through theft.' **(SLA)**
-'In X the effect is disproportionally high due to problems with the materials fund,every book has to earn its keep and be really value for money.' **(GM)**
-'AV is an income dependent department and therefore theft is a fairly big issue for us because if we don't meet our targets then that can effect how much money/funds we are given. We have to make so much each year - income based targets - and we take our expenditure from what we make and therefore if this margin changes for the worse - i.e. through theft we are making less and therefore having less to spend..' **(GM)**
-'A large amount of the book fund has to be spent on replacements and in actuality items are not replaced and because it is the best things that go that doesn't leave you with much.' **(LA)**

However, although the impact of theft is felt in many libraries it would be wrong to suggest that the impact is high across each authority and in every library. Yet one also has to bear in mind that thefts often only come to notice when users ask for help with locating an item or during shelf checks for requests, as one SLA highlighted: *'We do lose inlay cards etc. - but it's the kind of thing that you tend not to notice - as if the case is not there they won't come and ask for the disc - so it would take an audit to see what is missing.'* So the impact could well be seen to be less owing to insufficient monitoring of stock.

The impact can also be focussed on one particular category or section of the library. The example of the family saga section of a library in CSA A being stripped of over three-quarters of its stock in two months was given above, and this study uncovered more incidents such as this. Items stolen are often the most popular titles or subjects (e.g. computer manuals) and usually, as noted by Lincoln (1984a), the newer or more valuable stock.

> *- 'We moved all the videos because when we first got them we lost 185 in 2 weeks and kids were selling them door to door in baskets. – The principal librarian had insisted that they were kept in boxes.'* **(SLA)**
>
> *- 'We lose loads of videos and it reduces the level of service especially if they want the latest video, e.g. we had trouble with 'Toy Story' – if you have come in especially for an item and there is no chance in the near future of it being available for loan then... and then there is the aspect of local stuff which is irreplaceable.'* **(LA)**
>
> *- 'When older material goes, then that's it; if its out of print, that's it.'* **(SL)**

There are other, perhaps more minor, impacts. For example, it can be embarrassing for people going through the gate who set off the alarms when it is not their fault. But, as one member of staff commented, *– 'Most people are good – they get caught because we have to be extra careful.'* But this does raise the point that libraries have to consider not only how theft impacts upon the service but also how indirectly theft impacts upon the service in the way that libraries address the problem, e.g. security systems could be said to be intimidating and off-putting for users (see also section 8.5). There is also the time it takes to deal with users as well, as it can take longer to satisfy a request, or find what a borrower wants (if indeed one can) or issue books if one has to stop every five minutes when the alarms go off.

Also one has to bear in mind that the impact of theft may vary according to the time of year: *- 'We have seasonal trouble, and therefore in winter we get an extra caretaker.'* (CL). And clearly the impact might change over time, the effect of theft might be cumulative or may well drop off as a result of preventative measures.

7.1.1 Specific areas of stock affected by theft

"What do Georgia O'Keefe's artwork, sex, Nostradamus's prophecies, and a test guide for the armed services have in common? A book featuring any one of these is at high risk to be stolen from your library" **Mosley et al.** (1996:38).

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Keele (1987) dismisses, to a certain degree, the idea that geographical location of a library (e.g. inner city 'vs.' rural backwater) need necessarily affect the level of theft, although Keele *is* sure that the pattern of theft is common for all libraries, e.g. recent acquisitions are 'always' more likely to be stolen.   It would certainly appear from the evidence gathered during this research that this is indeed the case.   Several specific areas of stock seem to be generally targeted by thieves, but at the same time each individual library may have 'other' areas that appear particularly vulnerable.

-'Anything is likely to be stolen but there are certain areas of stock that are more prone; an item's value, and the re-sale value are obviously key factors.' **(CL)**
-'Books – fiction categories – science fiction fantasy and horror, graphic novels. Within non-fiction prone books are art books, computers, true crime, books about dress and costume (probably due to the local art and design college), the language audio collection, myths, transport (car manuals), all course text books and certain one off books because of their subject matter e.g. sex manuals, books on the martial arts, Koi carp, in fact any books on exotic pets, tattooing, things like ferreting (country pursuits) have always been prone in any library I have worked in.' **(CL)**
-'Videos, not fiction really, non-fiction are the most 'popular' categories -The Guinness book of records, travel guides, sports, reference books, dictionaries etc, Stuff for homework. Before Xmas all sorts goes, we lost a whole load of BBC collection talking –
books last year, I guess people give them as presents because they can't afford to buy them - or they are sold on.' **(LA)**

> -*'If a certain author is en vogue that's the one that gets nicked, e.g. Terry Pratchett, we lost half of them - 19 missing out of 30 odd, that was frightening..'* **(CL)**
>
> -*'It's the good stuff that goes and it deprives the customer e.g. travel books go, and recently, the kids and young adults stock has gone walk-about, but then it is summer.'* **(LA)**
>
> -*'Monthly we lose around 12 CDs and 6/7 videos a month – which, when you quantify over the year, is quite high.'* **(SL)**
>
> -*'It's usually the high cost non-fiction items like antiques books that are stolen, and we do have trouble from time to time with the videos.'* **(CL)**
>
> -*'All libraries now have alarms but in the past whole collections of videos have gone missing - 2 in 1996, 2 in 1997, 1 or 2 in 1998, half a collection in 1999. Obviously finding this is upsetting (a whole collection means 400-500 videos).'* **(GM)**

This selection of quotations gives a brief yet detailed picture of the areas of stock which are most likely to be stolen; they have been taken from libraries across the case study authorities and represent the categories most often mentioned. In several cases foresight might have reduced the losses, e.g. if preventative measures had been taken before incidences of theft, or before the unveiling of a new collection, it is unlikely that losses would have been so heavy. Rather we see generally a case of reacting after the event.

Clearly AV material is at risk and several categories of books seem always to be popular with thieves – science fiction, true crime, pets, books on computers, antique guides etc. Non-fiction in particular seems to be perceived as being most at risk, a fact that was recognised by Burrows and Cooper (1992). The fact that items on specific subjects are stolen obviously leaves a gap in the service provision as many library assistants noted: *'When something is taken, they take 2/3 on a subject and there are no replacements. Often they take several titles on one subject, e.g. a breed of dogs'*. That not all libraries are in the position to replace items (and the purchasing and processing of replacements takes time in any case)

means that users are deprived of choice, or are perhaps left with no books at all on the subject of their choice, or are required to pay for requests from other libraries.

New material is also highly prone to theft; in fact Griffith (1978) found that 4.7% of all new books are lost within the first six months. From evidence collected by this study this proportion may even be on the low side (see sections 5.1.3, and 8.2.2). This is supported elsewhere in the literature, e.g. experience suggests to Keele (1987) that an overall loss of 1% can in reality amount to the loss of half of the new stock. A county librarian from the Midlands is also reported to having found losses of just over 15% overall for stock purchased in the last year – figures which roughly concur with those found in section 5.1.3 (Keele, 1987).

From these findings it would seem to be prudent to identify the type of stock that goes missing and concentrate on protecting these areas. A new tagging policy in CSA B has put such a policy into practice (see section 8.6), basically because the authority has begun to rotate stock around more and cannot afford the money or the time to tag everything that comes in. Additionally, since theft appears to be concentrated in specific areas, it has made sense to introduce a sample-based strategy. As the senior library assistant said: *'It is pointless tagging everything that comes into the building but it is very clear what goes missing so we focus tagging on those items that are most at risk'*.

One specific incident from CSA A is worth notice since it highlights three major issues. Firstly, a library has to remain vigilant at all times even if theft is generally not considered to be a problem. Secondly, theft can and does occur in libraries that are situated in what many would consider as 'well off' or 'decent' areas. And thirdly, once loss is recognised, then measures need to be taken swiftly, although, ideally, preventative measures would have already been in place.

- 'We should have had 52 [Catherine] Cookson's on the shelf in the family saga section, there were 15 on loan and 5 on the shelf, you do the maths. 32 missing, and that doesn't include duplicate copies, we checked three weeks later and then another 3 weeks after that; they must have come back 2 or3 times because those that had been on loan the first time had disappeared the second. The section is round a corner.

Large print wasn't affected; similarly talking books were left untouched, although some Josephine Cox books are missing too. There are only 6 left, and we have lost 3 copies of one title - so there are no copies left of that book at all. We have also lost a few Patricia Cornwell books, about 50 crime are missing, titles which have been used in the last 2/3 months.

To be honest I would have said there wasn't a problem, it is a snobbish area, 'high-class' clientele - I wonder whether it is people going round and taking targeted books - could be going on around the area **(SLA)**

7.2 Perception of the seriousness of theft

Both the authorities surveyed and interviewees were asked about their perception of the seriousness of loss through theft across the range of stock held by their libraries.   The aim of this exercise was to supplement any figures that were found (or that were made available) with qualitative evidence as to which areas of stock were most prone to theft.

Respondents were asked to give a mark on a scale of 0-5 (where 5 indicated that theft was a major problem and 0 meant that theft of this material was not a problem) which corresponded with their perception of the situation.   The results were collected and both the range, mean (see Figure 8), median, and mode calculated for each area of stock (books, talking books, CDs/Audio Cassettes, videos (entertainment and non-fiction), DVDs, and play station games).
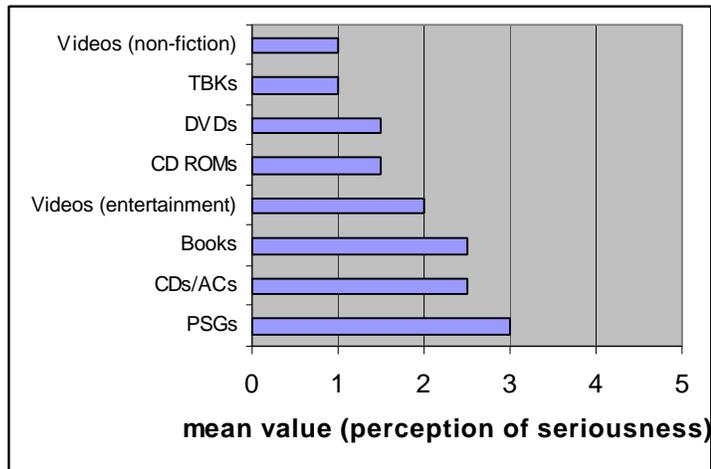
Figure 8: The perception of seriousness of stock loss through theft

In hindsight perhaps the category of books should have been broken down into, for example, fiction, non-fiction, junior and reference, as the variation across these sections was masked by only using a single umbrella term. Nevertheless, results showed that play station games (PSGs) were, on average, deemed to be the stock most prone to theft (with a mean score of 3), this was followed by CDs/Audio cassettes (ACs) and books (with a mean score of 2.5).

This would appear to support the theory that it is the attractive 'new' materials that are being targeted which is a serious matter due to the fact that it is often these items that the library is relying on for valuable income generation (through charging for rental). Only 3 categories received a score of 5 (the maximum) from one or more respondents, and again this serves to reinforce the findings as the categories in question were CDs/ACs, PSGs and entertainment videos.

The non-appearance of DVDs in this discussion is perhaps conspicuous, however the most common score they were given was '0' and the mean score was 'only' 1.5. The reason for this might be the fact that collections are being kept on closed access, or that few people yet have the equipment to play DVDs and

therefore the 'demand' for such items is limited.   If the latter is the case, then this might indicate that caution should be the watchword concerning this area of stock in the future, as the technology becomes more affordable and the popularity of this medium grows.

As mentioned above, Burrows and Cooper (1992) found that the subject fields perceived by most librarians to be most at risk was far from uniform; although the majority suggested that non-fiction was the most vulnerable material in the library, a fact largely supported by the staff interviewed for the present study.   However, it should be noted that this was at a time when libraries were only beginning to develop their AV materials.

Clearly the perception of seriousness is likely to be linked to the size of the problem, as the problem would not become apparent unless the level of stock loss was large 'enough' for the staff to notice that theft was a problem.   But as one group manager said: - *'I would consider any theft from a public library as being very serious, because public libraries are in a position where they cannot afford to lose any of their stock.'*   And, indeed, one needs to be aware that although stock loss might not be perceived to be 'serious' in certain areas of stock, even minimal losses have an impact and arguably each individual incidence of theft needs to be dealt with seriously.

7.3 The impact of theft on staff

Incidents of theft from library staff obviously do happen and although the theft of personal items from users and staff alike are not covered by this study, it is interesting to note that 21% of British staff questioned by Lincoln and Lincoln (1986) had had belongings stolen from them (Chaney and MacDougall, 1992). Although this is a direct impact of theft on staff, this section concentrates on the wider issues, dealing with the fact that staff need not necessarily have been victims of crime to feel its effect.

Clearly, due to the fact that frontline staff are most likely to come into contact with suspected theft a great deal of the quotes from more senior staff are directed to the impact that theft has upon them, but there were a few who also felt the impact personally.

-'*Staff are very dedicated to providing a decent service and if half the stock is disappearing and someone comes in and asks for something that you had but don't seem to have anymore, then that can be disheartening.*' **(H of S)**

-'*It effects their perception of the organisation they work for (diminishes that) and the community they serve. Staff are often disappointed that thieves are attracted into the library. Personally – it annoys me because I know the effect that it has on resources in the long run; I'm disheartened that thieving eventually has knock on effect to the other –*
services which the library provides.' **(CL)**

-'*I think it effects the morale of staff very much because they have their suspicions and are really disappointed when we lose the best stock. Their hands are tied in the way that you can't confront people without a security system, staff feel they are on the back foot.*' **(CL)**

-'*During periods when there is a high rate of theft staff become nervous; as I think that often theft is linked to other types of poor behaviour, abusive behaviour and threatening behaviour - and then the aspect of personal security comes into play and the vulnerability of staff.*'**(CL)**

'*I think the impact on staff is relative. New staff are always staggered, there is the shock factor, whereas older staff roll with the punches. It annoys them intensely but they don't have the same shock factor – those who can't believe that this sort of thing happens in a library. You build up a resistance - become hardened/immune to it – many of the staff just see it as a fact of life.*' **(SLA)**

Amongst the library assistants interviewed the impact was felt in much the same way, if not to a higher degree. There was also a stronger undercurrent of frustration as practically all of the 18 library assistants interviewed expressed such feelings relating to not being able to find items and the wider issue of the effect

theft had on the service and their 'inability' to deal effectively with it.   Frontline staff seemed to take stock loss quite personally as they almost took responsibility (or felt they should) for the fact that stock was/is being lost.   Theft also seemed to have a major negative impact on morale as the following quotes show.

