Library materials in primary schools:
their value, use, and management

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by

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Abstract

The principle aims of this dissertation are firstly to analyse the perceptions of various stakeholders in primary school libraries regarding the value attributed to and use made of library materials in primary schools, and secondly the ways in which library provision is evaluated. To fulfil the first aim several objectives were defined. These were to examine the value that education and library stakeholders place on the library; to identify the principle uses to which library materials are put, focussing principally on the use of books for information literacy, leisure reading and borrowing, and the creation of a book culture. To fulfil the second aim, concerning performance evaluation, the levels of policy creation and performance measurement shall be examined, along with stakeholder perceptions on this. Finally external ‘guidelines’ were examined for their impact on the levels of library provision.

This investigation is particularly timely. The government focus on education is as strong as ever, and there is an added pressure on accountability in public services through Best Value. It also follows a Library and Information Commission (2000) report that emphasises the importance of school libraries to the education process. Yet there have as yet been few studies as to how stakeholders perceive the value and function of a primary school library, and certainly no individual work that has assessed their methods of performance evaluation.

The methodology used in this dissertation was largely qualitative. No pre-conceived theories were formulated to be tested, and the conclusions from this study arise directly from the data collected. Stakeholders in primary school libraries, including teachers, librarians, and representatives of professional library groups, were all contacted and their views collected by questionnaires and interviews.

Some of the conclusions arising from the data collected are dispiriting. Despite the rhetoric surrounding the value of school libraries, education stakeholders admit that practice in reality is often very different, with the library taking second place to other, statutory, requirements. There is also little evidence of sophisticated
management of library resources, with only a handful of schools creating workable policies or assessing their performance in any way.

The conclusions are also bleak for external guidelines. Evidence suggests that many schools do not even have access to guidelines produced by such bodies as the Library Association or School Library Association. There is also little evidence that those who do use the guidelines have used them to ameliorate their levels of service.

However some of the conclusions arising from this dissertation give cause for hope. It is encouraging to conclude that many teachers and library stakeholders view the school library as a fundamental part of their school. Libraries in primary schools are perceived as being multi-functional entities who fulfil a variety of important roles for the pupils and staff. Furthermore it is shown that the majority of schools do put on ‘promotional’ activities involving books and literature for their pupils.

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1. Introduction

This section provides the reader with the context from which a study of primary school libraries, their use and evaluation, must work. Firstly it briefly looks at the political importance of ‘education’, from a central and local government perspective, then at the potential benefits that a well-equipped library can bring to the education process. Finally it looks at the current state of ‘performance management’ from within the library and education context, and also the current status of performance measurement within school libraries.

1.1. Education: the political context

To say that education has a high standing in central government priorities is to risk stating the obvious. It was on the back of their ‘education, education, education’ mantra that the Labour government swept to victory in 1997. Their attempt to keep education a key electoral issue was highlighted when Tony Blair chose to make the formal announcement about the date of the 2001 election from a South London school. A number of Government initiatives and reports have also signalled the centrality of education. Literacy hours, lifelong learning, homework clubs, the National Year of Reading, have all been introduced by a government with an apparent commitment to continuous education.

It is also clear that education is not simply a priority for policy makers of central government. Sheffield Metropolitan District Council, the authority in which this study is based, dedicates 33% of its spending on education. It has also recently produced a Best Value Performance Plan emphasising that education remains the council’s highest priority, with finance committed to education at the expense of other services (Sheffield Council, 1999).

This budgetary commitment reflects not only national policies but also the priorities and wishes of the people of Sheffield. The Best Value Performance Plan is informed by a strategy document produced by the Sheffield First Partnership, which
questioned Sheffield householders about their priorities: education came out as number one (Sheffield First Partnership, 1999:7).

1.2. The role of the primary school library

It was seven years ago that Streatfield and Markless (1994) claimed that there had been a lack of research into the benefits that could result from a well equipped, organised, and above all *used* school library. However the situation has now improved, and there has been more research examining the valuable role that book resources play in primary schools. School libraries have been found to have beneficial effects on learning in the following areas: curriculum support; literacy; development of information skills; and social and cultural development. These benefits will be discussed at greater length in the literature review. It is also worth noting that school libraries may provide children with the only opportunity that they have to interact with books and resources, as not all children will have access to books at home or be members of the public library (Raddon, 1984; Hirst and Pryke, 1986; Heather, 1984b).

1.3. Performance measurement

The benefits that can result from the use of a school library will only really have an impact on children if the service is effective; if it is well managed and evaluated. Performance evaluation has an important role to play in ensuring this effectiveness.

The measurement and evaluation of performance in the public sector is, like education, a government priority. The commitment to accountability can be found in central government’s recent legislation forcing local authorities to produce ‘Best Value’ plans, such as the Sheffield plan mentioned above.¹ It can also be found in the library world through the introduction of new public library standards and in

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¹ See [http://www.bestvalueinspections.gov.uk/](http://www.bestvalueinspections.gov.uk/)
education through the existence of OFSTED, the body responsible for school inspections.²

Standards and assessment are not only imposed externally. Researchers within the library field, and those dealing with children’s services, argue that performance evaluation can be a useful internal management tool. It plays an important part in policy creation and evaluation (Raddon, 1984), can be used for self-assessment (Audit Unit, 1996), and can help in establishing priorities (Heeks, 2000).

1.3.1. Methods of performance assessment

There are many methods of assessing performance and it is beyond the scope of the introduction to detail each technique. However it is worth drawing attention to the broad methodological split between quantitative methods of assessment and qualitative methods.

Quantitative methods of assessing performance focus on statistics and indicators that are easy to measure. One often-used example is book issues. The benefit of using statistical measures is that they allow quick and painless generation of performance data. It is also a relatively simple process to use quantifiable results as a quick comparison, allowing the manager to see where their school or library stands in relation to national standards, targets, or comparable institutions.

Unfortunately there are problems with the use of statistical data. The first of these is their sheer simplicity. They give no indication of the context of the institution being measured (Heeks, 2000). The problems that can result in such a situation are evident from the controversy surrounding school league tables. Another problem is that they do not measure the ‘impact’ of a service, be it a school, library, or school library, in that quantitative techniques do not measure the actual benefit that an individual gains from using the service.

Accordingly some researchers are advocating qualitative measures, such as those described in Linley and Usherwood’s (1998) *New measures for the new library*. This describes a ‘social audit’ technique in which stakeholders of the public library service, including focus groups of users and non-users, are encouraged to give their views on the performance of the library. This method takes account of context and social situations and so may offer an accurate picture of the level of service provision. However it is also expensive, and so difficult to implement in the majority of public services.

**1.3.2. Performance measurement in primary school libraries**

Despite the long history that performance measurement has in both education and library research (Abbott, 1994), there is very little empirical work dedicated to performance management in primary school libraries.

There are many guidelines suggested by institutions external to schools which have relevance to school libraries. Resources are mentioned in OFSTED inspection guidelines, and there are guidelines dedicated to school libraries produced by the Library Association and the School Library Association. However no investigation as to whether these guidelines are used, or what teachers’ perception of these may be, has occurred. The investigation of practices in performance evaluation in school libraries is diffuse in the literature, with no one work dedicated to this subject. Thus analysis of performance measurement in the primary school library remains an underdeveloped subject.

Therefore, it is not known what, if any, methods of performance evaluation are used in primary school libraries, a factor providing the principal motivation for this study. What is known is that, ironically for a government committed to accountability in schools and libraries, there is no statutory requirement for school libraries. This, coupled with underfunding, results in extremely variable standards in primary school library provision (Smith, 2001; Library Association, 1999).
1.4. Aims and objectives

The above section has shown from what context this dissertation is approaching its subject: the provision and management of library materials in primary schools. It is working from the belief that library resources offer a wonderful opportunity to contribute to learning and personal development within schools, but also from a context in which standards of provision are variable.

It also accepts the arguments that performance measurement can contribute to the effective and efficient running of services, but that it is not known whether techniques of performance measurement have yet permeated the running of primary school libraries. Finally it is also working from a context in which there is conflict as to the ‘best’ method of performance evaluation within library services as a whole.

1.4.1. Aims

This dissertation has two principal aims. Firstly to analyse how book resources are valued and used within primary schools, and then to investigate how these resources are evaluated.

1.4.2. Objectives

To fulfil the above aims this dissertation has the following specific objectives:

1. To examine how library materials are used with primary schools
   a) examine the value, and status, attributed to libraries in primary schools
   b) are children taught information handling skills using library materials?
   c) are children encouraged to borrow the resources for personal use at home?
   d) does the school encourage the creation of a ‘book culture’?

2. To examine the nature and current practice of performance measurement within primary school libraries
   a) whether performance measures are used at all
   b) if they are used, what is their nature, quantitative or qualitative?

3. To examine the perception of stakeholders in primary schools concerning methods of performance measurement.
4. To identify what, if any, national standards are used in the running of primary school libraries.

1.5. Limitations

This study focuses on the perceptions and opinions of various ‘stakeholders’ in primary school libraries: library co-ordinators (teachers responsible for the management of the library); teachers; schools library services; library professionals. However there are limitations to this study.

- Schools library services. Delegated funding has resulted in a situation in which there is less than 100% buy back into schools library services (Coopers and Lybrand, 1994). However, this dissertation will not focus on this development, or the implications of LMS for school library services. It will look at school library services only in respects of how they effect management of resources in schools, and how use is measured and evaluated.

- ICT. This dissertation makes no attempts to examine the use of ICT in primary schools, apart from when this use impacts upon performance measurement.

- The dissertation is not intended to ascertain how ‘good’ or ‘bad’ library provision in primary school libraries is, aside from where this impacts upon the objectives.

2. Literature Review
2.1. **Benefits of school libraries**

It has already been shown how important the government considers education to be. However, as hinted previously, there is less acceptance of the importance of primary school libraries in the educational process. The sections below will analyse the ways in which school libraries can contribute to learning.

### 2.1.1. Literacy

Firstly there is the role that well-resourced school libraries play in encouraging literacy. Literacy is a fundamental facet of the government’s education strategy. As can be seen from the initiatives outlined in the introduction, The National Literacy Strategy, the National Year of Reading and the introduction of Literacy Hours into schools are all testament to the commitment that this government feels towards literacy. Literacy is also a top priority for the Sheffield First Partnership, whose strategy emphasises the importance of raising standards in Sheffield schools so that they conform to the national average in literacy and numeracy (Sheffield First Partnership, 1999). Authors in the arena of children’s librarianship have also emphasised the continuing, vital, importance of literacy “regardless of ever-more sophisticated technology” (Elkin and Lonsdale, 1996:41; Elkin and Kinnell, 2000; Marriott, 1995).

Other authors are more specific concerning the continuing importance of literacy to education. Beard (1999) issued a report on the National Literacy Strategy that emphasises both the personal and the economic importance of literacy in today’s society. He suggests that the development of literacy skills does not only help children to read, it also encourages ‘systematic’ thought, increases critical faculty, and promotes an improved level of speech. Beard also posits that 60% of all jobs require a reasonable level of reading, and that literacy is vital in the world of work. He also points to the association between low levels of literacy, and high levels of unemployment and crime.

A well-equipped and used resource centre can evidently help in the teaching of literacy. Having a selection of books pitched at a variety of reading levels and
which are, above all else, interesting for children to read, will greatly complement the teaching of literacy within primary schools.

2.1.2. Information literacy

‘Information literacy’ covers a variety of skills including: the selection of potentially relevant information sources, the manipulation of these sources to locate relevant information within them, and then the bringing together and presentation of this information. While perhaps not receiving as much political attention as the easily quantifiable literacy targets, many writers are in little doubt as to the importance of these skills, and emphasise that information skills, like literacy, are becoming increasing vital to the economy (Heather, 1984a).

Information literacy, and the teaching of information handling skills, are vitally important for primary school aged children (Heather 1984b). Heather (1984a:18) underlines the importance of the school library in this process of education:

> if education is regarded as the acquisition of skills to enable pupils to learn effectively by themselves then the provision and use of a school library collection is central to the process

A view supported by Lonsdale (2000), and by IFLA and UNESCO (1999:24), who sanction this role in their School Libraries Manifesto:

> The school library provides information and ideas that are fundamental to functioning successfully in today’s society, which is increasingly knowledge-based. The school library equips students with life-long learning skills and develops the imagination, enabling them to live as responsible citizens

> It would be difficult to find a warmer endorsement of the school library’s value. Bodies such as UNESCO and IFLA evidently place a large emphasis on the development of information handling skills, and the importance of the primary school library’s role in this area. Objective 1b of this dissertation arises directly from
the issue of teaching information skills. It aims to identify whether primary school library materials are being used for this important purpose.

2.1.3. Beyond literacy

books are not about literacy, or data storage and retrieval. They are much more important than that; they are about life and death (Bolton, 1998:5)

As the above quote makes clear many writers considering the question of what benefit children derive from books eschew functionalist considerations of literacy and information handling skills and focus on the personal, social and cultural benefits that can result from a child’s interaction with books.

Evidently literacy skills are the beginning of this process, as “without them nothing substantial can be achieved” (Dombey, 1998:130). However these authors do suggest that access to a wide range of books beyond literacy teaching, will ultimately develop children’s intellect (Marriott, 1995), language skills, social integration (Library Association, 1991), and their emotional and cultural development (Elkin and Kinnell, 2000; IFLA/UNESCO, 1999; Blanshard, 1997; Elkin and Lonsdale, 1996; Marriott, 1995). Furthermore it is also claimed that the result of this focus on personal and social development will result in avid, long-term readers (Marriott, 1995; Hirst and Pryke, 1986).

However, while authors are in agreement that books and reading can provide children with the means to develop themselves emotionally and culturally, there is the suggestion that this role is being neglected in schools due to the emphasis on ‘technical literacy’. A recent training event held by the Library Association raised this issue. The course leader, Anne Harding, expressed concern that schools are becoming predominantly “judged by their SATs results”, and thinks that this can have a detrimental effect on less formal methods of learning, such as the use of books for leisure reading.

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3 The event, held on Tuesday 6 June 2001 at the Library Association Headquarters in London, was entitled, “Children and Libraries: Improving the fit”, and was led by Anne Harding, a specialist trainer in children’s reading and library services to children and young people.
Specifically she feared that the development of Literacy Hours, an hour dedicated to directed reading and learning each day, was leaving less time for teacher’s to simply read to their class. There was the suggestion that books chosen for class use were selected on their ‘technical’ merits, such as plot construction or authorial viewpoints, rather than for their value as ‘stories’. Ultimately Ms. Harding suggested that teachers now have “less time for promoting enthusiasm for actual reading”, and that the Literacy Hour sessions were in danger of creating “reading fatigue”.

This view is supported in some of the literature. Marriott (1995) voices the concern that schools have a tendency to focus on raising children’s technical literacy to a certain standard, but not beyond. He also implies that the stressing of technical literacy can degenerate children’s skills in other aspects of reading, in that they do not have an opportunity to develop critical skills which will allow them to choose appropriate literature for their own enjoyment. Marriott (1995:65) also supports Anne Harding’s belief that hearing stories read is important, stating unequivocally:

It is almost impossible to over-emphasize the value of this activity for children of any age or reading level

Many authors and commentators involved with children’s development stress the positive impact that reading can have at the primary school stage. However, as suggested above, there is a fear that the government’s emphasis on measurable results can be detrimental to allowing children the freedom to read books purely for leisure and recreation. This situation contributed to the development of objective 1c, which will assess whether library materials are principally used for literacy training, or whether provision is made for recreational reading, specifically the borrowing of books for home use.

The above sections have briefly suggested some of the many benefits, both educational and personal, that can result from a primary school library. However these benefits will only result from a library that is well managed, promoted and, above all, used. It is doubtful that this is the case with all schools from within Sheffield Local Education Authority or nationally. The following section details this
‘neglect’ of school libraries, and makes some suggestions as to how this neglect has come about.

2.2. The ‘deterioration’ of primary school library provision

‘Our school library money has been spent,’ cried Miss Rogers. ‘We just had to have a new coffee machine for the teachers’ staffroom, but buying that coffee machine does mean we can’t afford new library books for the next six months. Yet we need new books. We must have new books. What on earth are we going to do?’ (Mahy, 1999:2)

While this dissertation is certainly not implying that teachers spend money allocated to the library on coffee dispensing machines, the dire situation for library materials outlined above is not necessarily fictional. It appears that every piece of literature singing the praises of a well-stocked primary school library states in the same breadth the gap between the ideal and the real.

Professor Maurice Line, when president of the Library Association, stated that “as for school libraries, these are a national scandal” (Library Association, 1991:257). Similar comments have been made by Shimmon (1995), Elkin and Lonsdale (1996), Bolton (1998), and LISC (Library and Information Services Council, 1984), who all emphasise that provision in primary schools is “largely hit and miss” (Elkin and Lonsdale, 1996:247).

Inadequacy, according to the literature, can be found in almost every aspect of service provision in primary schools. If there is a library at all its stock is out of date, or inappropriate for children, accommodation and other resources are often inadequate or deficient (LISC, 1984).

Recent talks by children’s library specialists have confirmed this disturbing judgement. Trevor Dickinson, an ex-HMI with years of experience of assessing schools, condemns the outdated and often irrelevant material that can be found in primary schools, and concludes that much materials is “badly selected, well past its
date”. Ultimately he considers that children are too often “sold short on the library front”. Anne Harding, at the Children and Libraries training day at the Library Association, also raises the point of the poor choice of stock available at primary school. Harding quotes one 11-year-old girl as stating “at primary school there wasn’t much choice”. Harding herself concludes, “the size and quality of school libraries is immensely variable”.

While this situation is intolerable in itself, it is exacerbated by the fact that Britain is considered to have one of the worst records in school library provision compared to other Western countries (Heather, 1984a). LISC (1984) compares the situation in this country with that in American schools in which school libraries are seen as fundamentally important to the teaching and learning process, and are thus integrated with the learning policy of the entire school, with a much higher priority (Smith, 2001).

It is easy to see why Streatfield and Davies (1995:22) conclude that an “atrophy of school libraries has set in”, and why Heather (1984a:49), paints the following gloomy picture:

Most primary schools do have centralised collections of books, although they are usually inadequately housed in a busy area of the school. Staffing is usually limited to a class teacher who runs the library in his/her ‘free’ time or has half an hour a week allocated for library responsibilities. There are large variations in size of stock in primary school libraries and the amount of support from the school library service both within and between authorities.

