AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE INFORMATION NEEDS OF FAMILY HISTORY RESEARCHERS.

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Abstract

This dissertation is concerned with the information needs of family historians, who conduct their research as a leisure activity. Family history research encompasses both genealogy in its purest form and looking at other socio-political aspects of ancestors' lives. The investigation into family historians' information needs looks at both how they describe the information they require and what sources of information they use. More specifically, it presents: the motivations of family historians and the purpose of their research; the approaches that family historians take and the barriers they come across as they pursue their research; and the characteristics of the information that they require, or their information preferences. The analysis includes looking at the information-seeking behaviour of family historians.

By surveying opinion on different family history resources, eliciting responses from participants about how they approach their research and finding out what particularly interests family historians, this research builds a picture of the wide spectrum of information needs amongst this group of information users and provides some insight into their information-seeking behaviour. The research places itself within the constructivist paradigm, taking an inductive approach but using a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods: questionnaires, which include space for qualitative responses and semi-structured interviews. Analysis of qualitative data involved looking for emerging patterns and grouping the data under themes.

The main interest of family historians is genealogy, or constructing their family tree. Aside from this, parts of family history which look at the wider historical context are also very popular motivations. Family historians like to approach public libraries, living relatives, and archives or records offices to do their research. Family history resources on the internet are very

popular. Pay-per-view sites are heavily used, but free sites are more likely to be recommended by family historians. Subscription sites such as Ancestry (http://www.ancestry.com) are popular, especially when they are freely available on People's Network computers.

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1.0 Introduction

   Libraries which anticipate the needs of family history researchers will improve the quality of their service provision towards them, (Bever, 2003). The value of this to libraries is clear to Webster (2005), who notes the increasing interest in family history as a hobby, especially after the BBC series *Who Do You Think You Are.* A working definition of information needs analysis is:

> "We should be evaluating the need people have for information, the wants they express for it, and the demands and use they make of it," (Nicholas, 2000:19).

Therefore, it is necessary to ask public library customers with an interest in family history about their specific needs and about the resources they use to address these needs. Kuhlthau (1999) advocates research into information-seeking within a specific context and therefore this investigation's concern is the context of family historians using the two participating public library services. An analysis of how family history researchers perceive and describe their information needs and to what use, if any, they put the information that they find, is also necessary, if local studies services are to effectively tailor their provision to meet the needs of their customers. It is imperative to detect gaps in service provision so that difficulties researchers experience in information-seeking are identified. Finding correlations between family historians' information 'wants' and information usage helps to build a picture of their information-seeking behaviour. A dissertation undertaken three years ago in the Department of Information Studies at the University of Sheffield studied the provision of services to family history researchers, and suggested the information needs of family history researchers as a further research topic, (Parton, 2003). This topic area does not appear to have attracted a great deal of attention from researchers.

1.1 Aim

This dissertation aims to investigate how varied the information needs of family history researchers are, in order to establish priorities for service provision in the local studies library services taking part in the project.

1.2 Objectives

- To foster greater understanding of the motivations of family history researchers.

    -What motivates people to pursue family history research?

    -What aspects of family history are of particular interest?

- To identify the key approaches to information-seeking that family historians take.

    -What sources of information do family historians approach?

    -How far are they willing to travel in order to conduct their research?

    -What puzzles do people come across and how do they solve them?

- To identify the characteristics of the information ideally sought by family history researchers: its format, quality, nature, cost, or availability.

    -Which are the most important factors to family history researchers when they are deciding where to look for information?

    -What do family historians think about family history resources on the internet?

-Are free websites more popular than pay-per-view or subscription?

-Are pay-per-view and subscription websites perceived to be of better quality?

1.3 Scope.

The investigation will concentrate on the information needs of people who research their family history as a hobby or pastime, and not those of professional genealogists. This dissertation treats genealogy or tracing a family tree as one aspect of family history, which is concerned with looking at ancestral connections in their wider historical context. Therefore, this research is not exclusively concerned with genealogy, but with family history as a broad topic. The terms 'family historian' or 'family history researcher' are used to refer to people who pursue family history in this sense. The term 'genealogist' is applied to those who are only interested in tracing their family tree. Derbyshire County Libraries and Warrington Library, Museum and Archives Service agreed that the researcher could approach their customers with regards to their participation in the project.

1.4 Background to Library Services.

The library service which will hereafter be referred to as Derbyshire Libraries comprises of forty-six branch libraries and thirteen mobile libraries. It is run by Derbyshire County Council and serves a population of approximately 750,000. The library service which will hereafter be referred to as Warrington Libraries comprises of a central library, a museum, twelve branch libraries and a mobile library. It is part of the unitary authority Warrington Borough Council and serves a population of approximately 200,000. The promotional activities of these services with regards to family history will now be described, as these may impact on their customers' awareness and usage of certain resources.

1.4.1 Background to Library Services to Family Historians: Derbyshire Libraries.

At the time that the research was undertaken, Derbyshire Libraries were running courses and promotional events for family historians. The Local Studies Library at Matlock provides a printed leaflet about the services that it provides. Beginners' sessions are offered to those wishing to pursue their family history every Wednesday morning and there is a booking facility. There are two forms that customers can fill in to help staff understand their information needs: one is about interests in family history, and the other is about experience of using ICT. Many leaflets are provided in a pack with information on a variety of websites: local, national, and international; free and paid.

1.4.2 Background to Library Services to Family Historians: Warrington Libraries.

At the point at which the research took place, Warrington Libraries was running promotional events and courses for people interested in family history. Customers taking these courses are provided with packs of printed information such as book lists, what birth, marriage and death certificates contain and what census records can add to family history research. Guidance notes are also provided about more general aspects of ICT such as setting up an e-mail account, how to make online payments, and how to print from websites. Leaflets are provided with many suggestions of both locally specific and national websites from which to retrieve information about family history. The service does not accept any responsibility for the quality, accuracy or availability of information accessed through the internet. However, more detailed guidance is provided on the courses about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (http://www.familysearch.org), 1901 Census (http://www.1901censusonline.com/), Ancestry.com (http://ancestrylibrary.com/), Free BMD (http://www.freebmd.org.uk), UK

BMD (http://www.ukbmd.org.uk). Warrington Libraries subscribes to the library edition of Ancestry, and makes this freely available to customers through the People's Network computers.

2.0 Literature Review

Due to the lack of research literature on the information needs of family historians, the researcher has chosen to conduct two short surveys: one on current literature on library service provision to family historians, and a second on literature for family historians. Finally, the researcher will review some research literature on information needs analysis as part of information-seeking behaviour research, at a more general level.

2.1 Literature Review: Library Service Provision to Family Historians.

Harvey (1983) writes a book designed to inform library service provision to genealogists and family historians. He defines family history as being concerned with the wider historical context and genealogy as primarily concerned with constructing a family tree. However, he qualifies this by saying that these terms are interchangeable. The book provides guidance about sources of family history information pre-internet. It discusses the mistakes and limitations to the International Genealogical Index in its microfilm form. The advice that Harvey gives centres on collection development and organising family history material in an accessible way. The fact that genealogists are interested in primary source material raises difficulties to do with selecting items of stock on the basis of potential future usage. He argues that librarians should be prepared to welcome family historians or genealogists.

Like Harvey, Kovacs (2003) provides advice for librarians and looks at the challenges associated with dealing with these customers at the public library's reference desk. She acknowledges that the level of need varies between researchers, and that it is a skill in itself to distinguish both the level and what sort of information is required. Moving forward in time, she discusses the impact of family history material on the internet. She

expresses some skepticism about the usefulness of the Web's genealogical resources:

> "Success in helping patrons with genealogical research
> is the result of careful reference interviews combined
> with a keen understanding of what the Web can – and
> cannot – provide," (Kovacs, 2003:44).

Her approach to family history research is to seek information from living family members in the first instance, then searching for physical documentation from archives and records offices. The requests may arrive at these organizations by email, but the information generally arrives at the researcher in a physical format. Similarly, Webster (2005) advocates the promotion of printed resources to researchers. Thus, Kovacs' view of resources is to use the Web in ways in which it has already proved to be a useful information retrieval mechanism.

Webster (2005) holds the view that genealogical web resources which charge a subscription or pay-per-view fee, provide a higher quality service than those which are free. However, he cites cost as a potential barrier to accessing family history-related information, alongside not owning a computer and being afraid to ask for help from a librarian. Web-based information, whilst raising these accessibility issues, can overcome the barrier of physical access. Pettigrew, Durrance and Unruh (2002) cite one instance of a benefit gained from using networked resources to research family history:

> "...a home-bound person who used the network to
> research his family's genealogy because of its
> comprehensive organization of local resources,
> including public library, county agency and local
> historical association materials..." (Pettigrew, Durrance
> & Unruh, 2002:897).

Their study aimed to find out the information needs, the information-seeking strategies and the barriers to accessing community information in public networked libraries. They conclude that defining what the barriers are to

accessing information leads information professionals to develop resources with better accessibility.

This theme is taken up by Bever (2003), who looks at how public libraries can respond to information needs in their website design. She lists the most common local and family history questions, and relates them to the ways in which deaths are recorded. Apart from cemetery records, tombstone transcriptions, death records and obituaries, she also suggests that library websites should provide a list of epidemics, battles and disasters causing fatalities.

> "Providing the background information specific to your service area gives your users the context needed to overcome the obstacles in their research," (Bever, 2003:50).

Providing links to electronic records, or directions to physical records on a website can help people to access the information they require, and the chronological list can then allow amateur researchers to estimate the date of death of a relative. She explores the issues surrounding the recording of cemetery transcriptions, acknowledging that there are limitations to the quality of information provided in both print and online formats. These shortcomings centre around the fact that there is no universal style or format for producing a cemetery transcription record. However, she does advocate the use of websites with cemetery transcriptions because of these benefits: they are updated easily; they are fast and easy to access, and also cheap to use.

Thus far, the literature on service provision to family historians reveals that librarians disagree about the value and usefulness of web-based resources in family history research. A key interest of this investigation into the information needs of family historians is whether these opinions on web-based resources are reflected amongst library customers, and to what

degree they use these resources to answer their information needs in this area.

2.2 Literature Review: Publications for Family Historians.

Recent issues of commercial magazines and a selection of books on family history were surveyed. Serials such as *Practical Family History* provide tips on research, reviews of resources and information about resources: what they can and cannot tell you. *Family Tree Magazine* contains examples of success by both amateur family historians and professional genealogists and lots of information about resources. The researcher is wary of possible bias in these magazines towards promoting those resources which take up advertising space in the publication. All the family history magazines contain letters pages where readers can ask both other readers and the expert editorial team of the magazine to help them with their research. Authors of books disagree about defining the terms 'family history' and 'genealogy' and about which of these is the more academically valuable sort of research.

Rogers (1983) advocates studying pure genealogy over family history. He gives advice on starting points for genealogical research: on how to choose which branch of the family to research and on what questions to ask older living relatives. Hey (1987) on the other hand advocates family history over pure genealogy as for him, looking at the wider historical context is important. The case studies presented in the book emphasise this importance of context. Herber (1997) takes a middle view between Rogers and Hey in that he views genealogy as the starting point for family history research. He warns of the difficulties and the frustrating aspects of family history such as not being able to find any records. He provides tips on looking for clues in research such as Christian names shared by parents and

children, to determine the correct record. He advocates cross-checking different information from different sources.

Readers of family history magazines write in describing problems in their research. Most of these problems are about the difficulty of tracing birth, marriage, death or census records, (Derbyshire Family History Society, 2006a & 2006b; Practical Family History, 2006c & 2006d; Family History Monthly, 2006a & 2006b; Family Tree Magazine, 2006b). Articles in these magazines focus on these problems in more detail. For example, Barber (2006) presents the problem of ancestors changing their surnames, sometimes to cover up illegitimacy, and the difficulty of finding correct records for them. Similarly, Ashby (2006) describes an ancestor lying about his age. A more generic difficulty is discussed by Beadle (2006): finding very similar records of name and date of birth for two different people, and the challenge of eliminating the wrong record to establish the correct ancestral connection. One problem which makes it difficult to trace correct records is that of illegitimacy. O'Neill (2006) writes an article about how Bastardy Examination Records or Bastardy Returns which are held in county records offices can help trace the fathers of illegitimate children.

Magazine experts then give advice on overcoming these difficulties of tracing records. Their suggestions are often similar to the advice of Herber (1997); about searching more than one resource, and checking findings against different sources, (Practical Family History, 2006c; Family History Monthly, 2006a & 2006b; Family Tree Magazine, 2006a & 2006b). One piece of advice in Family History Monthly (2006a) is about checking the handwriting on original documents for clerical errors. This is just one part of the contextual information on census records provided in the book by Higgs (2005). This book describes the function of censuses at the time they were recorded and what researchers can find out from them now. It looks at the mistakes and limitations of the census and provides tips on how to read them

correctly. The article by Hawkings (2006) adds further information about census records and the numbering of houses. Writing with a similar purpose to Higgs, Tate (1969) describes the historical context of parish records and what has been kept where. The book provides guidance on the changing location of parish records over time. Similarly, Hey (1987) describes family histories written in the past.

The difficulty of tracing records becomes more complex when searching for records of Scottish or Irish ancestors. Various magazines and writers provide advice on how to go about this specifically, (White, 2006; Practical Family History, 2006a & 2006c; Family History Monthly, 2006a & 2006b). Similarly, problems and advice about tracing foreign ancestors, or ancestors who were British but lived abroad at some point, are presented in several magazines, (Practical Family History, 2006c & 2006d; Family History Monthly 2006a ; Family Tree Magazine 2006a & 2006b). Often problems can be to do with travel. Greene (2006) describes the family history trail taking you to somewhere unexpected and then this becomes a geographical barrier as travel is difficult. An example of a family history researcher formulating a strategy to overcome geographical barriers can be found in Practical Family History, (2006b). The strategy is to exchange research tasks: someone in one location does research for someone else who will reciprocate at another location.

Another common set of enquiries and suggestions were to do with finding out information about the occupations of ancestors. This could be general (Derbyshire Family History Society, 2006b; Neill, 2006) or about specific occupations, such as: the military (Practical Family History, 2006c; Family Tree Magazine 2006a; Family History Monthly, 2006b); nurses (Family History Monthly, 2006a); police and postmen (Family History Monthly, 2006b); and civil engineers (Family Tree Magazine, 2006b). For

specific occupations, the expert usually referred the reader to a specialist archive.

In summary, magazines provide a medium through which genealogists of varying degrees of expertise can exchange information. Books add further in-depth contextual information, and expert advice to inform the genealogist's research process.

2.3 Literature Review: Information Needs Analysis.

Menzel (1966) reviews different studies of information needs and use analysis in the academic fields of science and technology. He states that studies which focus on opinions are weak, and is in favour of more comprehensive studies of information systems. The limitations of studying information wants exclusively are described as follows:

> "After all, it is said, scientists and technologists can at best report their conscious wants for various information services, and these wants may of may not correspond to the services and policies that would lead to more productive scientific research," (Menzel, 1966:45).

He divides information needs and use analysis studies into three types: demand studies of information wants, experimental studies of information use and use studies of information-seeking behaviour. These use studies are further categorised as: channel studies, analysis of one information channel; utility studies, analysis of an information-gathering activity; and critical incident studies, analysis of messages in a specified unit of time, and their effect on the receiver.

Like Menzel, Martyn (1974) reviews use studies which are designed to answer a specific question about a specific information service, and notes the limitations of user studies. He defines information use as a communication activity, and therefore it is necessary to study the dynamics of information flow in a true user study:

> "Our proper preoccupation is, after all, with the interrelationship of people and ideas," (Martyn, 1974:21).

Both Menzel (1966) and Martyn (1974) are interested in taking an holistic view of information needs looking at needs, use and effect of information, as well as information exchange. However, Kunz, Rittel and Schwuchow (1977) define information needs analysis as being about speaking to a group of experts about their particular information needs. They define a type of user as a particular set of information needs, and not as a group or class of people. They advocate classifying users by their information needs, and are consequently more person-oriented in their approach to information needs analysis.

Wilson (1981) suggests that information-seeking behaviour is a consequence of an information user's perception that they have a need for information. He is critical of studies which focus solely on search strategies, because these studies overlook why the information is sought and to what purpose the information will be used. He proposes changing some terminology as follows:

> "Indeed, it may be advisable to remove the term
> 'information needs' from our professional vocabulary and
> to speak instead of 'information-seeking towards the
> satisfaction of needs'," (Wilson, 1981:8).

Within this definition, information-seeking is only one means towards the end of satisfying the user's need. Information-seeking behaviour often results from a combination of both cognitive and affective needs. He advocates shifting the focus of studies to the user:

> "An orientation towards the user in the true sense, that is, avoiding preconceptions about what he or she will perceive to be 'information', while concentrating upon the problems that create cognitive and/or affective needs, must result in a greater humility about the potential value of traditional information practices and a greater willingness to innovate and experiment," (Wilson, 1981:12).

Therefore Wilson's work is part of the trend towards person and user oriented studies of information needs.

In a similar vein to Kunz, Rittel and Schwuchow (1977), Nicholas (2000) writes that information needs analysis is not about creating a picture of the stereotypical user, but about defining the information need by a set of characteristics. His list of characteristics includes: subject, function, nature, intellectual level, viewpoint, quantity, quality or authority, date or currency, speed of delivery, place of publication or origin, and processing or packaging. He defines information wants as distinct from information needs: the former are subjective and depend on the customer's self-perception of their needs. He adds discussion about why studies which focus exclusively on use are limited, because they cannot distinguish between intended and unintended usage, or whether the usage is needed or not.

> "We should be evaluating the need people have for information, the wants they express for it, and the demands and use they make of it," (Nicholas, 2000:19).

Therefore, like Menzel (1966) and Martyn (1974), Nicholas is in favour of comprehensive studies looking at all aspects of people's interaction with information in information needs analysis studies. However, Nicholas believes that opinions are as important as usage in analysing information needs.

