THE USE OF DISPLAYS IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES: THE LIBRARIANS' VIEWPOINT.

A study submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Masters of Arts in Librarianship

at

THE UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD

by

LEANNE HOLDSWORTH

September 2007

Abstract.

This study takes qualitative look at the use of displays in public libraries. The author uses the literature available to determine focal points for the study, using materials from the academic and professional library press as well as information concerning how the retail sector uses displays. The author highlights the role displays can play in promoting books and reader development but also raises awareness of the lack of research previously undertaken in this specific area of library work.

A multiple method approach is taken, consisting of a survey of the displays on show at the time of the study in Sheffield Public Libraries and a series of semi-structured interviews with library staff.

The study suggests that displays are widely used in public libraries and that staff are aware of the benefits of displays and know how to maximise the impact of them. The study also shows that there are some barriers to display work, including a lack of space and time and little training. It is suggested that adequate display furniture and the willingness of the individual staff plays an important role in how many displays a library has and how focused the displays are on their specific borrowers.

The study concludes that displays are an important part of public library work that has been little recognised by library staff, managers and researchers. It shows that in Sheffield, there has been little training concerning displays but that this does not hinder the display making abilities of the library staff. It also suggests that careful thought needs be given when planning policies that include displays so that the clarity of the displays and responsiveness to the community is not compromised. The study

recommends that more training is given to library staff about displaying books and that public libraries should be better sign posted so they are highlighted to the surrounding community. It also recommends some areas for further research.

Contents Page

Abstract. ii
Contents Page.....iv
Chapter One: Introduction. 1
1.1. Background to the Study.....1
1.2 Aims and Objectives.....2
Chapter Two: Literature Review. 4
2.1 Previous Studies.....4
2.2 The Benefits of Displays.....4
2.3 Problems with Displays. 7
2.4 Recommendations from the Literature. 8
Chapter Three: Methodology.....12
3.1. Introduction.....12
3.2 Research Approach. 12
3.3 Methods of Data Collection.....13
3.3.1 Survey of Displays.....13
3.3.2 Semi-structured Interviews. 14
3.3.3 Sample Size.....15
Chapter Four: Findings. 16
4.1 Survey. 16
4.1.1 Number of Displays. 16
4.1.2 Number of Books.....17
4.1.3 Themes.....18
4.1.4 Location. 20
4.1.5 Face-out Displays.....22
4.1.6 Display furniture. 23
4.1.7 Additional Promotional Material. 26
4.1.8 Signage.....28
4.1.9 Additional Props. 31
4.1.10 Maintenance.....31
4.2 Interviews: Practical Aspects.....32
4.2.1 Choice of Display Themes.....32

4.2.2 Frequency of Changes.....35
4.2.3 Time for Display Work.....37
4.2.4 Resources for Making Displays.....40
4.2.5 Training.....43
4.2.6 Job Descriptions.....44
4.2.7 Evaluating Displays.....45
4.2.8 Partnerships.....46
4.3 Interviews: Staff Views.....48
4.3.1 Defining “Display”.....48
4.3.2 Impact on Promoting Books.....50
4.3.3 What Type of Books to Display.....53
4.3.4 Good Displays.....55
4.3.5 Poor Displays.....58
4.3.6 The Views of Peers and Managers.....60
4.3.7 Other Resources.....61
4.3.8 The Use of Displays in Public Libraries.....63
5.1 Budgets.....65
5.2 Training.....66
5.3 Library Policy.....70
5.4 Influence of Shops.....72
5.5 Barriers to Display Work.....75
5.6 Evaluation.....77
Chapter Six: Conclusions.....79
6.1 The Number of Displays.....79
6.2 Positive Findings.....79
6.3 Areas for Improvement.....80
Chapter Seven: Recommendations.....83
7.1 Training.....83
7.2 Further Research.....83
7.2.1 Influence of Bookshops.....83
7.2.2 “Tracking Borrowers”.....84
7.3 Sign Posts.....84
References.....85
Appendices.....90

Appendix 1: Survey Outline. 90
Appendix 2: Interview Schedule.....91
Appendix 3: Findings Graphs. 94
3.1: Displays Per Library. 94
3.2: Fiction and Non-Fiction Displays.....94
3.3.1: Face-Out Display One. 95
3.3.2: Face-Out Displays Two. 95
3.4.1: Display furniture One. 96
3.4.2: Display Furniture Two.....96
3.5: Signage.....97
3.6: Maintenance.....97
Appendix 4: Display Versus Issues Graph. 98

Chapter One: Introduction.

1.1. Background to the Study.

Displays are an integral aspect of public library work. Attractively arranged collections of materials are used to highlight and promote new stock, genres, authors, under active stock and special occasions. Displays require time and effort to create and maintain, all of which requires a level of commitment from library staff.

Most, if not all, public libraries have a display. Highland Park library in Texas, USA, displays "not-so-new but still interesting" books near the new books displayed in order to promote them (Kuzyk, 2006). Turner (1987 cited in Goodall, 1989) found Beeston Library in Nottinghamshire always created a display for newly acquired fiction. The 'Well Worth Reading' campaign suggested small displays were placed in amongst the fiction stock, with larger ones, more prominently placed ones to promote new stock (McKearney and Baverstock, 1990). These are just a few of the numerous examples found in the professional and academic press.

A display is essentially a specially arranged selection of books. The Oxford English Dictionary defines display as "to arrange something or a collection of things so that they can be seen by the public". This is true of public libraries, where displays are used to highlight or promote certain areas of stock.

There has been some research on displays in libraries. In particular there has been a focus on the impact displays have on issue figures, with results that show a positive relationship between displays and raised circulation. The same result has been found

in research into shopping and how shops promote their stock. There also been some research into how library users view displays, with conclusions suggesting they help borrower choice and encourage users to try new types of books. There has been no research undertaken from the viewpoint of the library staff.

In addition to the research mentioned above, displays are recommended in the academic and professional press as an integral part of reader development and book promotion. However, there is little research on how to make effective displays beyond generic advice such as to follow the example of the bookshops and maintain a neat display. Cleeve (1995) asserts that before 1990, there was little research into displays apart from in publications such as *The Museums Journal* or *Curator*. There has been work undertaken such as *The Display and Care of Books in Primary Schools* (Asbridge, 1967) and *Display and Publicity Ideas for Public Libraries* (Franklin, 1985) but these are clearly outdated and simply discuss ideas and themes for displays.

1.2 Aims and Objectives.

This study aims to understand the use of displays within a public library setting, and what the practicalities of display work means to the library staff involved in their making and maintenance. A survey of the twenty-nine public libraries in Sheffield was undertaken to assess the current use of display in one authority. The rationale for this was to discover the extent of display use and to ascertain any important themes behind the number, location and maintenance of the displays and the features of the library. The second part of the study is a series of semi-structured interviews with

library staff. This was used to discover the realities of display work, along with the views and feelings of library staff concerning displays.

This is a qualitative study that aims to gain an understanding of the impact of displays in public libraries according to the staff who work with them.

Both methods of research show that displays are widely used in public libraries and are seen to be positive addition to the library environment. There were admissions to the limitations of display work such as a lack of time and space, but there is a great understanding of the role displays can play in various aspects of the service. It is clear from the research that displays are an essential part of public library work.

Chapter Two: Literature Review.

2.1 Previous Studies.

There have been many qualitative studies that have touched on displays: these are usually concerned with the role displays play in user browsing, marketing or reader development (Perren, 2005; Stanley, 2004; Thomas, 2003; Blanshard, 1998; Van Riel, 1996; Baker, 1986; Goldhar, 1972). Much of the data is outdated and focuses on the numerical impact of the promotion. Qualitative studies have generally concentrated on why borrowers choose books (Evans, 1999; Goodall, 1989,), with none offering the viewpoint of the librarian.

Citation searches on Google Scholar and Web of Knowledge were undertaken in an attempt to discover further research on this area but no new information was found. It is interesting to note that a lot of the research that covers this area, especially concerning how people choose books, has been done by MA students of Librarianship or Information management. The Goodall (1989) research for example, offers a review of the findings eight pieces of research, six of which are MA dissertations.

2.2 The Benefits of Displays.

The literature raises offers an extensive knowledge of the importance of displays in public libraries for promoting stock, increasing issues and aiding borrower choices (Evans, 1999; Kinnell and Shepherd, 1998; Phelan, 1993; McKearney and Baverstock, 1990; Goodall, 1989).

Displays are useful tool for promoting books to borrowers. Kinnell and Shepherd (1998: 22) note that “one of the functions of the library service is to promote awareness of the material provided”. Cleeve (1995: 32) asserts that displays are a “versatile weapon in the library’s armoury of promotional options”. One librarian interviewed by Kinnell and Shepherd said displays are useful promotional tools for regular users who “are willing to take the risk of reading poetry or Asian fiction but unwilling to turn up for a special event” (Kinnell and Shepherd, 1998: 84). Walters (1995) and Kinnell and Shepherd (1998) both assert that children’s librarians have been successfully promoting books to children for years although promoting books to adults has been slow to adapt. Thomas (2003) suggests the resurgence of interest in promoting reading to adults has come about due to a rethinking of priorities due to funding cuts and the threats from the commercial sector, such as cheaper books due to the collapse of the Net Book Agreement in 1995, which regulated the minimum price at which a book could be sold.

Displays can affect the circulation rates of books. All the public libraries involved in the *Well Worth Reading* scheme saw their issue figures double at the least (McKearney and Baverstock, 1990). They also found that figures for the books in the display were higher than usual for the following eight weeks as people continued to discuss the promotion with their friends or caught up on the books they had previously missed. Goodall’s (1989) 1987 study showed an increase of 72% in circulation of books that were placed in a display to when they were simply on the shelf. Walters (1995: 23) states that a “failure to issue is as much a failure of exploitation as of an inherent lack of appeal in a particular type of stock”.

Displays can help people when they are choosing a book to borrow (Kinnell and Shepherd, 1998; McKearney and Baverstock, 1990; Goodall, 1989). Research shows that some borrowers, especially those who choose books by browsing, find traditional arrangement methods difficult to negotiate. Browsing is casual, random or unmethodological inspection of books in the hope you might find something interesting (Goodall, 1989). Ainley and Totterdell (1982:10 cited in Goodall, 1989) found that 55% of borrowers in central libraries and 75-80% in branch libraries choose books by browsing and suggest that

> Unfortunately the majority of public library book stocks are arranged in such a way as to make this browsing function as difficult as possible… Users have confessed to being daunted by the sheer number of books confronting them and long, formal, spine-displayed sequences can only exacerbate such feelings.

Celoria (1986 cited in Goodall, 1989) recommends libraries purposefully design loopholes in the library structure that allow for browsing. Displays could be a method of achieving this by providing a smaller choice of well-presented books. In her 1987 study, Goodall found one borrower said about displays “the decision’s made for me” (1989: 66), suggesting some library users prefer to choose from a smaller selection of books. 44% of users questioned in the *Well Worth Reading* scheme gave seeing the display as the reason for their choice of book (McKearney and Baverstock, 1990). Kinnell and Shepherd 1998) found 97% of borrowers

questioned felt displays assisted their book choice, with 79% feeling displays encouraged the borrowing of different authors to their usual choice. Richard Watson, Service Director of Culture at Leister City Council says of the matter “We find that many customers enjoy selecting from well-prepared displays rather than tightly-packed shelves” (Watson, 2006). The usefulness of displays is well recognised in the library world.

Displays can also act as unofficial guidance for users who do not have a clear idea of what they want to borrow. McKearney and Baverstock (1990) suggest people are more comfortable asking bookshop staff for help when choosing a book than library staff. Spiller (cited in Goodall, 1989) found 93% of borrowers questioned never asked library staff for help. Jennings and Searle (1986 cited in Goodall 1989) found a similarly high percentage. Reasons given in both studies included worries of it being seen as a frivolous enquiry, a waste of staff time or that fiction was not important enough to need help choosing. The act of taking time to arrange a selection of books that is appealing and interesting can indicate to library users that those particular books are worth further investigation or, indeed, borrowing.

2.3 Problems with Displays.

The literature notes a lack of evaluation by libraries into their promotional efforts. McKearney found “some libraries are not very tuned into the evaluation aspects of marketing” (Kinnell and Shepherd, 1998: 24.). Kinnell and Shepherd (1998) note that 105 out of 149 of local authorities had evaluated the methods of adult reading promotion. Monitoring the success of promotions is essential (McKearney and

Baverstock, 1990) as much thought, time and effort is put into them and will encourage further promotions and funding (Stanley, 2004). The literature shows some evaluation has taken place as there are numerous examples of increased circulation figures but these are mostly concerned with a one-off experiment. Consistent evaluation is a much more effective tool for measuring the far-reaching affects of promotion and display.

The academic press makes clear the difficulties faced by libraries when considering promotional work. A survey conducted by Kinnell and Shepherd (1998) found that lack of staff time, no specific budget and no specific person responsible contributed to the difficulties in promoting fiction to adult readers. Goodall (1989) suggests there is scope for improvement in library displays and that they need to be more imaginative and professional-looking. McKearney and Baverstock found library staff felt maintaining the displays and choosing books for them was an added pressure on their time. Cleeve (1995) highlights some potential problem areas with display such as the need for proper maintenance and a cluttered appearance.

2.4 Recommendations from the Literature.

The literature suggests many recommendations for library displays. In particular, Cleeve (1995) and Skaggs (1999) offer step-by-step guides to choosing themes and creating displays.

Often libraries are told they should learn from bookshops about displaying stock (Stanley, 2004; Phelan, 1993). Phelan (1993) suggests many libraries are adopting

the style of bookshops with forward facing books and quality graphics. The London Borough of Bromley authority increased their issues by 14% by embracing bookshop presentation (Phelan, 1993). Holman (2007) found distinctive displays are useful in bookshops for busy shoppers: the same could be said for busy library users. Some libraries have adopted elements of these suggestions and Botany Library in Manukau City, New Zealand has fully embraced the idea, creating a store-like library in a shopping mall (Public Libraries lecture, 2007). However, there is very little guidance about how to achieve the look of a bookshop in any of the literature.

Stanley (2004) does offer some practical advice on creating displays. He suggests the use of 'power spots': the areas that people first look at when they enter a building. He also advises that display units should be no more than three tiers high, with the middle tier in the 'sight and take' position; that is between he chin and belly button. He recommends that displays are always kept at least fifty percent full as users feel that the best books have all gone and so do not investigate the display further. These are all techniques that are employed in the retail sector and which can easily be adapted for use in public libraries.