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4 Comments made at a lecture on 6th April 2001 to MA Librarianship students at the University of Sheffield.
2.2.1. Causes of deterioration

The reasons for the dispiriting condition of primary school library provision are many, but can be thought of as originating either from within the school itself, or from more national factors.

Firstly, from within the school, there are deficiencies in budget allocated towards developing and expanding library resources in primary schools. Streatfield and Davies (1995) reported that 46% of schools surveyed for their report projected that their library budget would actually decrease in following years. Evidently, new and more relevant materials can not be purchased, accommodation and fittings can not be improved, without hard cash.

This situation has, some literature suggests, been exacerbated by the introduction of financial delegation to schools. Previously, Local Education Authorities were allocated funds from a central schools budget to pay for the provision of a schools library service in each Authority. The perceptions of the schools were that they were receiving these library services ‘for free’. With the advent of financial delegation schools have the choice as to whether to buy back into the schools library service, or to purchase library materials from other providers who have not been quality assessed. Now that schools library services ‘cost’, some schools are not buying back. This can result in a situation in which schools are buying low quality books and services from alternative providers, or a situation in which “when cash is tight, the book budget is standardly squeezed” (Elkin and Lonsdale, 1996:110).

While budget is evidently an important factor, it is not the only cause of poor provision. Some authors, principally writing from within the ‘library’ field, suggest that teachers do not have the level of expertise required to manage a ‘library collection’ within their schools (LISC, 1984). Teachers, some authors claim, do not know how to judge the quality of the resources that they are purchasing, with the resultant drop in the quality of the collection (Library Association, 1999; Bolton, 1998).
The issue of lack of expertise relates critically to the principal objectives of this dissertation. Elkin and Lonsdale (1996:79), claim that “no system is in place to ensure that pupils progressing through schools will encounter effective library services”. As has been shown in the introduction, measuring performance is one such system to ensure effectiveness. There is the suggestion that teachers, as a whole, do not have the training to implement performance measurement techniques that are relevant to library services (Elkin and Lonsdale, 1996). It is this perception that I shall be examining in objectives 2, 3, and 4.

Another factor that can negatively impact against primary school libraries is that they may not receive support from the head or senior management. This can effect both budget, as senior management decide on funding allocation, and on whether staff responsible for co-ordinating the library receive effective training. It would be a gross generalisation to claim that all headteachers or senior management do not recognise the importance of an effective book collection: some patently do. However this problem was identified as one which can contribute to poor services in LISC’s *School Libraries, the Foundations of the Curriculum* (1984). Some authors are also in doubt as to whether, even if the library has a high priority with heads and senior staff, services will actually be improved. Shimmon (1995) states that the problem arises principally from a lack of funding, and that library funding will always be sacrificed in favour of retaining teachers.

This suggests that poor levels of provision are only partially effected by attitudes within the school, and that national policies and positions have a greater impact on levels of service. This is a point of view with which many librarians writing about the levels of provision in primary schools concur. They make the point that, at present, there is no statutory level of library provision in primary schools, or even a requirement that primary schools contain a library area at all (Smith, 2001; Elkin and Lonsdale, 1996; LISC, 1984).

Ultimately, some authors consider that the ‘blame’ for this omission can be placed at the door of the government itself. An article in *Library Review* (Anon., 1996:31) makes the point that “the government needs to recognise that libraries are not an optional extra in the education process”. It also appears as though this
situation is unlikely to change radically in the future. LIC (Library and Information Commission, 2000: Foreword, Recommendation 3) in their report *Empowering the Learning Community* recommended that “consideration should also be given to making provision of school library and information services a statutory responsibility”. However the government’s response (2001: The Recommendations, recommendation 3, paragraph 7) makes it clear that this government at least will not be considering statutory provision as an option. They state “whilst we recognise the value of centrally managed learning resources, we are not convinced that introducing a new statutory burden on schools or local authorities would be the best way to raise standards. It is also counter to our policy of devolving responsibility for spending to a local level”.

The apparent lack of interest that the government displays in the teaching and learning potential of primary school libraries negatively impacts upon provision in other ways. Due to the fact that there is no central, national guideline on the provision of libraries, some authors have suggested that there is no clear policy framework for libraries in primary schools (LISC, 1984). This results in a situation in which many bodies, such as OFSTED, the Library Association, and the School Library Association, produce guidelines concerned with standards of provision. Almost inevitably these guidelines sometimes conflict, offering different advice to teachers responsible for co-ordinating libraries. This adds to the general confusion surrounding the expected levels of provision in primary schools.

Finally a third ‘national’ issue which contributes to the neglect of primary school libraries is the fact that they, conceptually, fall between the two ‘arenas’ of education and librarianship. It is library organisations, and ‘library literature’ that are principally concerned with standards and levels of provision. However, it is educationalists, teachers, sometimes with little or no library training, who are responsible for developing and organising the primary school library provision, and implementing these standards.

This conceptual dichotomy between ‘education’ and ‘librarianship’ in regards to primary school libraries was a powerful motivating factor in deciding the focus and emphasis of this dissertation. By collecting views from teachers and librarians
concerned with library services in primary schools, it is hoped that this dissertation can help to bridge this gap.

2.3. Performance measurement in primary school libraries

The introductory chapter gave some background information about performance evaluation within the general library context. This section of the literature review will analyse literature specifically related to performance measurement in primary school libraries. It focuses on three ‘external guidelines’ applicable to primary school libraries, OFSTED’s (1999a) *Handbook for the Inspection of Primary and Nursery Schools*, the School Library Association’s series of guidelines, and the Library Association’s (2000), *The Primary School Library Guidelines*.

Firstly, however, it may be useful to look in more detail about the ‘structure’ of performance evaluation. Fig. 1, below, is a simplified representation of a ‘service system’, within which the context of performance evaluation can take place.

![Fig. 1. The service system](image)

Inputs refer to resources, such as funding or staff-time that are put into a system. Processes refer to any activity that converts these inputs into outputs. Outputs refer to the direct result of a process. For instance, in a primary school library context, the output of a member of staff classifying material is a well-organised stock. The ‘impact’ of a service is less easy to define, and therefore to quantify, and can be described as the wider effect that a service will have on a user’s life. Following on the above example to its conclusion, it could be that the ultimate impact of a well-classified primary school library is the raising of educational standards.
Performance measurement can take place at any point on this system. Resources and staff-time can be measured, processes timed, outputs quantified. Impacts, while they can be evaluated, are more complex to ‘measure’. Impact can, for instance, be gauged using the ‘social audit’ technique described in the introduction, but can not, for example, be assessed by looking at management statistics derived from a circulation system.

While the system described above can clarify which ‘element’ of the service is to be measured, most authors writing about performance measurement, both within and without the primary school library sector, agree that performance measurement, to be effective, must conform to two factors. Firstly it must be linked to the goals and objectives of the organisation (Jowett and Rothwell, 1988; Office of Arts and Libraries, 1990; Abbott, 1994; Burton and Blagden, 1998). Evidently this assumes that the institution has defined goals and objectives, in other words, a library policy. Since this is an integral part of the performance evaluation cycle it was decided to assess whether schools have recognised the importance of developing a library policy, and this formed part of the questionnaire and interviews.

Secondly authors also agree that performance evaluation is at its most effective when it forms an integral part of the service, not an add-on (Walter, 2001). Walter also emphasises that this means that performance evaluation should be continuous. Once again, as this is an integral part of performance evaluation, it was decided to address the issue of continual performance assessment in the questionnaire and interviews.

2.3.1. External guidelines

External guidelines are relevant to measuring performance in primary school libraries in two ways. Firstly, like internal policy documents, they can set the standards and benchmarks against which primary school libraries can measure themselves. Secondly they can give practical guidance about how to measure performance internally. It is for these reasons that the knowledge and use of external guidelines forms a significant aspect of this dissertation, with relevance to objective 4.
Within the primary school library field there are many organisations that have a vested interest in producing external guidelines (LISC, 1984; Heather, 1984a). These are, overwhelmingly, associated with ‘bibliothecary’ rather than ‘education’, symbolic again of the ‘dual’ nature of the primary school library. Interested organisations include: the Library Association, the School Library Association, UNESCO, the British Library, and there are also guidelines produced on a regional level by Local Authorities, or work produced by individual authors.

Rather than welcoming the number and variety of organisations interested in, and producing guidelines for, primary school libraries, some authors suggest that this is itself a problem. Some of the guidelines, for example, conflict in the advice that they give, which could potentially produce confusion. LISC (1984:21) suggest that the consequence of so many organisations with a vested interest in primary school libraries is that: “advice, research and funding for initiatives are uncoordinated and the direction of development weak and uncertain”.

2.3.2. The School Library Association

The School Library Association (SLA) has produced a number of guidelines relevant to primary school libraries. These include: Development Planning for the School Library Resource Centre (1993); Organising Voluntary Help in the School Library (1996); Teaching Information Skills (1995); and, most relevantly, Designing and Planning a Primary School Library (1994), by Charlton. As mentioned above, an external guideline can be relevant to the evaluation of primary school libraries in two ways: providing benchmarks, and offering advice on methods of evaluation. Charlton’s guidelines fulfil both functions.

Charlton (1994) gives advice about developing a library policy, organising the library, collection management, accommodation, guiding and display, and refurbishment. This guideline document also provides some information on how to evaluate the primary school library. It provides a checklist, covering such aspects as shelving, signs and guiding, and heating and ventilation, with ‘adequate’, ‘inadequate’, and ‘replace or improve’ options to tick. The primary function of this list, however, is to offer teachers or library co-ordinators the opportunity to assess
current provision prior to a re-development. There is no mention of the importance of continual assessment, and no advice on measuring the effectiveness of the ‘working’ library, such as how to assess use, or how to assess user satisfaction.

There is literature evidence to suggest that some librarians do make use of SLA guidelines. Tilke (1995) mentions that he uses them as standards to monitor and evaluate the library provision of a secondary school library that he co-ordinates. However there is no literature evidence to suggest that these guidelines are used, or even that they are known, within a primary school library context. This was my motivation for including questions about these guidelines in the questionnaire and the interviews.

2.3.3. The Library Association’s ‘The Primary School Library Guidelines’

Another professional library group that has a vested interest in the management of primary school libraries is the Library Association (2000), who have produced a guideline document designed to support primary school library provision.

Like the SLA guidelines described in the previous section the Library Association’s guidelines cover many aspects of primary school library development. These include: library policy, staffing, funding, resources, organisation, literacy and information literacy, and judging success, in other words evaluating the service.

This document is more in-depth than those produced by the SLA, and offers some quite detailed guidelines. For example they suggest suitable dimensions for shelving units. They also, under the budgeting section, give suggested numbers of books based on pupil population, stating that they recommend 13 items per pupil.

While such quantitative measures may provide an easy to measure benchmark for those responsible for developing primary school libraries, there is suggestion in the literature that such measures can be misleading. Heather (1984a:5) suggests that “it is misleading to place too much emphasis on the quantity of the books provided without paying attention to their nature”. Blanshard (1997) concurs, stating that the emphasis on the quantity of stock can be detrimental to the quality of
library materials. However in the guidelines this quantitative guide is mitigated by
the inclusion of guidance on how to assess the quality of materials for the library.

The Library Association guidelines also advise on how to evaluate the service
internally. The guidelines stress the importance of measuring performance on a
regular basis. They state that an effective library “requires a continual process of self
review and evaluation which is both quantitative and qualitative” (2000:14). The
guidelines offer a set of performance indicators that can be used within a primary
school library. These are divided into: service input measures, quantitative and
qualitative; and service output measures, quantitative and qualitative. Some examples
of the performance indicators are as follows. Quantitative service output measures
include: the number of books issued, number of classes using the library, or number
of pupils using the library. Qualitative service output measures include an analysis of
how easy the library is to access, an assessment of the contribution of library
materials to achievement, and impact on pupils.

It should be clear just from reading the above examples that the quantitative
measures, even without an automated circulation system, are easier to measure than
the qualitative indicators. Furthermore the guidelines themselves are not particularly
useful at this point, and give little indication or advice as to how to measure the
‘impact on pupils’.

The Primary School Library Guidelines, despite the problems mentioned
above, would evidently be a useful tool for primary school library co-ordinators, both
for benchmarking their services, and for advice on how to carry out evaluation. It
also appears as though all primary schools have had the opportunity to access them.
As well as being freely available, both on the Library Association’s website or by
contacting the Association direct, a copy was sent to all primary schools and to heads
of children’s services in the Local Authorities (Douglas, 2001). The exhaustive
nature of these guidelines, and that fact that they are one of the few to actually
provide guidance on self-evaluation, was my motivation for including questions
about their use in the questionnaire and interviews.
2.3.4. OFSTED: ‘Handbook for Inspecting Primary and Nursery Schools’

The two guidelines described in the previous sections are both produced by library orientated organisations with a specific focus towards the internal management of the primary school library. However schools are, to be blunt, under no obligation whatsoever to use them.

OFSTED differs from these associations in three important ways. First of all, as the body responsible for the inspection of schools, any guidelines that they produce are bound to have more impact on the schools. Secondly the Inspection process is imposed externally, and the guidelines themselves are aimed at external Inspectors, not school management. Finally the handbook does not deal solely with the library, but covers all aspects of inspecting primary schools.

Library literature suggests that OFSTED pay little attention to primary school libraries. LISC (1984) state that the lack of guidance on libraries given by the Inspectorate and by advisors is damaging. ASLIB (1995:192), also perceived this as a problem:

We regret the low priority that we observe OFSTED and the Department for Education accord to school libraries in their Inspections and statements

ASLIB go so far as to press for a new regulatory body, OFLIB to be specifically responsible for the maintenance of standards and inspection of all library services, including those provided in schools.

In analysing the most recent handbook produced by OFSTED (1999a:106) to aid their inspectors in evaluating the effectiveness of schools, this neglect appears to continue. The ‘library’ itself is mentioned only once, under section 7, ‘how well is the school led and managed’. This brief mention is reproduced verbatim below:

You should judge the effectiveness of the library by the ways in which it promotes higher levels of literacy for all pupils; by the way it is a resource for personal study; by its contribution in encouraging pupils to read widely and confidently; and the
extent to which pupils value reading as a resource of pleasure and information. **Make your judgements and record your evidence only where provision has a significant impact on standards** (Emboldened original)

This statement clearly reflects the priorities of the inspecting body, and also gives an indication as to what they perceive the use of libraries in primary school should be. Literacy, inevitably considering government priorities, comes first, followed by personal information skills. Furthermore while reading for pleasure does get a mention, it is doubtful whether this aspect will be covered in the final Inspection Report as the guidance suggests mentioning the library only if it has a significant impact, good or bad, on standards. This results in a situation in which the library could receive “only 4 or 5 rather bland sentences” in the final inspection report (Findlay and Tibbits, no date:5), and it is very much up to the individual inspector as to whether they include it. To compound this problem inspection teams only have to include this section in a full inspection of schools. Libraries in successful primary schools, who qualify only to have a short inspection, do not have to be inspected at all.

This situation has created dismay in the library world. Douglas (2001:276), Professional Advisor for Children’s and School Libraries to the Library Association, commented that:

> OFSTED and other inspection agencies’ visits to school libraries are leaving many school librarians frustrated by an approach which ignores the significance of their contribution to learning and teaching across the school

Therefore one of the objectives of this dissertation is to assess the perceptions of primary school library co-ordinators about the attention that OFSTED gives to primary school libraries in their Inspections.

Generally speaking, there is very little literature that is concerned with standards and evaluation in primary school libraries. What literature there is, principally originating from the ‘library’ context rather than the ‘education’ context,
emphasises the importance of evaluation. Streatfield and Markless (1994:5) stress that measuring performance is essential to ensure the survival of the library:

Put bluntly, if the school library or learning resource centre is unable to demonstrate that it makes a real difference to the quality of teaching and learning in the school, then it will be seen as a low priority for expenditure at best, and expendable at worst.

There is even less literature which actually provides guidance to primary school library co-ordinators about how to measure performance internally, the Library Association’s (2000) *Primary School Library Guidelines* being the only document identified that does this in any depth.

There is also the suggestion that those standards and guidance on evaluation that do exist focus principally around quantitative measures such as number of books per pupil, or number of books issued. This is principally because these are a lot easier to identify and measure than qualitative measures (Raddon, 1984; Tilke, 1995). As mentioned in the introduction the over-reliance on quantitative measures ignores context, quality, and the impacts that the library could have on pupils.

There is a gap in the literature as far as performance measurement in school libraries is concerned. H. M. Inspectorate (1991:1) produced a survey of library provision in 42 primary schools. This suggested that evaluation is “weak in all but a handful of schools”. However there has been little work produced recently to update our knowledge of this situation, and little to suggest what stakeholders think about this situation, the use of external guidelines, or even their perception on the use of books. This dissertation aims to address these issues.
3. Methodology

‘Methodology’, in the context of this dissertation, is an amalgam of research philosophy, research strategy, and the actual research techniques used to gather data for analysis. In this chapter the description of methodology will be split, for clarity, along these lines. It begins with a description of the research philosophy, the overarching approach to the research question. It then moves on to the research strategy, in this case stakeholder analysis, which works from within the philosophy. Finally there is a description of the different techniques used to gather data. These include: literature review, preliminary interviews, questionnaires, and interviews with stakeholders. The analysis will include a description of the actual techniques used, and their success in accumulating data. The limitations identified in using this methodology shall be discussed at the conclusion of the chapter.

3.1. Research philosophy

This dissertation will make use of a qualitative research approach. This approach, termed ‘naturalistic inquiry’ by some authors, is differentiated from quantitative or positivist inquiry by its use of ‘grounded theory’. In grounded theory the researcher does not approach the research question with a pre-defined hypothesis. She or he collects the data around a research issue, and a hypothesis is generated, or grounded, in that data (Mellon, 1990).

This approach was deemed to be particularly applicable for this dissertation for many reasons. Principle among these is the fact that there is no well-established literature concerning performance measurement in libraries in primary schools. Therefore it was felt that there was not enough existing data to justify the imposition of a pre-defined hypothesis. It was also felt that the principle aim of this dissertation was to ascertain individual’s perceptions. Therefore it would be unjustified to attempt to ‘second-guess’ these perceptions.
It is also clear that, while perhaps not having the history, particularly in information studies, that a positivist approach does (Gorman and Clayton, 1997), the use of qualitative research philosophies is well supported. Mellon (1990), writing about research in information studies, makes clear that imposing preconceived hypothesis risks introducing preconceptions, and even misconceptions into the research process. Mellon also argues that a qualitative research philosophy is particularly suited to research within the information science arena. She (1990:3) points out that “in this age of automation, it is necessary for librarians to keep reminding themselves that theirs is a profession aimed at bringing information to people [original italics]”. Gorman and Clayton (1997) also address this point, arguing that qualitative research approaches have much to offer the information profession.

