INNOVATION IN PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

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By

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Abstract

Background

There is little research into young people’s and library staff’s understandings of and attitudes towards innovation. It was hoped that a case study of Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information (SLAI) would address this omission and provide insight into the state of innovation in library services to young people in Sheffield.

Aims

The aim of this research is to capture the unique characteristics of Sheffield Libraries Archives and Information’s (SLAI) provision of groups that promote reading to 12-17 year olds by answering the following questions:

- What understandings do library staff and young library users have of innovation in general and in relation to library groups that promote reading to 12-17 year olds?
- To what extent do library staff and young library users value innovation in relation to library groups that promote reading to 12-17 year olds?

Methods

An inductive approach was adopted. Data was gathered via 2 focus groups with young people, 2 focus groups with front-line library staff and 1 focus group with library management. These had participatory techniques and an adaptation of critical incident technique (CIT) embedded.
Findings

‘Novelty’ was identified as a key concept in general definitions of innovation and definitions of innovation in relation to libraries. ‘Value’ was identified as an important criterion in defining the value of innovation in relation to libraries. The value of ideas to young people was especially important to all participants.

Conclusions

Participants’ understood and valued innovation differently depending upon whether it was seen in a general context or in relation to libraries. Participants’ attitudes regarding the value of innovation in relation to library groups for young people were shaped by their experience of libraries. The case studied bears similarities to national trends identified in library literature. A question sheet was created to inform the design and execution of an innovative library group for young people (Appendix 1).
1. Introduction

1.1 Aims and Objectives

The aim of this research is to capture the unique characteristics of Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information (SLAI)’s provision of groups that promote reading to 12-17 year olds by answering the following questions:

- What understandings do library staff and young library users have of innovation in general and in relation to library groups that promote reading to 12-17 year olds?
- To what extent do library staff and young library users value innovation in relation to library groups that promote reading to 12-17 year olds?

It is hoped that this study will be of use to public library staff working with 12-17 year olds and to anybody else interested in the area.

1.2 Definitions

The term ‘young people’ is used to refer to anyone aged 12-17. The term ‘library groups that promote reading’ refers to groups that meet on a regular basis in a public library. Some groups promote reading explicitly, such as reading groups. Others promote reading in a more roundabout manner, for example a computer games club could encourage its members to read magazines, books and online resources about computer games in an explicit or implicit way. This definition is highly subjective and the degree to which a particular library group promotes reading is open to debate.
2. Literature Review

2.1 Innovation in general

The verb ‘innovate’ is defined thus in The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English:

“1 bring in new methods, ideas, etc. 2 (often followed by in) make changes” (Allen, 1991).

This definition captures key aspects of the meaning of innovation, namely that it implies novelty, difference and originality. Improvement and benefit are usually understood as being implicit in use of this word.

2.2 Innovation in management

Tidd et al. (2005) believe that innovation is not just about creating new markets but about providing new or updated products and services to existing markets. They provide a model of the different types of innovation:

- Product innovation - changes in the products and/or services an organization offers
- Process innovation - changes in the way products and/or services are delivered
- Position innovation - changes in the context products and/or services are introduced
- Paradigm innovation - changes in the underlying mental models which form the basis of what an organisation does

They also provide definitions of what they see as the 2 forms innovation can take within any of the above areas:
• Incremental innovation - continuous revision and improvement within an area
• Radical innovation - revolutionary development within an area

Both of these models provide a means of analysing innovation in libraries. Tidd et al. state that there is a direct correlation between provision of new products and success within a market; new products help organisations gain and maintain a foothold within a market, which results in increased profitability. Therefore, all organisations should aim to be innovative. An important assertion by Tidd et al. is that innovation is a knowledge-based process, a view shared by Du Plessis (2007) who states that, as a result, knowledge management is valuable in encouraging innovation.

Borgelt & Falk (2007) also recognize the importance of knowledge in innovation and emphasize the role of senior management in promoting innovation:

“The responsibility of any leadership desirous of change or innovation in an environment which is not over regulated must include as its priority, building and maintaining a knowledge culture that supports and allows risk taking”
Borgelt & Falk (2007 : 122)

They believe that innovation involves thinking in unconventional or unobvious ways, that risks are inherent to innovation and that these risks must be judged carefully before action is taken. Whether public libraries are over regulated is a point for debate but there is little doubt that, with their finite resources and the constant pressure to justify their existence, they would have to consider the risks of innovation very carefully.

Many believe that innovation offers a means of survival for organisations. Barden claims that organisations need to remember the basics of innovation, such as productivity, relevance and discipline, in order to establish sustainable innovation (Anonymous, 2008).
Shapiro (2002) concurs; innovation culture must be nurtured. They feel that any shortcomings regarding innovation can be overcome:

“Let’s face it, there are really only 2 reasons people aren’t innovative all the time. Either they aren’t motivated to be innovative, or they aren’t perceived as ‘competent’ in innovation. Both of these problems can be solved.”

Shapiro (2002: 8)

However, as regards libraries, this would appear to be a naive view. The majority of UK public libraries are subject to financial and resource restrictions. There are no set levels for investment in public libraries (DCMS, 2003) and, as a result, many authorities see them as an easy target for cuts (Comedia, 1993). The funding available to UK public libraries was cut throughout the 1970’s, 1980’s and into the 1990’s and it is believed that substantial financial investment is needed to meet the targets set for UK public libraries in reports such as Framework for the Future (Goulding, 2006; CILIP, 2003). Issues surrounding funding of public libraries add a third, entirely different problem to Shapiro’s list. Shapiro also believes the future of innovation is dependent upon organisations being tightly customer-focused. This is interesting as debates regarding whether libraries should provide what they think their public want or what their public say they want have been ongoing for some time (Usherwood, 1996; Pateman, 2008; Hartridge, 2008). Similar debates have taken place in the marketing world with Narver et al. (2004) claiming that pro-active market orientation is more valuable to commercial businesses than reactive market orientation because it allows them to create customer dependence and loyalty for their product. Shapiro states that companies wishing to innovate should poll ‘leading customers’, those consumers who are considered to be sophisticated trend-setters. Whether such concepts would be applicable to libraries is debatable. Shapiro does, however, describe the value in polling former customers. In libraries, it is recognised that non-users need to be targeted (DCMS, 2003) and polling former users may help libraries meet non-users’ requirements.
2.3 Innovation in public libraries

The DCMS (2003) report *Framework for the Future* is a long-term strategic vision for UK public libraries and makes a number of proposals that aim to encourage innovation among other things. Research identified a number of existing examples of innovative practice. Norwich, Bournemouth and Peckham are singled out as authorities that attempted to re-think the library as a physical space when they commissioned new library buildings. The People’s Network initiative is seen to have attracted new library users and taught library staff new skills, which they could then teach to users. The amount of reader development work was felt to have increased. Yet it is acknowledged that innovation was not widespread enough and projects were not being sustained for long periods of time. Factors constraining public libraries in the UK included a lack of figures acting as advocates for libraries on a national basis, lack of support from their local authorities, fragmentation of libraries as a whole, increased competition for users' patronage and inability to recruit new staff.

Vaizey takes a positive view of innovation in UK public libraries, stating that “library services across the country are adapting to change in innovative ways” (2007 : 17). Interestingly a number of examples of the innovation they found mirror suggestions made in *Framework for the Future*. Vaizey describes multiple use buildings (advocated by the DCMS as a means by which non-users can be attracted) and online reference services (just one of the recommended ways in which libraries can use the internet). Some examples of innovative service provision for young people are also detailed. Vaizey mentions Lambeth Libraries’ poetry slams, rap events and talent shows. However, in spite of these positive examples, a number of recommendations are made to UK public libraries in order to improve their service. The marketing and promotion of libraries are singled out as areas for improvement, as are libraries’ physical layout, opening hours and quality of stock. Again, all of these suggestions are also made in *Framework for the*
Future. This would suggest that there is a degree of consensus within library literature about the current state of innovation in UK public libraries and the ways in which it can be improved. It could also suggest that little progress had been made in the 3 years that separate the DCMS report and the Vaizey article. Both texts suggest that, although innovation is present to some degree, it is not impacting on as many areas of public library service provision as it might.

Drotner (2005) believes ideas of society are changing to encompass the concept of a ‘knowledge society’, that is, a society in which knowledge can be created, distributed and gathered freely. Drotner also believes that libraries must innovate in order to remain relevant to such a society and provide the best possible service. To this end, the model of a ‘multimodal knowledge centre’ is put forward and it is suggested that libraries redefine themselves in this image. Within this framework library staff need to innovate by redefining their roles and the provision of multimodal literacy is suggested as their focus. In short, libraries and their staff should assist users in the creation of information as well as in its retrieval and use.

2.4 Innovation in public library services that promote reading to young people

It is widely recognized that provision of library services to 12-17 year olds can be difficult (Hasson 1996; Jones 2007). Jones (2007) believes that many library authorities do not recognise teenagers as a priority client group and that money and resources are not allocated to teen-specific services as a result. These factors add to the general difficulties that libraries face in trying to be innovative, as identified in Framework for the Future, making provision of innovative library services to young people even more challenging.

