

The Impact of Public Library ICT Facilities on People
Living in Areas of Social Exclusion

A study submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Science in Information Management

at

THE UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD

by

EMMA CHAPLIN

September 2002

Abstract

This study aims to investigate the impact of public access ICT facilities in libraries upon people living in areas of social exclusion. It focuses upon the impact that the available ICT is having on both library users and non-library users, with a focus upon those groups more likely to be suffering from forms of social exclusion such as the unemployed and older adults. The study looks at ICT provision in the case-study areas, and attempts to create a profile of library users through a library user questionnaire. It then goes on to look at the extent of use and by whom of the facilities in order to assess whether the facilities are having any impact in general terms. It then explores the attitudes of library users towards ICT, barriers to ICT take-up, and finally looks at the impact of the facilities upon non-library users.

The study focussed upon 5 case study libraries covering two English authorities. A questionnaire of over 50 library users was undertaken as well as interviews with library assistants and senior librarians.

The study found that the libraries are used by a wide section of their communities, however this was not true of their ICT facilities. It found that there are a number of barriers faced by socially excluded people that prevent them from using ICT. One of the main barriers that emerged was a lack of awareness of what ICT can provide and what benefits it can bring.

The study concludes that ICT facilities in public libraries are not having a significant impact upon the residents of socially excluded areas, however the evidence suggests that they have the potential to have an impact upon local communities. However a lot more than simply installing PCs in libraries needs to be done. For instance, promotion and publicity needs to be improved, concentrating on publicising the benefits of ICT and not just its availability. In addition, if all the money and effort put into staff ICT training is to be of any use, then more staff need to be deployed in libraries so that they have time to put their training to use and assist users. Finally, creating partnerships with other agencies is recommended as means for increasing the impact of public access ICT.

Table of Contents

List of Tables		6
Table of Figures		7
Key to Abbreviations		8
Acknowledgements		8
Chapter 1	Introduction	9
	1.1 Background and Rationale	9
	1.2 Aims and Objectives	10
	1.3 Scope, Terms of Reference and Definitions	11
	1.3.1 General	11
	1.3.2 Social Exclusion	11
	1.3.3 Information Communication Technology	12
Chapter 2	Literature Review	13
	2.1 Introduction	13
	2.2 ICT and Social Exclusion	13
	2.3 Public Libraries, ICT and Social Exclusion	15
	2.3.1 The Extent of Public Access ICT Use	17
	2.3.2 Barriers to ICT Use	17
	2.3.3 Non-users	18
	2.4 Summary	19
Chapter 3	Methodology	20
	3.1.1 Research Approach	20
	3.1.2 Triangulation	21
	3.1.3 Data Analysis	22
	3.2 Methods of Investigation	22
	3.2.1 Literature Review	22
	3.2.2 Printed Material	22
	3.2.3 Data Collection	23
	3.2.2.1 Library User Survey	23
	3.2.3.2 Non-library Users	25
	3.2.3.3 Support Staff Interview	25
	3.2.2.4 Senior Staff Interview	26
	3.2.4 Case Studies	27
	3.2.4.1 Community and Library Profiles	28
	3.2.5 Data Analysis	31
	3.2.6 Limitations of the Methodology	31
Chapter 4	ICT Provision in the Two Authorities Studied	32
	4.1 The Overall Picture	32
	4.2 The Case Study Authorities	33
	4.2.1 Authority 1	33
	4.2.2 Authority 2	34
	4.3 Summary	34

Chapter 5	Characteristics of Respondents	36
	5.1 User Characteristics	36
	5.1.1 Employment	36
	5.1.2 Education	38
	5.1.3 Gender	40
	5.1.4 Age	40
	5.1.5 Ethnic Background	41
	5.2 Summary	41
Chapter 6	Use of Public Access ICT in Case Study Libraries	43
	6.1 Use of ICT	43
	6.1.1 Use of Facilities by Employment Status	45
	6.1.2 Use of facilities by educational achievement	47
	6.1.3 Use of facilities by age	50
	6.1.4 Use of facilities by ethnic origin	51
	6.2 What is the Library being used for?	52
	6.3 Summary	54
Chapter 7	Barriers to ICT Take-up	55
	7.1 The Literature	55
	7.2 The Library User Survey	57
	7.1.1 Fear and Lack of Knowledge of How to Use Facilities	58
	7.1.2 No Desire and No Need	59
	7.1.3 'I'm too old' Use of Facilities by Older Adults	59
	7.1.4 Perception and Awareness	60
	7.2 Non-user Encouragement	61
	7.3 Staff	62
	7.4 Summary	62
Chapter 8	Library User's Perceptions of ICT Facilities in Libraries	64
	8.1 General Trends	64
	8.2 Staff Views	66
	8.2.1 Library Assistants	66
	8.2.2 Senior Library Staff	69
	8.3 Non-ICT Users	69
	8.4 ICT Users	71
	8.5 Summary	72

Chapter 9	Public Library ICT and Non-library Users	74
	9.1 Non-library Users	74
	9.2 Barriers to Non-library Users	75
	9.2.1 Fear and Lack of Knowledge of How to Use Facilities	75
	9.2.2 Awareness and Perception	76
	9.2.3 Institutional Barriers	76
	9.2.4 Access Barriers	77
	9.3 The Case Study	78
	9.3.1 The Views of Library Assistants	80
	9.4 Promotion	80
	9.5 What is Being Done?	82
	9.6 Summary	83
Chapter 10	Conclusions and Recommendations	85
	10.1 Introduction	85
	10.2 Background	85
	10.3 Objectives	86
	10.4 Recommendations for Stakeholders	88
	10.5 Topics for Further Research	89
Bibliography		90
Appendix 1	Library User Questionnaire	95
Appendix 2	Library Staff Questionnaire	97
Appendix 3	Interview guide for Senior Librarians	98
Appendix 4	Flash card for library user questionnaire	99

List of Tables

Chapter 3	3.1 Questionnaire response rates by authority	25
Chapter 5	5.1 Employment status of respondents	37
	5.2 Qualifications of respondents	39
	5.3 Gender of respondents	40
	5.4 Age of respondents	40
	5.5 Ethnic origin of respondents	41
Chapter 6	6.1 'Do you use a computer in the library?'	43
	6.2 Main point of computer access	44
	6.3 Use of computers in library	45
	6.4 Use of facilities by employment status	46
	6.5 Use of facilities by educational achievement	48
	6.6 Use of facilities by the elderly	50
	6.7 What are the facilities being used for?	52
Chapter 7	7.1 Reasons for lack of library ICT use	58
	7.2 'What would encourage you to use the computers more?'	61
Chapter 8	8.1 'How important do you think it is for libraries to provide computing facilities?'	64
	8.2 Main Use of ICT Facilities	71
Chapter 9	9.1 Use of library before ICT introduction	78
	9.2 Use of library computers by existing library members	79

Table of Figures

Chapter 5	5.1 Employment Status of Respondents	37
Chapter 6	6.1 Qualifications of Respondents	49
	6.2 Main Use of Library	53
Chapter 7	7.1 Reasons for lack of library ICT use	61
Chapter 8	8.1 'How important do you think it is for libraries to provide computing facilities?'	65
Chapter 9	9.1 'Did you use the library before the computers were introduced?'	79
	9.2 'How did you find out about the library computing facilities?'	82

Key to Abbreviations

ECDL	European Computer Driving Licence
DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
ICT	Information Communication Technology
INSINC	National Working Party on Social Exclusion
LIC	Library and Information Commission
NAGCELL	National Advisory Group for Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning
SEU	Social Exclusion Unit
VITAL	The Value and Impact of End-User IT Services in Public Libraries

Acknowledgements

Thanks go to Mr Richard Proctor for his support and advice throughout this study. Thank you to the staff and users of Sheffield Libraries and Information Services, and Derbyshire Libraries and Heritage, with special thanks to Mike Beach and Robert Gent in giving their permission to use their libraries, and finally to Hilary Docherty and Martin Dutch for their interviews.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background and Rationale

There has been a great deal of change in terms of the public library since the mid 1990s whereby *'developments in ICT provision, notably with the introduction of Internet access, have started to change the landscape of public library services within the UK, with direct access to information sources, initially to an OPAC, becoming widespread, Increasingly the ICT-based services include Internet access'* (Eve and Brophy, 2001: section 2.1). Access to the Internet through the public library has in fact become government policy, initially by the commissioning by the government in 1997 of 'New Library: The People's Network', where the vision for public libraries was for them to be *'connected to a powerful network...offering ICT services in an integrated way with other, more traditional services'* (Bouhey, 2000: 143). Thus, a target was set to provide public access ICT facilities in all of the UK's static libraries by 2002 (Mackay, 1999: 3). This change has manifested itself in the presence of public access ICT facilities in 70% of libraries (The People's Network, 2002 Online) both central and branch. Staff are being sent on ICT training courses funded by the government who has put aside £20 million to train all library staff in the use of ITC (Haq, 2001: 38).

Through this funding to introduce public access PCs into public libraries, the government is hoping that the People's Network will achieve a number of things, with three areas being given priority:

1. Enhancing education and lifelong learning opportunities for children and adults;
2. Supporting training, employment and business, to foster economic prosperity;
3. Nurturing social cohesion through fostering a politically and culturally informed society (New Library: The People's Network, 1997).

Closely linked and associated with all three of the above priorities is the concept of social exclusion. In fact, Dutch and Muddiman (2001: 185) argue that *'ICT is...seen as a catalyst for addressing social exclusion through the creation of IT*

literate and employable individuals'. More specifically to public libraries, with the introduction of public access ICT facilities it is hoped that they will ensure that *'no citizen is left behind, providing a safety net against alienation and social exclusion from technological advance- a route to universal access and opportunity'* (New Library: The People's Network, 1997).

However, questions have started to arise over whether the computer in the public library has had the anticipated impact of getting socially excluded people to use ICT (Proctor and Bartle, 2002, Dutch and Muddiman, 2001 and Bruce-Burges, 2000). In fact, Dutch and Muddiman (2001: 183) argue that their 2001 research suggests that:

'Despite a rhetorical commitment to social inclusion, the technological transformation of UK public library services will result in little more than a modernisation of current services'

...and Eve and Brophy (2001) claim that:

'To date there is little evidence as to whether this investment in public libraries is generating value for money and having an impact on the citizens which it is intended to benefit'.

Therefore this study aims to assess whether the ICT that has been installed in libraries in areas suffering from forms of social exclusion is actually having an impact on these people, and if not why.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

The purpose of this research was to provide evidence for practitioners and policy makers on the impact that the widespread introduction of public access ICT facilities has had on those in areas of social exclusion.

Specific Objectives

- 1) To investigate the extent to which the ICT facilities are being used and by whom;
- 2) To investigate the reasons for non-use;

- 3) To investigate attitudes of library users towards ICT facilities in the library;
- 4) To investigate public access ICT and non-library users

Specific Aim

To assess the impact that the widespread introduction of ICT in public libraries has had on those living in areas of social exclusion.

1.3 Scope, Terms of Reference and Definitions

1.3.1 General

This study was carried out in five libraries within two authorities. All interviewing and surveying were carried out in these two authorities.

1.3.2 Social Exclusion

In terms of this study, the government definition of the term ‘Social Exclusion’ is used. This is because it is the government’s aim to use ICT and the People’s Network to ‘*tackle social exclusion*’. The government uses the following definition for social exclusion:

‘A shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, bad health and family breakdown’.

With the key risk factors including:

‘Low income; family conflict; being in care; school problems; being an ex-prisoner; being from an ethnic minority; living in a deprived neighbourhood in urban and rural areas’.

(Social Exclusion Unit, 2001a)

The local areas for this study were chosen using some of the above criteria. In addition the areas were chosen due to the economic changes they have experienced in the last two decades, notably ‘*the decline in the importance and scale of traditional industries such as manufacturing and mining*’ (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001a).

1.3.3 Information Communication Technology- ICT

In the context of this study, ICT is used as a term covering word-processing facilities, access to the Internet and e-mail. It however, does not include separate stand-alone (which some libraries have) online public access catalogues, unless they are available through the library web site which one must access through the public access PCs.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Although many library authorities are only starting to provide public access ICT facilities, the issue of ICT in public libraries has been a common theme in both government, academic and public library literature for a number of years now (see Stubbs, 1995; New Library: The Peoples Network, 1997; Building the New Library Network, 1998; Batt 1999). At this point in time the large scale, countrywide introduction of public access PCs has finally been implemented in 70% of libraries in England and Wales (The Peoples Network Online, 2002). This implementation is the outcome of the current Labour government's sanctioning of the publication of 'New Library: The People's Network' (1997). The People's Network was set up to '*connect every public library to the information superhighway*' and provide '*funding for the infrastructure...and for the training of all library staff in ICT skills and the development of educational content for the network*' (The Library Association, 2000).

'New Library: The People's Network' is part of a wider government agenda to use '*ICT for socially inclusive purposes*' (Selwyn, 2002: 1) and as part of the government's strategy for lifelong learning, a strand of government policy '*encompassing quality of life, new opportunities, re-skilling, equality of access and the like*' (Batt, 1999: 14).

2.2 ICT and Social Exclusion

The issue of social exclusion is now a '*central part of academic and political debate in the UK*' (Selwyn, 2002: 2). During their first year in office the current New Labour government established the inter-departmental Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) (Levitas in Selwyn, 2002: 2) and in 2000 published 'The National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal' covering 18 areas of concern '*ranging from housing to employment, political participation to use of ICT*' (Selwyn, 2002: 3). Furthermore, the Prime Minister, Tony Blair claimed that the labour government '*made social*

exclusion a priority from the moment we came into government, not least through establishing the Social Exclusion Unit as agents to change (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001b).

Despite the broad approach taken by the government regarding social exclusion (see Chapter 1, section 1.3.2) much of the literature on the subject of social inclusion illustrates the large part that ICT has to play in tackling social inclusion. For example the Department of Trade and Industry (2000) maintain that:

ICTs are important because they have a key role to play in helping people in deprived neighbourhoods overcome some of the major obstacles they face'.

Goulding (2001) notes that:

'Within the British Government's social inclusion agenda, information communication technologies (ICTs) are perceived as having an essential role to play in breaking down the barriers between the information 'haves' and 'have nots', encouraging the sharing of information across local, regional, national and trans-national boundaries and thus acting as a catalyst for social, economic and political renewal'.

In addition to the potential of ICT to facilitate social inclusion, Selwyn (2002: 4) highlights Government concerns over the potential of ICT to in fact create *'a new form of exclusion as well as reinforcing existing patterns of exclusion from society'*. This is because ICT is seen to have the potential to exasperate social exclusion by creating divisions between those who have access to the technology and those who do not. This view is held by the Government, for example the Prime Minister observes that:

'This technology is revolutionising the way we work, the way we do business, the way we live our lives. Our job is to make sure it is not the preserve of an elite- but an Internet for the people' (Blair in Selwyn, 2002: 4).

And, the then Minister for learning and technology warns that:

'If the digital divide is not tackled, it will entrench existing exclusion for generations. Familiarity with ICT is the indispensable grammar of modern life. Those not empowered by it are disenfranchised' (Wills in Selwyn, 2002: 4).

The academic literature also recognises that ICT can either exacerbate or alleviate social exclusion, for instance:

'A risk is acknowledged that ICT developments may reinforce polarisation and create additional division through people and communities who are 'information rich' or 'information poor', whereby the failure to get 'plugged-in' leads to a downwards spiral of economic inactivity with associated fall-outs' (Phipps in Selwyn, 2002: 2).

The gap that some argue (see Stoker, 2000) is already emerging between those who have access to the information technology and those who do not is often called the 'digital divide', a term *'used by politicians...as a shorthand to express fears that many people will miss out in a world where access to information, and the skills to handle it, will be increasingly important'* (Wilcox, 2000). In fact, Stoker (2000: 54) argues that developments in ICT *'have tended to increase the social divide'*.

It is thus through the provision of access to ICT for everyone that the government believes will *'bridge the gap'* and thus *'help to combat social exclusion'* (Wilcox, 2000). The remainder of this chapter will focus on the part the public library will play.