Wilson (2000) expands on his earlier criticism of information needs studies which focus solely on the use of existing systems. This investigation into the information needs of family history researchers is about what Wilson defines as information seeking behaviour.

"Information seeking behaviour is the purposive seeking for information as a consequence of a need to satisfy some goal. In the course of seeking, the individual may interact with manual information systems (such as a newspaper or a library), or with computer-based systems (such as the World Wide Web)," (Wilson, 2000:50).

Like Wilson (2000), Case (2002) reviews research on information behaviour. He defines information as "a difference you perceive" or "any aspect you notice in the pattern of reality," (Case, 2002:5). He states that information need is recognition that your own knowledge is inadequate to satisfy a goal. His clarification of the term information seeking is "a conscious effort to acquire information in response to a need or gap in your knowledge," (Case, 2002:5). His review categorises studies as being system oriented or person oriented and task-oriented or non-task oriented.

Drawing on the findings of the research he reviews, Case (2002) writes "Eight Lessons of Information Behaviour Research," (Case, 2002:288). Of these lessons, three in particular inform this investigation. Firstly, lesson one: "Formal sources and rationalized searches reflect only one side of human information behaviour," (Case, 2002:289). This study looks at interactions with informal information sources such as people in addition to traditional resources. The last two lessons are also of significance: "Information seeking is not always about a 'problem' or 'problematic situation'," (Case, 2002:290) and "Information behaviour is not always about sense-making either," (Case, 2002:290). This project took an inductive approach to finding what motivated family historians to search for information. For Case, information behaviour includes information seeking, information encountering and information avoidance. His definition accords with Wilson (2000) in that it encompasses all aspects of human behaviour towards information.

The research trend in information needs analysis has moved away from system-oriented research to people-oriented research, and this is reflected in the terminology used: 'information-seeking behaviour' is more commonly discussed in the research literature of recent years. This

investigation looks at both opinions and usage to gain a broad analysis of the information needs of family historians. It looks at some aspects information seeking behaviour within the specific context of family historians using two public library services.

3.0 Methodology

The inquiry is constructivist, as defined by Guba and Lincoln (1989) in that it consists of analysing specific cases of family history researchers talking about their information needs through one-to-one interviews with the principal investigator. An inductive research approach is most appropriate for the investigation because the research objectives are about achieving a greater understanding of the information-seeking behaviour of a specific group of family history researchers. However, a mixed model methodology, as defined by Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998), is introduced in the questionnaire which gathers both qualitative and quantitative data. Researching in the constructivist paradigm allows the investigator to include her experience of using family history resources and the literature review in shaping the research design and analysis.

A questionnaire also has practical advantages in that it allows more participants to contribute their views in a short space of time. The interviews balance out the shortcomings of the questionnaire, such as the finite number of categories from which to select a response, by allowing participants to state their information preferences in their own words. Therefore, using mixed methodology allows for data triangulation between questionnaires and interviews, thus achieving an in-depth picture of the information needs of the family history researchers who took part in the project.

3.1 Literature Search.

The initial literature searches were conducted on LISA using the terms 'information literacy AND public librar*' and 'genealogy AND public librar*'. Searches for literature were also conducted on Web of Knowledge, Library and Information Science Abstracts, STAR, and Google Scholar including terms such as 'information needs' or 'information needs analysis', 'family

history' or 'genealogy', and 'library' or 'public library'. Different combinations of these words and phrases were tried, including wildcards. Browsing the collections of the local studies libraries at Warrington, Matlock and Chesterfield was used to select information for family historians.

Once literature searches had been carried out, copies of books and items were obtained from the university library and public libraries. References in items retrieved were followed up to trace a line of thought back in time. Analysis of the literature was based on defining what the purpose of the item is, how it interrelates with other items written on a similar topic, and how it interrelates with this piece of research. There were difficulties in finding research literature *per se*. Many searches were carried out, but finding items of relevance proved problematic. Whilst there were items on information needs which were based on research, there were no research-based items found about family historians. The one research item about service provision to family historians was the dissertation by Parton, (2003).

3.2 Ethical Considerations.

All participants in the research were over the age of 18. They were identified as eligible to take part in the project by their presence at family history events in the local studies sections of the participating libraries. Participants were approached verbally about the research, and provided with the opportunity to refuse to participate. Informed consent was obtained in writing for the use of data provided in questionnaires and interviews.   The anonymity of participants was protected in the data gathering, analysis and final write-up. As the research involves inviting people to talk about a hobby, it was unlikely to cause people distress. If however, an individual wished to make a complaint, provision was made for participants to contact the project supervisor or the university. As the research was conducted in a public place, the safety of the principal investigator was not compromised. The

University's Ethical Approval was obtained by 22 May 2006, in time for the week of family history events at Warrington Libraries.

3.3 Survey Design.

The questionnaire is designed as a descriptive survey, by working backwards from the intended research outcomes, as recommended by Oppenheim (1992). The first two questions invite respondents to rank a list of family history objectives, and a list of resource characteristics in the order of their importance to them personally. Space is included for respondents to add in their own words a reason to do family history research, or a characteristic of a resource which would be a significant factor to them in choosing it. This space for qualitative data is in line with the overall research approach. These questions allow the investigator to look for emerging trends in the information "wants" of family historians.

The third question asks respondents to indicate the sources of family history information that they have approached in the course of their research, including talking to living relatives. The sixth question invites them to list any printed materials that they have found particularly helpful in their research. A completely inductive approach was necessary for this question, as there is such a variety of family history publications available. These questions both pertain to information usage. Question four aims to build a picture of some of the physical constraints affecting family historians, by asking them how far they are willing to travel in order to pursue their research.

The fifth question lists nine family history internet resources alphabetically: three of which are completely free, three of which are free to search but are pay-per-view to retrieve official records, and three of which are subscription-accessed. The question invites participants to tick to indicate

whether they are aware of the resource, have used the resource, and would recommend the resource. There is also space for respondents to add a further web resource which they have used.

The questionnaire is two sides of A4 paper, and this is a maximum size set by the investigator, in order that people will not be discouraged from responding to a lengthy questionnaire. The survey was piloted with two family historians known personally to the investigator, and with staff at the library services involved. The comments of these people helped the questionnaire to evolve into one that is user-friendly, and relevant to the issues that family historians are concerned with. Piloting the questionnaire also helped the investigator to decide how to analyse the data, as suggested by Oppenheim (1992). Added to the questionnaire was a question asking participants if they would be willing to be interviewed about their family history research, and space to provide a telephone number at which the investigator could contact them to arrange a one-to-one interview.

The format of the interview is semi-structured and comprises of open questions: 'How did you become interested in family history research?' 'What specifically interests you about family history research?' 'How did you approach your research?' and 'Has there been anything that you have found particularly helpful in your research?' A critical incident technique is used on participants who can think of a barrier that they came across in their research. They are then invited to talk about the barrier and if and how they dealt with it in order to overcome it. Active listening skills and free-flowing discussion techniques were employed by the investigator to encourage interviewees to elaborate further on their responses. Participants are also given the opportunity to tell the interviewer anything else that they would like to about their family history.

3.4 Data Gathering.

The principal investigator attended Family History Workshops at public libraries in Derbyshire and Warrington, circulated questionnaires and invited people to participate in interviews. A total of 110 questionnaires were printed, of which 100 were distributed, and 99 were returned to the investigator. 50 participants were Derbyshire Libraries customers, and 49 were Warrington Libraries customers. Both the investigator and supervisor's contact details were provided in a tear-off slip on the second page of the questionnaire and given to participants to keep. Each questionnaire was given a unique participant number, which both allowed the responses to remain anonymous and for them to be withdrawn from the analysis should any participant so wish. To date, no participants have contacted the investigator or supervisor to remove their data from the project. For an example of the questionnaire distributed see Appendix A.

37 questionnaire respondents expressed interest in being interviewed by leaving their contact details. Only 14 interviews were then arranged, due to the practical limitations of the timescale. Only 9 interviews were actually conducted, due to the other commitments of some potential interviewees. 10 people were interviewed however, as one couple wished to be interviewed together. 4 interviewees were Derbyshire Libraries customers, and 6 were Warrington Libraries customers. The interviews were of varying length due to differing levels of talkativeness amongst participants. None were more than the 20 minutes maximum that the investigator allowed. The full information sheet and consent form were presented to each participant before each interview began. All interviews were tape-recorded, with the permission of the interviewee, and fully transcribed. Each interview was given a unique number in order to match the tape recording to the transcription. Each interviewee was allocated a fictional name in the final presentation of the interview data.

3.5 Data Analysis.

Microsoft Excel was used to organise the questionnaire data for analysis. For questions 1 and 2, a reverse scoring was assigned to the rankings so that 1=5, 2=4 and so on. From adding up the scores assigned to each reason or quality and then creating a chart with this data, it became easy to see which reasons and qualities were most highly prioritized overall. Frequency tables were also created as the analysis occurred to illuminate the variation of prioritisation within the sample.

The process of entering the rest of the data into the spreadsheets was simpler in that a tick = 1. The responses for questions three and five were converted into bar graphs. The data from question 5 provides a snapshot of how popular internet resources are in general and which ones in particular are most popular. The design of the question allows the investigator to filter the results so that websites which participants claim to have used but also claim to be unaware of are not included in the data analysis. The structure of the question also allows the principal investigator to identify trends between the cost of the site and its popularity, but of course it is not able to establish causality. Therefore, triangulation with interview data sheds further light on this issue.

In the case of question 4, analysis was based on the response given as the farthest point to which the participant would be willing to travel in pursuit of family history research. Therefore, because there was only one response per participant, a pie chart was appropriately used to present this data. For questions 1 to 5, separate charts were created to show the differences between the preferences of Derbyshire Libraries and Warrington Libraries customers. The investigator looked for thematic patterns in the 'other' responses to questions 1, 2, 3, and 5 and in the list of publications that

respondents are invited to provide in question 6. These patterns are named in order to ascertain the range of responses for a given question.

Once gathered, the qualitative data from the interview transcripts was also classified in order to uncover themes and patterns in participants' perceptions of their information needs. Select quotations from the transcripts were then used to illustrate specific points that emerge from both the interview data and for triangulation with questionnaire data in order to answer the research aims and objectives. Specifically, the researcher looked for correlations between the information 'wants' and information usage of family historians in order to describe their information-seeking behaviour.

3.6 Constraints and Difficulties.

The research took place at public libraries; therefore the data gathered provides no indication of the information needs of non-library users. It is a physically difficult task to reach a population of non-library users who are researching their family history. The sample is very small so no meaningful statistical data can be drawn from it; rather it provides an accurate picture of the information needs of those surveyed. Furthermore, the investigator does not talk about the group of family historians surveyed as being representative of their sample because, as Oppenheim (1992) writes: "we cannot state what their relationship is to their relevant population," (Oppenheim, 1992:38). However, as many participants as possible were found within the time limits.

Some problems with the questionnaire emerged in the study which had not emerged during the pilot. Some respondents placed ticks instead of numbered rankings for questions one and two, so their data could not be included in the analysis which aimed at finding out about how family historians prioritise their preferences. A more serious problem is in question

five, whereby the third part of the question was misprinted on 80 of the questionnaires. Instead of saying 'Recommend?' it simply says 'would'. This mistake was only noticed at the analysis stage of research, and therefore it was too late to correct it. Therefore, only 19 responses could be legitimately analysed regarding recommendation of family history websites.

Some of the interview tape-recordings were difficult to transcribe faithfully and at some points was completely unintelligible, due to background noise and interviewees speaking softly. Having said that, the majority of the recordings were clear and much valuable data was gathered from the transcripts so these problems had little impact on the outcome of the research.

4.0 The Motivations of Family Historians

Question 1 on the questionnaire pertained to finding out what the most important reasons to do family history research were in the sample. Other reasons not listed in the questionnaire were gathered from respondents who completed the 'Other' category. The open interview questions: 'How did you become interested in family history research?' and 'What specifically interests you about family history?' elicited data in relation to the motivations of family historians. In addition to this, interviewees added remarks about their motivations towards the end of the interview, when they were asked: 'Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your family history research?'

4.1 The Motivations of Family Historians: Overview.

According to questionnaire data, the most popular reason to do family history research is 'Constructing a family tree with accurate birth, marriage and death dates'. By assigning the highest score to the highest ranking and so on, this reason scored 393 out of a maximum potential 470 and the most frequent score allotted to this reason was 5. *See tables 1.1 and 1.2.* Therefore, the largest majority of the sample ranked this as their top reason to do family history. It is the tracing of specific records of ancestors that family historians are interested in, or pure genealogy as defined by Rogers (1983). The second most popular reason to do family history is 'Tracing your origins geographically'. This reason scored 292 out of 470 and was most frequently ranked as the second most important reason. However, this reason was of more importance to Derbyshire Libraries customers than to Warrington Libraries customers. *See tables 1.3 and 1.4.* 'Learning about what the lives of your ancestors were like' scored 287 out of 470 and was most frequently ranked as top, but almost equally scored 3 and 2, showing that it varying importance to different people in the sample. Furthermore, this reason was more important to Warrington Libraries customers than to Derbyshire Libraries customers. *See tables 1.3 and 1.4.*

Table 1.1: Question 1: Reasons to do Family History Research

Reasons

Score axis: 0, 50, 100, 150, 200, 250, 300, 350, 400, 450

Reasons (x-axis categories):
- Constructing a family tree with accurate birth, marriage and death dates
- Tracing your origins geographically
- Finding out about the occupations of your ancestors
- Learning about what the lives of your ancestors were like
- Passing family stories on to future generations
- Other
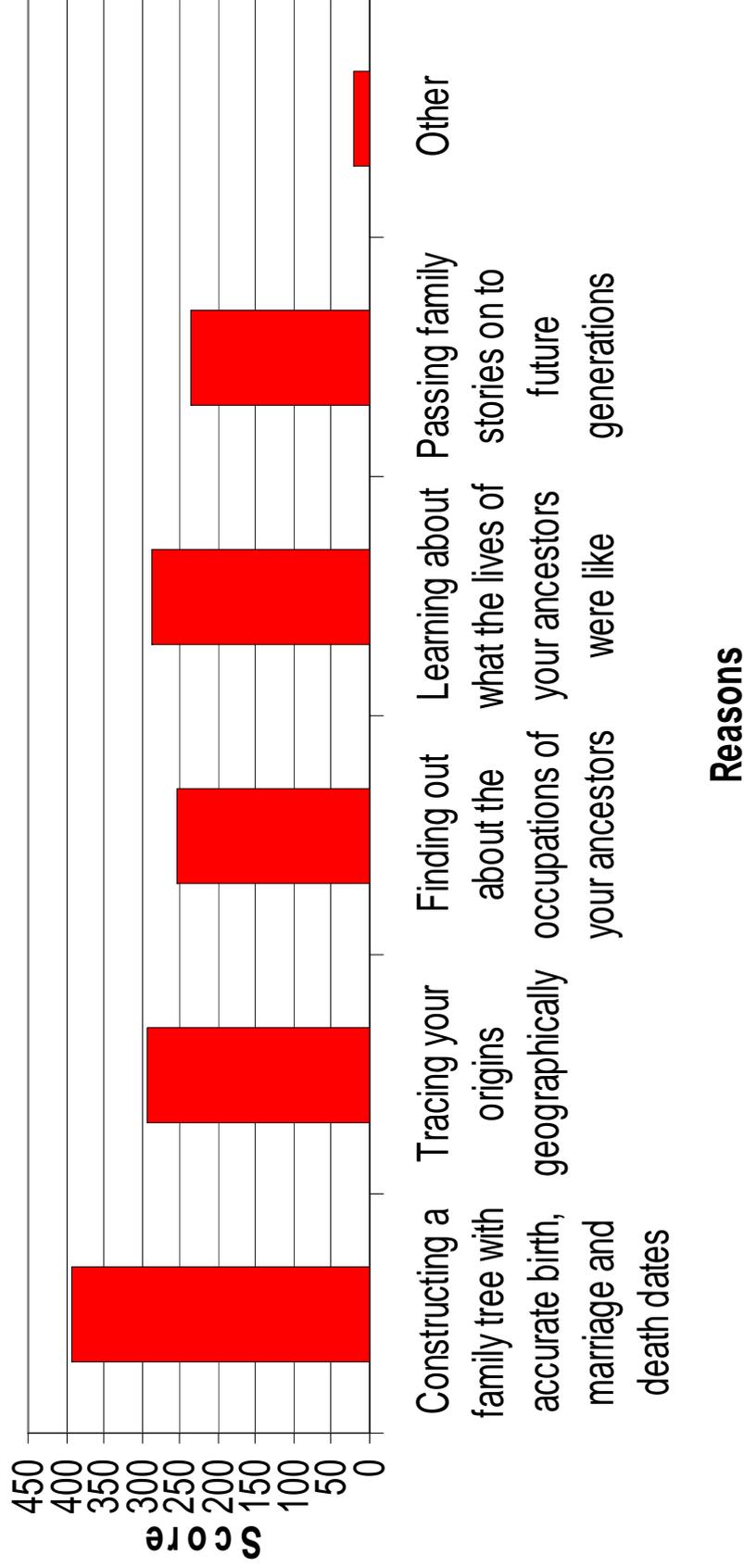
Table 1.2: Question 1: Frequency Table						
Reason / Score	High = 5	4	3	2	1	Low = 0
Constructing a family tree with accurate birth, marriage and death dates	56	18	8	7	3	2
Tracing your origins geographically	19	28	14	13	17	3
Finding out about the occupations of your ancestors	6	18	28	29	9	4
Learning about what the lives of your ancestors were like	23	13	22	21	12	3
Passing family stories on to future generations	12	18	16	12	33	3
Other	3	1	0	0	2	88

'Finding out about the occupations of your ancestors' scored 253 out of 470 and was most frequently scored 2, indicating that most of the sample do not think that this is especially important. However it is almost as frequently scored 3, which indicates a variation in importance. *See tables 1.1 and 1.2*. Questionnaire responses in the other category also indicate that it does have some importance, for example: "Relation to coal mining 1670-1950." *See table 1.5*. However, 'Passing family stories on to future generations' was, apart from 'Other', the least important reason to do family history, according to the 94 usable questionnaire responses for question 1. *See table 1.1*. 'Passing family stories on to future generations' only scored 237 out of a maximum potential 470. The most frequent score allotted to this reason was 1 because the most usual response was that it had little importance; that it was of lower importance than the other reasons presented in question one. *See table 1.2*.