3.2. Research strategy: stakeholder analysis

The above section outlines my research philosophy. The research ‘strategy’ adopted, that of stakeholder analysis, is particularly suited both to the philosophy and the research question.

Stakeholder analysis is the identification of stakeholding groups in a certain situation, which is followed by an analysis of their opinions about some aspect of the service (Pickering et al, 1996). Relating this to the context of the dissertation means that, through literature analysis and preliminary interviews, I identified a set of stakeholders in primary school libraries. I then collected their views on aspects of this service, particularly the use of book material in schools and the evaluation of this use (see Fig. 2 for a ‘map’ of the stakeholders identified). Stakeholder analysis is a useful research strategy that identifies all ‘interested parties’ in a given situation, and permits generation of data on potentially disparate viewpoints. It therefore provides a ‘rounded’ and in-depth view of a particular situation.

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5 ‘Stakeholding’ simply means that they have some form of interest in the situation.
The identification of stakeholders in primary school libraries also determined how they would be selected. Teachers responsible for co-ordinating libraries in primary schools were my ‘representative informants’ (Mellon, 1990). These stakeholders supply the bulk of the research data. Therefore an attempt was made to include a sample of these from the research population, primary schools in Sheffield. The stakeholders originating from ‘external institutions’ such as the Library Association or the School Library Association, were ‘special informants’, selected for their unique position (Mellon, 1990), a smaller number of special informants will be sampled for interviews. The stakeholder identification also highlighted the fact that this dissertation is working in two fields, librarianship and, perhaps to a greater extent, education. Every attempt was made to ensure that both fields were represented in the data collection.

Fig 2. Diagram showing stakeholders in primary school libraries
The two sections above have indicated the research philosophy and the research strategy used in this dissertation. The following section addresses the individual techniques used to gather data. As mentioned in the introduction to the methodology section, ‘techniques’ and ‘philosophy’ are two separate entities, and adopting a qualitative research philosophy does not preclude the use of data gathering techniques that are more often associated with positivist research.

This dissertation will therefore ‘triangulate’ the techniques used to gather data, using questionnaires and interviews as the two principal data gathering techniques. Some authors suggest that triangulating techniques is not justified within a qualitative research methodology (Mellon, 1990). However it is felt that the use of questionnaires to generate statistical data, and interviews to generate ‘discursive’ data, will be an asset to this dissertation. It will allow for a fuller analysis of different aspects of the research situation and “compensate for inherent weaknesses in each approach” (Gorman and Clayton, 1997:32).

3.3. Literature review

To begin the research a literature review was carried out to identify key texts, authors and concepts associated with the area of primary school library resources. This continued throughout the course of the study.

The sources used in the review were many. A search of electronic library catalogues, such as COPAC, was used to identify useful texts, as was a search of electronic databases. The range of databases reflected the fact that this dissertation operates from within the education and library fields. ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center), LISA (Library and Information Science Abstracts), BEI (British Education Index), Emerald Library, and ASSIANET (a social science database) were all searched. Keywords used as search terms include: ‘school and library/ies’, ‘primary school books/resources/library/ies’, ‘school library service’, ‘school library evaluation/performance’. The terms used were designed to yield results relevant to the dual focus of this dissertation: to examine how resources are used, and how library provision is evaluated.
I posted a request for any useful information onto a discussion list ‘lis-educ’ which deals with information services within an education context, and received email lists of education articles from the SARA alert system. Finally I attended two conferences relevant to this dissertation. Children and Libraries: Improving the Fit, on 5 June 2001, and Beyond Performance Indicators, on 17 July 2001. These were useful in identifying potential contacts as well as identifying literature.

The success of the literature search was varied. There was found to be a relatively large amount of data on the use of books, particularly the importance of reading, in primary schools. There was also found to be a section of literature dealing with primary school libraries. However there was little research published in the area of performance management within primary school libraries. No entire piece of work was dedicated to this subject, and it received little more than a mention in books dedicated to primary school libraries. This view was supported by a respondent to my query on ‘lis-educ’ who stated that “there is precious little really” in this area (personal communication, 3 May 2001). The paucity of works on performance management in primary school libraries provided an additional motivating factor in this research.

3.4. Preliminary Interviews

A preliminary interview was arranged with Andrew Milroy from the Sheffield schools library service on 3 April 2001. At this interview Mr. Milroy agreed to act as contact and mediator with the schools. The organisational structure of school library services and public libraries in Sheffield was discussed, which aided in the process of identifying stakeholders. Issues surrounding primary school libraries were also touched upon; these included funding and local management of schools. The current status of research in performance evaluation in primary school libraries was touched upon. Mr. Milroy confirmed that there has been very little research carried out in this area.
Practical information about contacting schools for questionnaires, questionnaire design, and contacting schools for interviews was also given. Mr. Milroy suggested that contacting schools ‘blind’ was likely to result in a large number of non-respondents, and agreed to preface the questionnaire with a letter from the schools library service requesting co-operation.

A second meeting was held on 4 May 2001. At this interview the procedures for disseminating the questionnaire was finalised, and four schools were selected to approach for interviews.

3.5. Questionnaires

As mentioned in the introduction to the ‘techniques’ section, it was decided to use a combination of ‘quantitative’ and ‘qualitative’ data gathering techniques in this dissertation. The questionnaire represents quantitative methods. Questionnaires were sent to 81 primary schools within Sheffield Local Education Authority. 75 of these primary schools were either LEA controlled or grant-maintained, and 6 were independent schools. The questionnaire itself was directed towards teachers responsible for co-ordinating library provision in their primary schools.

Distribution of the questionnaires would be managed alongside the schools library service, which agreed to send out and receive responses through the internal mail system, thereby reducing postage costs. Questionnaire distribution was timed to avoid both the SATs, held at the conclusion of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 in all primary schools, which occurred during May, and the half-term holiday held between 28 May and 8 June 2001. Accordingly the questionnaires were distributed on 13 June 2001, with an initial request for completion by 29 June 2001. After this two weeks a reminder, and another copy of the questionnaire, was sent to all non-responding schools, with a request to complete by 10 July.
3.5.1. Sampling

There are, according to the OFSTED database of school inspection reports, 148 primary, junior and infant schools in Sheffield, excluding independent schools. This constituted the population of the study. It was decided that, to ensure a representative sample, and taking into account the potential for non-respondents, 75 LEA schools (51% of the population) should be sampled for the questionnaire. 6 Independent schools located in the Sheffield region were also included in the sample.

While aware that the sample need not be statistically random, due to the qualitative focus of the dissertation, ‘purposive sampling’ was used to render the sample representative, and account for different types of schools (Payne, 1990). Accordingly the sample included 13 junior schools (7-11 year olds), 15 infant schools (3/4-6 year olds) and 47 primary schools (3/4-11 year olds), representing the proportion of each type of schools found within the whole population. Within each age division schools were also chosen to be representative of ‘control’: county; voluntary aided, or grant-maintained.

Within these restrictions the sample was further chosen by two methods. Using OFSTED reports schools were selected to be representative of a number of different communities. Schools with a high-proportion of pupils speaking English as an additional language were chosen, along with schools with a very low proportion of such pupils. Furthermore schools were also chosen on the basis of their ‘standards’. Schools with high test results were selected alongside those with ‘low’ achievement. Finally, account was also taken of comments concerning the school library, or library provision.

The limitations of this method are not difficult to discern. Some OFSTED reports are upwards of 5 years old, and it is very likely that many features will have changed in the schools. It is possible that the OFSTED reports themselves are biased. In some cases no mention of the school library will result from the focus of an individual inspector rather than any neglect on the school’s part. To attempt to counter this potential bias comments made by Andrew Milroy at the preliminary interviews were also taken into account.
3.5.2. Questionnaire design

Each of the questions included in the questionnaire were designed to be specifically linked to one of the research objectives (Bell, 1999). This method was used to attempt to remove unnecessary questions that would generate irrelevant data. Therefore, as the purpose of this essay was not to gather statistical information on the current standards of primary school library provision, no questions on, for example stock size, were included in the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was designed to garner information on the perception of library co-ordinators towards the use of books, and also to gain practical information as to how, if at all, performance is measured in the library area, and whether any external guidelines are used in development of the school library. There are many different areas in which performance can be measured in school libraries (Tilke, 1998). To ensure clarity the questionnaire was designed to ascertain if performance is evaluated in only two areas: use of materials and user satisfaction.

The questionnaire contained single and multiple response questions, and also contained spaces that allowed, and sometimes encouraged, the respondent to give a narrative response.\(^6\)

3.5.3. Questionnaire Piloting

Piloting research techniques is a very useful way to check their success in the field. It can have implications for ascertaining how long the questionnaire takes to complete; identifying ambiguities; and identifying any areas which do not receive enough coverage (Oppenheim, 1992; Pickering et al, 1996; Bell, 1999). While a full-scale pilot was not carried out the questionnaire was sent for evaluation to members of the target group: a school librarian and a primary school teacher, to gain their responses.

Changes were made to various aspects of questionnaire design resulting from this pilot, including: length; question order; question wording; and layout.

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\(^6\) See Appendix 1 for a copy of the questionnaire.
3.5.4. Questionnaire Response

An initial deadline for the questionnaire was set at two weeks. At this deadline 28 of the 81 schools had returned a questionnaire, a total which includes one school which declined to fill in the questionnaire due to the pressure of an OFSTED examination.

The initial response rate, at 34.5%, was good for this type of study. To try to increase this rate a reminder, which included a second questionnaire and return envelope, was sent to all non-responding schools, with a further deadline of one week. After this second deadline a total of 54 questionnaires, 67%, had been returned. Out of these 54 questionnaires, 8 schools replied that they could not, for some reason, complete the questionnaire, which left the response rate 57%, a total of 46 usable questionnaires returned for the study. This compares favourably with other ‘library related’ research projects based in schools. For example Streatfield and Markless (1995) had a response rate of 26% from primary schools in their Library Power study.

3.5.5. Questionnaire Analysis

The purpose of this study, as has been stated, was not to generate reams of statistical analysis, and the questionnaire was used to provide secondary information to the interview. Therefore no statistical package, such as SPSS, was used for analysing the questionnaire. Analysis made use of a coding frame. This involves assigning numerical values to each response, which were then entered into an Excel spreadsheet, to derive simple statistical information. Discursive responses to the questionnaire were analysed by identifying thematic categories. It was decided to include partially completed questionnaires in the analysis process.

3.5.6. Additional questionnaires

An additional questionnaire, containing only two questions and an opportunity for comment, was sent to 8 Universities that have a Primary PGCE course. This questionnaire was designed to ascertain course co-ordinator’s perceptions on training in the management of materials.
Unfortunately this questionnaire yielded only one response. Reasons for this could include:

- The timing of the questionnaire. The email questionnaire was sent after University holidays had commenced.
- The questionnaire was occasionally sent to a ‘general’ education email, and relied on the recipient passing it to someone with Primary PGCE responsibility.
- It is possible that the lack of response reflects the low priority that teacher trainers place on the issues around managing resources in primary schools.

### 3.6. Interviews

Interviews were the primary method of data collection. Interviews were considered to be particularly applicable both to the research philosophy and strategy deployed in this dissertation. As Gorman and Clayton state (1997:23):

>The key assumption made by qualitative researchers is that the meaning of events, occurrences and interactions can be understood only through the eyes of actual participants in specific situations.

While many researchers would hotly contest this view, it was felt to be appropriate to analysing perceptions on use of resources, and evaluation of resources.

Interviews were held with a variety of stakeholders: library co-ordinators, children’s representatives in public libraries, representatives of senior management in certain schools, such as Governors and Headteachers, and representatives of professional bodies such as the Library Association.\(^7\)

\(^7\) See Appendix 2 for a full list of interview subjects.
3.6.1. Interview Sampling

Sampling for the interview, as for the questionnaire, was purposive, in that interview subjects were selected by virtue of their role (Payne, 1990; Gorman and Clayton, 1997). However, in the interview situation, the selection of schools to study was also influenced by accessibility. Andrew Milroy identified four schools with whom the schools library service had recent contact. The library co-ordinator was contacted in each of these schools and agreed to be interviewed. Through personal contact a further school was also willing to be involved in the study. Following identification of the schools local libraries in the region of the schools were contacted, and an interview with the Children’s Representative at the branch was requested. After these initial interviews, the headteacher of a further primary school was interviewed as a ‘special informant’ in an attempt to broaden the scope of the data received, and to include the perspective of a headteacher in the study.

Finally special respondents were identified from Sheffield Schools Library Service, the School Library Association, and the Library Association, who all agreed to be interviewed. Finally, and in an attempt to render the sample more representative, an ex-HMI of schools was contacted and agreed to be interviewed.

3.6.2. Interview Design

As Mellon (1990:48) states “freedom of discovery is inversely related to structure in the interview situation”. Taking this on board, each interview was unstructured. Interview Guides were created which gave brief headings of the topics to be covered in the interview, however these were very adaptable and each was flexible to the situation.\(^8\) A separate Interview Guide was created for each stakeholder, with the Guides for the Governor, teacher, library co-ordinators, and Children’s Representatives being influenced by the responses received from the questionnaire.

\(^8\) See Appendix 3 for an example of an Interview Guide.
3.6.3. Interview Analysis

Each interview held in relation to this study was taped. This was incredibly useful as it allowed much more information to be gleaned from the transcripts than from notes. It also allows more natural interaction in the research situation. The recordings of the interviews were then analysed on a ‘thematic’ basis. At each listening, themes and categories were developed to classify the responses of the interview subject (Mellon, 1990). These categories were continuously updated and changed as each interview was analysed.

The themes were grouped according to the main objectives of the dissertation. Accordingly they were grouped by: perceptions on the use of materials and their value; perceptions on the measuring of performance within the school library, which includes discussion on policy documents; and perceptions on the usefulness of external guidelines, and external assessment of the library by OFSTED.

3.7. Limitations

Research philosophy:

- It is inevitable that the researcher brings personal or cultural bias to the research situation (Mellon, 1990). These biases can be subconscious, and not apparent to the researcher, or they can be acknowledged. In this dissertation the biases arose from an analysis of the literature and also from my position in the ‘library’ field. Firstly an analysis of the literature suggested that performance measurement was an underdeveloped technique in primary school libraries. I therefore went into the data gathering process with this presumption. Secondly my status as a ‘library researcher’ could be incompatible with the ‘education’ context of this dissertation. I went into the study convinced of a library’s intrinsic worth to education and to children.
Research strategy:

- Not all stakeholders identified in the diagram above were able to contribute to the study. Attempts were made to contact all stakeholders, apart from parents and pupils, shown in the diagram. However no data was gathered from LEA Advisors or OFSTED due to non-response.

Questionnaire:

- Sampling. Methods of choosing a sample for the questionnaire, based on OFSTED reports and Andrew Milroy’s comments, were both flawed in that they contain the potential for bias.
- Design. Some questions, with hindsight, could have been rephrased for greater clarity. For example questions 10 and 11 were not clear as to whether the respondent should tick one answer only, or all that apply. With reflection this question may have been more appropriate as a ‘ranking’ question.
- Design. Some questions introduced bias. For example question 18, “Do you consider that library materials […] provide a valuable service to the school?” would be very difficult to answer ‘no’ to. This question may have been more appropriate as a Likert scale.
- Design: In some questions more information would have been useful. For example question 26 asked whether the library co-ordinator had used any of the external guidelines offered as examples, but no further information was requested as to the reasons why the library co-ordinator either had, or had not, used the guidelines. This would have proved very useful information for objective 4.

Interviews:

- The flexibility in structure resulted in a situation in which some subjects from the same stakeholder group were asked different questions. Making comparison in some cases difficult.
4. Community Profile

This chapter gives a brief outline as to the social and educational context of this dissertation. The information provided by this chapter, while useful in giving an indication as to the context in Sheffield, and the schools that were chosen as interview cases, should not be taken as being completely accurate and up-to-date. Some of the sources used for this chapter are several years old, and while every attempt was made to locate recent information, some details will inevitably have changed.

4.1. Sheffield

4.1.1. The Social Context

Sheffield is a large city, the regional capital of South Yorkshire, with a population of 531,000. There are large disparities in social conditions within Sheffield. Some wards, largely concentrated in the West and South, contain very favourable economic conditions. Ecclesall ward, for example, ranks 8105 in the Index of Deprivation 2000, out of 8414 wards. Conversely it is also recognised that “the City includes some of the poorest housing estates nationally” (OFSTED, 2000a:2). Southey Green, a ward lying to the north of Sheffield City centre, ranks 43 in the Index of Deprivation 2000. Regeneration of the City is the ultimate goal of the Council and the Sheffield First Partnership (1997), who both recognise the importance of quality education in this process.

4.1.2. The Education Context

Sheffield Local Education Authority contains 148 primary schools, excluding independent schools. As mentioned above, and discussed in Chapter 1, the Council’s major priority is education, with 33% of funds being directed towards education.

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9 The Index of Deprivation 2000 was formulated by a team from Oxford University, for the Department for the Environment. It ranks wards in England, a total of 8414, according to a set of social indicators, including: income, employment, health deprivation and disability, education, skills and training, and housing and geographical access to services. The ranking runs from 1, which is the most deprived, to 8414, which is the least deprived (National Statistics, 2001)
Within education, Sheffield’s Education Development Plan highlights ten priorities for the City, amongst these are literacy and numeracy targets (OFSTED, 2000a).

However, despite the fact that education and literacy are foremost amongst the Council’s priorities, Sheffield does have problems with its educational standards, with “overall standards […] lower than national averages at every Key Stage” (OFSTED, 2000a). OFSTED’s *Inspection of Sheffield Local Education Authority* (2000a) also highlights some other disturbing figures. 42% of primary schools, they claim, require some significant improvement to standards and quality of teaching, compared to only 28% nationally. The number of exclusions in primary schools in Sheffield is higher than the national average, as is the amount of unauthorised absences.

The following sections give the social and educational context for the five schools that were chosen as principal interview subjects. To ensure confidentiality, these schools shall be referred to as School, A, B, C, D and E.

