Engaging the Community?

An investigation into public library approaches to social

inclusion in the North West of England

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Abstract

This study explores the approaches of public libraries in the North West of England towards community engagement and social inclusion. In 2003 the Labour government introduced 'Framework for the Future', a 10 year plan aimed at re-positioning public libraries back into the heart of the communities they serve and help guide them towards the creation of an inclusive service which is truly 'open to all'. Now in stage two, the framework agenda for 2006-2008 is focused on community engagement. The recently re-launched Public Library Service Standards and Public Library Service Impact Measures are both aimed at ensuring public libraries meet the aims set out in Framework for the Future. Embedded in these measures is the minimum requirement for public libraries to carry out community profiling to assess the needs of their communities in order to provide a relevant and valued service.

This research study investigates the extent to which community profiling methods are being adopted by the public library service in the North West. It will also seek to establish how users currently perceive the level of engagement the public library is practicing and the extent to which their needs are currently being met. The study looks at data from LLAs and public library users in the North West and the viewpoints of library staff from 4 case study libraries and independent commentators, to provide an insight into the perspectives of the major stakeholders. It does not attempt to generalise its findings but is intended to provide a snapshot of the current climate and facilitate further research.

It found that community profiling, whilst being carried out by all the local library authorities who responded, is not fully utilised. The information gathered is not deemed a major influence in the creation and development of social inclusion initiatives nor is it used to a great extent when allocating money to fund these initiatives. The community information gathered is less of an influence on

the service development of public libraries surveyed than the national library targets.

The study also identified the most common methods used by local library authorities for gathering community profiling information. These include national statistics and user questionnaires, which are viewed as less engaging than other recommended methods. Overall, a great disparity was observed in the level of usage of community profiling information and the attitudes of library staff towards social inclusion.

The library users involved in the research did feel the public library service met their needs and engaged with them to a certain degree. Nearly half of library users surveyed considered themselves to be from excluded groups, which suggests that public libraries are reaching out to those with the most need. However, there was still low usage amongst certain groups such as asylum seekers and refugees. The research also found that most users were unaware of opportunities to become involved with their public library through volunteering and of the extent to which the library service was actively involved in the community. This highlights the need for the public library service to market itself more to the community and raise awareness about the services it has to offer.

The report concludes by asserting that if local library authorities and their public libraries are going to successfully engage with their communities and become a truly inclusive service, they need to address several issues. These include institutional cultures, better marketing strategies, and consider the need for community profiling training for senior library staff.

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Introductory chapters

Part I discusses the origins of the research study. It looks at the research context to establish the motivation behind the aims, objectives and research questions. This is followed by the Literature Review which sets out the conceptual framework within which the research findings are presented and discussed in Part II. The final chapter in Part I, discusses the methodological approach undertaken and the various techniques use to gather the research data. It also evaluates research process, listing the limitations and problems encountered by the researcher during the study

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Putting the research into context

The purpose of this research study is to investigate the current approaches of local library authorities (hereafter LLAs) and the public library service in the North West of England towards community engagement. It will examine the usage of community profiling as a method for identifying the needs of local communities and how the profiling information is used to tackle social inclusion. It will also look at the perspectives of library users and seek to establish the extent to which they feel the public library service engages with them in terms of service delivery and community involvement. The author did originally intend to include an evaluation of public library approaches to community engagement and social inclusion through ICT initiatives. However, it was felt to extend beyond the initial scope of the study and deemed a candidate itself for a separate research study in relation to community engagement through ICT networking. However, the author does recognise that ICT is becoming increasingly relevant to public library service delivery and this is acknowledged in the literature review.

1.1.1 The Community origins of the public library service

Over the past few decades, public libraries have been the focus of much negative press. Through several Conservative and Labour governments, the death knell for the Public Library Service has echoed behind budget cuts and policy re-writes. The National Press is always quick to report on the negative side of events[1] and slow to report on the good that libraries do within their communities, such as the 'Libraries Change Lives Awards'.[2] The public library

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[1] See http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/Research/libresearch3.html for archived newspaper coverage
[2] http://www.cilip.org.uk/aboutcilip/medalsandawards/LibrariesChangeLives

service is always, it seems, trying to justify its existence and trying to prove its worth in increasingly capitalist terms, as the marketisation and modernisation of Local Government continues to redefine how we access our local public services.

One of the key justification's for the public library service is the extent to which it can contribute to the creation and ongoing development of local communities. Several 'buzzwords' are being used in library discourse to describe the befits of this relationship including 'social capital', 'community networks', 'community engagement' and social (or community) 'cohesion'. This terminology is centred on the role the public library has always had, that of a community hub (Matarasso, 1998); a place for *all* people to socialise, to gain access to information and to learn – for free.

The public library service has always been perceived as being perfectly placed to tackle the inequalities that exist within society. An idea conceived during the industrial age and born out of a desire to educate, public libraries were "realized by a combination of philanthropy and community action…group action closely associated with the industrial working class was the main driver" (Moore, 2004:28). Matarasso observed the public library's original purpose was aimed at "reducing the gap between a theoretical right to know and our actual right to know" (Matarasso, 2000:34). Whilst other library commentators observe that despite its just intentions, the library sphere has been overly influenced by the principles of the middle classes and as such excludes those who fail to subscribe to a mainstream way of life (Pateman, 1999/2000; Black, 2003, Matarasso, 2000).

1.1.2 The modern public library and the community

The emergence of the modern public library, marked by the Public Libraries and Museums Act of 1964, saw a move towards a more community

focused public service. The current government drive to promote the community orientated role of public libraries is not therefore a new concept and many of the initiatives and policies in evidence today are echoes of earlier community librarianship trends (Usherwood, 2003; Muddiman et al, 2000; Black, 2003). Brophy (2001:184) posits the library as a "community information intermediary", perfectly placed to manage the community's expanding information needs. Indeed, public libraries are becoming more concerned with access to information in all formats.

The focus of public libraries in the 21st Century is to ensure that no member of society is excluded and that it is truly a library service for all (DCMS, 1999). Social inclusion is now at the forefront of the public libraries agenda and under New Labour governance, they have been firmly placed on the political stage. The growing divide between the information rich and information poor in this technological age, the apparent disintegration of the social fabric and the fall in library usage contributed to the development of the 'Framework for the Future' (hereafter F4F) in 2003. The government's ten year plan aims to bring the public library service into the 21st Century by repositioning it back into the community and developing strategies to allow it to embrace technological change (DCMS, 2003). This has been evidenced by the Launch of the New Library: Peoples Network (DCMS, 2006a), an initiative which aimed to install Internet linked PCs into all public libraries and more recently through the 'Love Libraries'[3] campaign, aimed at raising national awareness of public libraries.

The next phase of F4F is focused on community engagement and the new Public Library Service Standards (hereafter PLSS) and the more recently developed Public Library Service Impact Measures (hereafter PLSIM) (DCMSc) have been developed to help public libraries develop their services to meet the needs of the local communities and ensure they are equally accessible. Within

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[3] http://www.lovelibraries.co.uk/

this is a requirement that all public libraries carry out a minimum level of community profiling to ensure they meet the needs of their communities.

However, there has also been criticism that the recommendations in F4F are unoriginal and unimaginative (Usherwood, 2003). Numerous research studies carried out over recent years, namely 'Open to All?' (Muddiman, 2000), 'Borrowed Time' (Comedia, 1993) and various reports by the Audit Commission and the House of Commons Committee have found that social exclusion initiatives have failed in the past to reach the most excluded members of our society. More recent research study into the perceptions of 14-35 year olds of the public library service (DCMS and Laser Foundation, 2006), also suggest that not enough is being done to develop a service that appeals to all sections of the community.

The emphasis on social inclusion has also led to a concern that the ethos of public libraries may be being distorted in part by the encroaching new technologies, but also by a growing pressure to please everyone or at least be seen trying to. Some observers warn that librarians cannot be everything to everyone (House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee, 2004). They can however support the local community by managing access to information and resources relative to its needs and by providing a link to other public, voluntary and private sector resources and services through partnership work. Perham (1997:7) notes that "Libraries are a valuable medium for helping people become part of the community", but they are not the only one. Furthermore, the increasing take-up within the public library service of the 'bookstore' approach to library design is also being viewed as evidence that the service may be in danger of losing its identity and its intrinsic value in a bid to validate its existence in an increasingly consumerist and transient society (Hood & Henderson, 2005).

The wealth of new strategies and policies regarding the service are pushing libraries to be more socially inclusive and creative in their approach to community engagement. Nevertheless, the mixed responses from commentators in the field to F4F and the public libraries agenda implies that good intentions may not be enough for these policies and strategies to succeed this time round. This research study is inspired by these conflicting reports surrounding the public library service and the questions surrounding its value to the communities that they serve.

1.2 Research Aims

The overarching aim of the research is to establish how the main library stakeholders; users, staff and local library authorities, currently feel about the public library service. To do this the study investigates the approaches of public library services in the North West towards community engagement and social inclusion. It will examine the usage of community profiling by local library authorise (LLAs) and the extent to which public libraries in the North West are engaging with their communities and fulfilling the needs of all their users.

To ensure this is achieved there are two main aims to this research study each with respective research questions and objectives. During the presentation and discussion of the results, each aim will be discussed within the context of corresponding research questions and objectives. The main aims of the study are to:

1. Investigate the extent to which local library authorities in the North West of England utilise community profiling.

2. Investigate the extent to which public libraries in the North West of England are engaging with their local communities.

1.3 Research Questions

Through these aims, I will seek to answer several more specific research questions:

i.   Which methods are used to gather community profiling information?

ii. Which socially excluded groups are considered a priority for LLAs in the North West?

iii. What service additions do public library users feel would help to meet their needs?

1.4 Research Objectives

Further to these research questions are several objectives which I aim to achieve whilst carrying out the research. These are:

A. To identify the extent to which community profiling information influences the planning and delivering public library social inclusion initiatives

B. To identify the depth of information gathered about local communities through community profiling.

C. To identify the extent to which library users in the North West of England feel engaged with their public library service.

D. To identify to what extent public libraries in the North West are meeting the needs of the local community.

1.5 Structure of the report

The following chapters set out the report as follows:

Chapter 2 consists of a literature review mapping out the current theoretical and political framework which the Public Library Service currently works within. It discusses the main thematic concerns of the study briefly critiquing the myriad viewpoints, providing an overview of current thinking.

Chapter 3 discusses the methodological approach adopted to carry out the research. It details the techniques used to capture and analyse the data and considers the study's limitations and any problems encountered along the way.

Chapters 4 and 5 are concerned with the presentation and discussion of the results in relation to the study's aims, objectives and research questions. They examine the data within the contextual framework of the theories and policies outlined in the literature review.

Chapter 6 is the concluding chapter containing the report summary evaluating the research experience and outlines any lessons learned. This is followed by the conclusions of the research project followed by a list of recommendations for further research that have arisen as a consequence of this study.

The bibliography and appendices are listed at the back.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter will outline some of the key ideas, theories and policies defining the public library service's position in relation to the community. This will provide the backdrop against which the research will be presented. The main thematic concerns of this dissertation are:

- Community Engagement
- The social inclusion/exclusion dyad
- Current Library Policy
- Community Profiling

All of these topics are interwoven and define the strategies and policies guiding the profession in the 21st Century. It is not possible within the scope of this report to discuss in great detail these themes, each one has been written about endlessly. The purpose of this literature review is to provide a brief overview of the current landscape and to familiarize the reader with these concepts sufficiently in order to understand the origins and inspiration for the research that follows.

2.1 Community Engagement

The Labour government's social policy agenda is focused on creating sustainable communities and tackling social inclusion. Public libraries are being seen as an integral part of that agenda. As a statement on the CILIP website illustrates, their position within the community as a

"trusted, neutral and inclusive community resource…gives public libraries a powerful potential to contribute to the Government's objectives for sustainable communities, neighbourhood renewal, social inclusion...The capacity of public libraries to engage in local community partnerships and involve local volunteers also gives them a powerful potential to contribute to the agenda of community engagement…" (CILIP, 2006)

The next phase of government's strategic outline for public libraries in the 21st century, Framework for the Future (F4F), is focused on ensuring public libraries are proactively engaged with their communities and providing a service that meets their needs. This section looks at the concept of community engagement, establishing a definition and framing the public library's role in facilitating it.

2.1.1 Defining community engagement

Community engagement is a relatively new term for an age old concept, one that at its heart is about listening to and involving the community in the creation and delivery of services that cater for their needs. Community engagement is the defined as "involving people from the community in decision-making" (MLAc, 2006:4). It is "the process of involving communities in the planning, development and management of services" (Scottish Centre for Regeneration, 2006). Manchester City Council is one of many local council's in the North West who recognise the importance community engagement plays in creating healthy social networks and cohesive communities. As the following statement on their website illustrates, community engagement can provide:

> "people with opportunities to have a greater say in what happens
> in their city and to be more active in decision making….
> People who are engaged in local projects have a chance to
> build their personal skills and take a more active role in their
> community and city if they wish. Engagement can help people
> develop their sense of place and belonging in their local area
> and support positive change within communities."
> (Manchester City Council, 2006)

At this juncture, it is helpful to understand what is meant by the term 'community' within this context. There are several types of community referring to a variety of groups connected by such things as common interests, work practices, virtual links and spatiality. Glass (1944, cited in Byrne, 1999:119) defined communities as being more than people simply co-existing in 'neighbourhoods' and sharing similar experiences. He described them as places

> "which were conscious of the communality which derived
> from common spatial experience and were willing
> to act communally".

Community engagement through public libraries is connected to the creation of local services which support what the government refers to as "sustainable communities';

> "places where people want to live and work, now and in the future.
> They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents,
> are sensitive to their environment, and contribute to a high quality of life.
> They are safe and inclusive, well planned, built and run, and offer
> equality of opportunity and good services for all"
> Department for Communities and Local Government (2005)

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This definition is more formal and lacking the cohesiveness implicit in Glass's definition but it illustrates the role public library services can have in removing social barriers and engaging with the community.

2.1.2 Social Theory

The role public libraries play in strengthening communities through active engagement is linked to social theories surrounding social capital and community (or social) cohesion. Briefly summarised, social capital is stated by some as the "antidote to social exclusion" (Percy-Smith, 2000:6). It can be viewed in several ways; as the 'glue' that binds people together - the 'social networks' and levels of 'civic engagement' that emerge from a "high degree of social interaction" (Forrest and Kearns, 2001:2129) or as a resource used "in support of community development and social inclusion" (County Galway Local Authorities, 2006:28).

'Community cohesion' (or social cohesion) is also another term that has become frequently used in public library discourse, policy documents and strategic outlines. It

> "implies challenging the conditions that lead to the
> segregation of people from different backgrounds"
> (Harris and Dudley: 2005:8).

Hence its links to social exclusion/inclusion governmental strategies centred on community engagement that are being rolled out nationwide. Vincent (2005) however, in his report on community cohesion, observes the conflict arising over its definition and the myriad ways it can, like social capital, be interpreted. His report attempts to create a holistic understanding of what community cohesion is, implying it is essentially about a sense of communality, of trust and reciprocity, centred on shared visions and opportunities.

Commentators also warn that such concepts should be approached with caution. Their intangibility makes it difficult to construct policies around them and raises questions about the extent to which they can be measured or evaluated (Baron et al, 2000; Halpern, 2005, Cordell, 2005, Forrest & Kearns, 2000). Others see terms like 'social capital', which can "reduce people to the level of economic units" (Pateman cited in Vincent, 2005:53[4]), as undermining the social roots of the ideas they encapsulate.

<u>2.1.3 Public libraries and community engagement</u>

Community engagement is being heavily promoted throughout the public library service as a way of re-positioning the public library as the 'hub' of the community. Several recent issues of the CILIP journal 'Library and Information Update' have had feature articles debating the pros and cons of community engagement in relation to social inclusion/exclusion. It is also at the 'heart' of the next phase of Framework for the Future (F4F) 2006 -2008 as emphasised by the £80 million Big Lottery fund which will be available to successful bidders from September 2006 and aimed at helping "libraries to become vibrant, well-used centres providing the services that local residents want" (Holman, 2006).

The public library service does appear to be embracing these social theories whole heartedly. Matarasso (1998) asserted that the public library is perfectly positioned, both symbolically and physically within the community to facilitate community cohesion. Moreover, despite the debates over falling usage figures and uncertainty over its validity in the new information age, a recent study by Usherwood (2005) demonstrated that many people still value the public library service as a neutral and trusted resource.

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[4] Taken from an email sent by Pateman to Vincent: see footnote 29 of cited article

However, there are still reports being produced that indicate that community engagement has a long way to go. The recent publication of a report (DCMS and Laser Foundation, 2006) into the perspectives 14-35 year olds have of public libraries concluded that stock, the building's appearance, service provision and the 'culture' of libraries can act as barriers to the services. A report commissioned by The Library Association carried out by the PAG[5] (Library Association, 2004:10) also identified barriers that prevent pubic libraries from engaging with their communities and successfully tackling social inclusion. They were identified as:

- Too many un-coordinated initiatives
- Too much emphasis on short-term funded initiative
- Reliance upon bidding for grants instead of guaranteed funding streams
- Too many initiatives focusing on poverty or which set a 'moral framework'
- Absence of the coverage of the good work the library and information services carry out

Commentators (Pateman, 2005; Matarasso, 2000) also assert that the needs of the most socially excluded members of the community are continually overlooked by library services. Whereas others observers warn that by trying to please everybody and 're-branding' the service, the public library service runs the risk of becoming 'diluted' to the extent that it appeals to no-one (Hood and Henderson, 2005; Train et al, 2000).

Several influential reports produced at the turn of the century, (Muddiman et al, 2000; Comedia, 1993; Audit Commission, 2002b), highlighted that if the public library service is to become socially inclusive and engage with local communities, crucial changes need to be made; in both its physical approach to service delivery and culturally with regards to the attitudes of the library staff. It has been criticised for not being proactive enough in its attempts to engage with

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[5] The Library Association's 'Policy Advisory Group' on social exclusion

the community with recent figures putting the number of working class users at just 24% (Marcella and Baxter cited in Pateman, 1999/2000). Muddiman (1999:184) notes that for some non-users "the gap between their own culture and that of the library is unbridgeable".

These reports paved the way for the new library strategies and policies that are currently driving the public library service and part of this study's research aims is to establish the extent to which it is succeeding in engaging with its all its users and the community as a whole. The next section moves onto define social inclusion and exclusion, establishing how they factor into public library approaches to community engagement.

2.2 Social Inclusion/exclusion dyad

Community engagement is being viewed as a way of ensuring that all members of the community can contribute their ideas and opinions to help create local services that meet their needs and provides them with more opportunities. It is aimed at both those who are socially excluded and those within the mainstream of society. To understand how community engagement can help to overcome social exclusion and facilitate social inclusion it is necessary to understand how these concepts manifest themselves in the community.

2.2.1 Defining social exclusion

The relationship between social exclusion and social inclusion has been a central part of governmental social policy and public library strategies over the past few decades. Whilst the terminology may change, the essence of the concepts remains the same. In the Seventies and Eighties, socially excluded people were referred to as 'the disadvantaged' and their exclusion was primarily viewed as the result of poverty. These were individuals whose marginalization

from society was the "result of structural forces preventing the equitable distribution of resources throughout society" (Coleman, 1981:9). Today social exclusion is seen as more multi-dimensional, Levitas (1998) suggests that social exclusion embraces several discourses; poverty, delinquency and employment. This view is supported by Percy-Smith (2000) who also asserts that it is the consequence of experiencing disadvantage in several areas of an individual's life.

Social exclusion is where an individual is excluded from society not only because of socio-economic problems, but also as a consequence of geography or levels of population. Percy-Smith (2000) identified several dimensions of social exclusion which were concisely summarised by Hicken (2004) and listed as:

- Economic (Poverty, unemployment)
- Social (isolation, homelessness)
- Political (disenfranchisement, disempowerment)
- Neighbourhood (urban and rural deprivation)
- Individual (illness, lack of social/educational skills)
- Spatial (the institutionalised and marginalised)
- Group (black and ethnic minorities, disabled, elderly etc)"

(Hicken, 2004:45).

To tackle social exclusion New Labour set up the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU), specifically to tackle the growing imbalance within society and the effect it is having on the social fabric. They define social exclusion as what,

> *"happens when people or places suffer from a series of problems*
> *such as unemployment, discrimination, poor skills, low incomes,*
> *poor housing, high crime, ill health and family breakdown.*
> *When such problems combine they can create a vicious cycle.*
> *(Social Exclusion Unit, 2006)*

Social exclusion creates barriers which prevent those defined as excluded from participating fully in "the economic, political and cultural life of the society within which they live" (Mandanipour et al, 1998 cited in Percy-Smith, 2000:6). Social exclusion can be deliberate or unintentional, born of prejudice or ignorance with regards to the needs of others and can affect a single individual or a community as a whole (Middleton, 2003).

2.2.2 Defining social inclusion

Social 'inclusion' then is the antithesis of exclusion. Where social exclusion concerns itself with identifying the barriers that prevent participation, social inclusion is focused on overcoming those barriers once they have been identified. It is about "social justice…giving everyone equal access to services, as well as respect and dignity" Middleton (2003:1). The former is a negative action whilst the latter proactively combats it. This sense of social justice is embedded in the library community's approach to social inclusion is exemplified in the PAG report (Library Association, 2004) which asserts that any activity addressing social exclusion

> *"should be based on an underpinning commitment to social justice*
> *and a practical approach to identifying the causes and facts*
> *of exclusion" (Library Association, 2004:4).*

The UK however has been slow to pick up on social inclusion as a social concept. Having been evident in European policies since the seventies, it has

only appeared in UK government policies from the mid-nineties (Vincent, 2005). However, the government's move from using the term social exclusion to social inclusion in their policies demonstrates a more positive approach and accurately reflects the ethos of the public library service (Train et al, 2000; Lang & Wilkinson, 2000). It highlights a move to a more preventative approach rather than a curative one, reflecting the need for long term commitment in the form of action not words.

Some commentators assert that social inclusion is unobtainable until the barriers that create exclusion are removed and "socially excluded groups and individuals gain access to the mainstream" (Vincent, 2005:26). Byrne (1998) observes that we are living in what he terms a 'post-industrial capitalist' society, the continuation of which depends upon the existence of the very barriers that social inclusion policies are trying to overcome. Byrne (1998:137) sees social exclusion as a derivative of an unequal society, "a product of the post-industrial order dominated by globalizing capital". He asserts that until we move away from this 'post-industrial capitalism' we will not eliminate the root causes and barriers which manifest social exclusion.

The interchangeability of these terms however can be confusing and essentially, although they differ at their roots, they are both concerned with tackling discrimination and creating a fair and equal society. Miller cited in Muddiman et al (2000) views both concepts to be part of a continuum along with social cohesion. All of these concepts are associated with the idea of community engagement.