The importance of displays is well recognised in the retail sector. One manager of a UK chain bookshop said

> that the style of display seemed to her to be more representative of the brand identity of the chain than the books that were stocked, and was thought to involve more "prescriptive input" from head office than even the choice of titles for sale

(Laing and Royle, 2006: 201)

The use of strict guidelines for front-off-shop displays is reiterated throughout this piece of research. The retailers in Laing and Royle's 2006 study recognised the use of 'power spots', locating displays of bestsellers by the door and having tables of promoted books near the entry area to the store. Cunningham and O'Connor (1968) found the displays were more effective at increasing sales than price reduction in supermarkets.

Other lessons can be learned from the retail trade. Psychologists have found that people are most likely to buy the first thing they see, echoing the need for Stanley's 'power spots' (Edwards and Gripper, 2006). The 'principle of triangular balance' states that the human eye will always focus first on the centre of a picture, which is why supermarkets place their most expensive products in the middle of the aisle (Edwards and Gripper, 2006). Learning the rules of retail could help libraries promote their stock better.

Publishers can help public libraries by providing better display material (*The Bookseller,* 2005; Kinnell and Shepherd, 1998; Phelan, 1993). The 'Reading Partners' project is a cooperative scheme between publishers and public libraries to increase the marketing potential of libraries (Holman, 2005). Tom Palmer, the co-ordinator of the project has created a database of authors willing to do promotional events in libraries and of libraries willing to participate. The scheme is also helping library reading groups by offering advance notice of the books and providing posters to advertise national events such as the "Richard and Judy Book Club". It is finding an enthusiastic welcome from library staff: Joanne Parkinson (the North East

Representative for the ‘Reading Partners’ scheme) said “We’d love publishers to come up and work with us – we’re open to any kind of project” (Holman, 2005: 23).

Other recommendations for effective displays include location, maintenance, catering for minority interests and imagination (Holman, 2007; Stanley, 2004; Thomas, 2003; Kinnell and Shepherd, 1998; Phelan, 1993; McKearney and Baverstock, 1990; Goodall, 1989; Goldhar, 1972).

Chapter Three: Methodology.

3.1. Introduction

This section discusses the approaches and methods used to achieve the aims of the research project outlined in Chapter One.

Careful consideration of the methodology of the research is important to identify the potential strengths and weaknesses of certain approaches, allowing for an informed judgement on the most appropriate method to gain significant and valid results.

3.2 Research Approach.

This study will mainly use a deductive approach to discover the range of feelings about library displays. The research will investigate the practicalities of display work and the views of library staff, both of which are subject to the perception of the individual.

There is no hypothesis to test as there are no assumptions being made about this type of library work. This will allow for a deeper analysis of the multiple responses of respondents. Objectivity and open-mindedness will need to be maintained to ensure that the full potential of the interviews are achieved. This approach will ensure a holistic view of the subject.

A qualitative approach will be the most appropriate for a study that is deep in focus but narrow on participants. The results will not be generalisable but will give an insight into the use of displays in the chosen public libraries.

3.3 Methods of Data Collection.

The initial phase of the study will be a survey of the existing displays in Sheffield public libraries to ascertain the level of display use, their function and prominent features. This will allow for any trends to be identified and will aid the understanding of the topic as a whole. The second method of data collection will consist of a series of semi-structured interviews with library staff to acquire an insight into the views and feelings of this group concerning display work and use.

3.3.1 Survey of Displays.

A list of features of displays was drawn up from the literature review. These included the theme of the display, the location, the number of books, the target audience, additional materials used and the level of maintenance (See *Appendix 1* for the survey outline). The knowledge gleaned from the literature allows a level of confidence in the accuracy and neutrality of the results. The template used to record the findings ensures that the same aspects off the display are scrutinised so that comparisons can be easily made.

Each library in the Sheffield authority was visited and each display was analysed to provide the information required. This was a time consuming process as there were twenty-nine sites, all of which had to be visited via public transport. This was hindered by the fact that some of the information provided on the library websites concerning bus routes was incorrect.

3.3.2 Semi-structured Interviews.

A semi-structured interview was used as it provides factual answers but allow for the exploration of the opinions, ideas and attitudes of the staff who deal with this particular issue of displays. It was felt that this was a better method than a questionnaire as it would allow for more detailed answers and generate new ideas and insights on the subject. Interviews also guarantee an adequate level of response, a noted problem with questionnaires (Gillham, 2000).

A semi-structured interview offers a guideline for the discussion, making sure all important topics are discussed; these have been taken from the literature review (see *Appendix 2* for the interview schedule). The semi-structured nature also allows the interview to follow the flow of the conversation which may generate unexpected answers. This flexible approach is important to gain a clear understanding of the individual situation: Bell (1987: 71) states that “a major advantage of the interview is its adaptability”.

The interview schedule will help maintain the neutrality of the interviewer and ensure all the appropriate procedures are followed such as gaining informed consent

and allowing the participant to ask questions. It will also assist the interviewer by providing prompts and probes to draw out the interviewee.

The interview was trialled on two occasions on fellow MA in Librarianship students before officially beginning the research to ensure the best possible wording and order of the questions and to increase the interviewer's confidence in propelling the interview along smoothly.

Most of the interviews were recorded by a dictaphone to guarantee as much information was captured as possible. Recording the interview also decreases the barrier between interviewer and participant, creating a more comfortable atmosphere during the interview. The interviews were than transcribed shortly afterwards so that any additional details were fresh in the interviewer's mind. One participant declined to be recorded and so his answers were noted down with as much detail as possible.

3.3.3 Sample Size

It was decided to interview twelve library staff. This number was felt to be manageable but large enough to produce meaningful results. Staff were chosen for their interest in displays as noticed whilst conducting the survey. Sometimes there was an opportunity to interview staff immediately, although on occasion, an appointment had to be made to fit in with the busy library schedule.

Chapter Four: Findings.

4.1 Survey.

4.1.1 Number of Displays.

There is a large variance in how many displays each library had (*see graph 'Displays Per Library* in *Appendix 3.1'*).Three libraries had eleven displays and one had twelve. Four libraries had seven or eight displays. The most common occurrence of displays was five or six displays in twelve libraries. Seven libraries had three or four displays. One library had one display. Only one library had no displays.

Two of the libraries with the most displays were the largest in Sheffield with over 200,000 issues in the year 2006/2007. This included the central library. The library with twelve displays had issues of 73,068 and was classed as a medium-sized library. One library was classed as a small library due to issue figures of 39,481. (The boundaries for this classification were +100,000 issues for 'large' libraries, between 50,000 and 99.999 for 'medium' libraries and below 49,999 for 'small' libraries). They were all however, newly refurbished.

The library that had one display is situated in a junior school. The library itself was very small and had very little space.

The average number of displays per library was five. This was calculated using the median and mode formulas. The mean average is slightly higher at 5.5 but again shows the same pattern as the other methods of calculation. The standard deviation

from was 2.907614, showing the majority of the libraries were close to the average number of displays.

64 of the 161 displays were located in the children's sections of the libraries. Library 18 had all its displays in the children's section as it was felt they were not needed in the adult section. Five libraries had no displays at all in the children's section. One of these libraries had no displays at all. The other four libraries each had three displays each, which is below the average number of displays per library.

There is a noticeable difference between displays for fiction and non-fiction books *(see graph 'Fiction and Non-fiction Displays* in *Appendix 3.2).* 96 of the displays are fiction, with 55 in the adult's section and 41 in the children's section. In contrast there are only 22 displays of non-fiction across the libraries. Two of these are in the children's section and one of these is a display of books for parents. 43 of the displays cover both fiction and non-fiction. The displays for adults (23) are mostly displays of new books. Other additions to this category are displays by cover colour, 'Dangerous Books for Boys', 'Pick of the Day', recommended reads and the returns trolleys. The themes of the children's displays that cover both fiction and non-fiction are the Big Wild Read, new books, recommended reads, Polish books and books in Chinese.

4.1.2 Number of Books.

At the time of the survey, there were 4046 books being displayed in Sheffield public libraries across 161 displays. The number of books varies greatly between displays

with the largest display having 184 books and five displays having no books on them. The larger displays include a number of books displayed spine-on as is traditional in library shelving but have been included in the count because they have been highlighted from the rest of the stock by their inclusion in the display. The displays with no books consisted of display boards that highlighted a certain promotion, for example the Sheffield Children's Book Award Shortlist 2007 or the Harry Potter Competition.

4.1.3 Themes.

The most common display themes were new books, the Sheffield Children's Book Award Shortlist 2007 and the Big Wild Read summer reading campaign. These displays were found in nineteen, twenty-four and fourteen of the libraries respectively. Other displays that were observed in more than one or two libraries were 'Kwik Fic' (6), Harry Potter competition (4), Quick Reads (8), Richard and Judy's Summer Reads (7), Recommended books (3), Fairy Tales (4), Quick Choice (6), and Citizenship (3).

The themes that appeared twice were summer, large print, 'Take a Bite', Study Skills, Life Skills, 'Take it Easy', film tie-ins, Literacy and Numeracy Skills, first books, 'Comix' and Rhyme Time. Also included in this section were two returns trolleys distinguished as displays and two displays where the themes were unknown.

One of these unknown themes was simply a selection of six books, fiction and non-fiction, stood up on a table near a seating area. The other display with an unknown

theme was much more confused. The display consisted of two shelves containing 31 books, some face-on and some spine-on, some fiction and some non-fiction. Above the shelves were four posters advertising online resources.

The themes that appear only once are the largest category. These are local history, 'Try Something Different', new large print, the BBC's RAW campaign, creative writing, the Orange Broadband Prize for Fiction 2007, blue covers, 'Pick of the Day', gardening, the 'Count Me In' campaign, dual language picture books, 'Take a Risk on a Book', 'Dive into a Book', 'Malebox', 'Black and Read', climbing and mountaineering, polish books, Chinese books, 'Love Letters', holiday reading. Parents collection, Dr Who, 'Aspriasian', red covers, 'Dangerous Books for Boys', 'Sleepy Stories', biographies, Ian Livingstone and Steve Jackson series books, family and historical fiction, 'Body, Mind and Spirit', graphic novels and 'Healthy Reading'.

Some of the displays that featured in one or two locations were circulating displays: a prepared collection of books and professional signage that moves between libraries. Examples of these are 'Take a Risk on a Book', 'Dive into a Book', 'Take it Easy', 'Take a Bite' 'Aspirasian', 'Malebox', 'Black and Read', 'Comix' and 'Love Letters', which explains the low occurrence of these displays.

Most of the other themes that appear once have an obvious aim of highlighting a certain section of stock, such as Polish and Chinese books in a library that caters for many community languages, or the climbing and mountaineering display at one library to highlight its extensive collection on that topic.

There were three ‘Recommended Reads’ displays. One was books recommended by library users and one by a member of staff. The other simply stated “Recommended Reads” and was unclear as to who was making the suggestions.

4.1.4 Location.

There were numerous locations for displays.

54 of the displays were in the entrance of the library. These mimic the “power spots” as discussed by Stanley (2004). Library 16 in particular embraced this idea and placed seven of its eight displays immediately in this vicinity to provide a multitude of books to entice borrowers or for those in a hurry. Other libraries had between one and four displays in their entranceway depending on space. Many of the libraries placed displays at the entrance to the children’s section.

Another popular area for displays was within the relevant area, with 32 displays fitting into this category. So for example, the ‘Aspirasian’ display (a collection of books by Asian authors) was next to the Asian DVDs and videos at Library 23. Library 26 had a display of family and historical fiction in amongst that genre. Library 6 had a new books display near their fiction section and a comfortable seating area to encourage browsing. Library 26 placed a display on study skills next to the adult non-fiction section and the young adults section so all the relevant people would see it.

A technique that is employed nine times by the public libraries in Sheffield is to place a display in an unrelated section of the library. In some cases this seemed to be deliberate ploy to encourage further borrowing: gardening display in amongst the fiction books at Library 14 for example or a selection of Quick Read books in the non-fiction area in Library 14. In other libraries a link could not be made in this way, suggesting the displays were placed wherever there was room. An example of this was the placement of a citizenship and literacy and numeracy display in the children's section of Library 17, although the books on the display were geared towards adults.

It is notable that one particular display was located on the issue desk of four libraries. The theme in question was the Sheffield Children's Book Award Shortlist 2007. Its placement was due to the nature of the display stand as it was a tabletop stand. Only one other display was found on the issue desk and that was a 'Pick of the Day'. The location of the Sheffield Children's Book Award Shortlist 2007 seemed to problematic for many libraries and could be found on windowsills, on tables or on one occasion on the floor. One of these displays was placed high up a shelf that made it difficult to see for an adult and left it completely unreachable by a child.

The displays are equally split between those in a "power spot" and those which aren't (81 and 80 respectively). The "power spots" were found not just in the entranceway but in places that drew the eye or followed the natural path of the library user. Library 25 had a large display of Summer Reading at the top of the stairs that led up to the adult area of the library.

4.1.5 Face-out Displays.

All 29 libraries had some face-out displays (books displayed so the cover is visible rather than the spine). The occurrence of this ranged between two examples in the smallest library (oversize picture books and adult fiction) to thirty-three different sections of the library at Library 26 *(see figure 1)*.

Adult Fiction	**Adult Non-fiction**	**Children's Fiction**	**Children's Non-fiction**
Family and Historical Fiction	Arts, Crafts and Hobbies	Fairy tales and Legends	Life in the Past
Crime	Sports and Games	Spooky Stories	Natural World
Romance	Gardening	Fantasy	Animals
Glitz	DIY	Animal Stories	People's Lives
Science Fiction and Fantasy	Science and Technology	Younger Readers Fiction	Transport and Communication
Westerns	Cookery	Poetry and English	Your Body
Young Adult Fiction	Transport	Funny Stories	Sport
Adventure	Life Skills		Countries and Beliefs
			Science and Invention
			Everyday Life

Figure 1.

Across the libraries there appears to be little difference in the genre of books that were displayed by this method *(see graph 'Face-out Displays'* in *Appendix 3.3.1).* Non-fiction was marginally more popular than fiction in both the adult's and children's section of the libraries. Children's fiction was the category with the lowest number of face-out displays in seventeen of the 29 libraries.