The description also includes information about the school’s libraries, drawn from the relevant OFSTED reports, and from observation carried out in the course of this dissertation. These schools, while chosen principally for their availability and their willingness to be included in the study, are also representative of different social environments. School D serves an affluent, semi-rural area of the City. School B serves an urban, but relatively affluent area. School A and School E serve areas which contain mixed social conditions, and School C serves an inner-city area with difficult social conditions.

\*10 At Key Stage 2 (11 years), the Sheffield average of pupils attaining Level 4 and above (the target level) is only 68.5%, comparing to a figure of 75% nationally, and an eventual target of 80% (Beard, 1999).
4.2. School A

School A is located in the heart of an estate south-east of Sheffield City Centre. It is in a ward which is relatively deprived, ranking 1766 on the Index of Deprivation 2000 (National Statistics, 2001). According to statistics taken in 1997, the percentage of children in households containing no earners was 21.6% (Sheffield First and Department of Information Studies, Sheffield University, 2000). Educationally the ward is also slightly below national targets. By 1998 figures, the average Key Stage 2 (KS2) score achieved by pupils in this ward was 3.75, with the target being 4 (National Statistics, 2001).

School A is a large school that draws its pupils principally from the local estate. Correspondingly the school’s pupils have very mixed social backgrounds. At the time of Inspection, 20% of School A’s pupils were entitled to claim free school meals, a figure which roughly corresponded to the national average (OFSTED, 1999b).
Data on standards of achievement in KS2 shows that School A is an improving school. In 1999, at the time of the OFSTED inspection, only 58% of it’s pupils were achieving a score of 4 or above at KS2 English. However, the School Performance Tables 2000, collated by the Department for Education and Employment, suggest that there has been rapid improvement, with 70% of pupils now scoring a 4 or above in English (DFEE, 2000).

The 1999 Inspection report was critical of the library provision supplied by School A. There was the suggestion that “the library is very small and not well enough organised to develop pupil’s research skills” (OFSTED, 1999b:6). The Inspection team concluded that library provision was one of the school’s key weaknesses, and urged re-development in this area.

At the time of my visit there were two libraries present in the school, one serving KS1 and one serving KS2. The school is due to move to a new building at the beginning of the coming academic year, at which point the two libraries will be amalgamated into a room that will also contain a computer suite. A local library that is in easy walking distance serves the school.
4.3. School B

School B is a large school of approximately 500 children, serving the Hillsborough area of Sheffield, to the northwest of the City Centre. Hillsborough ward is an area containing mixed social conditions. The Index of Deprivation ranks it as 3121 out of 8414, though for Sheffield this is ‘above average’ (National Statistics, 2001). Hillsborough compares favourably to School A’s ward when looking at the 1997 figures which show the percentage of children in households containing no earners: Hillsborough’s figure is 13.7% (Sheffield First and the Department of Information Studies, Sheffield University, 2000). Educationally however, there is little to choose between the two wards as far as the average score achieved by KS2 pupils are concerned. School A’s ward scored, as mentioned above, 3.75, with Hillsborough’s being only slightly better at 3.76 (National Statistics, 2001).

School B’s last OFSTED report, in 1998, shows a school containing pupils of mixed social backgrounds. The majority of the pupils are ethnically white, with 11% of the total pupil population being eligible to claim for free school meals, described as broadly average for the time (OFSTED, 1998). At the time of Inspection School B’s results in KS2 were described as slightly below the national average. This is still the case now. Performance Tables published in 2000, suggest that, in English at KS2, 64% of pupils are gaining a standards of level 4 or above, compared to an English average of 75%, and a Sheffield average of 68.5%, evidently placing School B below School A as far as KS2 results are concerned (DFEE, 2000).

The OFSTED report published in 1998 makes little reference to the library or to library material provision in School B, aside from mentioning that the level of resources are adequate and that they are readily accessible (OFSTED, 1998). At the time of my visit to the school there were two libraries, one serving KS1 and one serving KS2, each having its own ‘library co-ordinator’. The KS1 library was currently in a state of development, having been moved from an unsatisfactory location in the main hall, into a small, but dedicated library area. The school was at the point of installing Internet access in the library.
School B is served by Hillsborough branch library, which is a short walk from the school. Hillsborough Library, situated in Hillsborough Park, has a separate room dedicated to the children’s section. Its collection serves all age ranges of children and includes non-book material, such as spoken book cassettes.

4.4. **School C**

School C is situated in the heart of a complex of flats very near to the City Centre, in the Castle ward of the City. Castle ward is a deprived area, ranking just 198 on the Index of Deprivation 2000 (National Statistics, 2001). Accordingly, the 1997 figures of children in households with no earners are also very high, at 40.9% (Sheffield First and the Department for Information Studies, University of Sheffield, 2000). The ward also has a low average pupil score at KS2, at 3.52 (National Statistics, 2001).

School C is a small school, of only approximately 180 pupils. Most of these are drawn from the flats that overlook the school, and some are drawn from the surrounding estate. At the time of the last Inspection, in 2000, 57% of the school’s population were entitled to free school meals, which was almost three times the then national average (OFSTED, 2000b). School C also has the highest proportion of ethnic minority pupils from the ‘subject schools’, at 40% of the school’s population (OFSTED, 2000b).

School C, perhaps unsurprisingly, struggles to maintain standards. The school has been subject to Special Measures in the past, though these were removed at its last inspection. The DFEE’s performance tables for 2000 show that 38% of School C’s pupils attain a Level 4 or above in English, well below both the Sheffield and national average (DFEE, 2000). Standards in Maths and Science are also below the national averages, at 58% and 81% of pupils attaining a Level 4 or above respectively. Literacy and numeracy standards are a key issue for School C, and OFSTED (2000b) remarks that standards are improving.
At the time of my visit the school had no designated central library area in use, the library having been displaced by an IT training suite. However the school has ambitious plans to redevelop the library, and has put aside a room for this purpose. The school is served by a library that is a ten-minute walk away.

4.5. School D

Contrasting to School C, School D is set in the semi-rural Dore ward, to the south of Sheffield City centre. It is an area of good social conditions, ranking 4369 on the Indices of Deprivation 2000 (National Statistics, 2001), with only 10.7% of children living in a household with no earners (Sheffield First and the Department of Information Studies, the University of Sheffield, 2000). Unsurprisingly again, Dore’s pupils also perform well in their SAT scores, with the average score an impressive 4.17 (National Statistics, 2001).

School D is a large school which draws its student population principally from the surrounding areas (OFSTED, 1999c). Accordingly only 7% of the pupils are entitled to free school meals, a figure below the national average at the time of Inspection. Attainment of pupils on entry to the school are found to be high. These high standards are maintained through the school and 93% of School D’s pupils attained a Level 4 or above in KS2 English in 2000 (DFEE, 2000), with standards in maths and science both being above the national average.

School D’s OFSTED report (1999c:18:32), was, however, very critical of the levels of library provision within the school. There was the suggestion that “poor access to the school’s library books limits opportunities for both teachers and pupils”, and that “the present library does not provide sufficient stimulus to encourage the development of higher order reading and research skills”. OFSTED suggested that the redevelopment of the library should be a ‘key issue for action’. Redevelopment of the library, which includes both KS1 and KS2 materials, was still in process at the time of my visit in June 2001, and it was not, at the time, available.
for use by pupils. Access to public libraries is also problematic for School D, as it is effectively between two libraries’ ‘catchment areas’. This renders the distances to the public libraries difficult to overcome, a ‘deprivation’ not suffered by many inner-city schools.

4.6. School E

School E is situated just off the A57 to the south east of Sheffield City Centre in the Handsworth ward. Handsworth is an area containing mixed social conditions. It ranks 1314 on the Indices of Social Deprivation (National Statistics, 2001) and 24% of the ward’s children are in households with no earners in 1997 (Sheffield First and the Department of Information Studies, the University of Sheffield, 2000). Handsworth lags slightly behind School A’s ward in terms of KS2 test scores, with 3.69 being the average score of the ward’s children (National Statistics, 2001).

School E contains a broad social mix in its pupils, and also has issues surrounding the high rate of pupil turnover (OFSTED, 2000c). 36% of its pupils are entitled to free school meals, well above the 2000 average. Educationally standards at School E are below average in English and maths, and slightly below average in science.

As with so many other OFSTED (2000c) reports, School E’s Inspection team makes scant reference to the school libraries in their report. There are separate KS1 and KS2 libraries, with the KS1 library being located in a dedicated area, which is, however, prone to being used as a ‘dumping ground’. The KS1 library at the time of my visit was used regularly by pupils for Literacy training, but had not yet developed an issue system, which was the ultimate goal. Public library provision comes in the form of Woodhouse Library, which is approximately ten minutes walk, along a busy road, from the school.
Chapter 5. Results: Use and value of libraries

5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents results associated with the use of books and libraries in primary schools and the value attributed to them. It will also analyse the extent to which the primary schools in this study fostered a ‘book culture’ within their school. This chapter therefore corresponds to objective 1.

It commences with an assessment of the stakeholders’ perceptions around their library: how important they think it is to the school, what library co-ordinator’s think about their role, and other related issues. This section will show the extent to which a ‘library culture’ has been developed amongst the staff and pupils. Then it moves on to examine the practical use to which libraries are put, and assesses whether there is any difference between perceptions about the use of ‘books’ and the use of ‘libraries’, as the two concepts are not necessarily synonymous.

5.2. The value, and status, attributed to library provision in primary schools

5.2.1. The priority placed on libraries

Encouragingly 93% of stakeholders from the education sector asserted that libraries provide a valuable service to the school.11 In fact only two schools, 4%, responded that they did not consider that the school library contributed to the school in some important way. Furthermore one of these two schools replied that the only reason they did not feel that their library was of value was because it was not well developed: “Not enough materials/books. Lack of money/funding”. The remaining school that responded in the negative replied that “information is nearly always accessed via computers”.

Raddon (1984:105) makes the point that it is possible for standards of library materials to be “used as a yardstick to measure success and good provision on a national level”. This important role was not lost on some of the interview subjects

11 The percentages given in the result chapters are rounded up or down to the nearest half.
drawn for the education sector, who recognised that the primary school library has the potential to be a positive symbol of a successful school. One interview subject stressed that the head teacher “wants the library to be the showpiece” of a recent school development, other respondents made similar points:

“It’s an easily visible, almost quantifiable […] aspect of a school’s development”
“We are very conscious that having a living library in school is something that is essential”

These responses would suggest that those within the education sector consider the library a priority. However other data collected appears to indicate that while the ‘concept’ and ‘idea’ of the library is valued, in practical terms the library can not always be afforded a high status.

One arena in which this discrepancy is made apparent is the distinction in views between professional librarians and education stakeholders in the discussion of whether schools view the development and maintenance of their library as a priority. All professional librarians questioned, perhaps unsurprisingly, felt that the library should be a priority within the school. They also indicated that they considered that the library would see tangible improvement if it were viewed as a priority. In response to a query about how schools can allocate funding to the library when budgets are so tight, one respondent answered “But then some can do it, and that’s down to what you prioritise”. Others concurred:

“In the schools that are really committed you see a tremendous improvement, and a high level both of resourcing, and quality resourcing, but also in effective management and effective teaching of information literacy”
“You know, it’s priorities isn’t it? Is the school library […] how important is it in the set up?”

Education stakeholders, who are responsible for actually delivering primary school library services, suggest that the reality is slightly different, and while they
may want the library to be a priority for their school, practical issues, particularly funding, complicate this:

“You know there’s other priorities. I mean it is a priority, and they’ve been very good, and we’ve quite a good input of money. But you need a lot for a library”

“The budgets are so tight now, to pay for people to look after the library is the bottom of the list really”

“There are so many other things that people want as well”

This slight distinction in views is replicated in the discussions surrounding the relative value that stakeholders attribute to the presence, or not, of a central collection of resources within the school rather than resources being dissipated in the classrooms.

Representatives drawn from the ‘library profession’ all agreed that they consider the presence and management of a central collection as of equal, and often more, importance than classroom resources. The reasons given for this preference differ, one representative considered that a central resource facilitates effective management:

“[…] We do encourage them to develop a centrally located library if at all possible. So it can be centrally managed and organised”

Others suggest that a central resource is valuable in that it provides access to resources for the whole school, or as one interview subject states “something that everybody can use”, rather than a classroom resource with comparatively limited access:

“[a central collection] should be as significant, if not more significant than [a teacher’s] classroom activities. Because it is a whole school resource – it impacts on the whole of the school”

However not all stakeholders within the education community support the view that a central resource should be of higher priority. Streatfield and Markless (1994) in their survey of library provision in primary schools identified a ‘tension’
between holding collections centrally, or holding them in a classroom. The evidence
collected for this study suggests that this tension has not diminished, with some of
the interview subjects from the education environment expressing the view that, in
practice, their priorities are management of their classroom. One library co-ordinator
commented:

“If I do something in the library it means that I don’t get my
classroom sorted, and my priority is the classroom”

Once again a variety of reasons are given for the emphasis on classroom
collections. One library co-ordinator points out that the central resource in her school
is so small that disseminating resources actually increases access. Another states that
the National Literacy Strategy, and funding associated with it, has brought a lot more
resources into the classroom, with a lot more working now classroom based.

Aside from the debate on where the library stands as a priority for
individuals, all stakeholders support the view that the ‘priorities’ for the school as a
whole, whatever they may be, are set principally by the senior management,
particularly the head teacher.

“the head teacher enthuses everybody”
“the other crucial feature in all of these things is the role
of the head”
“if any library is really going to work it’s up to the head and the senior
management of the school”
“So the head, he or she, prioritises the funding”
“I think it’s largely down to the management team – to be quite
honest – what percentage of money is spent on books”

The impact of this on the level of library provision, and its status, in primary
schools is variable. One subject school had a headteacher and senior management
team who were committed to developing a high quality school resource centre. In
this case money had been put aside for the purpose of purchasing new material,
introducing an automated circulation system, and the employment of a part-time
‘library assistant’. Another school, however, which had conflicting priorities, had not
allocated any budget at all for library provision in the coming year. So while it is not
the case that the headteacher’s influence on the profile of the library within a primary school necessarily leads to its ‘neglect’, it certainly means that provision, both across Sheffield and across the country, is variable to the extreme, dependent as it is on an individual’s viewpoint.

The influence of senior management, which has also been noted in some of the literature (Streatfield and Markless, 1994; Coopers and Lybrand, 1994) has implications for whether the library is developed year-on-year. Since library provision is not statutory, those that set priorities could decide to withhold money for library development as other priorities impose themselves. Some of the evidence collected indicates that the stakeholders contacted for this study perceive that there is a lack of commitment shown to primary school libraries.

For example most stakeholders consider that funding allocated to the primary school library is precarious at best. One library stakeholder comments that “[primary schools have] not got this policy of replacing stock on a regular basis’. This is also supported by education stakeholders: “But I do notice that this time there is no money for the library […] we’ve always had a budget, a library budget […] But there isn’t one in this new budget”. Another stakeholder from the education sector stated that this continual commitment to developing library stock would be one of the first expenditures to suffer a budget cut:

“When schools are under financial pressure that’s unfortunately one of the things that tends to go first, […] a regular updating of the school’s stock of books”

This data would appear to suggest that, despite the 93% of library co-ordinators who responded to the questionnaire stating that they felt that libraries made a valuable contribution to their school, there is a problem with how, in practice, the library is perceived. Library stakeholders emphasise the importance of a central area for books, and the need to constantly update stock. However in practice staff may often look to their classroom resources first, headteachers may have conflicting priorities, and the library is sometimes perceived to be the service at most risk from removal of funding.
5.2.2. Staffing

This equivocal perception of school libraries within the education sector is highlighted again when issues of staffing are investigated. The questionnaire and interviews aimed to examine how primary school libraries are co-ordinated at the strategic level, how they are run on a day-to-day basis, and, more importantly, how those involved in managing the library perceive their function. These questions were designed principally to investigate the importance attached to the library within the school as a whole, and also by individuals directly responsible for its management. It questions whether the library is seen as a worthwhile responsibility and allocated sufficient time and resources for management.

While aware that most stakeholders consider the perception of senior management regarding the library to be of principle importance, the import of individual’s perceptions of the library can not be over-emphasised, particularly if the individual in question is the library co-ordinator (Marriott, 1995). Streatfield and Markless (1994:179) go so far as to make the following comment: “we were left in no doubt by the end of the project that the single most important factor leading to effective use of libraries in both primary and secondary schools was a positive attitude by teachers”.

When speaking of strategic management of libraries, the evidence suggests that you are rarely referring to professional ‘librarians’. One library stakeholder commented “I’ve come across, I think, four librarians in England” in the primary school sector. My research showed that those responsible for co-ordinating the library strategically are overwhelmingly teaching staff. It was also the case that none of the interview subjects held solely a ‘library’ responsibility, and that this function was combined with other roles. The other responsibilities of library co-ordinators were various, but they did tend to follow a pattern. For instance the library often came under the responsibility of English or literacy co-ordinators. In other cases the Deputy Head or Key Stage co-ordinator took on responsibility for the library. This indicates that the situation has not improved since the publication of the LISC (1984) report, which commented on the fact that the majority of school libraries would be staffed by teachers for whom the library is an additional responsibility.
Furthermore those charged with responsibility for co-ordinating the library express very mixed opinions towards their responsibility. One library professional states that in her experience teachers are often “lumbered” with the library role, and while the library co-ordinators themselves did not use such negative language, the data gives the impression that the role is allocated rather than chosen.

“You know, somebody’s got to do it”
“I inherited it as part of my overall responsibility”
“I’d also prefer someone else to actually have a specific library responsibility”
“I just became part of [my responsibility] really”
“Well I think it was kind of there was nobody else to do it!”

The reasons given for this lack of motivation about library responsibilities is, unsurprisingly, principally associated with time:

“And then the Literacy Hour came along and I have very little time. I have no time. I’m a full class teacher. I’m co-ordinating the literacy […] and I have no non-contact time to do the library”
“I have so many other things to do”

The effect that this lack of time, due to other responsibilities, has on the time that library co-ordinators actually dedicate to their library duties is shown in the chart.
above (fig. 4). As this chart suggests not only to library co-ordinators feel some equivocation about their responsibility, they also do not dedicate much time to the management of the library in practice. 41% of questionnaire respondents dedicated no time at all to library responsibilities, and only 26.5% dedicated more than 1 hour to the service per week.