2.2.3 Who is excluded?

So who are classed as the 'excluded' members of our society? The PAG report (Library Association, 2004:4) stated that the excluded are those that are

"…suffering from poverty and related deprivation, those disempowered on the grounds of social class, race, gender, and sexual orientation, disabled people, those discriminated against and marginalised by mainstream society, those deprived of life chances"

Specific groups identified by some of the leading commentators on this subject (Byrne, 1999; Hicken, 2004; Muddiman et al, 2000) include:

Black and Minority Ethnic Groups	**Refugees and Asylum Seekers**
Mental Health	**Young People**
Travellers	**Unemployed**
Ex-Offenders	**Low-income Families**
Single parent families	**Disabled**
People from rural Communities	**Migrant Workers**
Homeless	**Elderly**
Housebound	**Looked-after Children**
Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender (LGBT)	**Women**

However, some critics have argued that defining individuals in such a way can contribute to their excluded status. Such an approach that separates the 'excluded' into an array of categories can remove attention from the "inequalities and differences among the 'included'…resulting in an overly homogenous and consensual image of society" (Levitas, 1998). This can make the divide between them seem wider than it actually is and reinforce their position on the margins of mainstream society. Jarman (2001) also notes that what excludes individuals from mainstream society can also connect them as they face similar obstacles in other areas of their lives.

The multi-dimensional nature of social exclusion means it is not easy to distinguish the 'excluded' by one characteristic alone such as gender, race, age and sexuality. It can also be either a transitory state or a permanent one that any

individual can experience in their lifetime. For example, the idea of a 'job for life' is no longer one that exists in today's transient job market. Byrne (1999) notes the results of a study by Green (1997, cited in Byrne, 1999:94) which "shows that 39% of workers aged between 25 and 34 have experienced at least one period of unemployment in their working lives".

The social inclusion/social exclusion dyad seems to be the focus of endless studies as commentators from all schools of thought try to come up with a solution to the problem. Public libraries through community engagement can have an active role in combating exclusion. The following section looks at how public library policy is shaping their approach to community engagement and social inclusion.

2.3 Public library policies and strategic approaches to Social Inclusion

This section examines how the policies and strategies directing the public library services into the 21st century are defining the approaches of the public library service towards social inclusion and community engagement.

2.3.1 Political origins of current policy

When the New Labour party came to power in 1997, one of the items on their agenda was to modernise local public services, of which public libraries is one. Several key reports were carried out by various organizations including the Audit Commission, the MLA and the Laser Foundation. The findings of these reports agreed on several issues, namely that public libraries were not engaging with non-users and socially excluded groups. The Audit Commission report (2002b) found that despite successful progress in the areas of ICT and reader development, core services such as book stock and the physical infrastructure of libraries were being neglected. These findings supported research carried out by Muddiman et al in the 'Open to All' (2000) report which also questioned the

accessibility of libraries to socially excluded groups. Pateman (2003) also asserts that

> "libraries are massively underused by Black communities, travellers, refugees, asylum seekers, the homeless and other marginalised groups. Libraries are used most by those who need them least…"

The Audit Commission report (2002) also found the biggest fall in library users was those under the age of 55 and the most popular reasons for non-use included the lack of stock choice and poor access. It noted that the poor location of libraries was due to the "local demographic changes [which] have left libraries far from the communities that they were built to serve" (Audit Commission, 2002:6) with one-third having little or no provision for disabled access. It also highlighted the poor marketing strategies of libraries and observed that although good outreach work was evidenced, it tended to suffer from poor co-ordination and planning. The Audit Commission suggested that a clear and flexible framework was required that could be adapted by local authorities to fit the service needs of their communities.

2.3.2 Framework for the Future

In 2003, the Labour government launched the Framework for the Future, a 10 year strategy aimed at repositioning public libraries back into the community so that they may be better positioned to tackle social inclusion and engage with their communities. This was complimented by the re-launched Public Library Service Standards (PLSS) in 2004 and more recently by the Public Library Service Impact Measures (PLSIM) in 2005. Vincent (2005:49) observes that "these should provide a key way of measuring how public libraries are tackling social exclusion".

The Framework for the Future document states that "libraries are public anchors for neighbourhoods and communities" (DCMS, 2003:9), that they "are open to all and should benefit most those least able to afford private provision" (DCMS, 2003:6). It defines their role as three-fold, encompassing reader development, ICT skill development and the promotion of social inclusion and community cohesion. This framework seeks to achieve numerous aims that cover myriad areas of interest. The aims of F4F, taken from the new action plan (MLA, 2006d), which relate to my research include the following:

- Put people first, listening to and engaging with all communities, changing and modernising services to respond to their needs
- Provide access to opportunities for every person and a gateway in every community to the world of creativity, knowledge, skills and information
- Pay particular attention to how the needs of children, families and younger people and those in greatest need can be met
- Improve the quality of books and other stock and services to increase the use of libraries
- Modernise library buildings, spaces and services to meet the needs and expectations of communities

F4F does have its critics however, (Usherwood, 2003; Pateman, 2003) who see the document as less than innovative, rooted in library myths and skirting around the main issues with regards to the lack of long-term investment and practical support for libraries, demonstrating "an absence of any radical thinking" (Usherwood, 2003:309). Usherwood's (2003) paper observed that the lack of practical guidelines beyond all-encompassing statements undermines the positive intentions behind it. This vagueness was also noted by the House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee in their annual report for 2004/05.

Recent papers written about the public library service 3 years on from the implementation of F4F (Pateman, 2006; Fisher and Bradley, 2006) suggest that there is little evidence of institutional changes occurring in within the public library service in all but handful of areas. Studies by Fisher and Bramley (2006) show a 'pro-rich' bias towards library service usage with poorer households constrained either financially or by availability. This reinforces the earlier assertions of Pateman (1999) and Black (2003) that the middle classes are the main influence on library services with those harder to reach still being excluded from the library's core services.

2.3.3 Public Library strategies for engaging the community

The newly released PLSIM are designed to support F4F and ensure public libraries do proactively make a positive impact on their local communities, reaching those considered 'hard to reach' and who continue to be excluded from mainstream society, such as the homeless and long-term unemployed (Pateman, 2004). As the MLA website states;

> "The proposals are the starting point in the process of
> identifying 'robust ' measures to provide evidence of the effect
> public libraries have on communities. Guidance is also provided
> on community profiling which forms the basis on which to
> identify community needs for library services."
>
> (MLAc, 2006)

The focus on community profiling as a way of establishing the needs of the community and ensuring the services delivered are appropriate to those needs is examined in further detail in the subsequent section. The PLSIM cover 5 areas pertaining to the local community and these are linked to F4F. They emphasise the need for the public library service to reach out to

> "specific target groups within their communities and to

consider how to measure the impact of their activities on these
groups e.g. ethnic minorities, travellers, refugees."
(MLAd, 2006:3)

F4F is now in its third year and recently embarked upon Phase Two: 2006 -2008. This phase is structured around several themes aimed at: helping to raise national awareness of libraries (currently evidenced by the 'Love Libraries' campaign); developing a service in line with the needs of their communities (users and non-users); pursuing 'strategic partnerships' to facilitate community engagement and proactively reach out to those 'harder to reach'; developing online reader services (MLAd, 2006).

Several approaches are being advocated as a way for the public library service to facilitate community engagement and tackle social inclusion. Partnerships are viewed as one way of ensuring the librarian's role does not become too orientated around social work whilst enabling them to reach out to excluded groups (Hicken, 2004; Matarasso, 2000; Train et al, 2000). They are seen as an effective way of tackling social exclusion by providing support and sharing knowledge and skills with other service providers, agencies and the community itself (Percy-Smith, 2000; Vincent, 2005). This approach allows the public library service to focus on core services such as lending, reader development, and access to learning resources whilst promoting its services to the local community through established local voices. Partnerships are also effective at "bringing in new funding streams and creating shared resources" (Lines et al, 2004:1)

Volunteering is also being viewed as a vital component in community engagement and promoting community cohesion and social capital. It enables the community to become actively involved in the planning and delivery of public services. This creates a sense of belonging that facilitates cohesive communities and engenders a sense or respect and ownership in community

residents, helping to strengthen social networks (Cookman, 2001). In April of this year the MLA and CSV[6] Consulting published 'Community Engagement in Public Libraries' (MLAc, 2006), which reported specifically on how public libraries can proactively engage their local communities by including them in the decision-making process. It recognised that;

"[p]ublic life is strengthened through expressions of active citizenship. The library can contribute to strengthening public life by using models of community engagement" (MLAc, 2006:10)

However, it listed several obstacles that would have to be overcome, including the institutional culture of the PLS and the attitudes of library staff, noting that,

"[s]ome library staff have yet to still be convinced that community engagement is appropriate for libraries…that involving people extends beyond just consulting them" (MLAc, 2006:11).

This mirrors attitudes uncovered in a report by the DCMS in 2001 which found that using volunteering in libraries as a means "to reach out to socially excluded people was generally disliked" (DCMS, 2001). These attitudes are in direct conflict with the PAG report on social exclusion which categorically states that "[v]olunteers are definitely part of the solution in terms of social inclusion" (Library Association, 2004:9).

These approaches to community involvement are at the forefront of library social inclusion initiatives and viewed as being a move away from 'ticking boxes' towards a more community centered approach which focuses more the development of community cohesion in relation to social capital and healthy

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[6] 'Community Service Volunteers'

community networks (Vincent, 2005; Middleton, 2006). Both of these approaches are examined within the research study.

Public library policy is trying to re-centre the service within the community. The guidelines and strategies are designed to help standardize their approach to ensure a service that is engaging and equally accessible to all. There are critics however who warn that the PLS is becoming "bedeviled by uncertain aims and objectives" (Moore, 2004:51). Others advise that as the public library service moves into an era of post-industrial capitalism (Byrne, 1999) it should avoid being swayed by corporate values and focus on maintaining its neutrality, ensuring users remain citizens and not consumers (Middleton, 2006; Hood and Henderson, 2005).

2.4 Community Profiling

2.4.1 Defining community profiling

Community profiling has always existed as a means of establishing and planning for the needs of local communities and is essentially market research and ensuring money and services are devoted to the appropriate areas. Middleton (2003:1) defines it as "a simple tool for you to take a factual 'snapshot' of the town or area in which your library is situated". Stone (1985:1) sees it as a "means of characterising a community in a way which is relevant to the planning and evaluating of services". This is supported by Hawtin et al (1994) who outline some of the physical benefits of community profiling which include ensuring the appropriate allocation of funding, enabling strategic planning and assisting in monitoring the effectiveness of policies and initiatives. Stone (1985:1) observed that community profiling can also ensure authorities deliver a service that is "sympathetic to the community's need and likely to promote the community's welfare". Whilst Coleman (1985: xv) noted that profiling can be a useful tool "to

convince the powers who control resources that library services deserve support and enhancement even in times of stringency".

Despite its validity as a methodological tool, it is remarkably underused and very little has been written either outlining how to best carry it out or evaluating its effectiveness. Beal noted in 1985 that there was renewed interest in the community profiling within the library services suggesting it stemmed from "attempts by working librarians to re-assess their service role and the library's relevance in a rapidly changing economic and social environment" (Beal, 1985:2). This 'renaissance' seems to have lost its momentum until recently when community profiling reappeared in the PLSIM for the same reasons outlined by Beal twenty years earlier. Indeed, in the current climate, community profiles will enable libraries to gather the evidence they need to prove that their value and worth extends beyond book issues. The F4F document asserts that

> "[a]ll libraries need to work to establish programmes that will engage groups and individuals that are hard to reach by identifying them and establishing what are their particular needs and then by redesigning services when necessary so that there are no barriers to inclusion. "(DCMS, 2003:41)

The new PLSIM proposals for 2005/06 which are directly linked to the government's F4F strategy state that community profiling is a vital part of the PLSIM and as such all library authorities must 'adopt'

> "a minimum level of community profiling… [that will] form the basis on which to identify community need for library services and will inform planning, target setting and performance measures" (MLAa, 2006).

The guidelines for library authorities provided in documents accessible on the MLA website set out a 'two stage approach' to achieve the required level of

profiling activity. The first stage covers the required minimum level of community profiling and involves collecting data at 'authority' level. The second stage, to be met by Year 2 (2006), requires library authorities to obtain information at 'ward' level, which will provide a more precise overview of the needs of the local community (MLAa, 2006).

2.4.2 Recommended community profiling techniques

The type of information required includes data on the population numbers, age of residents, ethnicity, religion, employment levels, type of households, the number of homeowners and so on. Recommended resources for collecting this info include the census data available from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) website, deprivation statistics[7] and the local authority's Census Officer. It notes finally that "comments, knowledge and information available locally will enhance statistical information in developed models" (MLAa, 2006).

The techniques for gathering information outlined above, whilst valid, can be viewed as only superficial and would not necessarily facilitate a deeper understanding of the community. Middleton (2003:1) asserts that community profiling,

"is NOT an academic exercise or research exercise.
It's not important for you to know all the statistics on
unemployment or teenage pregnancies or older housebound
people in your locality. That doesn't really matter.
**What DOES matter is that you have a sense of what
some of the social issues are in your area
(drugs? homelessness? unemployment?).**" (emphasis theirs)

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[7] Available from the Department for Communities and Local Government formerly the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) http://www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/page.asp?id=1057

Previous commentators (Hawtin et al, 1994; Stone, 1985) on community profiling set out various techniques involving both 'primary' and 'secondary' research that can be used to gain a more holistic perspective of communities. These include[8]:

- Census data
- Observation
- Questionnaires
- Interviewing
- Group discussion

Hawtin et al (1994) strongly advocate the proactive approach, going into the community and observing not only the geographical surroundings but also the social interaction and local interests of the residents.

Community profiling is also viewed as a process that should be ongoing in order to maintain its relevance and to ensure that it can be relied upon as a source of information (Hawtin et al, 1994; Stone, 1985, Beal 1985). Stone (1985:2) also states that a "profiling programme needs to be part of an ongoing strategy for evaluating library services". It should have clear aims and objectives regarding how the information can be effectively used and help to maintain a service that is valued and sustainable (Coleman, 1985). This view is supported by Muir and Douglas (2001:270) who note

> "[l]ibraries should aim to survey citizens at least once every two years in order that the service can be tailored to meet customer and potential customer needs".

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[8] It is worth mentioning that the publication dates of the texts on community profiling predate the installation of electronic library management systems and explain the absence of any reference to them.

Proctor and Simmons (2000) note that community profiling could help to avoid branch closures. They observed that when branch libraries were threatened with closure and the local community became aware of it through a consultation process, both users and non-users fought to keep it open, sometimes successfully. They concluded that in some cases actively knowing the community could have pre-established the value and level of need in the area and saved the time and money which is spent administrating a closure which could be overturned at the last minute due to local demand.

2.4.3 The use of community profiling

A study by Ewart (2004) noted the erratic take up of community profiling. Ewart's research set out to explore how many local library authorities in the UK used profiling, the methodological techniques they utilized and the influence they had. Her study concluded that 54.7% of local library authorities did not have a community profiling policy, but suggested that this may change with the then impending PLSIM. Ewart (2004) also noted that the main sources relied upon for gathering data were the library management systems, local council and census statistics. In her report social inclusion was named as one of three primary benefits of using profiling along with planning and performance. Community profiling is seen as enabling library services to improve their understanding of the community and the barriers to service usage, raise staff awareness of the local community, help to tackle prejudice and encourage the socially excluded to utilize the library's services.

Community profiling then is a methodological tool for gathering data which helps the library services to understand the needs of the local communities they serve. It assists them in tackling social inclusion by enabling them to identify excluded groups to plan, deliver and monitor services ensuring the provision of an efficient, valued and inclusive service. It helps to establish local needs and service requirements, preventing the development of a service

which reinforces rather than tackles social exclusion. Pateman (2003) ISC 17 states that "by focusing on community needs libraries can become a dynamic force for change". Therefore, community profiling is integral to a library service's policy and should be a significant driver in the public library services' strategic approach to community engagement and social inclusion. The inclusion of a minimum level of community profiling in the PLSIM demonstrates how the usefulness of this methodological approach has finally been acknowledged by the library community and government on both a national and local level and may signal a more structured approach to providing a public library service which is 'open to all'.

2.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has set out the relevant concepts and theories around which the research is structured. Community engagement and social inclusion and exclusion are at the core of current public library policies and strategies and embedded in contemporary social theory. Community engagement is the focus of the next phase of the F4F strategy and is being viewed as a way of creating relevant and inclusive library services. Community profiling is being presented to LLAs as one way of establishing who their library users (and potential users) are and assessing their needs to help create a more engaging and socially inclusive public library service.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter discusses the methodological approach undertaken, it "explains how the problem was investigated and why particular methods and techniques were employed" (Bell, 2005:236). It outlines the framework of the study describing the research approach and the motivating factors behind the choice of samples. The subsequent sections move on to examine the various techniques utilised to gather the information, both qualitative and quantitative and the methods used for the analysis of the data collected. Finally, this chapter considers the concepts of reliability, validity and generalisation in relation to the research, concluding with a brief evaluation of the researcher's experience, discussing the limitations and problems encountered during the research and the ethicalness of the study.

3.1 Research Approach

Various factors influenced the research approach, such as the time scale for the project and the level of data that could be gathered and analysed within the allotted three months. Initially the study was to focus on local library authorities (LLAs) on a nationwide scale. However, after further consideration it was decided the best approach would be to conduct a localised research study as this was more realistic given the timeframe and would be more complimentary to the local case studies. The research design was naturalistic and inductive, carried out within a flexible design framework. This means the research was carried out in a 'natural setting', in this case the public library, where theories and meaning emerged from within the data (Sarantakos, 2005). In an inductive enquiry the researcher does not set out to prove or disprove an established theory or hypothesis, but attempts to 'induce' a theory from or gain further understanding of a situation. This approach suited the investigative nature of the study. Gorman and Clayton (2005:7) summarise it effectively,

> "…the qualitative researcher collects evidence and uses this to develop an explanation of events, to establish a theory based on observed phenomena."

Robson (2002) states, that this approach also requires the researcher to be flexible and to have a firm 'grasp of the issues', enabling the investigation to explore the phenomena as fully as possible without bias. The wide-ranging research undertaken prior to the project and outlined in the literature review formed a solid knowledge base for this study. This approach is characteristic of symbolic interactionism, a social research theory devised in the middle of the last century. It relies heavily on the examination of meaning within social contexts and is centred on exploration and inspection (Sarantakos, 2005). The research design was comprised of case studies and mixed methodologies, using a combination of quantitative and qualitative data capturing techniques.

3.1.1 Case Studies

3.1.1.1 Advantages and disadvantages

Case studies are one of the more traditional characteristics of a flexible research design (Robson (2002) and they formed part of core of my research design. According to Sarantakos (2005:212), case studies enable the researcher to

> "…investigate social life within the parameters of openness, communicatively, naturalism and interpretability, as informed by the interpretative paradigm"

This approach is supported by Gorman and Clayton (2005:57) who state that using multiple situations "broadens knowledge of the field and opens new avenues of awareness". Case studies were used in the research to obtain deeper insight into the views of users and staff in public libraries. The data

captured was used to compare and contrast with those of the LLAs in the North West region which were gathered via questionnaires. Operating within a flexible design meant the researcher could respond to events and any observations made whilst visiting the case studies and explore the phenomenon spontaneously. Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were carried out within the case study context.

There are disadvantages to using case studies, such as the inability to generalise the results and the increased risk of bias as noted by Sarantakos (2005:216). However, as the intention was not to provide findings which could be generalised did not impact on the research. The researcher's awareness of the risk of bias meant they were careful not to let their "personal impressions" influence the study's findings.

3.1.1.2 The case studies

Five public libraries within the North West were approached via emails to the Principle Librarian (or equivalent) asking if they would allow their libraries to be used as case studies in my research study (see appendix 3). Of those five, two responded positively. Each of the respondent libraries was central branches for two separate library authorities. After some initial discussion with my contacts' at each library, it was suggested that I may like to visit a corresponding local/outreach branch to gain a more holistic overview of the public library services for each library authority. This brought a new perspective to the research and the flexibility of the research design enabled me to incorporate these suggestions into my research design. Consequently, I carried out my case studies in 2 central branches and 2 local/outreach branches spanning two separate LLAs in the North West (see fig.1)

fig. 1

<div style="border:1px solid black; padding:1em; text-align:center;">

Case study public libraries

Local Library Authority 1   Local Library Authority 2

Case Study A   Case Study C

Case Study B   Case Study D

</div>
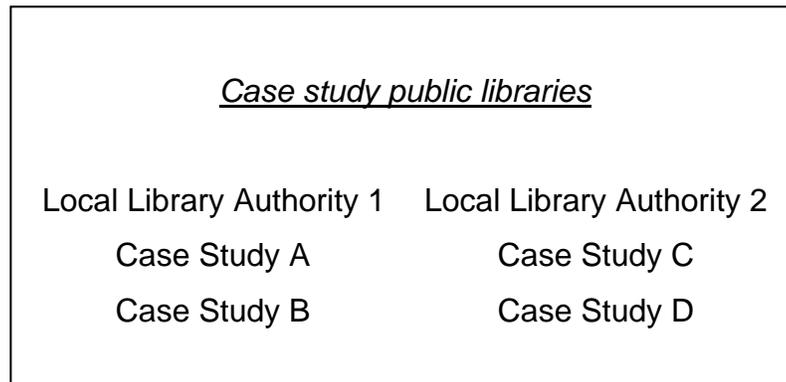
This approach worked well within the larger context of my research study, which included sending questionnaires out to every LLA in the North West of England. I could compare and contrast not only the views of frontline staff and users at both central and local branch libraries but also the viewpoints of the LLA's against the reality of the library experience for different branches. They also provided access to a wide variety of users from myriad backgrounds and cultures. Interviews were carried out with staff from these branches to gain insight into the different approaches to community engagement and their behaviours and attitudes. Unstructured observation was also conducted whilst on-site which gave further insight into the relationship between public libraries and community engagement.

3.1.2 Mixed Methods: Triangulation

Although the research carried out was primarily qualitative, it utilised both qualitative and quantitative techniques to gather the relevant data for analysis. These included semi-structured questionnaires, interviews, observation and a literature review. This is a decision supported by Gorman and Clayton (2005:12) who state that

"competent researchers today realise that confining an investigation to a particular investigative approach does not yield the fullest understanding of a phenomenon".

The analysis of data through different methods is known as triangulation, although several commentators use different terminology to describe it. Both Gorman and Clayton (2005) and Robson (2002) refer to it as 'multiple' or 'mixed' methods, whereas Sarantakos (2005:48) calls it "paradigm triangulation". It is generally thought to facilitate a deeper analysis and encourage a more accurate understanding of the data. Robson (2002:371) notes that the 'multiple methods' approach can "be used address different but complimentary questions within a study". This also supports the research approach and sits well with the overall aims and objectives of the study which span several interwoven but separate concepts.