Three libraries used face-out displays purely for non-fiction books across the children's and adult's libraries. These were Libraries 3, 6 and 19. Library 13's face-on displays were fiction only. Library 9 used face-out displays in its adult section for both fiction and non-fiction but not for the children's library. Library 28 did the opposite and placed books face-out in just the children's section, again both fiction and non-fiction.

18 of the libraries used the top shelves for displaying books face-out *(see graph 'Face-out Displays 2' in Appendix 3.3.2).* One solely used the bottom shelf. Five libraries used a combination of both top and bottom shelves: four using mostly the top shelves with some books on the bottom ones and one library mainly used the bottom shelves but positioned some face-out books on the top shelves.

4.1.6 Display furniture.

There was a variety of display furniture used in Sheffield Public Libraries *(see graph 'Display Furniture'* in *Appendix 3.4.1).* The most commonly used single piece of furniture was "dumpbins" – cardboard bookcases – with 22 of the 161 displays

created using this furniture. Wooden bookcases were also a popular method of displaying books with 14 displays. The Norwich Display Stand is a square unit with a flat top and either two or four sides of shelving underneath. These were used for 14 displays and were often located in the entrance of the library. 13 of these units had a Perspex display stand on top that allowed for books to be displayed face-out at varying heights. One Norwich stand did not have this Perspex component and used plastic book stands to achieve standing books. There were several other display units across the libraries. These were a glass display unit, four metal display stands, one octagonal unit similar to the Norwich stand, three slanted book stands, six staircase stands, two tilted stands and one turning stand. Tables were a popular method of displaying books with nine displays created on table tops. Display boards were used to make five displays.

Four displays used trolleys as display furniture. Two of these were for returned books but had been raised above the category of simply a returns trolley as they have been signposted and specially positioned to draw the attention of the borrowers. The other two trolleys were used to display new books, the theme of one being large print.

The library shelving was also used to house displays. Ten displays were created on a full bay or more of shelving. Eight displays were created on one or two shelves. Some libraries had built in display areas among their standard shelves. There were seven displays of this kind with three of these being in the children's library at Library 14.

Seven displays were created using Perspex holders that slatted into the ends of shelving bays. These were useful for small displays and with six of these having between two and eight books. The other held eighteen books but the holders were deeper and the books were placed in four rows, with some hidden from immediate view.

The special tabletop stands were used in the making of seventeen displays. These stands were bought specifically for the Sheffield Children's Book Award Shortlist 2007 which explains their high incidence rate.

The 'Special "Wood" Dumpbins" (dumpbins decorated to look like tree trunks) were part of the promotional material supplied for the Big Wild Read campaign. Including those that have been categorised in the 'Other' section of the Display furniture graph, these special dumpbins housed eleven displays.

The 'Other' section of the above graph shows the occurrence of displays that utilise more than one piece of display furniture *(see graph Display Furniture 2* in *Appendix 3.4.2)*. The most commonly appearing display of this section was a combination of a display board and a table to hold the books. One piece of furniture in this section was a slatted display board that had numerous plastic holders attached to it that displayed the Climbing and Mountaineering books at Library 16. If the occurrence of display boards used alongside other equipment was added to display boards used by themselves, the number of displays made using display boards would be sixteen, a

rate that would make the use of display boards among the highest piece of display furniture.

4.1.7 Additional Promotional Material.

48 out of the 161 displays had additional promotional material included in the display.

15 of these displays were for the Sheffield Children's Book Award Shortlist 2007 and included a variety of items. There was a booklet listing all the short listed books, a folder of author and book information, 'My Review' sheets, voting forms, quiz sheets and a bookmark showing the previous year's winner. No display included all these items. Inclusion ranged from just some booklets (in two displays), bookmarks (one display) and quiz sheets (one display) to four items from the list in three libraries (booklets, voting forms, review sheets, quiz sheets; bookmarks, booklets, voting forms, review sheets; booklet, two quizzes, voting form). 11 of the displays for the Sheffield Children's Book Award Shortlist 2007 had the shortlist booklet as part of their display, which was by far the most common piece of promotional material for this theme. Library 1 provided pencils at the table where the promotional material was so the children could fill out the forms immediately if they wished. One library had a Sheffield Children's Festival 2007 brochure in addition to the booklet.

The Big Wild Read summer campaign also had a variety of promotional material on display. These were postcards, leaflets in English and four community languages and registration cards. Postcards were used in three displays, leaflets in English in two displays, leaflets in four community languages in one display and registration cards

in one display. Eight displays included the contents of the pack the participant receives as they progress through the challenge. These included stickers, bookmarks, rulers and games. The pack contents are additional promotional material but were not available for users to take home and so have been separated from inclusion in the general promotional material category.

Three out of the four Harry Potter displays had an entry form for the competition as additional promotional material in addition to the rules. The display that did not contain the entry form had a Sheffield Children's Book Award Shortlist 2007 booklet alongside the rules.

Six out of the seven Richard and Judy Summer Reads displays had postcards concerning the campaign as a part of the display.

Of the other eighteen displays that used additional promotional material, book marks were the most common item (found in seven displays). Postcards were used in three displays (two BBC RAW campaign ones and one for the 'Aspirasian' display). Four displays included prize information for the Quick Reads campaign. Leaflets made by the libraries were used in three displays (climbing and mountaineering collection, how to find non-fiction, audio books). The gardening display at Library 14 contained the most additional promotional material of any display and included Sheffield College and Sheffield University horticulture course leaflets, BBC 'Breathing spaces' booklets, 'Parklife' city council newsletters and packs of flower seeds.

4.1.8 Signage.

59 of the 161 displays had professional signage, with 24 different themes *(see graph 'Signage'* in *Appendix 3.5)*. Professional signage is categorised as posters and signs that are made by outside companies to a high degree of professional finish. This was by far the largest category. The displays that used professional signage were Richard and Judy's Summer Reads, the Big Wild Read, BBC RAW, Fairy Tales, Orange Broadband Prize for Fiction, Quick Reads, Take a Bite, Study Skills, Life Skills, Quick Choice, Take it Easy, Literacy and Numeracy Skills, Count Me In, Take a Risk on a Book, Malebox, Black and Read, Just Returned, Comix, Citizenship, First Books, Love Letters, Rhyme Time, Aspirasian and Sleepy Stories. Some of these professional signs were incorporated into the dumpbins that displayed the books: Study Skills, Life Skills, Citizenship and Literacy and Numeracy Skills.

The next largest category was corporate signage which accounted for 32 of the displays. Corporate signage is classed as being produced by the Sheffield Public Library Authority and differs from professional signage due to the quality of the signs and the inclusion of the city council logo. The themes Sheffield Children's Book Award Shortlist 2007, Harry Potter and 'Kwik Fic' fit into this category.

41 displays were made by library staff. 25 signs were made using a computer and 16 were "handmade" (cut from coloured paper). The themes that had signs made on computers include New Books, Large Print, Quick Reads, Pick of the Day, Seen the Film, Read the Book, Climbing and Mountaineering Collection, First Books, Parents Collection, Dangerous Books for Boys, If you Like…, Healthy Reading and three

Recommended Reads. Some signs were simple pieces of A4 paper with black text printed on them. Others were more visually attractive, using different colour backgrounds or text, such as a Quick Reads display at Library 6 that had black writing on an orange background. The Healthy Reading display had a cartoon doctor as part of the sign. The New Books display at Library 25 had a bear-like creature with a speech bubble. The displays that had signs made with coloured paper included the themes Local History and Family Trees, Try Something Different, Creative Writing, Books Returned Today, Gardening, New Books, Harry Potter, Books in Polish, Books in Chinese, Holiday Reading, Dr Who and Body, Mind and Spirit. Again, these varied in complexity. Some were just letters cut out and stuck onto another coloured card: the holiday Reading display at Library 21 had yellow letters on a black background. Others included more elaborate signs such as the Large Print display at Library 22 that although it was done entirely in black and white, was visually striking as the letters in the sign grew smaller as the progressed down the board, imitating an optician's eye chart, accompanied by photocopies of spectacles.

Five displays were signposted using the normal library signage attached to the shelves.

18 displays had no signage. Some displays were not hindered by this as it was obvious what the display intended. The displays based on book cover colour for example did not need a sign. The Harry Potter display at Library 16 consisted of an incredibly life-like Harry cut out from coloured paper, easily advertising the contents of the display. Other themes that fit into this category were Creative Writing, Dual Language Picture Books, Biographies, Ian Livingstone and Steve Jackson series

books, Family and Historical fiction and Graphic Novels. Some displays needed a sign to explain their content. A good example of this was a ‘Take a Bite’ display at Library 8. The theme was known as the books had spine stickers but there was no explanation as to what ‘Take a Bite’ meant. New Large Print Books also comes into this section. Library 25 had the least signs with all but one of the displays in the adult’s section sign-less. The one display with a sign was a dumpbin with built-in signage. Two displays were easily understandable (Biographies and Ian Livingstone and Steve Jackson) but the other three displays (New Books, Richard and Judy’s Summer Reads and a Film tie-in) had to be explained by library staff. The two displays that had no theme were also without signage.

One library was in the process of creating a display and although the books were positioned on the table, a sign had not yet been made.

Five displays used a combination of professional and handmade signs. Two of these were Quick Read displays which used promotional posters and bookmarks along side signs made on the computer. One Harry Potter Display used pictures downloaded from the internet to announce the theme of the display from a distance and was supplemented by the small corporate poster that contained more information. The Count Me In display at Library 14 used professional posters to attract the eye with signs made on the computer to present further information. Library 25 extended its Big Wild Read display by decorating the wall behind the dumpbin with an enormous tree made out of coloured paper.

4.1.9 Additional Props.

Very few libraries used additional props in their displays. The most extensive use of this was seen at Library 12 where a blue cloth, a bucket and spade, a cocktail glass and umbrella and a big bar of chocolate were used as part of the Richard and Judy's Summer Reads display (which is sponsored by Galaxy chocolate). This was made possible by the display furniture as it was a glass box which prevented the display being disturbed. No other library had furniture like this that would allow for extensive props to remain untampered with. This seems to be a problem in public libraries: one librarian said she had tied balloons to the First Books display in her library and they had been popped within a day. Library 24 had a display with additional features. A lattice made from cardboard was erected in the middle of the display stand and decorated with bees, snails and gnomes. It was very attractive to look at but bore little relation to the display theme which was red book covers.

4.1.10 Maintenance.

The majority of displays were very well maintained *(see graph 'Maintenance'* in *Appendix 3.6).* 123 displays were placed in this category. Only six displays were found to be a little empty. 16 displays were found to have around fifty percent of their stock missing. Seven displays in this category were Sheffield Children's Book Award Shortlist 2007, and several members of staff admitted that they found it hard to keep the display unit full as they had a limited number of books and a great interest in them from users. Only two displays were found to be very empty. These were both Children's Book Award Shortlist 2007 displays.

Only six displays were found to be messy as although the other displays had varying degrees of fullness, they were all neat and tidy. Five were considered messy as the books had fallen over or been put in the wrong place by browsers. It was difficult to tell on one display if the books were artfully arranged or simply untidy.

4.2 Interviews: Practical Aspects.

The responses of the interviewee's are quoted verbatim.

4.2.1 Choice of Display Themes.

There is a divide between the display themes library staff choose for themselves and those themes that are dictated to them from another source, including the local library authority, the national library campaigns and even the media.

There are differing reasonings behind the display themes that library staff choose.

Current events and seasons are a popular basis for themes and three respondents specifically mentioned this, giving example of gardening in the summer and a display of red covers for the Chinese New Year. Respondent A suggested that the display theme 'Reduce, Reuse, recycle' came from an amalgamation of topical issues and the knowledge that the Big Wild Read summer reading scheme involved environmental issues.

Events calendars are another method of deciding a theme. The Multicultural Events Calendar was mentioned by one Respondent and Respondent B said of the Reader Development Champion

> each month she goes through [the calendar] and if there's any health issues coming up like mental health awareness days, she'll normally design a book display around that

Some themes are influenced by the groups that use the library. Respondent C said "we have schools coming in every Wednesday so depending on what the schools are doing we sometimes try and fit the displays around that". Another respondent said they built displays around groups such as "Chatterbooks" and "Under Fives".

Two respondents said that the displays were chosen either by a theme or by colour.

Respondent I acknowledged the fact that library staff were allowed to choose their own display themes but added "if they have space", suggesting that that particular library did not.

There was a difference in who picked the theme and who made the displays. Six respondents said that choosing a theme was a collaborative effort between all staff. Three respondents acknowledged the Reader Development Champion (a person assigned to be the Reader Development officer at that library) played an important role in choosing themes. Two respondents suggested the Reader Development Champion decided the themes for the main displays and allowed other staff to select

themes for the smaller displays. Respondent J said that the themes were chosen by the Reader Development Champion and herself, with no input from other staff.

Some of the display themes are chosen by the Sheffield Library Authority. Five respondents mentioned themes chosen this way. Respondent C said “mainly you get emails saying “right, all this promotional stuff’s coming, do something with it”.” Resonant I commented that the Quick Choice get sent out and most libraries have them. It was also mentioned by Respondent I that there are a number of pre-prepared displays that are sent round to the libraries from management. Respondent A added to this by discussing one pre-prepared display in particular

> And we’ve also got things that rotate around libraries as well so the ‘Comix’ display is one that will only be here a short while and it’s really just one poster and the rest is books. It’s because everyone can’t have the range of comics at the same time but we can promote some of them

The Sheffield Children’s Book Award Shortlist 2007 was commented on by one respondent as something the library authority had given them to display. Respondent C added that the display unit themselves were provided for the libraries as part of the display.

One of the national schemes was mentioned by three respondents. This was the Big Wild Read.

The Richard and Judy Book Club was mentioned by two respondents. Respondent B suggested that themes such as this were chosen because

> It's normally just based on what's going on in the press, what type of things people might be reading at the moment

4.2.2 Frequency of Changes.

The most common response to the question "How frequently are the displays changed" was monthly, with four respondents giving this answer. Respondent A said of some displays

> The 'Bookstart Bookcrawl' will only be there for a little while because we already know there is something to go there after. It's just to give people the idea so it'll probably be up for a month or something.

Respondent B gave the reasoning behind this decision as to

> different themes fresh in people's minds. People don't want to be seeing the same old books.

Respondent C said the displays were changed

> Roughly every once in three or four weeks, depending on what's going on at the time. So the Harry Potter one was done about a

> week ago and obviously it's about another week and a half until the book's released and it'll go for a week after that so that'll maybe be a bit longer. With the schools and what their doing, they usually get changed about every three weeks.