2.3 Public Libraries, ICT and Social Exclusion

Since its beginnings, the role of the public library has been to enable all sections of society to 'improve' themselves, and Webster (in Williamson, 2000: 181) highlights the library's position as a non-exclusionary institution whereby:

'information is made available to everyone, access being guaranteed as without cost to individuals; membership is free to all who live, work or study in the local area'.

As the Government's *'social exclusion and lifelong learning agendas are heavily reliant on the extension of ICT into communities, reducing barriers to information, knowledge and learning'* (Goulding, 2001) it seems that because of the public library's position of equality and access to all, it is seen by the government as a good base to locate ICT. The People's Network (2002) web site claims that *'public libraries are at the heart of the People's Network'*, and Eve (1999) observes that

'Public libraries are increasingly being recognised and heralded as ideal local delivery points for a range of national programmes addressing lifelong learning, access to IT skills and services and the delivery of government services. Libraries are also being championed as a means of tackling social exclusion, providing access to IT services for disadvantaged communities, and acting as "street corner universities"'.

This is also illustrated by the claims of the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (2001) who in their report *'Libraries, Museums, Galleries and Archives for All'* set out *'the Government's vision of the contribution that libraries, museums, galleries and archives can make to tackling social exclusion'*. They also suggest that:

'Public libraries are the focal point for the provision of information services in the community. As such they have an important role to play in helping to combat social exclusion' (DCMS, 1999).

Library literature also supports the cause for the library as having a key role in the tackling of social exclusion through ICT. For instance, in their report, *'Building the new Library Network'*, the Library and Information Commission see the public library as well-placed to play a critical role in social exclusion, stating that ICT in libraries will *'underpin social exclusion in the community and the wider economic prosperity of our society'* (Building the New Library Network, 1998). In addition,

the Library Association appears to support the government's plans to involve the library service in its strategy to combat social exclusion set out in the 'National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal'. In its response to this report, the LA state that *'library and information services of all types have much to contribute to the regeneration process'* (The Library Association, 2000).

2.3.1 The Extent of Public Access ICT Use

As the focus of this research is on the impact of public libraries on those who live in areas of social exclusion, an objective was to investigate the extent of use of the available ICT facilities, and, who is using them. Little literature in the past has focussed upon the actual impact of library ICT upon those in areas of social exclusion. The older literature has a more general focus, such as the National Working Party on Social Exclusion's report 'The Net Result' (INSINC 1997), that focuses on the use of information technology for achieving social inclusion. However, more recently both academic and government literature is starting to focus upon this area, such as Dutch and Muddiman (2002) and the Department of Trade and Industry (2000) who found evidence to suggest *'that take up (of ICT) among people living in deprived neighbourhoods is lower than the national average'*.

2.3.2 Barriers to ICT use

An objective of this study was to investigate potential and actual barriers to library ICT use. Initial literature focussing upon ICT and social exclusion did not recognise that other barriers apart from access to ICT needed addressing if the Government's ICT strategy were to have any impact (see for example 'The Net Result', INSINC, 1997). However, there is now an emerging section of the literature, both government, industry and academic that recognises that a lot more than providing access is needed. This material is significant to this study as it helps provide a background to objective 2 which sets out to assess the reasons for non-use of library ICT facilities.

Until recently, the literature saw access as the primary focus, with 'The Net Result' claiming *'it follows that we should pay particular attention to the question of access in the Information Society'* (INSINC, 1997). However, more recently, issues over barriers to ICT use, especially significant to the socially excluded, have started

to emerge in the literature. A common barrier cited in the literature is one of awareness and perception of what benefits ICT facilities can offer (see DTI, 2000 and DCMS, 1999), for instance Proctor and Bartle (2002: 98) highlight the theme of awareness of what ICT can offer, and observe that *'library users need to be made more aware of their value in supporting hobbies and interests, ... and for informal learning in general'*. The Department of Culture Media and Sport (1999) support this view and claim that:

'For those on the margins of our society, the potential benefits of enhanced information and communication often make no impression or are viewed as 'not for us''.

It is argued that it is not possible to simply provide free Internet access in public libraries and expect everybody to become 'socially included'. There are issues over opening times, staff training (see Batt, 2000), low IT skills of particular groups (see DTI, 2000) and quality of connection (see DCMS 2000). However, Stoker (2000: 54) argues that that it *'is no longer merely a question of access to computer equipment'* and suggests that the issue of lack of skills training is *'to some degree being addressed as computers feature increasingly as part of the education process and social inclusion programmes'*. The findings of Proctor and Bartle (2002: 127) can be used to back up the argument Stoker makes, in that their findings showed that *'even with physical access to a computer through a public library the most disadvantaged in society may still be disenfranchised'* and that this may be partly due to the fact that *'computers are seen by some primarily as tools for formal learning'*.

2.3.3 Non-users

Literature giving some attention to non-library users is limited. However, Dutch and Muddiman (2001: 183) recognise non-library users and suggest that libraries *'will need to move beyond a passive preoccupation with access'* and use the technology as a *'means towards more active engagement with local communities and disadvantaged users so the public library will indeed be open to all'*.

2.4 Summary

As demonstrated above in recent years the literature has seen the emergence of a challenge to the practice of simply providing access. However, an actual study focusing upon the particular area of public libraries and ICT and their impact upon people living in areas of social exclusion had not been done at the time of this literature review.

Chapter 3 Methodology and Methods of Investigation

3.1 Methodology

3.1.1 Research Approach

In the area of library and information research the research paradigm has shifted from the positivist tradition where quantitative survey techniques were felt to be the most appropriate and *'often the only way to collect data'* (Gorman and Clayton, 1997: 43). Now, it is becoming more common for *'qualitative research and its search for meaning'* to be *'adopted as an appropriate investigative paradigm'* (Gorman and Clayton, 1997: 43).

For this study therefore the main research approach chosen was qualitative in nature, with a goal to *'understand those being studied from their perspective, from their point of view'* (Gorman & Clayton, 1997). Or, in other words to attempt to gain the actual feelings, beliefs and perceptions of those in areas of social exclusion on ICT facilities in public libraries.

The decision to follow a more qualitative route of data collection and analysis in a library environment is supported by a number of authors such as Mellon (1990: 151) who claims that:

'Library programmes and services are notoriously hard to evaluate statistically for several reasons. First, they are complex.... Second, they are designed by people for people. And... people are unpredictable. Third, statistics on library services and programmes are unreliable.'

Gorman and Clayton (1997: 34) give a similar reasoning for the use of qualitative data collection methods in information environments, claiming:

'Information agencies are service organisations involving social realities and individuals who work within these realities... it is only natural that qualitative research ... be adopted as an appropriate investigative paradigm'

The research approach is also Naturalistic in nature as real-world situations as they happen naturally are studied with a *'lack of pre-determined constraints on outcomes'* (Patton, 1990: 40) for instance the researcher *'does not attempt to manipulate the research setting'* (Patton, 1990: 39), in this case the public library. The research approach is also characterised by grounded theory as the theory is *'inductively developed during (the) study'* (Maxwell, 1996: 33), in other words themes will emerge from the data.

In addition to the qualitative approach to this research, a degree of quantitative techniques were used. In fact, Gorman and Clayton (1997: 32) suggest that *'the best option is for a range of approaches that will allow flexibility in understanding problems and offering multiple insights into their solution'*. Quantitative techniques were used in conjunction with qualitative methods to analyse and collect the data, as statistical *'information provides a general pattern of use, what services are used, and by whom, and the qualitative data fills in the details of why people use the services, and how they value them'* (Eve and Brophy, 2000).

3.1.2 Triangulation

For both the research approach and the collection of data, triangulation is used. This method involves the use of multiple methodologies (Gorman and Clayton, 1997: 32) which leads to the collecting of *'information from several sources about the same event or behaviour'* (Hittleman and Simon in Gorman and Clayton, 1997: 32). Gorman and Clayton (1997: 32) suggest that these multiple methodologies of triangulation should be both qualitative and quantitative. Thus, in essence, triangulation has the benefit of:

- a) Allowing the researcher to '*address different aspects of the same research question, thereby extending the breadth of the project*'
- b) Enabling the researcher to compensate for inherent weaknesses in each (positivist and interpretist) approach, by drawing on the unique strengths of both. (Gorman and Clayton, 1997: 32)
- c) Being a means of cross-validating information. (Hittleman and Simon in Gorman and Clayton, 1997: 32)

3.1.3 Data Analysis

An inductive approach to data analysis was taken, whereby genuinely open questions were explored as opposed to '*testing theoretically derived (deductive) hypotheses*' (Patton, 1990: 40). Thus rather than proving or disproving an initial hypothesis, conclusions were drawn from the data and results of the investigation.

3.2 Methods of Investigation

3.2.1 Literature Review

The literature on the topic was reviewed in order to find the main gaps in the literature and to put the report into context for the reader. Initial literature searches were carried out using LISA (library and Information Abstracts), the Internet search engine Google was also used as was the university library catalogue. Bibliographies of former dissertations, articles and reports were also used to find literature and acted as a pointer towards more literature, one example being reports published by the Social Exclusion Unit where one report from a bibliography often led to more resources being uncovered.

3.2.2 Printed Material

Printed material was also used as a source of data. For example annual library plans and Best Value reports were used.

3.2.3 Data Collection

The data collection for this study is characterised by fieldwork as it *'is the central activity of qualitative inquiry. Having direct and personal contact with people under study in their own environments'* (Patton, 1990: 44). Thus, fieldwork was carried out in five branch libraries stretching over two local authorities, which are profiled in section 3.2.3.1.

3.2.2.1 Library User Survey

The Questionnaire

A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from library users, with the sequence and wording of each question remaining the same for each respondent (Mellon, 1990:1). The questionnaire had a number of closed option questions such as age, frequency of library visits and use of the ICT facilities. This type of question was used in order to gather some quantitative information that would allow a greater scope for data analysis. In addition to closed questions, a number of open questions were included as this study sought to *'obtain information relating to people's attitudes, beliefs or feelings about a subject'* (Heather and Stone, 1984: 21). Thus the open-ended questions were included in order to attain detailed and personal opinions of the respondents on their views relating to ICT facilities in their library and to find out the reasons for them not using the provided facilities. For example, one question asked for any additional comments on the computing facilities in the library. Appendix 1 shows an example of the user questionnaire.

The questionnaire was to be completed by the interviewer rather than a self-completion questionnaire as it was felt that this method would be quicker, ensure less questions would be missed out and make it more likely for users to agree to take part. A flash card approach was used for some questions such as age in order to speed up each interview (a copy of the flash card can be found in appendix 4). Finally, an explanation of the purpose of the study was given and a promise of confidentiality (Bell, 1993: 85) as it was felt that this would put respondents at ease.

In terms of responses to the open questions included in the questionnaire, it was felt that tape-recording the interviewee's responses might discourage them from participating or cause them to give guarded answers as the *'respondent is sometimes*

self-conscious or overly aware of the recorder' (Erlandson et al., 1993: 90). In addition, malfunctioning recorded machinery may have caused problems such as interviews being lost. Although with tape recording everything is captured on tape, it was still felt that despite this benefit note taking would be used instead.

Piloting the Questionnaire

The library-user questionnaire was piloted on 2 postgraduate students who did not possess a library and information background. This was to check that all questions and instructions were clear, to find out why, if any, questions were left unanswered and finally to '*see whether the wording and format of questions will present any difficulties when the main data are analysed*' (Bell, 1993: 84). A selection of relevant questions from Bell's (1993: 85) 'questions for pilot respondents' were followed:

1. Were the instructions I gave clear?
2. Were any of the questions unclear or ambiguous? Why?
3. Did you object to answering any of the questions?
4. Have you any additional comments on the questionnaire?

From the piloting of the questionnaire there were no changes made to the questionnaire as no problems such as '*ambiguities, [or] lack of clarity about the meaning of terms*' (Stone and Harris, 1984: 19) emerged from the pilot questionnaires.

Respondents

As this part of the data collection was dependent on the '*goodwill and availability of subjects*' the response rate was determined by those that were '*available and willing at the time*' (Bell, 1993: 82) and thus a 'opportunity sample' of 51 responses was managed from those actually in the various libraries at my time of visiting. Although this sample size is relatively small, Patton (in Erlandson et al, 1993: 84) believes that by using a '*small purposive sample*¹, and by not attempting to over-generalise from

¹ A definition of 'purposive sampling' is given by Merriam (in Erlandson et al., 1993: 91) who defines purposive sampling as '*selecting individuals on the basis of what they can contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon under study*'.

it, the researcher can do much to allay fears about inadequate sample size'. The response rate result from surveying users from the two authorities are shown in the table below:

Authority	Number of Respondents ²
Authority 1	40
Authority 2	11

Table 3.1 **Questionnaire response rates by authority**

3.2.3.2 Non-library Users

As this study focuses on people in areas of social exclusion both library users and non-library users applied to this study. However it was felt that due to the short time scale of this research project and other difficulties such as security concerns over street-interviews a non-library user survey would be inappropriate (see Chapter 9). Thus, the literature on this subject is consulted and used as a data source. Also, a question asking 'did you use the library before the computers were introduced?' was included in the questionnaire in order to ascertain whether non-library members were using the facilities.

3.2.3.3 Support Staff Interview

A structured interview was undertaken with the library assistants at each library visited. Library staff were interviewed as it was felt that they are important stakeholders in the service and are a vital part of the People's Network, with 'Building the New Library Network' claiming that *'ultimately it will be the library staff who determine the success of the project through their advice and advocacy role with members of the public'* (Building the New Library Network, 1998). The interview was standardised in that each question was the same and questions were in the same order for each interviewee. This standardised approach was taken because it is easier *'to aggregate and quantify the results'* (Bell, 1993: 93) an important factor as 13 library assistants were interviewed whose responses needed analysing qualitatively and quantitatively. It was ensured that the questions were non-directive

² The results appear skewed towards authority one due to the fact that an extra library was surveyed here.

and did not suggest a 'right' answer, which Brenner suggests allows for a degree of reliability of results (in Gorman and Clayton, 1997: 129).

The Interview was designed to find out staff views on the introduction of ICT into their particular library, who is using the facilities and to ascertain how they felt about the training they had received regarding ICT. A copy of the support staff interview can be seen in Appendix 2.

It was decided not to use a tape recorder during these interviews for the same reasons as the user questionnaires. It was felt that guarded answers might have been given by staff for fear of their managers finding out those responsible for any sensitive responses.

3.2.2.4 Senior Staff Interview

A semi-structured interview was adopted with senior staff. The structure was relatively 'loose' in order to *'ensure all topics which are considered crucial to the study are covered'* (Bell, 1998: 94), whilst allowing the personal views and ideas of the interviewee to emerge. Two members of senior staff were interviewed, one from each authority. Each interview followed an interview guide (see Appendix 3 for guide) where the respondent was *'allowed a considerable degree of latitude within the framework'*. Thus, *'certain questions are asked, but respondents are given the freedom to talk about the topic and give their views in their own time'* (Bell, 1998: 94).

As the interviews were not particularly long in terms of time, it was felt that it would be possible to take notes and transcribing would take too much time, for instance Bell (1998: 96) estimates that for each hour recorded 10 hours are needed to transcribe. In addition, a tape-recorder was not used due to the reasons given above for the library assistant interviews and user questionnaires.

3.2.4 Case Studies

Two in-depth case studies of library authorities were undertaken to get a greater depth than a national e-mail survey of library authorities, and to get a greater depth than studying only one authority. This was because each authority was an example of a different type of social exclusion. Authority 1 has a more obvious type of social exclusion, the stereotype of poor, run-down inner-city areas and large council estates with high unemployment and visible signs of crime and vandalism. Authority 2 however has a particular problem like that of Lincolnshire, one of '*social exclusion caused by rurality*' and because:

'These disadvantaged people are dispersed throughout the county, the problem can appear less severe than in urban areas, but the combination of poverty, physical exclusion and lack of access to services and opportunities can make for serious difficulties' (McInroy, 2001: 46).

In a response to the Social Exclusion Unit's 'National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal' the Library Association (2000) further illustrates the problems that rural areas face and claim that:

'Current deprivation indexes do not adequately reflect the needs of rural areas as problems of deprivation are dispersed across wide areas rather than concentrated in neighbourhoods'.