Seale (1999) however, criticises the use of multiple methods stating that they cannot guarantee accuracy of interpretation and that it is a method developed mainly for positivist approaches. Gorman and Clayton (2005) observe that this approach has received negative press. However, they assert that the usage of multiple methods reinforces the validity of the research results on two counts; firstly, it is "cross-validating… [by] providing both micro and macro level perspectives" and secondly, each method used balances out the strengths and weaknesses of the other methods of data collection (Gorman and Clayton, 2005:13). Sarantakos (2005:48) describes several combinations of "paradigm triangulation", however this study utilises "concurrent paradigm triangulation". Both methodological approaches (paradigms) are given equal weight, with quantitative and qualitative data being used to compliment each other "producing a more complete and dynamic picture" Sarantakos (2005:49).

3.2 Sample population

Sampling, according to Sarantakos, (2005:213)

<div style="color:purple; text-align:center;">

"may be guided by typicality…and theory, but also by
demand, convenience, personal interest, accessibility
or relevance to typical issues"

</div>

The sample method used for both of the questionnaires and the interviews is best defined as non-probability sampling, or more specifically "purposive sampling", recommended by Robson (2002) for small, inductive and flexible designs because there is no intention of making any statistical generalizations. Two sample populations were used to carry out two separate questionnaires, they were:

- Public Library users
- Local Library Authorities

The nature of purposive sampling enabled me to select participants based on the principle of my "…judgement as to the typicality or interest" (Robson, 2002:264). This allowed me to maintain an element of flexibility and to direct the investigation, according to the discoveries made as the study was carried out.

3.2.1 Public Library Users

Originally, the aim was for a minimum of 30 participants from each case study library, which would have given me 120 completed questionnaires. However, the differences in the public usage of each of the libraries and limited opening hours for some of the smaller branches meant the actual number of public library users surveyed was just short of that figure at 96 respondents. They were broken down as follows:

Table.1

On-site case study information

Case Study Library	Number of hours spent on site	Number of respondents
Case Study A	8	39
Case Study B	7	19
Case Study C	8?	30
Case Study D	7	8
Total	**30**	**96**

Most people approached were happy to give their consent to participate in the questionnaire. Due to the nature of a questionnaire, consent forms were not required as agreeing to take part in and the consequent completion of the questionnaire take the form of consent. However, information sheets were an explicit requirement and each participant was given one to read prior to giving their consent to participate in the research. Participants were all ages 16 years and above in line with the conditions of the university's ethics approval and their anonymity maintained. Incentives were offered in the form of chocolate; however, most participants turned down this offer and due the hot weather, this eventually had to be abandoned.

3.2.2 Local Library Authorities

The original proposal outlined a sample of LLA's that covered the whole of the United Kingdom except Northern Ireland. However, after reassessing the

scope of the project and the allotted time-scale it was decided that a smaller LLA sample would be more manageable. As the study aims to look at the social inclusion and public libraries in the North West, I decided to limit the LLA's to those within the North West region. This reduced the number from over 240 to just 22. A list of all LLAs in the North West was found on the 'Libraries North West Website'[9]. I obtained the email addresses of senior staff working within the Senior Management Team of the LLA from the *"Libraries and Information Services in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland 2005 -2006"* directory and sent out a standard email request asking for their participation along with an information sheet. The deadline was set provisionally for two weeks from the date of receipt; however, due to slow response rates, a follow-up email was sent extending the deadline by a further week.

3.3 Methods of investigation

As discussed above, both qualitative and quantitative methodological approaches were utilised during this research study. This section discusses in more detail how each of the individual techniques were used, including a brief description of how they were constructed and carried out.

3.3.1 Qualitative Methods

The qualitative research methods exploited within this study include:

- Interviews
- Observation
- Literature Review

These techniques supported the naturalistic 'bottom-up' approach to the investigation and allowed the researcher to obtain subjective viewpoints on the

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[9] http://www.lnw.org.uk/

phenomenon. They also enabled an examination of the contextual nature of the phenomenon and allowed for a deeper understanding of the subtleties at work (Gorman and Clayton, 2005). Qualitative research methods provide data that is

"informative and detailed… [they] present information gathered verbally in a detailed and complete form, not in numbers or formulae" (Sarantakos, 2005:45)

Rich textual data was captured both in writing and through recorded interviews. The interviews were transcribed to facilitate analysis through "step-wise conversion" (Sarantakos, 2005:411) and enable triangulation of the data to establish patterns or conflicting ideas emerging from within it. Gorman and Clayton (2005:3) note that "[t]he ultimate goal of qualitative research is to understand those being studied from their perspective". The qualitative research methods used enabled the researcher to gain a more holistic insight into the relationship between public libraries and community engagement by observing and talking to staff and users first-hand. This supported the data gathered through quantitative methods and helped to provide a richer analysis.

3.3.1.1 Interviews

3.3.1.1.1 Advantages and disadvantages

Interviews were included within the research design to allow the researcher to investigate further any common themes that emerged during the study and from the literature review. Face to Face interviews were carried out with library staff to support the quantitative data gathered through the user and LLA questionnaires. Robson (2003:273) notes that face to face interviews are ideal for "following up interesting responses and investigating any underlying motives in a way that…questionnaires cannot".

Oppenheim (2000) warns however, that such an approach is vulnerable to bias and the interviewer should ensure the conversation is more of a one-way rather than two-way conversation, to avoid influencing the interviewees' answers. It was difficult to limit the level of bias that the interviewer's presence created as the conversational tone of the interviews created a relaxed and informal atmosphere. This was successfully minimised by taking Robson's (2003) advice which suggests the interviewer should "listen more than they speak…[and] eliminate cues". This was made possible by having a rough outline of the themes to be covered as detailed below, and by minimising my body language.

3.3.1.1.2 The interviewees

8 interviews were carried out, 6 with library staff from the case study libraries. This included frontline staff and senior management. All Library staff were guaranteed anonymity to prevent any negative comebacks and to encourage participation.

The 2 other interviews were carried out with neutral commentators from within the public libraries arena. They were identified through the research for the literature review and approached independently via email (see appendix 5/6). Both were chosen because their body of work is relevant to the context of the research and the researcher felt their viewpoints on the subject of community engagement would support the final analysis of the study's findings. These interviewees gave verbal consent to be named within in the research. They can be identified as Pat Coleman, the author of "Whose Problem?" (Coleman, 1981) and Sally Middleton, the Social Inclusion Development Officer for Gloucestershire Libraries and Information Services[10]. Sally Middleton also writes

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[10] It must be stated that the viewpoints Sally Middleton quoted within this dissertation are representative of her personal opinions and are NOT a reflection of those of Gloucestershire County Council

quite frequently for the CILIP Library and Information Update magazine and other associated publications and websites.

3.3.1.1.3 Structure of the interviews

The staff interviews were carried out face to face and the interviews with Pat Coleman and Sally Middleton were conducted over the telephone. All interviews were recorded on my mobile phone which has an extended memory and functions as a Dictaphone, it also has a facility to record telephone conversations. This provided a good quality recording with minimal interference making it easier to transcribe. All interviews were the downloaded onto my PC and transcribed into text to facilitate analysis.

After much research into interviewing techniques, it was decided that a free style approach would be best suited to the overall inductive research design. Oppenheim (2000:67) suggests a heuristic, exploratory approach which allows for the

> "develop[ment of] ideas and research hypotheses rather than to gather facts and statistics. It is concerned with trying to understand how ordinary people think and fell about the topics of concern to the research"

This allowed the interview to take encompass a more conversational structure using the main thematic concerns of the study to open up the interview and enabling the researcher to explore naturally the ideas and opinions of the interviewees. Gorman and Clayton (2005:49) support this approach, noting that "the responses of the subjects should be allowed to drive the process forward".

Sally Middleton requested a brief outline of the topics to be addressed during the interview and this was duly sent via email. (see Appendix 7). The main

themes explored in interviews with both staff and the independent interviewees included:

- Community Engagement
- Public library approaches to social inclusion/exclusion
- Social Capital and community cohesion
- Funding for social inclusion initiatives
- New approaches to marketing
- Websites and the People's Network
- Government policy

Adopting a conversational structure rather than a more structured one allowed further exploration of themes and patterns that were beginning to emerge through the other research methods, giving the research more depth and demonstrated the benefits of the 'multiple method' approach.

3.3.1.2 Observation

By using case studies, I was able to get closer to the phenomenon of community engagement and observe at first hand how social inclusion manifests itself within the public library sector at a grass roots level. According to Gorman and Clayton (2005:5), the presence of the researcher can add another dimension to the participant's 'narrative', enabling them to use their own perceptions of the phenomena being investigated to support the "physical aspects of behaviour, description of settings and other characteristics of the environment". I conducted what Sarantakos (2005:222) calls, unstructured or naive observation, which "refers to everyday unstructured observation which people use when they interact with others in social situations". This technique was used whilst conducting the interviews and user questionnaires. By observing the behaviours of participants and any environmental factors such as the interaction between staff and library users, I was able to analysis the data

captured within a more defined, contextual framework and gain greater insight into the responses provided.

3.3.1.3 Literature Review

The literature review is fundamental to any piece of research; Sarantakos (2005:137) notes that by collating information on the 'research object', the researcher can build a solid knowledge base upon which they can structure their own investigation. It also enables the researcher to evaluate the best techniques for conducting their research. However, Bell (2005) also warns against simply constructing a 'list' of relevant literature, advising that it should critically evaluate whilst maintaining a neutral tone free of assumption and conclusions.

The literature review for this study has been an on-going process for the past 12 months. The concepts that have been researched were influenced in part by the modules studied during the academic year, coverage in the library and information literature and changes to national government public library policy. The main themes researched were community engagement, social inclusion and public libraries, but over time have expanded to include new concepts that emerged from the literature such as social capital, community cohesion and community profiling.

Due the transient and changeable nature of the library's position in relation to social inclusion, it was felt journal articles would provide a more accurate picture of the current climate. The main sources were journal articles gathered via electronic access and databases such as the LISA database[11], Project Muse[12] and E-LIS[13]. The researcher also consulted the websites of the main governing library bodies, the DCMS, CILP and the MLA. Academic texts

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[11] LISA: Library and Information Science Abstracts
[12] Athens password access to 200 online journals: http://muse.jhu.edu/
[13] E-prints in Library and Information Science http://eprints.rclis.org/archive/00003777/

were referred to for some of the more sociological themes such as social exclusion, social capital and community profiling.

Some concepts had very little literature discussing them, such as community profiling, which is interesting considering the support it receives as a methodological approach for libraries within other literature. This was also observed in another dissertation (Ewart, 2004) and it is worth noting the situation is still the same 2 years on.

3.3.2 Quantitative methods

Quantitative data is primarily useful in deductive research as it focuses on the capturing of factual, quantifiable data. However, as Robson observes, a research study which is primarily qualitative "can be enhanced by supportive quantitative evidence used to buttress and perhaps clarify the account" (Robson 2002:371). By adopting this approach, the researcher was able to gather specific factual data alongside the more general thoughts and opinions of the participants. The data obtained from the closed questions on the questionnaires to both users and local library authorities provided singularly objective data that was then used to frame the richer, more subjective qualitative data gathered through the open questions, interviews and observations.

3.3.2.1 Questionnaire

3.3.2.1.1 Advantages and disadvantages

The library user questionnaires were carried out face to face in the style of an interview survey. Robson (2002) notes that this enables the researcher to ensure the questions are understood and encourages people to participate. This was felt to be the best approach as it guaranteed that all questions were interpreted in the same way, increasing the validity and reliability of the results.

However, Robson (2002) also observes that the presence of the researcher can increase the risk if bias through implicit inference in their body language. The researcher was aware of this and tried to maintain a professional approach throughout.

The LLA questionnaires were sent via email to be filled in independently by the respondent. This has disadvantages in that the questionnaire is open to misinterpretation and only partial responses may be given (Sarantakos, 2005). However, it is also viewed as the most efficient way of administering them (Robson, 2002). Email was chosen as the preferred method to send the questionnaires as this guaranteed receipt of them and made it easier to follow-up any inconsistencies in the answers such as omitted answers and to communicate the extension of the deadline.

3.3.2.1.2 Questionnaire structure

The researcher used a semi-standardised/semi-structured questionnaire to gather data from both the LLAs and the library users. This is characterised by the inclusion of "a combination of pre-structured and pre-standardised questions and of unstructured and un-standardised parts" (Sarantakos, 2005:240). This meant it could incorporate both open and closed questions.

The closed questions required the participant to pick a predefined answer on a Likert scale. A Likert scale is a useful tool for gathering data relating to the opinions of the respondents (Sarantakos, 2005; Bradburn et al, 2004). Robson (2002) also notes that people can respond better to Likert scale questions as they can appear more interesting and this can improve the not only the response rate but the honesty of the answers. The open questions required respondents to provide their own answers and which were recorded on the questionnaire in their own words. This complimentary approach, using open and closed questions, is suggested by Wilson (2002) and by adopting this dual approach, I

could explore respondents' perspective through open questions and clarify their meaning through closed questions and vice-versa.

3.3.2.1.3 Questionnaire design

Both the user and LLA questionnaires were created after extensive research and piloted to several people on the course including staff. Several factors were taken into consideration when designing the questionnaires, which included their phrasing, layout and length. Commentators warn against using excessive jargon and ambiguous or 'loaded' words as these can threaten the validity of the data captured (Robson, 2002; Wilson, 2002; Oppenheim, 2000, Bradburn et al, 2004, Frazer and Lawley, 200). Bradburn et al (2004) note that question wording is often overlooked and that even the most well thought out questions can be misconstrued. Consequently, the researcher tailored the LLA and user questionnaires to their intended audience. The user questionnaires avoided terminology that the LLA respondent would be familiar with such as 'community engagement'.

Both questionnaires were separated into categories which each covered one of the major thematic concerns of the research study. This helped group together questions in a way that correlated with the aims and objectives making it easier to codify the data during the analysis phase of the research. This is approach is advocated by Robson (2002:241) who states

> "survey questions should be designed to help achieve the goals
> of the research, in particular, to answer the research questions"

Although both questionnaires appeared long, the mix of open and closed questions prevented the respondent from becoming bored and maintained interest. Positive feedback was received from one respondent to the LLA

47

questionnaire who commented on the returned form that "the questionnaire is well thought out and I found it useful to fill it in".

3.3.2.1.4 Response rate

Both of the questionnaires were created in using Microsoft Word software. The LLA questionnaire was created with a tick box facility to enable it to be completed and sent back electronically. The user questionnaire was printed of and filled in by hand, therefore the 'tick box' design was not required.

In total 13 out of a possible 22 LLAs responded, which translates to a very positive 59.1% response rate. Several commentators note that it is important to try and achieve a good response rate and to minimise the number of non-respondents, as those who fail to respond usually hold very different views to those who do (Robson, 2002, Bell, 2005). However, as I do not intend to make generalisations on my results this was less crucial. Despite this, a large response rate does facilitate a more accurate snapshot of the current climate and gives greater insight into the phenomenon.

The researcher had aimed to get 120 responses from library users but due to various factors outlined above, only 96 library users completed a questionnaire on site. This is still a substantial number and enough to provide substantial statistical data.

3.3.3 Analysis

The use of multiple methods of analysis enabled me to "address different but complimentary questions within the study" (Robson, 2002:371). The data captured was analysed in two ways.

3.3.3.1 Quantitative analysis

The quantitative data was analysed using both SSPS and Microsoft Excel software to generate visual aids to the analytical discussion. SPSS also enabled the data to cross-tabulated to aid deeper analysis. Closed or scaled questions were entered into SPSS and the answers recorded according to the code allocated to that answer. However, Gorman and Clayton (2005:221) warn against using percentages in small scale of the research as they "can be misleading and give the impression the sample is bigger than it in fact is". To avoid this, all percentages are shown alongside the frequency numbers.

3.3.3.2 Qualitative analysis

The qualitative data from *all* the questionnaires was transferred into tables in Microsoft Word and analysed using what Gorman and Clayton (2005) refer to as content analysis and Robson (2002) describes as the 'immersion technique' . This sets out to identify themes or patterns within the data and through coding techniques allows words that have similar meanings to be categorised together to establish common threads within the textual data (Gorman and Clayton, 2005). Through this the researcher was able to then carry out what Sarantakos (2005) calls 'step-wise conversion' where qualitative data is transformed into quantitative data. The data was inputted in Excel to facilitate graphical illustration. All of the interviews were transcribed and themes identified within the text to elicit direct quotes that could also be used qualitatively to support the analytical discussion of the research findings. This approach "emphasis[es] researcher insight, intuition and creativity" (Robson, 2002:458).

3.4 Reliability, Validity and Generalisation: eliminating bias

3.4.1 Validity

Sarantakos (2005) states that in qualitative research studies validity is often referred to by other names such as transferability or credibility. According to Gorman and Clayton (2005:25),

> "validity refers to the extent to which something actually measures what it is intended to measure…built up on reliability"

However, validity is thought by some to be a moot point when the research is carried out within a flexible design. Robson (2002) asserts that despite the controversy surrounding the validity of qualitative research with regards to its non-scientific nature, the validity of a flexible design can be ensured through "question asking; good listening; adaptiveness and flexibility; grasp of the issues and a lack of bias" (Robson, 2002:169-70). This research adhered to these five principles. When conducting the questionnaires and interviews, the researcher was conscious not to use language or phrasing which could influence the respondent's answer and allowed the data captured to guide the study, instead of trying to make it fit a certain hypotheses.

Sarantakos also notes that,

> " a study is held to be valid if carried out in the natural environment of the subjects, using suitable methods and taking into consideration the life and conditions of the researched" (Sarantakos, 2005:87).

Carrying out the research methods on case study sites ensured that the data was captured in a 'natural' library environment. The triangulation of methods

also meant the findings could be cross-validated. Robson (2002:175) notes that this approach can support the validity of a research study.

3.4.2 Generalisability

The findings of this research study are not intended for generalisation to the wider population. It was felt that the sample populations are not large or varied enough to produce statistical data which could support that. The findings are intended to be a 'snapshot' of the current climate, providing further insight into the phenomena of community engagement in the public library arena. Sarantakos (2005:98) notes that in qualitative research studies,

> qualitative researchers…employ naturalistic generalisations…
> us[ing] typical cases as their sample."

The case studies used in the research can be viewed as 'typical' of public libraries in the North West. The use of both central and outreach/local branches enabled a wider variety of users to be encountered increasing the internal generalisability of the study's conclusions, which Robson (2002) asserts can minimise the risk of bias that can occur through selective interviewing. Linking the findings back to the theories outlined in the literature review throughout the analysis provides a wider context to the research and utilises the benefits of cross-validation that are intrinsic in the multiple method approach.

3.4.3 Reliability

Reliability, according to Sarantakos (2005) is the ability to produce consistent and repeatable results. He observes that in qualitative research "concepts such as credibility and applicability, or auditability" are more utilised (Sarantakos, 2005:89). Robson (2002) notes that reliability can be ensured through good administration throughout the duration of the study. Although he

also comments that reliability is not of major concern to flexible design research studies. The researcher ensured reliability of results by taking Robson's (2002:176) advice and carrying out accurate note-taking, keeping a diary and practising good filing to ensure that the data captured was "thorough, careful and honest" . The diary was used to record contact details, an activity log, to do list and to note down any relevant observations.

3.5 Limitations and problems experienced

Several problems or unexpected events occurred during the study that limited the research study in various ways. They are as follows:

- The slow response of public libraries approached to be case studies in my research meant that the actual collection of data from users and library staff was carried out much later than timetabled. This was further exacerbated by a flood at one of the branches (case study D) that agreed to participate and my on-site research was delayed further until they had re-opened to the public.

- The slow response to the LLA questionnaire meant I had to extend the deadline by nearly 2 weeks. This was also much later than timetabled but coincidently the impact of this was reduced by the above case study delays.

- The consequence of the above delays was that the analysis of the data captured and the writing of the report were started much later than planned. This may have affected the depth of the analysis and the scope of the research study as time became a restrictive factor.

- The nature of this project is such that much of it was a learning curve. Whilst very effort was made to carry out the methodologies accurately and to the best of my ability, certain observation made during the research should be highlighted as if the research was carried out again these things would be done differently. Questions 9, 10 and 15 on the user questionnaires were not specific enough and may have generated answers that were not representative of the users viewpoints but rather given to avoid looking bad in front of the researcher. This may have compromised the data captured through these questions and should be considered when discussing the results during the analysis.

3.6 Ethics

The project received ethics approval from the university under the condition that I did not approach library users under the age of 16. This was also approved by the managers of the case study libraries. Verbal consent was given by users who participated in the questionnaire and the returning of the email questionnaire from LLA's was taken as their consent. Every participant was given an information sheet to read before consenting and anonymity was guaranteed with no name being recorded except during the interviews in case I needed to check back with the interviewee. All data was kept secure on my PC at home which is password protected. Robson (2002:6) observes that the best way to ensure a study will be carried out "effectively and ethically" is by obtaining a sound understanding of the methodology. To this end, I researched the methodological approach thoroughly and hope that by doing so I was able to carry out research accurately and that generates findings that can be viewed as valid and reliable.

Part II

Presentation and Discussion of Results

Part II discusses the results and findings of the research within the parameters of the aims, research questions and objectives set out in Chapter1. Each of the two subsequent chapters is defined by the overarching aim which forms the title of the chapter. To help the researcher investigate the aims more thoroughly, the corresponding objectives and relevant research questions (outlined below) are used to form the sub-chapters. To provide a more holistic overview of the research findings, relevant questions taken from the questionnaires provide the framework for the sub-chapters presenting the relevant raw data which is analysed alongside the qualitative data to provide deeper analysis. Each chapter will also briefly summarise the methodologies used to capture the data.

Part II concludes with an overview of the research including thoughts and reflections on the research process, a summary of the research study's conclusions and a list of further recommendations for future studies.

As discussed in chapter 3, this research does not intend to generalise the findings to the whole population, however the observations and findings could be viewed as indicative of the 'typical' situation as several cases studies were used to gather the research alongside regional LLAs. Hopefully the findings can be used to illuminate the relationship between public libraries, community engagement and social inclusion and facilitate further research into the phenomena.

Chapter 4

The extent to which local library authorities in the North West of England utilise community profiling

4.1 Introduction to the results

The results for this section were gathered from data captured through questionnaires sent to all 22 of the Local Library Authorities (hereafter LLAs) in the North West of England. The questionnaires were sent via email, and after the deadline had been extended twice, 13 LLAs (59.1%) responded. With a response rate of over 50% it is felt the results of the LLA questionnaire can be referred to as an adequate representation of how LLAs in the North West view the relationship between community engagement, social inclusion and public libraries. The quantitative data from the questionnaires is supplemented with qualitative data from interviews with both library staff from the case study libraries and from interviews with independent commentators in the public library arena. This triangulation of methodologies will help to validate the research findings and give the reader further insight into the phenomenon.