Start with the Child (CILIP working group on library provision for children and young people, 2002) acknowledges that innovation forms an important
part of the future of library services to young people, claiming that innovative ideas must be identified and adopted on a wider scale. It also acknowledges that existing examples of innovation are not widespread. In this sense, the report’s findings mirror those detailed in *Framework for the Future*. This suggests that the state of innovation in library services to young people is similar to the state of innovation in general library services.

The following ideas have been identified as ‘innovative’ on the basis that some element of the service they provide fulfils one or more of the following criteria:

- It is new to libraries as an area
- It is new to the geographical location in which the idea is/was being executed
- It is new to the individuals whom the idea was created in order to benefit

All of the ideas below are considered to be innovative by the authors of the respective texts.

Burn (2007) describes VerbYL, an Australian project that combines library services with youth services. The author believes this project to be the first of its kind with staff from both services working in partnership to make the project a success. VerbYL allows library services to have an important presence within "a welcoming space for all youth" (2007 : 100) and means library staff come into contact with a larger number of young people than they did previously, allowing them to build positive relationships with users and provide a more effective service. The importance of branding, quality of physical space and consulting young people in the creation and maintenance of this project are emphasized.

Partnerships are also a key theme in the ‘Boys, blokes, books and bytes’ pilot programme (Kelly, 2007), another innovative idea from Australia. Here,
Public libraries collaborated with local schools and the State Library of Victoria’s Centre for Youth Literature in order to combat an identified problem - boys’ comparatively low levels of literacy compared to girls. Ties to male role models within individual families and within the community were made, with libraries providing book group sessions for those involved. Evidence is provided to suggest that the scheme was a success.

In the UK, Hasson (1996) emphasizes the importance of consulting young people regarding the library services designed for them. He describes Johnstone Information and Leisure Library (JILL) and Yoker Youth Library, two relatively early examples of innovative services for young people. Hasson argues that allowing young users of these services to have a say in their running via user committees, access desired material and interact with staff almost as equals was a key factor in their success.

Similarly, The Reading Agency (TRA) Headspace project creates library facilities in partnership with young people who have input into what materials are stocked, what activities are run and what the interior of the library should be like (TRA, 2008). Headspace libraries take the form of ‘book bars’ in which ‘book waiters’ recommend books and other materials to users as well as serving refreshments. TRA itself is an independent charity that promotes reading and is arguably at the forefront of providing services that promote reading to young people in the UK. Booked Up¹, Enjoying Reading² and the Booktrust Teenage Prize³ are also TRA initiatives. It is interesting to note the emphasis they place on innovation:

“We place great value on new thinking - whether it takes the form of research, discussion, events or training and learning. We believe that it is very important to find out about reading, understand readers and appreciate how to serve them better.” TRA (2008 : online)

¹ http://www.readingagency.org.uk/young/booked-up/
² http://www.readingagency.org.uk/young/enjoying-reading/
³ http://www.readingagency.org.uk/young/booktrust-teenage-prize/
Here, the emphasis on novelty of thought relates closely to the definition of ‘innovation’ provided by (Allen, 1991) in §2.1.

In *Fulfilling Their Potential*, TRA (2004) state that a number of UK library services are engaged in innovative work with 11-19 year olds and that such work has the potential to change the lives of underprivileged young people in particular. Once more, the importance of partnerships in facilitating such work is emphasized. However they believe that there is a need for more authorities to engage in innovative projects and that designated pilot libraries would ideally be created in order to function as test beds for innovation service provision to underprivileged young people before such ideas are implemented on a wider scale.

Sighthill Library, Edinburgh provides a current example of an innovative library service in the UK. In the face of rising antisocial behaviour, Sighthill introduced a series of pro-active measures such as graffiti events, a football literacy project and a computer club in an attempt to engage young people in the area (CILIP, 2006). Evidence shows that antisocial behaviour was reduced in the area following the inception of these measures. The library’s partnership with local police and the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award scheme, among others, played a role in the success of its ideas. The promotion of partnerships as an aid to innovation in public libraries is a recurring theme; indeed Thebridge (2002) reinforces the idea that partnerships between libraries and other agencies can be used to promote reading to young people.

In Sheffield itself there is evidence of innovative work being done with young people. Ecclesall Library introduced a regular club for 11-14 year old males, ‘The Dangerous Club for Boys’ inspired by *The Dangerous Book for Boys* (Igulden & Igulden, 2006). Hailed as ‘genius’ (Swaffield, 2008), the group encourages members use non-fiction material available in the library to complete a task set in the spirit of the book. Marshall (2008) suggests that the group is successfully engaging its target audience and promoting sustained library use.
Unfortunately not all library authorities in the UK have provided good services to young users over the years. The Library and Information Services Council Working Party on Library Services for Children and Young People (1995) acknowledged that funding of services to young people, staffing of services to young people, the status of services to young people within the profession and training and continuing professional development (CPD) for staff that work with young people were all problems. Messenger (1997) reports that many of these issues were ongoing. Linley (2007) found that funding, staff confidence in working with young people and staff attitude towards young people was still described by library staff as barriers to working with young people. Such problems are not conducive to innovation.

Denham (2000) also reveals shortcomings in UK library authorities’ provision of services to young people, claiming that few authorities she studied had any plans for innovative initiatives for library users below the age of 18.

### 2.5 Conclusions

Overall it seems that there is no study that examines library staff and young library users’ understandings of innovation and attitudes towards it. This study will research these areas in depth, therefore it is felt that it will address a previous omission in the literature.

It is felt that public libraries, both in the UK and overseas, are going someway towards placing the emphasis on innovation which management literature feels is necessary. However, even when the need for innovation is recognised by national bodies, there does not appear to be a large amount of innovative work being done with 12-17 year olds. The scope for increased is apparent.
There is no evidence to suggest that libraries are adopting ideas recommended in management literature such as creating an innovation culture or promoting knowledge management.
3. Methodology

3.1 Case study approach

This research can be considered case study research in that it focuses upon particular phenomena in context and studies it in depth (Hartley, 2004).

This research adopts Donmoyer’s (2000) approach to generalizing from case studies. There is no attempt to present any generalizable laws; instead a selection of questions has been produced in order to inform other practitioners and interested parties. The reader can take what is relevant to their reality, based on the similarities and differences in the cases, and apply it as they see fit. Thick description as defined by Geertz (1973) is recognized as vital in this approach (Schofield, 2004) therefore the richest possible accounts of participants’ culture are provided.

This research makes no attempt to be objective, indeed the researcher, following Leedy & Ormrod (2005), questions whether it is possible or desirable to adopt a truly objective approach to studying people’s behaviour. In a scenario as complex as the one being studied, there is no ‘right’ answer or universal truth to be unearthed. Every individual’s viewpoint is equally relevant and important.

This research should be considered an attempt by one individual to capture the uniqueness of the case being studied, present the data gathered and provide an interpretation thereof along with all this entails.

3.1.1 Case

SLAI was chosen as the case to be studied as a result of personal interest. The researcher is an employee of SLAI.
3.2 Focus groups

Focus groups were chosen as the basis of this research for a number of reasons. They allow participants to verbalise their ideas and interact with one another in response to questions posed by the researcher (Hargie et al., 2004). They yield in-depth data, allow a lot of data to be collected in a small amount of time and can provide insight into issues that other methods could not (Bailey, 1994). For details on how focus groups were used in this study see Appendix 2 - §1.

3.3 Participatory techniques

A variety of participatory techniques were embedded within the focus groups. The term ‘participatory techniques’ is used to refer to any means of gathering data from participants that promotes a different level of interaction, often via visual or kinetic activity, than can be expected from traditional methods that only require written or spoken response. The same techniques were used with every focus group and each technique aimed to provide insight into participants’ reality which could not be achieved by any other method. The majority of writing on participatory methods describes their use with children and young people (see § 3.5.3). For details on how participatory techniques were used in this study see Appendix 2 - §2 and for their effectiveness with adults see Appendix 16.

3.4 Critical incident technique (CIT)

It is recognised that CIT may be used in case study research in order to get ‘closer’ to the subject (Chell, 2006). For details on how CIT was used in this study see Appendix 2 - §3.
3.5 Research with young people

3.5.1 General approach

The usefulness of qualitative methods has been recognised in studies where the emphasis is on young people’s interpretations of their experience (McKechnie & Hobbs, 2004).

3.5.2 Focus groups with young people

Focus groups were used with young people as they can potentially discover a lot about young people’s attitudes (Krueger & Casey, 2000), can uncover more information than quantitative methods (Charlesworth & Rodwell, 1997) and allow young people to interact with each other and the researcher and enjoy themselves (Gibson, 2007). Particular efforts were made to engage young people to ensure groups' success (Basset et al., 2008) and care was taken to establish an appropriate balance of authority within groups (Morgan et al., 2002).

The researcher has several years experience working with children and young people, a factor seen as beneficial by Hoppe et al. (1995).

3.5.3 Participatory techniques with young people

Participatory techniques were used with young people in order to allow them to exert control over the content of discussions and to enhance the reliability and validity of findings (O’Kane, 2004). Pictures were used as a medium for response as it can draw out richer data from young participants (O’Kane, 2004). Berson & Meisburger (1998) illustrate that pictures can be used to get very deep and rich data from even the most avoidant of young participants.
3.5.4 Critical incident technique (CIT) with young people

CIT was used with young people as it can draw new and rich data from young participants and focus their reflections on the topic at hand (Van den Boom, 2007).