In addition, the two library authorities were chosen because of their close proximity and ease of access, and the good relationship that the Department of Information Studies has with them both.

3.2.4.1 Community and Library Profiles*

Authority 1

Authority 1 is a large urban conurbation in the North of England with a history of heavy industry. It has problems with unemployment with the Authority's average income support claimants being 10%, compared to national average of 8% (Office for National Statistics, 2002).

Area A

An inner-city area with problems of unemployment- 18% of the area's population was claiming income support in May 2002. This is compared to the total Authority proportion of 10%. The ward has a rank of 129 (with 1 being the most deprived ward in England) out of a total of 8414 English wards (Office for National Statistics, 2002).

Library A

It is a newly refurbished bright and very pleasant library. It has a community room. It has 8 public access PCs with Internet access, there are also scanning and printing facilities. There are both black and white and colour printing facilities. The ICT facilities are well situated in that they have their own area of the library set away from the counter and bookshelves.

Area B

An inner-city former manufacturing community that despite substantial modernisation and re-building is still one of the poorest areas in Authority 1. The area is home to a number of ethnic communities, notably Somali and Yemeni (Proctor and Bartle, 2002). The level of income support claimants in the ward was 10% in May 2002 and the area ranked 1787 out of a total of 8414 English wards (Office for National Statistics, 2002).

Library B

This library is housed on the ground floor of what used to be the whole library, upstairs is home to a number of community rooms. It is one of the oldest public libraries in the Authority, which is easy to see owing to its imposing two-storey stance. It has 5 public access terminals all with the Internet, there are also printing facilities and 2 scanners. The area housing the computers is set apart from the books which gives it a 'learning centre' feel.

Area C

An inner-city community about 2.5 miles from the city centre. This area was severely affected by the closure of its main source of (industrial) employment in the 1970s and 1980s. Although the area has seen re-development in the last ten years, local unemployment figures have remained high at 13% (Office for National Statistics, 2002), almost twice the national average. The area is multi-cultural with substantial numbers of members of the Pakistani and Bangladeshi community. The area suffers from multiple deprivation with some of the highest figures for overall and educational deprivation in the country. The Indices of Deprivation gave the ward a rank of 561 out of 8414.

Library C

The library is an early 1980s building well situated in the main shopping area. The building is single storey and houses a community room for which there are plans to turn into a learning centre specifically for PCs. However at present (July 2002) IT provision stood at only one PC situated in a busy corner of the library- near the photocopier and 'just returned' trolley.

Authority 2

Authority 2 is a large principally rural district authority made up of small towns and villages. Some of its communities suffer problems of rural deprivation and isolation. The main industry and thus main source of employment in the area has now gone, leaving much social disadvantage and economic problems (Authority 2 Annual Library Plan, 2001).

Area D

Is an area of great deprivation and high unemployment owing to the closure of surrounding mines, once the area's main source of employment. The area suffers from rural isolation, lack of service provision such as shopping facilities and transport links. The unemployment rate in the ward in which the library lies is 14%, and it ranks at 380 in the Indices of Deprivation (Office for National Statistics, 2002).

Library D

A light, spacious and attractive 1960s-built library centrally situated. It has 4 public access terminals all with Internet access. There are also printing facilities.

Area E

Is an ex-mining town with problems of unemployment, rural isolation and a low level of services such as shopping facilities and financial institutions. Significant proportions of its residential areas suffer from poor conditions. The Indices of Deprivation gave the ward (in which the library is situated) the rank of 479.

Library E

The library here is centrally situated with a pleasant interior. It has a meeting room used by local groups. ICT provision in July 2002 consisted of 11 public access PCs, all with Internet access. 10 of the 11 PCs are situated on a balcony over the main library area. This area is specifically for PCs, which makes it have a 'learning centre' feel rather than that of using a computer in a library.

**All additional data on libraries and areas from Proctor and Bartle, 2002: pp 32-36.*

3.2.5 Data Analysis

The data was analysed by using quotations from user questionnaires, support staff interviews and senior library staff interviews. In addition, for quantitative analysis the statistical package SPSS was used. From this tables, pie charts and bar charts were drawn up to represent data.

3.2.6 Limitations of the Methodology

There were a number of limitations that came to light in regards to certain aspects of the methodology. Firstly, the number of responses to the user questionnaire was lower than was initially hoped. This was due to a number of restrictions including:

- The research being undertaken in a number of less busy libraries;
- A number of possible respondents were not able to understand the questionnaire due to English not being their first language;
- As many of the respondents were older adults, some were too hard of hearing to take part in the questionnaire.

Another limitation that emerged during the study was the ability to write down everything that respondents said. In order to do this stops in the interviews and questionnaires were encountered which meant that the flow of the interview or questionnaire was disrupted.

The low number of questionnaire responses meant that for the analysing of data many categories in the questionnaire had to be made broader. For instance, the age-group options were changed from 16-19, 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60+ to three categories: 16-29, 30-49, 50+. A similar thing had to be done with Ethnic Origin categories that were broadened to 'Asian', 'Black' and 'White'.

The inability to survey non-library users due to various time restrictions and difficulties was another limitation to this study.

Chapter 4 ICT Provision in the Two Authorities Studied

An important factor regarding ICT, public libraries and social exclusion is both the policies of authorities regarding ICT provision locally, and in turn, the subsequent availability of ICT in areas of social exclusion. This chapter gives a summary of a) the overall national picture, b) an overview of the public access ICT facilities provided by both authorities and c) the policies of the two authorities regarding location of provision. This is in order to give the reader background to what the policies of the two case-study libraries are.

4.1 The Overall Picture

The national picture regarding the availability of public access ICT facilities in public libraries *'remains uneven'* (Eve and Brophy, 2001), and Eve (1999) claims that:

'The extent and quality of services varies enormously between authorities. Some, for example, are able to offer extensive access to PCs, CD-ROM networks and fast Internet access, and have begun to move towards the development of content and services, provided via the Internet.'

Figures collected by the People's Network Team in April 2001 indicate that 95% of authorities are providing public Internet access in at least one library, but only 32% are providing access at all sites (People's Network Team, in Eve and Brophy, 2001). More recent figures indicate that 70% of Libraries in the UK now offer public Internet access (The People's Network Online, 2002).

In terms of library policy nationally, it appears that a great deal of policy is governed by government policies. Thus, one of the main focuses of national library policy at present is on Social Inclusion. This is not only relating to ICT policy, but all aspects of libraries. This can be illustrated by the Library and Information Commission's statement made in 2000, which claims that:

'In order to enable individuals and communities to participate fully in the learning society and in the cultural, social and economic life of the United Kingdom, the issue of social exclusion needs to be addressed. Social exclusion is one of the government's highest priorities and an area of utmost importance for the Library and Information Commission'. (Library and Information Commission, 2000).

Nevertheless, Eve and Brophy (2001: section 2.2) argue that *'there has been something of a bandwagon effect, with libraries installing PCs and Internet access without fully articulating either the reasons or the implications of so doing'*. The rest of this chapter investigates whether this is in fact the case with the two case-study libraries.

4.2 The Case Study Authorities

Both case-study library authorities offer mainstream software packages and Internet access through their terminals, including email facilities, significant in that Eve and Brophy (2001) observe that *'there is evidence that some library professionals are opposed to providing e-mail facilities'*. In addition, in all of the 5 libraries used in this study, Internet access was free, with only printing being charged for. Finally, both authorities were in the process of sending all of their staff on the ECDL ICT training course, and the majority of staff interviewed had already completed it.

4.2.1 Authority 1

Only about half of the public libraries in Authority 1 offer public access ICT. In terms of their static libraries, two libraries in the most deprived areas of the city both located in a ward with 19% of its residents unemployed and ranking 43 on the Indices of Deprivation out of 8414 English wards (Office of National Statistics, 2002) were without any ICT provision. However, when challenged about this in an interview the librarian responsible for social inclusion policy claimed that the policy was: *'to put the facilities in where we had capacity and in to areas of social exclusion and where people are less likely to have their own computers that offer Internet and access to the main software packages such as Microsoft office'*, adding that both the libraries mentioned would be getting ICT facilities with one becoming a learning centre housing 12 to 16 machines, and the other a smaller number due to its

smaller size. One must also put this into the context of the more affluent areas of the city, where libraries do not offer public-access ICT facilities. Finally, in the ‘Social Inclusion Strategy, 2002-2005’ (Authority 1 Annual Library Plan, 2002), Authority 1 claims *‘we want to realise the potential of the city’s libraries as place of learning, skills development and training, particularly for those who face barriers to mainstream opportunity’*. Thus, it appears that the overall policy is to locate facilities such as ICT where they are needed most- in areas of social exclusion.

4.2.2 Authority 2

Authority 2 is relatively well advanced in its ICT provision with all of its 24 libraries having ICT access (Authority 2 Annual Library Plan, 2001: 46). The Authority has received a greater amount of funding than Authority 1, being granted 3 consecutive Wolfson Libraries Challenge Funds. Thus the authority has been able to set-up its own networked ICT service offering Internet access, access to networked CD-ROMs, open learning computing facilities, multi-media material, video conferencing facilities and specialist facilities such as voice output software for those with visual impairments (Authority 2 Annual Library Plan, 2001: 46-47). Unlike Authority 1, Authority 2 has ICT provision on mobile libraries, serving 21 locations; and for their housebound readers, Authority 2 offers a laptop for librarians to take on home visits (information from senior librarian interview). Thus, with this wide-ranging ICT provision, Authority 2 aims to:

‘Promote lifelong learning and social inclusion, bringing information, learning materials and new technology to people who would not otherwise have easy access’ (Authority 2 Annual Library Plan, 2001: 46).

4.3 Summary

- For both authorities studied, it appears that their *‘librarians are becoming increasingly aware of the need to target and address the needs of specific groups within their communities’* (Library Association, 2000 in Eve and Brophy, 2001), in this case the socially excluded with their ICT policies. Both library authorities have a social inclusion policy that aims to provide the socially excluded with a means of accessing ICT. Thus Eve and Brophy’s (2001) ‘bandwagon effect’ (see section 4.1 above) does not appear to apply to either library authority.

- In terms of actual provision, although there is a distinct difference between provision throughout the whole service, the case-study libraries in each authority are very similar. For instance, both authorities offer ICT facilities in areas of social exclusion, and when the case-study libraries are separated, they are very similar individually in terms of public access ICT provision. On one hand, from the libraries studied in Authority 1, two have a relatively high number of terminals (5 and 8) as does one of the libraries studied from Authority 2 (11 terminals). In addition, all three of these libraries had extra facilities such as coloured printers and scanners. On the other hand, a case-study library from each authority (libraries D and E) had a relatively small number of terminals: 1 and 4, with no extra equipment such as scanners and colour printers.

Chapter 5 Characteristics of Respondents

As this study aims to assess the impact of the introduction of ICT into public libraries on those living in areas of social exclusion it was felt that an analysis of the characteristics of respondents would:

- a) Give a background to the results presented in the following chapters.
- b) Give an indication of the socio-economic characteristics of those using the case-study public libraries and a greater understanding of some of the problems faced in the areas in which the case-study libraries are located.

The survey of the five libraries stretching two authorities (profiled in Chapters 3 and 4) resulted in the completion of 51 questionnaires, which form the basis of this analysis.

5.1 User Characteristics

5.1.1 Employment

As part of the user questionnaire, respondents were asked to give their status of employment and if they were in work, their occupation. This information was needed to establish the number of users who were in possible positions of social exclusion due to their employment status and to obtain an indication of whether the public libraries studied attract those of low socio-economic status through their doors. Employment status can be used as a way of assessing this as '*social exclusion can impact on the unemployed*' and it can include those on low-incomes (Day, 1997). Table 5.1 presents the employment status of the questionnaire respondents, showing that the two most populated categories are the unemployed (25.5%) and the retired (35.5%).

Employment status	% of respondents
Full time employed	13.7
Part time employed	2.0
Unemployed	25.5
Retired	35.5
Other	2.0
Student	21.5

Table 5.1 **Employment status of respondents**

The results in the table above are shown in the chart below, which illustrates the range of employment statuses of respondents:

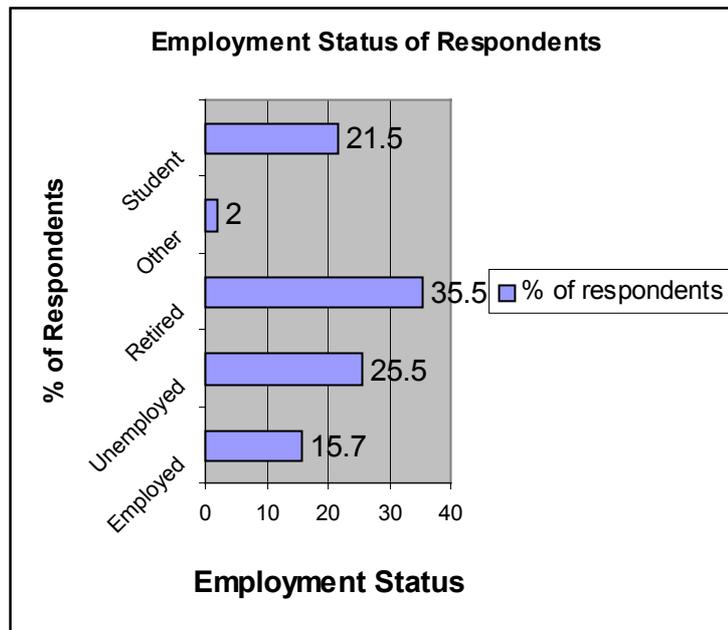


Figure 5.1 *Employment Status of Respondents*

Although the outcome of the questionnaire gave the two most common employment status types as ‘unemployed’ and ‘retired’ it cannot be claimed simply from this result that the majority of public library users are the unemployed and retired. However, a conclusion can be drawn from this: it appears that the public library is attracting two groups in society for whom social exclusion can impact: the unemployed and the elderly (Day, 1997).

In terms of the actual occupations of those surveyed the majority were those characterised by low-pay, casual employment, few promotion and training opportunities and those with high staff turnover. For instance the occupations of respondents included: *a packer, a mail-order assistant, a security guard, a taxi driver, a petrol-station assistant and a call-centre worker*. In addition, of the retired respondents surveyed, the majority of males were either former miners or machine operatives; no professional occupations were listed. In terms of females, there was a more mixed range of occupations such as cleaner and shop assistant, however the majority had been housewives. Thus, it appears that of the respondents, who were retired, all appear to have been in non-managerial and non-professional roles.

From the occupations of the respondents it is possible to argue that even those in work are in danger of being in a position where there is a threat of experiencing a number of the dimensions associated with social exclusion, such as low training prospects and low pay, which compounded could put a person in an excluded position.

This argument can be supported by Byrne (in Dutch and Muddiman, 2001: 184) who claims that those in *'low wage, service-based, casual employment'* are part of a *'large, insecure and poorly paid working class that drifts in and out of situations of social exclusion'*.

5.1.2 Education

As it is claimed that *'educational attainment...can contribute to social exclusion'* (Library and Information Commission, 2000) a question related to educational achievement was included in the user questionnaire in order to assess library use by those who could be called 'low achievers'³. In addition, it was felt that gaining an indication of level and type of qualification held by those living in the area would give an indication of how many people were likely to have had contact with ICT through education. The table below shows that a very large proportion of respondents (38.6%) had no qualifications at all, thus reducing the likelihood of any

³ The definition is used to mean those *'Individuals leaving secondary school either without qualifications or with qualifications of a level that might be considered to reduce employment prospects. In the case of the UK this comprises those leaving school without GCSEs grades A-C or equivalent'* (Proctor and Bartle, 2002: 16).

type of ICT skills. This finding is similar to one found by the Social Exclusion Unit (1999) who claim that *‘all the available evidence suggests that people who live in severely disadvantaged areas are disproportionately likely to have low levels of skills, whether these are defined in relation to formal qualifications, ...or other measures’*.