This was a problem identified by H.M. Inspectorate (1991:2) who recognised that library time is often squeezed when a co-ordinator has varying responsibilities:

the almost total absence of non-contact time for library work, allied to what is often a multiplicity of other key responsibilities, not least the responsibility of full-time teaching across the whole curricular range, creates difficulties for those charged with library responsibilities

The problem was also brought up by Morrison and Scott (1994:2), who stress that library co-ordinators often have “multiple or cross-curriculum responsibilities”. The situation, according to the evidence has not improved. However it may be wrong to assume that this indicates a truly negative attitude to the library by teachers. Rather it shows that in a situation which is highly pressured in terms of resources and time, non-statutory elements such as the library, often slips down the list of school priorities

![Bar chart showing how libraries are staffed on a day-to-day basis](image)

**Fig. 5. Bar chart showing how libraries are staffed on a day-to-day basis**

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This under-resourcing in terms of staff can also be highlighted in how the library is actually run on a day-to-day basis (see fig. 5 above). 33% of questionnaire respondents replied that their library is not, in fact, staffed at all during the day, a figure which exactly corresponds to that found in Morrison and Scott’s (1994) study. Of the 61% that did have some form of staffing the models for this varied, though pupil and parent volunteers were popular choices. It was also the case that many of the respondents indicated that where staffing existed it was certainly not carried out on a full-time basis, with many receiving support for only a part of the day, such as 1hr or ¼ hr.

The responses to the issues of staffing, both strategic and day-to-day, were varied amongst the stakeholders. While there was the implication, discussed above, that some co-ordinators feel that they have been ‘allocated’ a library duty, there is surprisingly little call for a dedicated library post from either the education sector or the library sector. The same interview subject who expressed a desire to see somebody with direct library responsibility (p. 51) also commented that she did not consider that that would be a full-time post, she also suggested that they could be “paid at a lower rate just to come and meet out small, modest needs”. A statement that also raises questions about how the education sector perceives ‘librarians’, with the suggestion that they should receive lower payment. Other stakeholders from the education sector agreed that primary schools do not require a full-time librarian, or even full-time non-qualified staff, for the running of their resource centre, one member of a senior management team suggested that: “I don’t think a school this size would require it”.

The employment of a full-time member of staff to run the library is beyond the scope of many primary schools. There are also many practical impediments, such as money and time, which inhibit the management of library resources by teacher co-ordinators. Another potential impediment to the effective management of the library is whether staff are trained in materials management, another factor which indicates the priority of the library within a primary school, and the importance that is, or is not, attached to it.
Representatives from the library community emphasised the importance of training in the primary school context:

“there’s a real need for in-service training in the library territory, it’s absolutely crucial”

They were also keen to stress that there are a variety of channels through which training could be accessed. This includes training offered by school library services, and by the School Library Association, which offers training tailored to those managing both secondary and primary library services.

The amount of ‘library’ training identified in the population was scarce. Only six, 13%, of respondents had received some form of library training. The delivery model of the training received by the library co-ordinators varied. Three of the six had prior experience or qualifications as librarians, and two had received training from the local schools library service. The remaining respondent had received training from within their school. None of the interview subjects had received any form of training in how to develop or manage a primary school library, though one expressed her intention to attend a forthcoming training session.

Some of reasons given for the rare instances of training are practical, such as money. However one of the library stakeholders questioned intimated that some library co-ordinators were not really aware that they required any training to act as a library co-ordinator in a primary school:

“Because quite often they are so very busy they don’t actually know how much they don’t know”

The responses from some education stakeholders seem to support this point of view. One library co-ordinator, in response to a question about training responded, “We don’t categorise that deeply really.” This suggests that she considered training only in the light of categorisation, and did not realise the importance of other elements in the managing of services. Another suggested “I don’t know whether I need any more [training]”. This attitude could indicate that a minority of education stakeholders do
not realise the range of activities involved in the management of library provision, and suggests that they have quite a limited view of what a ‘librarian’ is responsible for.

However this response was not found widely, and the majority of library co-ordinators did indeed recognise that training in library management would be useful for their library, and would directly impact upon the level of service. Unfortunately the situation was such that these views were predominantly expressed through stating what they have missed by not attending training, not through any benefits that they have gained by attending sessions.

“there’s still lots of questions I need to ask”
“Well it’s a bit overwhelming actually. I’m not quite sure what I’ve taken on”
“I’m sure it must have held us back […] yes it has held us back”
“We’re still floundering over little things”

Others suggested that this lack of training could result in a situation in which children’s information literacy development is being threatened:

“We don’t know how to categorise the non-fiction. And we’re very worried […] about the children realising which is fiction and which is non-fiction”

There is also a very real sense of frustration amongst some of the library co-ordinators about their lack of library management experience:

“If I’d had some training, if I knew anything about it I would […] have the pick of [library management techniques], rather than re-invent the wheel”

The lack of consistency in the level of training amongst library co-ordinators was considered to be an issue by one of the professional librarians questioned for this study. She considered that it was something that could primarily be addressed through the inclusion of a ‘library’ or ‘materials management’ module in PGCE courses. She states that library training “is something that I would really like to see in initial teacher training”. This call for some attention to be paid to the management of
resources in teacher training is certainly not new. Heather (1984b:35) reports how Herring, in 1979, made a call for “library studies [to] be part of the teacher’s initial training”. Unfortunately there has been no development on this subject. As stated in the methodology I did attempt to contact representatives of Primary PGCE courses from Universities across Britain. Unfortunately I gained only one response. This respondent recognised that such training would be valuable, but did not feel that it was an appropriate subject for a PGCE, which is “bound by QTS standards”. The respondent also suggested that this would be a more “appropriate for study as in service training perhaps during the induction year” (personal communication 21 June 2001).

Once again this highlights a disturbing perception of the place of ‘libraries’ within primary schools. As with the discussion around where the library stands as a priority within the schools, it appears as thought there is always something perceived as being ‘more important’ than the library, something which may indeed be statutory. Thus the library is often neglected in favour of other priorities, or other training.

A final issue that is associated with the positioning of the library within the school is the extent to which staff other than the library co-ordinator are involved in its development. This is important as the involvement of other staff displays a ‘whole school’ commitment to library development, rather than the displacement of responsibility onto an individual.

Once again data collected in this area show that there is very little consistency in practice. One respondent considered that it was “rare” for the team to work together as a whole on library matters. In other schools, however, there was more evidence of team working in the context of the library. One respondent, describing how their library development project began, states: “We had classroom libraries, and […] as a team we decided we would like to have a library”.

There is also further evidence of team working in specific areas of library development, particularly stock selection. One library co-ordinator invites all subject co-ordinators to be involved in choosing new stock for the library. Another states:
“What I usually do it I ask the other teachers to give me an idea which books …. where we feel there is a shortage”

Furthermore 57% of respondents to the questionnaire stated that they were not solely responsible for the management of the library, and that other team members were involved in this process. However it is worth noting that the nature of primary school resources means that there is often a Key Stage 1 infant library, and a Key Stage 2 junior library. So it is possible that each library has its own separate co-ordinator, who may be working in isolation on this task. Despite this caveat however, it is encouraging to see that teachers as a team are working together in some aspects of library development, and are taking an active interest in some areas, particularly stock development.

5.3. The function of library materials

This section aims to examine the practical use to which libraries are put within primary schools, and the perceptions of stakeholders around this.

5.3.1. Stock

As mentioned previously (p. 45), one questionnaire respondent suggested that the library no longer played a vital role in the school as information retrieval from computers had replaced information accessed from books. However the data collected suggests that most stakeholders do not see a strict dichotomy between the use of new technology and libraries, and suggest that ‘the library’ can encompass a variety of materials. Two library stakeholders comment:

“Although still with primary schools we are principally talking about books, we are talking about other materials as well, and electronic information”

“The fact that it should be a multimedia resource, the fact that it should combine […] ICT, magazines. The whole information world should actually be experienced by the child in the context of the library”
Encouragingly this is not a perception that is limited to the library world, and many education stakeholders evidently feel the same way:

“It isn’t just about books, it about material written down. It could be events, it could be bus timetables, telephone directories”
“And I think that we’ve got to now be looking at providing a much wider range of materials, for boys especially, to engage with – and computers of course. I mean there’s a lot of reading on screen isn’t there?”
“We’d like some computers in it”

While the perceptions of the library and education community are exactly the same on this issue, in practice the presence of non-book materials in libraries was harder to identify. My observation suggests that the principal stock in school libraries is still the book. However, three of the schools used as interview subjects had definite, concrete plans to introduce non-book information resources into their libraries, principally through ICT, in the next school year. One school library already contained a PC, which was due to be connected to the Internet in a matter of weeks. Another had plans to locate the library in a room which would also contain an ICT suite.

5.3.2. Libraries and the curriculum

An important issue for the use of the library, and indeed for how it is viewed within the school, is whether it provides a resource for the whole school, or whether the use of libraries is perceived as limited to humanity subjects. This was a concern raised in LISC’s (1984) report into school libraries, in which it was suggested that there was a failure to acknowledge how libraries contribute to all curriculum subjects, and the perception was that libraries really only impact on the English department.

Library stakeholders, as mentioned previously (section, 5.2.1, p. 47), consider that having a central collection is vitally important for access to resources. They also strongly believe that the function of the resources should be cross-curricular:

“The fact that [the library’s] the one place, where initiatives wont get stuck within subject areas”
“The library is a very powerful cross-curricular site, non-subject specific site”

However, some of the evidence collected suggests that the library is perceived as being part of the ‘humanities’. One of the questions asked if the use of the library formed a part of any policy document within the school. 56.5% of respondents replied that the library had a presence in other policy documents created by the school. They were then asked which documents, the results can be seen in the chart below (fig. 6). It is clear from the chart that the library is generally mentioned in English policy documents, this could suggest a bias towards the library being perceived only in relation to English and other humanity subjects, rather than as a cross-curricular resource.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document</th>
<th>Total responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English and others</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other humanities</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None-given</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Fig. 6. Bar chart showing in which policy documents use of the library is mentioned*

However there is also evidence that the library is a cross-curricular resource in practice. Library co-ordinators, as mentioned above (p. 50), are sometimes also responsible for literacy co-ordination, which, as one library representative points out, is a cross-curricular skill:

“the whole literacy thing breaks [the subject differentiation] down. Because literacy is about more than the English department – and I think that most schools now have a good grasp of literacy across the curriculum”

My own observation also indicates that the libraries studied were used for more than just humanities curriculum support, and were used as a whole school resource. This
is an encouraging development, and it appears as though the fears expressed in the LISC Report (1984) have been addressed.

5.3.3. Use of libraries

Both the interviews and the questionnaire aimed to ascertain what function libraries serve within primary schools, fulfilling objective 1b, c and d. Authors writing on this subject identify several potential functions that a central library collection can fulfil. Heather (1984b) suggests that they can be used for research, quiet study, leisure, and for the teaching of information skills. Hirst and Pryke (1986) also state that the central library area should be multi-functional. They emphasise it’s importance for reference, curriculum support, leisure reading, and, again, for the teaching of information skills. Fig 7., below, shows the functions that teachers in this study feel are fulfilled by the library.

As this chart indicates teachers also consider the library to be multi-functional. 76% of questionnaire respondents considered that the library had at least two functions. However there are three functions that are considered particularly important by the questionnaire respondents: curriculum support, the teaching of information skills, and the provision of materials for leisure reading are all deemed to be the major function of library materials.
Curriculum support

Support for the curriculum, as shown in fig. 7 above, was the most commonly named library function. 78% of the library co-ordinators replying to the questionnaire felt that ‘curriculum support’ is an important function of the central library collection. This view is supported by the narrative responses gathered in the questionnaire. When asked about why they considered the library contributed to the school, some comments included: “Support curriculum”, “complements topic work”, “support of learning”, “to support other curriculum areas”, and “resourcing the curriculum and enriching children’s experience”.

Interview subjects contacted in the course of this study concurred, and the following quotes show how the library is used as a ‘curriculum support’ resource:

“I think they’re there to promote the habit of using books for topic work”
“It holds mostly non-fiction so it’s meant to back up group work for research”
“The reference library’s used in lesson times particularly with the children doing topic work”

Information literacy

Heather (1984a:89) found reason to be positive as to the increasing development of information management amongst primary school pupils. She comments that “there appears to be a growing awareness of the need to train pupils of primary school age in selecting and using resources.” This optimism is supported by the results generated in this study. As fig. 7. above shows, 23 of the 46 respondents, 50%, identified ‘teaching information skills’ as an important library function. The questionnaire also showed that 85% of responding schools taught their pupils information managing skills.

Use of the library as a resource for the teaching of information literacy was also identified as a particularly important function by both library and education stakeholders who were interviewed in the course of this study. Referring to information literacy one professional librarian comments “I very much believe that
the library should be in the heart of those skills”, continuing “it should be the place in which [the children] actually learn to become information managers themselves.” Other library stakeholders agree:

“It’s also an opportunity to teach the children how to use the library”
“We’re saying its not what you know, it’s [what] you know how to find out”

Education stakeholders also emphasise this function:

“So for me the library isn’t just about fostering the reading, its’ about […] fostering study skills as much as anything.”
“We wanted to get children to use the library skills”
“I mean as to the role of the library, well really its – it’s to enable children to develop library skills”

**Borrowing books**

There appears to be little conflict surrounding use of the library for either curriculum support, or for the teaching of information handling skills. As to reading, and the borrowing of books for leisure, this was also considered to be an important function by the library stakeholders. The library is a place where “your child could discover their reading identity”, it is “a source of reading, fiction reading”. Fig. 7 indicates that 67% of respondents perceived “leisure reading” as an important function fulfilled by the library. Furthermore 70% of schools replied in the questionnaire that they actively encourage the borrowing of materials.

However data collected in the interviews indicates that some education stakeholders treat the actual borrowing of books with some equivocation. Only one of the schools selected for interview ran a ‘borrowing’ system from their central library, though several identified this as a future role. The information retrieved also suggested, however, that some of the education stakeholders felt that there might be a conflict between the borrowing of books, and other functions of the library. Specifically they expressed the fear that allowing the borrowing of materials will inevitably lead to a depletion of the resources, which could inhibit library use for other functions:
“It’s the follow up isn’t it with the borrowing library. And I must say I am dubious. Because, you know, they do […] lose a lot of books … or they draw all over them. And if you’re in the situation where you’re not going to restock all the time, it’s pretty soon not going to be able then to be used as a resource in the literacy hour is it?”

“You see I think the Key Stage 2 library was a borrowing library and they’ve lost …. books just don’t come back full-stop. And you know, you just can’t keep carrying that burden year in year out can you? You know you’re quickly going to deplete your resources”

“If we open it up to all the children, we lose the books […] And we lost such a lot of books we just can’t afford to do that.”

Some of the education stakeholders questioned appeared to feel that this was an impossible situation. Borrowing was perceived as an important function for the library to fulfil, and the respondents quoted above all planned to introduce a borrowing function into their libraries in the near future, despite their fears over the depletion of resources. Yet they also considered it to be inevitable that some books would go missing. This, coupled with the assumption that the school would not be able to fund the purchase of replacement stock, would, they felt, gradually impact upon other teaching and curriculum support.

The above section, detailing the perception of the stakeholders as to the functions fulfilled by the library does, I feel, yield broadly ‘positive’ results. A large number of respondents to the questionnaire felt that the library fulfilled a variety of functions. They considered that it provided access to a large number of books to a potentially ‘deprived’ audience, they also felt that it stimulated enjoyment in reading, developed information literacy, and provided support to the curriculum.

**Creation of a ‘book culture’**

The data collected also indicated that schools were, to a large extent, promoting and developing a ‘book culture’ amongst their pupils. Activities to promote literature, books and libraries, were considered particularly important by one of the library representatives:

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12 All did, however, encourage children to take books home from the classroom collections.
13 ‘Book culture’ refers to the extent to which children are encouraged to be involved with, and interact with, books in their schools.
“activities which actually promote children’s reading – create reading groups, create reading based activities – are very, very important”

They were also carried out in practice. 91% of the questionnaire respondents put on ‘book related’ events within their schools. The nature of these events varied but the most popular were Book Weeks and Book Fairs. Author, poet, or illustrator visits were also commonly held events. Other, less common, events were visits to book shops or books suppliers, and, in one case, a session in which “children dress up as a favourite character” from a book.

Interview respondents also suggested several schemes that they felt would involve the children in a book culture. One interview subject spoke of her plans to initiate a ‘library club’ for children during lunchtime. Another made reference to a ‘teacher-librarian’ that she had met in New Zealand, who involved the children in ‘reading games’ based around a game of Quidditch.

“The teacher-librarian took a class of children into the hall to play Quidditch […] that was something she could do as an extension of her literacy activities […] And I thought its what teaching should be about. It’s not just the basics it’s about the icing on the cake as well.”

Admittedly the activities outlined above were in the developmental stage, while the Book Weeks and Fairs that are already carried out.

Another way of involving children in book-related issues is to get them involved in the development and management of the library itself. One library co-ordinator emphasised that children are involved in helping to choose books for the library:

“Before I went to buy the stock […] I spoke to the children and said ‘oh, when you go to the library, or if you go to the bookshop, what sort of books do you like’. And they’re really, really enthusiastic about that. They love books actually”

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14 A football-like game played in the air, described in Harry Potter books.
Furthermore 26% of questionnaire respondents indicated that children were involved in discussing plans for the future of the library itself. This was principally carried out through informal discussions, with other methods including input from a School Council.

Another activity that contributed to the book culture of the school were visits to local public libraries. Provision of services, and a co-operation between the education and library sectors is considered an important issue for improving access to learning. LIC’s *Empowering the Learning Community* (2000:Foreword, paragraph 6) makes the point that “co-ordination between public libraries, on the one hand, and school or academic libraries, on the other, is inadequate”. They suggest that this could result in situation in which schools and libraries are “wasting opportunities to achieve more efficient investment in acquisitions, to offer better library support to children”.

Evidence collected in the course of this study suggests that local co-operation between public libraries and schools is occurring, but also that there is little consistency of use, with some schools making extensive use of public library services, and some making no use. Furthermore there is also the suggestion that schools have in fact made less use of public libraries over the past few years, a trend which counters Coopers and Lybrand’s (1994:1) assessment that “there is some evidence of increased use of public library services by schools”.

![Use of external library services](image)

*Fig. 8. Pie chart showing use of external library services*
70% of schools questioned affirmed that they did make use of some external form of library service. The pie chart above, fig. 8, shows that they principally made use of local branches.