3.6 Sampling

Once the case had been identified, the sample was dictated by the existence of services that promote reading to 12-17 year olds and potential participants’ ability and willingness to participate.

Two members of front-line staff from each available branch that ran a group that promotes reading to 12-17 year olds participated. In LS1, LS1-1 ran a group that promoted reading for young people and LS1-2 worked extensively with children but had not run any groups for 12-17 year olds. In LS-2 both participants ran groups for young people.

In LM1, two management level staff with special responsibility for services to children and young people participated.

YP1-1 was a young person who volunteered as a helper at the group LS1-1 ran.

All 7 participants in YP2 attended the groups that LS2-1 and LS2-2 ran.

3.7 Analysis

This study can be considered grounded theory in that the theories postulated are based on data collected as part of this research. A number of the tools and concepts considered part of grounded theory (Strauss &
Corbin, 1998; Bryman, 2004) were used. These include coding, theoretical saturation (it was possible to reach the point of theoretical saturation in the coding process but practical constraints prevented reaching this point in terms of data collection) and constant comparison.

Grounded theory is approached as a theoretical ideal, it is recognised that theory-neutral observation and data collection is virtually impossible (Bryman, 2004).

3.8 Limitations of Methodology

3.8.1 Focus groups

The influence of the group on individuals’ decision making was raised in AD-PI1 and has been recognised by a number of scholars (Morgan, 1997; Carson et al., 2001) however it was decided that the methodology should not be altered as responses are created by the group as opposed to the individual under any circumstance (Berg, 1995) and it was this type of group response that the method was chosen to capture. Observed data was collected in order to identify and analyse the nature of such processes.

Focus groups were shorter than recommended (Krueger & Casey, 2000). This was largely dictated by the amount of time the library staff could spare without compromising the level of service offered by their library and the amount of time staff that ran the groups for young people thought would be suitable. The desire to avoid putting off potential participants by being too demanding also played a role. Still, the groups were considered to be too long by some participants. The attention of YP2 was waning by Question 8 and the quality of their responses had decreased noticeably. The length of the LS1 focus group meant that the library staff who did not work with young people were unable to participate as originally planned.
Bloor et al. (2001) suggest that focus groups are not suitable for assessing the attitudes or behaviours of a group as intra-group variations will be under-reported.

In working with pre-existing groups, participants assume a higher level of shared knowledge therefore a lot of information remains implicit (Flick, 1998). It is also feasible that some pre-existing groups tacitly agree not to discuss certain issues (Morgan, 1997).

It is acknowledged that the wording used in the focus group questions and the definitions provided to the group may reflect the personal bias of the researcher. As Hollway & Jefferson point out:

“"It is a basic assumption of much social science research that if the words used are the same, and if they are communicated in the same manner, they will mean the same thing to numerous people in a sample."" 

Hollway & Jefferson (8 : 2000)

With Question 3 the choice of examples given to participants was subjective. It was not always possible for groups to reach a democratic decision on whether they considered an idea to be innovative or not as all of the adult groups involved only 2 participants. Any disagreement either remained or the most assertive of the pair had their way. A limited depth of data was gathered from this exercise as not all participants elaborated on the decisions behind their choices verbally.

Question 4 was subjective in the same way and the interactive, kinetic nature of the exercise proved distracting for some young participants.

Some young participants in YP2 displayed a negative attitude towards Question 5. One equated it with excessive exertion, saying to their partner
“You do the work” (YP2-6). Another participant was repeatedly mocked for drawing pictures.

3.8.2 Sample

The sample used as the basis of this research is not representative of libraries in the UK or even of libraries in Sheffield.

3.8.3 Limitations of methodology with young people

3.8.3.1 Focus groups with young people

It is acknowledged that focus groups with young people can be harder to moderate than those with adults, potentially leading to lower quality data (Krueger & Casey, 2000; Efken, 2002).

3.8.3.2 Participatory techniques with young people

Hart (1997) questions the value of using drawing as a participatory technique with young people, claiming that the medium can restrict participants’ expression. It should be noted that Hart’s writing focuses on people aged 0-14.

3.9 Pilots

This methodology was piloted so the researcher could develop their interview skills (Berg, 1995) and identify any issues with their research tools (Bryman, 2004).
3.9.1 Pilot focus group - young people

The particular importance of piloting methods designed to be used with young people with a group of similar young people has been identified (Oakley, 2000). For details of the proceedings of this group see Appendix 3 - §1.

3.9.2 Advisory group - young people

Following Barker & Weller (2003) a group of children were consulted with regard to the design of proposed research methods. For details of the proceedings of this group see Appendix 3 - §2.

3.9.3 Pilot focus group - adults

A pilot group with students in the Information Studies department of the University of Sheffield was arranged in the hope that their knowledge of and interest in research methods would give extra insight into the suitability of proposed research methods. For details of the proceedings of this group see Appendix 3 - §3.

3.9.4 Advisory group - adults

Barker & Weller’s (2003) idea of using people as close in nature to actual participants as possible to act as advisors was also applied to adults. This was done in order to identify any potential problems library staff may have with the chosen methods and to identify any hitherto unidentified issues that could inform the study. For details of the proceedings of this group see Appendix 3 - §4.
3.10 Ethical considerations

3.10.1 Selecting and contacting participants

All participants were self-selecting and had the right to discontinue participation at any time. Due to the limited number of potential participants, library staff and management were contacted directly. Potential young participants were contacted via letters distributed by the staff that ran the groups they attended. This was done to try and reassure potential young participants that the study was legitimate and non-threatening.

3.10.2 Anonymity and confidentiality

Participants were informed that their responses might be reproduced in this study but that all responses would be made anonymous. All participants are referred to by code (see Appendix 17). Written and recorded responses were stored securely and only seen or heard by the researcher. All written response sheets and recordings will be destroyed as soon as this study has been submitted and marked.
4. Findings

4.1 Innovation - general understandings

All groups provided general understandings of innovation. This suggests that the word ‘innovation’ is widely used and understood by participants.

All groups mentioned the concept of ‘novelty’. Participants in groups YP1, YP2 and LS2 related innovation to new ideas:

YP1-1 “Sort of making things...new ideas.”

YP2-1 “It means when you think up new ideas.”

AD2-2 “Innovation? Erm...new ideas.”

This suggests that notions of the mental act of creating a conception and of the conception itself were of prime importance in their understanding of the term ‘innovation’.

LM1-2 understood novelty to be more widely relevant to innovation:

LM1-2 “Oh, innovation is just the introduction of anything new in any sphere, whatever that might be. Erm...so to me that means new ideas, new concepts, new equipment even. That sort of thing.”

The mention of physical objects ("equipment") presents another dimension to understanding of innovation. The idea that a physical object can be defined as innovative is not found anywhere else in this study and could perhaps be attributed to the participant's management experience. It is expected that high-level involvement with ideas that are generally considered to be innovative and the increased necessity for a good understanding of developments in this service area have led to a wider appreciation of what can be considered innovative - perhaps they have encountered physical objects which have been labelled as innovative before. However, it is
proposed that this notion of physical objects being innovative is derivative of the aforementioned notion that innovation means ‘new ideas’. New equipment exists for a purpose, indeed the fact that objects are necessary for a specific purpose is what defines them as equipment (Allen, 1991) and the existence of a purpose denotes the mental act of identifying intention. In short, new equipment’s status as innovative is necessarily dependent on the ideas behind its use.

LS1-2 introduced the suggestion that innovation can take many forms and that novelty plays different roles within these forms:

LS1-2 “Not necessarily new ideas. Ideas that have been in practice for years sometimes...”
R “Right.”
LS1-2 “But a different approach to them.”

Here a difference is being made between ideas that are considered innovative by virtue of being completely new, signalled by the emphasis placed on “new”, and those that are considered innovative due to the way in which they are dealt with. LS1-2 does not expand upon what a “different approach” might comprise of but a number of participants did identify potential contexts in which existing ideas could be seen as innovative when detailing their understandings of innovation in libraries (§4.2).

It is of note that AD2-2 qualified their understanding of innovation by stating that innovation does not just comprise of new ideas, but of:

AD2-2 “New and exciting ideas.”

The notion that, to be innovative, ideas have to arouse certain feelings is an interesting one. Unfortunately AD2-2 stops short of explicitly saying whether the ideas have to excite them as an individual (regardless of their involvement with the idea or its impact upon them) or, more generally, excite the people involved with the idea (should it not happen to involve or impact
on AD2-2 directly). Either way, AD2-2 is attaching a condition relating to the quality of an idea, potentially limiting the amount of ideas they consider to be innovative.

The concept of ‘progression’ was mentioned in groups YP1 and LS1 a term that implies change and improvement (Allen, 1991). The participant in YP1 went as far as to make an explicit link between ‘innovation’ and positive change in their definition:

YP1-1 “Bringing things sort of [pauses] forward. And making things better.”

Yet, as the majority of participants did not state that they understood innovation as implying some form of progression, it can be assumed that they did not associate innovation with progress or even with ideas of ‘benefit’ or ‘improvement’ whatsoever. As they do not understand ‘innovation’ to imply benefit necessarily it is reasonable to assume that they would need convincing of an ‘innovative’ idea’s value before they adopted positive feelings towards it (see §4.3)

Participants in YP2 and LS1 believed that innovation implied a purpose, namely:

YP2-1 “To get people interested”

LS1-2 expands upon this concept by specifying exactly which people innovation should be creating interest in:

LS1-2 “To get the interest of everyone, not just kids [pauses] interest of the staff.”