Another significant finding from the user questionnaire was that there were very few traditional ‘academic’ qualifications listed, such as A-level (none at all) and only 1.6% of respondents had Degrees, which in real terms amounted to one respondent holding a B Ed with honours. Instead, the most common type of qualifications held by respondents apart from GCSEs (which were all obtained by those in the lowest age group) were vocational in nature. For instance:

An engineering machinist certificate, a NVQ in Business Management, Irish equivalent to O levels, a computing NVQ, NVQ in landscaping in ecology, NVQ in Catering, School Certificate, a City and Guilds in Creative Writing, a GNVQ in Health and Social Care, a NVQ in security, NVQs in electrician skills, and City and Guilds in Business.

Qualification	% of respondents
University Degree	1.6
A-levels	0
GCSEs or equivalent, C or above	28.3
GCSEs or equivalent, D or below	17.5
Vocational qualification	14.0
No qualifications	38.6

Table 5.2 Qualifications of respondents

The above results do not show the same as was found in Proctor and Bartle’s (2002) study where although carried out in ‘educationally deprived communities’, over a fifth of respondents were graduates. However, this could be down to the higher number of responses 1040 as opposed to the 51 in this study. Nevertheless the results for both education and employment status do fit with the findings of the

Social Exclusion Unit (1999) who suggest that *'as is often the case, very few residents of disadvantaged areas have higher level qualifications or belong to the more skilled occupational groups'*.

5.1.3 Gender

The table below (table 5.3) shows the gender breakdown of questionnaire respondents. The sample showed a predominance of male respondents- 58% compared to 41.2% of female respondents.

Gender	% of respondents
Male	58.8
Female	41.2

Table 5.3 **Gender of respondents**

5.1.4 Age

An age question was included in the questionnaire. As table 5.4 illustrates, there is a high proportion of respondents in the older age group. Proctor and Bartle encountered similar results in their 2002 study, as did Raven (1998) in her study. Nevertheless the proportion of 39.2% in the 16-29 age group is not hugely lower than that in the 50 plus age group, differing by only 2%, and Proctor and Bartle (2002: 40) argue that frequency of library use increases with age. Thus if this is true, elderly people were more likely to be questionnaire respondents, but not necessarily the largest user group.

Age range	% of respondents
16-29	39.2
30-49	19.6
50+	41.2

Table 5.4 **Age of respondents**

5.1.5 Ethnic Background

The proportion of ethnic minorities is low for a number of reasons. Firstly, only 0.7% of Authority 2's population are from ethnic minority communities, and thus there were no ethnic minority users observed in libraries D and E this reduced the overall proportion as the figure is the result for both authorities combined. Second, a number of library users approached in Authority 1 were not able to understand the questions. Thus, the figures for this category are not a realistic indication of the ethnic make-up of the library users in the case-study libraries.

Ethnic origin	% of Respondents
Asian	11.8
Black	7.8
White	80.4

Table 5.5 Ethnic origin of respondents

5.2 Summary

- The results of the library user questionnaire show that the case-study public libraries are attracting a wide range of people, including those that in terms of social characteristics put them at a disadvantage in terms of ICT- the unemployed, low achievers, older adults, and women. These people are the ones that the government hopes to reach through its recent ICT policies (the socially excluded)
- Particularly significant to this study is the high proportion of unemployed, elderly and educational 'low achievers' that the library is attracting. In terms of the unemployed, the average figure that emerged from the survey for all five case-study libraries was 25.5%, a figure much higher than the national average of 8% (National Office of Statistics, 2002).

- From the results it can be deduced that the public library is a good place to reach the elderly, a group whose participation in ICT use is low and a group commonly associated with suffering from social exclusion (Day, 1997). In fact they are under-represented in life-long learning on the whole (NAGCELL, 1997), and under the heading of lifelong learning comes *'the use of new communications and information technology'* (NAGCELL, 1999).

This was also observed by Proctor and Bartle (2002: 40) who found that *'a far higher number of respondents [of their questionnaire] were in the older age ranges'*, a finding that suggests public libraries *'therefore appear to be in an ideal situation to promote formal learning opportunities to this 'captive audience''*.

- Nevertheless, although this chapter draws some tentative conclusions about who is actually using the case-study libraries, one must be careful in generalising. In other words, there is a whole section of the community who do not use the public library and in terms of the case-study libraries it can be argued that this non-using group is made up of a large proportion of socially excluded members. Thus although there is use by the unemployed, low paid, elderly, those from ethnic minority communities and low achievers there is a *'questionable presumption that public libraries already engage with the socially excluded through the current network of libraries'* (Dutch and Muddiman, 2001). This aspect of the study will be further investigated in Chapter 9.

Chapter 6 Use of Public Access ICT in Case Study Libraries

One of the objectives of this study was to investigate the extent of use of the information technology facilities provided by the case-study libraries. This is in order to assess whether it is actually making an impact on those people who are living in the locality of the libraries, of which all five locations can be classed as areas suffering from forms of social exclusion. Therefore, this chapter looks at the extent to which the facilities are being used a) in general and b) in more detail by specific groups who are often seen as at risk from being left behind in terms of ICT use: the elderly, the unemployed and those with few or no qualifications (see DTI, 2000: 2.2).

6.1 Use of ICT

From the 51 respondents of the library user questionnaire, 74.5% claimed they had never used the library's public access computing facilities. This shows that although access to the public access PC and Internet is free in the case study libraries, its take-up is still relatively low despite the lack of a common barrier to ICT take-up: cost (see DTI, 2000 and Monmouthshire, 2000). In fact, only 15.7% of questionnaire respondents from the case-study libraries used the facilities often. Table 6.1 below shows these results:

Frequency of use	Percent of respondents
Often	15.7
Sometimes	5.9
Very Little	3.9
Never	74.5

Table 6.1 'Do you use a computer in the library?'

Part of the reason for this high proportion of users who do not use the library's ICT facilities appears to be down to the presence of a number of respondents with a computer at home, 39.2% as illustrated in table 6.2.

The table (6.2) below shows the main point of computer access of questionnaire respondents including home, work, educational establishment, friend's/relative's home or other (for instance job clubs). In addition, it also shows what proportion of respondents had no other access apart from in their local library. In terms of the categories, where more than one access point was mentioned in response to the question, the following method was applied: if 'home' and another option were chosen categories, then 'home' was predominant. If two other options were chosen, then the respondent was asked which source was used most frequently and this was used for the figures below.

Location of access	% of respondents
Home	39.2
Work	3.9
Educational Establishment	5.9
Friend's/relatives	7.8
Other	2.0
No other access (apart from library)	41.2

Table 6.2 **Main point of computer access**

The two highest proportions fall in to the 'home' (39.2%) and 'no other access' (41.2%) categories, with a surprisingly low number falling into the 'work' category (3.9%). The figure of 39.2% for home as the main point of access was the second highest percentage. This may suggest why such a high proportion of respondents had never used library computing facilities.

These findings are further examined in table 6.3, which shows the frequency of computer use by those with a) access at home, b) access solely in the library and c) their main source of access elsewhere (apart from home). The results show that 76.2% of respondents who do not have a computer at home or elsewhere (such as work) do not use those available in the library. Therefore, of those with no other access, only 23.8% are using the library computers. This result is surprising as a greater number of respondents who have computers at home (30%) claimed that they used the library computers also.

Do you use the library computer/s?	Respondents with a computer at home (%)	Respondents with no other computer access other than library (%)	Respondents with access to a computer elsewhere (<i>apart from at home</i>) (%)
Yes (includes 'often', 'sometimes' and 'very little')	30.0	23.8	15.0
No, never	70.0	76.2	85.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 6.3 Use of computers in library

The above results suggest that it is those who are already using computers either at home or elsewhere (at work, for example) who are using the facilities in the library. When these two groups are combined, the result is that 45% who have access elsewhere or at home are using the library ICT facilities. This figure is nearly double that of those respondents with no other access (23.8%). This finding can be supported by the views of some of the library assistants interviewed:

'Mostly people that know what they are doing use them' (library assistant from Library C);

'A lot of those people that haven't touched them don't use them. Most of the people are those who have used them at work or young people because they use them at school' (A library assistant from library D).

6.1.1 Use of the facilities by employment status

The unemployed are in a considerably disadvantaged position when it comes to computer use. Firstly, the unemployed are less likely to own computers- of the unemployed respondents surveyed, only 33.3% had a computer at home. On a larger scale, the Department of Trade and Industry (in DTI, 2000) point out that:

‘only a quarter of DEs⁴ say they have access to a PC at home compared with 44% of adults’ and ‘only 2% of DEs say they have Internet access in the home compared with one in three ABs and 14% of all adults’.

Furthermore those who are unemployed do not have work as a source of access, and miss out on training opportunities available to employees. As the case-study libraries were located in areas of high unemployment (see Chapter 3 for exact figures), it was felt that an assessment of ICT use by this group would be useful in order to assess whether the facilities were having any impact on them. This is important as *‘ICT skills are becoming more important in all aspects of work, not just the IT sector itself’* and *‘if individuals are going to be successful in work, obtaining IT skills will be critical’* (DTI, 2000). The table (6.4) below shows the use of the library’s computing facilities by employment status.

Employment status	‘Do you use a computer in the library?’ % of respondents	
	No, never	Yes (<i>includes often, sometimes and very little</i>)
In employment (full and part time)	75.0	25.0
Unemployed	84.6	15.4
Other	100	0.0
Retired	11.1	88.9
A student	36.4	63.6

Table 6.4 ‘Do you use a computer in the library?’ and employment status.

The results show that it is those people who are in work who are more likely to use the library computing facilities, as 25% of employed respondents used the library’s computing facilities, compared to only 15.4% of unemployed respondents. These findings can be supported by research undertaken by the Cabinet Office (in DTI, 2000) who found that:

⁴ Social class indicator

'There is a higher resistance to the use of new technologies among people who receive benefits than amongst the general population. Forty six percent of those receiving benefits are not willing to try any technologies they do not currently use, compared with a quarter of the general public. This pattern is consistent across a range of technologies, including...e-mail, and Internet access'.

This low take-up of ICT facilities by the unemployed may be due to a number of reasons. Firstly, it must be remembered that the barrier of cost is not present in this study therefore other reasons could include:

- There may be a lack of ability to use ICT through an absence of training opportunities through work or the general use of IT at work. This may in turn cause fear of looking stupid or breaking the facilities (see Chapter 7). For instance, an unemployed male surveyed said:
'I would like to have a go but I'm scared of making a mess. I've no experience with them before'.
- Also, it is possible that those who are unemployed may associate the facilities with formal learning (see Proctor and Bartle, 2002: 98) or as a tool simply for the workplace, rather than as a source of leisure, entertainment or for their own personal development. Thus there seems to be a problem of *perception*.

6.1.2 Use of facilities by educational achievement

The assessment of use by qualification was felt to be a useful indication on whether the public access facilities are having any impact as Proctor and Bartle (2002: 91) highlight previous research (see Bates and Further Education Funding Council) that has found that *'information technology provides considerable benefits for adult independent learners, low achievers and those with learning difficulties'*.

Table 6.5 below shows public access library computer-usage by educational level. The results indicate that of those with no qualifications only 10% used the libraries computing facilities at all. In terms of those with GCSEs using the

facilities, this figure was 44.4%. Of those with vocational qualifications 37.5% were using the facilities whether it be ‘often’, ‘sometimes’ or ‘very little’. These results are very similar to those found by Proctor and Bartle (2002: 92) who found that out of their surveying of library users, only 16.8% of low achievers used the library computing facilities, compared to 29.0% for ‘achievers’⁵.

Frequency of library computer use	GCSEs or equivalent		Vocational Qualification		No qualifications	
Often	25.9	44.4	12.5	37.5	10	10
Sometimes	11.1		12.5		0	
Very little	7.4		12.5		0	
Never	55.6		62.5		90	
Total	100%		100%		100%	

(All figures shown in %)

Table 6.5 Use of facilities by educational achievement

⁵ Those with qualifications of GCSE grade A-C or equivalent and anything higher than this- see table 1.1 ‘Equivalent academic qualifications’ in Proctor and Bartle (2002: 17).

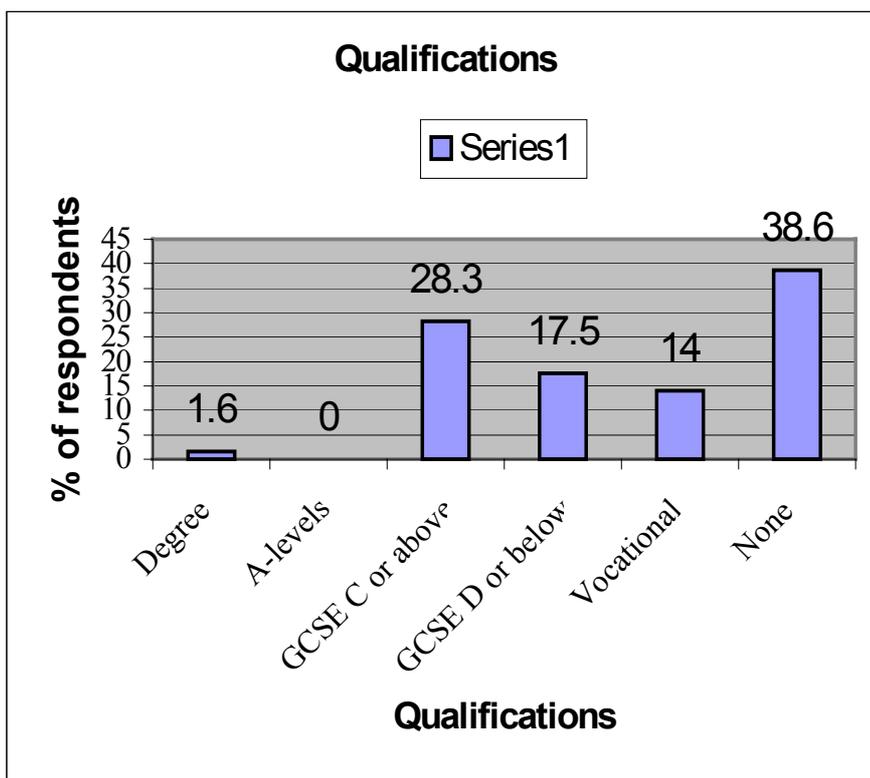


Figure 6.1 Qualifications of respondents

The results from the table indicate that those with qualifications, whether they be vocational or academic such as GCSEs, are more likely than low achievers to use the computing facilities in the library. This may be due to the reasons given by Proctor and Bartle (2002: 92) who suggest that computers may be *'perceived (by low achievers) as a tool for learning rather than leisure or information'*. The issue of perception is looked at in more depth in chapter 7.

There appears to be a relationship between educational achievement and computer use, with those possessing formal qualifications being more likely to use the computing facilities available in the library. In addition, the results suggest that due to the low amount of library-computer use by low achievers many are not benefiting from the potential benefits that they can bring.

6.1.3 Use of facilities by Age

The table (6.6) below shows a breakdown of library ICT use by age. In regards to the 30-49 age group, these results may not be as reliable as those for the other two groups. This is due to the fact that only 19.6% of respondents were in this age range. However the 16-29 group and the over 50 group were much larger samples with 39.2% and 41.2% of respondents respectively. This may suggest why the results show that none of the respondents from the 30-49 age group use the library computing facilities.

Age group	Frequency of ICT use in library			
	Often	Sometimes	Very little	Never
16-29	30.00	15.00	5.00	50.00
30-49	0	0	0	100
50+	9.52	0	4.76	85.72

Table 6.6 Use of the public access ICT facilities by the elderly

The results show that usage by the over 50s is alarmingly low with only 14% of respondents using the facilities regularly. This is alarming as it is suggested that *'Working class pensioners predominantly rely on the state pension and means tested benefits'* (Dutch and Muddiman, 2001: 184) and this would appear to put them in a position much less likely to own their own computer at home due to the costs involved. For example, in this study only 16.7% of retired respondents owned their own computer. In addition, as the Monmouthshire Libraries (2000) study suggests, retirement means the respondents miss out on any workplace exposure to ICT, and *'most older people are...outside the education system, so on the whole their exposure to the new technologies is very limited'* (INSINC, 1997).