Table 1.3: Question 1: Reasons to do Family History: Derbyshire
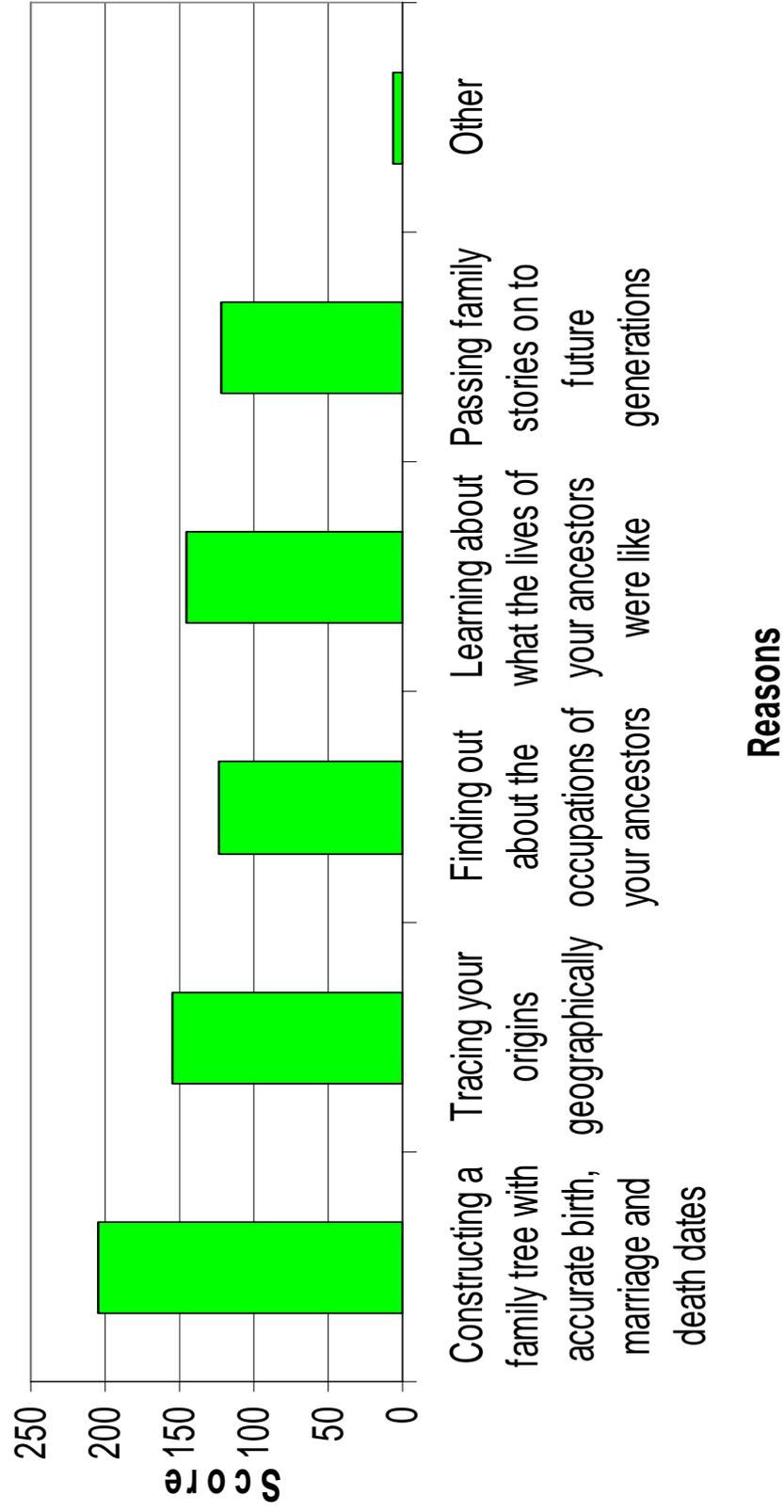
Table 1.4: Question 1: Reasons to do Family History: Warrington

Score

200
180
160
140
120
100
80
60
40
20
0

Constructing a family tree with accurate birth, marriage and death dates

Tracing your origins geographically

Finding out about the occupations of your ancestors

Learning about what the lives of your ancestors were like

Passing family stories on to future generations

Other

Reason

29
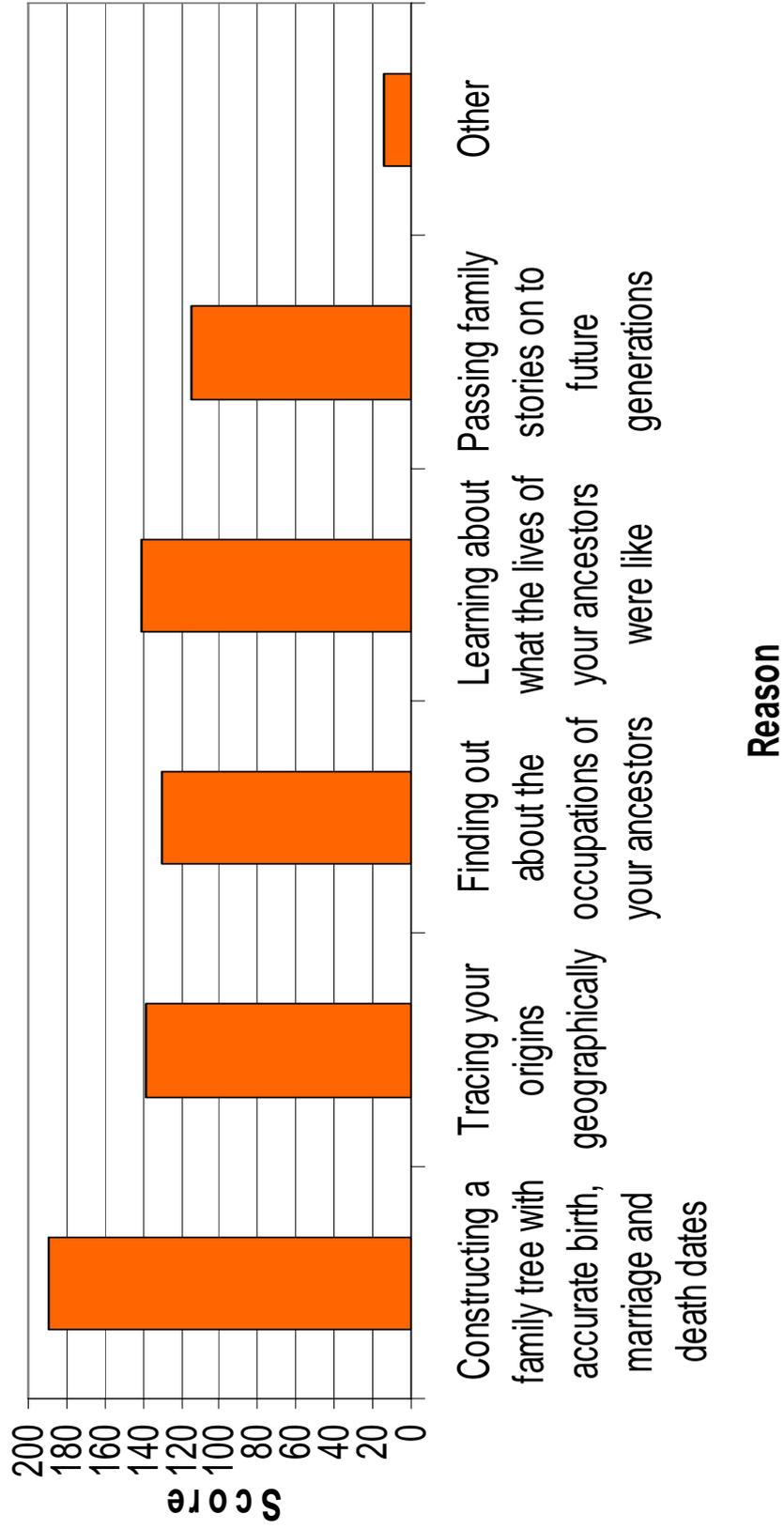
The list of reasons to do family history in question one was by no means exhaustive. A total of seven different responses were given under 'Other' and these scored 21 out of 470 collectively. *See tables 1.2 and 1.5.* Three reasons are general motivations to do family history and four are about a specific aspect of family history that is of particular interest. *See table 1.5.* These responses all reflect that family history research is regarded as an intellectually stimulating activity. Furthermore, for some family historians it was not simply a case of mapping out their geographical origins, but finding out more about the history of the places their ancestors lived. This is indicated by the response: "Finding out about where ancestors lived." *See table 1.5.*

Table 1.5: Other Reasons to do Family History

Motivations to do family history	Interesting aspects of family history
"Mental exercise"	"Researching the truth as passed on from elderly aunt"
"Detective work"	"Finding out about where ancestors lived"
"Curiosity (filling gaps in previous knowledge)"	"Researching a photo"
	"Relation to coal mining 1670-1950"

Not only are there a seemingly infinite number of reasons to do family history, but some people find it difficult to value the importance of one reason over another. One comment on the questionnaire was: "(Difficult to rank: all are equally important.)" This bears out in the questionnaire results where 16 out of 94 questionnaire responses ranked two or more reasons as of equal importance.

4.1.1 The Motivations of Family Historians: Constructing a Family Tree.

Remarks made in interviews indicate that this is a satisfying aspect of research, as finding a record of one ancestor can lead to finding another record of another ancestor, thus furthering the construction of the family tree:

> "So I sent there for a birth certificate uh which gave me his parents um and I went to uh Mansfield Registry Office uh to see if I could get a marriage certificate for his parents," Daniel, Derbyshire Libraries customer.

> "Mainly it's just addresses and dates you know and that's the main one that was my one and this is going back to 1851 census over here and that was great-great-granddad here *First-name Surname* wanted to know where he came from where he lived how old he was why if how many children he had," George, Warrington Libraries customer.

Furthermore, there is an indication that creating a family tree is part of a key output of the information that family historians gather.

> "I've made this family tree software stuff to produce a book well it produces a book for you once you've got all your information you can sort of tell it to make a book and tell it to put all't census information in there and your other information your record information and things and so it prints about 300 pages out and you've got a book," Daniel, Derbyshire Libraries customer.

> "Sometime I hope to find time to get back to it and write it all up properly," Jane, Derbyshire Libraries customer.

4.1.2 The Motivations of Family Historians: Geographical Origins.

Many interviewees listed and described the places where their ancestors lived and therefore the data is consistent across both survey instruments.

> "I'm very surprised that my forebears come from the North East, uh Hampshire down South, London, uh Staffordshire, Cumberland, and all this movement took place primarily in

um between about 1830 and 1870," Ronald, Warrington Libraries customer.

"I quickly realized I'd to spread my net a bit wider because my father's family line, the name was *Surname* had populated literally a village outside Nelson," Jane, Derbyshire Libraries customer.

As in the questionnaire sample, there is an indication amongst interviewees that tracing geographical origins is not as important as finding out about the places that ancestors lived.

"The research really has led me to uh an exciting part for me in that I've found out that um through census records that my great-great-grandfather was living in one of the last Chartists houses in a place called Great Dodford," Joseph, Derbyshire Libraries customer.

"I found out where they all lived and why they lived there," George, Warrington Libraries customer.

"Surely we all want to know where we came from and what the family did," Ronald, Warrington Libraries customer.

4.1.3 The Motivations of Family Historians: Learning About Ancestors' Lives.

Remarks made in the interviews which can be grouped under this heading show that this is an area of some interest, and support the questionnaire data.

"He were on all sorts of committees and things sort of late 1800s early 1900s uh and he seemed to be a busybody who knew everything in t'village," Daniel, Derbyshire Libraries customer.

"I'd love to know how my grandfather met my grandmother," Martha, Warrington Libraries customer.

"I got the impression that though they must obviously have been quite poor that she was in the maternity unit I think a lot of workhouses in those days had places for women to go and have children," Ronald, Warrington Libraries customer.

"1832 was a bad time in the area there'd been cholera in Burnley and he had um I've forgotten how many children y-yes he and his wife and *Three First-names* were being told to move on because they were a drain on the what do they call it the Parish Chest," Jane, Derbyshire Libraries customer.

4.1.4 The Motivations of Family Historians: Ancestors' Occupations.

Interview responses indicate that this is an interesting aspect of family history, as is consistent with the data from the questionnaire.

"These people were from Staffordshire and they moved to a part of Liverpool where pottery was made and I've worked out that maybe they were something to do with the pottery industry in Staffordshire," Ronald, Warrington Libraries customer.

"Her father was reputed to have been a Scots police inspector where is he *First-names Surname* he turned out never to have got beyond Sergeant having been demoted to Constable for being too friendly with publicans," Jane, Derbyshire Libraries customer.

"First-name Surname is was a surveyor so we we get a surveyor in Greenwich a st and then a stone mason and his son was a stone mason so it's gone right through the family," Joseph, Derbyshire Libraries customer.

4.1.5 The Motivations of Family Historians: Passing on Stories to Future Generations.

Despite this reason scoring low in the questionnaire, two interview responses were to find out about where you come from and to tell your children, indicating that these are considerations for some family historians.

"It's just sort of finding out something about where you come from, who you are," Daniel, Derbyshire Libraries customer.

"Because we want the children to know as much as possible and they want my grandchildren are interested," Ivy, Warrington Libraries customer.

4.2 Other Motivations of Family Historians.

Qualitative analysis of the ten interview responses to the question: "How did you become interested in family history?" reveal an equal number of different motivations to do family history. However, some participants cited more than one motivation and some were shared by more than one participant. Respondents focused on a reason or an event which led them to begin researching their family history.

Most of the reasons given in the interviews centred around one form of curiosity or another. This emphasizes the nature of family history as an intellectual pursuit. The most frequently cited reason to pursue family history involved curiosity about the origins of a surname.

"My husband was very interested in it in his family history because he thought the name *Surname* was of Dutch origin," Jane, Derbyshire Libraries customer.

"Well I mean the main reason is because of my uh unusual usual family name and it's as simple as that really I mean going back uh fifty years ago to uh maybe more than that really questioning where our name came from uh my father not knowing a lot about it and um it's always puzzled me," Joseph, Derbyshire Libraries customer.

"And grandfather one of the grandfathers was called *Surname Surname* and I've wanted to know why it you know came about and that's how it started," George, Warrington Libraries customer.

Another popular set of reasons within the interview sample were expressions of curiosity about relatives who they had never met, but perhaps had photos of, and this could often be heightened when living relatives refused to talk about them.

> "Well I think it first started when I didn't know much about my father he didn't live with his father so I tried to find out where he'd lived and why," Henry, Warrington Libraries customer.

> "Purely from a group of Victorian photographs that were passed on to me of the family uh my great-grandmother and her family uh I was interested in those," Ronald, Warrington Libraries customer.

> "Because we didn't know anything about her I just got this I just felt that I wanted to know a bit more and I found um an old photograph there were one with my family and my grandmother and um I started from there I was very close to my grandfather but he never discussed grandma at all," Martha, Warrington Libraries customer.

Wanting to have childhood memories explained was another reason why respondent's curiosity about their ancestors was excited.

> "I can remember as a child playing on these the farm buildings and all the rubble I can remember it so I'm sure that that was the mill I I don't know," Martha, Warrington Libraries customer.

> "I had such a memory of where mum used to take me and when I wanted to know why she took me there," George, Warrington Libraries customer.

Another reason cited by two respondents was to pursue family history as a hobby with their spouse.

> "Uh well I didn't my wife wanted to do her family tree / JR: Right / I sort of went along with her and I finished up doing mine," Daniel, Derbyshire Libraries customer.

> "I spent so long waiting outside record offices whilst he did his family history that I decided to join me him on the job," Jane, Derbyshire Libraries customer.

Whilst one respondent declared that family history research was an "addiction," others dated their interest from a specific event such as the death of a relative or seeing a course advertisement.

> "My sister had uh done our family trees and when she died I inherited a lot of her possessions and I got rid of most of the things but I kept the family family trees," Margaret, Derbyshire Libraries customer.

> "I had an elder brother who u unfortunately died and uh he was uh he was as I say older than me and when when he died I decided to take up the challenge you know that was maybe ten years ago," Joseph, Derbyshire Libraries customer.

> "We saw a course was advertised this summer at Hurst House and me and my friend it was using the computer to trace your family history so we decided to enroll for that and that's what we did and that's how that's what diverted me into family history," Margaret, Derbyshire Libraries customer.

In addition to the above reasons, other remarks made in the interviews in answer to the question 'What specifically interests you about family history?' and 'Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about your family history?' indicate that there are many other aspects of family history that are of interest and which cannot be grouped under curiosity, pursuing a hobby with a spouse, or as being precipitated by an event:

> "Particularly his medical history I would have liked to have known all that side because we've got medical conditions in out family," Margaret, Derbyshire Libraries customer.

> "I'm branching out sideways and I'm following different little families up you know trying to find living people," Daniel, Derbyshire Libraries customer.

"I've got at home two glasses two engraved glasses with initials on dates and I'd love to know who they who they were for," Martha, Warrington Libraries customer.

5.0 Approaches to Information-Seeking in Family History.

Questions 3 and 4 on the questionnaire related to places family historians would go to conduct their research. The former looked at sources which could be approached or visited to do family history research and the latter at the geographical limits to which family historians would travel in pursuit of genealogical research. Interviewees remarked on issues relating to visiting sources of family history information and travel in response to the open interview questions: 'How did you approach your research?' 'Has there been anything that you've found particularly helpful?' and 'Can you tell me about any difficulties you've had in your research?'