- *'Morale is affected, especially when you feel that it is your best stock that is going missing. Particularly when we were losing videos, because we all are aware of the need to raise money and staff are really disappointed.   And of course there is the sheer frustration that we did have something and then it's no longer there.'* (**LA**)

- *'We don't have a terrible problem with theft but you feel you have responsibility to the library and customers, and when it happens it is really depressing.'* (**LA**)

'It's embarrassing – when you have to say what is missing. You are aware that the service could be run better. Sometimes I don't like to admit theft because of that, it makes us seem inefficient.' (**LA**)

- *'It [theft] causes more work, if you are confident something is on the shelf and you go and it's not there, and the time that takes. A lot of work goes into checking that it is really missing. And then there is the general frustration.'* (**LA**)

- *'…Then there is the aspect of dealing with suspects which you wouldn't want to do in a month of Sundays when they're drugged up to the eyeballs. Especially female staff because it is the physical aspect. People can be intimidating and then it is really difficult to stand your ground, you feel you ought to protect the stock but sometimes you think well it's the stock or me.'* (**LA**)

- *'There is no security system and there is only 2 of us on the counter, there is no way to stop it, we are helpless. Theft leads to a depreciation of services and also means people give us a hard time.'* (**LA**)

- *'…New books, you look at it and know it is going to walk. Certain things seem to go and it does affect the service if the same type of stuff goes. People are left with little or no choice; there can be nothing on a particular subject. It is maddening and frustrating.'* (**LA**)

The impact of theft appears to be increasingly 'visible' because, as commented on above, the service is becoming more transparent as catalogues move on to the Internet and can be accessed more readily. This would help to explain why staff felt as if the impact of theft on them was increasing. Several library assistants commented that users are becoming more demanding:

'We pride ourselves on being able to supply a large number of what people ask for since we have become computerised people can access the catalogue at home and make the trip in expecting to find the item and... - people used not to know - so now users expectations are higher – the 'problem' increases as people demand 'where is it!' **(SLA)**

Perhaps the richness of data provided by these quotations is a positive aspect
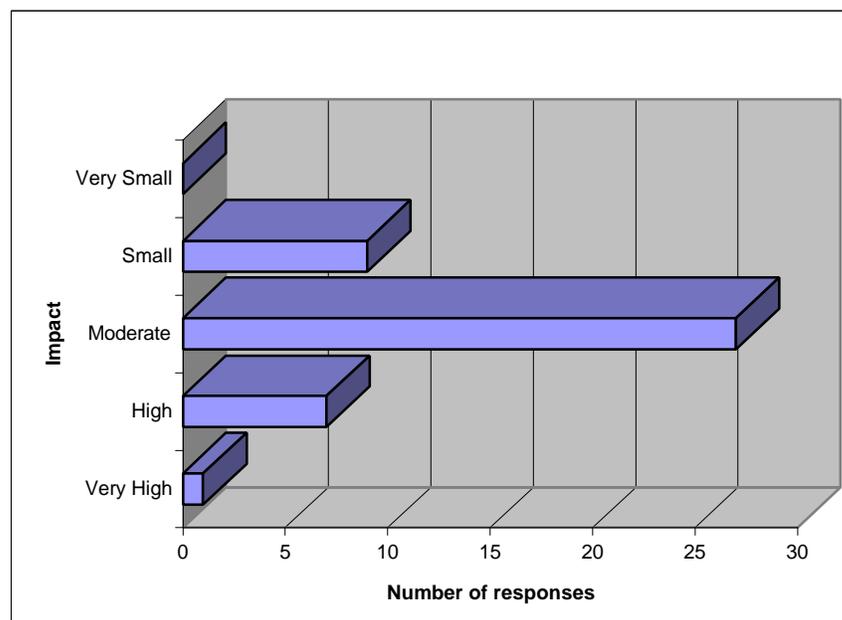
of the research technique as the survey results do not give such 'strong' indications of feeling as one can see in Figure 9 (overleaf).

Figure 9: The impact of theft on staff

Similar to the range of responses given for the impact of theft on library services, one can see that the majority of authorities (61%) felt that theft only had a moderate impact on staff.   Over a fifth of respondents felt that theft had a small impact on staff but this may have been symptomatic of the respondent.   In many cases the survey was sent to a senior member of staff and this may have resulted in the distribution being more 'centred'.   As has been highlighted in this section and in the previous chapter (section 6.2) the attitudes of LIS staff seem to differ depending on status, with more senior management appearing to have a more detached, less-emotive view of the situation.   One might assume therefore that had a library assistant responded to the survey, the chart would have shown that theft had more of an impact on staff.

7.4 Summary

1.   The impact of theft can be broadly categorised:

Choice: The available selection of stock is reduced, and this can be particularly apparent in certain categories or sections.   Items stolen have to be replaced, which reduces the number of new materials that can be bought. This might also lead to gaps in stock, if items are not replaced at all, or are not replaced in the library from which they were stolen.

Impact on Users: Users can become disgruntled or disillusioned when looking for items, as stock that they believe is 'on the shelf' may in fact have been stolen. Also users are affected by reductions in the speed of service owing to the impact of theft, and may be financially affected by having to pay for requests because of stock only being available from 'other' libraries (as a result of theft).

Financial: Theft obviously has a direct financial impact upon the service as money has to be found to replace items, and often resources are already stretched. Also there is the matter of lost income to consider where the theft of items which carry rental charges is concerned.

2.   The impact of theft on library services may be hidden by poor monitoring of the situation (as already discussed), a point stated succinctly by (Keele 1987:foreword): 'Losses have a very negative effect on the whole library service, but negative effects by their very nature are hidden, they have to be sought out and

quantified before their significance and the long term damage they are causing to the library service can be appreciated.'

3. Most authorities responded that theft has a moderate effect on services, however it was noted that the impact is not constant, and often particular areas of stock are particularly prone.

4. Generally new stock, non-fiction, and audio-visual (AV) materials are areas that are targeted by thieves. Books on specific subjects are also taken, although these categories can vary from library to library certain subjects (e.g. books on the supernatural, computers, exotic plants, etc.) appear to be forever 'popular'.

5. Results showed that play station games (PSGs) were, on average, deemed to be the stock most vulnerable to theft; this was followed by CDs/ACs and books. These findings would appear to support the theory that it is the 'attractive', 'new' materials that are being targeted, as was supported by the qualitative evidence.

6. The impact of theft on staff is felt to be moderate, although the strength of feelings expressed by staff undermines this neutrality. Often staff feel demoralised, angry and frustrated, and they also feel that they are made to work 'twice as hard' by theft. This situation is recognised by senior management. Staff also feel that the impact of theft on themselves is increasing, particularly as library catalogues become more transparent, and users more demanding.
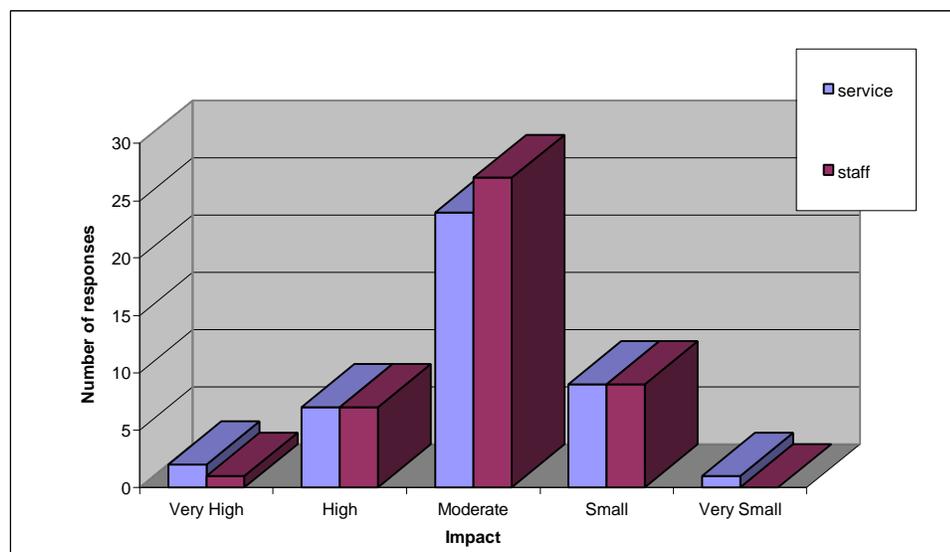
Figure 10: The impact theft is felt to have on library services and staff

7. As can be seen from Figure 10, the majority of respondents said that theft had a moderate impact on both services and staff. There is an almost perfect 'normal distribution' for the responses to these questions. The author is aware of the findings of, amongst others, Converse and Presser, (1986 in Foddy, 1993) who found that people have a tendency to choose the middle alternatives when given such a scaling of responses. Robson (1993:248) suggests that the inclusion of a middle category (such as 'moderate') 'does not affect the relative proportion of those actually expressing opinions'. In hindsight perhaps the questions on the impact of theft could have been followed with an 'intensity item', i.e. a question aimed at separating those with strong feelings from those with leanings (Robson, 1993). One can only speculate as to whether or not the results show simply this, i.e. basically a non-committal response, or indeed are a true reflection of feeling or neutrality of opinion concerning the impact of theft.

Chapter 8: Security Measures

"For him that stealeth a Book from the Library, let it change into a serpent into his hand and rend him. Let him be struck with Palsy, and all his members blasted. Let him languish in Pain crying aloud for Mercy and let there be no surcease to his Agony till he sink in Dessolution. Let Bookworms gnaw his Entrails in token of the Worm that dieth not, and when at last he goeth to his final Punishment, let the flames of Hell consume him for ever and ever." ***Author and date unknown***   Found in the monastery of San Pedro (and on the lending counter of Lincoln Central Library).

"Chaining books to tables, although cumbersome, was effective" ***Lincoln and Lincoln***   (1986:xi)

"…Well apart from installing alligator pits in the library it would be helpful to have some security presence… it is our job to serve the public, not to arrest them." ***Library Assistant***, CSA B (2000)

_____

8.1 Library Security: From chains to alligator pits and beyond

Bryson (1999:345) states that the choice of security level is a management issue, and clearly the choice of measure will have to reflect the need, whilst not compromising the ease of access to information and resources.   Once a measure has been chosen then there will be a set of criteria with regards to the choice of a particular type or make of security measure.   For example, in choosing a security system the cost, reputation of the manufacturer, design and appearance, effectiveness, servicing arrangements and compatibility are all factors that would have to be considered before a choice was made (MacDonald, 1992a:290). Higham (1984) identifies several other factors that should be part of the criteria for choosing a specific type and make of security system – ease of installation, ease of operation, strength, and impregnability.

8.2 The range of security measures used in libraries

As Pybus notes 'It has to be said that there is no way of stopping the determined thief, but there are ways of limiting the more casual theft of material

from our libraries.' (Pybus, 1998:51). Although this is a far from comprehensive list, current measures to 'limit' loss include:

- Closed access, i.e. having stock behind the counter or locked in cabinets.
- Security systems, which generally use electromagnetic (EM) or radio frequency technology (RFS – radio frequency systems).
- Security cases – there are a range of 'locked' cases which have been designed to fit and protect CDs and videos etc.
- Security guards – one authority annotated their questionnaire with exclamation marks alongside the categories of uniformed and plainclothes guards on the security measures checklist (Appendix 1, question 9). However, increasingly, libraries are using guards for staff's personal security and/or to 'protect' stock.
- Automatic communication links with police (ACL). Panic button which connects to the local police station
- External alarm systems (EAS). Obviously the buildings themselves may be alarmed to deter 'break-ins'.
- Closed Circuit Television (CCTV). Cameras which monitor activity in (or outside) the library.

On a humorous note, Shuman in an editorial article for 'Library and Archival Security' suggested that librarians might play subliminal messages across the library to deter thieves, although he did raise several ethical and political problems with this measure! (Shuman, 1995). Needless to say (it is believed that) this method has not been widely adopted by authorities in England.

Book Recovery Officers (BROs) were mentioned by a number of authorities. However, these are clearly only used in the pursuit of recovering items lost through non-return, an issue not covered by this study and therefore will not dealt with below.

Studies by Lincoln (1980, 1984c) have shown that the larger libraries typically found in urban areas are more likely to have security programmes in place than smaller, rural libraries (Lincoln and Lincoln, 1986:115), and this finding is supported by the present study.   A number of library authorities indicated that they only had an electronic security system in their central library, or only in the larger libraries within the authority.   All but one of the authorities surveyed had a security system installed in one or more of their libraries.   However, the use of other security measures was far from complete as is shown by Figure 11.

KEY

ACL — Automatic Communication Link (i.e. with police)

S.S — Security System

Sec — Security

Comb — Combination of closed access and security cases

CCTV — Closed Circuit Television

EAS — External Alarm System

SGs — Security Guards
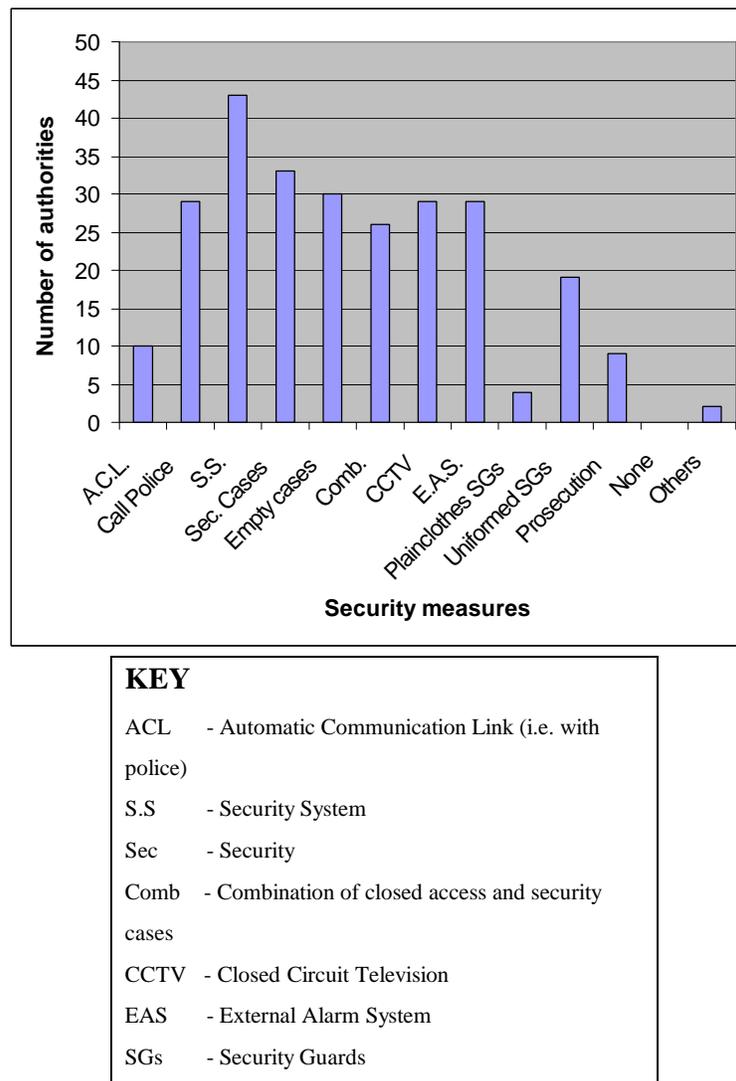
Figure 11: The range of security measures used by sample library authorities

In the mid eighties, when Lincoln and Lincoln (1986) investigated the levels of security in British public libraries, the percentage of libraries with security systems installed was only just over a quarter. It would appear, unsurprisingly, that the number of authorities using security systems has increased dramatically. With the work of Ashcroft and Wilson (1992) and Burrows and Cooper (1992), the awareness of the need to combat theft has risen, as has the variety of security measures and systems on the market.