Within this chapter, the following objectives will be met

- Establish to what extent community profiling information influences the planning and delivery of public library social inclusion initiatives;
- Establish the depth of local information gathered by LLAs through community profiling

It will also answer the following research question:

- Which methods are used to capture community profiling information?

4.2 The extent to which community profiling information influences the planning and delivery of public library social inclusion initiatives

Several commentators over the past few decades have advocated the usefulness of community profiling when developing public library services (Hawtin et al, 1994; Coleman, 1985; Stone, 1985; Beal, 1985). Furthermore, a dissertation project carried out by Ewart (2004), observed an increase in the usage of community profiling, but noted that a number of LLA's did not have an established community profile. Ewart (2004) suggested that the then impending 'Public Library Service Impact Measure' (hereafter PLSIM) may have a positive effect on LLA usage of it. The PLSIM were introduced in 2005 as a way of ensuring that the public library service meets the needs of the communities they serve and to facilitate the creation of a more socially inclusive service. Incorporated into them is a minimum requirement for the use of community profiling. To this end, it was decided an investigation into the extent to which community profiling is used by LLA's in the North West of England and how much that information gathered is utilised when planning and delivering public library social inclusion initiatives would be beneficial

4.2.1 Number of LLA's with community profiling policies in the North West

The LLA's were asked if they had a community profiling policy in place. There was no definition of community profiling provided with the questionnaire as its inclusion in the PLSIM indicates that all LLAs should have a good understanding of it. Of the 13 LLAs who responded;

- 8 stated 'yes' they did have a community profiling policy
- 5 stated they had one 'under development'.
- None of the respondent authorities replied 'No'.

With over 50% of respondent authorities having an active community profiling policy in place, this signifies a positive move by LLAs and public libraries towards understanding the make-up of the communities they serve. Although not all the LLA's had a community profiling policy in place, they did all carry out community profiling activities to varying degrees. The absence of a strategic profiling policy in 5 LLAs however could be indicative of a lack of ownership over the problem of social inclusion and a reluctance to proactively engage with the community.

4.2.2 The extent to which community profiling information is used when allocating funding for social inclusion initiatives

Each of the LLA's were asked to what extent they used community profiling information when deciding which social inclusion initiatives public library funds should be allocated to. The results (fig.2) shows how authorities have a policy in place and contrasts the data with the extent to which it is considered when allocating funding for social inclusion initiatives. It can be used as an indicator of the extent to which community profiling is taken seriously as a methodological tool for assessing community need and the value placed upon it by LLA's for measuring the impact public libraries have on the communities they serve.

As the fig.2 illustrates, having a community profile in place does not guarantee that the information will be used for its desired purpose. Half of the LLA's with a policy only consider community profiling information to a 'moderate' or 'small' extent when allocating funding for social inclusion initiatives. 4 LLAs it either to a 'great' extent or 'not at all' were equally split with 2 LLA's answering with each of the options respectively, 2 with policies and 2 without.

fig.2   **The use of community profiling information when allocating funding for social inclusion initiatives**

Do you have a community profiling policy
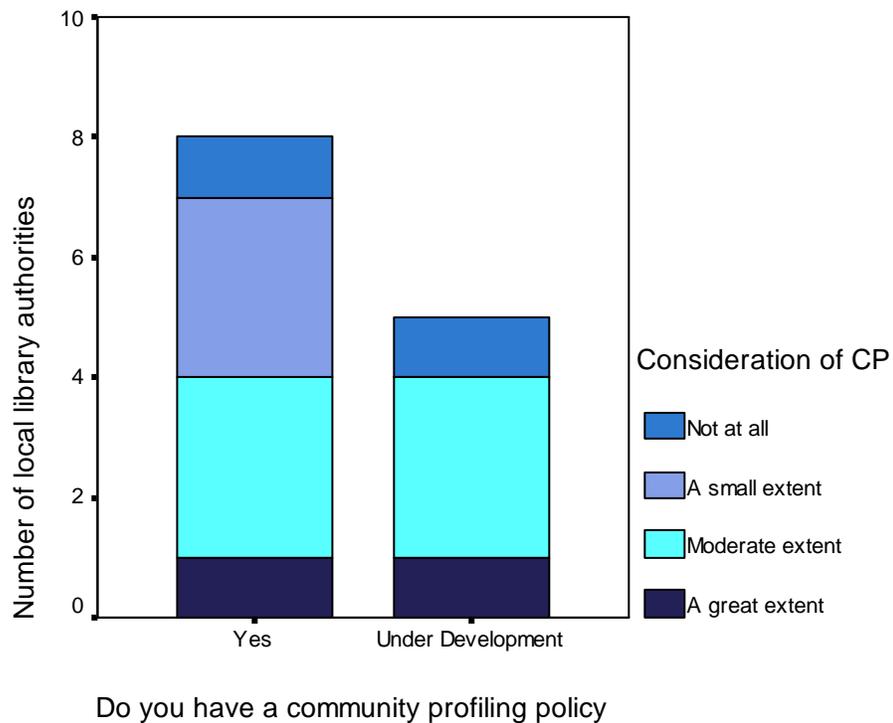
It is quite significant that the majority of LLA's only consider community profiling information to a moderate or small extent, considering the importance placed upon community profiling. This importance is demonstrated by its inclusion in the PLSIM and also the support it receives in related literature on the topic. It is perhaps even more significant that 2 LLA's do not consider it at all. This highlights a possible lack of understanding with regards to the value of community profiling and raises questions about their commitment to community engagement and social inclusion

When asked how important a role community profiling should play in allocating public library funding, one of the library commentators interviewed for this study, Sally Middleton stated:

> "…when you're talking about making use of public
> money, you have to make the best possible use of
> public money because it is a finite resource…public services
> should be accountable, should be democratically run,
> should really meet the needs of the local people"

This supports the current emphasis being placed on community profiling and highlights some valid points. Public money is finite and public libraries are just one of a number of public services that have to prove their worth in order to secure future monies. As one staff interviewee from case study D noted:

> "…every single penny's got to be accounted for. Well not
> necessarily accounted for…you've got to justify why you're
> spending the money doing everything…"

This interviewee also commented that despite the recent implementation of the public library service standards and impact measures, they are only targets and not legally binding. The only legally binding document concerning public libraries is the 1964 Public Libraries Act which, as the interviewee observed, can be manipulated to justify funding cuts:

> "When there was budgetary problems a few months ago,
> a quick half hour round the table trying to work out…
> what would we provide and what…they can cut or what they can't cut…
> What's the definition of what a library service
> has got to provide and what they can't…"

By not utilising community profiling information when allocating funds, LLA's run the risk that the money allocated may not be spent effectively and that the types of social inclusion initiatives invested in do not meet the community's needs. Furthermore, when cuts need to be made in library budgets, community

profiling could ensure that the cuts are made in the places that least affect the community (Coleman, 1981). However, it appears that when allocating funding to social inclusion initiatives, community profiling is not a very influential factor in the decision making process of LLA's in the North West. This contradicts the observations of the PAG (Library Association, 2004) and could undermine the ability of LLA's to respond to the needs of their communities.

4.2.3 Influential factors in the development of public library social inclusion initiatives.

4.2.3.1 National government library targets and community profiling

Questions 12a and 12b on the LLA questionnaire asked to what extent their social inclusion initiatives are influenced by both the central government's library targets (Q12a) and community profiling information (Q12b). The results of each question are displayed in Table 2 below:

Table 2.

Level of influence of central government library targets
and community profiling information

	Level of influence				
	Great extent	**Moderate extent**	**Small extent**	**Not at all**	**Total**
Central Government Library Targets	6	6	1	-	13
Community Profiling Information	5	6	1	1	13

On the surface, the figures give the impression that both have equal influence. However, the graph below (fig.3) compares the level of influence they both have on the funding decisions for social inclusion initiatives for each individual LLA. The purpose of which is to establish which hold the most influence overall when considered together.

fig.3

Graph comparing the influence of government targets and community profiling information on funding decisions

Extent of the influence of government targets
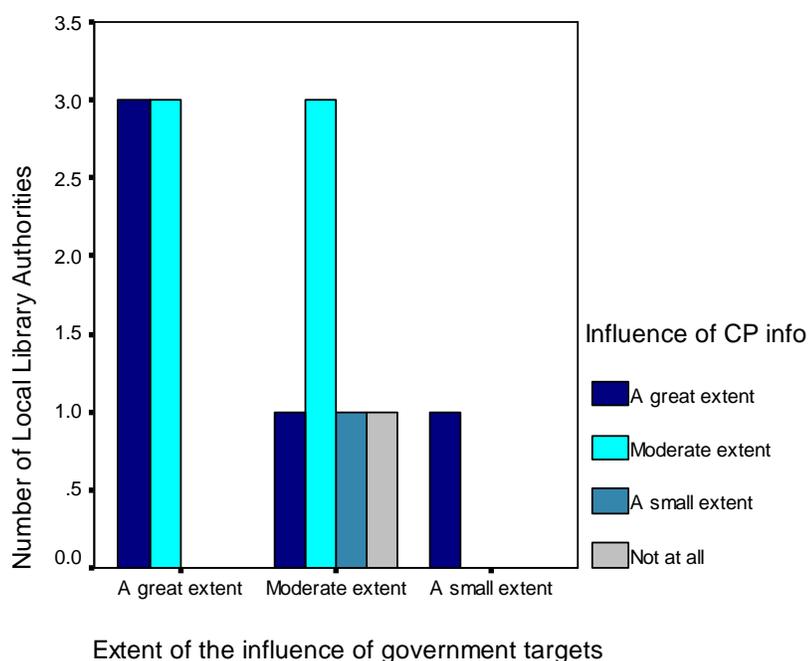
All of the respondent LLAs social inclusion initiatives were influenced by government library targets. However, 1 LLA did not consider community profiling information an influence at all in their funding decisions. Of the 6 LLA's that were influenced to a 'great' extent by government national library targets, only 3 considered community profiling information to possess the same influence. Of the 6 LLA's that were influenced 'moderately' by the national targets, only four considered community profiling information to carry the same level of influence or above. Of these, 2 LLA's considered it to be of only 'small' influence or 'not at

all'. Interestingly out of the all 13 LLA's only 2 considered profiling information to be of greater influence than the government's library targets.

What this shows is a great level of disparity in the approaches to funding the creation and delivery of social inclusion initiatives. Despite all LLAs' having a community profiling policy in place or under development, only 5 LLA's used the information to influence their social inclusion initiatives to a great extent. This seems to be in conflict with 'strategic objective 8' of the F4F 2004-2006 action plan which is to "deliver an inclusive service that reflects and helps build cohesive communities" (MLAd, 2006). It also raises questions as to what extent public libraries are free to explore the needs of the community when they are in conflict with national library targets. This supports Moore's (2004) claim that the library services are 'bedevilled' by uncertainty.

4.2.3.2 Public Library Service Impact Measures (PLISM)

Community profiling is stipulated within the PLSIM's as a minimum requirement for establishing the needs of the communities they serve. The PLSIM were created to measure the positive impact public libraries have on their communities and to help "provide the evidence we [public libraries] need to show the value of library services to individuals, local communities, local authority services and Government priorities" (MLAa, 2006). I asked all 22 LLAs in the North West to what extent PLSIM helped them to tackle social inclusion. The results of the 13 respondents are displayed in Table 3:

Table 3

	Level of extent LLAs feel the PLSIM help to tackle social inclusion			
	Great extent	**Moderate extent**	**Small extent**	**Not at all**
Number of LLAs	1	8	3	1

The majority of the LLA's thought the PLSIM helped them only 'moderately'. Only 1 LLA thought they helped to a great extent and 4 thought they did to a 'small' extent or not at all. This disparity is mirrored in the thought of several interviewees. When an interviewee from case study D was asked what they thought of the targets and guidelines being introduced, they emphasized that what was needed was money to promote the existing services and initiatives they do deliver not more targets;

"you're just forever under pressure…under pressure to perform… there seems to be a priority in justifying your worth rather than going out and telling the public or developing our services…But you can't promote your services…because you're spending all your time dotting i's, crossing t's, ticking boxes, recording things so you can prove yourself to the paymasters"

Interviewee Sally Middleton however, commented that she did not think the guidelines and targets were overly prescriptive and that they allowed each LLA to be creative in its approach to tackling social inclusion. Nevertheless, she also noted that,

"…what that means…for public library authorities is that unless you really have a vision for social inclusion, you don't tend to do it other than in a very piecemeal way"

Vincent (2005:49) also views the PLSIM as "a way of measuring how public libraries are tackling social exclusion [/inclusion]" Yet the research findings appear to show that targets and guidelines like the PLSIM are being greeted with a mixed reaction from the frontline. On the one hand some LLA's and interviewees view them as making a positive contribution to the public library's role in tackling social inclusion. Whereas other's see their influence as minimal, possibly shifting the focus from larger, more pressing issues.

4.2.3.3 Funding sources for social inclusion initiatives

Question 20 on the LLA questionnaire asked the LLA representative to list *all* of the main funding sources they rely on to finance social inclusion initiatives out of the options listed in the graph below (fig.4).

fig. 4

Sources of funding LLA for Social Inclusion initiatives
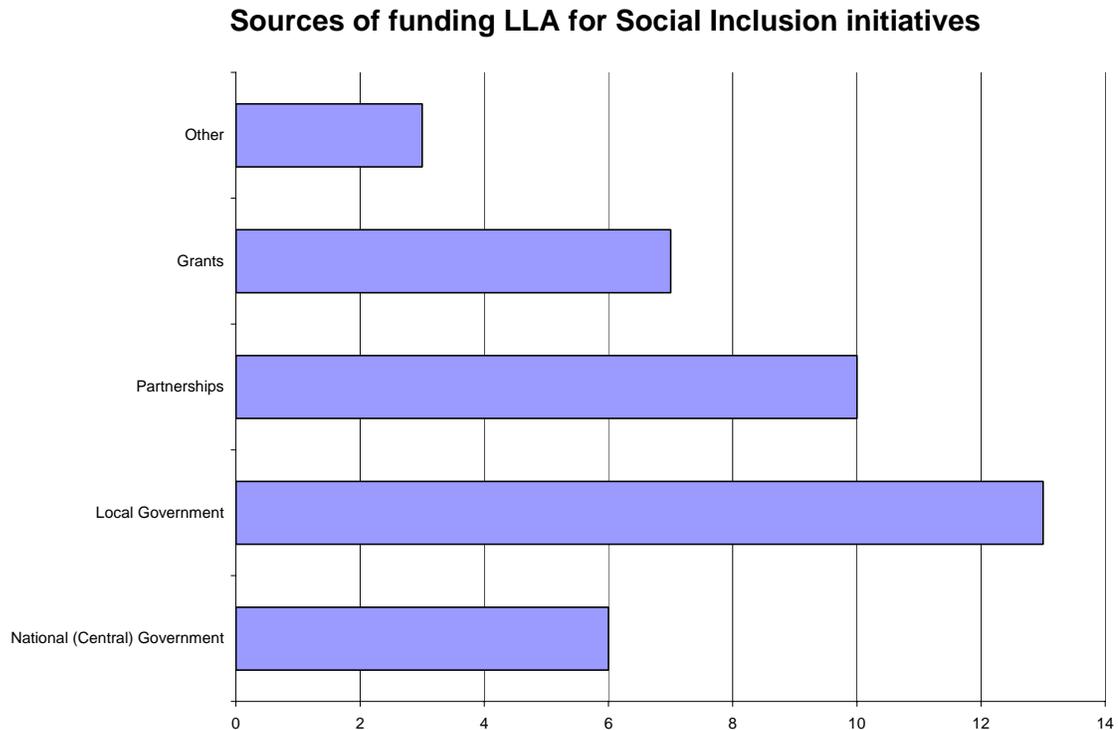
Out of the five options given to them, induced from research for the literature review, LLA's in the North West stated 'local government' as the main source of funding, followed by 'partnerships' and 'grants'. 'Central government' and 'other' sources were named as the lowest providers of funding for social inclusion initiatives. On the surface it could be interpreted that local government holds the most influence over public library social inclusion initiatives. Indeed the PLSIM's do tie into the Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA), run by the Audit Commission, which assesses the performance of councils in meeting the needs of their communities. However, the CPA also influences the amount of

funding local government receives from central government and this link to the PLSS and PLSIM raises questions over who essentially holds the most influence either directly or indirectly, local or central government.

Interestingly, partnerships are the second biggest source of funding with 10 LLA's identifying this option. They are being promoted as the way forward for public libraries to tackle social inclusion and are part of the F4F strategy for 2006-2008 (MLAd, 2006; Holman, 2006). Partnerships are a way of ensuring that the core role of the public library does not become diluted by trying to be everything to everybody (Train et al, 2000, Matarasso, 2000). It also enables resources and skills to be shared across the community (Lines et al, 2004).

Half of the LLA respondents also rely on grants to fund their social inclusion initiatives but this can be highly competitive and relies heavily on the bidding library having the skills to put forward a well-thought out proposal. As the PAG report (Library Association, 2004) also observed, grants are a source of unpredictable funding and are not suitable for the creation of long-term initiatives. It also depends on which socially excluded group they are aiming their initiative at. The Paul Hamlyn fund mentioned above, for example, focuses on allocating funding for initiatives which,

"address issues of inequality and disadvantage, particularly in relation to young people, through the arts, learning and education" (Paul Hamlyn Fund, 2006).

Therefore this could influence the creation of a greater proportion of social inclusion initiatives aimed at young people than say unemployed people in their thirties.

'Other' funding streams that some LLA's identified are variants on the 'Grant' option and include the Paul Hamlyn Fund and the Laser Foundation. It is worth noting however that according to the Laser Foundation website,

"The Foundation will not be issuing any further calls or funding
any further activities, having committed all available funds
and allowed for contingent liabilities"
(Laser Foundation, 2006)

One LLA was influenced more by the communities they serve than by targets and funding streams, responding with the following statement:

"We sometimes look for (or get given) additional funding
if it is likely to help us to achieve our goals but we don't allow
the funding to dictate how we shape services. That driver
comes from listening to communities and individual's views.
Obviously local and national government initiatives and priorities
helps us to shape direction but we are really focused on local
needs and getting it right on the ground."

These results illustrate how fragmented LLA approaches to social inclusion are and how sporadic funding availability is for such initiatives. Some LLA's like the one above may adopt a more independent approach but for the majority of other LLA's it appears the main influences remain the 'paymasters'.

4.3 The depth of information gathered about local communities through community profiling

The two stage approach to community profiling set out by the MLA, covering the period of 2005-06, asserts in its guidelines that by the end of 2006 the *minimum* level of information that they should hold on their communities should be at both authority and ward level (MLAa, 2006). The guidelines only stipulate the use of statistical data. However, commentators on community profiling suggest that several methods should be used to gather the information (Hawtin et al, 1994, Stone, 1985). Other observers in the field of public libraries also note the distinct advantages community profiling can bring to the public libraries by delivering a service which meets the needs the community and facilitates a more socially inclusive service, improving library usage (Muir and Douglas, 2001; Middleton, 2003). This next section looks at what depth of community profiling information is gathered and who is responsible for gathering it.

4.3.1 To what level is the community profile information collected?

All LLA's were asked to what level they gathered community information; authority, ward or both (see fig.5 below). Of the 13 LLA's who responded; 2 replied authority level, 3 replied at ward level and 8 replied both. The MLA guidelines do state that if an LLA carries out community profiles at ward level they may not need all of the information at authority level as some crossover may occur (MLAa, 2006). By this stage, 100% of LLA's should be collecting community profiling information at both levels, and definitely at ward level. As the diagram below illustrates, only 84.6% (11/13) of LLA's are currently on target. The other 15.4% (2/13) of LLAs are still collecting community profiling information at the first stage requirement despite now being near the end of second stage of the PLISM proposals for community profiling activity.

This demonstrates a continuing disparity amongst LLA approaches to community profiling. Despite guidelines setting out a *minimum* level of community profiling activity, LLAs seem to be falling short of the stage two requirements. The reasons for this could be, as Sally Middleton noted above, because they are not prescriptive enough. Although the level of information provided by the MLA regarding how to obtain both ward and authority level statistical information is more than adequate. It sets out where you can find the information on the National Statistics website, the different levels you can go to and how to interpret the figures.

Fig.5

Pie Chart illustrating level community profiling is gathered at by LLAs

Authority level

15.4%

Ward level

23.1%

Both

61.5%
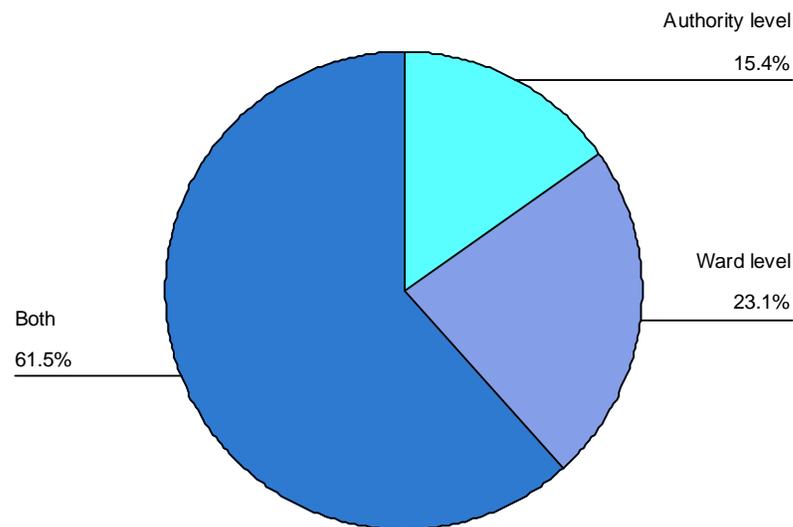
Interestingly, if we compare these figures with those relating to the extent to which community profiling information is considered when allocating funding for social inclusion initiatives, we develop a picture of LLAs carrying out this activity with no clear motivation as to why (see fig.6 below). The graph below shows the figures illustrating the level at which community profiling information is

gathered alongside the extent to which it is considered when allocating funding for social inclusion initiatives.