Schools used public library services for a variety of functions. These included: storytimes, introduction to the library sessions, author visits, and allowing children to join the library. Information collected from public library children’s representatives also suggests that some libraries put on more detailed presentations. One local librarian told me of how she explained to the children how their parent’s taxes pay for library materials and the upkeep of services.

Most of the stakeholders questioned evidently felt that class visits to a local library had many positive impacts on children. Esson and Tyernon (1991:11) suggest that class visits are “one of the most effective ways of promoting the library service to children”. Denham (2000) also makes this point, stating that visits from schools to libraries are an important method of promoting public library services. Stakeholders contacted for this dissertation concur, with two education stakeholders making the following comments:

“I think that’s the best way of introducing children to the libraries, taking them as classes.”
“And of course you’re trying to then create a culture where the children, if they’ve attended a library in their early years, there’s a greater chance of them using the library as they grow older”

There are of course other reasons why visiting libraries in classes can be beneficial to children, below are just some of the quotes collected from both library and education stakeholders, that illustrate some of the other benefits that can accrue from library visits:

“I think a lot of children still probably think that libraries are places that you’ve got to be quiet, and they’re a bit frightened of libraries. So I think if they do come with a class and see what the atmosphere is like, and that they’re made welcome”
“You give kids a rich experience when they’re at the library”
“I think the sooner we get children reading the better”
Other stakeholders emphasised that class visits to public libraries were particularly useful in areas in which parents may not take their children to the library themselves:

“See the parents, a lot of the parents, wont bring them will they? If you leave it to a lot of parents it wont happen”
“Because such a lot of them miss out because they don’t actually come in the library anyway”

So the benefits resulting from visiting a library are not in doubt, and all stakeholders responded that they felt it was a valuable experience for children. However once again there appears to be a gap between the rhetoric and what actually happens. Evidence collected suggests that use of public libraries for class visits has actually decreased over the past few years. Some of the education stakeholders, who were so supportive of the benefits that can result from class visits to libraries, also admitted that they had not, in fact, visited the local library for years. In fact there were occasional discrepancies between information retrieved from teachers, and information retrieved from their local librarians. Some teachers, in the questionnaires and interviews, stated that they did visit the local library, but subsequent interviews with local librarians appeared to suggest that this might not currently be the case.

The reasons for this lack of use appear to be various. Many stakeholders, both library and education, mentioned the practical difficulties. Time is always difficult for teachers to find, particularly when considering the size of the primary curriculum:

“the curriculum is too vast now”
“I think the pressure of the curriculum, we suddenly found that we couldn’t afford half a day to take kids up there”
“you’re so heavily timetabled now with the national curriculum”

Other problems identified included the logistical difficulties of manoeuvring a class of young children, sometimes across busy roads, to a library.
However library stakeholders identified a more troubling reason, which they perceived was having a negative effect on the level of class visits. They suggested that in some cases teachers did not recognise the important function that the public library can play in education. One librarian comments that “they possibly don’t think that the benefits are enough”. Another mentioned that “you have to keep jogging them” if visits were to be made. Another librarian mentioned that there could be a problem with the education sector as a whole not recognising the potential value of libraries:

“One or two colleagues have been on courses, education courses, and libraries have never even featured in it – you know. I think they forget that we’re here”

This view does find some support in the literature. Marriott (1995:51) warns that a librarian’s “professional expertise is invaluable yet often ignored by teachers”. However there was ultimately little evidence that this was the case amongst the education stakeholders involved in this study. All education stakeholders emphasised the benefits that they gain from visiting a library, the only impediments being practical, specifically time. Furthermore some stakeholders, including representatives of the library community, suggest that public libraries themselves must learn to market themselves to suit the demands of schools and teachers:

“I think the public libraries have adapted to working with schools on activities around the literacy hour badly”
“If the librarian can’t actually see the way into the lessons, that’s as difficult as the teacher not seeing a way into the lesson”

This is evidently not an issue that can be resolved simply. Both schools and public libraries have recently found themselves under pressure as far as time and money are concerned. But it is worrying that some library stakeholders identified what they perceived to be a negative attitude by teachers that is just not reflected in practice. This implies that a division, and a lack of communication, still exists between teachers and librarians at a local level. However it will certainly be necessary, if the recommendations of *Empowering the Learning Community* are to be fulfilled, that both schools and public libraries look to extending their co-operation.
5.4. Books in schools

As mentioned above (p. 45) books and libraries are not synonymous in primary schools, and the evidence collected suggests that ‘book resources’ are often perceived differently to ‘library resources’.

This division is particularly around literacy resources; books bought in particularly from funding for the National Literacy Strategy. These are often perceived, and treated, as separate from library resources. Fig. 7 above (p. 60) indicates that library materials are not generally perceived as having a literacy function. Only 8.5% of respondents singled out encouraging literacy as a potential role for the primary school library. A principle reason for this could be that schools often house their ‘literacy’ resources separately, in either a separate centralised collection or in the classrooms. One education stakeholder mentions this:

“For the literacy hour […] there is a separate library for both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.”

This was also found in other subject schools, which often had a separate centralised ‘literacy’ collection. The distinction between literacy and literacy materials on the one hand, and library resources on the other would not be an issue, however, if it were not for evidence suggesting that there also appears to be a distinction in the ‘perception’ of these two types of resources which sometimes impacts negatively on how these resources are used.

This distinction, identified by some of the education stakeholders, appears to have a detrimental effect on how the central library itself is used. Some education stakeholders appear to find integrating use of the library with their literacy teaching difficult. A problem apparently exacerbated by the highly structured nature of current literacy teaching:

“And for the first two years [of the Literacy Hour] everybody was eyes down, following this format to the letter. Consequently is was difficult to find how the library fitted into that”
“And its really persuading people that they can go to the library and they don’t have to follow this format every single session”
Library stakeholders also consider the separation, both conceptual and practical, of literacy resources from the library is damaging. With one representative voicing the fear that the emphasis on literacy resources impacts on the library in a very real, financial, sense:

“I find it quite dismaying when I go in to find that some schools have spent all the money that they were going to spend on books, which should include the library stock, on literacy materials for the classrooms. And the library has not had any money spent on it. I mean, not all schools, but that seems to be a very unsettling trend”

These results would appear to support the views expressed in the literature review (Section 2.4.3) which suggests that the focus on literacy could be detrimental to other aspects of a child’s use of books.

However as mentioned previously, there is very little consistency in any aspect of library provision in primary schools. Therefore in some schools the library and the literacy resources interact much more closely, and the library receives heavy use for literacy. One education representative talks of the plans to use the library in the Literacy Hour:

“Because next year we’re going to put an interactive white board in there […] so we are suggesting that it will be available for a whole class group to go in for the first part of the literacy hour”

Another school chosen as an interview subject used the library heavily, at least once a week for all classes, for the Literacy Hours.
5.5. Conclusions to Chapter 5

- There is little consistency in any aspect of primary school library provision. The priority attached to the library, the use of the library, and the use of books all differ across schools.
- Both library and education stakeholders speak of the priority which they feel should be attached to the library, however this is not necessarily always reflected in practice, where other priorities often supersede the library.
- There is a persistent tension between the importance attributed to the central library area, and disseminated classroom resources.
- The status and value attributed to the library is perceived to stem largely from the headteacher and the senior management team.
- Both library and education stakeholders feel that there is little secure commitment to development of the library.
- Primary school libraries are rarely co-ordinated by a trained librarian, the most common model is that the library is co-ordinated by a member of staff who also has other non-teaching responsibilities.
- Library staff are extremely ambivalent about their role. Many recognise the importance of library provision, but are unhappy that the responsibility is falls to them.
- Library co-ordinators dedicate only a small amount of time to their library responsibilities. Only two respondents spent more than three hours on library management.
- Training amongst library co-ordinators is rare. The majority recognises that this could potentially have a detrimental impact on service provision, but only one signalled her intention to attend any form of training in the future.
- Some schools place a team emphasis on library development, others place a larger amount of responsibility on the individual.
- All stakeholders agree that the library should contain non-book materials.
- Evidence indicates that libraries are generally used for cross-curricular purposes.
- Libraries are perceived as being multi-functional, and evidence suggests that this is often replicated in practice.
- Information skills are given a high priority in most schools, but some are more successful than others in integrating libraries into this process.
• The majority of schools encourage the borrowing of books, but there is disquiet as to the potentially negative impacts that this could have on other library functions.

• A large proportion of schools promote a ‘book culture’.

• Use of public libraries produces tensions in the schools, with the desire to make use of them sometimes not possible to carry out in practice.

• Literacy resources are often not integrated into central library provision. Some library representatives feel that this has a negative impact on service provision, but education stakeholders expressed no such opinions.
6.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the results that were received in relation to the internal measurement of performance in primary school libraries. As mentioned in the literature review (Section 2.3 p. 16), the presence of a policy, defining goals and objectives for a service, is an integral part of the performance evaluation cycle, therefore this chapter begins with an analysis of the presence of primary school library policy documents. It then goes on to analyse internal performance measurement within the schools, looking at the extent to which performance is measured, the methodologies used to measure performance, and the views of the education and library stakeholders on this subject. The results given in this chapter relate to objectives 2 and 3 of this dissertation.

6.2. Policy

Some authors argue that the presence of a formal policy document, outlining the goals for the service, how these goals are to be carried out, and how the school will know if they have been achieved, is an important feature of the effective management of resources. Hirst and Pryke (1986:1) argue that “adequate resource provision is dependent on a clearly stated school policy”. Charlton (1994:4) agrees: “the importance of developing a resources policy for the school can not be overemphasised”.

Other research, however, offers an alternative view. Morrison and Scott (1994:133) claim that their evidence indicates that “an absence of policy documentation did not necessarily indicate poor practice”. However in the context of this dissertation policy is viewed in its relation to performance evaluation, and the presence of a policy would certainly be useful from an evaluative point of view. H.M. Inspectorate (1989:32) states that the use of policies “engenders evaluation”. Howe (1985:13) also makes this point, stating “a pre-requisite for evaluation is to
have drawn up some aims for the library”, and that “you can not decide the success or otherwise of anything until you have decided what it is you wish to achieve”. Library stakeholders questioned in related to this topic emphasise the importance of a fully worked out policy document:

“I always believe in starting with policy before they do anything else”
“I think I would rather see the school – if possible as a whole, a whole staff – developing policy for managing their library”

Unfortunately the reality of what actually occurs in practice is a little different, and there was little evidence of formal policies in relation to the primary school library. Fig. 9 shows the response to a question about the presence of a formal policy document for the library. As this chart shows only a small proportion of the schools questioned, 24%, actually had a formal policy relating to the use of library materials, with 70% responding in the negative. These results are broadly in-line with other studies. Streatfield and Davies (1995) comment that 31% of the primary school that they surveyed had a ‘library development plan’, a figure only slightly above the 24% found in this study. Morrison and Scott (1994:133) also found that “few schools had library policy documents”. Furthermore there does not appear to be any correlation between the presence of a library policy and other variables. There was no relation between the presence of a library policy and time spent on the library by the co-ordinator, or in training received by the co-ordinator. Provision of a policy appears to be somewhat ad hoc.

**Fig. 9. Pie chart showing the presence of library policy documents in primary schools**
Evidence retrieved from the interview subjects confirmed this. Only one of the schools questioned in detail about their library provision had a dedicated library policy document, with another having a draft version. The other three, despite being at the stage where they were redeveloping their library, had no policy document defining its functions, or what they hoped to achieve with their redevelopment.

Contributing to the absence of policy documents was the implication that in those schools which did have a policy document, in draft or completed, there appeared to be a certain level of confusion as to what it actually contained. Writers on the subject are clear as to which elements of library provision they would expect to be covered in a policy document. Charlton (1994) advises that the document contain information on budgeting, accommodation, resource selection, training, support from outside agencies, and a clarification as to the role of the teacher who has library responsibility. Tilke (1998), referring to secondary schools, considers that a policy document should contain aims, management issues, information on users and resources, a clarification of the role of the library, collection management, and evaluation procedures.

However the evidence suggests that some of the education stakeholders, even if their school has a library policy, actually have little idea about what it contains. One library co-ordinator could not say what was in the draft policy document, another made this statement regarding the policy:

“It just tells you – well it wants updating now because we’ve changed the situation of the library – but it just says where the library is, it just says which members of staff use it, how they’re going to use it. It just says the amount of books that we’ve got. Just generally about how the schools feel about the library”

In none of the schools questioned was there found to be a current, up-to-date, library policy. This situation evidently makes the measuring of performance a difficult issue, how can you measure performance with any purpose if the goals for the library have not been defined?
However it would be misleading to suggest that none of the education stakeholders questioned about ‘their’ libraries could not formulate any personal goals that they have for the resource. The quotes below show that some of the personal objectives expressed for the library:

“I think it should become part of the culture – that the library is a living part of the schools that parents are involved in as well”
“I’d like to see it used regularly. And I’d like to see the books taken home. And I’d like to see the children being able to look-up their own information really”

Another teacher, who was not in this case a library co-ordinator, spoke extensively of what his own objectives for the library are. His goals covered: stock selection, environment, creation of displays, and use of the library. While in the majority of these cases the ‘wish-list’ is informal, limited to one member of staff. In other cases, while there is no formal policy, discussions about goals for the library did occur.

“And there’s another staff meeting at the beginning of the school year to have a look at what is happening with the library, what our goals are by the end of the year”

So once again procedures differ between schools. However the fact that all education stakeholders, when questioned about their own goals for the library, spoke with enthusiasm about the subject is encouraging.

6.3. Performance evaluation

As mentioned above, only a small number of schools questioned had a policy document in relation to the library materials. The results pertaining to internal performance measurement are similarly low.

Stakeholders representing the library community would suggest that internal performance measurement, carried out by the schools, is the way forward for the assessment of library provision: “Personally I think that self-evaluation is actually a
very important tool”. However, at the same time, there also appears to be the assumption amongst library stakeholders that very little is actually occurring within the context of the primary school:

“I don’t know if it is happening much at all.”
“You’ve got the whole accommodation, you’ve the furnishing of that big room. Very, very expensive. And nobody’s actually evaluating it”

As mentioned in the methodology section (Section 3.5.2, p. 31), the questionnaire, for simplicity, only examined two aspects of performance evaluation, measurements of use and measurements of satisfaction. In total only seven questionnaire respondents, 15%, formally measured use of their library materials, and four formally measured satisfaction, 8.5%. Of the four who measured satisfaction, two also measured use of the library materials. This means that a total of only nine questionnaire respondents, 19.5% measured either use or satisfaction in some form. H.M. Inspectorate (1991:1, 6) state that “monitoring and evaluation of library provision and use are weak in all but a handful of schools”, and that their research uncovered only one school which had “devised good, full, and systematic means of evaluating and monitoring library provision and use”. The very low figures obtained in the course of this study indicate that there has been little tangible improvement in the evaluation of provision.

An analysis of the questionnaire results of those who measured performance, either in use or satisfaction, was carried out to see if there was any correlation between variables. However, as with the presence of a policy document, there was no strong correlation between measuring performance and other aspects of library provision. There was no apparent correlation between the training of library co-ordinators and the evaluation of performance, with seven of the nine co-ordinators who evaluated performance having received no training. Turning this figure around,

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It should certainly be noted that the number of respondents who measured performance, only nine, was so small that it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions from an analysis of potentially correlating factors.
only two of the library co-ordinators that had received training measured performance in some way.

This is not necessarily a surprising result. Research into the training programmes offered by schools library services and other agencies suggests that ‘evaluating performance’ does not feature highly in primary school INSET courses, with the emphasis more on actually setting up and developing a resource centre. For example one library stakeholder responsible for organising training stated that a session on developing indicators was “mainly secondary”.

There was, however, a slight correlation between the evaluation of library provision, and time spent in the library. Fig 4., in the previous chapter (p. 51), showed that 41% of respondents dedicated no time to library responsibilities. However, of the nine that measured performance in some way, only one claimed to dedicate no time to the library. Looking at this from a different perspective, only two respondents in total claimed to spend more than three hours on library related duties, and both these respondents measured performance in some way. This could suggest that more time given over to library duties leaves more time to measure performance.

There was another slight correlation between presence of a policy document and measurement of performance. Five of the nine who evaluated performance had a dedicated library policy. The remaining four also stated that their library had a place in other policy documents produced by the school. This could suggest that the presence of a library policy makes it more likely that the school will attempt to measure success in some way. However there is also the question that arises from the four that did not have dedicated library policies, as to what they were measuring performance against.

Another feature of successful performance measurement, which was brought up previously in the literature review (Section 2.3, p. 17) is to extent to which measuring performance plays an integral role in running the library, and is not just performed as a one off. As mentioned above, there were actually seven respondents who measured use. Of these seven, five claimed to measure use on a regular basis,
with only two stating that this did not happen. Despite the low figures in general associated with the measurement of performance, this does suggest that when performance is measured, it does at least, generally, play a continued role in library development.

None of the schools chosen as interview subjects formally measured either the use of library materials in their schools, or measured the satisfaction of the library’s users. However several of them did refer to the possibility of carrying out use evaluation in the future, after further development of the library. Interestingly most of the debate about the future possibility of measuring performance was associated with the purchasing of automated circulation systems, and these systems’ ability to produce management statistics.

“[An automated circulation system] will also indicate which children aren’t taking out books. What kind of books are being taken out.”

“Hopefully if we do have a computerised system we can pull data off fairly well about how many books different children are borrowing, and, you know, the gender and the ethnicity and all that sort of information which it could give us”

However there was found to be no causal link between having an automated circulation system in the library and the measurement of use. Only two schools, 4%, had an automated issue system. However of these two only one currently formally measures performance.

6.3.1. Type of evaluation

While aware that only a very small number of respondents did measure use or satisfaction in some way, it may be useful to examine the methodologies that are used, or in some cases will be used, to measure performance. This section aims to examine whether there is a preponderant use of quantitative methodologies or qualitative methodologies.
Above is a chart showing the methods typically used to monitor use in the primary school library (fig. 10). Unsurprisingly the methodologies used in this case are all quantitative, in that they provide a statistical representation of the amount the library is used. It is also true that most of the education stakeholders referring to evaluation of library materials in the future did indeed refer to the management statistics that can be derived from an automated issue system (p. 79).

The discussion surrounding ‘qualitative’ evaluative techniques can be separated into two areas. The first of these is the use of ‘qualitative techniques’. As shown in fig. 11, below, the majority of questionnaire respondents used qualitative techniques to measure satisfaction. As can be seen from the chart, the more qualitative methods, actually talking with users and potential users, are more popular than methodologies that would yield more quantitative results, such as questionnaires. Though it is also worth remembering that only a very small number, 8.5%, measured satisfaction using qualitative measures, compared to the 15% using quantitative measures to assess use.