In a number of cases caretakers were required to undertake duties one would associate with security guards, and this explains the number of plainclothes security guards (4 authorities in all, equalling 9% of the sample). However, the aspect of training for caretaker staff in this capacity as 'pseudo-bouncers', and the general ethics surrounding caretakers fulfilling such a role, are clearly issues that require attention. Forty-three per cent of authorities did actually employ uniformed guards, although we must assume that this was not solely to protect stock from theft and that in a number of cases (perhaps the majority) the guards were probably employed for the personal security of staff and users. Two of the libraries studied in CSA A employed guards predominantly for this reason, and both of these libraries had security systems installed. Again, in comparison to the earlier work of Lincoln and Lincoln (who found that 12% of libraries surveyed had uniformed security guards), this number shows a significant increase in the use of uniformed guards (Lincoln and Lincoln, 1986:122).

Two thirds of authorities stated that they would call the police in instances where theft was suspected although only a fifth said that they would pursue prosecution. This figure may be an over-estimation as some respondents may have answered positively with respect to prosecuting 'non-returnees' (although there was clear indication in the survey instructions that the subject of stock loss through non-return was beyond the remit of the questionnaire).

It is interesting to note that two thirds of library authorities used CCTV, the same number (although not the same authorities) as had an EAS fitted to one or

more of their libraries. One might have expected that an EAS would have been the most common security measure adopted to protect stock in particular from burglary, yet this is not the case.

As for the reasons behind the introduction of various security measures, although the authorities were asked as to their criteria, many failed to respond to this question. This may have been due to the time it would have taken to answer the question, or indeed because of the range of reasons for in each case there must have been a reason (or more). Generally, one would expect the installation of a system to follow evidence that losses through theft were considerable. Other reasons given by authorities were that security systems were introduced as part of the general refurbishment of libraries or across a certain tier of service points (e.g. all district libraries). A number of authorities suggested that specific criteria were involved in the decision-making process, e.g. one authority stated that every library lending audio-visual (AV) material was fitted with a security system. With the growing number of libraries with such stock, from central service to smaller branches (even the smallest most rural branch in the case study authorities had a collection of videos) such 'totality' would have significant financial repercussions, and may not in actuality be necessary.

8.2.1 Security systems

Security systems are probably the most readily identifiable security measure used in libraries and there is a depth of literature covering the different types of system (Kearsley, 1975; Pegg, 1983; Pelscon, 1980; Stack, 1998a/b; and Witt, 1996), so only a brief summary of the current options is given here.

There are basically two methods of operating a security system, generally referred to as the 'by-pass' method and the 'full circulation' method. The former involves items being permanently sensitised and being passed around the security screen on issue. The latter requires items to be de-sensitised on issue, i.e. as they leave the library, and being re-sensitised when they are returned, so that items should only be sensitised when they are inside the library (Stack, 1998b; Witt,

1996). The basic principle on which these systems operate is the same; they detect a tag or label attached to an item (the target) by emitting a signal; the difference is in the type of signal and trigger used.

Systems based on electromagnetic and radio frequency technology are currently available (Bahr, 1984; Stack, 1998b; Witt, 1996). In radio frequency systems (RFS) the targets are always sensitised and staff have to pass the item around the security screen (which constantly emits low level microwave radiation) or deactivate the target by shielding it from activating the alarm (Witt, 1996). Electromagnetic systems (EMS) similarly always emit a low frequency signal from the screens that is activated when stimulated by an item that has not been desensitised (Witt, 1996).

Both systems have benefits and shortcomings, some of which will be addressed in section 8.5.1. A new technology RF-ID (Radio-Frequency Identification) has recently been developed which could revolutionise library practice in general, let alone aid security (Stack, 1998b). This technology comes from a security background and as well as allowing staff to identify the exact item that has gone through the security screens without being desensitised first, it also comes with wireless inventory reading technology. Using a portable inventory reader will make light work of stock checks and may therefore solve the problems related to the scarcity of data/information as discussed above, and also allow librarians to easily identify missing and mis-shelved stock (Stack, 1998b).

Smith (1999) describes the technology as tailor-made for library security and automation, and suggests that in 5-10 years time nobody will be buying anything but RF-ID technologies. Obviously the new technology will have teething problems, and will cost as much if not more than current systems, with the added drawback of requiring the fitting of RF-ID chips to library stock (Smith, 1999). However, it would seem to herald a new dawn in the key role of library security if not indeed library practice as a whole (Smith, 1999; Stack, 1998b).

8.2.2 The 'New' library, ten years on

As already discussed, new libraries and new stock are particularly vulnerable to theft.   Another example to add to the evidence comes from CSA A, where one of the largest district libraries in the authority was opened in 1989.   It is sited in a 35-acre shopping centre, in an area currently experiencing a period of growth with several building developments in the locality and generally, there is a good mixture of private and council housing in the area.

When the library opened it did so with a stock of 50,000 (including over 1000 videos, and over 1500 CDs) and the first stock take, which took place approximately 3 years later, indicated losses of between 10% and 15% (c.7,500 items).   A further 275 items were written off shortly after in a second stock-check, Overall the percentage loss was known to be artificially low as staff had already written a lot off when they found evidence of theft in the library.   Unfortunately when the library was planned and designed, little attention was paid to the security of the stock, as the group manager for the library admits: *'Security wasn't an issue when [the library] was set up ten years ago - I suspect there was an attitude that if you did it for one you would have to do it for all. A mistake was made at the time.'*

This was an expensive mistake; as given the current average cost of items one can estimate (using a nominal value of £10/item) that the library lost in excess of £77,750 within the first three years.   Bearing in mind that a security system costs in the region of £10,000 one can quickly see that even allowing for its having a minimal effect it would have paid for itself in next to no time.   The only positive aspect regarding security that one can take from this case is that AV material has always been kept on closed access (i.e. behind the counter with only the case on display).   Cases have been and are stolen from time to time, but largely the policy of restricting access to the material has considerably lowered, if not 'removed' the potential of theft.

The library is still without a security system and the problem of theft still persists, with staff noting recently that new material in general, and books on the supernatural and pets in particular, have been lost.

8.3 The effectiveness of security measures

How objective one can be when assessing the effectiveness of security measures is difficult to say.   Clearly, firms who sell various types of security measures will (and do) claim that their products are highly effective, and may even go as far as to offer a prediction of the reduction in theft that will come about as a result of purchasing a particular security measure.   For example, one stock-security system supplier will guarantee that stock losses will be reduced by 80% in the first year of operation (Witt, 1996).

However, hard quantitative evidence on how effective various measures are is particularly scarce.   This section attempts to gather some data together from this angle and then following sections will address the question from the 'softer' angle of evaluating the effectiveness of security measures by the examining the attitudes of staff.

'Before tagging we lost on average c.100 books /month - ones that we physically looked for - people would ask for an item, we would check the catalogue, it should have been there, and it wasn't. We noted down numbers, to delete them at a later date from the card catalogue - which takes no account of the dozens we weren't asked for. - Because of that they bought the system to protect books when we moved in here, because a 100 books a month is a lot of pennies when you work it out - you are talking big money £10/book - you can buy a lot of tags for that.' **(SLA)**

Indeed 100 books a month leads to an annual total in excess of 1000 books, and multiplying this by the average price of a book we soon get a figure for the cost of such a rate of loss of well over £10,000.   As will be discussed below this more than covers the price of a security system, or the installation of CCTV, and it

is in these terms that the effectiveness of a security measure is often judged. It is a simple balance between the money that the security measure would save by protecting stock, and the money it would cost to install and maintain the measure.

Ewing (1994:22) said 'The installation of an electronic book detection system is probably the most effective solution' (for preventing theft) and evidence from elsewhere (e.g. Casale, 1995; Pegg, 1983) would support this statement. But since no data could be offered by either of the case study authorities from 'before' and 'after' the installation of their security systems, it is impossible to say how effective they have been.

Previous research found that the level of book theft, as measured by the number of volumes stolen, was influenced by the presence of book theft systems. In libraries with systems in place, 38% reported fewer than 25 volumes stolen during the year, whereas the average number of volumes stolen from libraries without theft systems was 203 (Lincoln and Lincoln, 1986:121). The authors concluded that 'comparing similar libraries with and without book theft systems shows that the systems do control losses (Lincoln and Lincoln, 1986:121).

Other examples from the literature include Keele (1987:31) who acknowledges that although salesmen are biased in their claims, 'all security systems on the market have substantially reduced losses from libraries'. Michalko and Heidtmann (1978) showed that following the installation of an electronic security system in an American university, as was recommended by a previous study by the same authors, the overall collection loss rate was reduced by 39% (this rate was 55% for newly required items). And, Plescon (1980) also stresses that it is now clearly established from the evidence that once an electronic surveillance book security system is installed, library losses are 'dramatically reduced'. The fact that Plescon are a manufacturer of security measures should not detract from what would seem definitely to be the case.

One can assume that a complete closed access policy would considerably lower the level of theft.   If every item were kept under lock and key then the chances for opportunistic theft would be severely reduced, as, perhaps would be the quality of service.   This debate will be revisited in section 9.5.1.   At this juncture it is simply noted that 68% of authorities kept all or some of their AV material in this way and as earlier examples have shown those that have not have paid, in some instances, a high price.

As Kearsley (1975:77) said '…in libraries as in shops, the deterrent aspect is an important element in the effectiveness of a security system, for the basis of security is the prevention of loss rather than the detection.'.   Whether or not this is the case, it highlights that to a great extent the effectiveness of security systems and measures in general is very difficult to measure.   To count the number of people who have been dissuaded by measures, and the savings this has resulted in is obviously impossible.   Therefore stress must be placed on the attitudes of those who work alongside them, with regards to the effectiveness of measures, and it is this evidence that will now be presented and analysed

8.4 Attitudes to the effectiveness of security systems

There is obviously a dichotomy between the operational effectiveness of security systems and their effectiveness in practice as perceived by those who work alongside them.   It is important perhaps to find out what the expectations of staff are before a system is put in place, or to gauge what staff believe the role of security measures are in general.   Do they feel they are there to stop theft outright, or to reduce levels of theft by dissuading opportunist thieves?   Are systems such as an EM or RFS there to act as a 'visual' deterrent, or as a 'physical' dragnet?

-*'Primarily security systems are a deterrent. They discourage, if people really want to steal something they will.'* **(CL)**

'They can be a deterrent, but they won't stop 'determined' theft.' **(GM)**

'The security system; - its effect as a preventative measure is probably minimal, but as a deterrent it is quite high.' **(CL)**
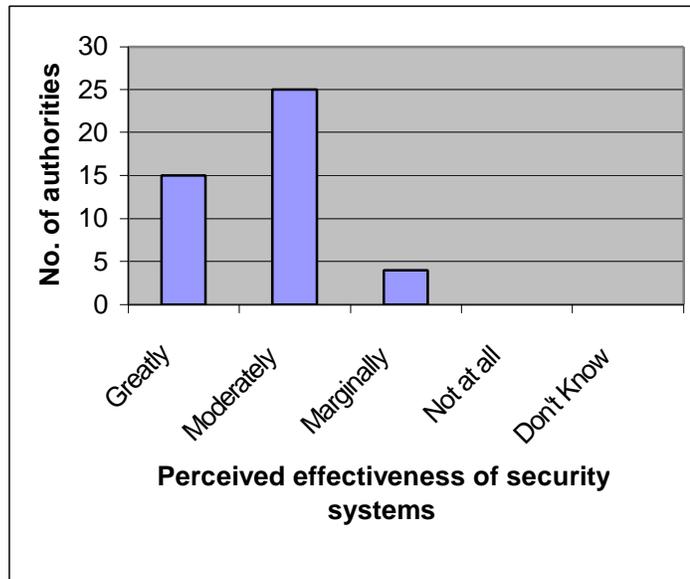
Figure 12: The perceived effectiveness of security measures   (see Appendix 1, question 6)

Although one could argue that more options to choose from with respect to the range of effectiveness might have led to a more varied spread of opinions, it would appear from Figure 12 that there is a consensus that security systems are reasonably effective.   Forty authorities (91% of the sample) stated that they thought their security system was either greatly or moderately effective.   Two thirds of the users of security systems surveyed by Burrows and Cooper (1992) felt that their systems had 'a great deal of effect'.   Although such positivism is not completely reflected in this survey's results, it is clear that authorities do have confidence in the effectiveness of security systems.

But what does this tell us?   Does having confidence in one's security system translate into acceptable levels of theft?   One could say 'clearly not' as the

majority of authorities, as already mentioned, indicated that theft *was* a problem. However, this indication was for the authority as a whole, and since from this study's evidence and the literature it is known that generally only the larger libraries have security systems installed, this could represent the fact that theft is 'only' at an unacceptable level in libraries without a system.

Within the case study authorities a similar pattern was found as is represented by the sample of quotes below. It should be noted that both of the CSA libraries that had installed security systems stated that they felt that the systems had had a great effect.

-*'In between 'Greatly' and 'Moderately', I want something between those categories, but yes it is effective both as a dragnet and as a deterrent.'* **(SLA)**
-*'The new security system led to a 'quite large' reduction in theft. It acts as both a deterrent - because people know how it works, but it also stops people. More people are caught inadvertently, and they generally get embarrassed, there is far more of that, but equally it seems more effective in terms of catching people.'* **(SL)**
-*'The point is that theft used to be a problem and since we installed the security system it hasn't been a problem and generally theft of stock is very low as a consequence.'* **(SL)**
-*'[Theft] Used to be much higher before the security system was installed...the stock didn't used to be tattled and people knew nothing was done. So the rate of theft was definitely higher before we had the RFS installed.'* **(LA)**
-*'Obviously the more you tag the more effective it is going to be.'* **(CL)**
-*'The new system has flashing lights and gets everyone's attention, the old one was far more subtle - they could also break through the barrier whereas this one is far more effective because it is more obvious. We don't get funny comments from the borrowers. Although it is embarrassing when they set off the alarms when they bring books back that they have already had issued to read in the library (because they think the book has been desensitised). When the alarm rings it alerts everyone whereas the old one didn't grab your attention. Regular*

> *borrowers prefer a decent system because then less gets stolen and therefore it protects 'their property' better and gives them more choice.'* **(LA)**
>
> *-'It was a deterrent to begin with, as it was something that people hadn't come across before - but then they worked out how it worked and...'* **(LA)**

The 'new' library that was analysed in section 5.1.3 has been shown to have suffered from heavy losses, although it had a security system installed when the library opened.   However, owing to logistical difficulties and several other factors the system has not been fully operational and therefore we must consider that the levels of loss may largely be due to the system's only working on a dummy basis since the library opened.   This highlights that if the system is not 'live' then potential thieves are soon going to rumble the situation.