This clearly shows a great disparity between the reasons for collecting the information and its actual practical usage. Of the 8 who collect community profiling information at both levels, indicating an adherence to the PLISM guidelines and a degree of thoroughness, 3 consider it only to a small extent or not at all when allocating funding for social inclusion initiatives.

fig.6

Graph comparing level at which community profiling (CP) information is gathered against the extent to which it is considered when allocating funding

Level at which community profiling information is gathered
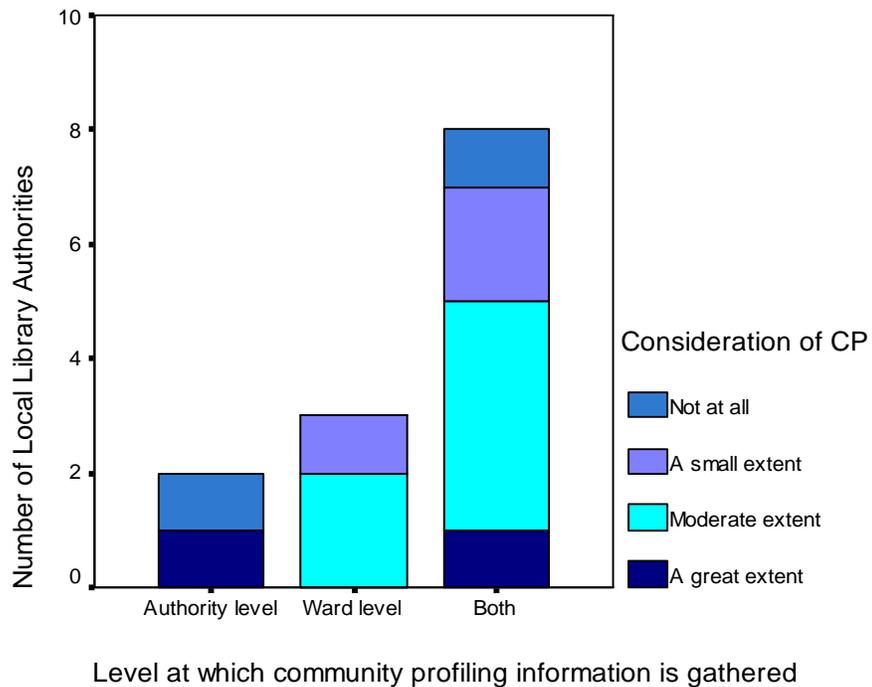
This disparity is also evident in the behaviour of LLA's who collect it at a singular level, most noticeably in the LLA's who collect it at the very basic authority level. Here the difference is wide with 1 LLA considering it to a great

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extent and another LLA not considering it at all. This comparison highlights further the uneven approach to community profiling and suggests that despite guidelines and targets there is still some confusion over the motivation for collecting it.

Commentators (Stone, 1985, Muir and Douglas, 2001) note that it should not be a one off activity which is left in a drawer to gather dust but rather is something that needs to be carried out regularly to ensure the public library service is meeting the needs of the community. Ewart (2004) in her dissertation study of attitudes towards community profiling by LLAs found that amongst those who carried out community profiling, very few could see the inherent value of doing it. The findings illustrated in the graph above seem to reinforce this despite the recent introduction of the PLSIM guidelines.

4.3.2 Who is responsible for carrying out community profiling?

Community profiling, as established in Chapter 2, is necessary if public libraries are to have a clear and accurate picture of the communities they serve. Its recent inclusion in the PLSIM is designed to help public libraries meet their targets and measure their impact in the communities. With this in mind, LLA's were asked who was responsible for gathering this information. The options given to the respondents were; library services, other council departments or both (see fig.7 below). Over 50% (7/13) of LLA's carry out the community profiling in-house, that is by library services. A move advocated by interviewee Sally Middleton, who stated that community profiling by Gloucestershire Libraries is

"left down to staff. Those are SDLs or Service Development
Librarians and they look after between 1 and 3 libraries"

70

3 LLA's community profiles are conducted by another council department unrelated to library service, 2 LLA's stated that their community profiles were the combined efforts of both departments and 1 LLA failed to stipulate who carried it out and due to time restraints I was not able to follow this up with the respondent.

Fig.7

Who is responsible for carrying out community profiling in your LLA?
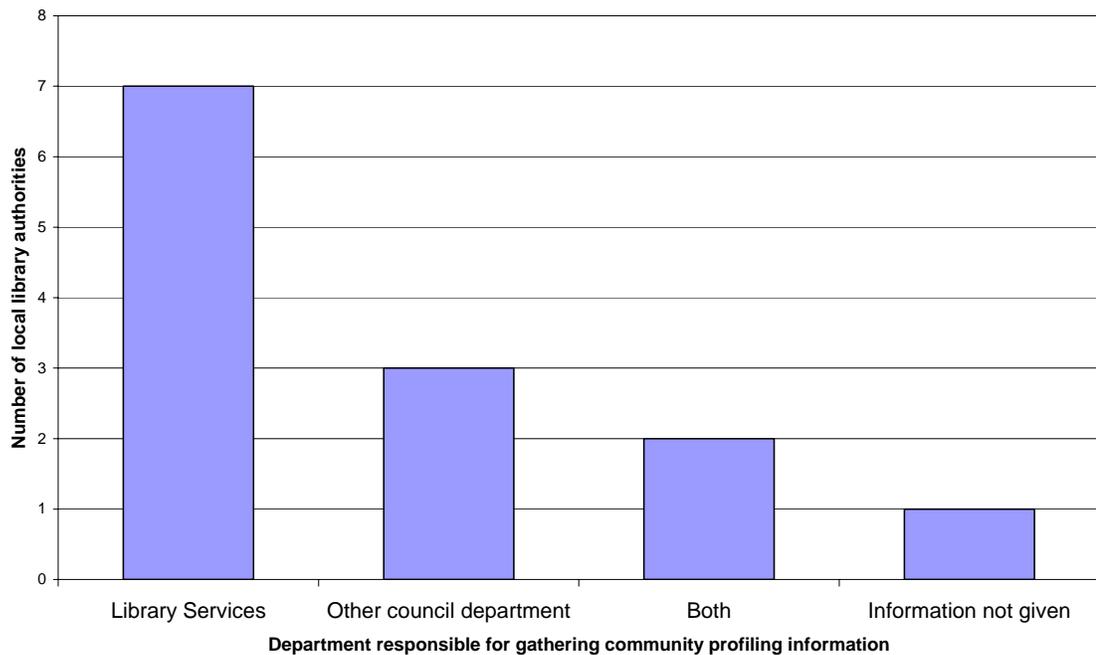
Where community profiling was carried out by 'library services', this included a variety of staff. For example, some LLAs handed over the responsibility to the Community Librarians, others to the Principle Librarian, Resources Manager or Service Improvement Officer. The 3 LLA's who relied on other council departments used the Chief Executives department's community profile, with 2 of them stating that it was then 'customised' for library use. The 2 LLAs citing that both the library services and other departments developed their community profile as a joint effort named departments such as the Information Management Unit as being involved. This raises the question of how non-library

staff members can accurately evaluate the community the public library serves as each local public service has different requirements and demographic targets.

4.3.3 Which methods are used to gather community profiling information?

To identify which methods are used to gather community profiling information, respondents were asked to identify all the ones they used from a list provided (see fig.8 below) The options on the list were drawn from the small selection of texts that discuss community profiling in depth (Hawtin et al, 1994; Beal, 1985, Stone, 1985). The results indicate that statistical data is the most commonly used method for gathering information with all LLA's naming this method. The next most popular method was user questionnaires with 9/13 respondent LLA's identifying this method. Whilst most LLA's used a mixture of one or two methods, one LLA stated that they used all five community profiling methods. However, 4 LLAs stated that they solely relied upon statistical data for gathering community profiling information.

fig.8

Methods of collecting community profiling information
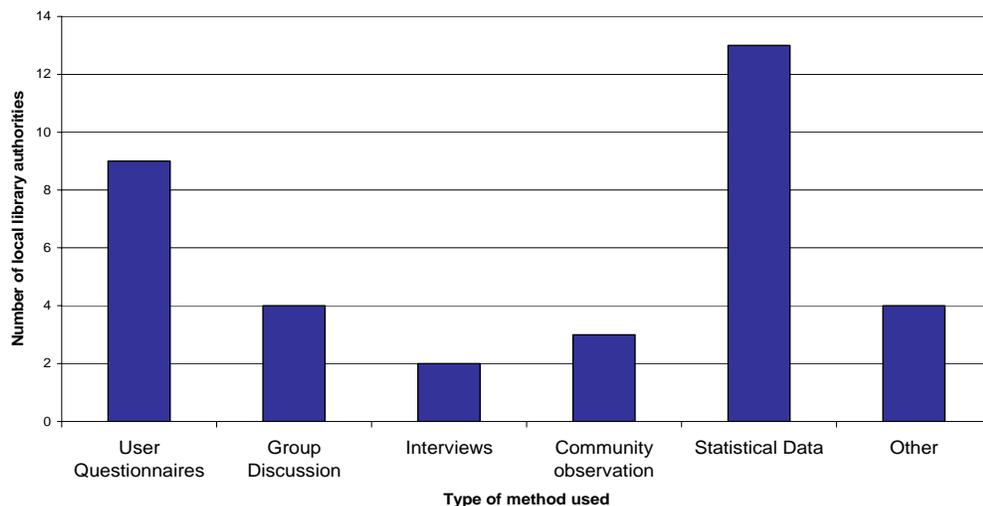
Other recommended methods; group discussion, interviews and community observation, whilst practiced, are done so minimally. Other methods identified through the research included; local staff knowledge, local council intelligence and community based consultation projects. The community consultation project was carried out by one of the LLA's responsible for case study libraries A and B. The project was funded by the Laser Foundation and sought to identify local user need to aid the development of a new, refurbished local branch library

These results indicate that the level of information gathered by LLA's in the North West is fairly superficial. National statistics come from the UK National Census which was last carried out in 2001. The next census is not due until 2011, hence any information regarding local areas maybe become considerably out of date in the next couple of years and not able to provide a true representation of the area. User questionnaires, whilst useful for assessing levels of satisfaction amongst existing library users, do not reach out to non-users and groups currently excluded or under-represented by public libraries.

Interviewee Sally Middleton (2003) from Gloucestershire Libraries wrote a guide to community profiling for 'The Network'[14] in 2003 and the Museum, Libraries and Archives East Midlands (MLA East Midlands formerly EMMLAC[15]) have also recently produced a 43 page guide to community profiling (MLA East Midlands, 2005). Both of these documents highlight the need to go beyond statistics in order to get an accurate picture of the local community. The MLA East Midlands (2005:14) guide states:

> "It's important to recognise that while statistical information about communities can be very useful, the personal knowledge and familiarity with your community gained by 'getting out there' and meeting and talking to people cannot be underestimated".

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[14] http://www.seapn.org.uk/ "Tackling social inclusion in libraries, museums, archives and galleries"
[15] EMMLAC stood for 'East Midlands Museums, Libraries and Archives Council'

Despite this guidance being freely available on the Internet and other advice available in the texts outlined in the Chapter 2, the evidence gathered for this report indicates that most LLA's in the North West do not venture beyond the bare minimum of community profiling activity. Furthermore, these methods seem to indicate that public libraries are only measuring impact on existing users in the community and not proactively identifying the needs of the *whole* community. The Audit Commission Report (2002) observed that "high satisfaction ratings amongst current library users do not, on their own necessarily mean that the service is good". Pateman (2003) also advocates the need to proactively assess the needs of non-users stating that "libraries must survey and review community needs, focusing particularly on the needs of the people who do not currently use them". The reliance on static community profiling methods prevents public libraries from actively engaging with not only existing users, but non-users too.

As one library staff member interviewed at case study D noted, for a library service to be 'open to all' it needs to listen to the voices of everyone in the community. They asserted that as a public service, the library is answerable to the local community and they should not only be involved in the service, but have access to information regarding funding and how they benefit directly;

"If you keep people in the dark they're going to be suspicious. And there's no point in saying it's *******MBC's policy not to do this…They don't care about that…all they see is you with this big word 'NO' above your head. Remove it, either show them what they're talking about or bring down the guy that's stopping them seeing it and let him answer the questions…Really truly, it has to be equal. If its not, forget it, it's only another plaque[16] on the wall and that's all it is…"

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[16] The 'plaque' referred to is the 'Investors in People' plaque awarded to organizations, business and so on for achieving a certain standard of performance and good practice. For more information see http://www.iipuk.co.uk/IIP/Web/default.htm

Observation, interviews and group discussions arranged through community groups and existing partnerships could help public libraries to engage more with the community. They would provide non-users and excluded groups with an opportunity to articulate their needs and become involved in the creation and delivery of the service. Not only would this approach create a more socially inclusive library service, it would demonstrate a willingness to listen and communicate which could in turn facilitate a move towards a more cohesive community.

4.5 Summary of Chapter 4

Community profiling, despite being embedded in the recently released PLSIM is still not utilized effectively and efficiently by LLAs and the public library services they govern. It seems it is not always taken into consideration when allocating funding for social inclusion initiatives nor is it considered a major influence in when it is considered. The majority of LLA's carry out community profiling at the recommended Ward level. However, 2 of the 13 respondent LLAs only collected it to authority level, despite being in stage 2 of the 2 year community profiling strategy.

The most common methods used to gather this information are the National Statistics Website and user questionnaires which do not engage with the community on an active level. Commentators advocate that LLAs be more proactive in their data capture and engage on a one to one basis with their community however, the more proactive methods such as interviews, observation and discussion groups are overlooked by the majority of LLA's.

Overall, the indications are that the motivation for collecting the community profiling information and the intrinsic value it holds for public library services is not understood or recognized. This could be preventing public

libraries from engaging with the local communities they serve and restricting their ability to communicate with those considered 'hardest to reach' in society.

In conclusion, it appears that LLA's need to be more creative and proactive in their community profiling methods. They need to engage with the community on all levels, through partnerships and existing library staff in order to gain a true picture of the community they serve and to build up relationships based on reciprocity and trust. These in turn will facilitate social capital and help to create cohesive societies (Cordell and Romanow, 2005)

Chapter 5

The extent to which public libraries in the North West of England are engaging with their local communities

5.1 Introduction to results

This next chapter moves away from the theme of community profiling and looks at how community engagement is practiced at a grass roots level to meet the needs of both non-excluded and excluded groups within the community. It discusses the quantitative and qualitative data gathered from public library user questionnaires. This use of multiple methods creates a holistic overview of the current climate and helps to assess how successfully public libraries are engaging with their communities from the point of view of all major stakeholders; library users, library staff and the LLAs.

This section refers to specific categories of socially excluded users. These categories were sourced from various pieces of literature on the subject of social inclusion/exclusion (Hicken, 2004; Muddiman et al, 2000; Pateman, 2004; Byrne, 2001; Coleman, 1981). However, it must be noted that this list is not exclusive and was subject to the interpretation of the respondents.

Some limitations did affect the comprehensiveness off this research. Due to ethical considerations, users under the age of 16 are not represented. Furthermore, because of time constraints and the scope of the study only the views of existing library users have been captured. A more comprehensive study may have sought to gather the opinions of non-users through community groups associations.

The literature review in Chapter 2 highlighted that community engagement is a new term for an old concept. Janet Hill (1973) in the seventies and Pat Coleman (1981) in the eighties were strongly advocating the positive effects of involving the community in public library services. It is has since received a renaissance by being placed centre stage in the government's 'Framework for the Future' strategy and supported financially by an £80 million pound 'Big Lottery' grant. This recent flurry of activity led me to consider how effective public libraries currently are at engaging the community.

Through the analysis of the results within this chapter, the following objectives will be met:

- Identify the extent to which library users in the North West of England feel engaged with their public library service?

- Identify to what extent public libraries in the North West are meeting the needs of the local community.

It will also answer the following research question:

- Identify which socially excluded groups are considered a priority for LLAs in the North West?

As with the previous chapter, this analysis does not intend to generalise its finding to the population as a whole, but provide a 'snapshot' of the current climate within public libraries exist. Nevertheless, by establishing which socially excluded groups are priorities for LLAs in the North West, the researcher hopes to highlight any areas for improvement in current approaches to community engagement and social inclusion.

5.2 The extent to which library users in the North West of England feel engaged with their public library service

Interviewee Pat Coleman observed that in the Eighties, Librarianship was very community focused; book issues did not matter so much "as long as the library [was] engaging and…talking with people". This view is supported by another interviewee, Sally Middleton:

> "I think that public libraries should be at the very heart of their communities…to achieve it takes a lot of hard work and a lot of networking and a lot of engagement with the local community"

Community engagement however is an ambiguous term, one that could have been misinterpreted by the general public. Therefore, each of the respondents was asked several questions aimed at establishing the level of community engagement and the extent to which they felt engaged with the library service.

5.2.1 Public Library usage

5.2.1.1 General usage

How often the library is used and by whom can be an indicator of the level of engagement people feel with their public library service. Each user was asked how often they visited the public library, with reference to the public library they were approached in. The options given to participants were weekly, fortnightly, monthly, and other. The majority of library users visited the public library one or more times a week, with 37/96 (38.5%) of people asked choosing this option. This is followed by 24/96 (25%) going once a fortnight, 20/96 (20.8%) visiting on a monthly basis and 15/96 (15.6%) stating 'other'. Over 80% of respondents use their public library on a monthly basis or more. This

demonstrates a good pattern of usage and a desire to re-visit the library on a regular basis.

5.2.1.2 Library users from socially excluded groups

To obtain a better idea of who these library users are, participants were asked to choose a socially excluded group which they felt best described them or to choose a 'none of the above' option. These results are illustrated in fig.9. Out of the 96 respondents, 42 considered themselves to be from a socially excluded group. It must be noted that from the list shown to respondents, several socially excluded groups' categories were not chosen; hence, they are missing from the data. These include the following groups: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual of Transgender (LGBT); Child in Care; Housebound and the Homeless. The reasons for their absence from the survey could be read several ways. Firstly, they may have not been present in the library at the time the survey took place, which possibly indicates low usage of the library by that group. However, in the case of the housebound, they are not likely to be 'in' the library as they receive a housebound service (all case study libraries did provide this service) and I met several users who where in the library choosing books for housebound users as well as themselves. Secondly, with respect to 'child in care,' these users are likely to be under 16 years of age and therefore not captured by my survey due to the conditions of the study's ethics approval. Thirdly, the nature of the question may have made some people feel uncomfortable and they choose to identify with another group or opt for the 'none of the above' option.

The biggest users from socially excluded groups include those who identified themselves as single parent families, Black and Ethnic minorities, the elderly and the unemployed. Of these four groups, single parent families and the unemployed are the most regular weekly users. The lowest users are rural community residents, migrant workers, mental health and refugees and asylum

seekers. These figures are interesting in light of recent debates over the usage of public library services by the socially excluded. Pateman (2004:36) asserted that the needs of those considered 'hard to reach' including "the homeless, the unemployed, travelers, asylum seekers, refuges, migrant workers and ethnic minorities" are not met by public libraries.

Fig.9

Graph showing regularity of public library visits by users from socially excluded groups
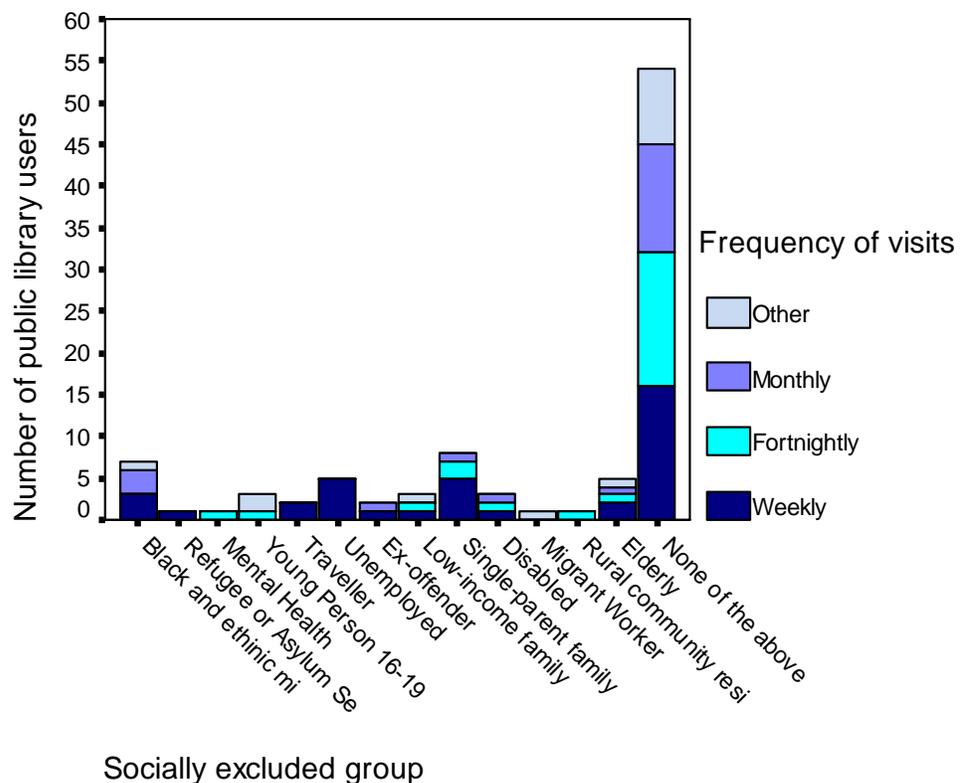
Out of this list only the homeless are not represented in the above graph. The unemployed are in the top 4 socially excluded users of the library, and in relation to the number of unemployed in the area this figure can be seen as representative. In 2001, 5.1% of the UK population were registered unemployed (National Statistics Online, 2006) and of the respondents to the user questionnaire, 5.2% were unemployed. However, travelers, asylum seekers, refuges, migrant workers, whilst also represented, are done so minimally.

Combining them into one group they only represent 4.1% of users. On the surface it looks like the public library is not engaging with these sections of the community. However, more research into the numbers of these groups within the population would need to be carried out to establish if they as proportionally represented or not. In depth community profiling would also help to establish this.

5.2.1.2 Age and sex of library users

I will move on to briefly look at the breakdown of users by age and sex. Of the 96 users who responded to the questionnaire, 42 (43.8%) were male and 54 (56.3%) were female. This supports recent library statistics collated by LISU and released by the MLA (2005) which showed that females were more likely to use the public libraries than males.

With respect to the age of library users, the results of the study show the biggest users are between 35-59 years of age with 44/96 (45.8%) of respondents being from this group (see fig.10 below). Women were also the biggest users in this age range (see table 4), making women aged between 35-59 the most common user group. However for the age group 25-34, men were the largest users. This is an area that requires further research to investigate why the number of women users drops of at this point.

Table 4

Table showing the sex and age of public library users

Age of public library users	Sex of public library users		
	Male	Female	Total
16-19	2	4	6
20-24	2	6	8
25-34	14	7	21
35-59	17	27	44
60-74	6	9	15
75+	1	1	2
Total	42	54	96

The figures for library usage by those aged between the ages of 16 and 34 were 35/96 (36.5%), higher than the national figures for this approximate[17] age group in 2005 (MLA, 2005) which state a figure of 21%. The recent report (DCMS and Laser Foundation, 2006) into the perceptions of 14-35 of public libraries drew attention to the fact that young people feel disassociated from public libraries. However they make up one third of my sample. Moreover, the 16-34 range in my research covers a smaller age group than the 35-59 age range, so comparatively a smaller portion of users could be expected in the16-34 age group. The lowest proportions of users were from the 75+ age group. This could be for several reasons including ill health, immobility and lower proportional representation in the area.