Two respondents said that their displays were changed every two months. Respondent D talked specifically of one display whilst Respondent J explained that all the displays were changed to the same timescale, as

> We have a three week issue period and it gives borrowers the chance to have a look and take something that caught their eye the next time they're in.

Respondent G's library changed their displays every two or three months, saying

> when we think they're not going, we can change them for whatever else is apt.

One respondent said they changed their seasonal displays every three months.

There was an acknowledgement among the respondents that the length of time a display remained active depended on the display. Some displays were considered permanent such as the 'Worth Reading' and 'Kwik Fic' displays mentioned by Respondent G and the 'Quick Choice' display at Respondent I's library. Some

displays depended on the length of the promotion. This was the case for the ‘Big Wild Read’ display commented on by Respondent A which would last the length of the school summer holidays.

It was mentioned that sometimes the frequency of changing the displays was affected by the lack of staff time. Respondent K said

> Probably not as frequently as we’d like due to time but we wouldn’t leave it up if it was completely out of date. We’re short-staffed and when you have the minimum in, there’s not always a chance to change them. We’re really aware that the spring display needs to come down now but we just haven’t had the time.

Another difficulty identified was the lack of new equipment. Respondent L was waiting for a new acrylic stand to put on top of the Norwich stand before she changed the display.

4.2.3 Time for Display Work.

Most of the interviewees agreed that although maintaining the displays was easy as it was part of the daily routine, finding time to make displays could be tricky.

Of maintaining displays, Respondent B said

> Your basic daily routine is topping up displays no one wants to see an empty display

Respondent I echoes this sentiment, saying

> It's just part of the job. When you're shelving you fill in any gaps. It's an important part of the job as it promotes the books.

Making displays seemed to be more of a problem. Only Respondent (C) gave an actual time for making displays:

> We sort of make time for it in the afternoons, when it gets a bit quieter

The general consensus from the other respondents was "when time allows". Comments include

> It's not always possible. It means there's one less person on the counter
>
> (Respondent K)

> As and when time permits really. They don't get done if we're short staffed or really busy
>
> (Respondent H)

> You have to make the display whilst you're still on the counter,

serving borrowers

(Respondent G)

It's quite tricky sometimes. They're done in stages sometimes. The one with the trellis on: the trellis was done over few days and then the books were chosen to match the colours – red- and that's done while you're on the counter serving people.

(Respondent F)

It is very difficult cos I'm only part time here cos we're only open three and a half days a week so it is very hard fitting time in for it because I don't want to neglect the group work which we all have to pitch in to so if I'm off doing my creative stuff and neglecting the group work than that's not good

(Respondent D)

I think it does depend on how busy we are so sometimes there's a gap say if we're doing classes. There's a natural flow of things so we have a class timetable so maybe two or three classes in a day and in between those times in when we'll really try and crack on with things like displays… but I think things like shelving and keeping the stock fresh does need more immediate attention say after a class comes and everything's just everywhere, you don't start saying "oh maybe I'll make a display", you just put the books back on the shelves and see what you can manage in the time you've got left.

(Respondent A)

It is clear from the responses that making displays is something that has to be fitted around other work duties. One respondent had resorted to coming in to work on his days off to finish his large-scale display projects, saying

> To be honest, I enjoy it enough so it's not like a chore to come in and do it. I literally couldn't do it in my staff hours
>
> (Respondent C)

This is of course an unusual step to take, but the respondent in question was very keen on making displays.

4.2.4 Resources for Making Displays.

The libraries of those interviewed seemed to be well stocked with coloured paper and other pieces of stationery. Six respondents mentioned stationery in their answer to the question "What resources are available to help with making displays". The range of stationery seemed extensive:

> We've got various bits and pieces of stationary, so we've got coloured card out the back and coloured paper to make various shiny objects with.
>
> (Respondent C)

> We've got card and tissue paper, foil, pens.

(Respondent F).

> We've got quite a lot of stationery type stuff. It's more imagination than anything

(Respondent K)

The library network also provides support for display making. Respondent H said the whole of the library system helped with making displays. Three respondents provided examples of inter-library cooperation that help with displays. Respondent C commented that

> There's a library across the way that has a colour printer so we can send images to them and they'll print things off and send them back to us if we want to do something like that.

Respondent G said

> We can ask other libraries for some books if we're doing a specific display and don't have enough books in this library

Respondent A cited the word processing unit of the library system was useful in making leaflets to accompany displays.

Four respondents said that much of their display materials were sent to them. Respondent A said

> A lot of the time a lot is sent through so for the summer reading campaign there are a lot of posters we can't even use so even in a beautiful big space like this there's not enough room for all the big glossy posters and I think people do get the idea that when they come into the library they'll just see part of it and that's enough really.

The summer reading campaign was also mentioned by Respondent C:

> Obviously with some of the nationwide displays like the Big Wild Read that we're doing over the summer, we just get sent that so we got a load of books in the post, a load of prizes and the cardboard do-it-yourself display… They've sent us hundreds of books in the last few days, more books than fit on the display which is nice.

Respondent D commented on the materials sent for the Big Wild Read display, saying

> You could literally stick the promotional material on the wall and make a display from that, without doing any work yourself and I guess that's the idea.

Respondent I mentioned other displays that were provided complete for the library.

> Circulating displays come with the dumpbin, books and sign so you just have to find a space for it.

There were some problems highlighted by the respondents. Respondent F seemed aware of the limitations of their resources as a previous staff member had furnished displays with “allsorts of her own stuff, unusual things, things she collected along the way “ from her time as a bookshop owner. Respondent L was waiting for a new sign to place above a display stand that was costing around £250, which she admitted was a large amount of money for the library to spend.

4.2.5 Training.

Seven respondents had not received any training about displaying books. Three of these had heard about training and one thought that the junior library assistant might have been on a course. Respondent B said

> No, not personally I haven’t had any training. I did use to work in a book shop so I’ve brought those ideas with me, try and put those into practice.

Of the five other respondents, four had attended training by the *Alternative Display Company*, who, although they do not concentrate specifically on books, do offer insights into what makes an attractive and eye-catching display. Respondent J had attended a full day course with the author Ann Cleeves.

Two of the interviewees who had received training about displaying books had done so several years ago. Respondent F had undertaken training fifteen years ago and Respondent I, ten years ago.

4.2.6 Job Descriptions.

Five respondents said that making and maintaining displays was not mentioned in their job descriptions. One of these was a manager. Respondent H felt that although it was not mentioned specifically, it was “part of the job”. Respondent E echoed this sentiment.

Four respondents were confident that making and maintaining displays was part of their job description. Respondent A suggested it was part of “making a good environment”. Respondent B was sure her job description mentioned “maintaining displays”. Respondent D felt a sentence similar to “Stock is attractively and imaginatively presented to encourage experimentation and new choices” was an aspect of the job description. Respondent I agreed that making and maintaining displays came under the heading “promoting stock”.

Three respondents seemed unsure of whether displays were mentioned in their job description. Respondent C presumed that it was included under “contributing to reader development activities”. Respondent G thought it probably came under some part of the job description but was not sure where. Respondent J said “I guess yes. It probably is there somewhere”.

4.2.7 Evaluating Displays.

11 respondents said that the displays in their libraries were never officially evaluated. Respondent L said this was due to a lack of time “but I might consider doing it for the next display”. Respondent I felt it would be possible to monitor the pre-prepared, circulating displays but she was not sure if this happened.

Respondent D said

> As far as I know it’s not general practice to do statistical analysis of issues in individual libraries which doesn’t make any sense to me as in any shop it would be done. I personally look at them every month and I do analyse it. For example what stats we do can get can show issues according to type so if I do a display on Children’s fantasy books then I analyse to see if there’s a little peak in issues. So I will myself but it’s not routinely done.

Six of the respondents who fell into this category said that it was possible to tell how well the displays were doing because they had to keep refilling them.

Respondent J’s library evaluated the displays by monitoring the number of issues. The books chosen for a display were placed in a special ‘display’ category on the library management system and the figures were checked frequently.

Respondent I mentioned some monitoring of the use of displays. She said that when the library gathered statistics each quarter “we have to write down the number of

displays we've had". Although this does not indicate any level of effectiveness, it does show that displays are an integral part of library work as to be included in the statistics, along with issue figures and People's Network usage.

4.2.8 Partnerships.

Only one respondent said they had never worked in a partnership that involved displays.

Five respondents identified that local groups sometimes held displays in the library. Respondent B said

> If somebody wants to put something up in the library then we do sometimes incorporate our displays around that.

Respondent G said

> From time to time we have displays from outside bodies but we don't necessarily put our books with them. Recently we had a local history society make a display but it wasn't linked with any stock.

Respondent L's library also hosted regular displays by the local history society.

Respondent K gave examples of local groups that created displays in the library, including one on breastfeeding and another by the local Sure Start centre requesting volunteers. She added

> It's useful cos we don't have time to physically do them ourselves and it adds to the environment of the library.

Respondent D agrees with the idea that displays from outside organisations can enhance the library environment:

> It's a bit on a tangent but a local group called 'Art in the Park' who do community art workshops have held two exhibitions here. They're not book specific but it's all about making the library an attractive place.

Two respondents highlighted displays that were arranged on behalf of their partnerships with a health centre (Respondent E) and a healthy living centre (Respondent B). Respondent B said

> Because we've got the partnership of the healthy living centre anyway, if they've got any initiatives going on, we try and incorporate those in. When we launched our pedometer collection last March we were in partnership with Activity Sheffield then and we had a walking display on the main display table as you come in the door.

Six respondents identified partnerships that involved displays but that were not directly organised by the individual libraries. The Big Wild Read, BBC RAW campaign, Quick Reads, BookStart and Count Me In were all stated as examples of the displays that involved partnerships arranged by the library authorities. Respondent A suggested one that sprang to mind:

> It's the 'Count Me In" bags which are about numeracy for one, two and three year olds and they've been made by the Yorkshire Bank and they've been quite popular.

4.3 Interviews: Staff Views.

4.3.1 Defining "Display".

The interviewees were asked to define the term "display". This question appeared to be the most difficult for the respondents to answer, with lots of "ums" and "ahs" before an answer was given.

Four respondents said that a display was a way of showing off certain stock. Respondent A referred to a display as "a showcase for something… shows what's possible". Respondent G said "It highlights certain stock on a certain theme". Respondent I said that a display was something that drew people's attention so they realised what stock was on offer. Respondent L said a display was "A way of showing off the library stock".

Three respondents used the word “eye catching” to describe a display. Respondent B said “eye catching, immediately as you walk in... Colourful, vibrant, eye catching”. Respondent F described a display as “Something eye catching, will get people looking”. Respondent J defined “display” as “A collection of books that catch the borrower’s eye”.

Two respondents stated that a display was anything other than books on a shelf. Respondent C said

> I would say a display was, well, could be anything that wasn’t simply books on a shelf.

Respondent D said

> It’s about choosing a selection of books and making them noticeably different from the rest of the books on the shelves.

Two respondents felt a display was something that encouraged borrowing. Respondent E said “Something to attract people to take the books out”. Respondent B agreed with this, adding “to encourage new users in our case as obviously we get quite a few non-library members walking through the library”.

Respondent K gave an answer offered by no one else. She thought that a display “enhanced the surrounding” of the library.

4.3.2 Impact on Promoting Books.

All the respondents felt displays had a positive impact on promoting books, even though there was little official evaluation. Words such as “high” (Respondent B), “Good” (Respondent C) and “considerable” (Respondent H) were all used to answer this question in an anecdotal manner.

Two respondents felt that displays were useful for people who had little time to look for books. Respondent B said

> I think displays are so important because people don’t always have time to go routing through the shelves to just check the spines.

Respondent F said

> [We] have the Quick Reads for people who don’t have time and I think they take things off a display just because they can see them.

Two respondents saw felt users saw displays as a recommendation of what to read. Respondent B said

> People in my experience like recommendations so if you’ve got something on a display table, they’re more likely to pick that up than to go to one of the spinners[1] in the libraries, just because it’s quick and easy and they think people have put them there for a reason

[1] A device for storing large amounts of books that turns under the guidance of the browser.

so they must be good.

Respondent D felt children benefited most from this idea of displayed books being a form of recommendation:

> There's the idea that certain books are being promoted as "this is good" and giving people a relationship with the books because you can't expect children to select books the way adults do. When you're an adult you have your favourite authors and things and maybe you'll choose other things but I think with kids, it's nice to have a bit more guidance and a bit more suggestion and you do that subtly through say the "Dan's Recommended Reads" books or whatever is simply placed on the little stands to be on display.

Two respondents thought displays were useful for increasing the circulation of books that were not being issued as well as it was felt they could be. Respondent F said

> People might take things that have lain dormant on the shelves for several weeks and if you put them on a display, forward facing, they tend to go out.

Respondent L agreed that by placing books that do not issue on a display, they "tend to go out".

It was felt by two respondents that displays had an impact on making the library an attractive place to visit. Respondent D said

> the second impact is making the library into a nice environment to be in, somewhere that is exciting and stimulating and I think visually that's really important, that's the idea I work towards. The idea that people come in and look around.

Respondent E said

> People appreciate it as well: the first thing they see when they walk through the door is an attractive display.

Respondent I thought displays played an important role in helping users choose books. She said

> People like things cut and dry: if something is constructed for them and states what it is, they don't have to look round the shelves. New book displays are really good at this because people know they won't have read anything on there before.

Respondent K felt displays were useful in giving borrowers new ideas about what to read. Respondent G added to this, saying

> We get lots of comments from users saying the display has helped

them discover new authors or genres.

Respondent A thought displays were a method of showing the public that all their needs would be catered for by the library:

> I think they've got a different impact on different people so say parents of very young children might use displays to see what it is they can get from the library so it helps people understand what's going on. And also it shows where our priorities are as well I think. We've got the multicultural events calendar up and people are really interested in that and even though it's just one poster, it shows we are wanting to engage with the multicultural community.

4.3.3 What Type of Books to Display.

All the respondents agreed that any book could be promoted by display. Comments included

> You can never tell what people are interested in so I think it's really important to display a variety of things on a rotating basis. We try and keep them all different as well so we have a non-fiction and a fiction all the time.
>
> (Respondent B)

> We've tried most of them, fiction, non-fiction and they all seem to work.
>
> (Respondent F)

> To be honest, you can make any kind of book look interesting by putting it on a display.
>
> (Respondent G)

Respondent J reasoned that her library found displays grouped by colour rather than theme worked better as both fiction and non-fiction could be included in the same display.