A number of library assistant's opinions support the results that show a low amount of ICT use by older adults. When asked 'What extent are the facilities being

used by the elderly?’ a few felt that they were being relatively well used by the elderly:

‘A lot of elderly users are coming in to use the computers’ (Library assistant from branch C);

‘Senior citizens are using the computers to send e-mails to grandchildren’ (Library assistant from branch A);

However, the majority said the use by this group was limited with one library assistant from library C claiming:

A few (older adults) use them (computers), but a lot say they don’t know how to switch them on’.

Another library assistant from library D said:

‘Not many elderly people use them. Very few do actually’;

A library assistant from Library E thought:

‘The elderly are in a minority’ in terms of library computer use.

The results appear to suggest that the public access facilities are not having a significant impact on older adults. In addition, there seems to be a relationship between age and ICT use with younger library users being more likely to use information technology.

6.1.4 Use of facilities by ethnic origin

As the ethnic minority sample was so small it was felt that it would not be representative of ethnic minority library users. Nevertheless, the results indicated that 50% of respondents from ethnic minority communities used the library computing facilities, and of those who did not, 60% had access at home.

6.2 What is the library being used for?

As the take-up of ICT facilities in the case-study libraries is low- only 25.5% of respondents said they used the ICT facilities ‘often’, ‘sometimes’ and ‘very little’ it was felt important to discover what the library was being used for. The table below shows that books- both borrowing and reading in the library, is still the most popular use for the public library of the questionnaire respondents. In fact, books got the highest response- 37.3% for the question ‘*what is your main use of the library?*’ Use of the library’s ICT facilities was true for only 15.7% of responses. These results are illustrated in the pie chart (figure 6.2) on page 53.

Main use of library	% of respondents
Books	37.3
Using computer facilities	15.7
Reading newspapers/magazines	13.7
Borrowing audio-visual	11.8
Study	11.7
Community information	3.9
Library equipment	3.9
General Enquiries	2.0

Table 6.6 What are the facilities being used for?

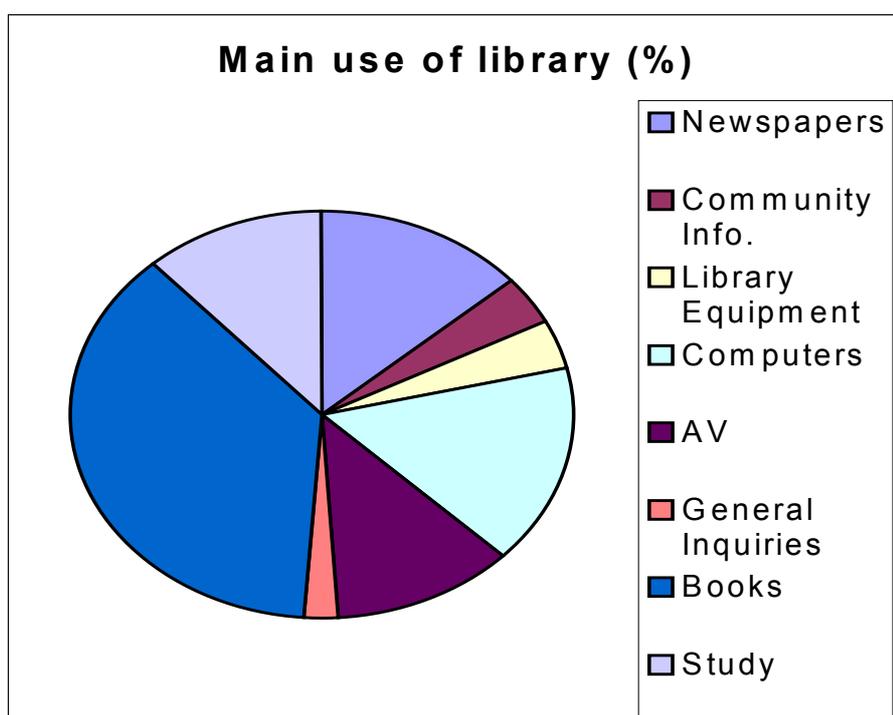


Figure 6.2 Main use of Library

The results show that the most popular use of the library is book related, either reading, borrowing or reference. This finding is supported by findings by Eve and Brophy (2001) who found that *'the overwhelming response was book related'*. This is also supported by a recent study by Proctor and Bartle (2002: 56) who found that for learners using the public library that books for both study and leisure came out higher than using the Internet and CD ROM's for learning. This suggests that the public libraries may need to concentrate on ensuring people know that libraries are not just about books.

This result is surprising as the case-study libraries were in areas where the ownership of a home computer and access at work are more likely to be low. This can be supported by a number of surveys undertaken in deprived neighbourhoods. For instance a study in Leicester found that only 10% of households had a computer and only 7% had access to the Internet (Foley in DTI, 2000) and where there is access to computers at home senior management from Authority 1 argued that they are *'less likely to have access to the net and instead are used for playing computer games. And, they may not have the main software packages such as Microsoft office*

which all our libraries with ICT facilities offer'. In terms of opportunity at work, due to the occupations of respondents (see Chapter 5) it could be argued that they are less likely to have computer access at work, or, be in a position less likely to obtain IT training at work. This argument can be supported by NAGCELL (1997) who highlight that:

'The evidence indicates that learning opportunities, where they exist, are mostly concentrated on the already qualified, professionals and those in positions of authority. The Labour Force Survey shows that those in professional, associate professional and technical occupations are twice as likely as those in clerical, secretarial, personal, protective and craft jobs to have training provided by employers, and more than four times likely to do so than plant and machine operatives'.

6.3 Summary

- Public access facilities are not having a notable impact on those without any other access, instead they are attracting those people who already have knowledge of IT- those with access at home, work and elsewhere.
- In terms of qualifications, a low number of low achievers are using the facilities, with the highest usage from those with formal qualifications.
- The facilities are not attracting a substantial proportion of older library users, whose main use of the library is still books. In fact the questionnaire results indicated that 72.2% of older adult's main use of the library was book-related, whereas 'use of the library's computing facilities' was true for only 5.6% of respondents.

Chapter 7 Barriers to ICT Take-up

Chapter 6 illustrated the actual use of the ICT facilities in the case-study libraries and found that there was a low amount of use (76.2%) by those with no other access to ICT other than in their local library. This chapter attempts to achieve another key objective of this study- to examine what the barriers to using the ICT are, or in other words to discover why a number of respondents are not using the facilities. To achieve this objective, this chapter looks at common barriers to take-up cited in the literature and more specifically to this study, it looks at why users are not using the facilities in their own words.

The results of this chapter are based on the results of the library user questionnaire carried out in the 5 case-study libraries and on interviews with 13 library assistants. The views of library assistants are used as it was felt that as these people work on the 'front line' and have face-to-face contact with users then they are in a good position to give their opinions on why people may not be using the ICT facilities

7.1 The Literature

The literature on libraries and public access ICT facilities covers a number of reasons for lack of take-up of facilities. In their report 'Libraries for all: social inclusion in public libraries', the Department of Culture Media and Sport (1999) suggest 4 main types of barrier to *'the socially inclusive use of libraries'* which can easily be more specifically applied to public access ICT facilities in public libraries. They suggest the main reasons to be:

Institutional

Under the heading of institutional barriers which *'authorities, libraries and library staff themselves may create'*, is the restricting or discouraging of certain sections of the community. Examples include charging policies, which disadvantage those on low incomes. Issues over restricted or unsuitable opening hours also fall under this heading.

Personal and social

Low income and poverty are issues that come under this heading, as do low self-esteem and forms of discrimination.

Related to perceptions and awareness

These barriers exist when people and communities perceive that libraries are not for them. *'This perception causes difficulties for: people who are educationally disadvantaged...people who don't think libraries are relevant to their live or needs',* and *'people with a lack of knowledge of facilities and services, and how to use them'*.

Environmental

This type of barrier includes poor transport links, the isolation problems experienced by rural communities and difficult physical access into and within buildings.

A recent study by Monmouthshire libraries (2000) identified a similar but more specific set of barriers to ICT and the Internet. They cite the following as the main barriers that users see as *'preventing them from learning about or using the Internet and library IT facilities'*: Cost, Access, Time, Inexperience, No interest, and ageism.

The Department of Trade and Industry (2000, section 4.3) give another *'range of barriers which prohibit the establishment of successful ICT access points and constrained the involvement of the target audience'*. Out of their seven barriers, three are of importance to this study: Promotion, Access and Competencies. Although these barriers did not emerge in this study they are still of great importance to it (see Chapter 9).

Access

In terms of access, it could be argued that 'access' is not a barrier which constrains *'the involvement of the target audience'* (DTI, 2000) in this particular study because the libraries are providing access. However, the Department of Trade and Industry (2000) cite access as a barrier in the following terms:

'There are physical barriers like location, access and opening times as well as security issues. There is a lack of suitable venues and some are off-putting for some groups. There is a lack of child support and facilities for people with particular needs such as people with disabilities, older people etc.'

Although no respondent gave 'access' as a reason for non-use of the ICT facilities, it may be because the people for who access is a barrier are not actually visiting the library because of this barrier. This issue is looked at in more depth in Chapter 9.

Promotion

The Department of Trade and Industry (2000) cite promotion as a barrier because: *'marketing is generally poor. The target audience lacks awareness of the potential of ICTs and they do not appreciate the benefits they offer'*. None of the questionnaire respondents gave 'promotion' as a reason for not using the ICT facilities, however this could be due to the fact that just like with 'access' those that it is a barrier for, are not visiting the library. This issue is further explained in Chapter 9.

7.2 The Library User Survey

From the library user questionnaire, a number of reasons for non-computer use by those with no other access than the library emerged. These reasons were the same as the ones found in the Monmouthshire study (2000) and also fit into some of the reasons cited by the Department of Culture Media and Sport (1999). However, it is important to remember that in the case-study libraries access is provided free of charge so 'cost' does not apply here.

The results from the library user survey concerning barriers to access fall into five main categories, which are listed below:

- Scared
- Lack of knowledge of how to use facilities
- Don't need to use the facilities
- Don't want to use facilities
- Too old to use the facilities
- Have a computer at home

Table 7.1 below shows the break down of responses, indicating that the most common reason given was a computer at home or access elsewhere, which applied to about a third of respondents (35%). This response needs little explanation, as it is a valid response that if one has a computer at home then they are less likely to *need* to use one elsewhere unless they require applications they do not have themselves. A more significant result however are the ‘lack of knowledge’, ‘Don’t need them’ and ‘Don’t want to use them’ categories. These are explained in more detail below.

Reason for not using library’s ICT facilities	% of respondents
Scared	5
Lack of knowledge	20
No time	5
Computer at home/elsewhere	35
Don’t need to use them	15
Don’t want to use them	15
Too old	5
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

Table 7.1 Reasons for lack of library ICT use

7.2.1 Fear and lack of knowledge of how to use facilities

One of the barriers to use of ICT is the fear of them, of which 5% of respondents cited as their reason for not using the library computing facilities. This fear is often down to a lack of knowledge of how to use them, of which 20% of people cited as their reason for not using the facilities. These two reasons can thus be seen as one single barrier as it is fear of looking stupid or breaking something due to a lack of knowledge of how to use the facilities. When combined, these two barriers give an overall proportion of 25%, a quarter of respondents. Some of the responses relating to fear and lack of knowledge are given below:

A male respondent in the 16-29 age group claimed:

‘I’m illiterate when it comes to computers’;

A retired woman, said she didn't use the facilities because:

'I haven't a clue!'

Thus, it appears that it is not simply about providing the facilities, instead people must have the ability to actually use them. This argument is supported by Day (1997) who claims that:

'Access is not simply an issue of public access points and their geographic location alone. Citizens must be able to use the technology and have the capability to use the information. Because these are skills that most people still do not possess, the issue of access should be linked to training, education and learning'.

7.2.1 No desire and no need

The results for these categories become more significant when the two barriers are combined, as in the Monmouthshire study (2000) where they are both seen as falling in the 'no interest' category. In fact, when these two responses are combined the overall total is 30%, which is the most common barrier with nearly a third of all respondents citing it as their reason for not using the facilities.

A retired miner claimed:

'I've got no need- my computer is in my head';

When asked why she didn't used the ICT facilities, a retired female claimed:

'I don't know how and I don't need to'.

7.2.3 'I'm too old'- Use of facilities by older adults

Many older adults surveyed felt that they were too old to use the computing facilities. In fact, out of all the respondents aged 50 or over who were surveyed (who made up 41.2% of all respondents), 9.5% gave being 'too old' as a reason for not using the available ICT facilities. Responses included the following significant answer where even though the retired gentleman surveyed knew 'the basics' of computers, he never used those provided by the library because of his age:

'I'm too old fashioned but I know the basics'.

Similar results have been found in other studies on ICT and older users, for example in a recent dissertation (Towers, 2001) focusing on mobile libraries and ICT provision a user of a mobile stop claimed:

'The estate is an elderly one therefore these facilities are not useful'.

In addition to feeling 'too old' to use the facilities, a number of older adults had no desire to use the facilities and the majority cited lack of knowledge as a barrier. These findings are similar to those found in a study carried out by Monmouthshire Libraries where barriers to older adult take-up of ICT fell in to the categories of: inexperience, no interest and age (Monmouthshire, 2000).

Proctor and Bartle (2002: 78) highlight the views of Fleet who argues that the public library is an ideal learning environment for elderly people, as they require choice and control of their learning environment that she suggests the library gives. However, this argument cannot be supported from the evidence in this report. Table 6.6 in Chapter 6 shows a breakdown of library users by age and their use of the facilities. The results show that those in the 'above 50' bracket are less likely than those in the younger age groups to use the public access ICT facilities available in the libraries.

7.2.4 Perception and awareness

The above three barriers which emerged from the library user questionnaire are all related to issues of perception and awareness, a barrier cited by the Department of Culture Media and Sport (1999). It appears that people have a lack of knowledge of what ITC has to offer them and the benefits that it has the potential to bring. Proctor and Bartle (2002: 98) support this argument when they claim that:

'Computers are seen by some primarily as tools for formal learning. Library users need to be made aware of their value in supporting hobbies and interests, in information seeking and for informal learning in general'.

Figure 7.1 below shows the results from table 7.1, and thus illustrates the large proportion of people who do not see that ICT is of any use to them (no need gets 35% of respondents, and scared/no knowledge gets 25% of responses).

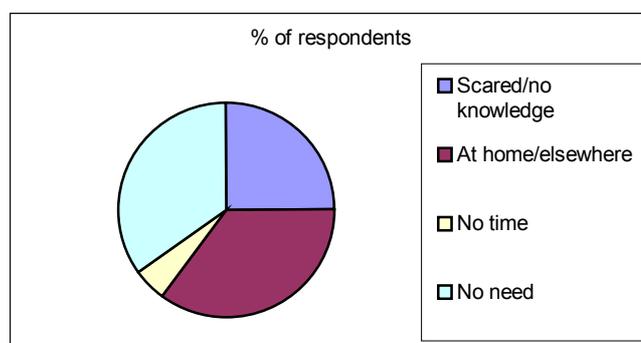


Figure 7.1 'Why don't you use the computing facilities?'

7.3 Non-user encouragement

The library user questionnaire included a question which asked those respondents who did not use the library's ICT facilities: 'what, if anything, would encourage you to use the computing facilities?'. The results are presented in the table below:

What, if anything, would encourage you to use the computers more?	% of respondents
More staff help	8.1
More knowledge	13.5
Don't know	2.7
Nothing	70.3
'If I didn't have one at home'	8.1
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

Table 7.2 'What would encourage you to use the computers more?'

The table shows that over two thirds (70.3%) of people who never use the libraries computing facilities said that nothing would encourage them to in the future. This indicates that the most prevalent barrier to use in this study is perception, in other words a majority of respondents are adamant that they do not need to use computers and thus nothing such as training or staff assistance will persuade them.

7.4 Staff

The library staff gave an interesting insight into why people were not using the facilities. Their responses support the results of the library user survey in that the reasons they give fall under the same categories as those given by the library users: ‘fear and lack of knowledge’ and ‘no desire, no need’.