They then identify the type of consequence that successful fulfilment of this purpose would have:

LS1-2 “Erm [pauses] good responses for people to take part”
This purpose appears to be positive and imply benefit. Yet this does not mean that the participants in question understand innovation as necessarily implying benefit. ‘Purpose’, by definition, is an *identified* ideal, not necessarily an *achieved* ideal. Thus, a belief that innovation implies a purpose that *ideally* implies benefit is not the same as a belief that innovation *necessarily* implies benefit or even that it necessarily implies another concept (such as ‘progress’) that itself necessarily implies benefit. The fact that, in LS1, this concept of ‘purpose’ is mentioned separately to the concept of ‘progression’ should serve to indicate that the two areas of understanding are quite different.

Another dimension in understandings of innovation is ‘time’. LM1-1 describes innovation as:

LM1-1 “Moving with the times.”

This introduces the idea of ‘currency’ and implies that there is a constant need for innovation as what was novel yesterday may not be novel in the present or future. This ties in with Tidd et al.’s (2005) assertion that the ability to update or replace a product frequently in order to stay current is important. LS1 discussed the fact that ‘innovative’ ideas need not remain in their existing state, that they can be altered over time via a process of collaboration and that separate innovative ideas can combine in order to achieve a single purpose. This links time with the value of innovation and introduces the possibility that the value of an idea will increase over time:

LS1-1 “Just ideas [pauses] ideas to bounce of each other. Which then [pauses] you get the ultimate from. Not necessarily the first innovation. It’s all of them put together.”

What the concept of ‘the ultimate’ embodies precisely is not explained but it is clear that it has positive value to the participant.
Overall, participants had understandings of the term ‘innovation’ that tallied with common understandings of the term, as represented by Allen’s (1991) definition. ‘Novelty’ and ‘benefit’ were key themes in participants’ understandings, where the latter can be seen to subsume the ideas of ‘interest’, ‘progression’ and ‘excitement’.

4.2 Innovation - understandings in relation to libraries

Responses to Question 3 show that understandings of innovation in relation to libraries vary in relation to library literature (Fig. 1). Participants did not feel that all the ideas they were presented with were innovative.

Fig. 1

Again, every group mentioned novelty in some form. In YP2, 2 participants demonstrated a good awareness of ‘novelty’ in terms of commonality of experience. In answer to Question 8, YP2-4 described their groups’ appearance on a popular television programme. When asked what they thought made their critical experience innovative they wrote, “Not every group goes on TV” (YP2-4). This awareness of ‘novelty’ in a wider context
was also exhibited by YP1-1 who, in response to Question 3, decided that Idea B was not innovative because of the likelihood it had been already been contemplated by libraries:

YP1-1 “Although they’ve not got libraries with cafes in, I think the fact that they’re introducing cafes in lots of different places...that’s already something that could’ve been considered probably.”

In LM1, context was mentioned in terms of the geographical area in which an idea was executed. The novelty of applying Idea G in their own library authority lead LM1-2 to consider the idea to be innovative in spite of the fact they believed the idea had been carried out somewhere else before.

LM1-2 “Talking about Sheffield it [pauses] it kind of is isn’t it?”

On the other hand, LM1-1 later discounted Idea E as being innovative on the basis that it had been carried out in a different geographical area, regardless of whether it was new to their library authority:

LM1-1 “We can say a lot of these things are not innovative. I mean, I suppose that’s why I’m querying that [gestures to Idea E slip]. Because I know that that was again instigated by [name] in [name of library authority] quite a while ago.”

These two different approaches are both based around the same concept - that definitions of ‘novelty’ can be dependent on context, in this case geographical area, and that this context has a bearing on whether an idea can be considered innovative. LM1-2 later formalised the difference between their approach to geographical context and LM1-1’s:

LM1-2 “You’re thinking about it more nationally.”
LM1-1 “Yeah.”
LM1-2 “I was thinking about it more locally.”
LM1-2 also identified contextual differences in terms of time and asked in what context ideas were to be judged:

LM1-2 “Can I just clarify with you? Are we looking at these as, you know [pauses] are they innovative now or are they innovative in the recent past? Or, you know, is it sort of what's innovative for the future kind of thing?”

This conveys the understanding that time is a factor in whether an idea is considered innovative or not. To this participant, an idea that was innovative some time ago may not be innovative now. The identification of these contextual factors indicates that both LM1 participants have an excellent knowledge of what's going on in library service provision to young people in Sheffield and in the UK, which has been built up over a period of time.

LS1, in contrast, appeared to take the context of ‘novelty’ as regards innovation to mean ‘new to their library service’. All the anecdotal evidence they provided was based on their library authority and either came from personal experience:

LS1-2 “That’s been thrown at us that many times. It isn’t new plus [tails off].”
LS1-1 “No, we’ve done that.”
LS1-2 “[indecipherable] hearing about that so it's not new. It’s not original.”

Or from having heard about projects in their library authority which they weren’t personally involved in:

LS1-1 “Isn't that what [name] did?”
LS1-2 “Yeah, and also [pauses] way back [name] and that guy, [name] did it.”
LS1-1 “Yeah that’s right.”
LS1-2 “With music and everything. And to be honest [pauses] that's a bit old hat now.”

This approach could stem from participants’ belief that the question was asking them specifically to base their judgements on their experiences within
SLAI or from the fact that they had less knowledge of innovation in library services for young people outside of their authority.

Group LM1 believed that an idea’s novelty also is subject to the experience of its intended audience:

LM1-1 “If you’re working with different young people [pauses] er, you know, say you have a group and it lasts for about a year and then you move onto a new set of people you can introduce things you’ve already done to them and its new to them”

This rallies against an absolute definition of innovation, ‘if this idea has not been done before at all then it is innovative’, and introduces a relative definition of innovation, ‘if this idea has not been done before in this context then it is innovative’. A similar understanding of innovation was expressed in LS2, “Well, it’s new to me.” (LS2-1). This statement implies that the idea being discussed is novel in relation to the speaker but that the speaker acknowledges it may not be novel to other people.

A separate dimension to participants’ understandings of innovation in relation to libraries is ‘value’. When discussing whether an idea was innovative or not, members of YP1 and YP2 often used the idea’s potential value to themselves as a deciding factor. The following exchange occurred when members of YP2 were discussing whether one of the ideas put to them in Question 3 was innovative:

YP2-6 “Oh, that’s a good idea!’
YP2-5 “That’s innovative.”
YP2-3 “No it’s not ‘cause it’s rubbish!”

Similarly, YP1-1 justified their classification of Idea E as innovative by stating:

YP1-1 “I think having something where you can get refreshments and be comfy and having books recommended to you would be really, really good
because [pauses] although they sometimes do, you don’t always know which books would be best to read because I’ve done it myself."

Relating the value of ideas to their own values is to be expected given the way Question 4 was phrased to young participants and the fact that the ideas presented to them targeted people within their age range. Participants in YP1 and YP2 also took the value of ideas to other people into account although the nature of their consideration varied. Assumptions about ideas’ value to general audiences were made, “Yeah, that’s innovative ‘cause people like football” (YP2-5) and more specific issues about the value of ideas to the young people also emerged:

YP1-1 “Football’s too biased. “Cause although people [pauses] a lot of people like football, not everybody does. It’d probably mainly be boys as well so it’d sort of put girls off coming to the library who don’t like football.”

Here, the participant decided that they did not consider football related reading events to be innovative because of their perceived negative value, particularly with regard to a specific gender group.

The degree to which an idea fits in with participants’ concepts of what a library should be like also affected their understandings of innovation. Idea A proved to be particularly emotive:

YP1-1 “And games consoles - too noisy. A library you come to read, you don’t come to play games. And also [pauses] it will disturb the people who are actually trying to come and read.”
R “Right, I see.”
YP1-1 “And I think, you know, people have games consoles at home. They don’t need to come to a library to play on something. A library’s a place where you look at a book, you want to read it, you want to relax. You don't want to be listening to ‘beep beep beep’ [laughter] all the time.”

This participant’s view of the library is relatively traditional – ‘reading books’ is cited as libraries’ main purpose. Ideas that did not fit in with this view of the
library were branded ‘not-innovative’, although factors such as consideration for other library users and availability of the media\(^4\) also come into play in this example. This emphasis on personal value plays no role in commonly understood definitions of innovation such as Allen’s (1991).

Staff also had feelings about what kind of ideas were suitable for libraries. LS1 felt very strongly that provision of food was outside of their job role as librarians and, as a result, categorised Idea E as ‘not innovative’:

> LS1-2 “I don’t think we have to discuss that. We’ve discussed that previously and we’re librarians not waiters.”
> R “Right, fair enough.”
> LS1-2 “We’ll do whatever for’r kids but we’re not waitresses\(^5\).”

In conclusion, understandings of innovation in relation to libraries have something in common with general understandings of innovation - the concept of ‘novelty’ is still key. However, in the context of libraries, other contextual factors such as commonality of experience, geographical location, time and audience were emphasised. Interestingly, a clear link between understandings of innovation and the value of innovation emerged – if participants did not value it then they did not think it was innovative. This understanding of innovation is not in keeping with commonly accepted definitions such as Allen’s (1991).