Several respondents felt that although all kinds of books could be promoted by display, there were some more suited to it than others. Respondent A thought hardback books were better suited to display because

> They've got a real presence about them. You feel like they'll really survive on the display but paperback ones bend a bit at the side and you wonder if it'll look worse when you take it off the display.

Respondent D felt that it was important to display the "exciting" books in the library to "to maximise its chances of going out".

Respondent G suggested the reason there were more fiction displays in his library was due to the fact that there were fewer books in each non-fiction topic.

Respondent C felt that although all types of books could be displayed, it depended on the wants of the user:

> What I do find is that perhaps, especially in your local, local libraries, the more set type of library user who only like their particular books so sometimes we do do displays where I've been dragging fiction books that I think people will like on display but sometimes it's like drawing blood from a stone, trying to get people to look beyond what they usually borrow.

Three respondents felt the covers of the books themselves were an important part of the decision making process of putting the books onto a display. Respondent A said "The actual cover of a book can make a difference". Respondent D suggested "any books with nice covers, attractive looking books". Picture books were recommended by Respondent K as these "tend to have attractive covers".

4.3.4 Good Displays.

Five people thought the books themselves were important in making a good display. Respondent E felt good looking books were essential in making a good display. Respondents A and H thought the books on the display had to be interesting. Respondent G agreed with this, saying

> It needs to include books people will want to read, not things like *War and Peace*!

Two respondents felt that a good display needed more than just books. Respondent C said

> I suppose it's hard to make a big display where you've just got books, it's nice to have something else around the books I suppose to drag people in there cos I mean you are in library so books don't particularly stand out themselves.

Respondent K felt support material added to the impact of the display.

Three respondents said that the display should be well signed so users knew what the theme or intention of the display was. Respondent C said

> It has to be clear what the display is: if you're trying to do a fancy display but if people don't have a clue what the display is for then you're possibly defeating the object. So obviously you want some sort of clear lettering.

Respondent I felt the display needed "A poster or title to describe what it is". Respondent K said the display should "be able to give information clearly, you need to know what it's about".

Four respondents said that a good display had to be eye catching and colourful. Respondent D said of this “Generally a good display is one that catches the eye. That’s the number one rule in capital letters”.

Three respondents said that the display needed to be easily accessible. Respondent B said “in an easily accessible position, easy for people to pick up things from it”. Respondent D felt the furniture affected what was accessible:

> We’ve got a lot of cardboard bins and they’re nice because they’re accessible and kids can just take the books off them.

Respondent I agreed, saying “It has to be easy to get at the books”.

Respondent B said it was essential that the books could be replaced:

> It should be important to be able to replace the things on them: there’s no point in having a display with a limited availability of stock because if they all go then you’ve got to change it.

There was a disagreement as to whether it was beneficial for the display to be tidy. Respondent A said

> Keeping it neat, keeping it tidy, making sure things don’t get out of hand, for example the Bookcrawl one, I did start really enthusiastically and I put some balloons on and I knew it would be a bit short lived and

> I learnt my lesson really as they got popped within a day.

Respondent D feels an extremely tidy display can deter borrowers:

> That's a funny thing that you can make a nice display and people won't take books from it cos they don't want to take anything away from the display…I've found if you put things on shelves on little stands, then that's when people are less likely to take the book off cos then there's a noticeable gap that they've left behind.

This seems like an odd contradiction of the views of the other respondents but is actually a phenomenon noticed by those who study shopping habits and is described in detail in Chapter 5.

4.3.5 Poor Displays.

The most common response to the question "What do you think makes a poor display?" was if the display looked messy or untidy. Four respondents answered using these words. Respondent A said

> If it looks like you can't be bothered then no one will take an interest in it and you needn't have bothered in the first place.

Three respondents mentioned books when discussing a poor display. Respondent E felt "tatty books" contributed to a poor display. Two respondents felt the wrong

books could hinder a display, including Respondent G who thought that the choice of books was important as

> Just doing a display of books that don't issue isn't necessarily going to make them go out, they might be a reason no one wants to read them. You have to avoid it becoming a dumping ground for anything and everything.

Four respondents listed "an empty display" or "a lack of books" as a feature of a poor display. Respondent C elaborated on this, saying

> The main problem I have with displays is that even if you've made a good display, all the books go out and then you've got no books to give out, especially with popular ones like Richard and Judy. That's no one's fault but it does make the display look bad.

Respondent K said that a display was poor if you could not tell what the display was about. Respondent C concurred, saying

> If it's not clear, so you've thrown a load of books together and no one has a clue what the point of it is then you've just got a load of confusing books that are out of position on the shelves.

Two respondents suggested that books laying down flat created a poor display.

4.3.6 The Views of Peers and Managers.

On the whole, displays were viewed positively by peers and managers. Out of the twelve respondents, ten felt that displays were considered to be important and their efforts in making the displays were recognised. Respondent C explained that the recent interest in reader development meant that the importance of displays was recognised and their use was encouraged. Respondents F and I felt that their managers recognised the role of displays in encouraging borrowing. Respondent B said “They place quite high importance on it; it’s to do with the whole look of the library”. As manager Respondent L felt displays were a positive addition to her library. Respondent J said it was her manager’s idea to evaluate the displays by collecting statistics from the library management system.

Two respondents felt that they did not receive enough support from managers concerning displays. Respondent A said

> I have to say sometimes I have to encourage my managers to pay attention so I have to say “hey what do you think about this? Do you think it’s good enough or do you think we could do something more with that?” It could be that they could take more of an interest especially as they encourage new users and encourage borrowers to borrow more.

She had also noticed a difference in the attitude of staff members:

> There’s one person I work with who doesn’t pay any attention

> whatsoever and doesn't care… But those of us who do like it work together so that's alright.

Respondent K said of her managers

> I don't know that they even notice. They're more worried about us chipping the paint. No one ever says "good job".

4.3.7 Other Resources.

There was a wide variation in the responses to the question "In an ideal world, what resources would you have to help you with making displays?". Some were simple adjustments that could be easily accommodated such as Respondent A's suggestion:

> what would make a really big difference is, you can't print things off from these computers [behind the counter] so you have to wait for the People's Network computers to be free and log on as a visitor and try and do as much as you can before someone books the computer so it would be really good if our computers at the desk were linked to a printer. And if we had a colour printer, that would be even better.

Three respondents wanted more stationery to help them with making displays. Respondent G said

> More stationery, like coloured card would be good. We learnt how

> to do all sorts with different things on the display training but we haven't had the cellophane or tissue paper to do it in the library.

Respondent L wanted artefacts to complement the themed displays as well as more stationery. Respondent F echoed this idea, saying "Maybe a budget so you could go out and buy things to go on displays, props and things".

Four respondents would like more spaces on which to make displays. Respondent F said

> To be like Waterstones and have two or three Norwich displays in the entrance, if you've got the space.

Respondent J also wanted an additional Norwich stand. Respondent I said

> More display equipment, lots of different display furniture. We've got so little wall space. More of that would be good as well.

More books were wanted by three respondents. Respondents B and D both wanted more new books. Respondent E said simply "More books I suppose, more nice new books". Respondent B said

> Newer books. More of the popular books like the R&J ones. Each library gets two copies of those but you don't physically see them in the library for a good six months because they're always on request

to other libraries.

Respondent K suggested that she would like training on making displays. She said

> "It'd be nice to have some training, some focus or some ideas from somewhere about how to display things, the correct procedure.

4.3.8 The Use of Displays in Public Libraries.

Nine respondents were very positive in response to the question "In general, how well do you think public libraries use displays?". Five respondents felt public libraries did very well at using displays, with comments such as "I think we all do well. There are always displays up even if they're not themed" (Respondent G) and "It's part of the library thing" (Respondent K). Respondent A said

> Pretty well I think. I don't think libraries have to be like glossy and trying really hard because it's all about people and public service and I think people accept that. I went to Waterstones the other week just before Harry Potter came out and I could not believe the hype about Harry Potter, it was unreal. They had Harry Potter music playing, banners everywhere and every shelf was Harry Potter and you could want to read something else but you were forced to be displayed upon and libraries are not meant to be like that and I'm glad they're not.

Three respondents were more reserved in their response to the question. Two Respondents (C and H) felt libraries did fairly well within the limitations of their resources. Respondent J said libraries were doing quite well but that “it’s difficult for small libraries to find space for displays”.

Three respondents felt public libraries were not using displays as well as they could be. Respondent B said

> Possibly not as well as they should do. I think they’ve still got a lot to learn from bookshops in the way they display things. But I think at the moment we’re doing our best. We’ve got one of the newer libraries in Sheffield so we’ve got the newer display equipment which I think is more eye-catching. We’re all trying our best and trying to learn from the book traders.

Respondent L said that libraries are not using enough displays, adding “We’re only just getting started in Sheffield”. Respondent F recognised that there was a move being made in Sheffield Public libraries placing more importance on displays:

> I think there has possibly been a change in attitude in the last few years because there are more ready-made displays. And we’ve had refurbishments and more provision’s being made in the refurbishments for display items. Things have purposefully been bought whereas before you made do.

Respondent D thought that generally the public libraries used displays well but added

> It does depend. You've got to have an information assistant who enjoys it and that's not necessarily the case so you do go to some libraries and things have just been stuck up and it's alright but unless someone really wants to do it why should they spend hours on it when there are so many other jobs to be getting on with so it would be nice to see more of it but you can't force it on people.

5.1 Budgets.

In an ideal world, four respondents said they would like more display furniture. In reality, display furniture is expensive and may not always be a high priority when disseminating budgets. The Norwich unit that Respondents F and J specifically requested cost £549.95 for a four-sided unit or £575.95 for a unit with two shelves and a storage compartment (www.gresswell.com). The additional acrylic stand that Respondent L was waiting for costs £250 (www.openingthebook.com). Whilst conducting the survey, one member of staff at one library said they had to have their face-out books lying down as the library did not have enough stands to hold the books upright. Although these are relatively cheap compared to the furniture such as the Norwich stand, they are an additional expense that the library budgets may not have room for. Bought individually the stands cost £2.29 for a small stand and £2.59 for the larger one (www.gresswell.com) and although there is a discount for buying in bulk, the cost soon becomes significant when the number required by the library is added up.

There seemed to be little budgeting for displays within the individual library. Kinnell and Shepherd (1998) found that 'no specific budget' was the reason given by 25% of respondents as a constraint on promoting adult reading. One respondent in this survey specifically asked for a display budget in the interview, suggesting that this is currently unavailable to library staff. The Richard and Judy Summer Reads display at Library 12 was the display with the most artefacts and only the blue cloth had originally come from the library. A member of staff explained that the glasses and bucket and spade had been donated for the display by library staff and the bar of chocolate had been bought from the display-maker's own pocket. Two interview respondents felt a good display featured more than just books. A budget that allowed for the purchasing of additional artefacts or furniture that would enhance the display-making capabilities of a particular library, would increase the impact of the display in their eyes and would also allow an increase in the variety of displays seen in Sheffield Public Libraries.

5.2 Training.

Two examples of training concerning displays were mentioned by the respondents. One was conducted by the *Alternative Display Company* and was the course attended by the majority of respondents who had experienced training and the other by the author Ann Cleeves in association with *Opening the Book.* There is a third method of display training on offer to library staff. It is called *Frontline* and is an online course for public library staff run by *Opening the Book.*

Display training from the *Alternative Display Company* consists of a four and a half hour session, covering

- Introduction
- Tools of the trade
- Creating 3-D effect on a flat surface
- Use of leaflets etc to enhance children's work
- Use of colour to catch the eye
- Economical use of materials
- Themed displays using props
- Suspended displays in windows and display cases
- Stapling to anything
- Displaying clothes and books
- Displaying and creating costumes
- Time to practice the above

(http://www.alternativedisplaytraining.co.uk)

Many of the actions mentioned above would prove useful for public library staff, such as creating a 3-D effect on a flat surface, use of colour, economical use of display materials, displaying books and themed displays. Some however may not be useful for the day to day displaying of books such as suspended displays in windows and displaying clothes. Having personally undertaken the course, it is a very good basis for generating ideas and would be useful for people involved in large scale display work for special events for example. The course involves using posters, cellophane, tissue paper and ribbons to create eye catching displays. However, there

is a problem when it comes to utilising these new skills back in the library environment, as mentioned by Respondent G during the interviews. The library needs to be well stocked with these types of stationery and display furniture (namely display boards) for staff to be able to put their new found skills into practise and Respondent G found this not to be the case. Other respondents who had attended this course vocalised an understanding of the lack of real use this course had. Respondent F said it "was more about making things and practical things like that, rolling posters up, not what to display".

Respondent G said "it centred on displaying posters but you can incorporate those ideas into displaying books". Respondent L also mentioned the focus on posters rather than books and explained she had only put the skills she learnt into use once when creating a display using rolled up posters for a Refugee Week themed display.

The training conducted by Ann Cleeves in association with *Opening the Book* was a day long event and was centred on the paradigm of reader development. This training is included when the company refurbishes a library. They have also begun running half day courses "in response to demand" (Anne Downes, 2007). The one participant who had undertaken this training was positive about the experience and used the ideas the course gave her in many of the displays she created. She repeated phrases from the instructor in her responses such as "why display books that you know issue?" and "bombard them with books".

The training course *Frontline* offered to public library staff has not been undertaken by any staff at Sheffield Public Libraries. The course consists of seven modules that

encourage the user to approach the reading experience in a different manner. It encourages library staff to think about borrower's choosing and reading habits, discusses the importance of book covers and advises on how to run a successful promotion. Module five explicitly discusses displaying books. The first section of the module allows the user to practice creating a display with virtual book covers and suggests methods of organising the books for the greatest impact.

> You could alternate cold colours and hot colours, or put light next to dark. Frame bright, light covers with dark ones. Alternatively you could look at the images on the covers. Are there a group of cartoon treatments that go together? Do the faces or eyes group together well? Animals together?
>
> (Opening the Book, 2007).

The module goes on to discuss the brief period of time most borrowers spend in the library and the fact that some users prefer a smaller range of books to choose from. It offers much of the same advice as the literature review provided, such as the importance of face-on displays and making sure displays are kept full and also stresses the need for the correct display furniture. The module ends with the user creating a small face-on display in their library and monitoring its effectiveness. The course has proved to be popular and 126 of 149 library authorities in England have contracted to use the Frontline course from September 2006 to August 2009 (Opening the Book, 2007).