8.4.1 Attitudes to the effectiveness of other security measures

The central service point in CSA B had recently had closed circuit television (CCTV) installed, and it was interesting to note the impact that staff felt it had had:

> *-'We had CCTV installed 3 months ago and what effect it has had. It's interesting in the first week it was noticeable that some of our regular thieves seemed to just 'give up', they saw the CCTV, turned round and left. This scenario repeated itself several times, obviously we didn't know they were regulars, but they would come in and turnaround as soon as they saw the TV screens.'* **(SLA)**
>
> *-'I have general confidence in them (various security measures), especially since CCTV was installed – cameras have made known ne'er do wells turn round as soon as they came in and saw the screens – see TV and then turn round again – safety issue as well as security.'* **(LA)**
>
> *-'We have had 1 or 2 incidences recently - our summer crime wave has started - but no-one has picked things up - staff are really busy - but staff and users have got used to it, it is more of a deterrent than anything else including chances of prosecution.'* **(SLA)**

From analysing the incident book kept in this particular library in which notes are made every-time a theft is suspected (i.e. when someone 'breaks through' the barriers and refuses to stop, or when broken video/CD cases are found etc,) it was found that the number of incidents relating to theft had dropped since the introduction of CCTV. The number of incidents between July 1998 and July 2000 was 181 in total, with 95 of these relating to theft; between the time when CCTV was introduced in April 2000 and July 2000, there have been only 6 incidents. The average number of incidents per 3 months (calculated from the incident book) is just over 10 and therefore the number of theft-related incidents between April and July was well below average. Although one has to be very cautious in attributing the fall in theft-related incidents to the installation of CCTV, taking these figures in the context of staff comments, one would be reasonably confident in tying together 'cause' and 'effect'.

However, as noted by the SLA, there is a question as to whether or not the library might merely be experiencing a honeymoon period afforded by the introduction of the cameras, and whether the number of incidents will increase again once the novelty has worn off for both staff (re. their vigilance) and potential thieves. For, as was noted by a LA in CSA B: *'people still hold up petrol stations although they are caught on camera and subsequently appear on regional and national TV.'*

Generally, staff seemed, from the survey and interviews, to be confident of the effectiveness of measures, as was testified by one library assistant: *'I'm fairly confident (re. effectiveness of security measures). I think taking things out of their cases and storing them elsewhere is important – zero tolerance – if you stamp on things early it stops it increasing – I mean people come back (to thieve) and will do it over and over again. We need to be seen to be efficient about how we deal with such things, we need to create as much space as possible.'*

One authority stated that the levels of theft had 'stayed the same' over recent years owing to the theft of new media such as videos being countered by the introduction of CCTV (in 2 libraries) and stock security systems (in 8 libraries). Others expressed similar sentiments. However, it would be unfair to suggest that security measures are a panacea, as there are clearly negative aspects to consider.

8.5 Problems with security measures

One 'problem' identified by a community librarian was that any security solutions proposal has to be politically acceptable to councillors, and this may be leading to an increase in theft (see section 6.4.1). In a vicious circle scenario, it may also lead to librarians being wary of informing councillors of the extent of the problem owing to possible repercussions, in the book-fund for example. If a librarian reports huge losses and cannot offer any acceptable remedial action to combat this then the councillor is unlikely to be keen to throw good money after bad.

The group manager of the library that installed CCTV said that she was concerned that having huge screens pointing at users entering the library might not be the most welcoming sight, a concern shared by the head of services for CSA B who wondered whether it was worth putting off an already disaffected client group further by turning the library into 'Fort Knox'.

Certainly, librarians need to consider the obtrusiveness of such measures. Although CCTV might deter the criminal element by being a highly visual (in more ways than one) it has to be remembered that it tars every user with the same brush (Ewing, 1994) and could 'deter' innocent borrowers. Along the same lines, security guards may be intimidating to library users and to have one on duty for every hour the library was open (to combat theft) would be both expensive and perhaps 'impractical' (Ewing, 1994). However as one library assistant from CSA B noted: *'Borrowers are generally happy that we are protecting the stock, and we never get any complaints about the fact that the gate goes off or that the*

videos are in 'clip cases'. People realise that in this day and age it [security] is necessary'.

8.5.1 Problems with security systems

The idea that security systems might in fact encourage some 'borrowers' to actually 'have a go', is an interesting aspect of the debate on whether or not systems are effective. One could consider that in a certain way, and for certain clientele, a security system might act as 'a red rag to a bull' and could exacerbate the problem. This problem is described by Keele (1987:37), and Higham (1984), who recognised that measures put in place to combat theft may indeed tempt people to 'join the game' and test out the effectiveness of the security in place.

Both the key methods by which systems operate have their inherent weaknesses and advantages. The main problem with the bypass system is that the triggers are permanently sensitised, so if a reader comes into the library with a book that they have already had issued and then leave the building with that book, then the system will be activated. This would also be the case if the borrower took the same item into another library (or even a bookshop) with a similar system or indeed a library which has a full circulating version of the same system (i.e. one that allows the de-sensitising and re-sensitising of items) (Stack, 1998a and b. Pegg, 1983).

The major problem with the fully circulating system however, is that it adds another stage to the proceedings when it comes to issuing and discharging books. This adds more time to the process and also more opportunity for error (e.g. forgetting to desensitise an item leading to an erroneous activation of the system) (Pegg, 1983). The bypass system involves no extra stage in the circulation process, which gives staff more time to serve the customers and increases efficiency. The de-sensitising/sensitising units also often take up much needed space on the counter. So the fully circulating system reduces the pressure on the staff and also means there is not the need for as much attention to the library's

layout, but its main problems lie in the added time and processes involved with this system (Stack, 1998b).

Other problems recorded by Brand (1984) can be of a far more practical nature, e.g. the damage caused to library materials by the adhesives used on tags, health issues regarding the fact that they constantly emit low levels of radiation and the effect they have on heart pacemakers. They can cause disruption to automated circulation systems if they are placed near them owing to the emitted signals causing interference (Brand, 1984). Obviously, security systems do little to reduce internal theft, and are largely helpless with regards to alerting staff to the theft of equipment (Brand, 1984). Also they can always be negotiated by the wily thief and various methods are described in the literature involving magnets, tin foil, angles of approach etc. which can disable systems and thus allow items to be stolen without detection (Witt, 1996; Goswani, 1998). The quotations below detail several problems identified by stakeholders interviewed as part of this study.

- *'The sensitivity can be altered but if it is set too high it can go off spontaneously which is very annoying, or it can be lessened to such an extent that that it would rarely detect theft!'* **(GM)**
- *'They can be temperamental.'* **(LA)**
- *'There is the odd false alarm (although too many may undermine staff and user confidence in the system) but even that can be a positive reinforcement of the purpose of this measure, and staff are sometimes encouraged to walk through with a sensitised item to alert the public that the system is alive and well.'* **(GM)**.
- *'It's not very good for customer relations, those people who genuinely forget to get something issued – some would get embarrassed, others really upset.'* **(LA)**

A recent message on a library and information science discussion list (lis-link) highlighted another problem. One contributor wrote that a security firm had assured him that the system had been set up with an 85% detection rate (i.e. not all tagged items are detected), which they said was 'as good as it got', but he seemed

able to take books out without ever triggering the system[4].   On reporting this to the engineer from the company, the engineer had informed the librarian that all security systems have a blind spot, and that he must have acquired a knack for finding it!   Which begs the question, who is to say that thieves would not also do so?   Several problems relate to the impact that the installation of security systems can have on the staff, and a number of these are referred to in the quotations below:

-*'Confrontation has not been experienced in the community libraries as it is the security system which provides the information as it were and leads to confrontation.'* **(GM)**

-*'I'm concerned that it [the security system and related equipment] is another piece of technology for staff to master, there is also the issue of it being time consuming. Then there is the basic ergonomics of the whole thing, I have already had a couple of complaints concerning repetitive strain injury caused by having to 'clunk' (i.e. description of the process used to sensitise items) the books when they come in.'* **(GM)**

-*'Frustration, it is difficult dealing with people when alarm system goes off. We have to ask them if they have any Central Library books, and now they know that that is a reason why the alarms might be activate they use that as an excuse to walk out with stock. We haven't searched anyone's bags, we need someone other than the staff to deal with it, we're too busy serving the public.'* **(LA)**

Ultimately, no security system is foolproof; there is no guarantee that a security system will make a library theft proof and no assurance that it will definitely lower levels of loss, however from the literature and the present research it would seem safe to say that overall they do have a positive effect (Witt, 1996).

8.6 Cost of security measures

It could be argued that the major 'problem' with security systems is their cost, in terms of capital investment and subsequent maintenance (Witt, 1996). One authority commented that 'regrettably the high cost of security provision is

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1. Madden, A., lis-link, 23/05/00

beyond the investment capacity of decreasing budgets'.   There is clearly a need to balance costs; for example, it would be inappropriate to fill a small rural library with high-tech gadgetry when theft is known to be a minor problem.   The cost of the chosen range of security measures, logically and sensibly, must mirror the value of loss through theft.   There are, however, areas in which the costs can be minimised without reducing the level of security, as is demonstrated by a case taken from CSA B, where a new tagging policy has been recently implemented.

As has been detailed above, specific areas of stock are often more vulnerable to theft than others (section 7.1.1).   There seems to be a general consistency across libraries within the case study authorities, and one might therefore assume across libraries elsewhere in the country, with regards to which items are most 'at risk'.   Bearing this in mind CSA B devised a policy that came about largely as the result of an organisational problem.   The introduction of new stock rotation plans in the authority meant that large quantities of non-security tagged items were going to be coming into the central library, and tagged stock from the central service point would be moving out into libraries without security systems (clearly the latter point being less of an issue).

Previously the policy had been to tag everything, but this had to be revised and reduced owing to the costs and the time involved, and a decision was made to focus on areas most prone to theft.   Within adult lending, for example, it was proposed that only science fiction, fantasy and horror books would be tagged. Within the junior section, tagging would be concentrated on all the graphic novels and reference material.   This tagging procedure would appear to be a cost effective measure and has the added bonus of flexibility since if a 'new' area of stock was felt to be prone then it would be easy to include this in the sample of items to be security tagged.   Clearly, the earlier policy will mean that the majority of the stock will still, in fact, be security-tagged, but in the future, by selecting the most susceptible material for preferential security treatment, the authority will be able to reduce costs without (hopefully) compromising security.

This practice has been used elsewhere. 'Most libraries will selectively trigger the most vulnerable stock – new acquisitions, heavily used books, most recently used borrowed books and books in subject areas which have suffered the greatest losses.' (MacDonald, 1992a:293).

Bahr (1981, 1984) notes that the spiralling costs of library materials has significantly contributed to the affordability of security systems, and basically what library managers want to see is a return on their investment (Stack, 1998b). Considering that the approximate cost for CCTV is around £7,000, and the installation of a security system can set a library back c.£10,000 (depending on the number of gates purchased, the number of tags bought etc.) one recognises that the value of stock loss through theft needs to be recouped within a certain time period to justify the spending on security measures in the first place (Griffith,1978)

As was reported in the Library Association Record (1978a), electronic systems can quickly pay for themselves. Nightingale reported in the same journal a year previously, that the installation of a system in the face of losses of 10% of the total stock per annum from his library recovered its cost (£12,000) in the first 4 months (Nightingale, 1977). Evidence presented earlier from the case study authorities would also seem to indicate that a fully operational security system might have been (or would be) cost-effective.

Evidence from one of the authorities that estimated the service as a whole was losing 6% of stock per year; this accounted for 13,560 items. They took the average price of a book to be £9.00, and calculated that the value of stock stolen per year could be £122,040 for books alone. The total annual materials budget was £243,000, and thus stock losses represented over 50% of the book fund. If the loss rate was reduced by 80%, as 'promised' by one security firm (Stack, 1998b), this would lead to an estimated saving of £97,632 – clearly covering the cost of installing a security system.

Houlgate and Chaney (1992:47) state: 'Security is expensive, but in the long run it will prove to be a cost-effective investment. Clearly the level of that

investment will depend very much on the individual circumstances (and these will vary between organisations) but the need for that money to be spent is there and it cannot be avoided.'   One always has to consider the cost of *not* installing a system; as Stack (1998b:27) says 'who can afford to constantly replace materials?', a point underlined by the following quote from a library assistant from CSA A : *'Lets put it this way, it is pretty pointless spending £5,000 on stock without first having a security system to protect it. Money should be spent on security system first and then on new stock because otherwise the new books will be bought and then will walk straight out*.'**(LA)**

Yet considering the evidence offered earlier with regards to the lack of data, this need to prove the value of theft prevention/detection measures places libraries in a quandary (Griffin, 1978).   As Plescon (1980) notes, the librarian has a very difficult task in preparing a cost- effective proposal with respect to the installation of a security system or an increase in the book fund to cover replacement costs due to the lack of accurate assessments of loss.

8.7 Training issues

It is interesting to note that, Ewing (1994:22) reported that CCTV has been deemed expensive and its usefulness reduced somewhat by the fact that it also required 'consistent attention of staff to be effective'.   When interviewed about staff training, with respect to theft prevention and dealing with cases of suspected theft the SLA in the central library in CSA B said of CCTV:-*'It has become part of the furniture and I will have to reinforce the message with staff to keep an eye on the screens... as it records but it is difficult to capture a moment. You generally have a rough time and place – we get good picture of them coming in…. It started off having a large effect and now both staff and users are getting used to it.'* **(SLA)**

As Lincoln and Lincoln (1986) succinctly stated, traditionally libraries and other public administrators have not been trained on issues to do with crime and security.   In their research, 30% of libraries surveyed actually had crime

prevention sessions, and this corresponds with a level of 45% for the present study's sample, although what this training actually covers, and to what depth, is uncertain.

Clegg et al. (1989) detail how one south coast university devotes four pages of its library staff manual to what to do in the event of the security system alarm is being activated, with typical responses and staff procedures listed. Bradford University is also credited for a similar section of their manual that covers various scenarios and reactions. Yet no such measures were apparent in any of the case study libraries, and the lack of training was an issue for a number of the library assistants interviewed.

In reply to the question: Have you received training in dealing with suspected theft and general crime prevention measures?

-'No, but it would be really useful. I don't dare accuse anybody.' **(SLA)**

-'No, but I would really appreciate some.' **(LA)**

-'Yes, well more in the way of advice.' **(LA)**

-'No training – we have been told that there is nothing we can do.' **(LA)**

-'No, there is probably something in the staff manual.' **(LA)**

-'No, never seen anybody. we have had training on how to deal with difficult situations but nothing specific. Training is only linked to the security system but it is just as relevant if you don't have one and you catch someone.' **(LA)**

-'Nothing specific – if we knew someone had something and we tried to confront them we might get punched or stabbed.'.**(LA)**

-'We do not know what our rights are, as far as I understand until they are out of the door you can't accuse them of stealing.' **(LA)**

Again, there was a little difference in opinion between staffing levels as is shown by the next series of quotes but generally when placed alongside the previous inset, they clearly show a 'shared' awareness that formal training is as MacDonald (1992b:294) puts it, 'crucial for the chosen system to operate effectively'. 'Staff should know why systems has been introduced and have clear

procedures to follow.'(MacDonald, 1992b:293), an issue echoed in the literature by Bahr (1981:112) who suggests that a 'dedicated, security-conscious staff contributes significantly to any security program'.