Fig.10

Graph illustrating library usage by age demographic

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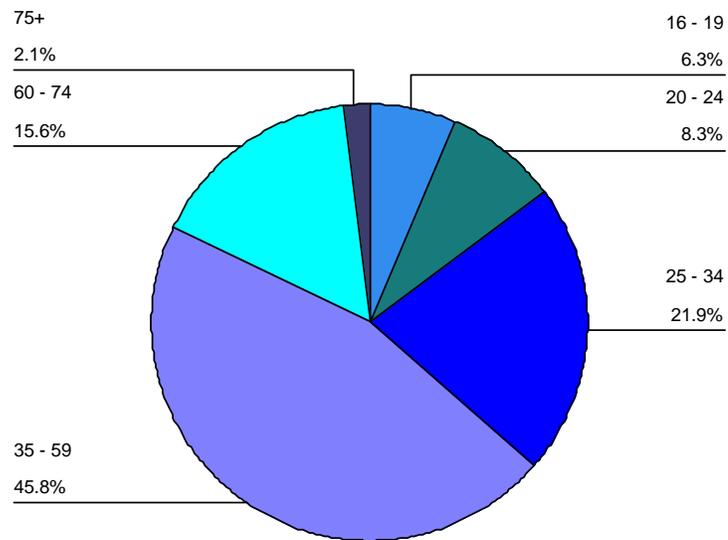
[17] Due to the limitations of the researcher's ethics approval it was not possible to obtain the viewpoints of library users younger than 16 years of age.

<u>5.2.2 How welcome do library users feel?</u>

Overall, the library users approached did feel welcome in their public library. 97.9% (94/96) answered 'yes' and only 2.1% (2/96) stated 'no'. The reasons why the 2 users did not feel welcome were either because the staff were unhelpful and dismissive or because the library was annexed onto a council building and to enter the library users had to walk past a reception area. A flaw in the methodology was noticed here that should be mentioned, however it was too late to change it in the questionnaire when noticed. This question (5a) should have led straight onto question 6 f
or those who answered 'no' they did not feel welcome. However this was not accommodated for and consequently even those who answered 'no' were still asked the following question (5b), "how welcome do you feel?" Consequently, those who answered 'no', still answered 5b which created some inconsistency in the results as both of the users who answered 'no' they did not feel welcome, then stated they felt 'quite welcome' when asked how welcome they felt on the scale shown to them. Despite piloting the questionnaire to several people, this error was not spotted. Furthermore, it illustrates the unreliability of people's responses that they tend to opt for the middle choice when forced to make a decision as noted by Bradburn et al (2004).

Taking this into consideration, the results for question 5b, "How welcome do you feel?" are illustrated in Table 5a below:

Table.5a

How welcome do public library users feel?

How welcome do you feel?	Frequency number	Valid percentage
Extremely welcome	16	16.7%
Very Welcome	51	53.1%
Quite Welcome	21	21.9%
Welcome	8	8.3%

On this scale, more than half of respondents felt 'extremely' or 'very' welcome in their local public library. Whereas Table 5b below, looks at the total figures for both groups of users and illustrates further their perceptions of how welcoming the public library is:

Table.5b

How welcome do public library users feel?: Categorised

Type of user	Extremely welcome		Very Welcome		Quite Welcome		Welcome	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq	%
Excluded group category	6	14.3	22	52.4	10	23.8	4	9.5
Non-excluded group ('None of the Above')	10	18.5	29	53.7	11	20.4	4	7.4

Considering both sets of data above, it is clear that whilst socially excluded groups do feel welcome, the level of welcomeness is lower for them than for those who consider themselves not excluded. More library users from non-excluded groups felt extremely welcome and 'very welcome' than users from excluded groups. Whilst those who categorized themselves as 'excluded', were more inclined to choose the options at the lower end of the scale. However, as are care worker present in case study D with a learning disabilities group observed:

> "They [the clients] are now using a library service
> they would never have been able to use before
> …they are included in it"

This demonstrates how attitudes towards social inclusion have changed over the years. By reaching out to individuals categorized as marginalized from society, the public library has been able to engage on a deeper level with all members of the community. However, as the table above illustrates, whilst overall it appears that although most users found the library a welcoming place, it may not be

engaging to the same extent with users who consider themselves to be from socially excluded groups.

5.2.3 How proactively are public libraries in the North West engaging with the local community?

Community engagement is an all-encompassing term, covering a wide range of activities as outlined in the literature review. Case study library D is an example of community engagement at work, a library-cum-community centre; it has succeeded in restoring a library service to an area where many other council services had given up hope. When staff from case study D were asked what they thought of the impact and why the community engagement was a success, one interviewee observed:

> ""…there's a lot of joined up work going on, on this estate now between the library services, the housing service and other aspects of the council …we got funding for a community development worker on site all day, every day, she can liaise then with a) the local tenants and residents and also b) the organizations that are working in the area"

This highlights the importance the role partnership work can play in community engagement as supported by the next phase of F4F and in creating a diverse, inclusive service. One user of case study D reinforced this with a rather oxymoronic statement:

> "It's just one big, little community getting involved"

However, is this viewpoint representative of all the users who responded to the survey? The next section looks at how connected the public library makes people feel with their local community. This will provide insight into the library's ability to promote community cohesion and engage with the community.

5.2.3.1 Do library users feel their library service connects them to the local community?

Users were asked to what extent the public library made them feel connected with their local community (see Table 6 below). Overall, most felt their public library enhanced the feeling of community in the area to a 'moderate' or 'great' extent. When separated into outreach and central branches the picture becomes clearer. The percentage of people who felt their local/outreach branch library connected them to the local community was nearly double compared to library users of the central branches.

Table 6

How connected does the public library make users feel with the community?

Extent the public library makes you feel connected with the local community	All case study libraries		Outreach/ smaller case study libraries Case study B/D		Central branch case study libraries Case study A/C	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Great extent	19	19.8	8	29.6	11	15.9
Moderate extent	43	44.8	13	48.1	30	43.5
Small extent	24	25	5	18.5	19	27.5
Not at all	10	10.4	1	3.7	9	13
Total	96	100	27	100	69	100

There was little difference between those who felt it only moderately connected them in either branch type. However, those who felt it only connected them to the community a 'small' extent or not at all rose quite sharply with over 10% of central branch users feeling their branch did nothing to connect them to their local community.

Nevertheless, that is not to say central libraries are not useful as community hubs and may indicate that a different approach is required to centralise services. To some users the central branch is their local library if they live within 2 miles of the city centre. It is also a place were all communities from

the surrounding area can meet and interact beyond the boundaries of their branch libraries. As Pat Coleman, author of "Whose Problem" (1981) noted when interviewed for this study;

> I was director of Birmingham Libraries in the late 80's/early 90's. The central library there was a tremendous meeting place for people from black and minority ethnic communities, young people and had huge potential, because of that, to be a place where people got out of their parallel lives".

What is implicit in this statement is that despite the good that smaller branch and outreach libraries do, they could contribute to the problem of isolation and exclusion. They need to co-exist alongside a central library and work in tandem in a way that proactively engages *all* types of users. This would promote integration, bridging people's parallel lives and in turn help to tackle social inclusion and create cohesive societies.

Further examination of the levels of community engagement experienced by both socially excluded and non-excluded groups demonstrates that the former feel that the public library connects them with the community to a greater extent than the latter (see fig.11 below). 42/96 respondents claimed to be socially excluded, 23% (10/42) of them felt the public library only made them feel connected to the community to a small extent or 'not at all'. Of those, 7 stated that they felt the library made them feel connected to a small extent and 3 'not at all'. Whilst 44.4% (24/54) of the 54/96 remaining non-excluded users felt the library connected them to the community to the same degree, with 17 stating a 'small' extent and 7 'not at all'.

Fig.11

Graph illustrating the level of connectedness felt by
public library users from socially excluded groups
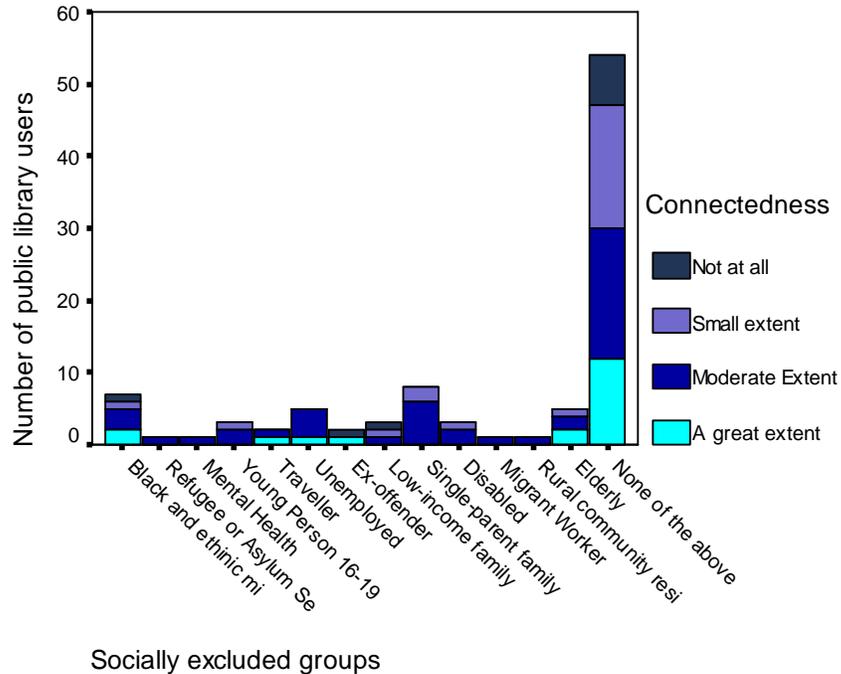
Despite variances in the numbers of excluded and non-excluded users surveyed, the difference is still visible when translated into proportional percentages. Overall, more people surveyed from socially excluded groups did feel that the library helped them feel connected to the community more than those who are considered *not* excluded. This raises several questions as to why those who feel less welcome in the public library conversely feel that its presence connects that more to the community. Harris and Dudley (2005:29) believe that the very existence of the library

"reflects the notion of cohesion in the way it goes about its
business – offering people from different backgrounds
similar opportunities and being proactively receptive to new
arrivals and new or emerging communities"

However, the answers to these questions lie beyond the remit of the study but could be an interesting avenue to explore in future research.

5.2.3.2 How proactively the public library involves itself in the community

LLAs were asked if they felt local communities should be actively engaged the planning and delivery of library services. Of the 13 LLA responses received back, all responded 'yes' they did think they should be involved. Of the 96 public library users asked how proactively they felt the public library involved itself in the community, only 95 responded to the question. Here another flaw in the questionnaire design was observed. On this question, there was not a 'don't now' option available. This too was not picked up in the pilot, however it was considered during the design process. Due to the nature of the question, which relied on the perception of users as opposed to knowledge of users, it was felt a 'don't know' option may encourage respondents not to consider how they 'felt'. This was explained to users prior to asking the question, however one user still maintained they had no opinion on the matter and they were logged into the data set as 'missing' to facilitate accurate analysis of the responses.

The findings are illustrated in fig.12 below and show that most users felt the library involved itself to a moderate or great extent. This referred to community involvement in the form of activities like community group involvement (provision of meeting rooms), outreach work with the community, homework clubs. In reality all the case study libraries did carry out some form of proactive community work. To help compare perception of the library's pro-activeness against the reality of each case study's actual involvement in the community I have presented the levels of perception for users from each case study in the Table 7 below.

Fig.12

Graph illustrating the extent users feel the public library

involves itself in the community.

Extent the library proactively involves itself in the community
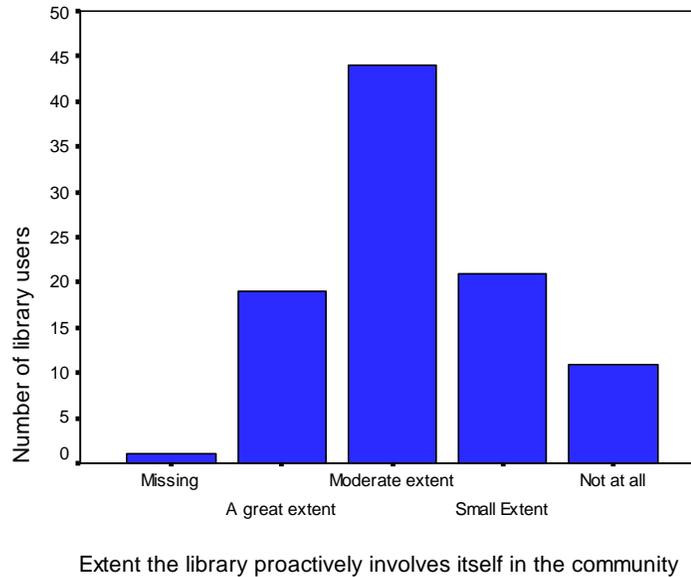
Despite the low respondent rate, case study D stands apart form the other libraries in that all the users asked there thought the library did involve itself to either a great or moderate extent.

Table.7

Table showing public library users perception of

public library involvement in the community

User perception of public library involvement in the community	Case study			
	A	B	C	D
Great	4	5	5	5
Moderate	18	11	12	3
Small	11	2	8	-
Not at all	6	1	4	-
Total	39	19	30	8

This is a good reflection of the actual pro-activeness of case study D. It provides weekly access to a range of external agencies that make use the library space including the Citizen's advice bureau, a chiropodist, women's over

50's group and an outreach group who deal with learning difficulties. One member of the over 50's group commented that despite all living on the same estate

"had it not been for the library we never would have met".

A staff member interviewed at case study stated also that the changing role of libraries is in effect a return to tradition;

"…in some respects it's like the traditional, the old sort of Carnegie idea of giving a library to a community, giving people the opportunity to empower…"

Library users of the other case studies felt the library's involvement in the community was 'moderate' overall. Most notably, users from Case Study A (a central branch library) were the ones who had the largest number who thought the library's community involvement was small or none existent. Yet through talking with staff from case study A on-site and the researcher's own observations it is known that the level of community work carried out by this branch is quite extensive. Aside from homework clubs and reading groups, it also works with traveller communities and their children, visits community groups who support refugees and works in partnership with an organization which helps refugees and asylum seekers adapt to life in the UK.

This misperception of the library service they provide to the community may be for several reasons, either a lack of publicizing either within the library, on the website or in the local press or it could also be due to a lack of staff awareness. When interviewed, the awareness of staff members at case study A of the library's community activity was low. When asked further about the level of community engagement practiced by their library, the answers were limited:

"There are a lot of changes but you do try to explain things to people, you know, we'll say that you can be served from any counter… stuff like that. Or in conversations generally, you might come and say 'oh well we offer that service' "

Whilst this attitude displays good customer service, it illustrates a lack of staff awareness over what it means to 'engage' with the community and a lack of proactivity and creativity in their approach. It is demonstrative of the organisational culture that commentators (Muddiman et al, 2000; Audit Commission, 2002b; Pateman, 2004) assert needs to change if public libraries are to provide an engaging and inclusive service.

5.2.3.3 How aware are users of opportunities to become involved in the planning and delivery of library services?

All of the case study libraries offered some form of opportunity to become involved voluntarily in the public library, this ranged from the chance to assist with housebound services to stock suggestions and administrative assistance in the form of leaflet distribution and maintenance of the library garden (at one of the case studies). However, the researcher's observations noted that three-quarters of the case study libraries offered only minimal opportunities for users to get involved through volunteer work, usually though Library Link - the housebound service. The exception was case study D which was more open to involving the community thorough volunteer work in the way advocated by the MLA though the CVS project outlined in chapter 2 (MLAc, 2006).

Despite the availability of volunteer opportunities, when library users were asked if they were aware of any opportunities to become involved in the public library service only 18/96 responded 'yes'. The majority (78/96), were unaware of any opportunities to become involved voluntarily with the public library.

Cookman (2001) asserts that volunteering is a positive way of practicing community engagement and engendering social networks and social capital. By involving library users in the planning and delivery of library services, the position of the library within the community becomes magnified. Moreover, it ensures a service that meets the needs of the community it serves (MLAc, 2006).

These results show a lack of inventiveness on behalf of the libraries regarding ways they could utilize the community through volunteering. It also illustrates further how inefficient public libraries are at marketing their services and the opportunities they offer.

5.3 To what extent are public libraries in the North West meeting the needs of the local community?

The study moves on from discussing the extent to which public libraries are actively engaging the community to looking at whether the current service meets the needs of the community. As outlined in the previous chapters and the literature review, establishing the needs of library users should extend beyond simply looking at local statistics and dispensing user questionnaires. However, what service areas do those needs come under and what barriers do people encounter when they try to use the existing services? Vincent (2005) identified several broad categories that encompass many of the physical and social barriers that people encounter when using library services. The following examples taken from Vincent (2005:26) outline the main barriers:

- **Institutional:**   *Opening hours, organizational culture, stock*
- **Personal and Social:**   *Illiteracy, poverty, self esteem*
- **Perception and awareness:** *The 'not for me' mentality of those who feel intimidated by the library*
- **Environmental:**   *Building accessibility, geographical location*

With these barriers in mind I asked users several questions aimed at ascertaining whether they felt the library service was meeting their needs as part of the investigation into community engagement.

5.3.1 Is the public library accessible?

To establish accessibility, library users were asked how easy it was for them to access their public library both geographically and physically. Geographically meant in terms of its location and distance to travel and accessibility by transport (car or public), whilst physically referred to how easy it was to enter the building, the positioning of the stock and layout of the library.

The majority of users felt the library was either quite easy or very easy to access (see fig.13). Only 2 people, both from case study A, felt the library was not easy to access geographically and 1 user felt it was hard to access physically. The reasons given for geographical inaccessibility were both because the users lived outside the area and whilst they did use their local branch library they enjoyed browsing the different stock available at the central library.

fig.13   Graphs' illustrating how easy users think it is to gain access their public library: geographically and physically

How easy is it to access the library - geographically?

How easy is it to access the library: physically?
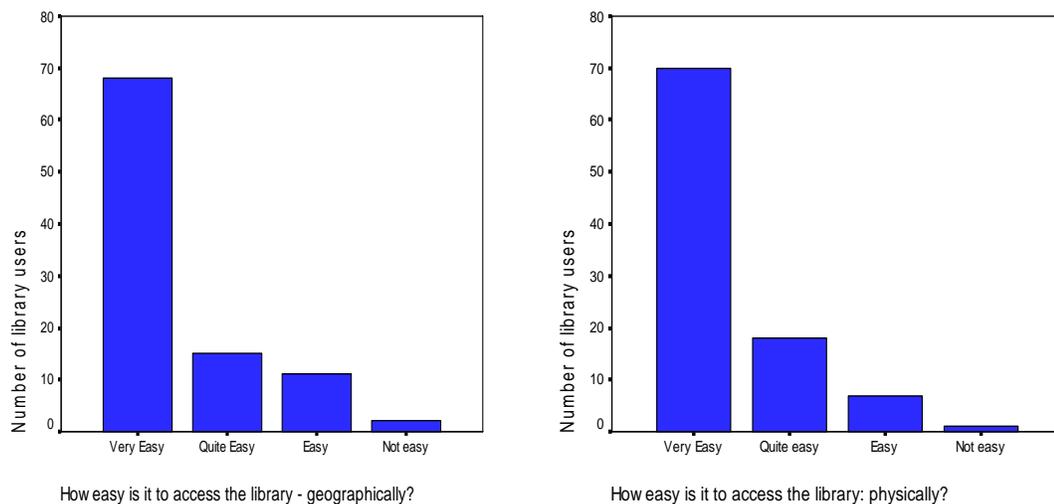
The reason for physical inaccessibility was in relation to the positioning of stock. Again the user was from case study A, and was directed at the musical score collection which was displayed in a way that meant they had to bend sideways for long periods of time and the thin spines were difficult to read.

This illustrates that library targets to ensure people have access to a public library within 2 miles of their home are working. No-one complained that they had too far to travel and the main complaints were associated with stock display or because the user had chosen to travel to the central library to 'browse', despite reservation facilities being available. When I asked the LLA's if they were planning any branch closures, only one responded 'yes' and the reason given was 'redesigning of the building' and was in fact part of the community consultation scheme discussed earlier. Therefore, this closure would not affect access in the long term, although relocation whilst building was completed would cause some disruption. Environmentally then, according to Vincent's (2005) description, public libraries are meeting the needs of users with respect to this area.

5.3.2 Do public library users in the North West feel the stock selection meets their needs?

Another area of public library services that facilitates social inclusion and demonstrates a high level of community engagement is stock selection. If libraries consult and listen to their users and the community, the stock should reflect their interests and encourage growth of issue rates. Users were first asked if the stock met their needs and given the choice of: 'yes' / 'no' / 'partially' / 'don't know'. Their responses are illustrated below in fig.14. Just over half of respondents, 57/96 (59.4), replied 'yes' which is comparatively quite low. Standard 9 of the government's PLSS[18] states that there should be 216 new

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[18] Public Library Service Standards http://www.culture.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/07070797-AE22-4064-8BAF-FEEE2ABA99F9/0/libstandards_06.pdf

stock additions per 1000 population. This is part of a bid to ensure stock reflects the needs of users.

All case studies did have facilities to recommend stock but most users were unaware of it. Furthermore, the government has recently released a new stock procurement agenda aimed at ensuring stock is acquired to facilitate

"better availability and more efficient management of
stock, with flexibility to meet local needs;"
(PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2006:5)

28/96 (29.2%) of users felt stock only met their needs partially whilst 8/96 (8.3%) stated no it did not, with a further 3/96 (3.1%) stating they did not know. These users were first time visitors to the libraries they were approached in and therefore did not feel qualified to comment.

Fig.14:

**Pie chart illustrating to what extent public library
stock meets user needs**

Don't Know
3.1%
No
8.3%
Partially
29.2%
Yes
59.4%
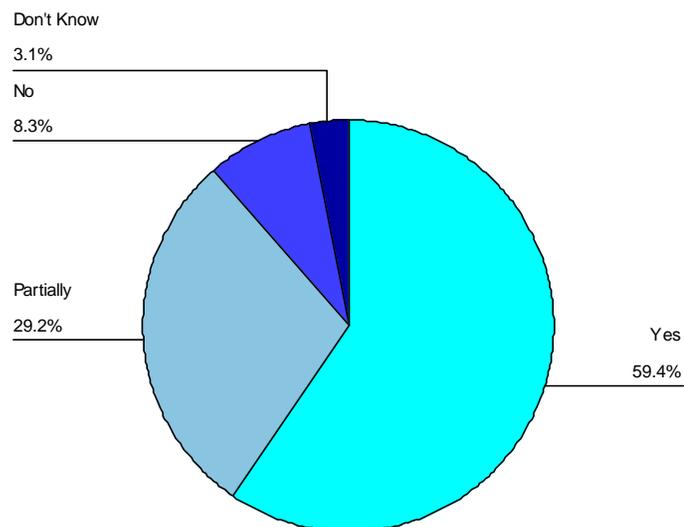
Staff interviewed prior to the publication of this report, which calls for the sharing of staff knowledge on user stock requirement, stated:

> "…book selection, we don't get any input and
> we know what people want"

Interviewee Pat Coleman noted that in the seventies they used to take their users to bookstores to choose material and working so closely with the users brought with it a great sense of 'satisfaction':

> "taking these Pakistani gentlemen to Bradford to buy
> books in Asian languages, that was all an incredible
> experience, of that closeness to cultures that were,
> in those days, completely new"

Such an approach is not widely practiced today but further research into this once the new agenda has bedded in would be interesting to pursue to observe if approaches to stock procurement change to better reflect the needs of library users and the community.