### 4.3 Innovation - value in relation to libraries

Responses to Question 1 showed that the majority of participants felt that library groups were better when they had new and different ideas (Fig. 2).

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\(^4\) This may belie a certain naivety on the part of the participant, not everybody has a games console at home. In Livingstone & Bovill’s (2000) study, 33% of participants did not have a “TV-linked games machine” in their house although this may have changed in recent years.

\(^5\) The speaker does appear to have misunderstood or misrepresented the concept of Idea E slightly but, regardless, they displayed a similar understanding of innovation in libraries as YP1.
Responses to Question 4 illustrate that, overall, participants felt that the majority of the innovative ideas they were presented with would attract young people to library groups (Fig. 3). This implies that they are valuable.
Issues surrounding the value of innovation within a library context varied. All groups made observations regarding the value of innovation in relation to young library users. LS2-1 noted that, in their experience, innovation helped maintain group members’ interest and attendance:

LS2-1 “I think if you do the same stuff every month, they’re gonna get bored and they’re not gonna wanna come.”

In LS1, participants believed that the innovation could play varying roles within groups with varying results. LS1-1 thought that the value of innovation to a group diminished over time:

LS1-1 “Then sometimes, once you’ve got it established it doesn’t matt…[trails off] you know, they like coming.”

This infers that innovation is valuable in setting up a group and creating interest in users but once the general concept for the group has been established, innovation no longer plays a role. In contrast to this, LS1-2 believed that innovation had to be constant:

LS1-2 “Doing nothing isn’t the way forward.”

The value of an idea to young library users was at the centre of their rationale:

LS1-2 “A little bit extra sometimes just does keep the interest, keep things new, keep things appropriate for the children [pauses] youngsters taking part.”

In LS2 it was felt that the value of an innovative idea depended on the quality of its execution. When asked if Idea D would attract young people to library groups LS2 replied:

LS2 –1 “I don’t know.”
LS2 –2 “I don’t.”
LS2 –1 “I think if you get somebody in who knows what they’re doing then maybe [pauses] and if it’s for a specific reason. Like they did it at [library name], they got somebody in and it was projected onto the window during the [name of area] festival so they could all see it. So that was really good and they came in but us just doin’ it when we don’t have a clue [pauses] I think its really [tails off]”
LS2 –2 “…If you got a professional person in, yeah.”
LS2 –1 “Yeah.”

Here, the execution of an idea by a trained filmmaker is seen to add quality and therefore value to Idea D. This idea’s value was also affected by its relation to other aspects of young people’s lives; it was considered unlikely to attract young people on the basis of its potential similarity to school work:

LS2-2 “I don’t know whether they’d see it as a bit schooly”
LS2-1 “Yeah, they might. Yeah.”

LS2’s negative attitude towards the school-like nature of this idea is justified by the negative attitude young people have shown towards close association between schools and libraries (Corradini, 2006).

The degrees of value associated with innovation in relation to libraries vary. Some participants in YP2 made positive associations with innovation:

YP2-1 “I like it when there are new ideas and different ideas.”

YP2’s responses to Question 8 also showed that they valued innovative the experiences they had with their group. When asked how their critical incident made them feel, 5 of the 7 participants drew self portraits displaying positive emotions (see Figs. 4 -8)
However, participants in LS1 and LS2 did not believe that positive value was intrinsic to innovative ideas. LS1-2 stated that some form of practical benefit is needed for innovation to be valuable and implied that new ideas should not be introduced if there is no need for them, dismissing the idea of “change for change’s sake” (LS1-2). LS2-2 stated the idea that existing practices can have value:

LS2-2 “There’s always this emphasis on ‘Ooh, new, different, bright is better’. Not always. Sometimes tried and tested is just as good.”

This view was shared by LM1-2:

LM1-2 “Sometimes it doesn’t matter whether you have new and different ideas all the time. Sometimes ideas you’ve already tried and tested are better.”

YP2-2 believed in the value of their group as an entity separate from its ideas. When asked to elaborate on their response to Question 1 they said:

YP2-2 “I’ve put it in that order because [pauses] because its always good. No matter what they are.”
This suggests that certain participants value the group for non reading-related reasons such as socializing. The social functions of a reading group were also emphasised by some members of library staff:

LS2-1 “I don’t think it should be too formal either. ‘Cause although we do get ‘em to write a review and read a book.”
LS2-2 [interrupts] “That’s not what [indecipherable]”
LS2-1 “Quite a lot of its playing the games and them just meeting up and stuff like that.”
LS2-2 “Yeah.”

In answer to Question 5, all young people could think of innovative ideas that they would value. YP2’s innovative ideas exposed a great deal of information as regards what they valued. One participant put forward the idea of giving free books to young people. One interpretation of this could be that the participant particularly valued personal material gain, a view reinforced by the fact they had little concern for their idea’s impact on libraries as a whole:

YP2-1 “Free books. You don’t have to pay.”
YP2-3 “You just pick them up and walk out again?”
R “Are they yours to keep?”
YP2-1 “Yeah [indecipherable]”
YP2-3 “Then that’d cost the library a lot of money and would have to shut down because it’d go bankrupt!”
YP2-1 “So?”

The theme of material gain also appeared in answer to question 4 where participant YP2-1 did not categorise Idea A as innovative on the basis that they would not receive financial reward for outstanding achievements made on the games consoles:

YP2-1 “Do you get paid for doing high scores?”
R “No.”
YP2-1 “Awww.”
Participant YP2-5 categorised Idea D as ‘not innovative’ because were informed they would not be able to keep the video camera after the film had been made.

Value of innovative ideas to staff was also an issue. In LS2, participants felt that innovative ideas were more valuable if they were ‘fair’ to the staff—that is if staff felt they were in an acceptable working environment:

LS2-2 “I mean people that are just gonna come in and mess around.”
R “Yeah.”
LS2-2 “I couldn’t [pauses] I wouldn’t like that environment [pauses] for meself or for other people, for other library users...Not having a youth club in a library, I don’t like that at all. I don’t think that’s fair.”
LS2-1 “No.”
LS2-2 “On staff or other borrowers.”
LS2-1 “Yeah.”

Another dimension to the value of innovative ideas was their ability to achieve their aims. Some staff could recall instances in which innovative methods had not had the desired effect:

LS1-1“I think sometimes, I know they’ve done it in the past, and that the people [pauses] it’s gone really well and yet the other staff, if you like, that’s been there [pauses] the kids have only come for the pizzas and coke.”
R “Right, I see.”
LS1-1 “Y’know, they’ve not come [pauses] they just know that there’s a [pauses] free refreshments.”

This implies that the young attendees had not actually participated in the activities being held at the library. It is clear that LS1-1 believes the main aims of the activity are promoting the library and its use and also that these aims have not been reached. The perception of such ideas was that they are ‘gimmicks’ used to lure young people into libraries without engaging them with libraries:
“We want to get them, not on false pretences.”
“You want ‘em to be interested, don’t you?”
“You want them to be interested in what’s happening.”

When considering Question 5, LS2 differentiated between ideas that attracted young people in to library buildings but did not necessarily encourage use of the library facilities and ideas that encouraged positive use of library facilities:

“Is it just to get people through the door or to get people to take out books?”

Both participants in this group disputed the value of ideas that they felt were just to get young people ‘through the door’:

“I don’t want to do just ‘through the door’ ‘cause you could have a library full. You could.”
“You could have a library full of people but they’re not taking anything out.”
“But is that what we’re there for? Is that our job? I don’t think so.”

Another dimension to libraries’ broadening of the services they offer to young people is the element of competition it creates with other businesses that provide similar services. One participant felt that the selling of food and drink involved in Idea E would put the library providing that service in competition with local cafes. This factor had a negative impact on Idea E’s value:

“We’re not here to put the cafes down there out of business and [pauses] I’ll be quite honest on that. I’m not here to put another small business out of business.”

LS2-1 recognised the fact that library events for young people can have the potentially positive value of attracting the interest of other library users:
LS2-1 “The dance thing got lots of people in.”
LS2-2 “Oh that dance thing. I weren’t here for that.”
LS2-1 “I don’t know whether it made people take out books but it got people in.”
LS2-2 “Promoted the library.”
LS2-1 “Yeah, ‘cause every [pauses] ‘cause then [pauses] although we did have to close the children’s library ‘cause they were prancing about in there.”
R “Right.”
LS2-1 “They all [pauses] people that were coming in were going ‘Ooh, what’s goin’ on?’”
R “Oh, brilliant.”
LS2-1 “So I think that’s quite a good [tails off]”

Library staff also acknowledged the value of different activities to different groups of teenagers. In reference to Idea C, LS1-2 said:

LS1-2 “It should have been ‘sport’, not ‘football’ [laughter] and you’d have had my answer straight away if it was ‘sport’.”
R “Right, I see. So, just out of interest, what would you have answered if it had been ‘sport’?”
LS1-2 “Sport? ‘Yes’. Football I’ll go ‘no’ now.”
R “Could I just ask you to expand on that a little? Why does football in particular [tails off]?”
LS1-2 “Not all kids are interested in football. There’s so many that are interested in lots of other diverse sport [pauses] and girls as well [pauses] and I’m not being sexist because my daughters play football but ‘sport’ does bring in a much wider range of children.”