> -*'It is a training issue for staff covered by 'dealing with difficult people' sessions.'* **(H of S)**
>
> -*'There are training needs as far as apprehending suspects, spotting possible thieves, how to deal with a borrower when alarm goes off...'* **(SLA)**
>
> -*'Recently three of the staff went on a conflict awareness course that covered things like dealing with aggressive borrowers, but there's no training on how to notice somebody. And I don't think we have had much training on the law, e.g. whether you are allowed to challenge somebody.'* **(CL)**
>
> -*'We have a session from time to time, but more regular and formal training would be useful because it heightens awareness - people get used to things and you need to re-awaken their consciousness - you need it to remind them, and that is why we should do it more often.'* **(SLA)**
>
> -*'We are all trained to be extremely polite, to give the benefit of the doubt, and there are occasions when it can be a white card. We should train staff to be more assertive but at the same time to remain polite and to act within the bounds of the law.'* **(CL)**

Chaney and MacDougall (1992) talk about back-up systems, i.e. facilities to assist staff when they require instant assistance, but the present study recognises the need for a more preparatory approach rather than a 'first aid' emergency reactive measure (although this is undoubtedly needed too).   From the evidence, there appears to be a serious need for frontline staff to be trained in how to react when theft is suspected and what procedures to follow and where they stand legally.   The legal ramifications of borrowers' refusing to 'empty their bags' when asked to do so after setting the alarms off, was recently raised on the discussion list 'lis-link' (28/03/00) and is obviously an issue outside the case study authorities.

Many staff are unaware of what they should do and where they stand, and several expressed concern on grounds of safety in confrontational situations and this is another area that, it would appear, is not being addressed fully at present. There is no specific mention of theft within a recent LIS book on 'dealing with aggression and violence in your workplace' (Pantry, 1996). Yet surely the confrontation which occurs when one is dealing with a suspected thief, or trying to prevent stock from being stolen is a major issue which requires attention.

However, not all staff were sure that they needed training. As one commented: *'We have had nothing official, we have a routine when the alarm is set off which we are shown as part of induction but we have not had specific training. You go so far and then call a more senior member of staff. I'm not sure whether we need training as incidents are few and far between. When people are caught by the system they generally try and lie their way out of it - they know they're lying, we know they're lying, and it generally gets sorted.'* **(LA)**

There is an excellent chapter by in Chaney and MacDougall (1992) on a model training programme for managers about countering crime. This centres around two core aspects – communication skills (non-verbal communication, listening skills, dealing with difficult customers etc.) and knowledge (including the law relating to library theft, and self-defence!). However surely training should also be given to front-line staff who deal with issues relating to theft practically everyday.

The fact that a particular library authority may take a certain stance on the issue and may have (or not, as the case maybe) a set policy to which staff must adhere is a case where staff would require tuition and practice. Other matters concerning vigilance and observation are also areas for focus which are particular to combating theft and therefore warrant specific training or at least written security guidelines, as is recommended by the National Preservation Office (NPO, 1999a and c).

Even with a system installed it is imperative that staff do not simply rely on its presence to stop theft; they must remain vigilant and always try to be aware of the possibility of unauthorised removal (Keele, 1987). Lastly, it would seem to be prudent not to only have a brief introduction to the security system as part of a member of staff's induction to the library, but also have follow-up or separate sessions on library security. From personal experience, this kind of session invariably leads to information overload, and therefore there is a real need for revision, or stand alone sessions focussing solely on the security of the library.

8.8 Prosecution

Time and cost were identified by a great number of the authorities as being the reasons why prosecution was not pursued in cases of theft. There was a definite feeling that more would be lost by prosecuting than would be gained. In the same way that security systems have to be cost effectiveness, so do other security measures, including prosecution.

From the survey returns it would seem that prosecution is generally only pursued in cases of stock loss through non-return, rather than theft. Obviously, the aspect of proof is the key reason for this, yet, although paperwork may show that users have overdue items this is no guarantee of a successful prosecution. Ten authorities from the sample of 44 pursued prosecution, and the success rate was in the region of 60%. Qualitative evidence to support these finding was given by several stakeholders interviewed:

-*'Prosecution – I've only experience of it being used in cases of non-return or where police have gone into a house and found £100's of pounds of stolen library books. I have never come across an authority that has actually prosecuted someone for actually stealing something. And most authorities are reluctant to go down that road because it takes so much time and costs so much money to pursue. Then, if a person is a juvenile it is almost like a Pyrrhic victory. So I think most authorities turn a bit of a blind eye to theft or do as much as they can do to reduce the risk but accept that in modern society it is a*

fact of life. I am not sure whether it would deter people anyway e.g. shops prosecute shop-lifters but it still goes on, it doesn't deter people who have a serious intention of stealing things whether it is from a public library or a designer clothes shop.' **(GM)**

-'From a legal standpoint it is basically 'too much trouble'. Fines were small if any, and this has been reflected in LIS decision not to pursue in recent years - has been at least 5/6 years - costs outweigh the benefits. We mostly got conditional discharges and cases weren't given high priority. Ideally it is a good idea, and there are benefits in terms of publicity / deterrent, financial gain (small), and the principle – but there is the price of principles to consider. We did pursue prosecution in the past, but we no longer pursue it, only very rarely in cases of non-return.' **(LE)**

-'There is no specific policy or criteria for following prosecution – we go on the advice of legal. Every so often we make an example of someone - for publicity purposes rather than taking everybody to court. If there is chance of getting money back.' **(H of S)**

Under the 1968 Theft Act, the suspect has to be shown to have intended to permanently deprive the LIS of the items; and to do so has often proved 'very difficult and costly to establish in the courts' (MacDonald, 1992b: 273). There are alternatives, for example imposing a ban on users caught thieving but Burrows and Cooper (1992) found that only 15 % of public libraries imposed a temporary or permanent ban and this is probably indicative of the difficulty in enforcing such sanctions.

8.9 Stock-taking in the public library

'Unless there is some type of regular complete or partial inventory or an ongoing computerised circulation system, missing books are not likely to be noticed.' **Lincoln and Lincoln**, (1986:33).

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'Stock count and inventory practices are often sadly deficient' (Burns in Burrows & Cooper, 1992:iii), and the type of count or check used varies between

authorities and libraries (Burrows & Cooper, 1992). The absence of full physical inventories and counts in many libraries concerned Burrows and Cooper (1992) and since this study has shown that the situation has unfortunately not improved, this author can only echo the concern and alarm expressed by others.

Just over 20% of authorities undertook annual stock takes. However, it would have been interesting to see how many authorities carried out a full inventory (if any). When Burrows and Cooper researched the situation they found that 73% of libraries carried out full stock counts and 7 out of 10 of these did this on an annual basis. Thirty-two per cent of libraries carried out full stock checks aimed at specifically identifying missing titles (Burrow and Cooper, 1992:9). One can assume that the total number of authorities, if any, that carried out an annual total inventory would have been very low indeed.

The base-line as it were is that libraries cannot really assess the level of theft without first doing a stock-take, and they cannot tell what stock is being stolen unless they do a full inventory. The advent of RF-ID technology does suggest that technology might provide the answer, but at present the monitoring of stock levels is clearly deficient.

It is widely recognised that a theft often only comes to light when a user asks a member of staff for an item (Lincoln, 1984a; Witt, 1996) and thus one can predict that the amount of stock actually 'missing presumed stolen' is far higher than is indicated by this method of detection. It is quite possible for loss to go unnoticed for a long time, and while it is acknowledged that total stock-takes or inventories are very time - and thus also cost - consuming there is a desperate need for some means of appraising the situation on a regular basis.

A rolling programme of stock checks, or sample inventories are two areas that could be explored. One library in CSA A has been highly organised and has done several stock takes in the past two years; these were not necessarily total but the line manager had organised inventories of specific categories etc. The

flexibility of such a system would seem to be an ideal compromise, as the problem concerning insufficient monitoring of stock levels revolves around fitting it in at the expense of other stock activities. As one group manager commented: *'You need to find a happy medium.'*

Another example of time and labour saving methods would be to limit the circulation system to highlighting the most recent additions to stock and check if they are on the shelves. Since it is known that, generally, the most recent stock is the most vulnerable to theft, this might be an effective way of ascertaining loss. With modern circulation systems it should be possible to print out a list of books that have been missing, or that have not gone out on loan for a specific period of time and do shelf checks to locate each title (Pybus, 1998). Mis-shelving would be an issue, but the regular tidying of library shelves, or even a wholesale tidy of the library before such a stock exercise, would go someway to reducing this element of error.

Miller and Sorum (1977) offer a two stage sampling procedure for estimating the proportion of lost books in a library, and techniques such as this would indeed help to make the process of evaluating stock losses more manageable for a large library. However it would, to a large degree, mask trends and subtleties of the loss which could only be uncovered by a full inventory. Foster (1996) details other sampling procedures that could be used to estimate stock losses and in turn be used for a cost benefit analysis regarding the installation of a security system.

A history of 'poor' stock taking practice can be very detrimental, as the systems manager of CSA A intimated: *'There is no point looking at a place that has never done a stock take before and then does one. That was the case with every service point up until 1998. Some of them had never done stock taking in years/decades so the result was a very skewed one because there were decades of mistakes in there as well as things which had been stolen.'* Such a cumulative effect can therefore have a negative impact on the credibility of any

figures that are produced, and obviously would in turn limit effective security management.   As has been previously discussed, decisions regarding security need to be based on sound data and information so that the measure can match the problem.

8.10 Guidelines for best practice

There are a number of helpful security audits, checklists and guidelines offered in the literature, e.g. The National Preservation Office (NPO) security guidelines (Jackson, 1992: 224) and NPO (1999 a, b, and c), Keele, (1987), Lincoln & Lincoln (1986:145), MacDonald (1992b), and Mosley et al. (1996). This section draws together the main aspects of best practice as identified during the course of this study.

• **Recognition and monitoring**   Firstly, library managers and policy-makers have to recognise that there is a problem and acknowledge the fact.   This indicates that in the first place the level of theft in a particular service point or across the authority has to be known (Jackson, 1992: 224).

Clearly, in a non-computerised library it is more difficult to keep track of how much is missing and what exactly is missing from the catalogue.   However, as has been mentioned above, the facility to easily collect and store data does not necessarily mean that such a practice is taking place, or indeed that it leads to more efficient stock-management.   We can refer back to the library assistant who noted that previously, before the computer system was installed, they had kept hand-written lists which kept a check on what was being lost from which sections. The introduction of a computerised system had curtailed this practice but clearly had not made it redundant and a need for this information was identified as imperative to monitoring the situation and justifying claims for the installation of a security system, or for more funds to recoup losses.   The major aspect is the translation of quantitative and qualitative data into useful pointers for future strategic and practical developments

• **Strategic planning** - *'When library management were planning the new library we considered what security to put in to protect the stock. I think libraries have always accepted a certain amount of loss, but it was perceived that new stock would be/was particularly vulnerable and in certain areas of material such as non-fiction the cost of material was/is getting very expensive.'* **(GM):**

• £1 million was spent on the library in question yet still, several months after opening, the security system is not fully operational and the levels of loss, as shown in section 5.1.3 are high.   This shows the need to make security an important part of strategic planning.

When a new library is opened it would make sense to look at the security of that library and the stock it will hold.   The findings of this study would seem to show that such forward thinking will be beneficial in the long run, as well as probably in the short term (as the high rates of loss in the months immediately following the opening of a 'new' service point indicate).   The refurbishment or opening of a library was seen by 4 authorities to be an integral part of their criteria for the introduction of a security system, and such alterations and ventures would seem to offer an ideal opportunity to integrate security measures into the planning process.

Ideally, the installation of security measures would come out of forward-thinking - strategic security planning, and not as a knee-jerk reaction to a long period of significant losses.   As MacDonald succinctly states, it should be: '..a sensible precaution taken by a responsible library manger who recognises the importance of a book detection system as one of a number of desirable measures necessary to improve the availability of stock to the benefit of all readers and staff alike.' (MacDonald, 1992a:291).

'It cannot be emphasised too strongly that a detection system is not a security system in itself but merely reacts when it detects books which have not been

formally issued. As a security measure the systems are most effective when they form part of an overall security strategy within which the management policy for the detection system has been carefully planned and implemented.' (MacDonald, 1992a:289).

• **Policy and guidelines**   'Security planning and policy making is an essential but regrettably neglected area of the management of library and information centres' (MacDonald, 1992b:267). 'Library managers should develop a policy for dealing with crime, possibly in conjunction with rules of membership. A firm policy will help staff to understand how to deal with situations and will command respect.' (Wrigley, 1992: 44).   These two quotations from the literature underline the need for libraries to have policies regarding security, a need that does not appear to have been recognised, since 84% of respondents to Burrows and Cooper's survey (1992) did not have any written security policy in place in their libraries.

Guidelines which adhere to the legal constraints regarding consent and reasonable grounds for action should be drawn up, and procedures for staff to follow in given circumstances (including indications of what mood, tone, and attitude to take) should be established, made widely known, and if possible, practised. (Houlgate and Chaney, 1992).

• **Physical layout of the library**   This does not mean that everything has to be on closed access but does mean that attention should be paid to the internal and external layout of the library to identify areas prone to theft (NPO, 1999b).   The National Preservation Office (NPO, 1999b:2) states: 'Security should be considered not only as part of planning and design of the building, but also as an integral part of the management of the service. It is the responsibility of the library manager to assess the risk and extent of the problem at frequent intervals, and to initiate, co-ordinate and implement the development of a security policy within the library'.

This aspect of library security management also includes the protection of specific areas of the library's collections, e.g. access to AV items tends to be more closely controlled than is access to books and reference materials owing to its attractiveness to thieves (Lincoln and Lincoln, 1986). As has been highlighted above, one may consider that certain types of stock act as 'magnets' for thieves due their rarity, expense, sell-on value, or simply their attractiveness and popularity. (The magnet analogy is perhaps ironically appropriate as a magnet's disabling effect on certain types of security systems has been well documented).

• **Staff** To address the issue of internal problems one authority that had experienced problems with staff theft had introduced a code of conduct with respect to staff loans. Obviously, senior management needs to be aware of the issue and vigilant, and perhaps even address these issues through more 'rigorous' recruitment and selection. Theft by library staff could be countered by introducing bag searches or identity passes. but obviously this would be damaging to working relationships. If theft was not a sacking offence perhaps it could be made to be one if the problem was felt to be sufficient to warrant such draconian action (MacDonald, 1992b). However when considering this matter the scale of the problem needs to be kept in perspective.