Fear and lack of knowledge

‘A lot are quite scared by it (ICT). Many still prefer books’ (library assistant from library B);

‘The elderly here are frightened of technology’ (A library assistant from branch E);

‘There is one simple reason why the elderly do not use the computers and that is fear’ (Library assistant from branch D).

No desire and no need

‘People have to see the need’ (Library assistant from branch A);

‘People don’t always see the need’ (Library assistant from branch D).

7.5 Summary

- It appears that despite the removal or lack of certain common barriers, especially ‘cost’, a number of people are still not using the ICT facilities available to them.
- One of the main reasons for non-use appears to be respondent’s lack of knowledge of the benefits and relevance of ICT. Related to this is a problem of perception- people do not recognise the benefits that ICT can bring to them nor do they perceive them to be for themselves- for instance older library users see

ICT as being for the younger generation. Thus there is potential for the facilities to have a greater impact on those library users not using the provided ICT if the facilities are promoted in a way that allows people to see how it could help and interest them.

- There appears to be a problem of a lack of ability to use the facilities, which is preventing a number of people to use them. Thus it could be argued that it is not simply about 'access' and providing the facilities, as if people do not know how to use them then they will not use them. Thus there may be potential for the facilities to have more of an impact if more than just the means to access ICT was offered. For instance informal training sessions and outreach work both by skilled IT staff.
- Library staff are aware of the problems of perception and lack of awareness of users. Thus they are placed in a good position to help change pre-held views of ICT. However due to lack of time, resources and other problems (see Chapter 8, section 8.2) the ability of public libraries *'to provide support or outreach work to aid those who are not information literate'* (Dutch and Muddiman, 2001: 192) and to promote the service is limited.

Chapter 8 User's Perceptions of ICT Facilities in Libraries.

Chapter 7 illustrated that many library users did not perceive the library's computing facilities to be either for themselves or relevant to their lives. This chapter will delve in to this aspect of the study more deeply and will present the opinions of both ICT users and non-users of the computing facilities available in the library in order to meet Objective 3. In addition, as both senior and frontline staff are an important stakeholder and in a position where they see users first hand then it was felt that their views would add value to this chapter.

8.1 General trends

It was felt that it would be important to find out whether library users found the public access ICT facilities an asset or not to their libraries. When respondents were asked: 'how important do you think it is for libraries to provide computing facilities?', 88.2% thought it was 'very important', and 9.8% of respondents felt it to be 'quite important'. Thus, 98% of respondents saw an importance in the library providing computer access. None of the respondents felt that it was unimportant for the library to provide computing, and the only other response given to this question was 'don't know', given by 2% of respondents. These results are illustrated in the table below:

How important?	% of respondents
Very important	88.2
Quite important	9.8
Not very important	0
Not important at all	0
Don't know	2

Table 8.1 'How important do you think it is for libraries to provide computing facilities?'

The chart below illustrates these results more clearly:

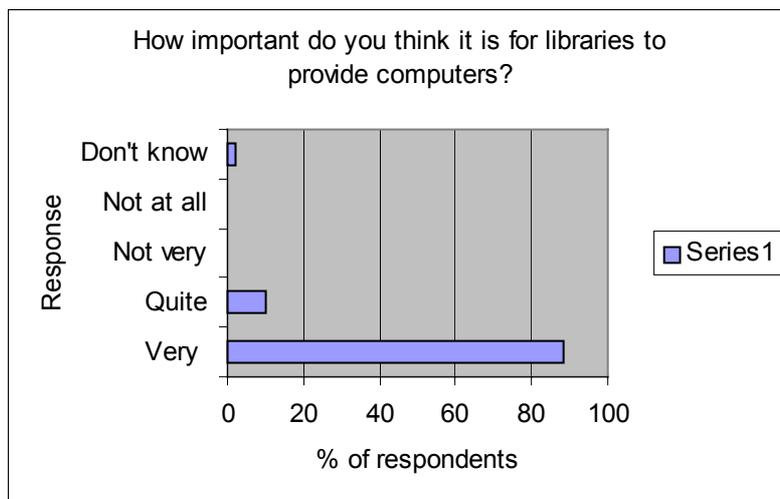


Figure 8.1 'How important do you think it is for libraries to provide computing facilities?'

The high results for the 'very important and 'quite important' categories are surprising in that only 15.7% of library users surveyed claimed to use the facilities often and more striking is the fact that 76.2% of users with no other computer access said they never use the facilities. Thus it appears that there is a) a general realisation by all respondents, and even those who do not use ICT facilities at all, of the importance of ICT in today's society, and b) a recognition that they are a valuable resource for the community and c) a general consensus of support for ICT facilities in public libraries. These results illustrated more specifically in the quotes below:

'It is very important because it's all progress. Now you've got to use them' (A retired female who never uses the computing facilities);

'It's good to have them in the library because everybody will need to use them in time. I wish I could. It's another world' (A retired female who never uses the computing facilities);

This is a small library so there is sometimes the problem that the books we need are not on the shelves...the internet can usually provide what we need (A home tutor who uses the computing facilities as a teaching aid);

A retired woman who had used the library computers once said

'They are good for every age, for old and young. You can keep up with the times. Many people are afraid but would like to try them [computers]'.

The above findings are supported by those of Eve and Brophy (2001: section 4.3.4) in their VITAL⁶ study which found that 96% of respondents including those library users who do not actually use the services themselves, rated the importance of providing computer facilities in libraries as very or quite important. In the study, only 4% of users considered them unnecessary. Lilley and Usherwood's (2000: 19) findings are also similar, as when asked whether they agreed with 'information technology is a challenge that the library world needs to face if it wants to be relevant to the next generation', 82.5% of respondents said they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

8.2 Staff views

Members of front line staff and senior management were asked their views on the ICT facilities in their libraries. The attitudes of both groups are illustrated below, beginning with those views of library assistants.

8.2.1 Library Assistants

The attitudes of library assistants towards the public access ICT facilities in libraries were on the whole positive, especially in regards to the socially inclusive potential of the facilities and the benefits to the library as a whole. However, a number of concerns emerged, the main ones are listed below:

- One interviewee was concerned that the library service was:
'Turning to computers rather than books, but books are more important';
- Another concern was what was being accessed through the Internet. For example a concern of a library assistant from branch D was that:
'Kids tend to use it for games more than anything else';

⁶ The Value and Impact of IT Access in Libraries.

- Another worry held by both staff and library users regarded what was being accessed and the accessing of Internet pornography by younger users was the main concern. In fact, whilst questioning a home tutor for excluded children, one of his pupils was accessing unsuitable web sites;
- A common concern that can be seen from the data gathered through staff interviews is the issue of staff time. One member of staff at library A said:
'The PCs can be very time-consuming as people want a lot of time spent with them which we cannot do';

This theme emerges in the Monmouthshire study (2000) where here, customers were *'aware of the demands on staff, and felt it was too difficult for staff to manage the issue counter customers, and simultaneously provide IT support'*.

- A number of positive implications for the library itself emerged from the interviews with staff. A library assistant from library E thought that the introduction of public access terminals into the library *'has made the library more up to date. It has attracted the hesitant and gets the young interested'*. An assistant from library D thought that the PCs *'benefit the library because it gives it (the library) a wider audience'*.

Implications for Social Inclusion

The most common theme that emerged from the library assistant interviews was the issue of the socially inclusive nature of the ICT, and its impact upon the local community. In terms of this study, this is also the most important aspect of the views of the library assistants interviewed. The majority of library staff recognised both the actual impact that the facilities were having and the potential impact that public access ICT facilities could have.

Actual impact on social exclusion

'Elderly users are coming in and using the computers to contact their family abroad which is a lot cheaper than ringing them up, which many round here can't afford to do'.

'They (the computers) are a good thing, I'm all for it. It's getting people that can't afford it to use computers'.

'Asylum seekers and people from ethnic minorities have been using e-mail to keep in touch with their family abroad. You can e-mail in all different languages so everybody can use it'.

Potential implications for social inclusion

Another library assistant working at library C recognised the social inclusion implications when she said that ICT is benefiting the local community because:

'It gives everybody the opportunity to have access to a PC because not everybody can afford them, there is high unemployment in this area'.

A library assistant at library D noted that:

'100s of families out there can't afford computers, this gives access to people who haven't got the cash'

On a similar note, a library assistant from library E thought that the ICT facilities had:

'Benefited the community because this is not a very rich community- some can't afford computers and the net. But this has opened it up for everybody. Anybody can do it because membership and the Internet are free here'.

8.2.2 Senior Library Staff

A librarian from each authority was interviewed in order to gain their views on the socially inclusive potential of public access ICT. Both interviewees saw the potential of public access ICT for social inclusion, suggesting that:

'The availability of ICT in the library make it a very accessible community resource and people feel more comfortable in a library than say a cyber café'
(Librarian from Authority 2);

'They (computers) have the potential to improve information and knowledge and increase citizenship. However, there are still all sorts of barriers, IT is not different from other services, it is not just a case of putting the facilities there'
(Librarian from Authority 1).

These responses show that there is a general recognition of the socially inclusive benefits of public access ICT. However, there is recognition by one Librarian that providing access is not simply the answer. This will be further discussed in Chapter 9.

8.3 Non ICT users

Those respondents who claimed that they never used the library's facilities were still aware of the benefits and value of ICT in today's environment. The following selection of comments demonstrate this trend:

'Everybody will need to use them in time. I wish I could. It's another world'
(A retired woman);

'They are good for the younger generation' (A retired man);

'I'm illiterate when it comes to computers but they are good for people who want information and to brush up on their skills' (An unemployed man);

'If there are no books in then you can go on the net and find the information you are looking for' (An unemployed man);

'They give information to a lot of information very quickly' (An unemployed man);

Respondents recognised their socially inclusive potential, suggesting that:

At least if parents can't afford them then they (children) can use them here (A retired male library user);

'I don't use them myself but it is very important to have them here for people who can't afford them' (A retired female);

'This area has high unemployment so not many people can afford them so they can use them in the library' (A home tutor who uses the library's ICT as a teaching aid).

Older adult's perceptions of ICT in the library

The responses from the questionnaire show that a common theme with older adults is the belief that computers are only for the younger generations, and Chapter 7 shows this and illustrates that one of the reasons for the lack of take up of ICT facilities by those who have no other access apart from library access was a feeling that they were 'too old'. However, just like the overall picture where those that never used the library's (or any other computing facilities) still felt their presence was important, older adults who never used the facilities still felt having them in the library was important for other, most notably 'the younger generation'. For example, one retired man thought that it was very important for the library to provide public access to computers because:

'It is good for younger people because they need it in today's society'.

...and, a retired women felt:

'Having the computers here helps youngsters a lot'.

The results show that most responses from older adults showed a recognition of the benefits of ICT. However, research by Yeates (2001) on the other hand found that:

‘Retired people acknowledge that they lack ICT skills, but are actually less likely than more knowledgeable users to want public libraries to provide ICT and networked resources training’.

Nevertheless, the Monmouthshire Libraries study supports the results of this study and found that older adults appeared to recognise *‘the changing information and communication technologies in the UK’* (Monmouthshire, 2000). Lilley and Usherwood (2000: 19) also found similar results and observed that *‘if anything there was more positive feeling about IT from the older respondents who recognised its value in attracting younger users’.*

8.4 ICT users

So far, this chapter has concentrated on those who do not use the library’s ICT facilities. However, there were a number of users surveyed who use and value the ICT facilities provided by the library. This is especially true for the Internet access that the library provides. The table below indicates which library computing facilities are being used and shows that of all respondents who used ICT facilities, 91.7% used the Internet, suggesting that the Internet is the most valued feature of the technology available in the library.

IT facility	% of respondents using facility
Internet (excluding e-mail)	91.7
Internet-based e-mail	41.7
Word Processing	33.3
Games	16.7
CD-ROM	0

Table 8.2 **Main use of ICT facilities.**

The following were comments from users of the ICT facilities:

'I don't think I would have done most of the work I did last year if they (the computers) weren't there' (A part time student).

'The computers are very important. Most people need them to do CVs because of spell-check. I'm a bad speller so I used a computer' (An unemployed man without access at home)

'I use the computers and the books. My only access is here at the library. Even if I did have the Internet at home it is too expensive to go on it in the day or for half an hour or an hour' (A retired man without access at home).

'It helps me find things for crosswords faster than books. It's well run and it's important that it's free' (A retired man without access at home)

The evidence above suggests that those who use the library's ICT facilities place great value upon them. This seems especially true in terms of the Internet, of which 91.7% of computer users make use.

8.5 Summary

- The results show that both library ICT users and non-users see the provision of ICT as an important role for the service. Respondents recognised the benefits that ICT can bring, if not to themselves then to others and the local community in general. This result is supported by Eve and Brophy (2001) who argue that their results:

'Indicate that where such services (public access ICT facilities) are available they are valued by their users, by public library users who do not happen, for whatever reason, to use those particular services'.

- Many respondents, especially older adults recognised the importance of ICT to others but failed to see any use for themselves.

- The Internet appears to be the most valued ICT facility offered and is also the most popular.
- The evidence presented in section 8.4 of indicates that there is a potential for the ICT to have an impact on the lives of those in living in the local area as for those users who make use of the library's ICT there have been some positive outcomes.
- Although staff have many concerns with the People's Network they recognise the potential for social inclusion that public access ICT can have.

Chapter 9 Public Library ICT and Non-library Users

As this study aims to assess the impact of public library ICT facilities on those living in areas of social exclusion, it was important to look at non-library users as well as library users. Thus, objective 4 seeks to ascertain what, if any, impact the library's computing facilities are having on non-library users. As it was felt too difficult to survey non-library users (see section 9.3 below) this chapter therefore investigates the literature surrounding the subject, views of senior library staff and the data obtained from the library-user survey.

9.1 Non-library Users

There is a theme running through the literature on public access ICT facilities, regarding those people who for whatever reason, do not use public libraries. For instance, Bruce-Burges (2000: 32) highlights that many of those that the government is targeting with their ICT policy do not use public libraries, and he asks:

'How many of this target population⁷ will actually visit a library? If they do not so already, how will they People's Network encourage them to do so? And what of those physically unable to visit their local library, either through disability, or lack of suitable and affordable public transport'.

Dutch and Muddiman (2001: 187) point out that simply by their location in local communities public libraries are facing the challenge to *'engage with excluded communities'*.

⁷ *'Socially excluded and disadvantaged communities'* (Bruce-Burges, 2000)

9.2 Barriers to Non-library users

The barriers to ICT use covered in Chapter 7 can apply to non-library members just as they do to those people who use the public library but who do not use the ICT facilities it provides. Below are the barriers that may prevent non-library users in using public library ICT facilities. It could be argued that these barriers apply particularly to the people living in communities in which the case study libraries are located. This is down to a number of factors, for example:

- a) The areas have high levels of unemployment, illustrated by the area profiles in Chapter 3, and Chapter 5 shows the high levels of unemployment of respondents. Where there is employment, the occupations are not managerial or professional. Thus ICT training at work is likely to be low or non-existent (see DTI, 2000: section 2.2); users are less likely to own their own computers due to a low income (see Chapter 6, section 6.1.1). Therefore, this makes the barriers below more specific.
- b) The respondents included a high number of people who did not possess any formal qualifications (see Chapter 5) when this is considered against the evidence of the Basic Skills Agency (in NAGCELL, 1997: section 2.21) who concluded that:

‘those with poor numeracy and literacy skills are more likely to be unemployed or in low income jobs...they have few opportunities of work-based training’.

It could be argued that the people in the areas are less likely to own computers or have access and training at work and thus face the barriers below to a greater extent than the better educated.

9.2.1 Fear and lack of knowledge of how to use facilities

Just as many of those library users surveyed did not use the facilities due to a fear of them caused by a lack of ability to use ICT (25%), this can apply to non-library users. For example research by the Department of Trade and Industry (2000: section

4.5) found that it was difficult to find successful promotional events set up to reach the target audience (people who do not use the library) and that *'people who feel alienated or frightened by the technology'* were difficult to reach.