5.3.2.1 What type of material would help to meet user needs?

Those users who answered 'partially' or 'no' were then asked what type of stock they would like to see more of in order to meet their needs. The types mentioned are displayed in the Table 8 below (note some users stated more than one option therefore the numbers are not in direct proportion to the statistics above):

7 users specified a need for more academic material relevant to their university courses. This included the subjects Nursing, Medicine and Computers. In non-fiction generally, several users stated the level of health information was low, in particular texts on alternative therapies and spirituality.

Table 8

**The type of material public library users
feel would help to meet their needs**

Type of Material	No. of users
Foreign language titles	3
Large Print *	1
Non-fiction (General)	9
Non-fiction (Academic support)	7
Non – Fiction (Learning foreign language)	2
Current Fiction (Mainstream/bestsellers)	4
Non-mainstream Fiction (Specific genre/Less mainstream)	5
Government Material (e.g. Parliamentary Acts)	1
Wider range generally	5
Videos/DVDs	2
Up to date reference material (Newspapers/Journals)	1

This is interesting in light of the current PLSIM which are specifically aimed at measuring the contribution libraries can have on the health and well-being of people in their communities. Part of the measures for year one (2005), was the percentage of health related non-fiction reference and lending material available (MLAa, 2006). Other non-fiction categories that were mentioned were Art, History, Music (history of and scores), Biography, True Crime and Careers advice.

Several users, mainly those whose first language was not English, requested more foreign language fiction. The measures covering health information also mention availability of foreign language books covering this subject also. Interestingly, none of these users considered themselves to fit into any of the socially excluded group categories listed on the questionnaire.

Of the 4 case study libraries, only two did *not* charge for reservations within the same library authority (both of these were from the *same* authority). Users from these libraries (case study C and D) were happy overall with the stock as they could request it in from other branches free of charge and found the librarians willing to help them source the material they wanted. However, the

other 2 libraries (from another authority) do charge a fee of 70 pence for reservations from any branch inside the authority. This was named by several users of these libraries (Case study A and B) as a barrier to the service and off putting when choosing material to borrow.

Staff interviewees from case study B, a smaller local branch library, had quite strong opinions on the subjects of stock. When asked if they thought there was anything missing form the library service they replied "more books". They also commented that most of the 'good' stock was kept at the central library (case study A),

> "…they put that much stuff into that main library,
> that people come in for non-fiction stuff at the
> branches and we haven't got anything
> and they don't come back again…"

Indeed, some users who did not feel that the stock selection met their needs, with specific reference to non-fiction and academic texts were users of branch libraries.

5.3.3 What extra services do public library users feel would help to meet their needs?

19/96 respondents felt that there were other services that the public library could offer to help meet their needs. Some of the more popular services which were mentioned by more than one respondent included: Café or refreshment area – 5 users / Crèche or childcare facility – 2 users / More community events – 2 users. Other new services mentioned included a one-stop shop information service and air-conditioning. One case study did offer a one-stop shop but not the one frequented by this user. Other suggestions were extensions on existing services; better PC software and more PC's and study

areas. The users who suggested a crèche facility did so because when they visited the library they could not look for themselves because they needed to attend to their young children, both were single parents. One suggested a simple padded and cordoned of play area that they could be left in whilst they browsed the adult shelves. In this library, case study C, adult paperbacks are displayed on the edge of the children's library so the children could still be observed by parents browsing these book selections.

By using some of the more proactive profiling techniques outlined in chapter 4, public libraries could better understand the needs of their users and non-users, which differ from library to library. This was noted by a staff member in case study B who said:

"You've got **********, you've got here,
you've got two different types of clientele"

Despite this, only 19.8% of respondents felt the library needed to offer more services as opposed to the 37.5% of users who felt that the stock selection did not fully meet their needs. This could be indicative that public library users still judge the quality of a library on the book stock, as opposed to the myriad other services they offer.

5.3.4 To what extent do library users feel their public library service meets the needs of the local community?

An overwhelming 93.8% (90/96) of users felt that the public library service met the needs of the local community to a moderate or great extent, although the majority opted for 'moderate'. Most users felt that the library held a wealth of community information and whilst most did not take advantage of it, they were aware of its availability. This supports the findings of Usherwood (2005) that even amongst non-users the library is still viewed as a source of relevant and

trusted information. This is a similar figure to the responses to stock selection where 88.6% (85/96) felt that the stock met their needs fully or partially. Despite nearly a quarter of users only being partially happy with the stock selection, overall they were satisfied. There does still seem to be a connection between stock satisfaction and community need. Users still see the library in its traditional role despite recent modernization of the service. One staff member at case study D also observed this:

> "[t]hey still see the library as a book-based service.
> And of course they're not even mentioning talking books,
> or tapes, or CDs videos or…It's just the books, that's all they see.
> But its getting better. They are starting slowly to understand…
> It's because they've been given more information"

The sharing of information, a transparent approach to service delivery which included the community in planning and delivering services is the key to community engagement. This approach is the route to healthy social networks, cohesive communities and good levels of social capital. This is the approach advocated by Harris and Dudley (2005:31) who also note that:

> "The connectedness of community groups and organizations
> is a major contributor to cohesion and articulation of need.
> Where information flow drops…the local information ecology is
> vulnerable: levels of face to face recognition drop significantly,
> people receiving information or sharing it and the
> neighbourhood could begin to fracture or atrophy"

Overall, it appears that the public library service is meeting the needs of the community, although there is still substantial room for improvement. Greater involvement in the community through groups and partnerships, better publicizing of the service and its achievements and most importantly more

proactive profiling of the communities they serve, would help more users to feel the library service engages with them and meets their needs to a 'great' extent rather than a 'moderate' one.

5.3.5 Which socially excluded groups are considered a priority for LLA's in the North West?

This section looks at which of the socially excluded groups defined in the literature are considered a priority. As outlined in the literature review, some commentators assert that those considered 'hardest to reach' in our society are often neglected by the public library service and their needs overlooked. (Pateman, 2005; Matarasso, 2000, Muddiman et al, 2000). It was originally thought that social exclusion originated from poverty, but recent thinking has defined it as multi-dimensional (Byrne, 1999; Percy-Smith, 2000; Levitas, 1998). This next section looks at which socially excluded groups are a priority for LLAs and seeks to establish; which groups may be being overlooked in the development of library services and how important public libraries in the North West consider it is to address their needs, within their social inclusion agenda.

Each LLA was asked to pick out of a list of 19 categories, which socially excluded groups they consider to be a priority for them. They could choose more than one. The graph below (fig.) illustrates their responses in order of priority. The top 4 priority groups are: Young Persons (16-19); Housebound; Mental Health; Disabled. The lowest 4 priorities for LLA's (not including 'other') starting with the lowest are Rural Community Residents; Ex-offenders; Women, LGBT, migrant workers, travelers and asylum seekers tie in third place from the bottom with he unemployed coming in fourth. The 'other' category does not refer to a specific group; one LLA responded by ticking this box only and added the following statement:

On the surface this is a sound response, however it does not demonstrate any move towards identifying the groups most prevalent in their area.

fig.15

**Graph illustrating which socially excluded groups
are considered a priority for LLAs**
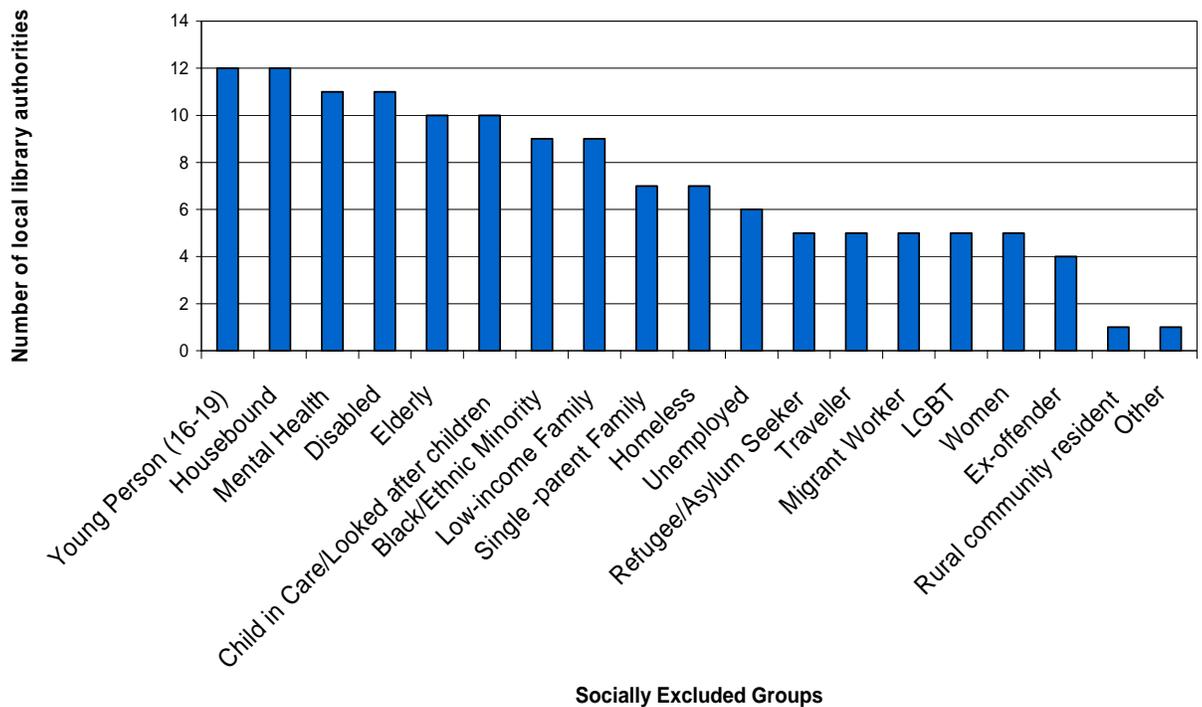
These results are interesting for several reasons. Firstly, the high prioritizing of young people is out of synch with the thoughts of staff and library users. Several users commented that they felt the library service was too youth orientate and staff at case study B stated that they felt

"everything seems to be geared towards the kids".

This could be a misconception of who classifies as 'kids' however and a reflection of the gap between children's library provision and young adult provision for the 16-19 age group. The recent growth in crossover fiction has created a niche market for this age range but many libraries still don't know how to cater for this group. Blanshard (1997) advices that

"[b]arriers between adult and children's services should
be minimised both publicly and administratively to create
a continuum of service to individuals" (Blanshard, 1997:15).

During my study of the 96 users surveyed this age range accounted for just 6.3%. The recent PricewaterhouseCoopers report (2006) observed that 14 -35 year olds do not feel engaged with the library service. The prioritizing of this group does indicate libraries are trying to tackle this.

It is quite a concern that the many of the groups given a low priority are also those considered hardest to reach. According to this research study they are also the groups who least use the service (see fig.9). It is concerning that these groups are being overlooked by LLA's with seemingly very little effort being made to engage them on a regional basis. Case study A does carry out an initiative in partnership with a local group aimed at facilitating refugee and asylum seeker integration into the community, a staff member informed me that they:

"have been involved in consultation work on the new ********
'New and Emerging Communities Strategy'. We have visited
Starting Point with the Mobile Library - this is a Reception
Centre for the children of asylum seekers and refugees.
They are taught there for up to two terms before going into
mainstream schools. We hope to make regular visits there."

This demonstrates community engagement at work on several levels. It is an initiative that works in partnership with other local projects, reaching out to those who are hardest to reach and helping to build bonds with the local community. It facilitates trust and contributes to the development of social capital by supporting education and long term life opportunities.

To gain a better understanding of how seriously social inclusion is taken by LLAs they were asked if they had a working definition if social inclusion. Of the 13 responses received, 5 either did not have a working definition of social inclusion, did not supply one or provided simple statements such as

"Service provision to accommodate all needs"

Several LLA definitions were borrowed from existing council, government or MLA definitions. One LLA (LLA 12) sent a very comprehensive, well researched document that aims to set out a framework for library staff to create an "Inclusive Library Service" entitled "Plan for the Future 2006-2008". The document is 23 pages long and not only outlines what social inclusion is but provides lists and synopses of recommended reading including government and non-government reports. It also includes a comprehensive list of socially excluded groups, a list of factors to consider when planning services including guidance on sourcing the minimum information required by the government for community profiles. This document should be held up as a best practice approach to creating a socially inclusive library service. Such a document if used nationally could reduce divide between levels of service from authority to authority.

This is inconsistency in approaches to social inclusion is emphasized by the views of two interviewees from the case studies. A staff member from case study B, a small local branch situated on the edge of a council estate, when asked if they thought social inclusion was something libraries should be concerned with they replied:

"I don't think the library is a place for people who don't know
how to behave properly…we're not trained to deal with people
with social problems…This is our workplace why should we put up
with it…The library isn't responsible. It's basically for research,
reading, it's not a place to solve your problems…we don't want
to be social workers. We don't want to be child-minders.
We want to be librarians"

This viewpoint is in stark contrast to the comments from a staff member at case study D, another local outreach branch, who sees the role of the library in the 21st Century as being centred around community engagement and development,

"We are taking the library service out into specific small
communities of ************ and trying to give them access to
library services –whatever that means. That's evolved in the
years I've been doing this job"

These two comments illustrate the conflict that is evident in the approaches of the LLA approaches to community profiling and tackling social inclusion. The F4F strategy sets out a direction for the future, but at its heart the library service is split between those who embrace change and adopt a flexible approach and those who are rooted in traditions of a service that Black (2003) asserts has always had the interest of the middle-classes at its heart. This is supported by Pateman (1999/2000) who also observes that,

"…public library staff are part of the problem rather
than the solution…This makes the system self perpetuating
and has marginalised all previous attempts to tackle social
exclusion, such as community librarianship"

Social inclusion whilst being embedded in the role of the public library service through policy and strategy, does encounter obstacles through the disparity of their approaches to community engagement and social inclusion. The face of community life in the UK is continually changing and more cities and towns are becoming homes to foreign nationals seeking work or safety. The lack of prioritization of these groups could be indicative of several things; a complacency from within the library service to embrace change or that the proportion of people from these groups is low and therefore not a priority for that reason. Whatever the reason, for many the library could be the place that assists their entry into mainstream society. Removing institutional and cultural barriers to service delivery could be the first step to tackling social inclusion (Vincent, 2005).

5.4 Summary of chapter 5

Most library users visit the library at least once a month with the largest proportion visiting once a week or more. However, library users from socially excluded groups do frequent the library less so than non-excluded groups. The majority of library users do feel welcome in the public library but those from socially excluded groups do so to a lesser degree. Conversely they did feel the library connected them to the community more so than non-excluded users.

Public library users felt the library did actively involve itself in the community to a moderate extent. However, nearly all of the respondents were unaware that they could volunteer to become actively involved in the creation and delivery of public library service. This is in conflicts with the number activities carried out by the case study libraries and illustrates a possible need for community orientated library activities to be better publicized their achievements and activities. All respondent LLA's stated that the community should be actively engaged in the planning and delivery of services.

Public library users did feel overall that the library met their needs in terms of access, stock selection and service provision. Very few users could think of an extra service they would like to see, although several types of stock were identified as being in low supply, mainly academic and non-fiction material.

The priority groups for social inclusion initiatives still reflect those that are traditionally easier to reach. This may be a true reflection of the needs of the community, however in light of the usage of community profiling information and the depth of information gathered this in unlikely. As stated earlier, statistical information can become quickly out-dated therefore groups such as refugees, asylum seekers and migrant workers, the unemployed can be misrepresented or omitted entirely from available statistical data. Consequently it could be harder to assess their needs and cater for them sufficiently.

Social inclusion is on the agenda for most LLA's in the North West with the majority of respondents having a working definition of social inclusion in relation to their service. However, the depth of these definitions varies and this disparity is echoed by the contrasting views of staff in the case study libraries.

Chapter 6
Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Concluding reflections

This study aimed to investigate the approaches of public libraries in the North West towards community engagement and social inclusion. It reflects on the use of community profiling by local library authorities and the extent to which public libraries are engaging with their communities. A flexible research design was used which supported the inductive nature of the investigation. The triangulation of qualitative and quantitative methods provided the researcher with a wealth of data which was used to cross-validate the findings. This also enabled the researcher to present a holistic overview of the current climate and for several perspectives to examined.

On reflection, several unforeseen events did limit the scope of the study and these are outlined in detail in Chapter 3. However, it is worth noting that there were originally three aims to the study, the third examining the use of ICT in relation to social inclusion and community engagement. The size of the data gathered in relation to this aim was so substantial that it was felt it would provide a valid study on its own and the decision was made to remove the aim entirely. This aim is outlined below as one of the further recommendations for study.

The research findings below offer a glimpse into the reality of public libraries. It is hoped that, whilst no generalisations have been made with reference to the wider population, the findings themselves will help LLAs and public libraries to reflect not only on their own approaches but to look to each other for inspiration and advice. The discrepancies highlighted, between the approaches and viewpoints of LLAs and public library staff, do indicate a lack of synthesis overall from authority to authority and branch to branch. However, it is

felt that by continuing to share of best practice and through constructive reflection on how the needs of the community are evaluated and met, will help all libraries to provide an engaging and inclusive service.

6.2 Summary of findings

What follows if a summary of the findings in direct relation to the aims, objectives and research questions of the study.

The following objectives and research questions fulfil Aim 1: Investigate the extent to which local library authorities in the North West of England utilise community profiling.

Research objective A: The extent to which community profiling information influences the planning and delivering public library social inclusion initiatives

- Community profiling policies are not in place in all LLA's in the North West. However, the research demonstrates that presence of a policy does not necessarily guarantee the level of influence community profiling will have on the planning and delivery of public library orientated social inclusion initiatives. Overall approaches to the use of community profiling information seem to be heterogeneous with little regularity or consistency of approach between LLAs. This indicates a lack of understanding with regard to its validity as a methodological tool for assessing community need. It raises questions with regards to the overall commitment of LLA's to community engagement and social inclusion.

- The non-prescriptive guidelines on community profiling from central government could be contributing to the 'piecemeal' approach to social inclusion. The wealth of targets and service measures such as the PLISM,

do not appear to be synthesizing LLA approaches to social inclusion but rather succeeding alienating some library staff. A combination of the asymmetric approaches of LLAs to community profiling methods could be preventing the public library service from evolving into a wholly inclusive service.

- Central and local government hold the most influence over the allocation of funding for social inclusion initiatives through both the targets that are set on a national level and the funding they allocate on a local level. These two reasons are implicitly connected through the Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA). Partnerships are also used quite extensively to obtain funding and this can be seen as a positive move to engage with the community. However, if community profiling information is only used to a moderate extent when allocating funding then it could undermine attempts to locate relevant community groups with which to form 'strategic' partnerships with.

- By relying heavily on local government for funding which is implicitly driven by national targets, community profiling information may become surplus to requirement and done simply to 'tick boxes' rather than to proactively engage with the community.

Research objective B: The depth of local information gathered by LLAs through community profiling

- The majority of LLA's in the North West appear to collect community profiling at both Ward and Authority level, in adherence with the PLSIM guideline. Although there is evidence that not all LLA's are doing this.

- The majority of LLA's stated that community profiling is carried out by the library service themselves or by a combination of their department and

other council departments. A minority of LLA's did state that other council departments were totally responsible for carrying out their community profiles. Some of these profiles were then 'customised' to fit the library services. Where library services did gather the community profiling information, it was the responsibility of staff members form the Senior Management Teams

Research question i: Which community profiling methods are used?

- LLA's in the North West mainly rely on the National Statistics databases and user questionnaires for their community profiling information. However, these methods do not reflect the needs of the whole community. National statistics can rapidly become out of date and user questionnaires only capture the opinions of existing users. There is evidence that some LLAs do carry out more proactive methods such as interviews, community observation and discussion groups but this is minimal. It appears that community profiling is carried out away from the public domain and does not involve frontline staff, whose experience both at work and in the community would be of benefit.

The following objectives and research questions fulfil Aim 2: Investigate to the extent to which public libraries in the North West are engaging in their local communities.

Research objective C:

The extent to which library users in the North West of England feel engaged with their public library service

- The majority of library users do feel engaged at some level with the public library. However, the extent to which they are engaged with the library continues to be affected by their age, social status and sex. The research findings reinforce the observations made by other commentators that those 'hardest to reach' are the least engaged.

- Library users do feel the library is a welcoming place, however socially exclude users tend to feel less welcome. Conversely, socially excluded users felt the library gave then a greater sense of connectedness to the community than those who did *not* consider themselves to be excluded. This suggests that whilst the library itself may be intimidating, its presence in local areas supports a sense of community and belonging.

- In general library users do feel the library proactively involves itself in the community and most have a perception of the library's activities with the community, but few seem to have experienced it first hand. Public awareness of voluntary opportunities with the library is low despite all LLA's openly advocating it.

- The overall conclusions to be drawn are that public libraries do practice community engagement but on a sporadic basis. Their community activities are under-publicised and staff awareness of the concepts of social inclusion and community engagement varies from branch to branch.

Research objective D: The extent public libraries in the North West meeting the needs of the local community?

- *Accessibility*

    This was looked at with respect to both geographical and physical access to the building. Overall, most users did feel that they access to their public library on both counts was very or quite easy. Those who did not find it easy were visitors to central branches who had opted to use it over their more local branch. These results indicate that public libraries are adhering to PLSIM targets on community accessibility to public libraries despite the recent wave of branch closures.

- *Stock*

    Just over half of library users felt the stock selection met their needs, with the rest feeling it did only partially or not at all. This could be reflective of the centralization of book acquisition that many libraries have adopted. The recent introduction of a new stock procurement strategy may improve the situation. Those who did not feel the stock met their needs called largely for more academic and non-fiction titles. Some staff noted that stock at local branches gave users less choice and was inferior to central branch collection. They cited this as reason for low issue numbers.

- *Service Provision*

    Most users felt that the library service did meet the needs of the community to a moderate or great extent. The larger percentage of users opted for moderate however and this indicates that more work needs to be done to identify those needs. This could be because, as the results on community profiling in chapter 4 indicate, despite the use of community profiling by LLAs, the information gathered is under utilized and superficial.

Research question ii: Which socially excluded groups are considered a priority for LLA's in the North West?