There is also the need for staff to take collective responsibility for effective security, and it is recommended that each level of LIS staff would ideally be involved in the development and implementation of any theft prevention program (Houlgate and Chaney, 1992).

• **Training** As was outlined in the previous section, the training of staff is an important and often neglected area of security management. Issues such as the way to address users suspected of theft, or legal matters surrounding this. are all areas that require training. Although a lot of this may seem to be common sense, policy and practice needs to be regularly revised and staff reminded that they must always remain vigilant to the possibility of theft.

- **'Appropriate' would seem to be the watchword**   As Bahr (1981) says, the question is whether the security program or system is suitable to the size and type of loss that an individual library sustains.   Keele (1987) and Ewing (1994) both suggest that a librarian needs to assess his/her own stock loss through theft before taking preventative action, which links back to the first point.

Unless there is a perception that the problem is widespread, there is little point in pursuing high-level security measures in every library. As the Head of library services in CSA B mentioned: *'Each library has its own library development plan and it [the need for theft prevention measures] will be brought up through this process.'*   Each library, like each borrower, is an individual case requiring individual attention. The key factor is that it has to work in the service point in question otherwise problems that may antagonise staff and users alike could occur.

- **Security Measures**   These have been described in detail above, and their effectiveness has also been assessed.   In conclusion, it would appear that even a dummy system can be useful, and that when installed, security systems have a track record of significantly reducing theft (Pegg, 1983).

Related to this, it is important to introduce an appropriate system - appropriate to level of stock loss/perceived level of stock loss, and also appropriate to the layout of the library.   Although such measures can be costly initially, the cost of stock loss through theft has always to be kept in mind.   As a community librarian from CSA A remarked: *'I said to the Head of Leisure Services - it is no good giving us the money for books if we have no security. Stuff would just go because I think we've been deprived for so long people will see new books and think 'that's what I want.'*

- **Publicity and education**   These could be considered as security measures but as they have not been previously discussed they warrant a separate entry.

Warning and advisory notices are recommended by Houlgate and Chaney (1992) to make the library's stance on issues of security clear.   Even if not 'true', dummy notices about prosecution and cameras etc might be just as useful. MacDonald (1992) also advocates publicity in the attempt to prevent theft – e.g. emphasising the positive reasons for having a security system, and/or emphasising the line taken against offenders.

A community librarian in CSA A suggested that *'When you talk to groups of school kids etc., you mention that you have to bring books back, as some don't realise these days and it never hurts to remind people.'*   Education of users and non-users regarding library policy is certainly an issue and whether it is stunningly effective or not, it is surely worth a try.   As one group manager said: *'There is less understanding of the collective use of libraries nowadays. This has increased sadly, as has theft.'*

One could also concentrate on trying to change people's attitudes to theft as: 'If there are substantial numbers of people in the community who believe that the unauthorised taking or keeping of library materials is not a crime then, then the problems may be difficult to control' (Lincoln and Lincoln, 1986:16).   As Houlgate and Chaney (1992:47) highlight, the ethos of order and the code of behaviour that is established in the LIS sector is a good basis on which to build security plans but is however 'just about the only plus-point in an otherwise rather gloomy picture'.

● **A more proactive approach**   This aspect has been left until the end as it indicates a shift in attitude and approach rather than any concrete measure.   From the evidence provided by this study and others, libraries would certainly appear to need to become far more serious in addressing the problem of theft.   As a library assistant astutely pointed out: -'*We need to put a high priority on it [theft prevention], who knows what life stock has in it. People are deprived by thieves and the library is deprived of income and customers in the long run as if you*

only have old stock on the shelves that no-one would think of stealing then that will eventually reflect in borrower figures.'

A community librarian also raised the issue that: - *'There are no notices to say that thefts will be prosecuted like there are in shops. If we instilled a more proactive approach e.g. letters to the parents etc. and took an active role instead of ignoring the problem it would help'.*

There seems to be a tendency in public libraries to act after the event and this clearly is the wrong way to go about combating theft - the old maxim of prevention being better than cure. Libraries are already sustaining costly losses which they can ill afford; and the impact on the service and on staff would appear to be cumulative. In terms of collecting data and combating theft by introducing planning, policy, measures, and training, libraries need to move to cover losses and address these issues, not sit back until it is too late.

8.11 Summary

1. The range of security measures currently used by libraries was introduced, and the range used in those libraries sampled via the questionnaire was described.

2. The different types of security systems were described and their strengths and weaknesses were briefly covered. The 'new' RF-ID technology was highlighted as an area where possible developments might (and should) occur.

3. With the example of one library from CSA A that has been open for over 10 years, the case for integrating security management into the strategic planning of a library is made. A point further underlined by the example later on of a 'new' library that has suffered heavy losses since opening with a security system that was not fully operative.

4. The effectiveness of security measures was addressed with evidence from the literature, the survey and the interviews.

5. Problems related to various security measures and systems were covered briefly before the discussion moved onto the cost of systems. Preventative measures have cost implications that have to be offset against any savings. A

'selective' tagging policy was given as an example of one way in which security costs could be minimised, using tacit knowledge and in-house data, while retaining a high level of security. Security systems are in general cost effective and the value of loss can be recovered in a few years, if not in a matter of months (in extreme cases).

6. A definite need for training was identified, an issue recognised across all levels of staff. What to do when dealing with suspected theft, and legal issues were areas of specific concern for staff.

7. Stock-taking practice in libraries was highlighted as being deficient and several options regarding sampling were given as alternatives to full inventories, which, although being clearly the best practice for identifying areas and levels of stock loss, is obviously very time consuming; a fact that has led to its near extinction from practice.

8. Authorities are not generally pursuing prosecution in cases of suspected theft. Time and cost were identified by the majority of authorities as being the reasons why this was the case. There was a definite feeling that more would be lost by prosecuting, than would be gained.

9. Several references from the literature were listed with regards to best practice and then a summary of key areas in which library practice could be improved was given. These included recognition and monitoring of levels of theft, strategic planning, policy-making and guidelines, the physical layout of the library, staff training and the inclusion of staff in decision-making processes (yet at the same time safeguarding against 'internal' theft). Other issues identified were making sure all measures taken were 'appropriate' to the library they were intended for, education of both users and non-users with regards to library policy and practice, and generally adopting a more proactive approach.

Chapter 9: Discussion and Conclusions

"Anyway, the book has vanished. . . ." **Umberto Eco** The Name of the Rose (1984, page 365)

"I am constantly amazed at the extent of the theft of library material and its cost and waste. I am dismayed at the lack of knowledge regarding the size and extent of these losses…". **Keele**: (1987: foreword).

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9.1 Constraints

Before discussing some of the wider issues of the topic and drawing the study to a close, this section will address the main constraints that placed limitations on the research.

Clearly time is the main constraining factor for a dissertation study.   The three-month period over which the work needs to be done limits the scope of any study.   It leads, almost inevitably, to the need for sampling.   Initially it was envisaged that the questionnaire would have been sent to every library authority in the country.   However, owing to time limitations, and, to a lesser extent, financial constraints, it was decided to limit the sample to authorities that could be contacted via electronic mail.   In practice this covered over two thirds of the

library authorities in England (104 out of 150); this sample was felt to be both large enough, and broad enough.

Stock-loss through non-return is clearly a related area and one mentioned in the opening chapter.   However, it was felt that with the constraints of this study, this topic could not be considered alongside the key focus.   The difficulty lies in establishing intent.   Although several library staff indicated that they felt some people joined the library with the 'aim' of deliberately defaulting, or when moving to a new address took several items out (often CDs and videos) knowing that the library would have difficulty tracing them.   One would be naïve to express disbelief at such occurrences, as this type of activity clearly does happen. However, drawing the line between non return due to an intent to steal, and that due to forgetfulness, or apathy, or because the borrower cannot afford the fines, or is embarrassed at having gone overdue (all of which are reasons that the author himself has come across) is difficult.

Perhaps the greatest hindrance was the lack of available data.   It was hoped that authorities, and in particular the case study authorities, would have been able to supply data regarding loss, or indeed stock figures so that the level of loss could have been calculated.   However, very little in the way of such information was forthcoming and, therefore, only tentative conclusions can be drawn from the findings of this study.   Yet the very fact that data regarding stock loss through theft was thin on the ground is one of the major issues that this study wishes to raise and it is this aspect of the research that will now be dealt with.

9.2 The lack of data on theft

'One of the problems is that there are no numbers. That in itself is significant.'
Keyes Leab: (in Van Nort, 1994:26)

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Morgan (1995:69) states that libraries often get 'hung up' on figures. However, in the light of the evidence it would appear that this is not the case when

it comes to theft, as is bemoaned by Jackson (1991).   However Jackson (1992:218) says that: 'The lack of facts on library crime is understandable. The librarian of the 1990s is far less likely to have the time and resources to do regular stock checks', and this study has unfortunately only added to the evidence in support of such a statement.   The fact that, to a great extent, libraries do not know how much they are losing, and, therefore, are unaware of how serious the problem of theft may be is the single largest factor hindering the effective management of stock loss through theft (Griffith, 978).

Lieberman (in Van Nort, 1994:25) bemoans the fact that there is 'no good substantial statistical information available at this time', and Stack joins a number of authors in stressing the need for accurate and regular inventories (Stack, 1998b). This study can only add to this list in calling for greater attention to substantial stock monitoring.   As Ewing (1994:25) said: 'To make progress in this field, libraries must improve their stock inventories and importantly, the regularity with which these are carried out. It is necessary to determine whether losses are increasing, decreasing or remaining static.'

The lack of archived data also made it impossible to establish with any degree of certainty whether levels of theft have increased over the past years.   The perception of the majority of authorities which replied to the questionnaire (45% - 20 authorities out of 44) and the staff within the 2 case study authorities (71% - 25 members of staff out of 35 (the legal executive and systems managers were not asked about this topic)) was that levels have increased.   No one suggested that levels had fallen overall, and the only indications of reductions in the number of incidents of theft were felt to have come as a direct result of the installation of security measures.

The Audit Commission's *'Due for Renewal'* report, published in 1997 noted that the prevention of stock-loss required more attention, and that 'most libraries could not provide annual loss figures (Audit Commission, 1997:42).   Clearly, little has changed in the interim.   The benefits of improved stock management were

lauded in terms of the financial savings and service improvements it would bring by, amongst other things, reducing stock loss. But the evidence suggests that theft in public libraries is increasing and levels of theft could be higher than previously thought (Ewing, 1994).

In lieu of 'hard' data on the subject, one might have expected to find an abundance of qualitative evidence in the literature, yet little was found and this study, in gathering together the opinions and attitudes of various stake holders, has attempted to redress the balance. The value of such information has been partly in the detailed insight it has allowed into a sensitive subject, and the way it has opened up debate. Several comments were received expressing interest in the current work on the grounds that the libraries involved were aware that they could be doing more. Also, a number of responses implied that the questionnaire and interviews had given rise to debate within the organisation and, in some cases, made the authority think about the subject for the first time in a while.

9.3   The level of theft in English public libraries: Concluding remarks

The most recent work focussing solely on theft from English public libraries was Lincoln and Lincoln (1986:48) who found that patterns of library crime were linked to city size, and that there was a strong correlation between level of book theft and the size of population. They also found that the size of library, the number of staff in the library, the level of activity in the library and the socio-economic make-up of the library's catchment area also affected the level of theft. The authors did, however, admit to the unrepresentative nature of their survey, as it clearly concentrated on larger service points (Lincoln and Lincoln, 1986).

These patterns may well be the case. However, the present author argues that one cannot draw such conclusions without first investigating the situation in a more balanced sample, or indeed one weighed towards smaller libraries and towns (to provide a counter-balance to previous research). It is too simple to presume that there is a correlation between a number of 'obvious' variables and the level of

theft in a city's libraries, as it could be argued Lincoln and Lincoln (1986) did in their research.   The variables could be inter-related and thus the patterns might not be so damning and conclusive as they first appear.   For example, it would seem logical to find large libraries in large cities with more stock and staff and higher levels of activity.

Yet since Lincoln and Lincoln's sample concentrated on larger libraries, the proportion of libraries with security systems in their sample was probably higher than average.   Thus it could be argued that for this very reason their sample was not an accurate reflection of the situation and could have lead to an underestimation of the levels of theft in England as they concentrated on the libraries with the most protection.   All of which serves to say, without doubting the validity of Lincoln and Lincoln's work and without refuting their findings, that there would appear to be grounds for concern owing to the sampling they used and the conclusions they drew from their survey.

One further point is that Lincoln and Lincoln (1986) counted the number of incidents of theft, which is clearly not necessarily related to the amount of stock lost.   One 'theft' could means the loss of a single book or it might involve the loss of 8 videos or 10 CDs, and what defines an incident – the number of times someone is caught in the act or the number of broken clip cases found, or…?

Perhaps, as Chaney and MacDougall (1992:19) note, libraries 'defy the bounds of usual criminological patterns' and although they recognise that the location of the library is an important factor in the level of theft ' there may be exceptions'.   For example, as Lincoln (1984a) claimed, library theft is related to socio-economic factors, basically the more working class the neighbourhood the greater the loss.   However, as one community librarian from CSA A said, it is *'inappropriate'* to say that theft goes hand in hand with social deprivation and therefore assume that libraries in areas of poverty will have high levels of theft. This statement was supported by an episode of theft in CSA A during the time of this study, where one district library located in a relatively 'well-off' area of the

city had recently suffered a spate of theft which had seen the family saga section decimated (see section 7.1.1).

It is difficult, if not therefore impossible, to estimate the level of theft on the dimensions of the library and its catchment area.   And this study, owing primarily to a paucity of data, but also in light of the uniqueness of the phenomenon which has been recognised through the course of the research, cannot confidently make any statements concerning the relationship between multiple variables and theft. Nor can it confidently say that the current level of loss in public libraries is x% and thereby compare it to previous measurements and set the alarm bells ringing as it were or breath a sigh of relief that the problem has diminished or disappeared.

The last estimate was 5.3% (Burrows and Cooper, 1992) and due to insufficient quantitative evidence this study cannot offer much to dispute this figure.   However, one can go as far as to say that in terms of the loss of new stock and certain categories and items (AV material in particular) this figure would seem to be seriously lower than the apparent level of loss being experienced by libraries in the case study authorities.

It is known that the vast majority of items are not formally requested, and that many users simply accept that what they find on the shelves is the entire stock. If they cannot find an item that they think should be there, the user generally will assume that someone else has the item.   If they have checked the catalogue and an item is shown to be available for loan and they cannot locate it they may doubt their own searching skills and seek assistance, or may simply look for something else.   We can assume that these are common everyday occurrences in public libraries across the country, and, unfortunately, they all indirectly suggest that the figures for stock loss through theft are perhaps even higher than those found in this study and in previous research.   The point is that libraries generally only know if an item is missing when a user asks for it in person or via a request, or through an inventory – which in a library of any reasonable size has almost become an impossible dream.   Stock-takes, although not pin-pointing exactly which items are

missing, do give a quantifiable indication of loss but as this study has found, stock-taking policies and practices are not currently helping the situation.