9.2.2 Awareness and Perception

The findings of Chapters 7 and 8 suggest that promotion is not simply about informing people of the availability of public access ICT facilities. Instead, there appears to be a problem with awareness and perception, in other words despite the facilities being available libraries, many people do not recognise the benefits they bring, as *'people who do not feel ICTs are relevant to their lives, or are not aware of the benefits they can offer, are unlikely to try to learn about them'* (DTI, 2000: section 4.6). Thus, there needs to be promotion of the various different uses of the technology to both library users and non-library users. There is some recognition of this in the literature. For example in a recent study, the Department of Trade and Industry (2000) found that:

'Marketing is generally poor. The target audience lacks awareness of the potential of ICTs and they do not appreciate the benefits they offer'.

9.2.3 Institutional barriers

In its report focusing on lifelong learning and continuing education, NAGCELL (1997) observes that *'in circumstances of widening social inequalities, it is scarcely surprising to find evidence of disaffection, alienation and hostility to those institutions, including education, which are perceived as either causing or endorsing them'*. Although this view relates particularly to educational institutions, it could just as easily be applied to the public library. For instance, a senior librarian from Authority 1 recognised the public library's position as an institutional and the problems brought about by this in terms of getting certain sections of society to use it, claiming that:

'There are many reasons why people might not go in the library, some people see it as an institution. Some people are put off by outstanding fines they have and are thus reluctant to enter the library'.

Thus, one barrier that applies to non-library users is an actual avoidance for a number of reasons of mainstream institutions, of which the public library is one. NAGCELL (1997: section 2.18) suggest that:

'Understandably, some people faced with systematic inequalities (for example 'housing, employment, transport, health, education and training') and exclusion make a life for themselves outside of and untouched by mainstream institutions'.

As the areas in this case study have a range of social and economic problems such as unemployment and poor housing conditions (see Chapters 3 and 5), then residents are more likely to be faced with the type of social and economic inequality mentioned above. Thus, a group of alienated and disaffected people is likely to exist.

9.2.4 Access barriers

Chapter 7 introduced the concept of 'access' as a barrier to ICT use, and cited the definition given by the Department of Trade and Industry (2000), who regard access as a barrier to the use of ICT. The following extract from their definition especially applies to non-library users, as it recognises that some people see. In addition, the problem of people having the ability to physically get to the library is pointed out, as are the problems faced by those with young children:

'There is a lack of suitable venues and some are off-putting for some groups. There is a lack of child support and facilities for people with particular needs such as people with disabilities, older people etc.'

Thus, in terms of non-library users it appears that simply providing access per se is not all that is needed to encourage non-library users to visit the library to use its ICT facilities.

9.3 The Case Study

A survey of non-library users was not undertaken as it was deemed too difficult to survey non-library users due to time restraints, and a ‘street survey’ was felt to be inappropriate (see Eve and Brophy, 2001: section 3.7.2). This is true of many similar studies and Eve and Brophy point out that:

‘Little evidence is available about non-users and the reasons why investment in public library ICTs does not always attract the use which is predicted’.

Thus, a question asking if users had used the library before the computing facilities were introduced was included in the library user questionnaire. It was felt that obtaining this information would help to assess whether the ICT facilities have had any impact on those members of the local community who are non-library users. The results of this question are presented in table (9.1) below. The results show that a significant majority of library users were already library users before the computers were introduced. Whereas only 9.8% of people had joined the library specifically to use the computing facilities.

Did you use the library before the computers were introduced?	% of respondents
YES	90.2%
NO	9.8%

Table 9.1 Use of library before ICT introduction

The results in the above table are represented in the bar chart below, which illustrates that the computers have not been significant in attracting new members as only 10% of respondents had joined the library specifically to use them.

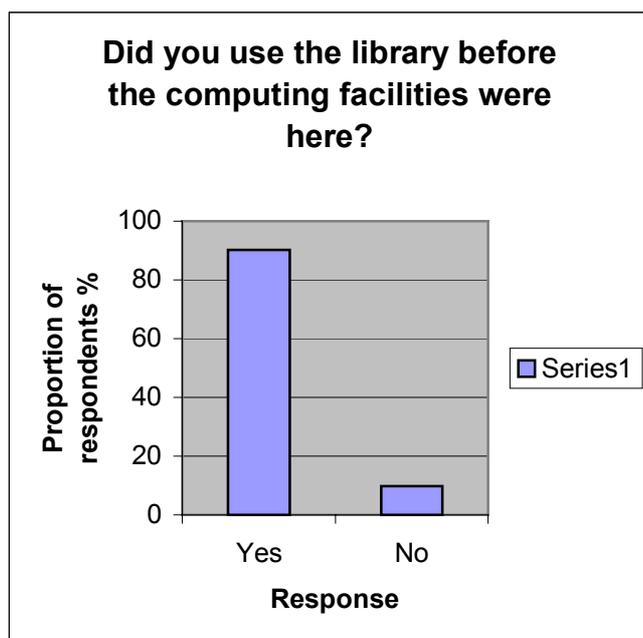


Figure 9.1 'Did you use the library before the computing facilities were introduced?'

The above results are broken down even further in table 9.2 below, which shows how many people who used the computing facilities were already library members. The results show that of those respondents who used the library computing facilities, 82.6% were already existing library users, with only about a fifth (17.4%) of respondents claiming to have joined the library to use the computing facilities.

Do you use the library computers?	Did you use the library before the computers were introduced?	
	YES	NO
Yes (includes often, sometimes, very little)	82.6%	17.4%
No	100.0%	0.0%

Table 9.2 Use of library computers by existing library members

These results appear to suggest that resources are being used by existing library users, which supports the claim made by Dutch and Muddiman (2001: 190) who suggest that *'there is a real danger that any extra resources (to facilitate networked ICT, such as staff and equipment) will be sucked up by ever increasing demands from existing library users'*. Smith (1999: 312) further supports this argument by suggesting that

'it is not yet clear that information technology and the Internet are changing the nature of public library use. Past evidence suggests that new services mostly attract existing users'.

9.3.1 The Views of Library Assistants

However, comments from library assistants do not support these results. A number of library assistants claimed that the computers were bringing new people in, for example:

'There is a mixture of existing users and new joiners, but there have been more new joiners using them (the computers)';

'Some people join because they want to use the computers'.

Nevertheless, it could be argued that the library assistants recognise all new users because they are unfamiliar, and so it appears to them that more people are actually joining for the computers than is actually the case. Furthermore, not all library assistants gave the same response, for example one library assistant claimed:

'Most computer users use the other services- few come in just to use the computers';

...And another said:

'Only a small number have joined to use the computers'.

9.4 Promotion

Promotion of the ICT facilities is one of the most important factors in public access ICT as there is no point in the facilities being there if people do not know that they are. McInroy (2001: 51) claims that *'it is quite evident that publicity is a major task'*, and the Department of Trade and Industry (2000: section 4.5) argue that *'one of the key factors in the success of any initiative is reaching the target audience in the first place'*. In addition the importance of promotion is reinforced by the claims

of the Department who cite 'promotion' as one of the *'barriers which prohibit the establishment of successful ICT access points and constrained the involvement of the target audience'* (DTI, 2000).

The importance of promotion of ICT services also is illustrated by the findings of Eve and Brophy (2001) who found that *'there is evidence that non-users do not immediately think of public libraries as the place to go for Internet access'*. This argument is supported by the findings of Authority 2, who found out by using focus groups with non or infrequent library users, that:

'Many people had experienced great difficulty seeking information to help with a problem, and few were aware of the range of services provided by the public library. Despite the extensive publicity which the public-access to ICT had received, and the high levels of use it attracted, none of the people in the focus groups knew that libraries could offer access to ICT and help with getting started with computers' (Annual Library Plan, Authority 2, 2001: 73).

It has been argued that promotion of library ICT facilities is poor, and in a recent study Yeates (2001) found that *'over 60% of teenage and business users found out about ICT services through visiting the library rather than through promotional activity'*. From the library user questionnaire, out of all the people who used the library computers 90% found out about them through visiting the library, 2% from library promotion and the rest (8%) found out through word of mouth. These findings are illustrated in the pie chart figure 9.2 below:

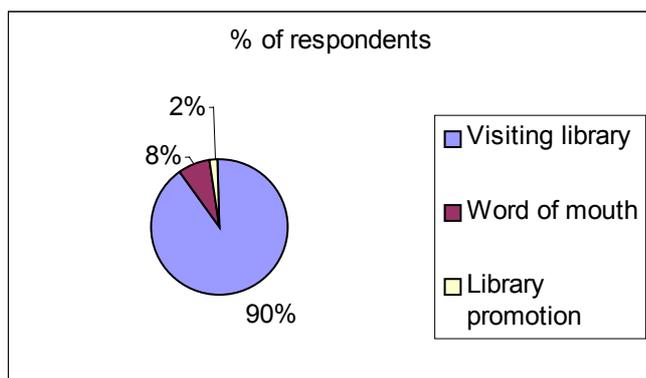


Figure 9.2 'How did you find out about the library computing facilities?'

Thus it appears that in terms of promotion, library authorities need to make people aware that the facilities are available, as illustrated above. They need to make it clear to non-library users that libraries are not just about books or for people who read books only, instead they need to promote the other aspects of libraries, in this case ICT access. In addition, as illustrated in section 9.2.2, library authorities need to find a way of promoting the relevance of the technology to people's lives, this needs to be done for both existing library users and those who do not use the library. Library authorities need to concentrate on promoting the 'content' of ICTs, and illustrate content of interest to people's lives, such as *'information about their health, hobbies, the local community, local events etc.'* (DTI, 2000: section 4.6).

9.5 What is being done?

There have been steps by both library authorities to promote their services to both library users and non-library users. For instance Authority 1 obtained some funding which enabled it to provide 2 ICT tutors in one of their libraries, who also undertook out-reach work in order to inform local groups such as the elderly of the availability of public access ICT in the library and the training sessions available. However, once the funding ran out, this initiative had to cease as the Authority could not afford to maintain it (information obtained from interview with senior librarian from Authority 1). The Authority also produced leaflets concerning the particular library involved.

Authority 2's public access to ICT service has received '*extensive publicity*' (Annual Library Plan, Authority 2, 2001: 73). For instance the authority promotes its services through its web site and has in the past produced a number of leaflets. The authority has also set itself a list of priorities that emerged from its Best Value Review, including to:

'Improve the marketing of the service, so that all those who could benefit are aware of what the public library offers, and to give users a voice in helping to determine the future direction of the service'.

Despite these attempts there still appears to be a problem of promotion and publicity for both authorities, this is summed up by one library ICT users who observed:

'There is nowhere else here that people can get access to a computer without having to buy one...but many people don't know they are here...my wife is a teacher and she didn't know that the library had them for public access. They need to be advertised more...that there are 11 and are free...like in local supermarkets where lots of people go...put there in the community...big notices outside the library'.

9.6 Summary

- There is recognition in the literature of the problems of getting non-library users to visit the library in order to use the available ICT facilities. In addition, there is recognition that getting people to use the ICT in general is difficult, especially when people do not see it as having any relevance to their lives.
- It appears that the majority of the use of the public access ICT facilities is by people who are existing library members. From the results of the library user questionnaire it appears that only a small number of people (17.4%) who were actually using the facilities were new library users.

- Nevertheless, the above result and the comments made by library assistants in section 9.3.1 suggesting that people are joining to use the facilities suggests that the facilities are having an impact upon some of the local community. Moreover, the ICT facilities have the potential to have an impact upon even more people if promotion was improved and other barriers to non-library users removed.
- Finally, the results show that the library authorities are attempting to promote their services, but when considering the above findings it could be argued that a lot more needs to be done.

Chapter 10 Conclusions and Recommendations

10.1 Introduction

This study was designed to assess whether the government's plans to use ICT in public libraries located in areas of social exclusion has had any impact on people living in these areas. It was designed to aid both policy makers and practitioners in any further investment in public access ICT facilities in public libraries, and to suggest further recommendations as to what can be done in the future to increase the impact that ICT in public libraries is having on those people living in areas of social exclusion. In order to do this, the study examined four specific areas:

- The extent to which library ICT facilities were being used and who by;
- The reasons why library users were not using the facilities;
- The attitudes and opinions of library users towards ICT facilities in their library;
- To investigate the position of non-library users in terms of the ICT facilities- for instance the barriers they face.

Although this study focuses on 5 case study libraries the findings can be used to give a general indication of the situation in areas of social exclusion, and the recommendations are such that they could be implemented by any library authority.

10.2 Background

ICT has the potential to make a positive impact upon those people living in areas of social exclusion, the Department of Trade and Industry claims (2000: 6) that ICTs *'are important because they have a key role to play in helping people in deprived neighbourhoods overcome some of the major obstacles they face'*. For instance it can provide citizens with the chance to develop their IT skills and thus improve their employment prospects (DTI, 2000: 6). They can also improve the health of users as they are able to provide access to *'information giving health and lifestyle advice'*, which is important given that:

'people in deprived neighbourhoods tend to be in poorer health and die earlier. So these neighbourhoods have a higher proportion of people with disabilities or long term health problems than elsewhere' (DTI, 2000: section 2.2).

Finally, ICTs can develop confidence and self-esteem (DTI, 2000: section 2.1). Thus by offering public access ICT facilities in areas of social exclusion the public library has a chance to contribute to the lives of people in such neighbourhoods. Hopefully through the findings of this study this chance can be improved through looking at things through the perspective of those people involved- the local community, rather than through the eyes of policy makers.

10.3 Objectives

Below is an assessment of what the study found in terms of each of its 4 initial objectives.

To investigate the extent to which the ICT facilities are being used and by whom

One of the findings of this study was the low use in general of library ICT facilities- 74.5% of respondents never used the library computers. This is of some concern as the areas display characteristics which suggest that home ownership and work access are likely to be lower than in more affluent areas, as shown in Chapter 5. What is more worrying than this is the fact that of those with no other access to a computer, only 23.8% of respondents used the library ICT facilities.

Another area for concern is the fact that the ICT may not be reaching older adults, the unemployed and educational low achievers, as the patterns of use for these groups is low.

Thus, it appears that the library's ICT facilities are not being used to a significant extent and thus not having as great an impact upon the people living in the local area. However there is potential for there to be an impact as the library is attracting a wide range of users through its doors (illustrated in Chapter 5). What is also reassuring is that there is ICT some use by all types of users, and despite the fact that it is to a small extent, it still suggests that some people have realised the usefulness of ICT to their lives.

To investigate the reasons for non-use:

The findings illustrated above confirm the belief that *'people lack an awareness of the potential value of the Internet, or indeed of the benefits of information technologies generally'* (Stoker, 2000: 54) a theme in the literature and one that emerged in this study. In addition, the study found evidence suggesting that another reason for non-use was a lack of ability and knowledge of how to use the facilities. Thus it appears that in order for the ICT to have a greater impact, these two issues need to be tackled.

To investigate attitudes of library users towards ICT facilities in the library:

One of the most significant and reassuring findings of this study is that nearly all respondents (98%) recognised the importance of public libraries providing ICT facilities. What needs attention however is the fact that a number of respondents, including the majority of older adults surveyed could see their importance not for themselves but for others, especially the 'younger generation'.

The fact that the Internet is the most popular use of the information technology is reassuring, as it appears to be the most focused upon section of ICT in both government and academic literature in terms of facilitating social inclusion.

To investigate public access ICT and non-library users

Chapter 9 illustrated the low take-up of library ICT facilities by non-library users, for instance it was found that only 17.4% of ICT users had joined specifically to use the

computers. This indicates that there are a number of barriers still in force for non-library members that are preventing them from using the library and its ICT facilities. In addition it suggests that the publicity and promotion methods employed by both library authorities have only been marginally successful.

Nevertheless, the fact that nearly a fifth (17.4%) of library ICT users have joined the library to use the library ICT facilities suggests that the computers are having some impact, and indicates that the facilities and their location in the library are potentially of value.

10.4 Recommendations for stakeholders

The findings of this study suggest that the impact of the library ICT on the local residents was not significant. Nevertheless, the results also suggest that there is potential for the public access ICT to have a greater impact. This is indicated by the value placed upon the facilities by ICT users and non-ICT users alike.