5.1 Visiting Sources of Family History Information.

Unsurprisingly, as the questionnaire was distributed in a public library, 89% (88 out of 99) respondents approached public libraries in order to do family history research. This was the most popular place to do family history research. Living relatives were approached by 88% (87/99) of respondents and therefore were another very popular source of information. Archives were approached by 72% (71/99) of respondents and records offices by 70% (69/99) respondents. *See table 3.1*. However, records offices were used slightly more, proportionally, by Derbyshire Libraries respondents, and archives by Warrington Libraries respondents. *See tables 3.2 and 3.3*.

Table 3.1: Question 3: Sources of Family History Information

Bar chart showing Usage on the vertical axis (0 to 100) and Source on the horizontal axis. Sources: Living Relatives, Public Libraries, Archives, Records Offices, Churches, Other.
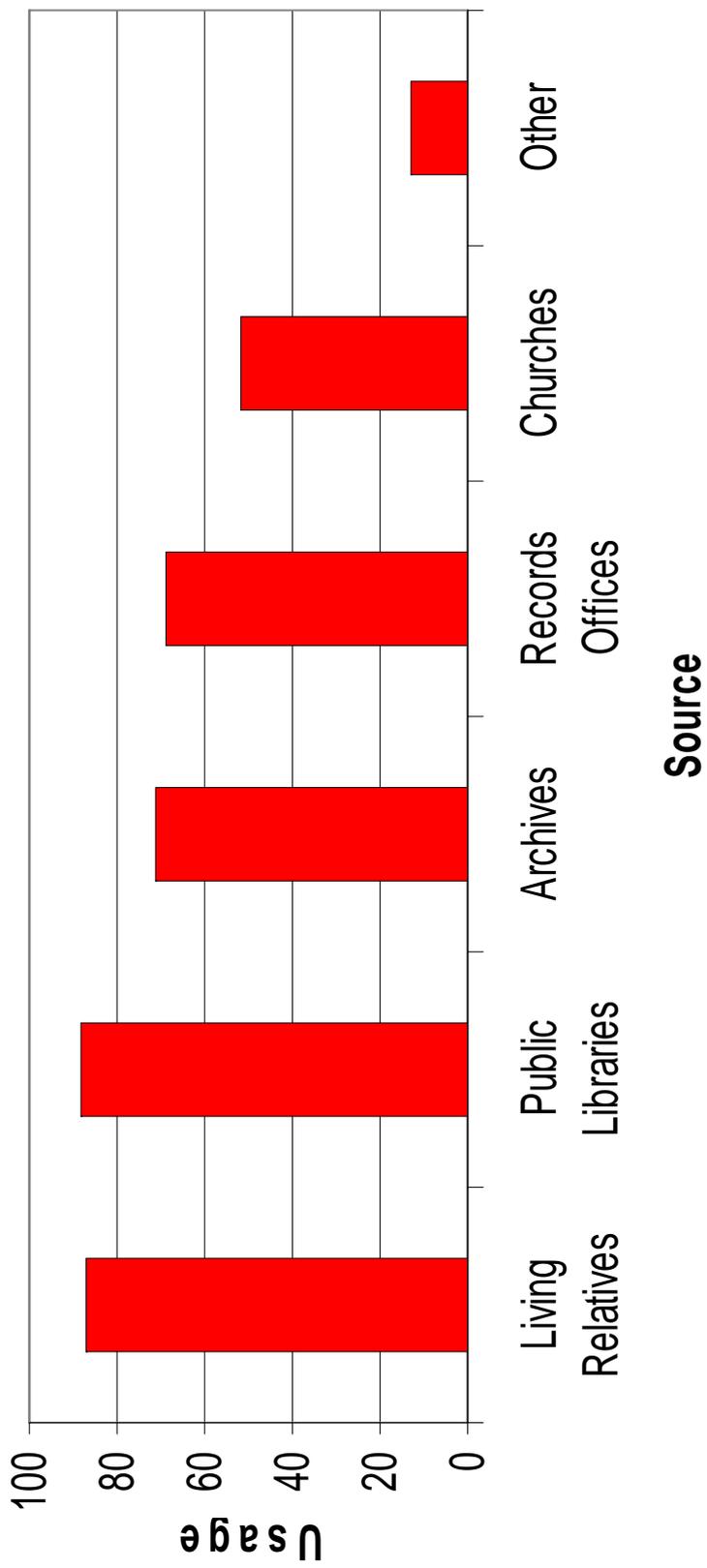
Table 3.2: Question 3: Sources of Family History Information: Derbyshire

Bar chart showing Usage (0–60) by Source:
- Living Relatives
- Public Libraries
- Archives
- Records Offices
- Churches
- Other
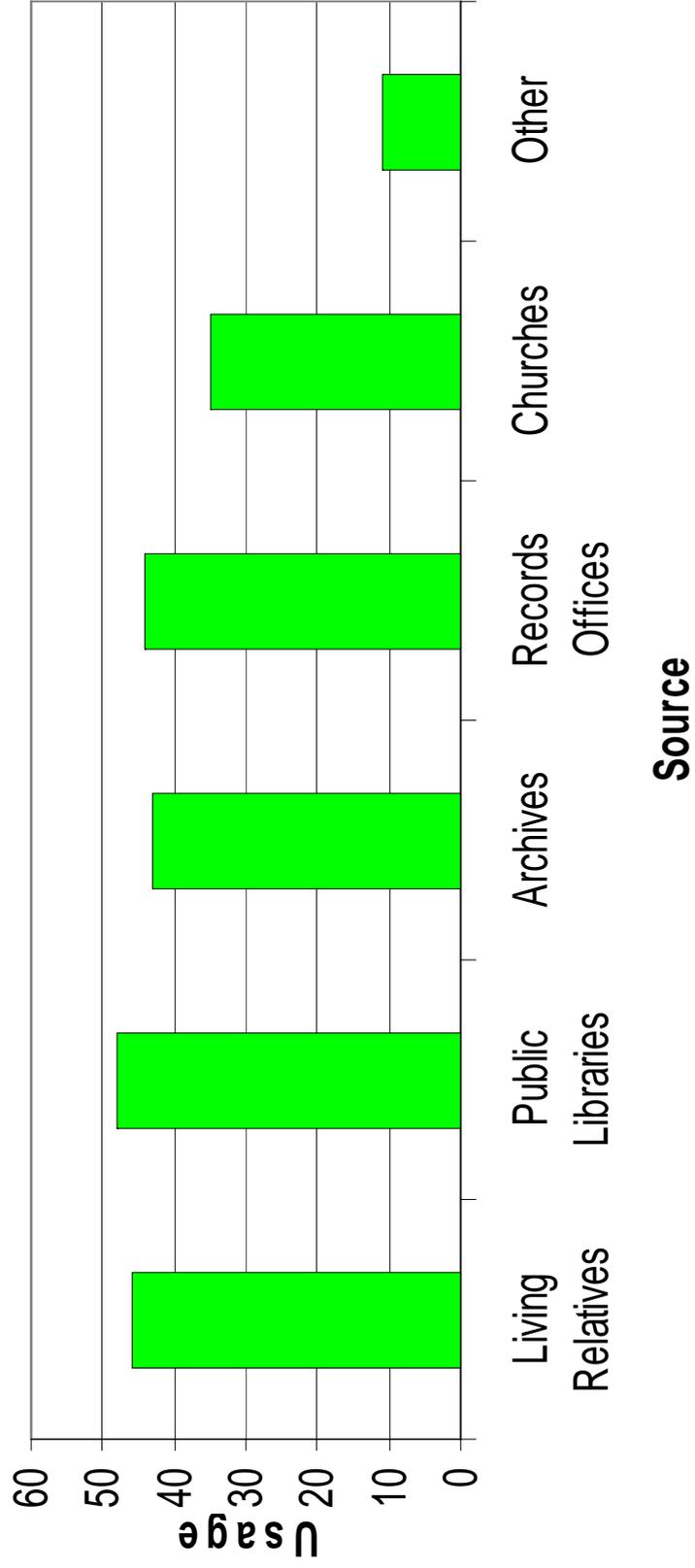
Table 3.3: Question 3: Sources of Family History Information: Warrington
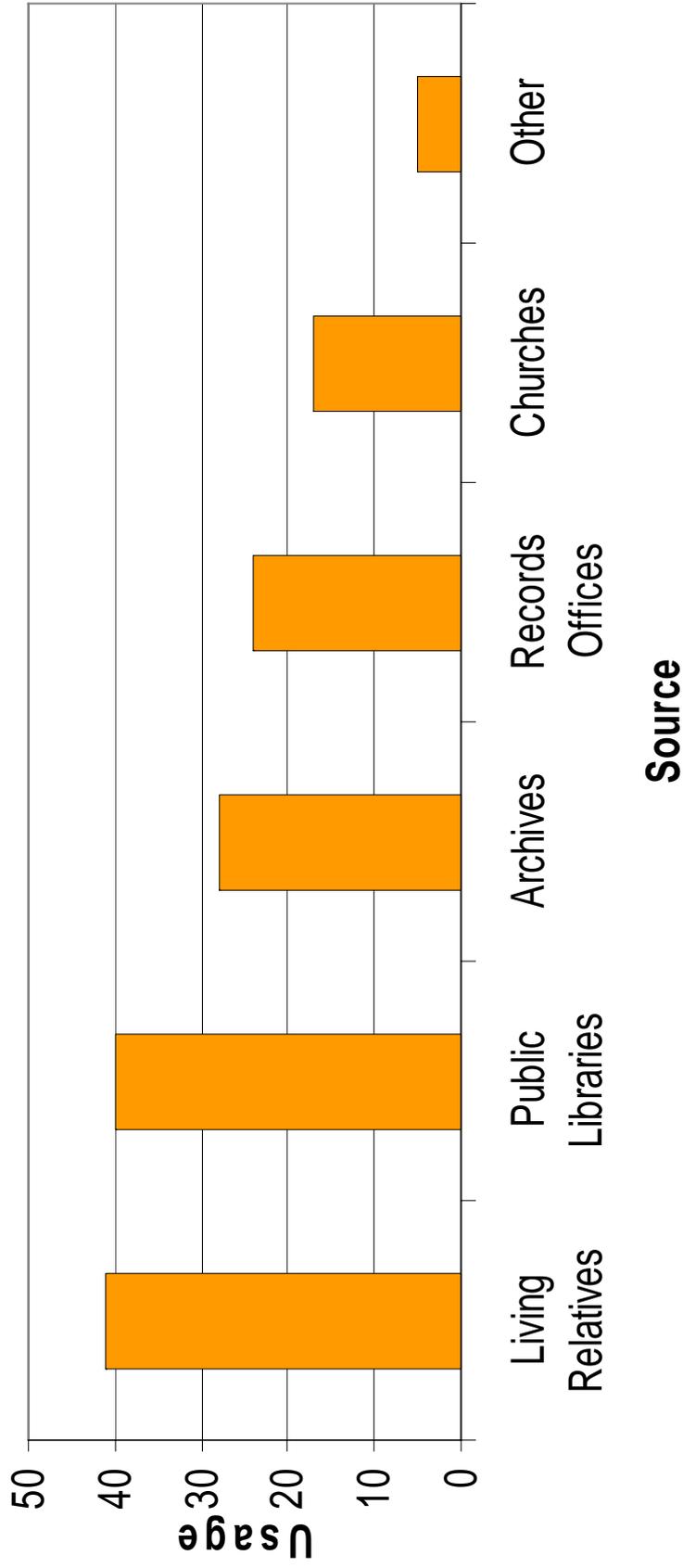
Only 53% (52/99) of respondents had approached churches to do their research. A total of sixteen sources were listed under 'Other'. *See table 3.1.* Seven of these related to use of the internet as a place to do family history research.   Five responses can be grouped under approaching people and organisations, and two are specific types of records repository to visit. One response suggests use of family history information sources already in your possession and one response indicates going to any place or organisation that will help with family history research. *See table 3.4.* Therefore, the selection of sources provided in the questionnaire was by no means exhaustive and there are a wide variety of sources of information that family historians choose to approach.

Table 3.4: Other Sources of Family History Information.

Internet	People / Organisation	Repository	Document	General
"Net"	"Family history agent (Wiltshire)"	"Regimental Libraries"	"Family papers"	"I'm a tart – anywhere that might be of help"
"Internet" (x 3)	"Local history groups/societies"	"Local paper archives"		
"Some name in internet"	"CWGC"			
"Internet site"	"Mormon church, family history societies"			
"Genealogy web site"	"Overseas contacts"			

5.1.1 Visiting Sources of Family History Information: Public Libraries.

Responses in the interviews reflected the data in the questionnaires, as seven interviewees mentioned public libraries or local studies libraries positively in response to the question: 'Has there been anything that you've found particularly helpful in your research?' Respondents also expressed gratitude for the helpfulness of library staff:

> "Most o't local studies have been more than helpful you know and there's always uh you know they're always friendly staff they're always interested and they'll always do whatever you need doing you and nothing's too much trouble for them," Daniel, Derbyshire Libraries customer.

> "Mainly all the information I've got is from the library," George, Warrington Libraries customer.

Other interviewees felt the value of the role of the library in helping them to use internet resources:

> "Being on all these courses at the library really and I it because I'm not I'm not a whiz kid on the computer," Martha, Warrington Libraries customer.

> "Culcheth put on a two hours and just gave us details about it really and it sounded really fascinating," Ivy, Warrington Libraries customer.

However, some interview responses indicate a lack of awareness about what public library services provide:

> "I did contact the library / JR: Right / Um no the museum but they didn't get back to me," Martha, Warrington Libraries customer.

> "You can pay through the libraries you can buy uh like vouchers that you can go to use at the Matlock Records Office so I think that'll probably be my next step / JR: Great ok um / I don't think that's very well publicised though," Margaret, Derbyshire Libraries customer.

5.1.2 Visiting Sources of Family History Information: Living Relatives.

Some interview responses indicated that there were no living relatives left to approach for family history information.

"Tried to find how many of the family were left because unfortunately uh a lot of the older ones have died," Ivy, Warrington Libraries customer.

"I didn't know an awful lot of the family before," George, Warrington Libraries customer.

One interview response reflected that the information that living relatives are able to provide can be limited.

"I uh spoke to some family members but uh they they didn't know very much because the ones relating to the photographs were all dead," Ronald, Warrington Libraries customer.

One interviewee received interesting information from a living relative, but questioned its reliability.

"One member of the family known as *First-name* is ninety-two or three and she swears they were horse traders between Glasgow and Belfast whether I'll ever prove it I don't know," Jane, Derbyshire Libraries customer.

5.1.3 Visiting Sources of Family History Information: Archives and Records Offices.

Interview responses also supported the questionnaire data in suggesting heavy use of records offices, as these were mentioned by five interviewees in response to the question: 'How did you approach your research?' However, only one interviewee mentioned archives specifically in response to the same question. A helpful member of staff was remarked upon by one interviewee:

> "I went to uh Mansfield registry office uh to see if I could get a marriage certificate for his parents / JR: Right / Uh and I met a very helpful young lady there who said that they were married in 1835 before certificates were issued but she said I can give you ten children for em," Daniel, Derbyshire Libraries customer.

5.1.4 Visiting Sources of Family History Information: Churches.

Two interviewees mentioned looking at church records at libraries, but none mentioned going specifically to churches in response to the question: 'How did you approach your research?' This indicates that there is little need, perhaps even less than is indicated by the questionnaire data, to visit churches themselves in order to pursue family history.

5.1.5 Visiting Sources of Family History Information: Other Sources.

All ten interviewees mentioned internet sources at some point during the interview. These responses will be discussed in more detail in section 6.3. People and organizations not listed in the questionnaire were mentioned by three respondents. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints were one of the things that one respondent found particularly helpful in his research. Another responded to the same question by stating that people had been as much help as records, and later related how a contact at a family history society had helped her to trace records:

> "Through a contact uh at Chesterfield Family History Society I found a woman who was going to North Allerton Record Office and see if she could find any *Surnames*," Jane, Derbyshire Libraries customer.

Another interviewee knew somebody at a market who would do some research for him. However, there is a sense from one interviewee that having somebody else do the research takes away some of the pleasure of pursuing it yourself:

> "We could get someone to help us I believe and pay them to do it but I don't know [tape unintelligible 2 seconds] I know it's not the same is it," Ivy, Warrington Libraries customer.

Other types of records repository were approached by two interviewees such as family research centres, history centres and heritage centres. Using sources already in your possession was mentioned by one interviewee in response to 'How did you approach your research?'

> "The starting point really was um my grandfather's medals from the Boer war," Joseph, Derbyshire Libraries customer.

One interviewee mentioned "tramping around graveyards at Mansfield Woodhouse," which is yet another source of family history information.

Two interviewees related anecdotes of discovering family history information almost serendipitously:

> "She invited us in and she says and in her hallway there were all these pictures all on her walls and that," Daniel, Derbyshire Libraries customer.

> "I found out that there was a bakers in Warrington of the same name as the people from Liverpool *Surname* was the name so I went into the bakers and said is this anything to do with *First-name Surname* who was my uh great-great-grandfather and he said there was a *First-name Surname* owned this," Ronald, Warrington Libraries customer.

5.2 Travel Limitations of Family Historians.

The questionnaire data show that the furthest that most family historians are willing to travel in pursuit of their research is to other parts of the UK. This is the case for 56% (55/99) of the sample. 20% (20/99) of the sample would be willing to travel overseas. However, an almost equal

proportion of respondents 19% (19/99) were not willing to travel beyond their own county. Only four respondents were not willing to travel beyond their town and one respondent did not answer the question. *See table 4.1*.

A greater proportion of Derbyshire respondents were willing to travel to other parts of the UK and overseas than in the Warrington sample. Conversely, a greater proportion of Warrington respondents were only willing to travel within their own town and county than in the Derbyshire sample. *See tables 4.2 and 4.3*. Therefore, it appears that in general Derbyshire family historians are willing to travel further than Warrington family historians.