Similarly, LS2 discussed the appeal of reading groups:

LS2-1 “‘Cause its like the book group is only gonna attract the sort of kids that wanna come to a book group. Not the kids that hang around outside [pauses] graffiti-ing on everything. ‘Cause they’re not gonna come to a book group.”
R “No.”
LS2-2 “They’re just not.”
However, in spite of all the potential pitfalls of the ‘innovative’ ideas that participants were presented with, hope existed that innovative ideas valued by all concerned could be implemented. The strength of feeling surrounding this concept was illustrated in LS2 when the participants thought of an idea which they felt would provide value to young people, let staff work in a comfortable environment without compromising their job role and which was in fitting with their ideas of what libraries should be like and what they should promote:

LS2-2 “But maybe doing it through [pauses] if there was a youth club.”
LS2-1 “Yeah.”
LS2-2 “If there was a youth club and we went to the youth club and promoted the library that way.”
LS2-1 “Yeah.”
R “Ah, I see.”
LS2-2 “Like one of the suggestions that you’ve made [gestures to idea slips]. I think that would be a positive experience.”
LS2-1 “Yeah, I think that would be good!”
LS2-2 “And I like that! I like that idea.”

Perhaps this successful fulfilment of all criteria approaches what LS1-2 described as ‘the ultimate’ although whether it would genuinely be of value to young people would remain to be seen.

4.4 Ideas for innovation

In response to Question 5 it emerged that a surprising number of participants considered familiar ideas, such as reading groups, to be innovative. YP1-1, for example, listed reading groups as one of their ideas with the caveat that they were to be targeted at “older children” (YP1-1). This illustrates how an existing idea can be rendered innovative depending on the
context in which it is applied. Again, YP1-1’s response was based very much on their personal interest in an idea and desire to participate in such a group:

YP1-1 “I’ve read a book, the same as one of my friends at school and we were talking about it.”
R “Right.”
YP1-1 “But I know there’ll have been other girls who’ve read it and I’d like to discuss it with them and see how they found it.”

LS2 also believed that reading groups for 12-17 year olds were an innovative idea, with user demand and popularity cited as the main reasons for their choice:

LS2-1 “We know from here that there’s a need for it and its popular.”
LS2-2 “Yeah, absolutely.”
LS2-1 “And somewhere like [library branch] where they don’t particularly do hardly anything I think there are kids round there that would really like to do it. It’d go down really well.”

The participants in LS2 went as far as to argue that reading groups should be a standard activity that libraries provide for young people:

LS2-1 “I think it’s something all libraries should do, to be honest.”
R “Yeah.”
LS2-1 “I think it’s really [pauses] a biggie, that one, I think.”

YP2-7 went as far as to include an existing reading group scheme, Chatterbooks. The participant had evidently valued their experience with the group enough to think it would be a valuable experience for other young people.

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It is interesting to note that at the time of writing, the researcher understood there to be 2 active reading groups for 12-17 year olds in Sheffield’s 29 branch libraries.

LS2-1 put forward the idea of homework clubs, another familiar concept. Again user need had been identified and was a main factor in this proposal:

LS2-1 “Well basically there’s nothing like that in this area, no homework help really.”
LS2-2 “No.”
LS2-1 “Except for tuition that you have to pay for.”
R “Right, I see…”
LS2-1 “Someone said that they wanted us to run one.”
LS2-2 “Mmm [in assent].”

However it was felt that a partnership with school teaching staff would improve the value of the idea, as library staff were unable to provide the necessary depth of academic knowledge in order to help any young people who might attend.

LS2-1 “If you’re gonna do it [pauses] if you can get some, like teacher or something who would volunteer or, y’know, someone who’s, like, teacher training.”
LS2-2 “Yeah, teacher training or something like that. That’d be good.”

Partnerships were also mentioned by LM1 as the foundation of some of their ideas. A partnership with a local cinema was proposed:

LM1-2 “We’ve done things in the past with [cinema name] when they’ve done their, erm, annual festival but, you know, again [pauses] that seems to me that it’s quite an attractive venue for that age group.”

Among the ideas considered for this location were a film club and a deposit collection of library material related to cinema and popular culture. The fact this cinema was chosen, not least, at it was deemed to be a popular venue for young people illustrates how library management were attempting to escape the confines of traditional library buildings in order to appeal to young people. Collaboration with local celebrities was being arranged for an activity as part of the National Year of Reading:
“One of the things that we’re wanting, we’re hoping to do under National Year of Reading is [pauses] erm, is having this um [pauses] er a book panel. A panel of people who we would get in a theatre or somewhere and then have an invited audience and we were thinking of that. ‘Cause on of them hopefully is going to be [local celebrity’s name].”

“Oooh!”

“And that would be aimed at teenagers and secondary school, wouldn’t it?”

“Yeah, yeah.”

“And that would be a chance for them to sort of interact about books and reading with a panel of celebrities.”

The desired effect of this activity was to attract and engage young people and it was felt that the celebrities would give libraries credibility amongst young people.

The concept of workshops appeared in many groups. YP1-1 suggested writing workshops

“I think writing workshops would be good.”

“Mmm hmm.”

“You know, working with people who’ve written books.”

“Right.”

“Because I [pauses] I mean I write lots of things every so often and I just think it’d be good to learn a bit more how they do it and get more ideas.”

They also suggested art workshops and displayed an awareness and consideration of what other young people valued in the process:

“I said ‘contemporary art’ but its things like [pauses] not graffiti, which is on the walls, but that kind of writing, that kind of style that teenagers like.”

“Yeah.”
YP1-1 “That kind of style. I think that’d be really good because that’d get a lot of people in [pauses] because, you know there’s [pauses] a lot of teenagers that have different types of writing.”
R “Mmm.”
YP1-1 “You know, like, so swirly writing and graffiti-type writing and all that kind of thing.”

LS1 also suggested art workshops, this time as a result of personal experience of their popularity, and felt that workshops could be based around sport and music too. They expanded on the value of music to young people and also its ability to make traditional literacy-based activities more appealing to young people:

LS1-2 “There’s music ones in’t there, we’ve got one comin’.”
LS1-1 “I mean music is always good.”
LS1-2 “Not always literary-based either.”
LS1-1 “They like music in poetry.”
LS1-2 “Cause you say ‘poetry’, it’s like [pauses] you’re just gonna get a small group. But if you get the music in as well [trails off]”

Library materials and stock were a recurring theme. Participants in YP2 felt that “More NEW books…More YA books” (YP2-3 & YP2-4) would be a good idea. LM1 felt that the provision of more comics and graphic novels would be beneficial. These media are available for use in the library and for loan on the same basis as other library collections. Whilst stocking comics and graphic novels is by no means cutting edge, Hasson (1996) describes it taking place in 1984, young people particularly demanded them in Sheffield’s CIPFA Library User Satisfaction Survey (SCC, 2008). This suggests that, in this instance, the value of an idea to young people takes priority over its novelty.

LS1 advocated the availability of games consoles for use in the library and also of the games themselves for loan. This sees non-traditional media functioning in the same way as traditional library collections. LS1 did,
however, suggest that the terms of loaning video games be different from those imposed on other collections:

LS1-2 “To take home, as we would a DVD but with no charge.”
LS1-1 “Yeah.”
LS1-2 “But p’raps a [pauses] incentive to return them.”

Participants had ideas regarding environment of the library itself. YP2-4 put forward the concept of having different rooms for each category of material stocked in a library. As library materials are usually categorised by format, genre and age suitability, this idea implies a degree of segregation by personal interests and age. It may suggest that the young person whose idea it was would prefer to have an area in which adults and younger children were less likely to be. Indeed, some library staff felt that some young people needed their own space in libraries:

LS2-1 “If you’re going to have, like, try and attract teenagers that mess around you need a separate corner or something [pauses] out of the way.”

However, LS2-1’s proposal was made as much for the benefit of other library users and library staff as for the young people themselves as it was felt that holding certain events in libraries would attract young people with a tendency to misbehave and encourage them to be loud and disruptive.

Creation and use of outdoor space was also suggested. Some ideas, such as a “book garden” (YP2-3 & YP2-4), appeared to have a tangible link to reading whereas others did not. One participant felt that a pond would be a good idea and did not relate it to traditional library-related activities. One could interpret that a pond would relate to libraries along the general theme of ‘leisure’ and that it was intended to create a pleasant atmosphere, something that libraries should try to provide. However, there was the stipulation that the pond should have a selection of animals within. The suggestions of frogs and fish are in keeping with average conceptions of
what one might find in a pond in the UK but the inclusion of sharks and octopuses are not. This element of the unusual could be interpreted as evidence that the participant was not taking this exercise particularly seriously but, whether that is true or not, it may well be indicative of a general desire to experience the new and exotic. This idea is reinforced by the fact that some participants took this theme even further. Ideas varied from the slightly indulgent, use of a chocolate fountain in the library (YP2-7), to the unequivocally fantastic, including books that could speak (YP2-1) and even the installation of a time machine (YP2-7). The reasons for these ideas could vary but it seems clear that these experiences would be new and unusual for the young people who suggested them, in which sense they are fitting responses to the question asked, and one certainly cannot deny that they would be innovative.