- The types of socially excluded groups which are considered a priority represent the more traditional socially excluded groups such as young people, the elderly, the disabled and the housebound. The majority of LLA's do not view the 'harder to reach' groups as a priority for their library services. This includes groups such as asylum seekers, refugees, ex-offenders, travelers and LGBT. The attitudes of some public library staff also reflect an unwillingness to fully embrace the role libraries have in tackling social inclusion. This evidence supports assertions by commentators that the library service is a 'classist' institution which fails to meet the needs of those who rely on it the most. If public libraries are to become truly inclusive they need to adjust to the changing face of UK communities. Again a more creative approach to community profiling that is proactively used to develop social inclusion initiatives based on solid definitions could help to engage these groups and support the development of cohesive communities

Research question iii: What service additions do public library users feel would help to meet their needs?

- Most library users felt that there were no other services the library could provide to meet their needs. This positively suggests that core services in themselves are sufficient and that libraries need to work within the framework of existing services to engage the community. Nevertheless, the most popular suggestions of those users who did feel other services were required included a crèche and a café. Both of which could help to proactively meet the needs of some users and create a more welcoming environment.

6.3 Recommendations

6.3.1 For Public Libraries

There is room for improvement in the area of stock selection. Wider provision of non-fiction stock including academic texts related to higher education subjects would help to meet the needs of users. More creative thinking with regards to the services on offer is also advocated, the provision of safe, enclosed areas for young children in particular. Better marketing of the service and what it can offer may also enhance user satisfaction with the service and facilitate community engagement. There also needs to be more concentration of social inclusion initiatives centred on those 'hardest to reach'. The researcher suggests this can be done in several ways; through greater use of partnerships with existing community groups; by making frontline staff more informed about the concepts of community engagement and social inclusion to ensure best practice is carried out authority wide and not restricted to random branches.

6.3.2 For local library authorities

The contrariety of LLA approaches to community profiling is concerning and should be addressed. All LLAs should have a policy in place that is embedded in the strategic frameworks of their public libraries. Regional guidelines similar to those created by MLA East Midlands would go some way to facilitating a cohesive approach to profiling. They would also inspire a more creative approach to gathering the information and engaging with the community itself. The researcher also suggests specific training should be given in community profiling to senior management staff of public libraries to encourage them to carry out their own community profiling.

6.3.3 Further studies

- A study into the availability of funding for long term and short term social inclusion initiatives would help to establish how funding is allocated and the extent to which its restrict attempts by public libraries to develop social inclusion initiatives.

- A deeper study into the why certain socially excluded groups are repeatedly considered a priority over other 'hard to reach' groups. This would help to identify gaps in current social inclusion approaches and source best practice examples. This would build upon the initial research carried out for this study and possibly utilize the Delphi study approach incorporating senior management from both public libraries and LLA's nationwide.

- A study into ICT and public libraries. This would enable public libraries to better understand the impact ICT can have on community and help them to utilize their ICT resources more proactively. Such a study could explore further the perceived benefits of ICT has on community networks and help libraries to better understand the physical and social benefits ICT can for individuals and the libraries themselves.

- A study looking as public libraries websites and how much freedom they have to develop websites that accurately reflect their services and actively interact with library users. Further investigation into this would illuminate this area and help public libraries to better utilize their web presence in the information age.

- A study into the attitudes of staff towards social inclusion, taking into account different variables such as age, sex, experience and social class. Further exploratory research into this would help to further identify the organizational barriers to social inclusion that are manifest in the culture of public libraries.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Local library authority questionnaire

About yourself / your authority

> 1. **What is your job title?**
>
>
> 2. **Which local library authority do you work for?**

Community Profiling

> **3. Does your local library authority have a community profiling policy?**
>
> ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Under development
>
> *(if No please state why in the space below and **go to Q8**)*
>
>
> **4. To what extent is information gathered through community profiling taken into consideration when allocating funding for public library social inclusion initiatives?** *Please place X in the relevant box:*
>
> A great extent Moderate extent A small extent Not at all
> ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
>
> **5. Is the community profiling information gathered at:**
> *Please place X in the relevant box:*
>
> ☐ Authority level ☐ Ward level ☐ Both

6. Who is responsible for carrying out community profiling in your local library authority?

7. Which of the following community profiling methods are used to gather information? *Please place a X next to all that apply*

☐ User Questionnaires   ☐ Group discussions

☐ Interviews   ☐ Community observation

☐ Statistical data   (*Please specify source(s) in space below*)

☐ Other (*Please specify in space below)*

8. Who is responsible for the maintenance of the public library website:

   Please place X in the relevant box:

☐ Local Authority IT department

☐ Public Library Staff

☐ Both

☐ Other

(please specify in the space below)

9. How much control do Librarians have over:

   Please place X in the relevant box

a) The style of the public library website?

Total control	Reasonable control	Minimal control	No control
☐	☐	☐	☐

b) The functionality of the public library website?

Total control	Reasonable control	Minimal control	No control
☐	☐	☐	☐

c) The content of the public library website?

Total control	Reasonable control	Minimal control	No control
☐	☐	☐	☐

10. Is the public library website independent of the council's corporate format?

Please place X in the relevant box:

☐Yes   ☐No

Social Inclusion

11. What is your library authority's working definition of the term 'social inclusion'?

12. To what extent do you feel the local library authority's social inclusion initiatives are influenced by the: *Please place X in the relevant box*

a) Central government's national library targets:

A great extent	Moderate extent	A small extent	Not at all
☐	☐	☐	☐

b) Community Profiling information:

A great extent	Moderate extent	A small extent	Not at all
☐	☐	☐	☐

13a. How many social inclusion initiatives are currently being carried out by your library authority? (Approximately)

13b. Of these initiatives how many are: *(Please place number in the brackets)*

Long term (e.g. ongoing)   **[   ]**   Short term (e.g. fixed duration)   **[   ]**

14. Out of the following options, which forms do your social inclusion initiatives take?   *Please place a X next to all that apply*

☐ Promotion of core services to specific library *user* groups

☐ Promotion of core services to specific *non-user* groups

☐ Access to ICT via the library website (i.e. e-government, Peoples Network)

☐ Stock provision (i.e. language, format)

☐ Creation of new services in response to community need

☐ Facilitating easier access to services (i.e. building access, stock availability)

☐ Partnerships with other public services and community groups

☐ Community involvement in the delivery of library services (i.e. volunteering)

☐ Other *(please specify in the space below)*

15. To what extent do you think it is the public library's role to tackle social exclusion? *Please place X in the relevant box:*

A great extent	Moderate extent	A small extent	Not at all
☐	☐	☐	☐

16. Do you feel the community should be actively engaged in the development of

public library services? *Please place X in the relevant box:*

☐Yes   ☐No

17a. Is your local authority considering closing one or more public library branches in the next 12 - 18 months? *Please place X in the relevant box:*

☐Yes **(Go to Q17b)**   ☐No **(Go to Q18)**

17b. Why are you considering branch closures? *Please place a X next to all that apply*

☐Financial reasons   ☐Lack of use   ☐Centralisation of Services

☐Relocation/redesigning of building   ☐Other *(please specify in the space below)*

18. To what extent do you feel the current Public Library Service Impact Measures go towards helping the public library service tackle social inclusion?
Please place X in the relevant box:

A great extent   Moderate extent   A small extent   Not at all

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

19. What was your local library authority's total expenditure on social inclusion initiatives for 2005? (Approximately)

20. Which of the following are the main funding sources for public library social inclusion initiatives in your local library authority? *Please place a X next to all that apply*

☐National Government   ☐Local Government

☐Partnerships   ☐Grants

☐Other (*please specify in the space below*)

Library Users

21. Which of the following socially excluded groups do you feel are a *priority* for your local library authority?   *Please place a X next to all that apply*

☐Black and Minority Ethnic Groups

☐Refugees and Asylum Seekers

☐Mental Health

☐Young People

☐Travellers

☐Unemployed

☐Ex-Offenders

☐Low-income Families

☐Single parent families

☐Disabled

☐Migrant Workers

☐Rural Communities

☐Homeless

☐Elderly

☐Housebound

☐Looked-after Children

☐Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender

☐Women

☐Other

(Please specify in the space below)

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire, your co-operation is greatly appreciated. Please return the completed questionnaire via email lip05jmc@shef.ac.uk or by post to Jo Cocker, 98 Mornington Road, Heaton, Bolton, BL1 4ED, by **Monday 17th July 2006.** If you are interested in obtaining a copy of the research findings please contact my dissertation supervisor, Barry Eaglestone (b.eaglestone@shef.ac.uk) at University of Sheffield after September 2006.

I am also looking for a small sample of people to interview via email or telephone regarding the topics of this questionnaire to gain further insight. If you *would* like to participate further please enter your details below:

Name:

Contact Number:

Or contact me directly on 07790589905 or via the email address below.

If you have any additional comments regarding the topics covered in this questionnaire please feel free to add them below. Use as much space as you need to.

Appendix 2: Public library user questionnaire

Public Library Service

---

1. How often do you use this Public Library?

    Weekly   **[ ]**   Fortnightly **[ ]**   Monthly   **[ ]**

    Other *(specify)*

2. What do you see as the *main role/function* of the public library?

    Lending Books (*and other material*)   **[   ]**
    Providing access to information (*information provider*)   **[   ]**
    Lifelong Learning (*Education*)   **[   ]**
    Promoting cultural awareness (*Arts*)   **[   ]**
    Other (*please specify*)   **[   ]**

3. Which of your public library's services do you find the *most* useful?

4. Are there any other services that you would like to the library to provide?

Community Engagement

5a. Do you feel your public library is a welcoming place?

         Yes **[ ]** *Go to 5c*   No **[ ]** *Go to 5b*   Don't know **[ ]**

5b. If No, why?

5c. How welcome do you feel?

     Extremely welcome   Very welcome   Quite welcome   Welcome
        [ ]   **[ ]**   **[ ]**   **[ ]**

6. To what extent does your public library make you feel connected with your local community?

     A great extent   Moderate extent   Small extent   Not at all
       [ ]   **[ ]**   **[ ]**   **[ ]**

7. How easy it is for you to access your public library?

  a. Geographically
  b.
     Very easy   Quite easy   Easy   Not easy
      [ ]   **[ ]**   **[ ]**   **[ ]** *Go to 7ai*

7ai. Why is it not easy?

b. Physical access (to the building, to the shelves/stock)

     Very easy   Quite easy   Easy   Not easy
      [ ]   **[ ]**   **[ ]**   **[ ]** *Go to 7bi*

7bi. Why is it not easy?

8a. Do you feel the stock selection meets your needs?

  Yes **[ ]**   Partially **[ ]** *Go to 8b*   No **[ ]** *Go to 8b*   Don't know **[ ]**

8b. What type of stock/material would help to meet your needs?

9. To what extent do you feel the public library involves itself in the community?

A great extent	Moderate extent	Small extent	Not at all
[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

10a. To what extent do you feel your public library service meets the needs of the local community?

A great extent	Moderate extent	Small extent	Not at all
[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

10b. Are you aware of any opportunities to become involved in the creation and delivery of public library services to meet the needs of the community?

Yes   [ ]   No   [ ]

Public Library Website

11a. Do you have access to a computer at home?

Yes **[ ]** *Go to Q11b*   No **[ ]** *Go to Q12a*

11b. If Yes; do you have an internet connection?

Yes **[ ]**   No **[ ]**

12a. Do you use the computer provision provided by your local public library?

Yes **[ ]** *Go to 13a*   No **[ ]** *Go to 12b*

12b. Why do you not use the library's computer provision? *Go to Q14*

13a. What is your main reason for using the public library computers?

13b. How have you benefited from having free computer access?

14. Have you ever accessed the public library website?

Yes **[ ]** *go to Q15*   No **[ ]** *Go to Q16*

15. How do you rate the quality of the local information on the library website?

Very good	Quite good	Good	Not very good	Poor
[ ]	**[ ]**	**[ ]**	**[ ]**	**[ ]**

16. Are you familiar with the 'People's Network'?

Yes **[ ]**   No **[ ]**

Social Inclusion

17. Out of the following groups, which, if any do you feel *most accurately* describes you?

☐ Black or Ethnic Minority

☐ Refugee or Asylum Seeker

☐ Mental Health

☐ Young Person (16-19)

☐ Traveler

☐ Unemployed

☐ Ex-Offender

☐ Low-income family

☐ Single parent family

☐ Disabled

☐ Migrant Worker

☐ Rural Community resident

☐ Homeless

☐ Elderly

☐Housebound

☐Child in Care

☐Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender

☐None of the above

18. Which of the following age brackets do you fall into?

16 – 19 **[ ]**   20 – 24 **[ ]**
25 – 34 **[ ]**   35 – 59 **[ ]**
60 - 74 **[ ]**   75+ **[ ]**

19. Is the respondent :

        Male   **[ ]**   Female   **[ ]**

Thank you for taking part in this questionnaire.

Appendix 3: Case study email request to public libraries

Dear…………………,

I am a Masters student at the University of Sheffield currently studying for my MSc Information Management. As part of my final dissertation project, I am conducting a research study into the funding decisions of Local Library Authorities and the extent to which the needs of the local community are considered and met. This will incorporate an examination of related issues such as community profiling, social inclusion and community cohesion in relation to the role of the public library. The research project will be conducted over a three month period, running from June to August 2006.

To help me with my research I am looking for public libraries in the North West region to participate in my study and was wondering if you would be willing to allow your library to be used as a case study in my research. For details of what this would involve please see the attached information sheet, which outlines all the relevant details pertaining to the study. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on Mobile: 07790589905 / Home: 01204 – 407235 or via email lip05jmc@shef.ac.uk.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you,

Yours sincerely,

Jo Cocker

Appendix 4: LLA email questionnaire request

Hello,

I am a post-graduate student at the University of Sheffield currently researching the relationship between social inclusion and public libraries for my final dissertation project. As part of my research, I am examining the approaches of local library authorities in the North West towards social inclusion and related areas including community profiling.

Would yourself, or another member of the Senior Management Team be willing to
complete the attached questionnaire which should take approximately 20-25 minutes to complete? Your response will be integral to my research and gratefully received.

****All respondents will be kept anonymous and no individual local authority will be identified in my final report****

Upon completion, please save the document as 'Returning Questionnaire' and return to lip05jmc@shef.ac.uk or print off and post to Jo Cocker, 98 Mornington Road, Heaton, Bolton, BL1 4ED by Monday 17th July 2006. If you have any problems with the questionnaire or further questions please do not hesitate to contact me on 07790589905 or via the above email.

Thank you for your time,

Best wishes,

Jo Cocker

Appendix 5: Email to Pat Coleman

Dear Pat,

I am a master's student at the University of Sheffield currently researching for my final dissertation project on public libraries and community engagement. I am trying to trace the author of a book entitled "Whose Problem? The Public Library and the Disadvantaged" authored by Patricia M Coleman. Could you tell me if that would be yourself and if so would it be possible for me to carry out a short email/phone interview with you with regards to the above topics? Thank you for your time,

Best wishes,

Jo Cocker

Appendix 6: Email to Sally Middleton

Dear Sally,

I am a Masters student at the University of Sheffield currently studying for my MSc Information Management. As part of my final dissertation project, I am conducting a research study into the extent to which Local Library Authorities and their serving Public Libraries engage with the needs of the local community through their use of community profiling, funding allocation and website accessibility. This will incorporate an examination of related issues such as social inclusion and community cohesion in relation to the role of the public library in modern Britain.

Having read a number of articles authored by yourself over recent years which have discussed many of the above issues, I was wondering if it would be possible to conduct an interview with you to gain a deeper perspective of current thinking in this arena and which could be included to support my research context. I would be aiming to conduct the interview during July 2006 and would be happy to carry it out by phone or via email, whichever would be most convenient. Please see the attached information sheet, which outlines all the relevant details pertaining to the study. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on Mobile: 07790589905 / Home: 01204 – 407235 or via email lip05jmc@shef.ac.uk.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you,

Yours sincerely,

Jo Cocker

Appendix 7: Email to Sally Middleton outlining interview topics

Hi Sally,

The type of interview I wish to carry out is an exploratory one, which adopts a conversational, freestyle approach. Consequently, I have decided not to create specific questions for the interview as I think that will restrict the flow of the conversation and I am more interested in your opinions and ideas rather than gathering factual evidence. I can however outline the specific areas I wish to discuss so you can be aware of the topics I am interested in exploring with you, although I appreciate that we may not be able to cover everything during the conversation.

The main areas of interest are:

Community engagement in relation to Public Libraries: key points/best practices that libraries could adopt to successfully engage with the community; the role of the public library in modern society.

The relationship between social inclusion and social capital (i.e. the impact public libraries can have in tackling social exclusion and improving the community networks and opportunities for local people).

The funding availability and structures for public library social inclusion initiatives.

How public libraries can proactively overcome barriers to social inclusion.

The re-branding of public libraries and the consumerist approach to public library services.

The current government's approach to the public library services and the recently published Public Library Service Impact Measures.

I hope this is alright, if there are any problems please do not hesitate to call me. With your consent I would also like to record the conversation rather than take notes to ensure accuracy and avoid misinterpretation. Please find attached

an information sheet which provides further details of the research project.
Thank you once again and I look forward to speaking with you on Thursday.

Best wishes,

Jo Cocker

Appendix 8: Figures at a glance

Number of local library authorities who have a community profiling policy in place or under development

- 8/13 LLA's who responded did have a community profile in place.
- 5/13 LLA's had one under development

The influence of community profiling on the allocation of funding for social inclusion initiatives

- The majority of LLA's in the North West, 9/13, considered community profiling only to a 'small' or 'moderate extent' when allocating funding for social inclusion initiatives.
- 2 considered it to a great extent and 2 'not at all'
- Central government national library targets are a greater influence on local library authority funding than community profiling information.
- LLA's that considered national targets to be of 'great' influence and only 3 of those thought community profiling was of equal influence.
- LLA's that thought national targets were of 'moderate' influence 2 of which thought community profiling had only a 'small' influence or none at all.
- Only 2 LLAs considered community profiling to have a greater influence than national targets.

The usefulness of the PLSIM in tackling social inclusion

- 1/13 LLA said they felt the PLSIM helped them tackle social inclusion to a 'great' extent.
- The majority of LLAs (8/13) stated that they thought it helped to a moderate extent.
- Nearly a quarter (4/13) of them felt it only helped to a 'small' extent or not at all.

Main funding sources for social inclusion initiatives.

- All 13 respondent LLA's cited local government as the biggest funding provider for social inclusion initiatives.
- The second biggest source of funding was partnerships with 10/13 LLAs stating this option.
- Grants and national (central) government were the lowest sources relied upon with 7/13 and 6/13 naming them as funding sources respectively.
- Other sources were identified as variants on the 'grant stream of funding such as the Paul Hamlyn and Laser Foundation funds.

The level to which community information is collected.

- 2 LLA collected community profiling information at authority level.
- 3 LLA collected community profiling information at ward level.
- 8 LLA collected community profiling information at both authority and ward levels.
  - o Of those 8 LLA's who collected community profiling information at both required levels. Only 1 of them considered it to a great extent when allocating funding. 4 considered it moderately, 2 to a small extent and 1 not at all.

Who is responsible for carrying out community profiling?

- 7/13 LLAs stated library services were responsible for their community profiles
- 3/13 LLAs cited other council departments
- 2 LLAs cited both
- 1 LLA did not specify

  - Where library services were responsible it was usually the duty of a senior librarian or member of the library's senior management team.
  - Where other council departments were responsible, 2 added that it was later customised to 'fit' the library

Which community profiling methods are used?

- All 13 respondent LLAs cited statistical data as the main method used for capturing community profiling information, specifically the national statistics website.
- 9/13 respondents also cited user questionnaires.
- 4/13 respondents cited group discussion
- 4/13 respondents cited 'other' including local staff knowledge, local council intelligence and consultation projects
- 3/13 respondents cited community observation
- 2/13 respondents cited interviews

Which socially excluded groups are considered a priority for LLA's in the North West?

The numbers in brackets below show how many LLA's out of 13 respondents stated that group as a priority.

- The top 4 priority groups for LLA's are:

  - o Joint 1st: Young Persons (16-19) /Housebound (12/13)
  - o Joint 2nd: Mental Health / Disabled (11/13)
  - o Joint 3rd: Elderly / Children in Care (10/13)
  - o Joint 4th: Black and Ethnic Minorities / Low income families (9/13)

- The lowest 4 priorities in descending order:

  - o Unemployed   (6/13)
  - o Refugees & Asylum Seekers / Travellers / Migrant Workers/ LGBT / Women (5/13)
  - o Ex-offenders (4/13)
  - o Rural community residents (1/13)

Public Library usage:

Overall:

Users *not* from a socially excluded group	54/96
Users from a socially excluded group	42/96

By frequency of visits to the public library*:*

- Weekly   37/96 (38.5%)
- Fortnightly   25/96 (24%)
- Monthly   20/96 (20.8%)
- Other   15/96 (15.6%)

By socially excluded groups (42/96 of the whole sample):

- Most frequent users: Single Parent Family   8/42

    Black and Ethnic Minority   7/42

    Unemployed   5/42

    Elderly   5/42

- Least frequent users: Refugees and asylum seekers 1/42

    Migrant Workers   1/42

    Rural community resident   1/42

    Migrant Workers   1/42

By sex:

- Male   42/96 (43.8%)
- Female   54/96 (56.3%)

By age:

- 16-19   6/96   (6.3%)
- 20-24   8/96   (8.3%)
- 21/96 (21.7%)
- 44/96 (45.8%)
- 15/96 (15.6%)
- 75+   2/96 (2.1%)

How welcome did users feel in the public library?

The number of users who felt welcome?

- Yes   94/96 (97.9%)
- No   2/96   (2.1%)

<u>How welcome did they feel?</u>

- Extremely welcome   16/96 (16.7%)
- Very Welcome   51/96 (53.1%)
- Quite Welcome   21/96 (21.9%)
- Welcome   8/96   (8.3%)

How connected did the public library make users feel to the local community?

- A great extent   19/96 (19.8%)
- A moderate extent   43/96 (44.8%)
- A small extent   24/96 (25%)
- Not at all   10/96 (10.4%)

How proactive did users feel the public library was in the local community? (NB. One respondent refused to answer, making the number of respondent 95 for this question)

- A great extent   19/95 (20%)
- A moderate extent   44/95 (45.8%)
- A small extent   21/95 (21.1%)
- Not at all   11/95 (11.6%)

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Number of public library users aware of voluntary opportunities within the library

- Yes   18/96 (18.8%)
- No   78/96 (81.3%)

Are public library user needs being met?

<u>Number of users who find it very easy to access their public library:</u>

- Geographically   68/96 (70.8%)
- Physically   70/96 (73.2%)

<u>Do public library users feel the library stock selection meets their needs?</u>

- Yes   57/96 (59.4%)
- No   28/96 (29.2%)
- Partially   8/96 (8.3%)
- Don't know   3/96 (3.1%)

- 19.8% felt there were other services the library could offer to meet their needs