Table 4.1: Question 4: How Far Family Historians Are Willing To Travel

Legend:
- Within your town
- Within your county
- To other parts of the UK
- Overseas
- None of the above

Table 4.2: Question 4: How Far Family Historians Are Willing To Travel: Derbyshire

Legend:
- Within your town
- Within your county
- To other parts of the UK
- Overseas
- None of the above
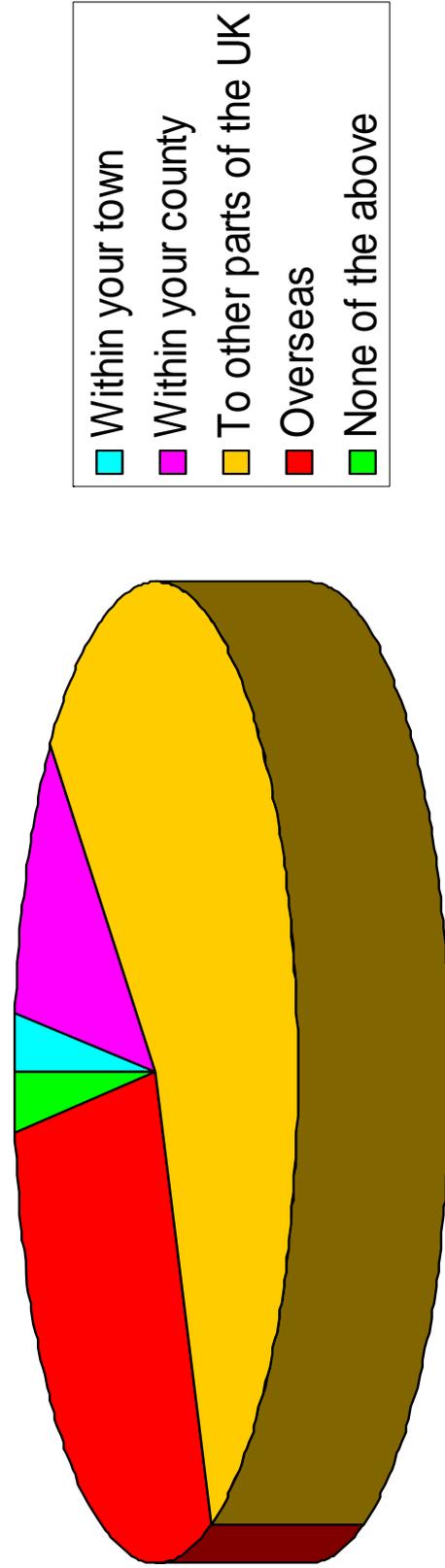
Table 4.3: Question 4: How Far Family Historians Are Willing To Travel: Warrington

Legend:
- Within your town
- Within your county
- To other parts of the UK
- Overseas
- None of the above
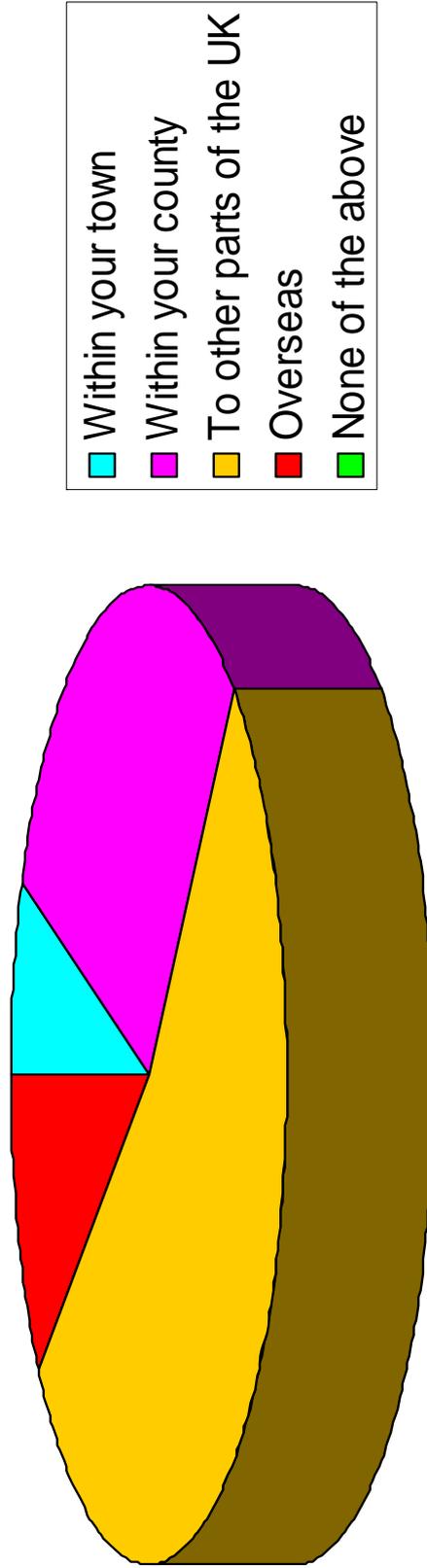
Five respondents ranked their travel boundaries, even though this was not required by the question. Four of these ranked them to indicate that they would rather stay close than go farther afield, and one ranked them in order of 'Within your county', 'To other parts of the UK', 'Within your town', then 'Overseas'. A conjecture as to why this might be the case is that there may not be any information of relevance available in the home town of the respondent.

Other unsolicited comments added to the questionnaire included: a question mark next to 'To other parts of the UK' as well as a tick; next to 'Overseas' the positive comment "New York – whilst on holiday," and the less positive comments "if necessary" and "with reservation and with strong evidence."

Many interview responses suggested that travelling to do family history research was an inconvenience. These responses seem to suggest that family historians would rather be in close proximity to the information that they require. The simple fact of where records are held makes this impossible for some family historians.

> "I've been one of the lucky ones I haven't had to travel," Daniel, Derbyshire Libraries customer.

> "The alternative was going to Liverpool but the nearest to Warrington was St Helens," Ronald, Warrington Libraries customer.

> "We just wish we were in Glasgow where we could get more," Ivy, Warrington Libraries customer.

> "I've not found it as easy since um I've been in Derbyshire fourteen years and prior to that I was in London twenty-eight years and able to get to records offices very easily in London," Jane, Derbyshire Libraries customer.

One of the interviewees who had been overseas to do family history research related that this had been a secondary purpose of his trip, the main purpose being a holiday. This was n response to the interview question 'How did you become interested in family history?'

> "We were on holiday in Italy and we went to see where my grandfather came from," James, Warrington Libraries customer.

However, for one interviewee, travel to other parts of the UK and overseas was an enjoyable part of family history.

> "I went then to the uh research centre in Trinity Street in Worcester um from there I mean it's taken me to um Greenwich in London uh I'm thinking now particularly of my side of the family uh where else have I been to I been to Walsall History Centre," Joseph, Derbyshire Libraries customer.

> "This family research business has taken me to South Africa I've recently been to South Africa I've I've been to Ladysmith," Joseph, Derbyshire Libraries customer.

6.0 The Characteristics of the Information Sought by Family Historians

Questions 2, 5 and 6 on the questionnaire related to different characteristics of a family history information source. Question 2 required respondents to think about the process of choosing an information source and prioritise the qualities that are most important to them in the selection process. Question 5 pertained to awareness, usage and recommendation of free, pay-per-view and subscription internet sites. Question 6 looked at usage of other family history resources. Interviewees discussed issues relating to information characteristics, the internet and other information sources in response to the questions: 'How did you approach your research?' 'Has there been anything that you've found particularly helpful?' and 'Can you tell me about any difficulties you've had in your research?'

6.1 Important Qualities of a Family History Resource.

Two questionnaire responses were discounted because they contained ticks instead of numbered rankings. According to the data from the 97 usable responses for question 2, 'Reliability and accuracy' was the most significant quality of a family history resource, when deciding whether to use it. *See table 2.1*. This quality scored 369 out of a potential 485. Its most frequent score was top (5) and it was the quality which received the most top scores. *See table 2.2*. However, when breaking the sample down by the two library services, it becomes clear that the cost of the resource, 'Free/value for money', is the most significant quality to consider, amongst Warrington Libraries customers. See *tables 2.3 and 2.4*. Furthermore, one respondent in the Warrington sample commented that 'Reliability and accuracy" was not a consideration when cross-checking possible records on International Genealogical Index (IGI). This suggests that in the case of this respondent, family history research is about searching for possible connected records and not finding one set of correct records. Across the whole sample 'Reliability and accuracy' and 'Free/value for money' are the most significant

considerations when choosing a family history resource. 'Free/value for money' scored 337 out of 485. Its most frequent score was top (5), indicating its high importance to respondents. *See table 2.2.*

The next most important set of qualities were to do with format. The sample deemed that the resource being 'Available electronically' was more important than it being 'Available as a hard copy document'. *See table 2.1.* 'Available electronically' scored 293 out of 485. Its most frequent scores were 4 and 3 equally. *See table 2.2.* 'Available as a hard-copy document' scored 236 out of 485. Its most frequent score was 1, emphasizing respondents did not consider this quality as highly as most of the others listed. *See table 2.2.*

'Speed of access' was the least important quality of a family history resource. It scored 222 out of 485 and its most frequent score was 1, emphasizing its low importance to respondents. A total of six different qualities were listed under 'Other' and they collectively scored 23 out of 485. These qualities can be grouped under issues of geography, ease of access and utility. *See table 2.5.* These qualities all seem to indicate that the user-friendliness of the resource was a significant consideration for these respondents.

Table 2.1: Question 2: Qualities of a Family History Resource

Score

400 — 300 — 200 — 100 — 0

Free/value for money | Available electronically | Available as a hard-copy document | Reliability and accuracy | Speed of Access | Other
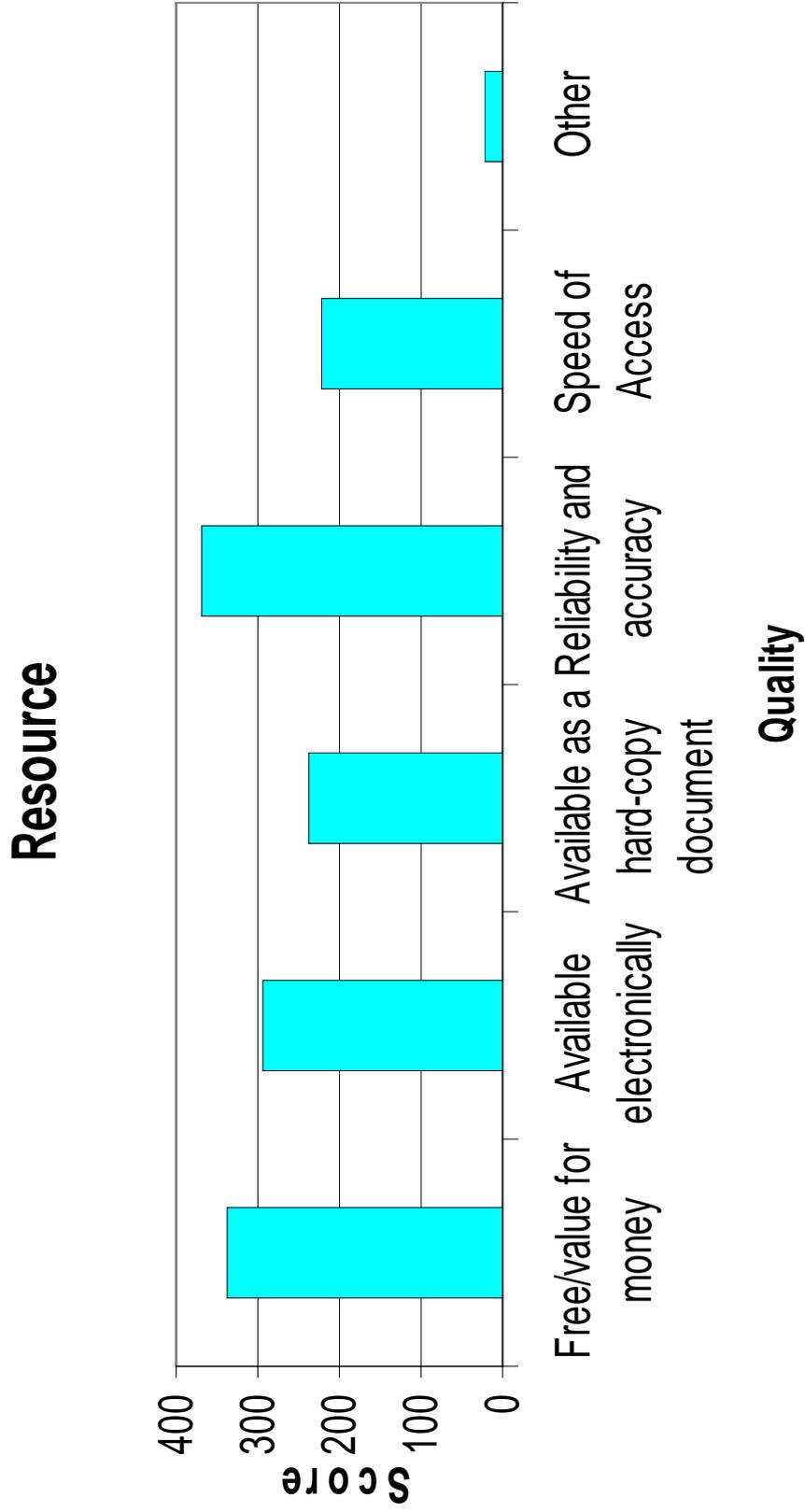
Quality

Table 2.2: Question 2: Frequency Table						
Quality / **Score**	High=5	4	3	2	1	Low=0
Free/value for money	36	22	13	9	12	5
Available electronically	19	23	23	14	9	9
Available as a hard-copy document	13	17	14	17	27	9
Reliability and accuracy	44	20	12	16	1	4
Speed of Access	12	10	20	20	22	13
Other	1	2	3	0	1	90

Table 2.3: Question 2: Qualities of a Family History Resource: Derbyshire

Quality (x-axis): Free/value for money, Available electronically, Available as hard-copy, Reliability, accuracy, Speed of Access, Other

Score (y-axis): 0, 50, 100, 150, 200, 250
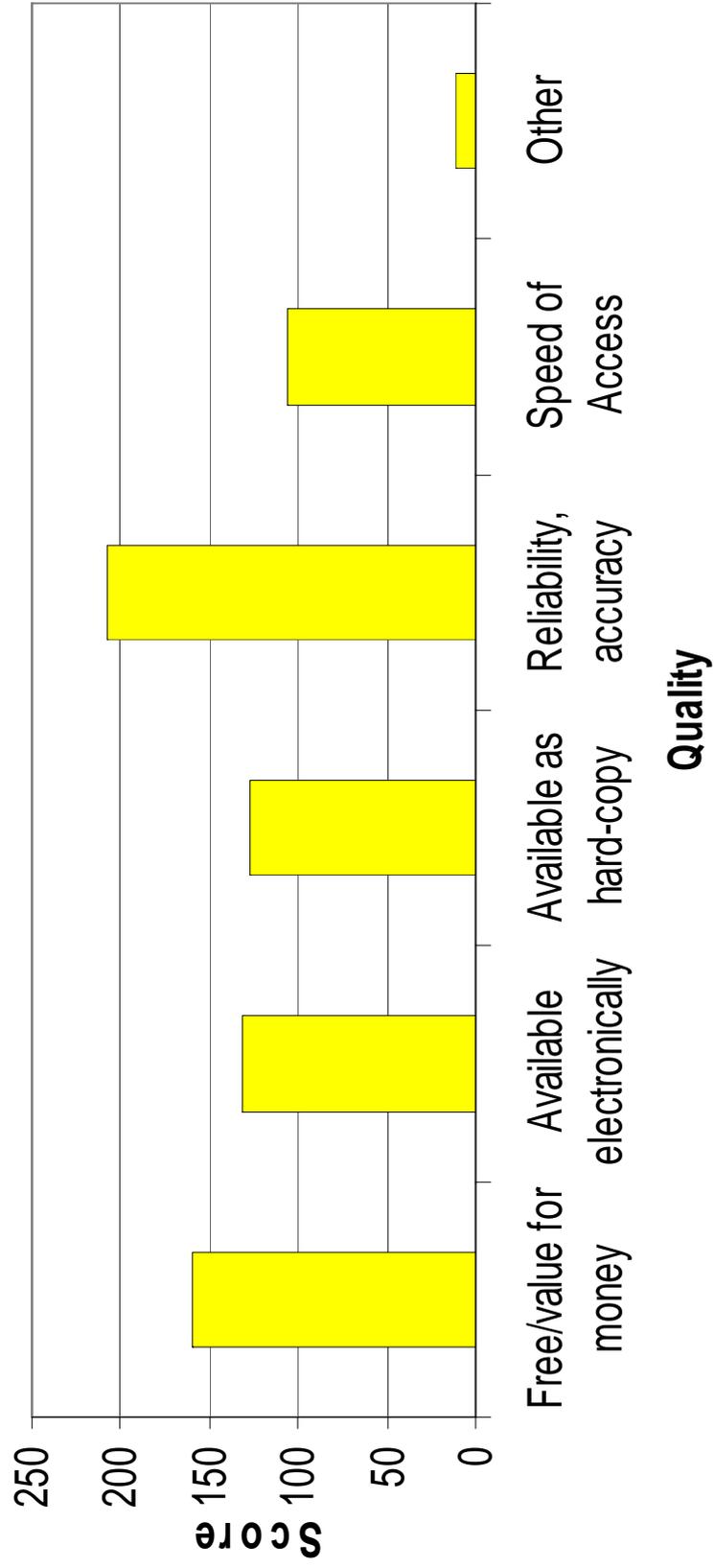
Table 2.4: Question 2: Qualities of a Family History Resource: Warrington
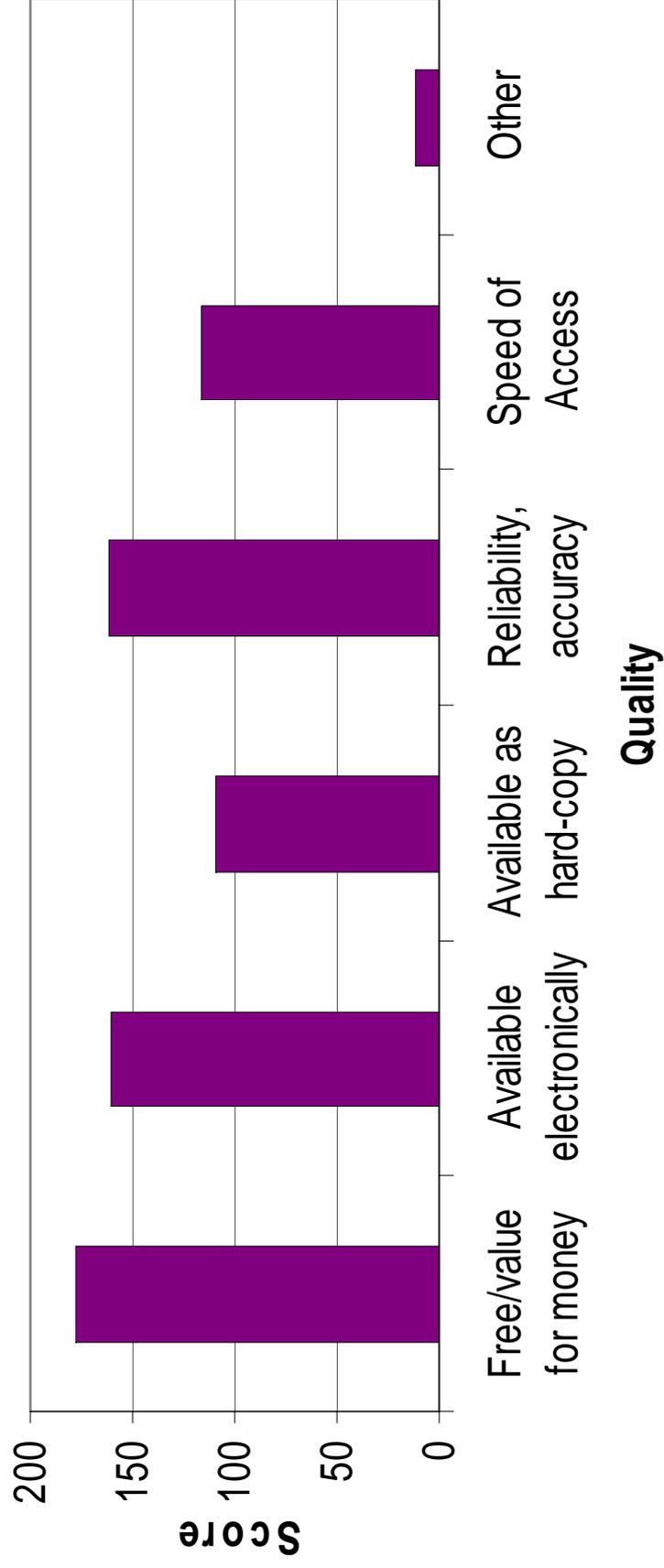
Table 2.5 Other Important Qualities of a Family History Resource.