In order for the public access library ICT facilities realise this potential (to have a greater impact upon people in areas of social exclusion) a number of things can be done:

1. Basic IT skills sessions should be offered on an informal basis, for instance 'drop-in sessions' and IT taster sessions. For more formal skills, libraries should aim to work in partnership with local educational establishments to whom they can direct those people who want to further their skills on a more formal basis and could perhaps provide some IT support in libraries;
2. Library authorities should aim to provide more staff and resources in libraries offering public access ICT so that a better service to users is achieved, as library assistants will have more time to spend with IT beginners. In addition, other services will not suffer;

3. Librarians should attempt to improve the publicity of the services a) in terms of what they can offer, and b) that they are actually there. Taster sessions should be offered that guide the user towards web sites that interest them in order for the realisation that the Internet is relevant to their lives to emerge.
4. In terms of non-library users, a greater amount of out-reach work should be undertaken. For instance visiting community groups and homes for the elderly in order to publicise the facilities.
5. The fact that the facilities are free should be advertised as cost is seen as a barrier to ICT take-up, especially in areas of social exclusion.
6. Library authorities should ensure that specific specialist posts are created for librarians to oversee an ICT and social inclusion policy.

10.5 Topics for Further Research

A number of themes emerged throughout this study of which there was not enough time to cover. These themes could be interesting topics in themselves to study, and are listed below:

Ethnic minorities and library ICT use

As 3 of the 5 case-study libraries were located in areas with significant ethnic minority populations it would have been useful to study this particular area in more depth. Thus, this may be an interesting and useful area for further research.

Women's use of library ICT facilities

It would have been interesting to look in more detail at the use of library IT facilities by women, as they are seen to be underrepresented in ICT use. This is sometimes due to their cultural background which constrains them from '*undertaking learning or other community activities*' (DTI, 2000: 5.4). Thus research in this aspect of ICT use would be interesting to undertake.

Bibliography

Audit Commission (2001). *Best Value Summary Reports, Libraries* (online). London: Audit Commission. <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/home/> [Accessed 15 July 2002].

Batt, C. (1999). "I have seen the future and IT works". *Library Review* (online), **48** (1), pp. 11-17. <http://dandini.emeraldinsight.com/> [Accessed 4 March 2002].

Batt, C. (2000). "The taste and smell of cyberspace". *Public Library Journal*, **15** (1), pp. 19-22.

Bell, J. (1993). *Doing Your Research Project*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Boughey, A. (2000). "Implementing the 'New Library: The People's Network' and the management of change". *Aslib Proceedings* [Online], **52** (4) April, 143-149. www.aslib.com/proceedings/index.html [Accessed 26 April 2002].

Bruce-Burges, A. (2000). "The other side of the counter". *Library Technology*, **5** (2) April, p. 32.

Building the New Library Network (1998). A Report to Government. London: Library and Information Commission. <http://www.lic.gov.uk/publications/policy-reports/building/> [Accessed 7 May 2002].

Day, P. (1997). "The community benefits of electronic networking" (online). Brighton: School of Information Management, University of Brighton. www.partnerships.org.uk/articles/day1.html [Accessed 25 June 2002].

Department of Culture Media and Sport (1999). *Libraries for all: social inclusion in public libraries. Policy Guidance for Local Authorities in England*. London: DCMS. <http://www.culture.gov.uk/pdf/socialin.pdf> [Accessed 27 July 2002].

DCMS (2000). *Sixth Report: Public Libraries* (online). London: DCMS. <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199900/cmcmds/241/24108.htm> [Accessed 27 July 2002].

DCMS (2001). *Libraries, museums, galleries and archives for all. Co-operating across the sectors to tackle social exclusion* (online). London: DCMS. http://www.culture.gov.uk/pdf/libraries_archives_for_all.pdf [Accessed 8 August 2002].

Department of Trade and Industry (2000). *Closing the Digital Divide: Information Communication Technologies in Deprived Areas a report by Policy Action Team 15* (online). London: DTI. <http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/seu/publications/pat/pat15.doc> [Accessed 6 August 2002].

Derbyshire Libraries and Heritage (2001). *Annual Library Plan September 2001* (online). Derbyshire: Derbyshire County Council. <http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk> [Accessed 23 July 2002].

Dutch, M. and Muddiman, D. (2001). "The public library, social exclusion and the information society in the United Kingdom". *Libri*, **51** (4), 183-194.

Erlandson, D. A. et al (1993). *Doing Naturalistic Inquiry: A Guide to Methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1993.

Eve, J. (1999). "VITAL services? Evaluating IT access in public libraries". *Ariadne*, **21** (online). <http://www.ariadne.ac.uk/issue21/public-libraries/intro.html> [Accessed 23 June 2002].

Eve and Brophy (2000). CERLIM (Centre for Research in Library and Information Management) (2000)- *VITAL Methods Workbook* (online). Manchester: Resource: The Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries 2001. <http://www.mmu.ac.uk/h-ss/cerlim/projects/vital/workbook.doc>. [Accessed 26 August 2002].

Eve, J. and Brophy, (2001). *The Value and Impact of End-User IT Services in Public Libraries* (VITAL) (online). Library and Information Commission Research Report 102. Manchester: Resource: The Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries. <http://www.cerlim.ac.uk> [Accessed 3 July 2002].

Gorman, G. E. & Clayton, P. (1997). *Qualitative Research for the Information Professional: A Practical Handbook*. London: Library Association Publishing.

Goulding, A. (2001). 'Information: commodity or social good?'. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, **33** (1) March, pp. 1-4. <http://library.shef.ac.uk/www-bin/www-talis32?> [Accessed 17 August 2002].

Haq, R. (2001). "Delivering learning: Bristol's new learning centre". *Managing Information*, **8** (6) July/August, 38-39.

Heather, P. and Stone, S. (1984). *Crus Guide 5 Questionnaires*. Sheffield: University of Sheffield.

INSINC (National Working Party on Social Inclusion) (1997). *The Net Result*. London: IBM.

Library and Information Commission (2000). *Libraries: the essence of inclusion* (online). London: Library and Information Commission. <http://www.lic.gov.uk/publications/policyreports/inclusion.html> [Accessed 8 July 2002].

Library Association (2000). *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal: A Framework for Consultation- The Response of the Library Association* (online). London: The Library Association. http://www.la-hq.org.uk/directory/prof_issues/natstr.html [Accessed 8 July 2002].

- Lilley, E. and Usherwood, B. (2000). 'Wanting it all: the relationship between expectations and the public's perceptions of public library services'. *Library Management*, **21** (1), pp. 13-24.
- Mackay, N. (1999). "Technology, the public libraries network and the need for joined-up thinking". *Journal of Information Science*, **25** (1), pp. 1-6.
- Maxwell, J. A. (1996). *Qualitative Research Design*. London: Sage.
- McInroy, R. (2001). "Case study: Rural communities and the potential of electronic libraries". *Managing Information*, **8** (10) December, pp. 46-49, 51.
- Mellon, C. A. (1990). *Naturalistic Inquiry for Library Science*. London: Greenwood Press.
- Monmouthshire Libraries (2000). *Internet Access for Older Adults in Public Libraries* (online). Final Report to the Library and Information Commission. Monmouthshire: Monmouthshire Libraries.
<http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/leisure/libraries/report.html> [Accessed 17 July 2002].
- NAGCELL (National Advisory Group for Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning) (1997). *Learning for the 21st Century First report of the National Advisory Group for Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning* (online). London: NAGCELL. <http://lifelonglearning.co.uk/nagcell/index.htm> [Accessed 14 August 2002].
- NAGCELL (1999). *Creating Learning Cultures: Next Steps in Achieving the Learning Age* (online). London: NAGCELL.
<http://www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/nagcell2/> [Accessed 14 August 2002].
- New Library: The People's Network (1997). (online) London: Library and Information Commission. <http://www.ukoln.ac.uk/services/lic/newlibrary/full.html> [Accessed 19 April 2002].
- Office for National Statistics (2002) *Neighbourhood Statistics* (online).
<http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/> [Accessed 14 August 2002].
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*. 2nd ed. London: Sage.
- The People's Network Online , 2002. Web site at: <http://www.peoplesnetwork.gov.uk> [Accessed 5 May 2002].
- Proctor, R. & Bartle, C. (2002). *Low Achievers: Lifelong Learners. An investigation into the impact of the public library on educational disadvantage*. Sheffield: Resource: The Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries.

Raven, C. M. (1998). *An Evaluation of the extent to which branch libraries may contribute to community regeneration through information technology*. Dissertation. Sheffield: University of Sheffield.

Selwyn, N. (2002). "‘E-stabilising’ an inclusive society? Technology, social exclusion and UK government policy making". *Journal of Social Policy* [Online], 31 (1), pp. 1-20. [Accessed 13 April 2002]. <http://journals.cup.org/bin/bladerunner?>

Sheffield City Council (2002). *Social Inclusion Strategy for Sheffield 2002-2005* (online). Sheffield: Sheffield City Council. <http://www.sheffieldfirst.com/download/down.html> [Accessed 27 August 2002].

Smith, I. M. (1999). "What do we know about public library use?". *Aslib Proceedings*, 51 (9), October, 302-314.

Social Exclusion Unit (1999). *Skills for Neighbourhood Renewal: Local Solutions Final report of the Policy Action Team on skills* (online). <http://www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/pat/front.htm> [Accessed 11 August 2002].

Social Exclusion Unit. (2001a). *Preventing social exclusion*. Cabinet Office. Available at <http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/seu/publications/reports/html> [Accessed 5 July 2002].

Social Exclusion Unit. (2001b). News Release: 'Government on Track in Tackling Social Exclusion'. Cabinet Office. Available at http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/seu/media/p_releases/pse.htm [Accessed 8 July 2002].

Stoker, D. "Social exclusion, 'joined-up government', public libraries and the Internet". *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, 32 (2), June, pp. 53-55.

Stone, S. and Harris, C. (1984). *Crus Guide 2 Basic Social Research Techniques*. Sheffield: University of Sheffield.

Stubbs, J. F. L. (1995). 'Public libraries and national information superstructures'. *Aslib Proceedings*, 47 (9), September. pp. 187-194.

Towers, H. (2001). *An Investigation in to the Impact of ICT on Mobile Library Service Provision and Use*. Dissertation. Sheffield: University of Sheffield.

Wilcox, D. (2000). "How new technology can help the socially excluded in the knowledge society" (online). *HousIt*, July. <http://www.housit.org.uk/index.htm>. [Accessed 28 August 2002].

Williamson, M. (2000). Social exclusion and the public library: a Habermasian insight. *Journal of Librarianship and information science* (online), 32 (4) December, pp. 178-186. http://library.shef.ac.uk/www-bin/www_talis32?

Yeates, R. (2001). *Longitude: Final Report* (online). London: Resource, The Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries. <http://www.resource.gov.uk/research/longitude> [Accessed 14 July 2002].

Appendix 1 User Questionnaire

I am a student from the University of Sheffield. I am doing a study on people's use of and views on the computing facilities in their local library. Would it be possible for you to answer this questionnaire to assist with my research. The strictest confidence will be ensured and the results will kept be anonymous at all times.

1. How often do you use the library?

More than once a week Once a month
Once a week Less than once a month
Once every two weeks

2. What is your main use of the library?

Study To use library equipment
Reading / borrowing books (*photocopier etc*)
Reading newspapers/
Magazines in the library Using the computing facilities
Finding community information from leaflets/notice boards
Other (please specify)

.....

3. Do you use the computing facilities in the library

Often Very little
Sometimes Never

4. If not, or very little, why?

5. How did you find out about the library's computing facilities?

Word of mouth Other
Library publicity
Came in and saw them

6. If you do use the facilities, what have you used them for? (*tick as many as are applicable*)

Internet e-mail
Word processing CD ROM's
Games

7. If you encounter problems with the facilities, whom do you consult?

Staff Computer books
Other users Other

8. What would encourage you to use library computers more?

9. Did you regularly use the public library before computing facilities were introduced?

Yes No

10. Do you have access to computing facilities elsewhere, please say where: (*tick as many as are applicable*)

Home Work
No access Educational establishment

Cybercafe Friend/relative's home
Other (*Please say where*)

.....

11. How important do you think it is for public libraries to provide computer facilities?

Very important Don't know
Not very important Quite important
Not important at all

12. Why?

13. How important to you personally do you feel the libraries computing facilities are?

Very important Don't know
Not very important Quite important
Not important at all

14. Do you have any additional comments to make about computers?

15. Male Female

16. Are you: (*employment question- interviewee should have flash card*)

17. If you are in work, what is your occupation?

.....

18. Which age group do you belong to? (*Interviewee should have flash card*)

19. How would you describe your ethnic background? (*Interviewee should have flash card*)

20. Which of the following qualifications do you have? (*Interviewee should have flash card*)

I would like to ring some people for more information. Would you be prepared to take part in this? If so, please fill in the section below:

Name:

Telephone number:

E-mail address:

Thank you for your help.

Appendix 2 interview for staff

Branch:

Date & Time:

2. What are your views on the introduction of ICT into this library?

3. What are the advantages?

4. What are the disadvantages?

5. What impact do you think the comp. facilities have had on people who are new to ICT use?

6. To what extent are the users new to library use?

7. To what extent are the facilities being used by those often under-represented in computer use such as:

- The elderly
- Young males
- The unemployed
- Ethnic minority groups

8. If they are under-used, why.

9. What do you think the library needs to do to increase use by:

a) these groups?

b) non-members?

10. What appears to be the main use of the computers?

Internet [] E-mail [] Word Processing [] Games []

Community Information (i.e. from your council/library Intranet) []

11. Do users come to you when they have problems with using the facilities?

12. Have you been on a computing course?

13. If yes, what type?

14. If yes, were you sent by the library [] You did it in your own time []

15. What training

a) would you like

b) do you feel you need.

16. Finally, in what ways do you feel that having ITC facilities in this particular library is benefiting the local community?

Appendix 3 Senior Library Staff Interview Guide

Objective

To explore the policies of the library service regarding ICT in public libraries, especially with regards to libraries in areas of social exclusion.

Aims

- To explore what the library service's policies are on providing ICT for their communities
- To explore the present and planned ICT facilities
- To explore what, if any, promotion of ICT is actually undertaken by the service. For instance:
 - Training courses organised by the library
 - Encouraging use by non-library users through for instance local community centres
- To explore interviewee's feelings about ICT in his/her libraries.
- To explore interviewees feelings on the help given to ICT users by staff.

Introduction

I am interested in the policies of the library service regarding ICT in public libraries, especially with regards to social exclusion.

1. Facilities

What are your plans for the future in terms of ICT in your public libraries?

2. Policy

2.1 Location

What are your policies on deciding on the location of ICT in your libraries:

Do you focus facilities where there is voiced demand?

Do you focus your ICT facilities where the community regularly uses them and has the skills to do so?

Where they are needed most due to low home ownership and low access at work

2.2 Staff

What are your views on the level of ICT help that staff should offer?

3. Promotion

Do you promote your library facilities?

If so, how? (And where?)

If not, why? And do you plan to do so in the future?

4. Aims

What do you hope the widespread introduction of ITC into public libraries will achieve?

Appendix 4 User Questionnaire Flash Card

User Questionnaire answers

Below are choices of answers for questions 14, 16, 17 and 18. When these questions are asked, simply give the letter that applies to you. For example, for question 16 'Which age group do you belong to?' if you are 24 then answer 'b'.

14.

- a. Full time employed
- b. Part time employed
- c. Unemployed
- d. Other (please specify)
- e. Retired
- f. A student

16.

- a. 16-19
- b. 20-29
- c. 30-39
- d. 40-49
- e. 50-59
- f. 60+

17.

- a. White
- b. Black Caribbean
- c. Black African
- d. Black Other
- e. Indian
- f. Pakistani
- g. Chinese
- h. Bangladeshi
- i. Other (*Please specify*)

18.

- a. GCSEs / O Levels grade D or below (*or equivalent*)- please say how many
- b. GCSEs / O Levels grade C or above (*or equivalent*)- please say how many
- c. A level (*or equivalent*)- please say how many
- d. Other (*Please specify grade / level*)-please say how many
- e. No qualifications