9.4   Library standards and theft

At this stage of the study the focus is being turned back to the issue of theft in public libraries within the present forum of changes.   One of the reasons behind the present research was the lack of research done in this area in the light of growing stock-diversification, and the increasing amount of expensive resources which libraries are being encouraged to provide.

As Lashmar and Oliver (2000:8) reported, the sum spent on books today is less than half what it was twenty years ago.   They state that their survey, based on performance against four local council performance indicators for library services, shows the damage done by budgetary cuts, a finding supported by official figures (Lashmar and Oliver, 2000).   The recently introduced national standards for public libraries call for councils to buy 216 books CDs or other items each year for every 1000 residents in their catchment area (and to replace all stock within 8.5 years).   If the council fails to buy more than the minimum threshold of 170/annum then it would be subject to government intervention.

The standards are recognised to be 'demanding', reflecting, as they do, the top 25% of current performance in public libraries across the country (Library Association Record, 2000).   Fiction and non-fiction quality are to be measured, in the case of non-fiction against a 'framework [of] the titles published in each major subject field during the year (Library Association Record, 2000).   This clearly has ramifications for the management of stock loss through theft bearing in mind the previously discussed vulnerability of new stock in general, and non-fiction books in particular.

The standards call for 50% of requests to be supplied within seven days, and 70% within fifteen days.   However, if theft has depleted the stock in certain popular areas (as is likely) one has to say that it could take a lot longer to satisfy requests since libraries would have to look to other branches or authorities to fulfil a request, which might have not been necessary in the first place if the library's own stock had not been plundered.

If, as one community librarian pointed out, the library authority is meant to be spending £2 per capita one has to ask how much of this should/would go on security devices etc.   When one considers the cost of installation, tagging and maintenance, one can imagine that the £2 would not go very far.   However, as previously noted, what is to be gained by filling libraries with new stock only to see it disappear over a few months due to insufficient security?

Auditing conventions differ between authorities and therefore common standards and comparisons between library services are difficult to achieve (Burrows and Cooper, 1992).   In terms of managing stock loss through theft, libraries would obviously benefit from national standards in this area.   However, the recent draft LIS standards do not mention anything along these lines (Library Association Record, 2000).   None of the standards relate to the regularity of stock taking; indeed, there is no mention of auditing, stock control, or monitoring, and therefore measures to improve stock checking will have to be self-driven. Burrows and Cooper (1992) raised the need for standard auditing practices so that the real levels of loss could be ascertained but since their report nothing has been done to bring this about.   The absence of such a standard probably means that high stock loss will continue to go largely unnoticed unless authorities tighten up on this aspect of collection management by themselves.   It is unlikely that public libraries will have 'time to spare' given the pressure that is being (and will be) exerted on public libraries via the standards and 'best value'.

9.5   Social exclusion and theft: Access vs. security.

'Many of the problems of theft and most of the problems caused by problem patrons are exacerbated by the ease of access' *Lincoln and Lincoln*: (1986:12).

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Obviously, there are a number of factors that have been identified by this study and in the literature (in particular Lincoln and Lincoln, 1986) as 'encouraging' theft, including:

• The desirability of its contents, especially now that many libraries stock videos, DVDs, CDs, CD ROMs, and play station games.

• The lack of security. Compared to other public buildings such as museums and schools, libraries are often poorly protected.

• Building design. Many library buildings were built without issues of security being considered and often the internal layout exacerbates the problem of theft e.g. the number of 'hidden' corners, blocked lines of vision etc..

• Opening hours. Often libraries are the only public building open at nights or weekends and therefore are arguably more susceptible.

• The level of activity in libraries. The level of staff vigilance is offset by the fact that libraries are often so busy that staff have little time to keep their eye on the stock, and this obviously offers more opportunity for theft, and

• The lack of crime prevention training.

Perhaps the key issue is that of open access, which was identified by Lincoln (1984), in the first national study of crime in US libraries, as generating 'the great majority' of problems regarding theft.   The issue of open access cropped up time and time again in the literature, and it was a recurring theme throughout the data collected for this research.

With the issue of open access vs. secure holdings we are dealing with the very ethos of the public library.   The subject of social exclusion has been dear to the hearts of politicians, and therefore dear to the hearts of politically astute librarians in recent months with a burgeoning number of reports geared to addressing the problem (DCMS, 1999).   This comes in tandem with a drive, again politically fuelled, to see computers and Internet access for all in every public library, in an attempt to 'close the digital divide' (DTI, 2000).   The library service

would be foolish not to react to such 'opportunities', and indeed, judging by the almost constant references in the professional journals to projects and developments, public libraries do seem to be responding to these initiatives. However, in terms of theft from public libraries such developments are not without consequence

When one Community librarian was asked about theft in the public library he commented that: *'I thought your project was coming from the social exclusion standpoint –librarians are bastards, all librarians are Fascist swine – so I was trying to show how sensible the staff were/are.'* This illustrates, in basic terms, one of the contradictory factors that make the management of theft in public libraries such a difficult matter, especially in the light of recent government policy (DCMS, 1999). Librarians and LIS staff in general could be seen as policing the stock and stopping people accessing/using resources by putting security barriers and security conscious policies in place. Yet, at this point in time, libraries are being encouraged to open their doors wider, in metaphorical terms, and tackle social exclusion in a more proactive manner. The situation is summed up by this quote from Keele, (1987:18):'Librarians are devoting all their resources to promoting, rather than policing their readers'.

MacDonald (1992b:274) suggests that 'some librarians, in seeking to provide a welcoming and accessible environment, may themselves find explicit security measures somewhat uncomfortable or even threatening and not consistent with their motives for entering the profession.' The author goes on to suggest that overt security measures such as CCTV give a clearly visible reminder that surveillance is being carried out, and security systems and measures in general serve as a constant reminder of the library's positive attitude towards security (MacDonald, 1992b). But whether libraries should be exuding such overt positivism in combating theft is a point for discussion:

To what extent should libraries adopt a hard-line policing enforcement attitude is open to debate. If you are going to tackle social exclusion you have to accept

Yet much though libraries are trying to address matters concerning social exclusion we must still consider theft as being a socially unacceptable act; theft is against the law, whether from a library or a bank.   However, this is a very naïve statement, as the laws regarding shoplifting and bank robbery are clearly different and the penalties they carry reflect this fact.   As has been discussed above, library theft is often not taken particularly seriously, especially in comparison to other forms of theft (including the theft of personal property from library users), and as a result it is not judged in the same terms.

Different libraries clearly will decide upon different levels of security. During the course of the study the author came across one authority, who in making a concerted effort to tackle social exclusion, were seemingly 'quite happy' to say goodbye to a certain amount of stock through theft and stock loss through non-return.   This stance could be criticised from two major angles.   Firstly, should libraries exercise zero tolerance of theft and therefore not accept any loss that would cost the service and reduce the level of service for other users? Secondly, although one library authority might feel that it could absorb a certain level of loss, other authorities might not be in a position to do so.   Such leniency might well be a positive step towards social inclusion, however it is one that not all library authorities have the luxury of granting.   Libraries, in general, seem to be taking a more hard-line approach as this following excerpt underlines:

break-ins, all videos were on closed access. I mean, if you stop people from actually getting in then that means it's impossible for them to steal.' **(GM)**

Certainly, if the general attitude of staff was heeded, libraries would be as proactive in protecting stock from certain members of society as they are in addressing social issues.   This leaves the service in a quandary, as it returns us to the very seeds of the debate regarding the paradox of the need for protection and the library's mission to promote its services, as is eloquently explained through the series of quotes from library assistants below:

- 'What's the point in having nice books if they are going to walk. It's just one big viscious circle – get money, buy books, lose books, need to buy replacements, no money left to buy new books.' **(LA)**
-'It wouldn't be right to search people's bags, and in any case I wouldn't want to do it. We want to be welcoming, we want people to come in; the stock belongs to the people, so they are basically stealing from themselves.' **(LA)**
-'We want people to have free access. You can't protect and promote, and our job is to promote, but because we are funded by public money - it is not our money, so we have to protect it.' **(LA)**

It was the view of Lincoln and Lincoln (1986:12) that most thefts are crimes of opportunity and therefore it follows that if you eliminate the opportunity then you rid the library of theft.   Implementing measures that reduce the opportunity to thieve punishes 'honest' borrowers and diminishes their opportunity to enjoy an open and accessible service.   As Ashcroft and Wilson (1992:1) encapsulate in one sentence: 'The problem for librarians is their schizoid role as both the custodian and exploiter.'

Houlgate and Chaney (1992) note that LIS managers have to recognise that crime in society is increasing and that they must consider if the proud tradition of open access *is* the 'best way of operating' in this climate.   The very nature of the public library service, people being allowed to browse without raising suspicion,

the rows of shelves which can act as a haven for thieves, and the innate trust placed in borrowers all accentuate problems relating to theft.   Closed stacks and keeping items safe under lock and key are two means of thwarting thieves; however, most librarians would (and indeed should) not wish to return to such time consuming, laborious and harsh policies (Stack, 1998b).

So it comes down to balance and compromise because, as the Plescon report into 'the real cost of theft form libraries' (1980) highlighted, although many librarians are averse to operating restricted access and concentrate on promoting and developing their collection, theft itself must be considered as a major restriction and a danger to the very service librarians are trying to provide and nurture.

9.6 Conclusions

As Bean notes (1992:13), the image that many people have of the public library does not usually cover the problem of crime; however, those who work in libraries know that the reality is otherwise.

At this level of study it is difficult and inappropriate to say whether the extent of the problems intimated by the research is both a valid and accurate expose of the picture on a wider scale.   More research (and in particular, longitudinal studies) needs to be done to verify the findings of this dissertation, and take the research further as the following chapter will discuss.   However, the fact that little work has been done on the subject in recent years, and that there is a worrying lack of information kept by authorities on the problem of theft, is felt to be highly significant.   The present study argues that the absence of research and data in light of recent developments within the public library service has meant that the growing seriousness of the problem has not been apparent, and thus has gone largely unchecked.

'As the value of media and equipment held in libraries increases, librarians are being forced to reassess their attitudes towards security…AV material generates income but also increases the risk and attraction of theft.'' said Casale

(1995:18). The perception of staff and evidence of whole collections of videos being stolen time and time again, as well as other supplementary evidence from this study has shown this to be the case.

The variety and depth of the data-set has allowed wider generalisations to be made from the detailed analysis of results, yet one point which has been raised is that it would appear that generalisations attributing theft to specific variables may not be particularly accurate or useful. Each library needs to be evaluated individually with regards to its vulnerability to theft, although this does not mean that procedural or security policies need not be centralised. In fact this author suggests that more attention to the issue needs to be paid by policy-makers, i.e. those generally in the 'upper echelons' of an organisation, as there is a need for a higher level of strategic management and policies directed towards reducing theft.

Clearly, one practical means of preventing theft is the installation of security systems and the work of Michalko and Heidtmann (1978) cited above shows that this indeed reduces theft and in particular the level of theft of newly acquired items. Since this is clearly an area that concerns many of the libraries covered in this study and in which a large percentage of loss would appear to be concentrated, such evidence would seem to underline the benefit of introducing security systems in more public libraries.

Evidently, the impact of theft is felt most at the 'sharp end' of the service. Stock is depleted, often loss can be focussed on specific areas of stock, borrowers have less to choose from and may be required to pay for requests if stock has to come from elsewhere. Staff have to deal with the consequences of theft and often express strong feelings as to its effect on the service and on them personally. They also feel in need of more training and information with regards theft and how to deal with it, and the distinct lack of both is another area for concern. However from this, one recognises that theft needs to be considered beyond 'the front line', as the implications for the service, the budget, and accountability in particular require serious attention.

Ultimately the provision of a high quality of service is the core aim of any library/library authority and management decisions clearly are made to ensure that such standards are achieved and maintained.   Recent developments in this area, i.e. the new draft standards for public libraries (Library Association Record, 2000) only add an extra layer to this endeavour.   The facts are that libraries do not seem to be doing enough to combat theft, they do not seem to be aware of how much they are losing through theft, nor the extent to which the public library service is being affected by the phenomenon.   In the end, the responsibility comes back to the highest level of the organisation.

Libraries must try and avoid a basic 'post mortem exercise', i.e. working out how much has been lost after it has gone, and should try and bring about flexibility and regular monitoring so that emerging trends can be spotted and acted upon before it is too late.   It was always hoped that a possible outcome of the study and part of the value of the dissertation would be in raising awareness of the issue of theft in the public library.   The alarm call, has been sounded and hopefully will stir, in particular, policy-makers and management into paying more heed to the situation.   By informing professional staff of the value of certain measures and procedures it is envisaged that ideally steps will be taken to tighten policy and practice in the future to combat the problem.   Library theft, as Griffith said (1978), is a problem that will not go away, and rather than avoid the topic or push it down the list of priorities, this research alongside others advocates that librarians should swiftly move to meet the problem head-on.   If possible the librarian must strive to be 'one step ahead of the thief' (Hoel, 1984), often the profession has been too tolerant and waited until the damage has been done.

Chapter 10: Recommendations for Future Research

10.1 Introduction

Considering the possible depth and breadth of this subject, and the necessity for this study to focus on as specific an area as possible, there is clearly a range of opportunities for further research.   This section highlights several major possibilities for future study, although this is far from an exhaustive list.

10.2 Focus on the impact theft has on borrowers

There is a niche in the research for a study to be concentrated on the social impact of theft, and the attitudes of the library's users and non-users towards it. In what ways do they feel that the service is affected by theft, are they aware of the level of the problem and what are their opinions with regard to the ways in which the public library should tackle the issue?   Are borrowers intimidated by the security in libraries as was intimated by several librarians, or are they 'pleased' that the library is making an effort to protect 'their' stock.

10.3 Micro-scale study of the problem

One could look at the variation of theft within various categories of book, or areas of stock.   The present research has drawn some basic findings together on this subject, but more in-depth analysis would provide a useful tool in combating theft and justifying expenditure.   It could be argued that a great deal of this is

common sense, and experienced library staff will have a good idea of what areas of stock are 'targeted' by thieves.   But, as argued above, there would appear to be a need to have substantial evidence with which to make a case for spending on security measures, or increasing funds for replacing material and/or buying new stock.

Work could be done through concentrating on a specific area of the service, for example local studies where a lot of the material kept is irreplaceable, or the schools service to see if levels of theft and attitudes towards theft differ across the service.   For example, in CSA B over a 1000 books were 'missing' in the schools collection that would seem to warrant further analysis and/or action.   In the case of AV departments, for example, a dissertation could be done on establishing the financial implications of theft and stock loss through non-return in terms of loss of income generation, replacement costs, the cost of protecting stock etc.   It would be possible on such a smaller scale to carry out a cost benefit analysis perhaps prior to a decision being made re installing security.

10.4 'Before and after' research

This leads on to another area that might inspire future research.   One could study the effectiveness of a security measure by monitoring levels of theft around the introduction of a 'new' system or policy i.e. a 'before and after' study. However, as covered in section 9.1, within the constraints of a Master's dissertation the chance for longitudinal studies is restricted, although the need for such research has been identified.