Geography	Access	Utility
"Access without having to travel far"	"Ease of access (more than speed)"	"On reliability and accuracy – unless cross-checking possible, especially if using IGI"
"Obtained locally"		"Help to find sites etc"
		"Grouped documents such as the Family Records Centre"

6.2 Usage of Family History Resources.

62 questionnaire participants chose to respond to the open question 6. Many responses included several resources, some of which had a specific title and some were named more generically. For the purposes of analysis, responses can be grouped under the headings 'Books', 'Magazines', 'Records', 'Newspapers' and 'General comments'. These responses can be viewed in Appendix B. From these responses it is evident that in this sample magazines and books are very popular sources of family history information. Records such as trade directories and electoral registers are also quite popular. However, newspapers are less so. The general comments show that a wide variety of information sources are used by family historians, such that it is very difficult for respondents to list all of them in the space provided on the questionnaire.

6.2.1 Important Qualities and Usage of Family History Resources: Reliability, Accuracy and Cost.

Interviewees discussed issues of reliability, accuracy and cost in relation to internet sites, which will be discussed in more detail in section 6.3. Two interviewees expressed concern over the costs involved in pursuing family history research, particularly in ordering birth, marriage and death certificates.

> "Whether we'll have to buy the certificate the documents I think they're about £8.50 each / JR: Right yeah / So whether you think we could have access to see them without actually having to buy them because if you it could work out quite expensive," Ivy, Warrington Libraries customer.

> "I can only guess at a year of birth and uh possibly a year of marriage and none come out of to me as being right and without actually spending a lot of money getting birth certificates um there's no other way," Ronald, Warrington Libraries customer.

However, three interviewees had ordered hard copies of birth, marriage or death certificates. Therefore, the cost was not a barrier to access for every participant.

6.2.3 Important Qualities and Usage of a Family History Resource: Format.

Three interviewees had used microfiche censuses and parish records. One interviewee expressed some difficulty with gaining information from records in this format.

> "Purely out of microfilm it wasn't very uh legible or anything like that but I did get some information from it," Ronald, Warrington Libraries customer.

Later in the interview, the participant expressed hope that once microfilm records are digitized they would be easier to read.

One interviewee gave an answer which was characteristic of most interviewees: information-seeking in a variety of different formats.

> "Most of the information I've got is obviously off the computers off the microfilm and electoral register and census," George, Warrington Libraries customer.

Two interviewees in total had used electoral registers, and a further two had used trade directories. Interview data shows a pattern of seeking information in a variety of formats so that the shortcomings of one source can be fulfilled by another source.

6.2.4 Important Qualities and Usage of a Family History Resource: Other Qualities.

One interviewee indicated that ease of access or convenience was an issue when deciding whether to use a family history resource.

> "But now it's all on like microfilm so you've got to book uh to read it," Ronald, Warrington Libraries customer.

Nevertheless, having to book was not a barrier to this customer accessing the information he needed.

6.3 Perceptions of Family History Resources on the Internet.

Responses to question 5 on the questionnaire build a picture of awareness and usage of websites, and give some indication of whether the respondents would recommend the site to others. Only five participants (5%) did not answer this question, which indicates that very few in the sample are completely unaware of family history web resources. At the other end of the awareness spectrum, two participants added comments to this question indicating that there was not space to record all the websites that they had used for family history: 'Various found by Google' and 'Lots'. The sample for the recommendation of websites is considerably smaller than that for the rest of the questionnaire. Only 20 responses could be counted due to a misprint on the rest of the questionnaires, where the word 'would' showed instead of 'recommend'.

The website that the most questionnaire respondents were aware of and had used in response to question five was the pay-per-view site 1901 Census (http://www.1901censusonline.com). *See tables 5.1 and 5.4*. The second most prominent site in respondents' awareness and usage was the subscription site Ancestry (http://www.ancestry.co.uk) and it was more prominent in Warrington than Derbyshire, as could be expected from Warrington Libraries' subscription to Ancestrylibrary.com. *See tables 5.1 to 5.6*. However, some questionnaire respondents added 'Ancestry.com' and 'Ancestrylibrary.com' in the 'other' category, even though they are sites provided by the same company. *See table 5.7*. This indicates that Ancestry's sites could have been recorded as even more popular if all its names had been given in the questionnaire. It is also one indication of the accuracy limitations of this type of question. Whilst responses were filtered so that no sites were recorded as used that a respondent was unaware of, people would not necessarily have been able to remember the names of all the sites they have looked at or have only used a little. Therefore, these results give some indication of awareness and usage of family history resources on the web, but do not provide a completely reliable picture of this within the sample.

A second pay-per-view website which featured prominently in the awareness of respondents was 1837 Online (http://www.1837online.com). However, this was only the fourth most used website. Despite only being the fourth most prominent site in respondents' awareness, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (http://www.familysearch.org) was the third most used site. *See tables 5.1 and 5.4.* Two responses to question 5 in the 'Other' category referred to this site by different terms: 'the Mormon site' and 'IGI'. This indicates the possibility that a greater response could have been achieved in terms of awareness of the resource, if the questionnaire had alluded to all the names that this free site is known by. This site also was the most recommended site: it received six recommendations in the table and a further one from the 'Other' category. *See tables 5.7 and 5.8.*

Table 5.1: Question 5: Awareness of Family History Resources on the Internet

Legend:
- Free (red)
- Pay-per-view (green)
- Subscription (yellow)
- Other (cyan)

X-axis (Website): 1837 on line, 1901 census, Ancestry.co.uk, England and Wales Census Records Online, Familyrelatives.org, FamilySearch.org, Genes Reunited, RootsWeb, UK BMD, Other

Y-axis (Frequency): 0, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90
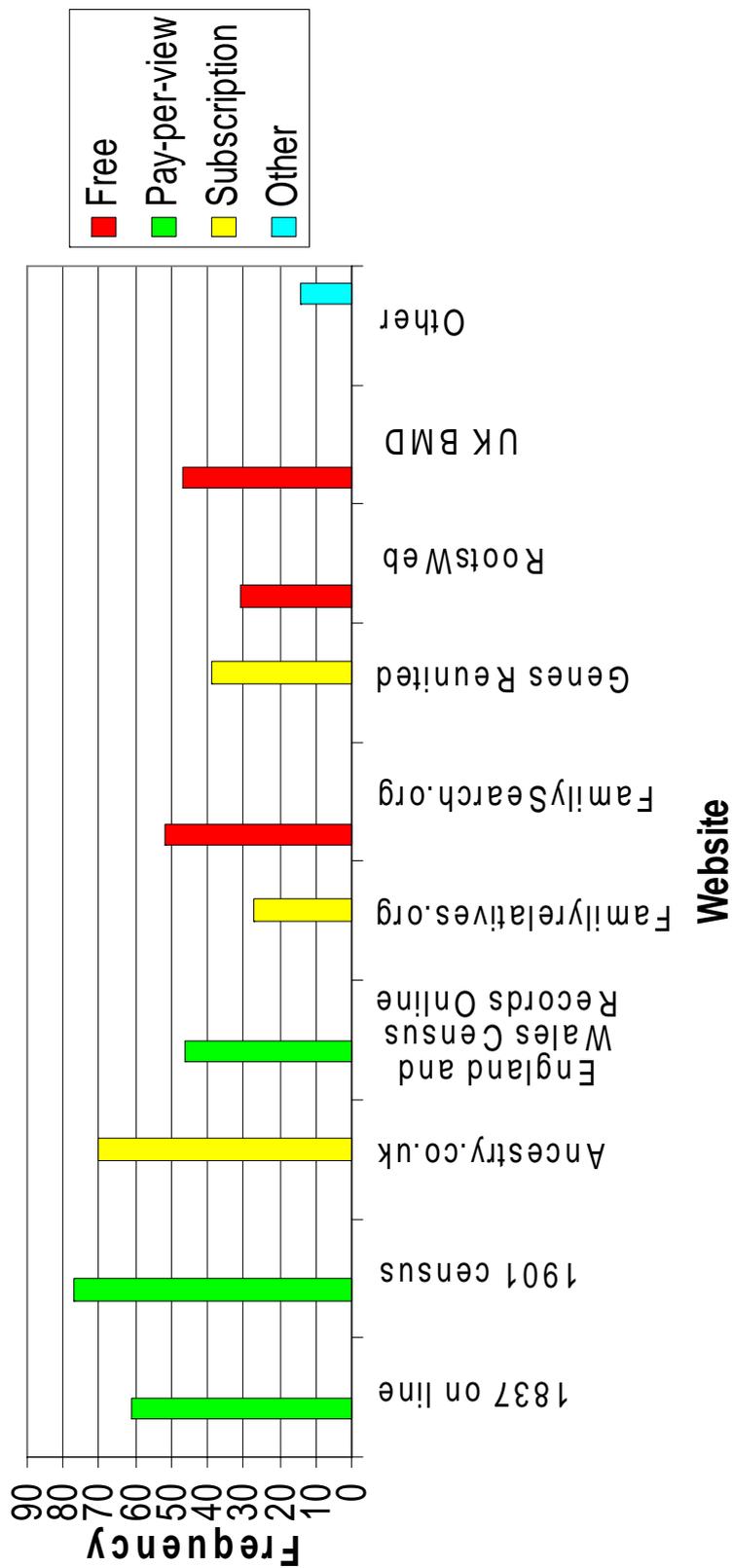
Table 5.2: Question 5: Awareness of Family History Resources on the Internet: Derbyshire

Legend:
- Free
- Pay-per-view
- Subscription
- Other

Website (x-axis): 1837 on line, 1901 census, Ancestry.co.uk, England and Wales Census Records Online, Familyrelatives.org, FamilySearch.org, Genes Reunited, RootsWeb, UK BMD, Other

Frequency (y-axis): 0, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45
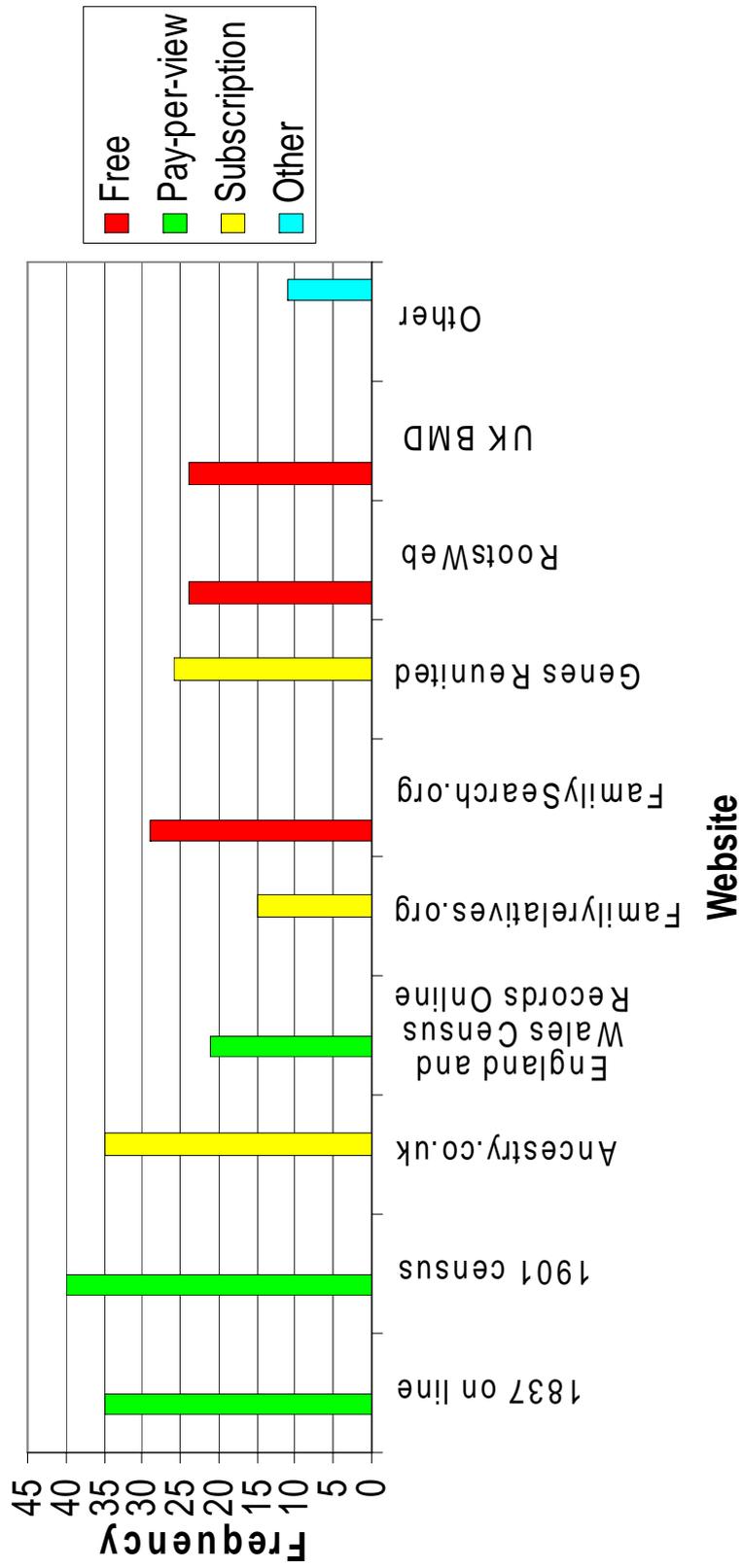
Table 5.3: Question 5: Awareness of Family History Resources on the Internet: Warrington
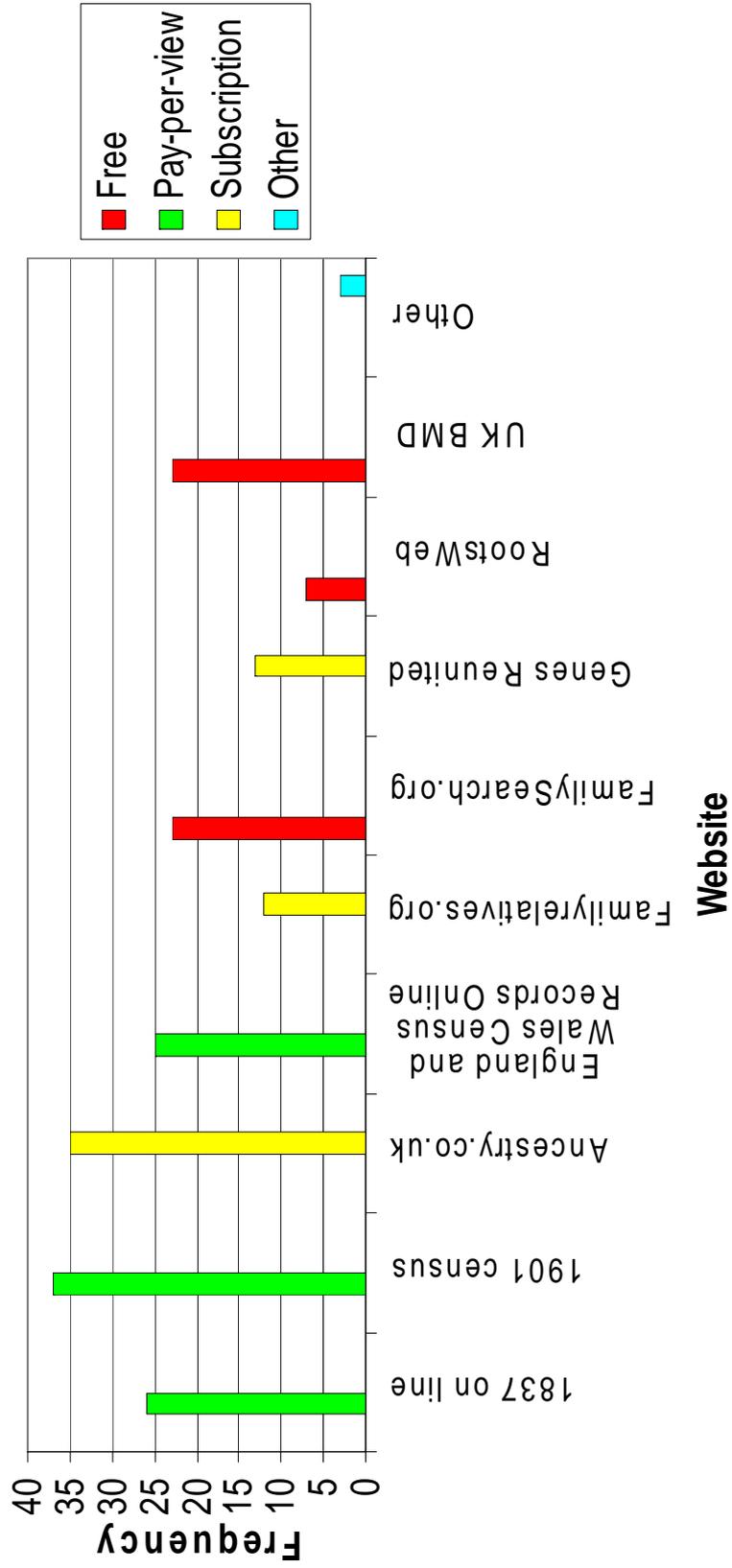
Table 5.4: Question 5: Usage of Family History Resources on the Internet