Some ideas were, in a sense, both activity and environment based such as YP1-1's 'book board':

YP1-1 “I think, like, maybe a poster or a board that says all the new books and then people who’ve read them can put their rating next to it.”
R “Oh right, I see.”
YP1-1 “So other people find out what they think and they can decide from that whether they want to read it.”

This was designed to have the benefit of appealing particularly to those young people who did not wish to attend a reading group but who still valued the ideas and opinions of other young people. The theme of interactivity present in this idea was also found in the ideas of LM1, who suggested the use of social networking Web sites such as Facebook\(^8\) and MySpace\(^9\) in order to promote libraries:

\(^8\) http://www.facebook.com
\(^9\) http://www.myspace.com
LM1-2 “I guess just, you know, using those as ways of contacting young people or getting information out there about what the library service has got to offer.”

These sites are often considered to be part of Web 2.0 and interactivity is one of their defining characteristics. Use of email for the same purpose was also discussed as was sending young people text messages to their mobile phones. Such ideas would allow libraries to reach young people by transcending their traditional physical boundaries. Participants in LM1 also suggested the placing of traditional library materials in none-traditional environments in order to transcend the physical boundaries of libraries:

LM1-2 “We’ve done things like this before, you know like when we left books on buses and things.”
LM1-1 “Yeah.”
LM1-2 “And ‘pass it on’.”
LM1-1 “Yeah.”
LM1-2 “I’d like to expand on that really for that age group [pauses] like book extracts or something.”
LM1-1 “Yeah.”
LM1-2 “Or magazine type publications that could be put on buses or trains or whatever.”

It was felt that young people saw library buildings as “boring” (LM1-2) and this idea aimed to sidestep such negative attitudes by making traditional library services available in non-traditional environments. Allowing young people to encounter library material in their everyday lives could mean that libraries reached more non-users in particular.

One factor that stood out in the front line library staff’s explanation of their ideas is the fact that the needs of the young people they were aimed at were central. LS1 felt strongly that services for young people should be made available to all young people:
LS1-2 “We’re talking for all here. Not just designated groups that are picked out by the professionals who think ‘this group needs more help’. For all.”
R “Right.”
LS1-2 “We don’t [pauses] what’s the word?”
LS1-1 “Sometimes its good that they do though.”
R “Yeah”
LS1-1 “Pick out the individual groups.”
LS1-2 “Oh yeah. Yeah.”
LS1-1 “But sometimes the ‘normal’, if that’s right, kids get left out. Because they don’t fit into these special.”

The fact that innovative ideas are often targeted towards the young people who are judged to be the most in need was also surfaced in Questions 6 and 7 (see §4.7).

Members of LS2 felt that any ideas for young people were more valuable if they promoted literacy explicitly. They were also firm in their belief that it was possible to attract and engage large numbers of young people whilst staying true to this aim:

LS2-2 “We’ve only, like, ever done things [pauses] I mean we have had a library full and its been good. It’s been a good experience.”
LS2-1 “Mmm.”
LS2-2 “You know like when we did the [pauses] presented the Reading Challenge thing.”
LS2-1 “The medals.”
LS2-2 “We presented them all with medals and certificates and it was absolutely chock-a-block in there. How many? There must’ve been about a hundred.”
LS2-1 “Yeah.”
LS2-2 “And that was [pauses] but it was a really good experience, weren’t it? And it did promote the library in a good way.”

Value appears to be the key category here. All participants chose the ideas they put forward on the basis of their value, either to themselves or others.
4.5 Attitudes towards young people

A notable theme identified in groups’ attitudes towards young people was their perceptions of young people’s attitudes. In LM1 it was felt that, in certain ways, young peoples’ attitudes were very changeable. The concepts of ‘tastes’ and ‘trends’ were mentioned in context with library service provision:

LM1-1 “You’ve got to move with them because their tastes and trends and ideas change.”

Here, young people’s attitudes are seen as a driver for innovation. LS1-2 agreed that young people, as a whole, did change with regard to tastes and trends and again this was seen as a driver for innovation:

LS1-2 “Kids change and kids stay the same [laughter] so you have to have that [innovation] happen.”

What differs here is LS1-2’s assertion that young people’s attitudes did not change in every aspect. It was understood from this passage that the nature of young people’s relationships with adults, for example, was one of the immutable factors which partly defined them as young people. Indeed, participants in this group went on to assert that young people are often uninterested in what adults suggested to them or provided for them, that they are not as tolerant of adults as they are of other young people and, as a result, that they need their own space. It is of note that this participant had children of their own and appeared to be talking about young people’s attitudes from their personal experience. One particular attitude both members of LS1 felt that young people held was detailed as follows:

LS1-1 “I think sometimes, with their friends and that, it doesn’t feel cool to come into a library.”

LS1-2 “Yeah.”
LS1 as a whole seemed very aware of the negative perceptions that exist about libraries and librarians and this tallies with LM1’s belief that young people have a negative attitude towards library buildings (see §4.4).

That being said, LS1 were upbeat about the attitudes of young library users’ towards library staff, although they did feel that young people would relate more directly to younger members of staff:

LS1-1 “I do think we’ve got quite a good working relationship with the teenagers and that here.”
[indecipherable]
LS1-2 “But I do think that’s more, they’re comfortable with us in [pauses] they’re comfortable with us ‘cause they’ve known all of us a long time. And that’s been built up over years.”
R “Right.”
LS1-2 “Erm. But, yeah. I think they relate better to ‘studenty’ types. And I mean adults over the age of 21, you’re ancient to ‘em aren’t you?”

It was also recognised that elements of the ideas they were being exposed as part of this research could be used to improve relationships with young people and change their attitudes:

LS1-2 “Talking to’t youngsters about books and literature and non-fiction stuff as well, not just novels. That does build up a good relationship and show you’re interested and you’re not the ‘twin-set and pearls’ who’s gonna go ‘Shhhh!'”
[laughter]
LS1-2 “You know, that they are welcome here and you are interested in them.”

A certain faith in the attitudes of young people towards staff was also demonstrated. Staff believed that, not only is it individuals’ personality that matters over and above their appearance, but that young people think likewise and are responsive to the interest shown in them by staff:
LS1-2 “It’s what’s in here [gestures to heart] and in here [gestures to head] that matters. Not [pauses] you know. It’s your interest in them.”
R “And do you think the teenagers pick up on that? Do you think they can sense the, sort of, genuineness of the interest?”
LS1-1 “Oh I think they can sense it.”
LS1-2 “They know who’s interested.”

This may be seen as a direct consequence of LS1’s positive experience with young people.

Unfortunately, not all staff had had positive experiences with young people. Members of LS2 made numerous references to incidents where young people had been behaving antisocially both in and around the library:

LS2-1 “I’ve seen it a bit at [library name] were they just literally come in because they’re bored and they’ve got nothing to do. But they end up messing about and sort of upsetting everybody else in the library.”

Here the causes (boredom and lack of preoccupation) and consequences (the upsetting of other people in the library) of such behaviour are identified. This level of awareness would help in creating solutions to such problems, something the group later attempted (see below). Experiences from outside of libraries also informed staff opinions of some young people’s attitudes:

LS2-1 “We’d put on a dance group for the younger kids and loads of teenagers came in and nicked half the contents of the storeroom and swore at everybody.”
R “Right.”
LS2-1 “And that, we were basically saying we should have [pause] I mean that’s in [area name] so its a completely different thing. But we were basically saying that we should have somebody on the door. If you’re aiming something at a specific group and the funding is for this specific group then for them to come in who weren’t even attending the event and nick all the basketballs and stuff, we didn’t think that was very fair.”
The cause of this participant’s concern was the opportunities that had been denied the young people who attended the dance group in question. The fact that any offence or risk to the adults who were running the group is not mentioned can be seen as indicative of this participant’s priorities. These negative experiences influenced participants’ views of young people to the extent where they differentiated between sociable and well-behaved young people and antisocial and ill-behaved young people. Previous events were considered more valuable if they did not attract the ill-behaved:

LS2-2 “They were all good experiences and none of them attracted the wrong sort of people. That sounds awful but I mean people who are just going to come in and mess around.”

Negative experiences also lead to expectancies of certain types of attitude from certain groups of young people:

LS2-1 “Say we just put games consoles in, they’d basically abuse it. They wouldn’t use it properly.”

Even though participants had been repeatedly exposed to certain young people’s antisocial behaviour, they still harboured a desire to provide a service to such young people:

LS2-1 “If you’re going to have, like, try and attract the teenagers that mess around you need a separate corner or something [pauses] out of the way.”
LS2-2 “I think you need a youth club [pauses] I think they would. I think they would come in [to the library]. I mean we’ve had some like.”
LS2-1 [interrupts] “They would come in if there was something like games consoles or something.”

Interestingly, YP1-1 acknowledged the impact that young people’s negative attitudes could have on groups that promote reading:

YP1-1 “I think a lot of it depends on the people who attend.”
R “Right.”
YP1-1 “Because if there’s people who go there because their friends are going there but not because they want to be there [pauses] it affects them because, if they don’t want to be there, they’ll not concentrate. They’ll not take part and that’ll affect other people’s ability to do so. And then it’ll just, sort of [pauses] a bit like dominoes. One person goes and the whole lot goes.”