It would certainly be wrong to attempt to explain the use of these qualitative methods as a conscious choice made by library co-ordinators against quantitative techniques. One potential reason could be that discussing issues with pupils or...
parents is actually easier, in that it takes less time, than designing, conducting, and analysing questionnaire responses.

![Bar chart showing the methods used to measure satisfaction with the school library](image)

**Methods used to monitor satisfaction**

**Methods**

- Pupil question
- Discussion
- Staff question
- Discussion
- Parent question
- Discussion

**Total responses**

0 1 2 3 4 5

Fig. 11. Bar chart showing the methods used to measure satisfaction with the school library

Other respondents signalled their intention to take up such qualitative techniques in the future. One questionnaire respondents signalled that they would like “more involvement of parents and children”, in their evaluation of the library. Other interview subjects expressed similar hopes:

“Our also we intend to talk to the children, and ask them what … how they perceive their usage of [the library]. Maybe there are some things that we can get from that”

Above and beyond the use of qualitative techniques, there was also identified a desire to use a ‘qualitative philosophy’, by which I refer to measuring outcomes and impact on library users resulting from their use of the materials, rather than just the use itself (see fig. 1, p. 16). A library stakeholder had this to say on the subject:

“I want it to be outcome focussed […] If they’re evaluating the resource they should be looking at how it’s impacting on the school”

This philosophy was also supported by some of the education stakeholders, who agreed that measuring use is only, in itself, a first step to gauging the effectiveness of
the library, and that the ultimate goals should be measuring impact on pupils, often though of in terms of their test results:

“But ultimately the way of measuring the impact of any quality initiative is going to be on results”

However, while test results themselves are quantitative in nature, these stakeholders also agreed that assessing how the library makes a quality contribution to children’s results was going to be difficult. This is something that has been identified in the literature. Raddon (1984:216) makes the point that within a school context:

there are a variety of relationships, ideas, methods, and materials, which can not be taken out of context and examined in isolation

Both library and education stakeholders recognise this difficulty, many saying that they can not prove, and indeed would not try to prove, a causal relationship between effective library provision and increased standards of achievement. The benefits are, it seems, almost assumed. Below are some quotes that illuminate this point.

“And you know, what isn’t easy is actually saying that that impacts on achievement”
“It’s quite hard to say ‘its because of the library’, you just hope that it’s one of the many initiatives that are raising standards generally”
“I mean I suppose certain things would be measurable […] but things like the raising of standards, it's, it’s lots of things that have an impact on that really”

On this subject it is also worth noting that this was not a debate taken up by many of the education stakeholders questioned. There was also very little evidence which suggested information about use and satisfaction collected fed into any form of planning procedure, apart from in an informal way. The evaluation of library provision for management purposes is still very much a rarity in a primary school context.

However, like the presence of policy, there is the implication that informal performance measurement of a kind is carried out. One question in the questionnaire
asked about responsibility for measuring performance of the school library materials. 91.5% of questionnaire respondents managed to attribute some responsibility for monitoring the use of library materials, whereas only 15% formally measure use. Which does at least suggest that a member of staff has a role in assessing use of resources.

One interviewee also mentioned, off the top of her head, which classes from which year groups regularly make use of the library, but also made it clear that this monitoring was on an informal basis only. Furthermore, many of the schools questioned did actually record borrowing of book materials, typically through a card system or a reading record book:

“The children just fill in a little card and leave it in the main library”
“I mean we make a not of who’s got which book in a simple recording system”
“They have a reading record book”
“They have a system, a card system”

Though once again, however, this is rarely used for any planning purposes.

Returning finally to some perceptions about performance measurement within primary school libraries. As mentioned above, only 19.5% of schools replied that they did measure either use or satisfaction. However, 65% of the total replied that they were not happy with the levels of evaluation carried out on the library, and seven out of the nine that already evaluated the provision in some way also indicated that they did not feel that it was addressed adequately within the school.

Turning to the potential obstacles to performance evaluation, Morrison and Scott (1994:134-135) found that “scant evidence of detailed monitoring and evaluation of library resources was linked to an absence of time for library duties”. This was supported by evidence retrieved from the questionnaire in which the reasons given for the low amount of evaluation were generally focussed around lack of time. 19 respondents felt that it was their own lack of time that was inhibiting the development of formal evaluation procedures. This was also backed up by the interview subjects, both library and education:
“And the real obstacle is that too few teachers have enough time”
“Because they haven’t got time – they haven’t got time to evaluate
the resource itself to start with, and they don’t have time to evaluate
the use of the library”
“Because my time is limited at the moment I haven’t time to do everything
all at once”

Other factors which education stakeholders identified as impacting negatively
on the evaluation of library provision is lack of involvement by teachers other than
library co-ordinators, lack of resources, lack of involvement by teachers, and lack of
specific training.

6.4. Conclusion to Chapter 6

- Only a small proportion of schools develop a library policy. Furthermore there
  are some doubts as to the quality of the policies that do exist.
- There has been very little improvement in levels of performance evaluation from
  previous studies. Instances of performance evaluation are still very rare.
- There was a slight correlation between the use of performance assessment and
  time spent by library co-ordinators on library duties.
- Methodologies of assessing performance were both quantitative and qualitative,
  but schools were more likely to measure use quantitatively, than satisfaction
  qualitatively. Furthermore only two schools combine qualitative and quantitative
  assessment techniques, the remaining seven using either one method or the other.
- Some teachers emphasised the importance of an ‘outcome-based’ assessment
  system, but expressed problems with carrying this out.
- Most schools were dissatisfied with the levels of performance evaluation
  practised in regards to the library, and would like to see some improvement.
Chapter 7. Results: External guidelines

7.1. Introduction

This chapter aims to examine issues surrounding the use and perception of externally produced guidelines relating to primary school library provision, fulfilling objective 4 of this dissertation.

This chapter will commence with an investigation of School Library Association Guidelines and the Library Association’s Primary School Library Guidelines, looking at how they are marketed to primary schools and whether this marketing has been successful. It will then look at the impact, if any, of these guidelines on the way that school libraries are run. This section will combine use of SLA guidelines with use of the LA’s guidelines, as the numbers using each individual guideline were just too low to form the basis of any examination. The analysis of impact section will also include in-school use of OFSTED’s Handbook for the Inspection of Primary and Nursery Schools, as these were used in some cases as an aid to library development by schools.

Finally the impact of OFSTED Inspections shall be examined. This section will look at the views of stakeholders on OFSTED Inspections in relation to the primary school libraries. OFSTED Inspections are included in this section as, while they do not produce ‘guidelines’ as such, they are responsible for the external performance measurement of primary schools.

7.2. The School Library Association guidelines

7.2.1. The organisation

The SLA’s role was defined by one of the library stakeholders in the following way: “to help schools to develop their libraries for the benefit of the students”. Evidently this means that provision in primary schools is considered to fall under the SLA’s remit. Services offered to members include an annual conference
and training event, locally run training events, a magazine, and, evidently, the guidelines.

Despite the fact that those involved in the running of primary school libraries would evidently be welcome amongst SLA membership, it appears as though membership amongst primary schools, who can join on an institutional or individual basis, is lower than that amongst secondary schools. However, the association does market itself directly to the primary sector:

“We are trying to focus on primary membership by going to places like the Education Show, with our stand and publications stall”

7.2.2. The guidelines

The SLA produces a number of guidelines relevant to the running of school libraries each year. They are produced in response to current issues in school librarianship, relevant government initiatives, or as a response to enquiries. The methodology used to market these guidelines to schools include the following:

“Well obviously through the membership. We also send information to all school library services. We go to big exhibitions [...] We advertise in journals like, obviously our own, but I mean we advertise in things like Junior Education. We send lots of review copies out and they often get good reviews in things like the Times Education Supplement”

So there are a number of methods through which a school could gain knowledge of, and access to, these guidelines. However the data collected via the questionnaire seems to suggest that many schools are not aware of these guidelines. Only 12 respondents, 26%, of library co-ordinators questioned replied that they had heard of the SLA guidelines.

Knowledge of the guidelines does not necessarily imply that the guidelines were actually used in the school’s development of their library, so a further question was asked to ascertain whether schools that had heard of these guidelines had in fact used them. Of the 12 respondents who had heard of the guidelines only five had
actually used them in developing their library. This makes a total percentage of 11% of responding schools using the SLA guidelines.

None of the interview subjects co-ordinating the libraries in the interview subject schools had made use of the SLA guidelines, so it was not possible in this case to ascertain whether any who had used them had found them useful.

7.3. The Library Association’s Primary School Library Guidelines

7.3.1. The organisation

The LA, like the SLA, perceives its role in a way which would make them relevant to library provision in primary schools, despite the fact that they ‘officially’ represent professional members, of whom there are few in the primary school context. They are described by one stakeholder as having “a responsibility to actually support good quality library provision wherever libraries are found in the UK”. However their relation with primary school libraries is, perhaps, perceived as being a bit more ‘remote’ than the SLA. The Library Association’s principal market is described as being the professional librarian, and the secondary market is described as all others who are involved in some way with library provision, which could include primary school libraries and their staff.

7.3.2. The guidelines

The primary school library guidelines were issued with the direct intention of attempting to raise the standards of primary school libraries, this is described as being “the whole message”. The guidelines themselves were marketed in a very direct way to all primary schools in England and Wales, a copy of the guidelines was posted directly to each school, with extra copies being sent to schools library services.

This would appear to give direct access to the guidelines to every primary school. However library stakeholders have identified some problems with the direct mailing of the guidelines. One stakeholder describes how in many schools the guidelines “would not get further than the secretary”. This view was supported by an
education stakeholder, who when questioned about whether she had heard of the LA’s guidelines responded in this way:

“We get a vast amount of stuff coming into school. I’d have thought that if it had come in the last six months [the headteacher] would have passed it straight to me […] if it was prior to that I’m not quite sure where in the school it would have ended up”

In Sheffield schools it appears as though many of the respondents who had heard of the guidelines had accessed them through their local schools library service. One education stakeholder describes the process as one in which the representative of the schools library service “gave [me] the address and phone number” of the LA, from whom she ordered her own copy. The conclusion that many schools’ point of access to the LA’s Primary School Library Guidelines is the schools library service is supported in an analysis of the questionnaire responses received from Independent schools in Sheffield. Of the six questionnaires sent out, five were returned. Of this five, four did not make use of the schools library service, and none of these had heard of the LA guidelines.16

As to the level of use of the guidelines within the education community, the picture is very similar to that of the SLA guidelines. In this case, despite the ‘blanket posting’ of guidelines, only 15 respondents, 33%, had even heard of the Primary School Library Guidelines. Of this 15, six respondents claimed to have used them, a total percentage of 13. To some extent this was mirrored in the responses of the interview subjects. One co-ordinator replied that she had heard of the guidelines, but had not used them, despite being in the middle of a plan to redevelop the library.

However despite the above figures, a larger proportion of the interview subjects had heard of the LA’s guidelines, and so it was possible to gain some views, from both the education and the library communities, as to their usefulness. One library stakeholder assesses the guidelines in this way:

16 It is unclear whether the Independent school that does make use of the school library service had heard of the guidelines, as this entire section of the questionnaire was incomplete.
“I think they’re quite adequate. I think they’ve had a fine line to stride between being overwordy, and over-detailed, in which case the teachers wouldn’t be encouraged to read them, and between including everything that should be included”

Education stakeholders were also largely welcoming of the guidelines:

“it looks as though it’s quite a comprehensive document”

Another suggested that it is important for the ‘library’ community to become involved in guidelines for primary schools:

“If it’s going to be an effective thing, it has to be set up with library skills, and they’re the people to do it, they’re the people [...] to give you the advice of how to do it, and how to go about it, because primary schools don’t have that”

Another library co-ordinator, in the midst of redeveloping their library, made the following rueful comment: “Oh gosh. I should have had something like this before I started the project really”.

These comments are all very positive, and suggest that library co-ordinators and other education stakeholders would use the guidelines. Inevitably, as in so many other aspects of primary school library provision, there is a contrary view. For example some stakeholders, library and education, appear to feel that the LA’s guidelines are almost too comprehensive to be relevant to many primary schools, which often contain only very limited library provision. One library co-ordinator explains why she has not used the guidelines:

“I think [a representative of the schools library service] told me about them, and he may have given me a leaflet on them. And I never sent for it – because we were so limited. It was such a small room that we were doing. If I’d been doing a big room, I would have needed the guidelines”

Other stakeholders question whether the guidelines set realistic targets for primary schools, many of whom do not have a large budget dedicated to library development.
In response to a question about whether schools could meet the guidelines, one stakeholder commented “a lot of schools would struggle”.

Of course there is a contrary view to this situation, and one representative makes the point that advocating anything but the highest standards of library provision to primary schools, would in fact be self-defeating:

“We couldn’t issue guidelines – bearing in mind our role is to campaign and support excellent library provision – that were mediocre”

7.4. Impact of the guidelines

As mentioned in the introductory section (7.1) the examination of whether use of guidelines has any impact on other aspects of library provision will include analysis of those respondents who use SLA, LA or the OFSTED (1999a) Handbook for the Inspection of Primary and Nursery Schools. The reasoning behind this was that the numbers of respondents using specific guidelines was so low as to make analysis meaningless. In fact, only 11% of questionnaire respondents at heard of any of these guidelines. Furthermore of those that had heard of the guidelines, only 42% had used them, a total of 11 questionnaire respondents.

![Bar chart showing the use of external guidelines in primary school libraries.](image)

Fig. 12. Bar chart showing the use of external guidelines in primary school libraries.
The chart above indicates the low level of use that external guidelines receive amongst primary school libraries. While it would be pleasing to show that there was a wide discrepancy in those schools which used the guidelines, and those that did not, with those that do providing better and more effectively managed access to resources, there appears to be little evidence to support this.

For example there was no apparent correlation between those co-ordinators who claimed to make use of one or more of the guidelines and time spent on library duties. 11 respondents used one or more of the guidelines, of this five claimed to allocate no time to library activities. There also appeared to be little correlation between use of external guidelines and amount of training received by the library co-ordinator. Nine of the 11 who used the guidelines had received no training of any sort in relation to library development and management.

Use of external guidelines also does not appear to correlate with the internal evaluation of library provision. Of the 11 respondents who claimed to produce a dedicated library policy, only four claimed to use some form of guidelines. Use of performance measurement techniques was also unconnected with knowledge and use of the library guidelines. Of the nine the measured performance, only four used some form of guideline, three respondents each using the SLA and OFSTED guidelines, and only one using the LA’s guidelines. This is a particularly disappointing result when considering that the Primary School Library guidelines contain a detailed section on measuring performance.

In fact the only area in which there does appear to be a link between the use of guidelines and another aspect of library provision is in the presence or absence of day-to-day staffing. Of the 11 questionnaire respondents who used one or more the guidelines, only one does not staff their library in some manner. While it may be confusing to speak of percentages with such low figures, this means that only 9% of those respondents using some form of guideline do not staff their library. Compared to the figure of 33% of the total number of respondents not staffing their library and the link appears apparent. There is not enough evidence to suggest that use of external guidelines is causally related to the staffing of the libraries, and any
hypothesis about the link would be a presumption, particularly considering the low figures that are involved. Suggesting a link would also raise the question as to why only staffing was effected, and no other aspect of library provision.

There could be many different reasons to account for the low use of, and lack of impact from, external guidelines dealing with primary school library provision. One factor that has been suggested by stakeholders is that the SLA and the LA’s guidelines are in no way a statutory requirement, library co-ordinators can take them or leave them.

“But I think it really comes down to that, if they don’t have to do it they wont – because there’s plenty of things they do have to do”

This, of course, is where OFSTED Inspections have the benefit, being a requirement for schools. The following section will examine the relation between OFSTED Inspections and the primary school library.

### 7.5. OFSTED Inspections

It has already been indicated in the above section that there appears to be little correlation between the in-school use of OFSTED guidance in the use of resources, and other aspects of library provision. However OFSTED Inspections are a different matter, being an altogether less optional process.

As mentioned previously in the literature review (Section 2.3.4) OFSTED’s handbook for their inspectors does not, on paper, encourage a thorough assessment of primary school library provision. ASLIB (1995:178,192) bemoan the “scant attention” that libraries receive, and also “regret the low priority” that libraries apparently have for OFSTED. The view that the Inspections are, at the moment, insufficient is supported by many of the stakeholders, particularly the library stakeholders, contacted for this study. One library stakeholder comments on how the library only appears to get a mention in Inspection reports “only if it’s particularly good or particularly bad”. Other library stakeholders concur:
“But basically I personally feel that OFSTED should actually focus more on the library”
“My strong suspicion is they get short measure”
“[Inspections are] very patchy”

This view is also supported to a certain extent by stakeholders from the education sector:

“I think [OFSTED] ought to pay attention to it”
“From little bits they I’ve read, OFSTED – they actually don’t always take very much notice of school libraries”

Other stakeholders are more accepting of the attention paid by OFSTED to library provision. They feel that the state of the library is something that OFSTED would pick up on, but don’t actually offer any views on whether they consider this to be a positive or negative:

“But we felt that it was one of the areas in the school that they were likely to pick up on. Because it didn’t look good, at that point”
“But without a doubt, OFSTED, if they were to return to school and give us an Inspection, which they could at any time, if we didn’t have a library it would be a cause for concern”

At the other extreme there were also education stakeholders who felt that, if anything, OFSTED actually focussed too much on the library. There was the feeling that, if the library was good, they were happy to receive a positive assessment, but if they considered it under-par, they would not like a negative assessment:

“I think they gave just about right [attention]”
“I think it would have been quite an onus on me, in my job, to also have prepared a library policy”
“I would not have wanted them to go further into details on the library. Possibly in a secondary school, maybe”
“It depends on what it’s like, I suppose. I mean I wouldn’t want a comment yet, until we’ve got it up and running. But then if we’ve put a lot of money and work into it I would like them to say ‘that’s better’”
This is a particularly negative perception. Rather than seeing a ‘poor’ assessment as an opportunity to begin a development of the library, some co-ordinators almost appear to feel that they would prefer to have library provision ignored.