Legend:
- Free (red)
- Pay-per-view (green)
- Subscription (yellow)
- Other (cyan)

X-axis: Website
Y-axis: Frequency
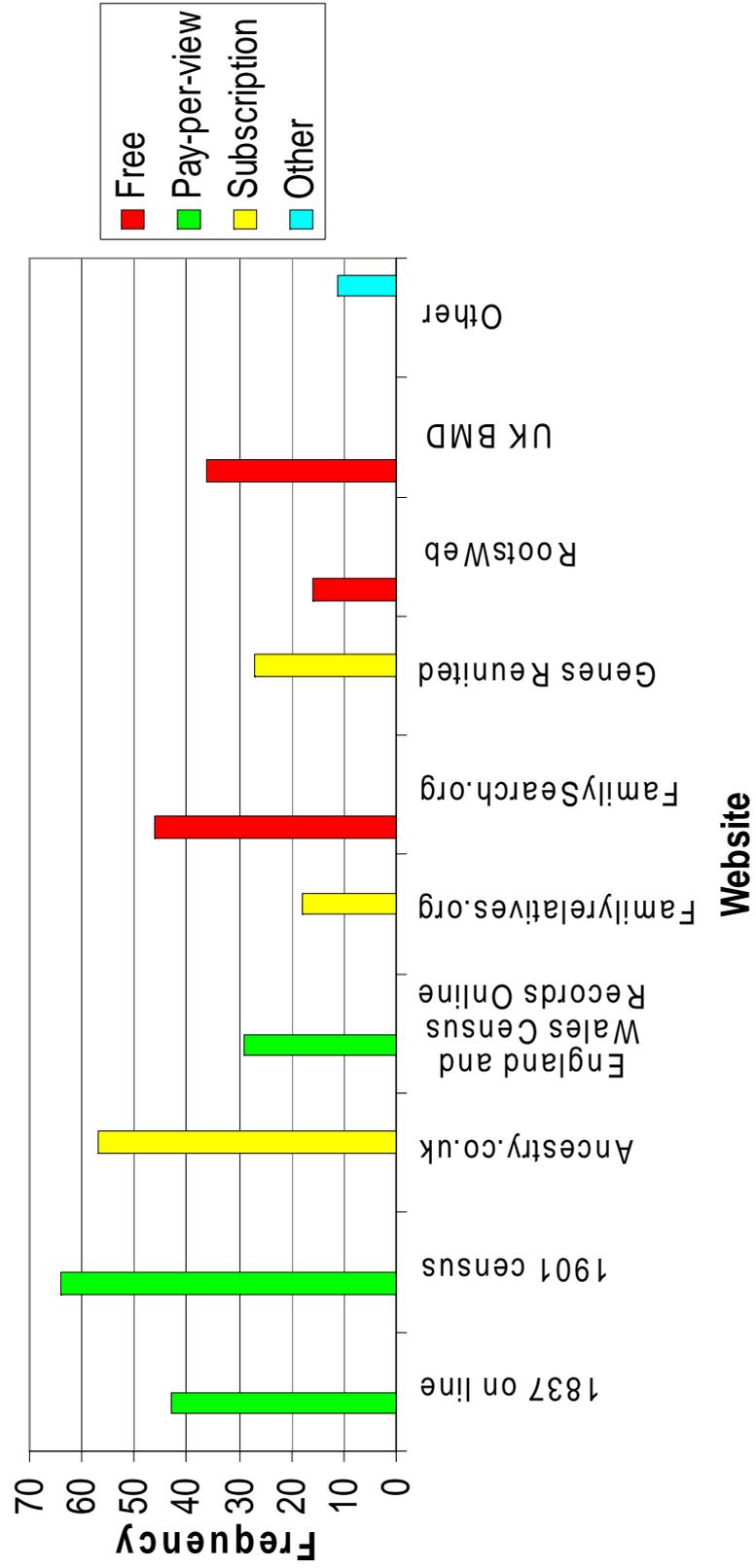
Table 5.5: Question 5: Usage of Family History Resources on the Internet: Derbyshire

Legend:
- Free (red)
- Pay-per-view (green)
- Subscription (yellow)
- Other (cyan)

Frequency (vertical axis): 0, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35

Website (horizontal axis): 1837 on line, 1901 census, Ancestry.co.uk, England and Wales Census Records Online, Familyrelatives.org, FamilySearch.org, Genes Reunited, RootsWeb, UK BMD, Other
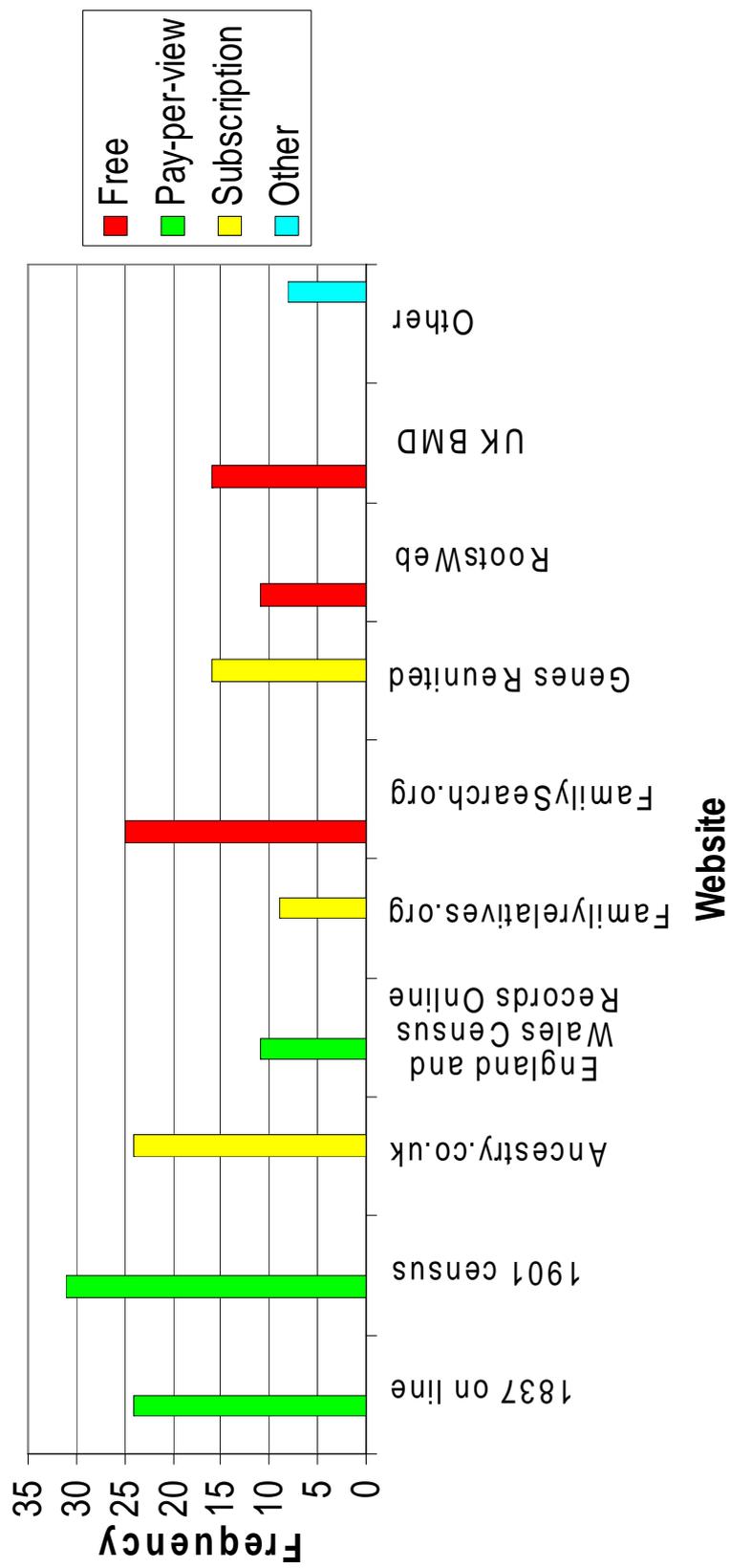
Table 5.6: Question 5: Usage of Family History Resources on the Internet: Warrington

Legend:
- Free (red)
- Pay-per-view (green)
- Subscription (yellow)
- Other (cyan)

Frequency (vertical axis): 0, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35

Website (horizontal axis): 1837 on line, 1901 census, Ancestry.co.uk, England and Wales Census Records Online, Familyrelatives.org, FamilySearch.org, Genes Reunited, RootsWeb, UK BMD, Other
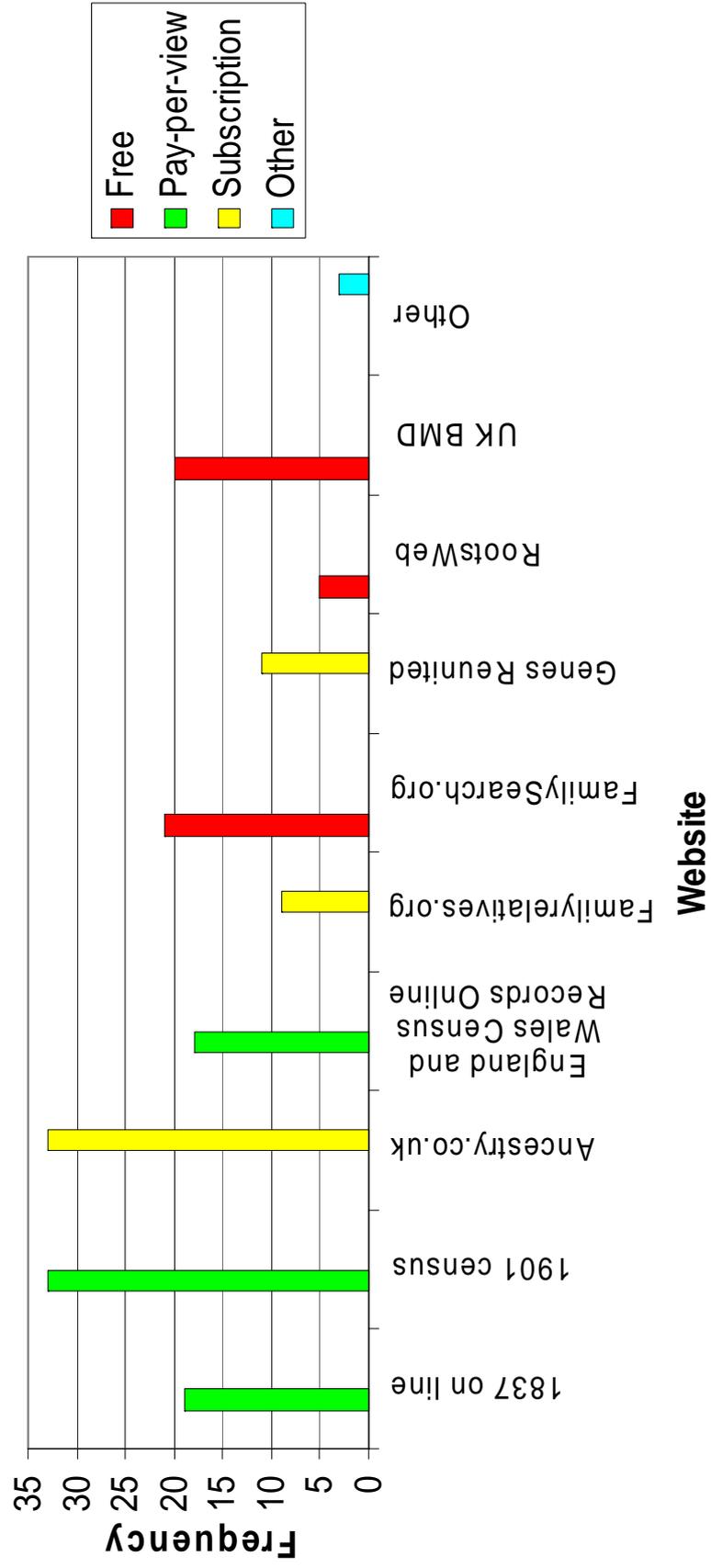
Table 5.7: Question 5: Other Family History Websites.

Website	Aware?	Used?	Recommend?	Free/PPV/Sub?
Ancestry.com / Ancestrylibrary.com	2	2	1	Sub
Commonwealth War Graves Commission http://www.cwgc.org/	1	1	1	Free
Free BMD http://www.freebmd.org.uk	2	2	1	Free
IGI/Mormon Site/The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints http://www.familysearch.org	2	1		Free
Genuki http://www.genuki.org.uk	2	0		Free
'Archives catalogue' (unknown address)	1	1		Free?
The British Army in the Great War of 1914-1918 http://www.1914-1918.net	1	1		Free
British Origins http://www.britishorigins.com	1	1		Sub
Cheshire BMD http://www.cheshirebmd.org.uk	1	1		Free
Cyndi's List http://www.cyndislist.com	1	1		Free
Lancashire BMD http://www.lancashirebmd.org.uk	1	1		Free
USA Census 1880-1930 http://home.att.net/~wee-monster/census.html	1	1		Free
Wakefield MBC Burial Register http://www.wakefield.gov.uk/CommunityAndLiving/CemeteriesAndCrematoria/GenealogySearches	1	1		Free
Yorkshire BMD http://www.yorkshirebmd.org.uk	1	1		Free

Table 5.8: Question 5: Recommendation of Family History Resources on the Internet

Legend:
- Free (red)
- Pay-per-view (green)
- Subscription (yellow)
- Other (cyan)