Kinnell and Shepherd (1998) suggest that there should be joint display training between libraries and the book trade to ensure knowledge and experience is shared. This would be useful in encouraging public libraries to think more carefully about the positioning of displays, which is something none of the afore-mentioned courses explicitly instructs on.

It is important to consider the impact of training on staff. Training leads to increased job satisfaction and productivity (Hughey and Mussnug, 1997) as staff are more confident in their skills. Training would help overcome the problem of "willingness" to make displays. Many respondents identified a specific person for making displays, whether it was the Reader Development Champion or just an interested member of staff. Respondent A in particular identified someone who played no part in creating displays in her library. Although it is useful to have someone in the team who enjoys making displays, it could cause problems if that person was away from the workplace due to sickness or a new job. It was noticed that one library for example, acutely missed the skills and materials provided by a member of staff who had recently left. Training in display work could help overcome such problems and create an organisational culture that encourages all staff to participate in all activities the library conducts.

5.3 Library Policy.

The policies of the authority was referred to four times during this study. It was mentioned by two members of staff during the survey as a hindrance on their display work because staff were no longer allowed to put up posters unless they were on

specific notice or display boards. One interview respondent commented on it when discussing her manager's interest in ensuring the paintwork of the library remained unharmed. Another respondent bemoaned the fact that the policy discouraged making home-made signs, saying

> On the other hand I'm all in favour of DIY displays, people in libraries getting to make their own stuff cos I think the personal touch is appreciated by people than the slick presentation you get with the pre-produced stuff
>
> (Respondent D).

Without being so explicit, Respondent A also echoed this sentiment concerning the level of professionalism within public library displays:

> I don't think libraries have to be like glossy and trying really hard because it's all about people and public service and I think people accept that

before discussing the over zealous exploits of a bookshop when displaying the release of a new book.

The policy concerning the placement and professionalism of notices in the libraries was presumably the reason given for the lack of signs on displays at one library. This caused confusion when deciding on the theme for the survey and could be puzzling for borrowers who approach the displays whilst choosing books. Three respondents

felt a display should be well-signposted to show users what the display was about. By adhering too closely to the policy, the library can become more confusing for users, rather than clearer as the policy aims for them to be.

Professionally-made signs are the alternative for hand-made signs but this restricts the themes as professionally-made signs could never cover the full range of interests that hand-made displays can. It would be unlikely for example that a sign made by a professional company would find a sign for a Polish display or gardening display as profitable as a generic display such as 'Take a Bite', where virtually any genre of fiction can be included in the display. This limits the responsiveness of the particular library to its clientele if use of hand-made signs is restricted. Cleeves (1995) and Perren (2003) both stress the importance of targeting specific user groups, something that professional signage cannot do. Goodall (1989) recommends that displays cater for minority interests but unless the professional companies provide signs that reflect the full diversity of library users, hand-made signs and displays are an essential addition to the library environment.

5.4 Influence of Shops.

The influence of bookshops was evident in the libraries surveyed.

Many had displays in the entrance like those in the large chain bookshops. This is considered to be the ultimate "power spot" by Stanley (2004) and Underhill (1999). One respondent's response to the question "In an ideal world, what other resources would you have to help you with making displays?" said more stands in the entrance

like Waterstones, recognising the importance of this location. Other displays were located in power spots such as at the top of the stairs or at the end of the aisles. Libraries should be aware of the movements of the users when they walk round the library to maximise their use of power spots. Underhill (1999) suggests that British people tend to walk towards the left when they enter a shop. This is useful information to know when deciding which way to face the display and the signs on the display. One library did this well by placing a large display to the left of the aisles so it was immediately noticeable as you walked round.

There were problems when it came to locating displays in power spots. One display was placed in a power spot so it was seen as soon as the borrower came in the door but the sign was facing towards the aisle rather than the entrance. The user would have to be already browsing the shelves before they realised that the new books were separated from the normal stock. This problem is simple to rectify but shows that there needs to be an understanding of the power of location for the displays to have a positive impact.

Another problem identified concerning the location of displays was the use of the special tabletop stands for the Sheffield Children's Book Award Shortlist 2007. The nature of the stands meant they had to be placed on a table or shelf. Most libraries managed to find a space for the stands in an area that drew attention to the books being displayed but some obviously struggled to find a suitable space for them. One library had placed it on the counter, which in theory would seem a good idea as users could browse the selection whilst waiting for their books to be issued, but the display was surrounded by various leaflets and became hidden among them, especially as the

display contained leaflets. One of these stands was placed on a shelf above the children's section. It was out of the sight line of many users, never mind the children it was aimed at, and was nearly impossible for anyone to reach without a stool. Underhill (1999: 80) describes the ideal positioning of items on a shelf as between "slightly above eye level to about knee level". He also points out the importance of placing things at the right level for their intended target: bookshops for example, tend to place books containing characters from popular television shows low down, so the children can see them and books such as *Grimm's Fairy Tales* on the higher shelves as it is more common that adults will choose these books for their children (Underhill, 1999: 145). The third example of the misplaced use of one of these stands was in a library that placed the stand on the floor. It was not in an obvious sightline and was difficult for anyone to browse unless they felt comfortable squatting on the floor. Underhill (1999) explains that women in particular do not feel comfortable bending down to reach things and frequently leave without buying anything if they have to do this. In addition to being difficult for borrowers to spot, the display is in an awkward place for library staff and could easily be overlooked when shelving. It is also in a prime position for being accidentally kicked or knocked over, which is not conducive to an attractive environment in the library. These examples show that it is important to understand the limitations of certain pieces of furniture and the layout libraries themselves before buying them. The stands were £150 each from Openingthebook.com and are a lot to spend if you consider that three out of the sixteen uses of these were not as effective as they could have been due to the nature of the equipment.

One interesting thing noticed by one respondent was the fact that people didn't like to take things from an immaculate display. Underhill (1999) also found this to be the case in a bagel shop in Utah. A rack of bagel chips was placed near the counter but very few customers actually took them from the display when it was full. The solution was to have staff pull a few bags out every-so-often to show that the stock was "allowed" to be taken and sales immediately increased. Perhaps a display in a library should always have a book or two missing to encourage borrowers to take stock from the display.

5.5 Barriers to Display Work.

The literature review suggests that time is the biggest barrier to display work. The pressures of staff shortages and other essential library duties were mentioned by the respondents as part of the struggle to make and maintain displays. Kinnell and Shepherd (1998) found 41% of respondents to their survey on constraints in the promotion of adult reading felt lack of staff time was a problem. Cleeves (1995) recommends that adequate time is given for display work to ensure other commitments are completed. It is understandable that displays do not take the highest priority in public libraries as there are other essential jobs that need to be executed to ensure the smooth running of the service such as shelving, answering enquiries and issuing stock.

Two respondents specifically mentioned that some display work had to be done whilst serving on the counter. Although this may seem like an inconvenience to both

the staff member and the borrower, it could be seen as a chance to promote the display before it is even made or a chance to engage the borrower in a conversation that would usually be missed, perhaps asking for their suggestion of what should be included or what should be the theme of the next display.

Space seemed to be a more pressing issue for library staff. Thomas (2003) concludes that space is more important when arranging books than time or money. Whilst conducting the survey, the lack of space was given as a reason for the lack of displays by ten libraries. This was more common in the smaller libraries.

The survey shows little correlation between the number of displays in a library and the number of issues (a figure used to decide the size of the library in lieu of the availability of other data). See *Appendix 4* for a graph showing this relationship. Of the libraries that had eleven or twelve displays, only two fell into the category of over 100,000 issues per annum, which is considered for these research purposes, a large library. One was the central library with 386,363 issues in the year 2006/2007. The other had 253.419. The other libraries with this amount of displays were medium-sized (50,000 – 99,999 issues per annum) with 73,068 issues or small (less than 49,999 issues) with 39,481. The eight other libraries that fell into the 'large' category showed some correlation. Six libraries had five or more displays, making them above or equal to the average number of displays. Two had less than the average number of displays with three and four displays respectively. The libraries with less than 50,000 issues, excluding the one mentioned previously, showed the least correlation between issues and displays. Five libraries had five or more displays and six had less than five displays, including one which had no displays.

The striking thing about the libraries with the most displays was that they were the most recently built or refurbished and had the most amount of new display furniture, such as the Norwich stands. This fits in with Respondent F's acknowledgement of the change in attitude towards displays and the inclusion of new display furniture in refurbished libraries. Respondent L's library had recently undergone refurbishment and she had received new display furniture, although she was waiting for a new Perspex stand to complete the piece. This evidence shows that having specifically-designed display furniture can impact on how the library uses displays and suggest that the way to increase the use of displays across the authority is to increase the occurrence of special display furniture.

5.6 Evaluation.

The importance of evaluating any promotional efforts was stressed in the literature review. Stanley (2004: 4) asserts it is essential to record the success of promotion so "key decision makers can be convinced of future investment".

There is a consensus that it is difficult to evaluate displays. Issue figures can be collected but this is often a time consuming task and requires access and a working knowledge of the library management system. It also requires all staff to be fully informed so books are placed in their appropriate positions. This is the method used in most studies of the impact of displays. The evaluation method given by Respondent I of counting the number of display created per quarter gives little insight into how well the displays are used. Both methods of evaluation are limited in

what they investigate. Aspects of displays such as enhancing the library environment or assisting borrower choice are not evaluated by these methods and indeed, are difficult to measure by any method. Qualitative studies such as questionnaires and interviews can provide useful insights into how library users view the service but can be time-consuming to collect and analyse. Underhill (1999) accepts that simply analysing sales figures can be misleading, showing for example a positive rise in profits but a decline in the 'closure' rate, that is the amount of people who enter the store and actually buy something. He suggests a clearer picture of how people shop can be gleaned by the use of 'trackers': people employed to secretly follow customers around a store and note which way they walk, every thing they touch and look at. Again, it is an approach designed by the shops that could be brought into public libraries to discover an accurate picture of the use of displays and other aspects of library work that are difficult to evaluate using traditional methods.

Chapter Six: Conclusions.

6.1 The Number of Displays.

Sheffield Public Libraries extensively use displays. Only one library had no displays but this was understandable considering its size. Some libraries admit they struggle to find space for displays but the research shows that not all the libraries that have a large amount of displays are necessarily the ones with the most issues. The most important factor in the number of displays in a library is the amount of display furniture the library has. The newly refurbished libraries in Sheffield have the most specific furniture for displays and therefore the most displays.

Another factor that affects the number of displays is the enthusiasm of the staff who make them. The libraries that have staff who actively enjoy making displays tend to have more displays and certainly more individual displays aimed at their locale clientele.

6.2 Positive Findings.

Overall, the study shows a positive use of displays in Sheffield Public Libraries. There seems to be an understanding of the importance of displays by library staff that extends beyond the obvious remit of promoting stock. Enhancing the library environment, encouraging borrowing of new authors or genres and providing people with ideas were all given as explanations of the impact of displays on promoting books. Library staff appear instinctively know things that the literature review suggests such as the need to keep the display full and tidy and the influence of

bookshops. There is an instinctive ability among library staff to make good displays that create a positive impact on borrowing without much formal training. This all shows that displays are an integral part of library work and staff develop display skills unconsciously alongside their ability to use the library management system and to successfully engage with borrowers.

6.3 Areas for Improvement.

There could be some improvements to create a seamless approach to displays within the library authority. The rules stating how and what can be displayed aim to provide this consistency across the libraries and are useful in that they give guidance for all libraries to have the same 'look' but fail to consider the needs of the local community who can not be provided for with professional materials or that people prefer to be clear what the display is about. Policies need to take into account the practicalities of enforcing those rules within a multitude of differing sites, with differing levels of staffing, space, furniture and staff awareness.

Increasing staff awareness of the importance of displays would help ensure a consistent approach to this method of promotion. Training in displays would increase staff skills and confidence, creating a more effective service and a more professional environment. The training needs to be appropriate and above all relevant to the needs of the staff and the users. As the respondents suggested, it is useless to provide training that is then not followed up by the provision of adequate time or resources. There should also be a dissemination of information gathered by professionals in the retail trade. The literature review showed that a frequent recommendation was to

follow what the bookshops do in terms of displaying books. There is an informal understanding of things like the importance of placing displays in the entranceway and even an understanding of some of the sophisticated methods of encouraging purchases such as not maintaining a 'perfect' but untouchable display, but a greater understanding of these thoroughly researched methods could help eliminate some of the problems found in the Sheffield library system such as signs facing the wrong way, minimising their impact on users entering the library.

The importance of displays was recognised by all the library staff interviewed but some felt their managers were not as enthusiastic about their use as they could be. Sometimes, displays can become "part of the furniture" and are therefore not recognised as having their full potential. This is the reason many pieces of research suggest that the displays must be changed frequently to maintain their level of impact. It was also recognised by one respondent whilst chatting at the end of the interview. He asked about the responses of other staff that had been interviewed and commented

> We've been doing displays for so long without thinking about why we do it. It's interesting to start thinking about them properly.

There are many proven benefits to having displays in public libraries and staff work hard, sometimes under staff and time constrictions, to enhance the library environment and promote the library's stock. It may not seem like an important aspect of the service as it is unmonitored by the Public Library Service Standards, but the frontline staff recognise the impact displays do have. This may also be the

reason why displays have not been as thoroughly researched as other areas of the public library service. Attention needs to be given by library managers and information studies researchers into displays to ensure that the full benefits of the displays can be achieved and, more importantly, that staff efforts are recognised in all aspects of library work. This recognition also needs to extend to budgetary considerations of display furniture and materials.

Chapter Seven: Recommendations.

7.1 Training.

Staff should be given adequate training in making displays. This should be aligned with the priorities of the library, for example concerning the promotion of reader development. Training will increase awareness of the importance of displays and help overcome the difficulties of being reliant on certain staff members who like making displays.

7.2 Further Research.

There is scope for further research in this area.

7.2.1 Influence of Bookshops.

One aspect of displays that could be researched is the relationship between bookshop displays and those in libraries. It was intended to cover this within this research project but it was found that the results from the survey and interview were enough to provide an adequate study. It would be interesting to asses the levels of training and support bookshop staff received in comparison to library staff and also to explore any examples of co-operation between these two bodies to decipher the benefits to both parties.

7.2.2 “Tracking Borrowers”.