7.5.1. Impact of the Inspections

Unlike the other external guidelines, OFSTED Inspections provide an obligatory externally measured evaluation of the school, therefore, unsurprisingly, the Inspections are considered as having the potential to impact much more noticeably on school library provision. Library stakeholders recognise that this is true, and aim to use Inspections as a tool to improve provision: “the lever, really, is Inspection”.

This is not just hypothetical, and the evidence collected suggests that one potential impact of the Inspection process is a school’s redevelopment of their library. One library co-ordinator stressed that it was a result of a negative OFSTED report concerning the library, that a redevelopment was ordered to take place. Another stated how the OFSTED Inspection could prompt a re-assessment of library provision:

“And then suddenly you’ll get an audit by [...] an outside agency like OFSTED, and you’ll get figures like 60% of your stock should be binned”

The impact of OFSTED Inspections was never likely to be without controversy, however, and some education stakeholders suggests that the impact produced can often be more negative. One of the reasons for this is that the Inspections often provide the school with a large number of competing priorities. One co-ordinator explained that the library had constantly been sidelined for development as OFSTED had always highlighted something else that required work. Other education stakeholders, some of whom also suggested that OFSTED did not focus enough on the library, concurred with this point of view:
“When you have an Inspection [...] everything’s got to be just so. You’ve got to have – everything becomes a priority doesn’t it?”

“Now you could say [...] having a thriving school library will raise standards in literacy [...] which I do believe it will have an impact. But our HMI actually clearly didn’t see it as the most important thing, because what he was actually focussing on was the quality of teaching and learning”

Another criticism of the negative impact of OFSTED Inspections highlighted by one of the education stakeholders was that it set impossible targets for improving the library, that the school could never hope to meet:

“The main concern in OFSTED as I recall [...] was the fact that it wasn’t there and it wasn’t accessible during the day. But to be honest unless we got another building there’s not a lot we can do about that”

Finally other stakeholders identified the negative effect that an Inspection could have if it does not take notice of the library. The suggestion is that if OFSTED does not consider the library to be a priority, then the school will not:

“Because it is hard to keep promoting schools to have quality libraries. If OFSTED are ignoring it, schools will ignore it as well to a certain extent.”

However this situation is not set in stone, and some library representatives hint that the pressure put on OFSTED by the Library Association and the School Library Association amongst others, is having an effect. The result of this is that new guidelines to Inspectors, to be issued this summer, will include a more detailed checklist concerning the school library.

However, even if this checklist is to be introduced, the reaction of school libraries to external guidelines could still be perceived in a relatively negative light. Schools, as a result of negative Inspections, do indeed sometimes plan to redevelop their libraries and improve provision, and this is a positive result. However it does mean that their response is ‘reactive’ rather than pro-active. Schools appear to be
forced into redevelopment rather than seeing a well-stocked library and a well managed resource as intrinsically important.

7.6. Conclusions to Chapter 7

- Only a minority of respondents had heard of either the School Library Association or the Library Association guidelines. Furthermore only a small proportion of this minority actually used the guidelines in practice.
- There was some evidence to suggest, particularly in regards to the Library Association’s guidelines, that promotional methods may be have been unsuccessful. The posting of guidelines directly to schools appeared to be less successful than a school’s direct contact with their schools library service.
- There is some evidence to suggest that a minority of education stakeholders consider that the Library Association’s guidelines exceeded their needs.
- There was no apparent correlation between use of guidelines and any other aspect of library provision, apart from the presence of day-to-day staffing.
- Library stakeholders are united in feeling that OFSTED Inspections are inadequate as far as school libraries are concerned.
- Education stakeholders are more equivocal as to OFSTED Inspections and the library. Some express the view that not enough attention is paid to libraries, some consider that current levels of Inspection are adequate, and occasionally that they are inadequate.
- OFSTED Inspections are generally considered to be an effective way of promoting library development in primary schools.
- A significant proportion of stakeholders, all education, felt that OFSTED Inspections as they stand could be detrimental to library provision by providing the school with alternative priorities or impossible targets.
8. Conclusion

8.1. The value and use of library materials

Many authors, quoted in the literature review, make the case that libraries within primary schools have the potential to contribute in many different ways to the educational, personal, and social development of the child. They argue that, due to these benefits, the library should become a priority for the management and staff of primary schools.

The above view is certainly supported by the library stakeholders contacted in the course of this study. Representatives from the Library Association, the School Library Association, and Sheffield’s school library service agree that they consider libraries should be a priority for schools. However education stakeholders are more ambivalent about the priority which they feel should be attributed to the library.

93% of questionnaire respondents affirmed that they felt the library contributed valuably to the school, but interviews with education stakeholders who are responsible for co-ordinating their primary school library suggest that they feel the library is not a major priority in practice. Furthermore, and more damagingly, they are incredibly equivocal about their own roles. Library co-ordinators, it appears, rarely volunteer their services, with the library often falling under the responsibility of a Literacy or English co-ordinator. This is very far away from the H.M. Inspectorate’s (1989:6) suggestions that to improve library provision the school needs “skilled, enthusiastic staff [italics added]”.

On top of this there are continual pressures of time, which afflict library co-ordinators whether they have volunteered for the responsibility or not. Finally there is also the issue of library training, which is rare amongst library co-ordinators. Writers stress the potentially detrimental impacts that having under-trained staff can cause both the library and the children that the library is supposed to serve. Bolton (1998:3) comments that many primary school teacher’s “training has failed to equip
them to make distinctions between the good and the meretricious in selecting and using books with and for children”.

The situation described above, in which education stakeholders express their perceptions that the library plays a very important function, but are not able to dedicate the resources required to provide an effective resource, shows that there is still a “mismatch between rhetoric and reality” identified by Morrison and Scott (1994:xii) in primary school library provision. The way forward from this situation is certainly not uncomplicated. The blame in no way should be placed wholly on the schools, and certainly not on the library co-ordinators themselves, who are often dedicating their own personal time, out of work hours, to develop library provision. However all stakeholders, including teachers, senior management, professional library associations, and the government, should work to bring together the ‘rhetoric’ and the ‘reality’, and be ready to commit both financial and human resources into developing the effectiveness of their libraries.

When analysing the actual uses to which libraries are put, the situation appears more optimistic. Libraries are rarely mono-functional. They fulfil, and are perceived as fulfilling, a variety of important functions within the school. Information skills, the creation of a ‘book culture’ and the use of resources for leisure purposes are all recognised as important by both education and library stakeholders.

However there is again a slight discrepancy between what education stakeholders desire for their library, and what they feel can be done in practice. The tension in this case principally exists around the borrowing of books. While the majority of schools claim to encourage the borrowing of books, many interview subjects expressed concerns that borrowing would inevitably lead to stock loss, with the potential of reducing the library’s effectiveness in fulfilling other functions.
8.2. Internal performance measurement

All the evidence collected in the literature suggests that instances of policy development and performance evaluation are rare in primary schools. Unfortunately the evidence suggests that this is still the case. Only a small proportion, 24% of schools, have a specific library policy, and an even smaller amount, 19.5%, evaluate their provision in some way.

Furthermore, due to the small numbers involved, it was not possible to analyse with any accuracy the correlation between policy development, and performance evaluation, and other variables of library provision. The only variable that appears to correlate in a small way is the slight correlation between the evaluation of library materials and the time the co-ordinator spent on library duties. This correlation was enhanced by the fact that many of the questionnaire respondents implied that evaluation would have a higher priority if their had more time to spare on library matters.

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to evaluate library provision. Unsurprisingly use was generally measured by quantitative means, such as the number of books being issued. However when looking at more user-orientated forms of evaluation, qualitative methods, such as discussions with users, are more popular than quantitative methods, such as questionnaires. However it must be noted that measurement of satisfaction was significantly rarer than measurement of use. This would suggest that the dichotomy between methodologies of assessment outlined in the literature review is still present in the evaluation of primary school library provision. However, the low levels of evaluation, both quantitative and qualitative, found amongst primary schools would suggest that a culture of ‘evaluation’ is not yet present, in any form, in primary school libraries.

Finally, while there is little evidence to suggest that performance evaluation is widely used, there is cause for optimism when assessing how teachers and other education stakeholders feel about this situation. 65% of respondents were not satisfied with their internal performance evaluation techniques, and have identified
ways in which they can improve this. But while it was clear that the majority of schools are not satisfied with their methods of assessment, there was also little indication that any real progress can be made in this area until teachers have more time, and more inclination to use their time, for library duties. All evidence suggests that this lead must come from the top. Headteachers and senior management are fundamental in deciding the culture of schools, and the priorities of schools, and it is from them that any changes must be instigated. This situation is particularly applicable in today’s educational environment, in which the government’s current policy is to devolve as much power as possible into schools, and attempt to reduce statutory responsibilities (Department of Education and Skills, 2001).

8.3. **External guidelines**

The findings relating to the use and perception of external guidelines are also relatively disappointing. A minority of respondents replied that they had even heard of either the Library Association’s *Primary School Library Guidelines*, or the School Library Association’s series of guidelines. Of this minority only a small proportion actually used them.

Furthermore there was no real evidence that these guidelines had any tangible impact on other aspects of service, though again the small numbers involved makes analysis difficult. There was apparently no impact of guideline use on the time library co-ordinators spent in the library, the training they have received, the presence of a library policy, or the presence of performance evaluation.

These results must call into question both the way in which these guidelines are marketed to schools, and how they are actually used within schools themselves. The criticism voiced by some stakeholders that the Library Association’s guidelines are not applicable to the primary school library context does not necessarily mean that the Library Association should ‘lower its standards’, but it does suggest that communication between the library and the education communities could be improved. The schools library services have a fundamental role to play here, as is
evidenced by the fact that the education stakeholders, if they had heard of the
guidelines, had generally heard of them through their local schools library service.
Indeed it does appear that the Library Association recognise this fact, and are now in
the process of ‘piloting’ their guidelines in co-operation with a small number of
schools library services throughout the country.

As far as OFSTED Inspections are concerned the evidence is more mixed.
Library stakeholders unite in calling for more attention to be paid to libraries in the
inspection process, and welcome the signs that this is indeed occurring, with an
addition to the Inspection guidelines including a checklist for assessing the library.
Education stakeholders are more split. A minority suggest that they would prefer
greater inspection of the library, and, like the library stakeholders, feel that libraries
do not receive enough attention. However the majority appear to suggest that they
feel that OFSTED does give an adequate amount of attention to the libraries.

8.4. Suggestions for further research

- At various stages throughout the research attention has been called to the
discrepancy between English primary school library provision, and provision in
other countries, particularly America and Australia. A study, which compares
library provision in comparable schools from across these countries, could be
valuable in comparing aspects of library provision and also in setting benchmarks
for good practice.

- Bearing in mind the future changes in OFSTED guidance in regards to library
provision, a study assessing whether these changes have any impact on the
standards of library provision in primary schools would be useful.

- This study only managed to identify a very small number of schools that assessed
performance in some manner. A larger study, identifying a greater number,
though not necessarily a greater proportion, of schools which evaluate provision,
could perhaps identify further correlation between aspects of library provision
and the evaluation of performance, and may be able to identify common features
of those schools which do measure performance.
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Sheffield First and the Department of Information Studies, the University of


Appendix I

Book resources in primary schools: questionnaire

I would be grateful if staff responsible for the co-ordination of library/book resources could fill out this questionnaire. Please return the questionnaire in the envelope provided to Sheffield Schools Library Service before Tuesday 10 July 2001.

This questionnaire aims to investigate the organisation and use of library materials within primary schools. There are also questions to elicit your views concerning the presence and use of library materials in the school.

There are four sections. The first section contains questions on basic details concerning library material provision in your school, and questions on staffing. The second section is concerned with use of materials, and the third with monitoring the performance of library materials. Finally the fourth section asks about contact with external library services.

Section 1: Basic information and staffing

1. Where are school library materials located in your school?
   A central collection □ Classroom collections □
   Both □

2. Does the school library make use of an automated issue system?
   Yes □ No □

The remaining questions in this section refer to the staffing of central collections. If your school has no central collection please proceed to Section 2.

3. How much time per week do you allocate for library responsibilities?
   None □ Less than 1 hour □
   1 - 2 hours □ 2 –3 hours □
   3 hours or more □
4. Are you solely responsible for co-ordinating the library?
   Yes □ No □

5. Have you had any formal or informal library training?
   Yes □ No □
   If yes, who provided this training?
   Your school □ School library service □
   Other, please specify ___________________________________________________________________

6. How is the library staffed on a ‘day-to-day’ basis? Please tick all that apply.
   Clerical help □ Parent volunteers □
   Pupils □ Other, please specify ___________________________________________________________________

7. Are children involved in discussing the library’s future?
   Yes □ No □
   If yes, how?
   ___________________________________________________________________

Section 2: Use of library materials

8. Is there a policy document for the use of library materials?
   Yes □ No □
   Don’t know □

9. If no, are library resources mentioned in other policy documents?
   Yes □ No □
   Don’t know □
   Is yes, which documents?
   ___________________________________________________________________
10. What, in your view, is the primary function of the materials held in the central collection? If your school has no central collection, please proceed to question 11.

Curriculum support ☐ Teaching information skills ☐
Leisure reading ☐ Private study ☐
Literacy training ☐ Other, please specify ___________

12. What, in your view, is the primary function of the materials held in classroom collections? If your school has no classroom collections, please proceed to question 12.

Curriculum support ☐ Teaching information skills ☐
Leisure reading ☐ Private study ☐
Literacy training ☐ Other, please specify ___________

13. Are the children taught library/information handling skills?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, are the skills taught in ‘specific’ sessions or as part of the normal course of lessons?

Specific sessions ☐ As part of lessons ☐

14. Is there a formal policy relating to library/information skills training for pupils?

Yes ☐ No ☐

15. Do you give any advice to other class teachers on how to train their pupils to use the library?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, what advice do you give?

16. Are children encouraged to borrow books from either the classroom or central library collections for recreational reading at home?

Yes ☐ No ☐

17. Does the school put on ‘book related’ events, such as visits by authors or local librarians, or ‘book weeks’?

Yes ☐ No ☐
Is yes, please specify

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

18. Are the children involved in creating ‘book related’ displays within the central 
collection?
   Yes [ ] No [ ]
within classroom collections?
   Yes [ ] No [ ]

19. Do you consider that library materials, whether in a central collection or in 
classroom collections, provide a valuable service to the school?
   Yes [ ] No [ ]
If yes, in what way?

____________________________________________________________________

Section 3: Monitoring performance

20. Who is responsible for monitoring how library resources are used? Please tick all 
that apply.
   Library staff [ ] Library co-ordinator [ ]
   Individual teachers [ ] Headteacher [ ]

21. Does the school currently formally measure the use of library materials:
   within the central collection?
   Yes [ ] No [ ]
   within classroom collections?
   Yes [ ] No [ ]
If ‘no’ please go to question 23.

22. If yes to either of the above, which of the following measures are used to monitor 
use? Please tick all that apply:
   Number of books issued [ ]
Number of classes using the library  
Number of children using the library per specified time  
Number of teachers using the library per specified time  
Other, please specify

23. Is use of library materials measured on a regular basis?
   Yes ☐  No ☐

24. Does the school currently formally measure the satisfaction of library ‘users’ (pupils, staff, or parents if applicable)?
   Yes ☐  No ☐

25. If yes, which of the following methods are used to monitor satisfaction? Please tick all that apply.
   Pupil questionnaires ☐
   Discussion with pupils ☐
   Staff questionnaires ☐
   Discussion with staff ☐
   Parent questionnaires ☐
   Discussion with parents ☐
   Other, please specify

26. Are you aware of any of the following guidelines concerning library provision in primary schools:
   Library Association’s *Primary School Library Guidelines* ☐
   School Library Association Guidelines ☐
   OFSTED guidance for resources ☐
27. Do you use any of the above guidelines when managing the library resources?

Yes □  No □

If yes, please specify which

____________________________________________________________________

28. Do you feel that the evaluation of library materials is dealt with adequately within the school?

Yes □  No □

If no, what improvements would you like to see?

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

Section 4: Contact with external ‘library services’

29. Does the school make use of the schools library service?

Yes □  No □

30. If yes, which services provided by the schools library service do you make use of? Please tick all that apply.

Advice on book selection □  Loan of books or project packs □
Consultation □
Other, please specify

____________________________________________________________________

31. Are pupils taken to any libraries outside school? If no, please proceed to question 32.

Local branch □  Other branch □
Central public □  Other, please specify_____________________


32. If yes to any of the above, what is the purpose of these visits? Please tick all that apply.

To borrow books ☐ Introduction to the public library ☐

To learn information skills ☐

Other activities, such as storytelling. Please specify

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

33. Are children encouraged to make use of their local public library service independently?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, how?

____________________________________________________________________

I would like to discuss the provision of library materials in primary school with a sample of questionnaire respondents. If you would be prepared to talk to me either by phone or email please complete your details below.

Name:_____________________________________________________________

Telephone:_________________________________________________________

Email address:_______________________________________________________

THANKYOU
Appendix II

Full list of interview subjects

Education Stakeholders

- School A
  KS2 Library Co-ordinator
- School B
  KS1 Library Co-ordinator
- School C
  Library Co-ordinator
  Chair of Governors
- School D
  Library Co-ordinator
  Deputy Head; Head of KS1
- School E
  Library Co-ordinator

Library Stakeholders

- Children’s Representative; Frecheville Library
- Children’s Representative; Hillsborough Library
- Children’s Representative; Park Library
- Children’s Representative: Greenhill Library
- Children’s Representative; Woodhouse Library
- Sheffield schools library service: 2 representatives.
- Schools Library Association: 1 representative
- Library Association: 1 representative
- Ex-HMI Inspector
Appendix III.

Interview Guide: Library Co-ordinators

Staffing
Covering:
- Responsibility – what duties?
- How did the responsibility come about?
- Training?

Use of books
Covering:
- Levels of use in the libraries.
- Borrowing of books.
- Literacy hours and their impacts.
- Importance of literacy and “beyond literacy”
- Information skills training.

Performance measurement
Covering:
- Policy document and its content (e.g. budget, collection management).
  - Is the library a priority in this school?
- General questions on, e.g. do you measure the performance of materials in the library or classroom collections.
- Collection management: selection of books; children’s involvement;
- External guidelines: e.g. OFSTED and LA, SLA.
  - knowledge of
  - relevancy to practice.
  - Do you use in practice?
    - If not, why not?

External institutions
Covering:
- Links to public libraries, and their purpose.
- Links to SLS and their purpose.
  - What areas of advice have the SLS been able to give you?