There has been relatively little use of the action research methodological approach in the public library field but it could be appropriate in terms of testing the effectiveness of security measures for example (personal communication with Phil Levy, Department of Information Studies, University of Sheffield).   Lau (1999) and Clark (1997) give a helpful introduction to the use of this method in the LIS field.

10.5 Cross-sector analysis of library theft

One of the key issues behind the focus of this study was the apparent concentration of research in the academic sector. This study has tried to address this imbalance, but recommends that work could be done adopting a cross-sector approach, thus allowing comparisons to be made between academic, special/workplace, voluntary and public libraries, with regard to theft and perhaps also the mutilation of stock (as this is felt to be 'more' of a problem in sectors other than the public library).

10.6 Stock loss through non return

This has been a constant thorn in the side of this study, as it was clearly a related theme; however, for reasons discussed above, the decision was made to limit the project to theft. It would be interesting to look at the two issues side by side, either through a comparative study to ascertain which was the more 'serious' – as many intimated that stock loss through non-return was a bigger problem than theft. One could investigate if this was in fact the case, otherwise one could tackle the broader topic of stock loss by researching the levels and impact of both aspects combined. This would probably raise as many disturbing facts, figures, and questions as this study has! For example, CSA B had undertaken a 20-week study of borrower write-offs and found that within 6 months 1 in 3 borrowers default. It was estimated that the central library annually lost c.£14,000 through legitimate borrowing, and CSA A found for part of their Best Value report that they were owed c. £60,000 worth of debt (from losses and fines)from people who had not used the system for the last two years

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Appendices

Appendix 1:   Questionnaire Survey

RE: Theft in Public Libraries Questionnaire

Please reply to: liq99mm@sheffield.ac.uk

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am currently studying a Masters in Librarianship at the University of Sheffield, Department of Information Studies. I am studying theft from public libraries for my dissertation. I would be grateful if you would take a few minutes to complete the questionnaire below.   This questionnaire has been sent to around 100 library authorities in England and respondents will receive a summary of the findings in September.

Please note that all the information given will be classified as confidential, and will be used only as part of my dissertation. No-one will be identified or named in the final report.   Please pass this questionnaire on to someone else if they are in a better position to answer the questions. Thank you for all your help.

yours sincerely,

Mark McCree

INSTRUCTIONS

If your e mail server allows, simply reply including original message, complete the questionnaire and return it to me. Otherwise copy the questionnaire and paste it into a new message. If you would prefer - simply print off a copy of this message, fill in the questionnaire and then return it to the postal address given below.

Please place a tick (x) in the appropriate bracket (or brackets, where more than one option is applicable) unless otherwise indicated. If a question is not applicable, simply ignore it and move onto the next question.

NOTE 1: All questions relate to libraries in your authority, and not to any one library in particular.

NOTE 2: 'Library Theft' refers to catalogued items that are missing from stock, presumed stolen AND other materials, equipment and library property which cannot be accounted for. This questionnaire is NOT concerned with non-return items i.e. those which are on the catalogue and out on loan, but which have never been returned.

NOTE 3: I apologise if the lay-out of this questionnaire is upset by differences in e-mail reading facilities.

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. What is the name of your library authority? (please type in the space below)

_____

2. Which of the non-book materials listed below are available on loan?

Talking Books   ( )

CDs/Audio cassettes/LPs   ( )

CD ROMs   ( )

Videos (entertainment)   ( )

Videos (non-fiction)   ( )

DVDs   ( )

Play station games   ( )

Others (please state)   ( )

_____

3. Do libraries in your authority carry out annual stock takes?

Yes ( )   No   ( )

If Yes, is it a total stock take

Yes ( )   No ( )

or, a sample stock take

Yes ( )   No ( )

If No, please comment on your stock take policy.

_____

4. Does your library authority train staff in dealing with cases of suspected theft?

Yes   ( )   No   ( )

DATA

5. Do you keep any data on levels of theft?

Yes (if Yes go to q.6)   ( )

No (if No answer q.5b)   ( )

5b. Why do you not keep data on theft?

Cannot calculate from circulation management system   ( )

Not enough time   ( )

Problem considered to be negligible   ( )

Too difficult to quantify accurately ( )

Don't know ( )

Others (please comment) ( )

_____

(Go to q.7)

6. If possible, please note the annual percentage loss in each of the categories below - i.e. the percentage of stock lost in 1999 through theft. If data for a category in unavailable, or unknown, simply leave blank.

Category	Annual Loss (%)
Books	(%)
Talking Books	(%)
CDs/Audio cassettes/LPs	(%)
CD ROMs	(%)
Videos (entertainment)	(%)
Videos (non-fiction)	(%)
DVDs	(%)
Play station games	(%)
Others (please state)	(%)

7. Please comment if you are aware of any equipment or library property that has been stolen in the last year, and if so please state what has been lost.

_____

8. Please give your perception of the seriousness of the problem, by giving a mark on a scale of 0-5 (where 5 relates to the theft of… being a major problem, and 0 indicates that the theft of...is a minor problem in the libraries in your authority). If a category is non-applicable simply leave blank.

THEFT OF... Minor (0) - Major (5)

Books   ( )

Talking Books   ( )

CDs/Audio cassettes/LPs   ( )

CD ROMs   ( )

Videos (entertainment)   ( )

Videos (non-fiction)   ( )

DVDs   ( )

Play station games   ( )

Others (please state)   ( )

_____

SECURITY

9. What security devices or security measures do you adopt to combat theft?

(Where you use more than one method, please mark all relevant boxes)

Automatic communication link with police ( )

Call police when theft is suspected   ( )

Electronic Security system   ( )

Combination of case and closed access   ( )

Security cases (around tape/video etc.)   ( )

Empty cases (i.e. stock kept elsewhere)   ( )

CCTV   ( )

External alarm system   ( )

Plainclothes security guards   ( )

Uniformed security guards   ( )

Prosecution   ( )

None   ( )

Other (please state below)   ( )

_____

10. Please state the name(s) and make(s) of any electronic security system(s) used
in your libraries.

_____

11. Please indicate the degree to which you believe electronic security systems reduce levels of theft?

Greatly   ( )

Moderately   ( )

Marginally   ( )

Not at all   ( )

Don't know   ( )

12. Please comment on any criteria you may have for the introduction of an electronic security system?

_____

13. Please comment on what criteria you have with regards prosecution (i.e. when you will/will not prosecute).

_____

14. In the last five years has your authority prosecuted anyone for theft?

Yes   ( )   No   ( )

If so, was the prosecution successful (i.e. resulted in the defendant being found guilty) (please state below)?

_____

OPINION

15. How do you perceive the number of incidences of theft to have generally changed over the last 5 years? Do you think they have:

Increased   ( )

Decreased   ( )

Stayed the same　　( )

16. Do you consider theft to be a problem?

Yes　　　　( )

No　　　　( )

Not sure　　( )

17. Do you perceive the impact of theft on users, in terms of a reduction in service quality, to be...

Very High　( )

High　　　( )

Moderate　( )

Small　　　( )

Very small　( )

18. Do you perceive the impact of theft on staff, in terms of having to deal with suspected theft, and having to explain why stock is 'missing, presumed stolen' etc., to be...

Very High　( )

High　　　( )

Moderate　( )

Small　　　( )

Very small　( )

_____

Please add any additional comments that you think would be relevant or helpful. Thank you.

_____

If you would be willing to help further in this study, Please place a cross in the following brackets　( )

*If you have any in-house literature/data on the subject (reports, memorandums, policy guidelines, training supplements etc.), I would really appreciate it if you would send them to me.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR HELP.
PLEASE RETURN THE QUESTIONNAIRE AS AN E-MAIL MESSAGE TO:
liq99mm@sheffield.ac.uk
Or post your response to:
Mark McCree, c/o University of Sheffield, Department of Information Studies, Regent Court, 211, Portobello Street, Sheffield; S1 4DP. Tel: (0114) 272 6873

Appendix 2:   Interview schedules

2.1 Interview with senior management (Head of Services, Group Managers)

INTERVIEW WITH SENIOR MANAGEMENT

Job Title :

Library :

Questions

1. Do you perceive theft to be a problem in your library authority?

... and could you comment on what particular problems your library experiences, or has experienced.

2. Please give an indication of the 'seriousness' of the problem, by giving a mark on a scale of 0-5 (where 5 relates to the theft of... being a major problem, and 0 indicates that the theft of...is a minor problem in the libraries in your authority.

If a category is non-applicable simply leave blank.

THEFT OF.../	Minor- Major (0) - (5)
Books	( )
Talking Books	( )

CDs/Audio cassettes/LPs   ( )

CD ROMs   ( )

Videos (entertainment)   ( )

Videos (non-fiction)   ( )

DVDs   ( )

Play station games   ( )

Others (please state)   ( )

3. Do you consider stock loss through non return to be as serious as stock loss through theft? Comments

4. Do you perceive the number of incidences of theft to have increased over the last 5 years?

Increased   ( )

Decreased   ( )

Stayed the same   ( )

5. Do you perceive the impact of stock loss through theft on users, in terms of a reduction in service quality, to be... Comments - what effect do you think theft has on the service.

Very High   ( )

High   ( )

Moderate   ( )

Small   ( )

Very small   ( )

6. Do you perceive the impact of theft on staff, in terms of a reduction in service quality, to be... Comments - what impact do you think theft has on staff.

Very High   ( )

High   ( )

Moderate   ( )

Small   ( )

Very small   ( )

7. Do you have a specific budget for security measures

8. Is theft management part of the authority's strategic planning?

9. Are issues concerning the theft of stock considered before each library opens or during the annual/regular review process.

10. Do you have any formal policy measures in place which deal specifically with theft?

11. Do you think theft should be tackled by authority wide management strategies or on an individual library basis - and what levels of theft management are appropriate at which levels of decision making?

12. Does your authority train staff to deal with theft? (Training needs as far as apprehending suspects, spotting possible thieves, how to deal with a borrower when alarm goes off...etc.)

13. Please indicate the degree to which you believe electronic security systems reduce levels of theft? Comments re. effectiveness of measures.

Greatly	( )
Moderately	( )
Minimally	( )
Not at all	( )
Don't know	( )

14. If you have installed a security system in the last 5 years, or hired security personnel, how much has this cost?

15. How much has your library spend on security measures in the last year?

2.2 Interview with middle management (Community Librarians, Senior Librarians, Senior Library Assistants)

INTERVIEW WITH MIDDLE MANAGEMENT

Job Title:

Library:

Library Details:

(e.g. Size of 'local' population, general characteristics of locality/catchment area, description of library, demographics of borrowers, no. of issues, size of stock etc.)

Stock

Which of the non-book materials listed below are available on loan?

Talking Books (Adult/Jnr) ( ) Videos (entertainment) ( )

Videos (non-fiction) ( ) CDs/Audio cassettes/LPs ( )

CD ROMs ( ) DVDs ( )

Play station games ( ) Others (please state) ( )

Security

What security devices or security measures do you adopt to combat theft (Where you utilise more than one method, please mark *all* relevant boxes)

Automatic communication link with police ( )

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CCTV   ( )

Call police when theft is suspected   ( )

External alarm system   ( )

Electronic Security system (e.g.RFS/EM)   ( ) - **name**

Security cases (around tape/video etc.)   ( )

Plainclothes security guards   ( )

Empty cases (e.g. stock kept behind counter)   ( )

Uniformed security guards   ( )

Combination of case and storage   ( )

Prosecution   ( )

None   ( )

Other (please state below)   ( )

Questions

1. Do you perceive theft to be a problem in your library?

2. Please give an indication of the 'seriousness' of the problem, by giving a mark on a scale of 0-5 (where 5 relates to the theft of... being a major problem, and 0 indicates that the theft of...is a minor problem in the libraries in your authority. If a category is non-applicable simply leave blank.

THEFT OF...	Minor- Major (0) - (5)
Books	( )
Talking Books	( )
CDs/Audio cassettes/LPs	( )
CD ROMs	( )
Videos (entertainment)	( )
Videos (non-fiction)	( )
DVDs	( )
Play station games	( )
Others (please state)	( )

3. Do you consider stock loss through non return to be as serious as stock loss through theft?

4. Do you perceive the number of incidences of theft to have increased over the last 5 years?

Increased　　　　　( )

Decreased　　　　　( )

Stayed the same　　 ( )

5. Do you perceive the impact of stock loss through theft to be… (Comments)

Very High　　( )

High　　　　 ( )

Moderate　　 ( )

Small　　　　( )

Very small　 ( )

6. Do you perceive the impact of theft on staff to be… (Comments)

Very High　　( )

High　　　　 ( )

Moderate　　 ( )

Small　　　　( )

Very small　 ( )

7. Does your library carry out an annual stock take? . . .

8. Do you keep any in house data on theft?

9. If possible, please note the annual percentage loss in each category - i.e. the percentage of stock lost in 1999 through theft. If data for a category in unavailable, or unknown, simply leave blank.

Category	Annual Loss (%)
Books	(%)
Talking Books	(%)
CDs/Audio cassettes	(%)
CD ROMs	(%)
Videos (entertainment)	(%)
Videos (Non Fiction)	(%)
DVDs	(%)
Play station games	(%)
Others (please state)	(%)

10. Please indicate the degree to which you believe security systems reduce levels of theft?

Greatly ( )

Moderately ( )

Minimally ( )

Not at all ( )

Don't know ( )

11. When was your security system installed? (Please give date, if known)

12. And has it led to a decrease in theft?
If so, has this decrease been. . .?

Very large ( )

Quite large ( )

Moderate ( )

Small ( )

Negligible ( )

13. Does your library train staff to deal with theft?

15. Do you gauge the costs incurred due to theft

16. How much has your library spend on security measures in the last year?

2.3 Interview with library assistants

INTERVIEW WITH FRONTLINE STAFF

Library:

Questions:

1. In what ways do you feel theft affects your day to day work?

Please comment on what impact you think theft has upon staff (e.g. in terms of stress, pressure, having to deal with people who can't find a book...etc.).

Very High   (   )

High   (   )

Moderate   (   )

Small   (   )

Very small   (   )

2. In what ways do you feel theft affects the service?

Please comment on what impact you think theft has on the service (e.g. in terms of stock loss through theft, reduction in service quality, damage to the library's image etc.)

Very High   (   )

High   (   )

Moderate   (   )

Small　　　　( )

Very small　　( )

3. Have you noticed theft being a particular problem for a specific type of stock or category?

4. How do you perceive the number of incidences of theft to have changed, if indeed they have, over recent years?

5. Have you received training in dealing with suspected theft and general crime prevention measures?

6. Please indicate the degree to which you believe electronic security systems* reduce levels of theft? Please comment on the effectiveness of measures and alternatives.

Greatly　　　( )　　　　　　　　　　*if they have one or not

Moderately　( )

Minimally　　( )

Not at all　　( )

Don't know　( )