Underhill (1999) suggests the most accurate way to assess how people shop is to monitor their every move from the minute they walk into a shop. Notes are made on where they walk, what they look at and what they touch and can be used to identify any barriers to completing a sale. This could be extended to libraries as they too have customers who go through the same decision making process when it comes to borrowing books. A study of this type would create new information on the way visitors to the library use displays and could provide a useful addition to the knowledge in this area.

7.3 Sign Posts.

Whilst conducting the survey of all the libraries in Sheffield it was noticed that only two were sign posted from major roads. It seems strange that such a useful community asset should not be highlighted for those who are new to the area or have previously had no need to discover the whereabouts of their local branch. Much money is spent on public libraries and they deserve to be promoted alongside other council resources such as swimming pools.

Word Count: 18, 673.

References.

Alternative Display Company, (2007). *Course Content* [Online]. Birmingham: Alternative Display Co. Ltd. http://www.alternativedisplaytraining.co.uk/973759_03.html. [Accessed 29 August 2007].

Asbridge, W. A. (1967) *The Display and Care of Books in Primary Schools.* London: The School Library Association.

Baker, S. L. (1986) "Why Book Displays Increase Use: A Review of Critical Factors". *Public library Journal,* **25**, (2), 63-65.

Bell, J. (1987). *Doing Your Research Project: A Guide for First Time Researchers in Education and Social Sciences.* Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Blanshard, C. (1998) *Managing Library Services for Children and Young People.* London: Library Association Publishing.

The Bookseller (2005) "Publisher Plot Library Promos". *The Bookseller,* 4th February, 7.

Cleeve, M. (1995) "Taking a Stand: The Market Realities of Exhibition and Display Work". *Librarian Career Development* [Online], **3**, (1), 31-35. http://www.emeraldinsight.com [Accessed 10th April 2007].

Cunningham, A. C. and O'Connor, N. J. (1968) "Consumer Reaction to Retail Price and Display Changes". *European Journal of Marketing,* **2**, (3), Abstract Only.

Demco (2007). *Norwich Display Stand Price* http://www.gresswell.com/CGI-BIN/LANSAWEB?PROCFUN+LWGWWEB+LWGW025+GWP+ENG+FUNCPARMS+ZZWSESSID(A0200):16722695010041250576+ZZWNAVPAG(A0100):PRODUCT+DATESEQ(A0140):8142007101440. [Accessed 29 August 2007.

Demco, (2007). *Bookstand Price*. http://www.gresswell.com/CGI-BIN/LANSAWEB?PROCFUN+LWGWWEB+LWGW025+GWP+ENG+FUNCPARMS+ZZWSESSID(A0200):16722695010041250576+ZZWNAVPAG(A0100):PRODUCT+DATESEQ(A0140):8142007103648. [Accessed 29 August 2007].

Downes, A. (2007). Personal Correspondence

Edwards, D. and Gripper, A. (2006). "Tricks of the Traders". *The Daily Mirror* [Online], 29 June. NewsBank. http://infoweb.newsbank.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk. [Accessed 29 August 2007].

Evans, K. (1999) *Why and How do People Choose the Fiction they Borrow from Sheffield Public libraries?* MA in Librarianship, University of Sheffield.

Franklin, L. C. (1985) *Display and Publicity Ideas for Libraries.* London: Jefferson, McFarland.

Gillham, B. (2000) *Developing a Questionnaire.* London: Continuum.

Goldhor, H. (1972) "The Effect of Prime Display Location on Public library Circulation of Selected Adult Titles". *Library Quarterly,* 42, (4), 371-389.

Goodall, D. (1989) *Browsing in Public Libraries.* Loughborough: The British Library Board.

Holman, T. (2007) "A Book for Every Occasion". *The Bookseller,* 16th February, 26-27.

Hughey, A. W. and Mussneug, k. J. (1997). "Designing Effective Employee Training Programmes. Training for Quality [Online], 5, (20, 52-57. http://www.emeraldinsight.com. [Accessed 29 August 2007].

Kinnell, M. and Shepherd, J. (1998) *Promoting Reading to Adults in UK Public Libraries.* London: Taylor Graham Publishing.

Laing, A. and Royle, J. (2006). "Marketing and the Bookselling Brand: Curernt Strategy and the Managers' Perspective". *Distribution Management* [Online], **34**, (3), 198-211. http://www.emeraldinsight.com . [Accessed 29 August 2007.

McKearney, M. and Baverstock, A. (1990) *Well Worth Reading: An Experiment in Fiction Promotion.* Winchester: Well Worth Reading.

Opening the Book (2007). *What is Reader Development?* [Online]. Pontefract: Opening the Book. http://www.branching-out.net/branching-out/page2.asp?idno=519 [Accessed 29 August 2007].

Opening the Book (2007). *Acrylic Tabletop Stand Price.* http://www.openingthebook.com/otb/page.asp?idno=839 [Accessed 29 August 2007].

Perren, M. (2003) "How Reader-Centred Are You?". *Information Scotland,* **1**, (2), 12.

Phelan, K. (1993) *Libraries and Reading Promotion Schemes.* Bournes Green: Comedia.

Skaggs, G. (1999) *On Display: 25 Themes to Promote Reading.* London: McFarland.

Stanley, J. (2004) "Marketing Your Library Without a Marketing Budget". *One Person Library,* **21**, (1), 3-4.

Thomas, J. (2003) "Promoting Recreational Reading in the Public Library". *New Zealand Librarian,* **49**, (8), 283-286.

Train, B. (2001). Mind's Eye Evaluation Report [Online]. http://scholar.google.com/schhp?ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&hl=en&tab=ws&q=. [Accessed 29 August 2007].

Van Riel, R. and Fowler, O. (1996) *Opening the Book: Finding a Good Read.* Bradford: Bradford Libraries.

Walters, R. (1995) "The Library, the Bookshop and the Literature Centre". *New Library World* [Online], **96**, (1116), 21-27. http://www.emeraldinsight.com [Accessed 14th April 2007].

Yates, S. J. (2004) *Doing Social Science Research*, 2nd ed. London; Sage

Appendices.

Appendix 1: Survey Outline.

Survey of Displays in Public Libraries.

Name of Library:
Date of Visit:

Display ....

Location	
Theme	
Type of display	
Number of books	
Clear aim/target audience?	
Additional props?	
Additional promotional material?	
Professional materials?	
Maintainence	

Additional information	

Appendix 2: Interview Schedule.

Interview Schedule.

Introduce myself and give interviewee informed consent sheet and contact details. Read out the informed consent sheet whilst they read it and sign two copies of the Interview Consent Form.

Participation Information.

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview. Before we start I'd like to ensure you know what will happen now during the interview and later with the data I'll collect.

The interview concerns the views of library staff on displays and is part of my dissertation for the Department on Information Studies at the University of Sheffield. The interview will discuss practical aspects of creating displays as well as your feelings about the topic. The interview should last about half an hour. The research project aims to gain a clear understanding of the way public libraries use displays to promote books and the impact they have on the work of public library staff.

I will be making notes/recording during the interview to assist my research project. You will not be referred to by name in any of the final research. Care will be taken to ensure your anonymity throughout the research project.

You can withdraw from the interview at any time, both during the interview and afterwards. If you wish to withdraw after the interview you can do so by contacting me or my dissertation supervisor Peter Willett in writing and your interview will be removed from the study.

I hope you find the interview interesting and thank you again for agreeing to take part. If you have any further questions, there will be time at the end of the interview to discuss these, or feel free to contact me at a later date.

Ask if they have any questions. Sign both Interview Consent Forms. Give one the participant, keep one for own records.

The Interview.

Section 1. *This section concerns practical aspects of display work.*

Q1. How are display themes chosen in your public library?

Q2. How frequently are displays changed?

Q3. How does making and maintaining displays fit into your day-to-day work schedule?

Q4. What resources are available to help you with creating displays?

Q5. Have you received any training about displaying books?

Q6. Does your job description mention creating displays?

Q7. How is the effectiveness of displays evaluated in your library?

Q8. Does your library have any partnerships that involve displays?
Prompt publishers, suppliers, government agencies.

Section 2. *This section concerns your views and feelings on displays.*

Q1. Can you define ‘display’ for me?

Q2. What impact do you think displays have on promoting books?

Q3. What types of books are best suited to promotion by display?

Q4. What do you think makes a good display?

Q5. What do you think makes a poor display?

Q6. How are displays viewed by your peers and managers?

Q7. Ideally, what resources would you have to help you with your display making?

Q8. How well in general do you think public libraries use displays?

Section 3. (For Sheffield library staff only)

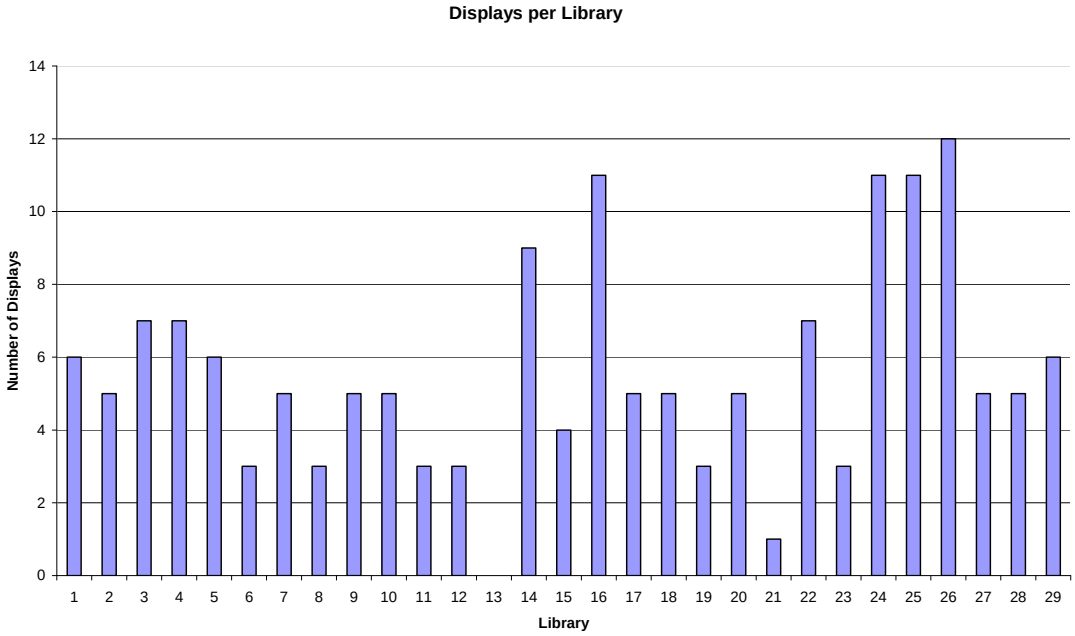
This section concerns the act of creating a display.

Q1. Can you talk me through the step by step process of creating this display?
Prompt: ideas, sourcing materials, timescale.

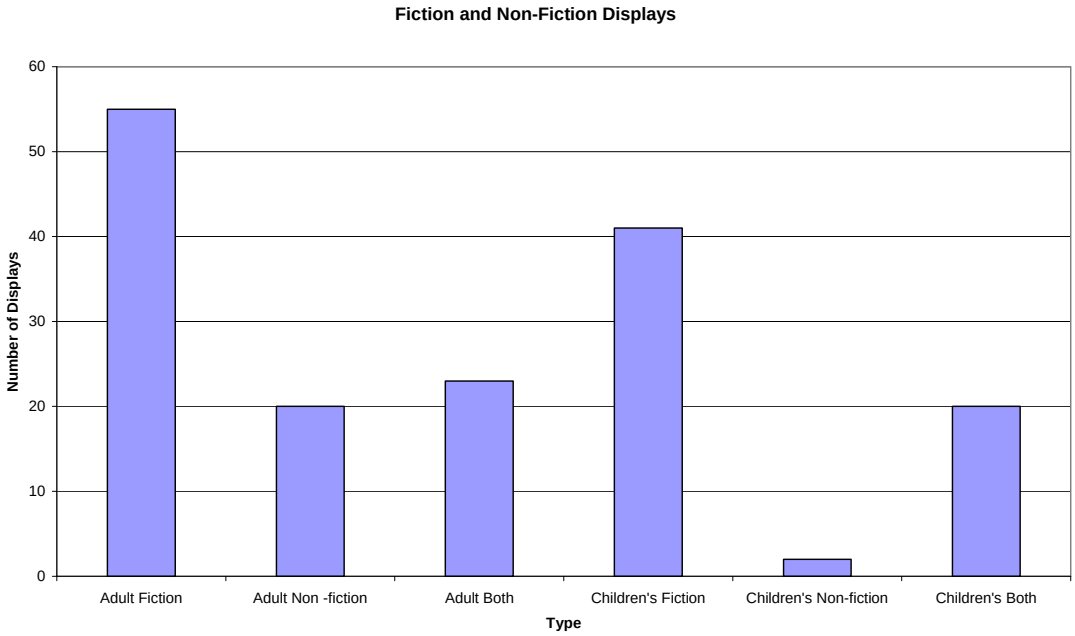
Throughout interview remember probes: nodding, clarification, examples, what happened next, reflecting.

Appendix 3: Findings Graphs.

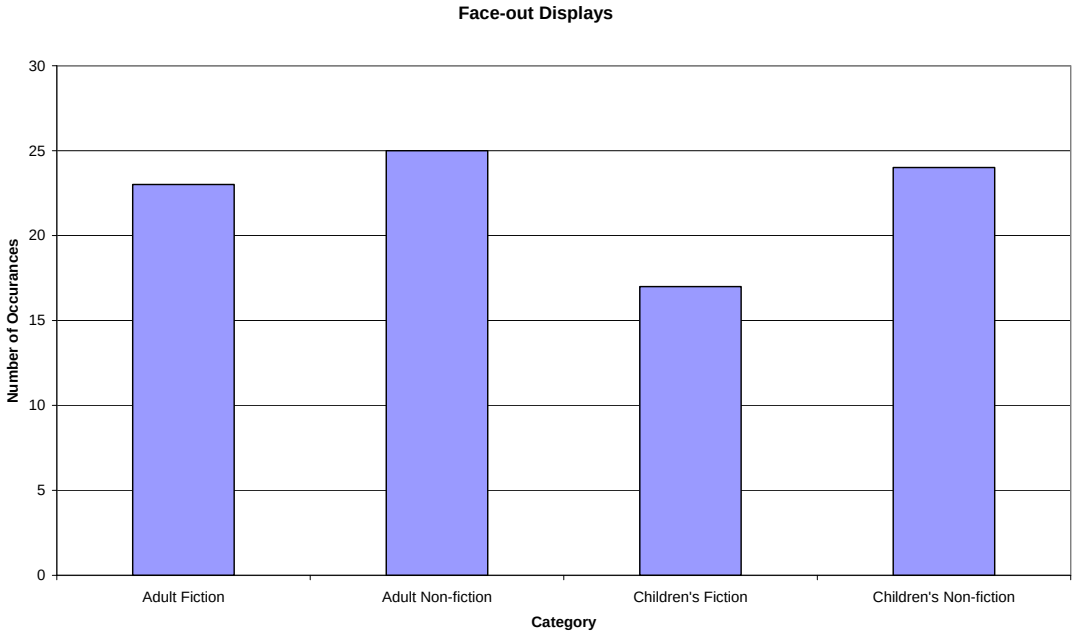
3.1: Displays Per Library.