X-axis: Website
Y-axis: Frequency

Websites: 1837 on line, 1901 census, Ancestry.co.uk, England and Wales Census Records Online, familyrelatives.org, Familysearch.org, Genes Reunited, RootsWeb, UK BMD, Other
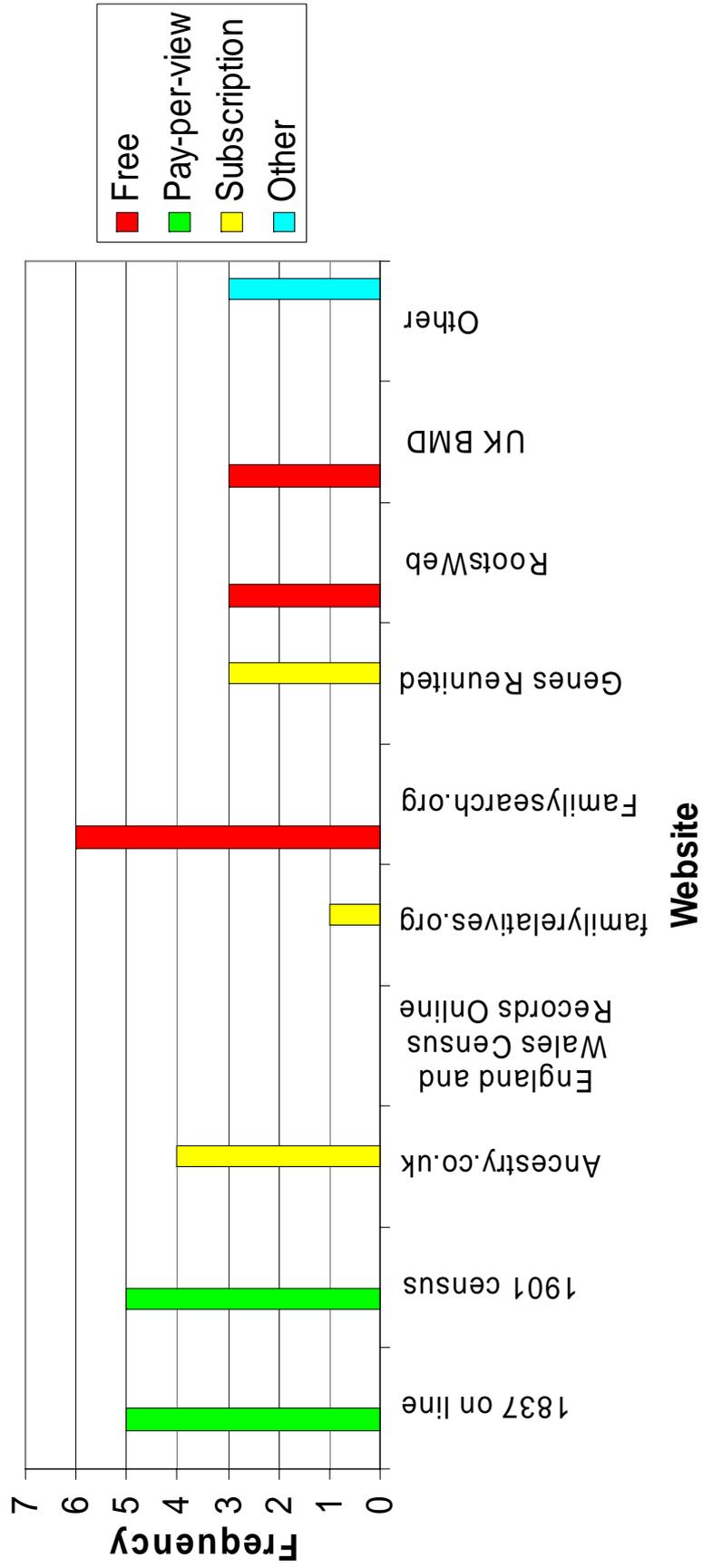
UK BMD (http://www.ukbmd.org.uk) ranked as the fifth most popular site, with regards to awareness and usage. *See tables 5.1 and 5.4.* The site itself is freely accessible and links to other records websites at local level, some of which were named specifically by respondents in the 'other' category. *See table 5.7.* The top four most used sites amongst Warrington Libraries customers were all demonstrated on the family history courses run by the service: 1901 Census, Ancestry.com, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and UK BMD. *See table 5.6.* Whilst this does not show cause and effect, it is an interesting correlation between promotion and customer usage. The sixth most popular site in terms of awareness and usage was England and Wales Census Records Online (http://www.ukisearch.com/census.html), and this is a pay-per-view site. The seventh most prominent website in terms of awareness and usage was the subscription site Genes Reunited (http://www.genesreunited.co.uk/). The free site Roots Web (http://www.rootsweb.com) was the second to least prominent site listed in terms of awareness, and the least used site. The subscription site Family Relatives (http://www.familyrelatives.org) was the site that respondents were least aware of and that had been used by the second to least number of respondents. *See tables 5.1 and 5.4.*

Of the websites listed as other, 12 out of the 14 listed were free sites. The most used of these was Free BMD http://www.freebmd.org.uk. This site, Ancestry and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission http://www.cwgc.org/ each received a recommendation. *See table 5.7.*

Overall the questionnaires indicate that respondents are most aware of and most use pay-per-view sites, particularly 1901 Census. Respondents are more aware of and use free sites more than subscription sites, and there are a wider variety of free sites that respondents are aware of and use. Free sites, particularly The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, are most

recommended by respondents and subscription sites, particularly Ancestry, are recommended more than pay-per-view sites.

6.3.1 Perceptions of Family History Resources on the Internet: General Comments.

All ten interviewees had used at least one website at some point in their family history research. Five responded to the question, 'Has there been anything that you've found particularly helpful in your research?' with names of websites. Positive feelings towards the internet in general were expressed by one participant, who was also aware that it has limitations.

> "This internet thing it's uh it's uh it's a wonderful tool but I don't think we're quite using it to its full potential yet," Daniel, Derbyshire Libraries customer.

However, there were indications that some interviewees felt less than confident about using computers in general.

> "My biggest difficulty is not being able to work the computer properly," George, Warrington Libraries customer.

This participant went on to explain that he wished he had taken notes at the course run by the library.

6.3.2 Perceptions of Family History Resources on the Internet: Free Sites.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints was mentioned when interviewees were asked 'Has there been anything that you've found particularly helpful in your research?' One interviewee hinted at the limitations of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints' site: that whilst it is possible to trace your family history back a long way through the transcribed and uploaded parish registers, it is often inaccurate.

> "I'm now at the stage where I've got somebody from um
> possibly possibly somebody born in the late 1600s perhaps
> but that's purely going on the LDS you know the Mormon
> site," Ronald, Warrington Libraries customer.

It is interesting that the problems of incomplete and inaccurate records described by this participant were present in the early microfilm form of the IGI, as described by Harvey (1983).

Cheshire Births, Deaths and Marriages (http://www.cheshirebmd.org.uk/) is a local part of UK BMD and free to search but the user must download an application form and pay for a copy of the birth, death or marriage certificate. Two interviewees cited this when asked what they had found particularly helpful.

> "The Cheshire Births Marriages and Deaths I think has
> been one of the s best ones," Henry, Warrington Libraries
> customer.

However, one interviewee qualified this by remarking on the limits to its usefulness with regards to her interest in family history.

> "I've found the uh Cheshire Births, Deaths and Marriages
> um quite useful but it's finding the I'm having difficulty
> finding out more about um not so much names and dates
> more about the people you know," Martha, Warrington
> Libraries customer.

Cyndi's List (http://www.cyndislist.com) was another free site mentioned by an interviewee in response to the question about what they had found to be particularly helpful in their research.

6.3.3 Perceptions of Family History Resources on the Internet: Pay-Per-View Sites.

Interview responses reflected frustration with having to pay for sites in response to the question: 'Can you tell me about any difficulties you've had in your research?'

> "One of my main difficulties with the sites is that you have to pay to get on them," Margaret, Derbyshire Libraries customer.

Two interviewees had used the pay-per-view site Scotland's People (http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/) but had not been able to be successful because they did not understand what the website could and could not provide beforehand.

> "Scotland's People when we came here my daughter had put six pounds I think on and we used it up and then we put more money in and we're going to see if we can pick anything out and the difficulty seemed to be that the information they did have there it was out with the band and they say it was between such and such a date and another date," Ivy, Warrington Libraries customer.

6.3.4 Perceptions of Family History Resources on the Internet: Subscription Sites.

Positive comments were recorded about Ancestry, both as a subscription site, and as a freely accessible site from the People's Network PCs in Warrington Libraries. The census search facility on this site was found to be particularly helpful.

> "So those censuses now sort of put uh more flesh on the names and so forth they tell me more about the people they tell you and their movements about the country," Ronald, Warrington Libraries customer.

> "Ancestry.com unlocked it plus a little bit of detective work from myself," Joseph, Derbyshire Libraries customer.

Two interview respondents expressed great satisfaction with using Genes Reunited.

> "They find people when they've got the identical information and they sort of put you in touch with each other and maybe sometimes it's just a coincidence but it's worked out quite well for me and my own family," Daniel, Derbyshire Libraries customer.

> "Recently somebody from America as I say has contacted me through the Genes Reunited site who are part of that family," Ronald, Warrington Libraries customer.

7.0 Conclusion

Triangulation of the questionnaire and interview data allows the investigator to reach conclusions in answer to the research questions. Some correlation between participants' information 'wants' and information usage can be seen. This helps the researcher to build a picture of the information-seeking behaviour of family historians.

7.1 The Motivations of Family History Researchers.

The main purpose of family history research is to construct a family tree with accurate birth marriage and death dates, or pure genealogical research. Aside from this, the motivations of family historians are various and difficult to prioritise one over another. Many family historians view their research both as an intellectually stimulating activity and as a hobby. Curiosity about family history can be precipitated by an event such as the death of a close relative or be excited by looking at old photographs. Whilst finding the facts of where ancestors lived and what their occupations were, family historians are also interested in the wider historical context and in finding out about what the lives of their ancestors were like. Therefore, the sort of family history research as defined by Hey (1987) is also very popular. Family historians approach their research from many different angles and are interested in specific aspects of family history. These aspects range from researching a family's medical history to finding living relatives.

7.2 Approaches to Information-Seeking in Family History.

The entire data gathering for this research took place in public libraries; therefore it is unsurprising that it finds that the vast majority of family historians approach public libraries in order to do their research. Whilst some customers lack awareness about library services, a much larger proportion are happy with the service provided. Specifically, family historians are

satisfied with the helpfulness of staff and have found computer courses particularly useful. Archives and records offices are also heavily used by family historians, and the helpfulness of staff is also noted at these organisations. Most family historians also approach living relatives for information, but the reliability of this information can be questionable. A lesser proportion of family historians approach churches for information, because church records are often available at libraries, archives and records offices. There are a variety of other sources of information which are approached by family historians. Some approach large organizations such as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints or the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Others contact family and local history societies or family history agents. Family historians also visit specialist libraries, archives and heritage or family history research centres.

Travel is a consideration for many family historians, but attitudes towards it are varied. Most family historians would only be willing to travel within the UK. Proportionally, Derbyshire Libraries customers are willing to travel further than Warrington Libraries customers. Whilst most family historians would prefer not to have to travel far to do their research due to convenience, it is often necessary to visit another part of the country if the research is to progress. Overcoming the barrier of geographical distance can be achieved by having someone else do the research on your behalf. Some family historians would enjoy travelling overseas in pursuit of their research, but for some this could only be if there was strong evidence to suggest that it was necessary and for others family history research was only an incidental part of an overseas holiday.

7.3 The Characteristics of the Information Sought by Family Historians.

The key factors influencing a family historian's decision of whether to use an information source are its cost and the reliability of the information it provides. The expensive nature of ordering documents from records offices can be a barrier to some family historians' progress in their research, but this is not the case for every researcher. Reliability and accuracy are not always the most important characteristic of a family history information source, as the research is often about finding several possible records and a process of cross-checking them.

There is a slight indication that family historians prefer to access information electronically. Microfiche and microfilm records are sometimes described as being difficult to read. However, the overall picture is that family historians use information in a variety of formats. Speed of access to information is not important to family historians; more important are issues such as ease of access and utility.

Many family historians are aware of and use a wide variety of family history resources on the internet. The range of attitudes towards family history resources on the internet amongst library customers is similar to the wide spectrum of opinion amongst librarians, as described in section 2.1. Whilst some family historians lack confidence in using computers, many have found websites very helpful in their research. Family historians are most aware of and use pay-per-view sites, particularly 1901 Census (http://www.1901censusonline.com); and are more aware of and use more free sites than subscription sites. Conversely, free sites, particularly The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (http://www.familysearch.org), are most recommended by family historians. Whilst family historians find this site useful, they recognise limits to its reliability and accuracy. Parts of UK

BMD (http://www.ukbmd.org.uk) which are free to search were found useful, but the bare facts of the information provided do not satisfy family historians' curiosity about the historical context of what their ancestors' lives were like. Subscription sites such as Ancestry (http://www.ancestry.com) are more highly recommended than pay-per-view sites, but family historians are often frustrated with having to pay to access sites at all. Ancestry is particularly popular for two reasons: the census information appeals to family historians who are interested in finding historical contextual information, and it is made freely accessible in Warrington Libraries.

7.4 Information-Seeking Behaviour.

Family historians are most interested in constructing a family tree and in order to do this they are most likely to use public libraries within the UK and freely accessible internet sites such as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. They are also interested in finding out about what the lives of their ancestors were like: where they lived and what occupations they had. Looking at census records is one of the first steps towards this and family historians are most likely to access these records on a pay-per-view site such as 1901 Census or the subscription site Ancestry.

Some family historians overcome the barrier of travel by using the internet as much as possible in their research, or by arranging for a family history agent or other personal contact to do research at another location for them. Family historians overcome psychological barriers in relation to IT by taking courses provided by the library. Cost is only regarded as a barrier by some family historians. Those for whom it is a barrier have difficulty finding a way to overcome it and continue their research.

8.0 Recommendations

Family historians approach their research from a wide variety of motivations and perspectives. It is very difficult therefore to take a 'one size fits all' approach to serving their information needs.

- Family historians on the whole are satisfied with the service that public libraries are providing to them.
- IT courses are particularly helpful to those who find it difficult to use computers, and for who ease of access and utility are important considerations.
- Libraries can use more targeted marketing to help make their customers aware of the stock and services that they offer, particularly those which are free.
- Librarians can help people access websites and establish personal contacts through family history societies to help people overcome geographical barriers to pursuing their research.
- Libraries can subscribe to sites such as Ancestry library edition (http://www.ancestrylibrary.com) which provide free access to a wealth of family history information and this then is one way to help family historians overcome the barrier of cost.
- Libraries have a role in raising awareness amongst their customers of what different websites offer, so the customer can weigh this against the cost of using it and make an informed decision.
- However, there will always be limits to what libraries are physically capable of providing as a service to family historians. In Case (2002), lesson five of the eight lessons of information behaviour research, "Sometimes it is not possible to make information available or accessible," (Case, 2002:289-290) confirms that it is not always possible for information professionals to satisfy their users needs, if the primary records are simply unavailable.

9.0 Further Research Topics

Family history research is often undertaken by those doing lifelong learning for reasons of personal fulfillment. Many participants in this project commented on the intellectual stimulation it provides, the IT skills they had acquired and the 'detective work' they had done. Looking at the difference between actual and intended learning outcomes in family history was not within the scope of this study. It would be interesting to research the ways in which family history contributes to the government's lifelong learning agenda, and if it could be used to draw up a framework for information literacy in the context of informal learning at public libraries.

[Words: 15,100 excluding title page, acknowledgements, abstract, bibliography and appendices.]

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Appendix A: Questionnaire

You are being invited to take part in a research project which aims to investigate how varied the information needs of family history researchers are, in order to establish priorities for service provision in local studies libraries. A summary of my findings will be presented to the Warrington Libraries, Museums and Archives Service and Derbyshire County Libraries, who have allowed me to conduct my research. The research project will be submitted to the University of Sheffield as a dissertation to partly fulfill the requirements of an MA in Librarianship on 1 September 2006. This questionnaire has a unique participant number: *002*. This will allow the information you provide to remain confidential. By completing this questionnaire you are giving your consent for your responses to be used in my research.

1. Please rank the following reasons to do family history research in the order of their importance to you personally, assigning '1' to the most important and '2' to the next most important, and so on.

Constructing a family tree with accurate birth, marriage and death dates.	
Tracing your origins geographically.	
Finding out about the occupations of your ancestors.	
Learning about what the lives of your ancestors were like.	
Passing family stories on to future generations.	
Other (please specify):	

2. Please rank the following qualities of a Family History Resource in the order of their significance to you, when you are deciding whether to use one. Please assign '1' to the most important and '2' to the next most important and so on.

Free/value for money.	
Available electronically.	
Available as a hard-copy document.	
Reliability and accuracy.	
Speed of access.	
Other (please specify):	

3. Which of the following have you approached in order to do family history research? Please tick all the boxes which apply.

Living relatives	
Public Libraries	
Archives	
Records Offices	
Churches	
Other: (please specify)	

4. How far would you be willing to travel in pursuit of family history research? Please tick all the boxes which apply.

Within your town	
Within your county	
To other parts of the UK	
Overseas	

5. Which of the following internet resources are you aware of? And which have you used? And which would you recommend? Please tick all the boxes which apply.

Website	*Aware?*	*Used?*	*Recommend?*
1837 on line http://www.1837online.com			
1901 census http://www.1901censusonline.com/			
Ancestry.co.uk (UK & Ireland)			
England and Wales Census Records Online 1851-1901			
familyrelatives.org https://www.familyrelatives.org/treequest/jsp/customer			
Familysearch.org http://www.familysearch.org/			
Genes Reunited http://www.genesreunited.co.uk/			
RootsWeb http://www.rootsweb.com/			
UK BMD http://www.ukbmd.org.uk/			
Other: (please specify)			

6. Please list any publications which have been of use to you in your research.

7. Are you interested in being interviewed by the researcher as part of the study? If so, please leave your name and contact details.

Name: Tel.:

If you wish to withdraw your responses, or have any further queries about the research project, please contact the following people. Please quote participant number: *002*.

My contact details: Miss Jennifer Richards Email: **lip05jr@sheffield.ac.uk** Tel. 0775 968 8725	My supervisor: Ms Sheila Webber, Lecturer. Email: **S.Webber@sheffield.ac.uk** Tel. (0114) 222 2641

Appendix B: Other Family History Resources.

Books	Magazines	Records	Newspapers	General Comments
Colin Rogers - 'The Family Tree Detective'	Family Tree Magazine (x 5)	1881 Census	Ashbourne News Telegraph	All the books in the library (x 3)
W.E. Tate - 'The Parish Chest'	Oxford Family History Society Magazine	IGI [?] (x 2)	Matlock Mercury	Books local to my particular area ie Lincolnshire
Richard Harrey - Genealogy for Librarians	Aberdeen Family History Society Magazine	National Census Returns (x 2)	Derbyshire Times	Books on local history (x 2)
Herber, M: Ancestral Trails	Your Family Tree (x 2)	Trade Lists/Directories / Kelly's Directory/ Directories of Derbyshire (x 4)		Books about family history – lots (x 2)
Frank Rogers- How to trace your ancestors (or similar)	Practical Family History	Electoral registers (x 2)		All Derbyshire stock
BBC - Who Do You Think You Are? (x 2)	Tracing Your Family Tree (x 2)	BMD		Books about Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Lancashire places
Mullaly Col BR 'The South Lancashire Regiment'	Derbyshire Archaeological Journal	Gravestones		Various books on Haig, French

Whalley-Kelly Capt H 'Ich Dien: The Prince of Wales Volunteers (S Lancs 1914-34)	Derbyshire Record Society	Parish Registers		One biography etc
Making a family history record	Norfolk/Sheffield/Nottingham Local History Mags			Local history books about the part of Northumberland I'm researching
	Bodkin (Bradford FHS)			Local publications
	Banyan Tree (ERFHS)			Magazines on family history (x 7)
				Local newspapers
				Various family history booklets on pre-1837
				Too many over 30 years