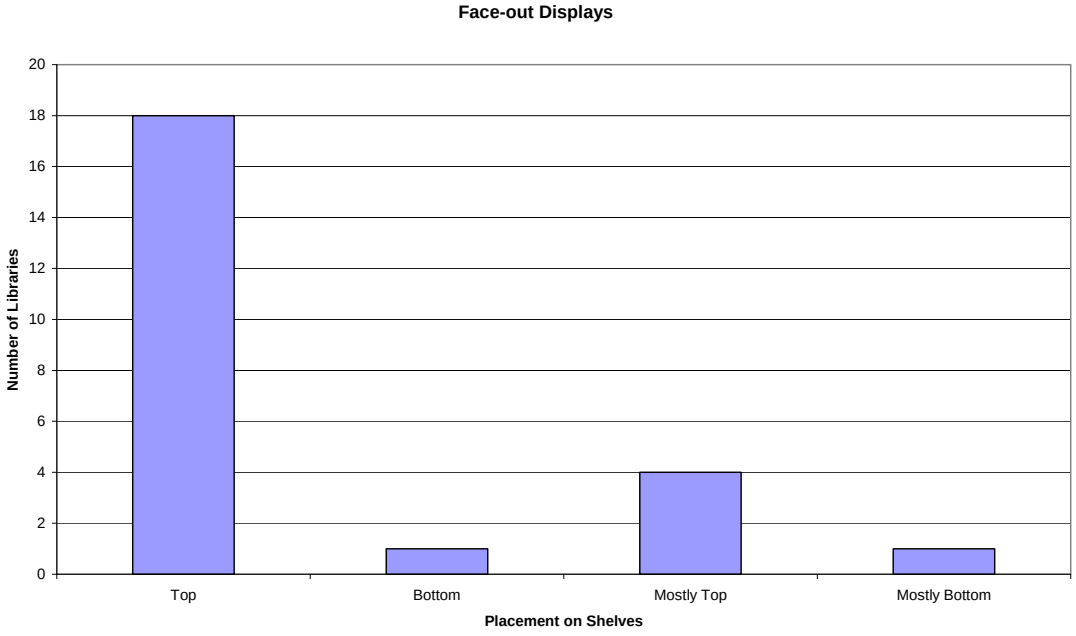
3.2: Fiction and Non-Fiction Displays.



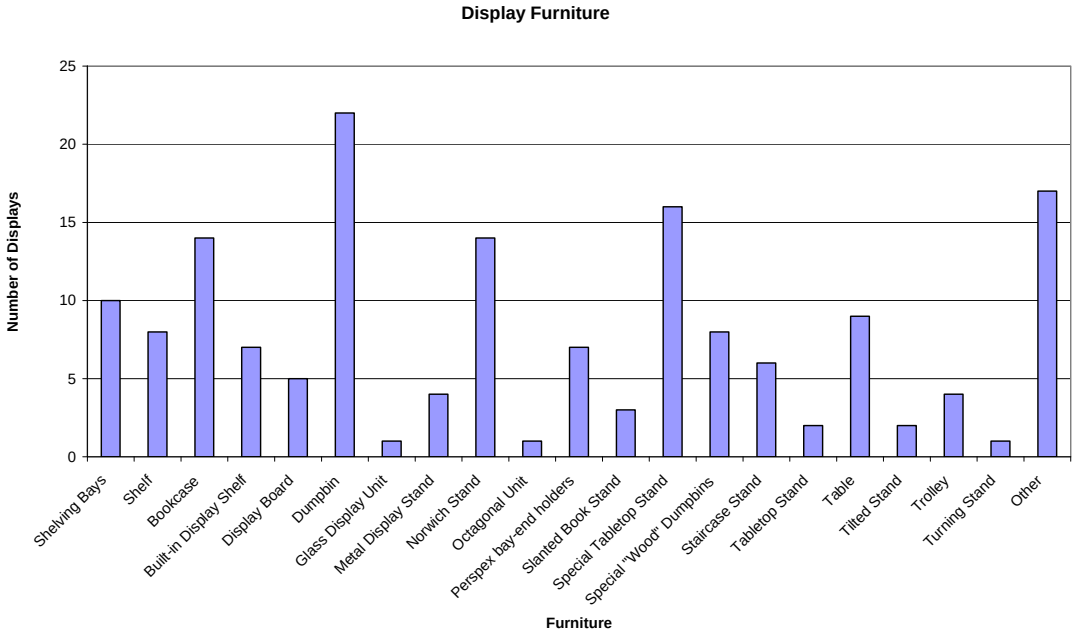
3.3.1: Face-Out Display One.



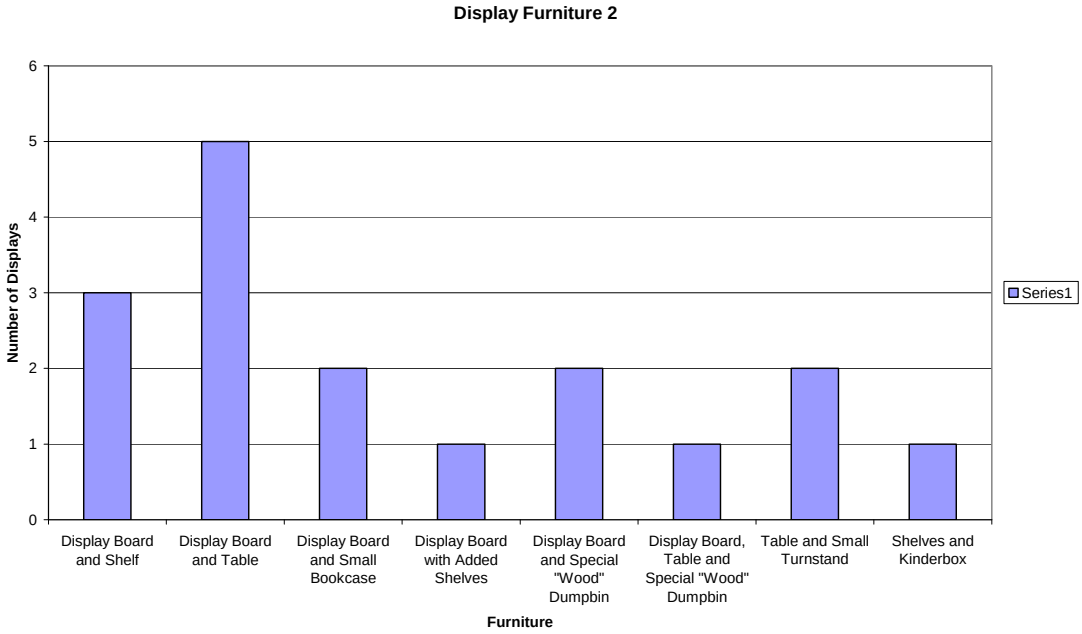
3.3.2: Face-Out Displays Two.



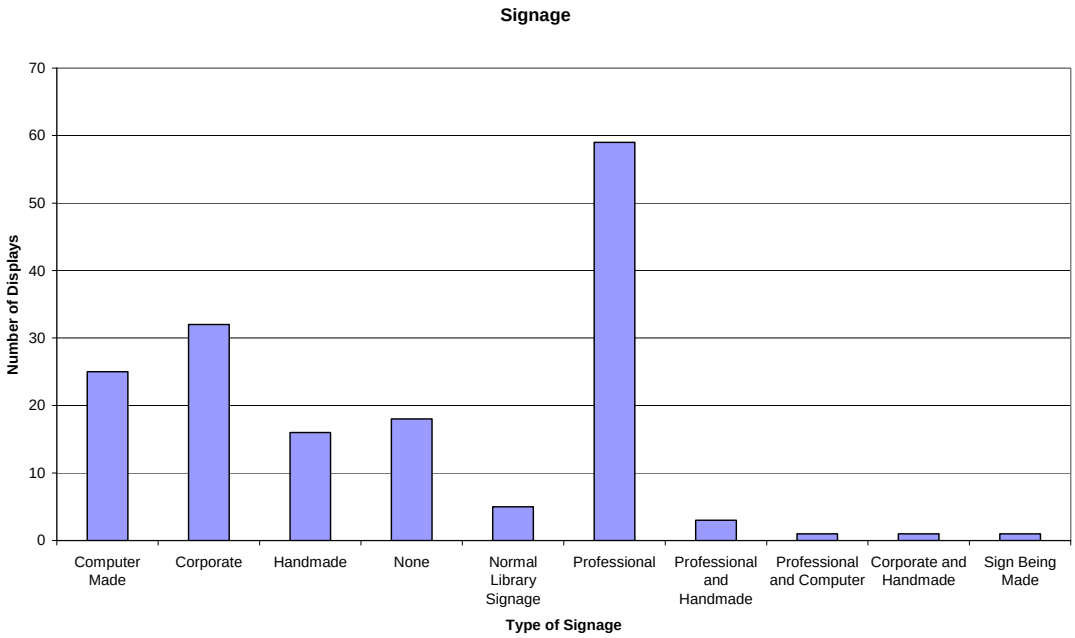
3.4.1: Display furniture One.



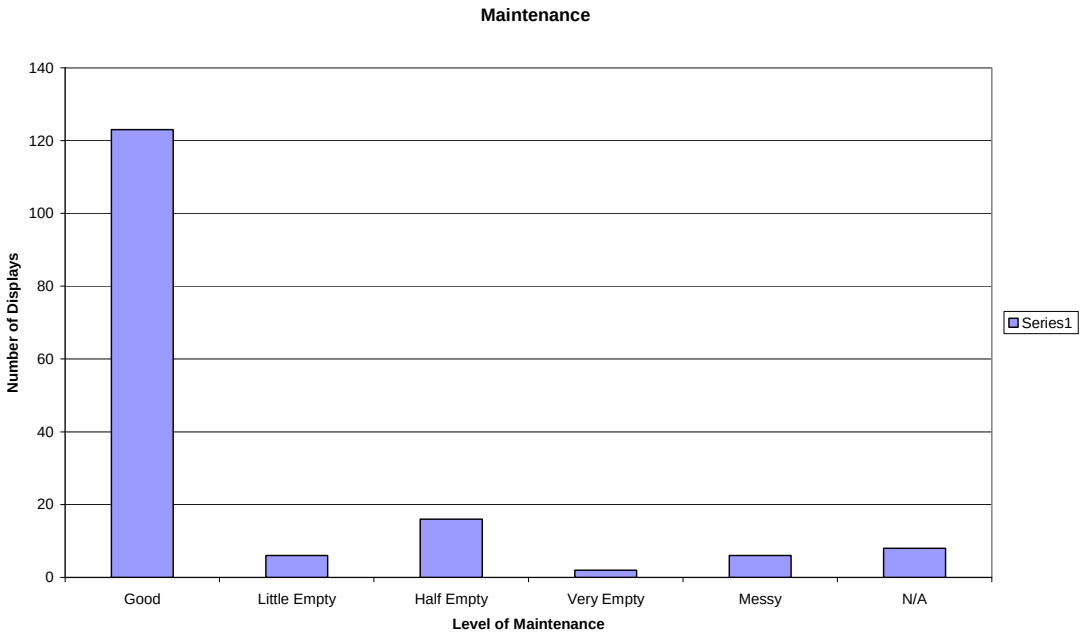
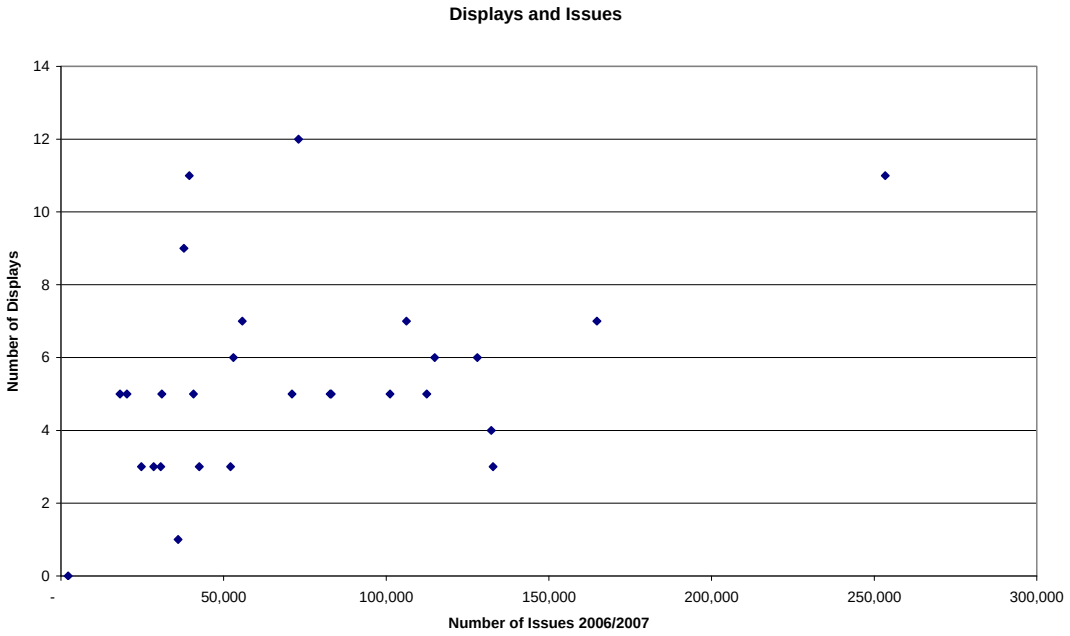
3.4.2: Display Furniture Two.



3.5: Signage.



3.6: Maintenance.



Appendix 4: Display Versus Issues Graph.