In contrast, nobody in YP2 explicitly referred to young people’s attitudes and it is possible that this difference in awareness was due to YP1-1’s experience as a helper at a library group.

Another aspect of attitudes towards young people was the value placed on young people themselves. In LS1, participants explicitly stated that they viewed all young people as equal:

LS1-2 “We don’t distinguish between children and youngsters. A youngster, whether they’re a young offender or a grade A student, I make no difference. ‘Cause a grade A student may need as much interest and input to have them involved in a library as a, you know, young offender. The young offender’s put off comin’ in because they’re gonna get in bother when they put their head through the door, the grade A student will think ‘well nobody’s interested in me ‘cause I’m a youngster’. Each youth have got their own devils and their own problems within them.”

This acknowledgement that young people are individuals and not a homogenous group and that all young people should be treated equally is extremely important. TRA (2004) believe young people may be the most diverse group in society and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2003) states that everybody under the age of 18 should be granted equal rights including the right to preserve their own identity and freedom of expression.

In YP1 another positive acknowledgement of young people’s differences was made:
YP1-1 “I think that people with learning difficulties. I know that they like maybe
to touch [pauses] they like things that feel good. And if they’re doing stuff with
paper or just drawin’ they’ll find that really boring.”
R “Right, I get you.”
YP1-1 “So, you know, to make something innovative you have to broaden
what they use to get different types of people involved.”

The need to improve library services to young people with special needs is
identified in Start with the Child (CILIP working group on library provision for
children and young people, 2002). Again, it is possible that YP1-1’s status as
a helper with a group that promotes reading has given them an insight into
and appreciation of different people’s needs- no recognition of the needs of
different groups or mention of accessibility was made in YP2.

4.6 Attitudes towards adults

A number of the attitudes towards adults expressed in this study refer
specifically to library staff. In LS1, participants spoke positively of their
colleagues when it came to the subject of working with young people:

LS1-2 “I would say 98% of our staff are very interested in teenagers.”

This positive attitude was even demonstrated by those who had explicitly
stated that they did not want to work with young people:

LS1-1 “And even people that say ‘Oh, I don’t want to work with children’ are
doing things. In fact we’ve done things before and they have, they’ve helped.”
LS1-2 “They are [pauses] they are interested.”

Why certain members of staff would claim not to be interested in working with
young people and then demonstrate a willingness to work with young people
was unexplained. As the relationship between staff at LS1’s branch seemed
so positive, one explanation could be that they were ‘converted’ by
enthusiastic colleagues. Unfortunately, not all library staff felt that their colleagues demonstrated such positive qualities and their attitudes towards them varied as a result. In LS2, a more difficult relationship with other staff members was described:

LS2-2 “And, you see, you need staff. If I’m doin’ stuff like that, [LS2-1’s name]’s doin’ stuff like that, that takes us off counter.”
LS2-1 “Yeah.”
LS2-2 “And that alienates us with the other staff members.”
LS2-1 “Because they think ‘Well, they’re doing that’.”
LS2-2 [interrupts] “They think we’re ‘avin’ a lovely time and we’re partyin’ and leavin’ them to’t counter. That’s how they see it and that causes resentment sometimes.”

The tensions in the described relationship between staff lead participants to limit the amount of work they did with young people in order to try and appease the other parties:

LS2-2 “So you have to be a bit careful.”
R “Right.”
LS2-1 “And not do too much because then they think you’re not doing your fair share of, like, bog-standard library work.”
LS2-2 “Library work- still have to do that. And that’s difficult for us because you’re exhausted just planning your activities and doin’ them. And then tryin’ to keep the peace doin’ the bog-standard library work.”

Likewise attitudes towards library management were shaped by the personal experience of participants. Unfortunately in LS2, the experiences were also negative. Staff felt that management did not value their work with young people:

LS2-1 “It’s, like, the managers as well though. If they’ve got a problem with staff, their immediate thought is ‘Well we’ll just cancel the activities’.”
R “Right.”
LS2-1 “‘Cause when we had a problem before, [line manager’s name]’s first thought was ‘Well, what can we cancel?’’. Rather than ‘Let’s sort the staffing out’ it was ‘Well, let’s not run this, this and this’, which in’t really gonna sort anything out ‘cause we’re still not gonna have a lot of staff.”

R “Yeah.”

LS2-2 “And I find that absolutely demoralizing.”

LS2-1 “I do.”

LS2-2 “Because we’ve worked so hard to set these things...”

LS2-1 [interrupts] “To build it up.”

LS2-2 “To build it up. And then just let it go as though it’s nothing.”

They also identified discrepancies between what management said they would do and what they actually did. Anomalies of this nature appeared to visibly upset participants:

LS2-1 “They sent a new sheet of paper round last week, I think. And it said ‘We will provide’, and I think it was a general libraries one, it said ‘We will provide weekly Under 5’s and Baby Time’ and ‘We will answer queries by fax’ and all of this. And then I thought, ‘Well, actually, we don’t do that’. ‘Cause we haven’t got a fax machine, Under 5’s we’ve got 2 groups but each one comes weekly so they’re every 2 weeks, and Baby Times is monthly so”

LS2-2 “There in’t enough staff to do all that weekly!”

LS2-1 “No! But if they’re saying ‘We will provide’ but, at the same time, turning round and going ‘Well cancel it ‘cause you haven’t got enough staff’ [tails off]”

LS2-2 “Yeah.”

LS2-1 “It’s a bit [sighs]”

The following anecdote describes a similar situation:

LS2-1 “The classic example of that is when [name of children and young people’s centre] sent you loads of lovely ideas and you rung up and went ‘Can I do this and this and this?’ and they went ‘Nope’.”

LS2-2 “Couldn’t do any of them, yeah.”

[laughter]

LS2-1 “That is the best example! It was like ‘Ooh, look at these wonderful ideas!’. What was one of them?”
LS2-2 “It was sent from actual people that do Chatterbooks.”
LS2-1 “Yeah.”
R “Right, I get you.”
LS2-2 “You know the actual named place sent all this bumf up and it was sent to [name of children and young people’s centre] and [name of children and young people’s centre] sent it to us and then you couldn’t do half of it anyway!”
LS2-1 “And you think ‘Why have you bothered sending it then?’”

Similarly, a discrepancy between managers’ stated intentions and actual actions is implied in the following:

LS1-2 “This is where ground staff, front line staff need to have a bit more input. It’s no good askin’ for us ideas and then just ignore it.”

The comments made in these three passages clearly show disillusionment with management but perhaps the strongest criticism came in LS2-1’s response to Question 8. When describing how their critical incident made them feel they recounted an incident between them and their line manager:

“Afterwards, our manager got told off because [they] hadn’t followed the correct guidelines on filming in the libraries.

[They] accused us of going behind [their] back because we emailed [name of SLAI’s marketing manager] about it for publicity purposes and [they] hadn’t told [name of SLAI’s marketing manager] about the event, which was [their] fault not ours. So afterwards we felt v let down by the managers.” (LS2-1)

It is evident that these experiences with management left front-line staff undervalued, disillusioned and demoralised. Such factors create a strained working relationship which are not conducive to provision of high quality or innovative library services.

However, when LM1 were consulted, they stated that they valued positive staff attitude highly. Staff were described as “the key” (LM1-1) to valuable work with young people and their attitude and ability were emphasized as
important factors in the development and sustenance of innovative library services. Whilst it is acknowledged that LM1 are by no means representative of all SLAI management, the discrepancy between the way they valued staff and the way staff felt valued suggests that positive management attitude towards staff is not being communicated effectively or that it is not being translated into actions that would ensure better management-staff relations in future.

Information regarding attitudes towards adults in general was also communicated by LS1 and LS2. In LS1 it was felt that adults did not treat young people in the same way as they treat other adults:

LS1-1 “Adults aren’t as tolerant of youngsters.”

Given this situation, it was recommended that young people be given their own space in the library to ensure that both they and adult library users could get the maximum use and enjoyment from the library.

LS1-2 “And I think [LS1-1] concurs with this, a designated area away from the grumpy individuals.”
R “Right, I see.”
LS1-2 “And I don’t mean staff…”
LS1-1 “I think a lot of the older ones it’s like, you know the libraries were ‘you can’t talk’ and they think it should still be [pauses] but it’s not. It’s welcome, it’s a family place.”
LS1-2 “It’s family orientated…They’re noisy. And we don’t give a fig about noise do we? I mean as long as the kids feel comfortable. That’s what matters.”

Interestingly it is adult attitudes and behaviour that are identified as the problem here, not young peoples’. This suggests that LS1 value young people more than adults whose attitudes towards the library do not tally with their own.
LS1-2 also recognized the potential for friction between young and adult library users and felt that service provision for young people was more valuable if it did not compromise service provision to other library users:

LS2-2 “It would be a bit of a riot, wouldn’t it?”
LS2-1 “Yeah.”
LS2-2 “And I don’t think that’s fair on other library users that have come in to use computers and to, you know, choose books and have a quieter zone.”

Here it seems that young peoples’ attitudes and behaviour that are identified as the problem here, not adults’. This suggests that LS1 value adults more than young people whose attitudes towards the library do not tally with their own.

What was interesting is that no discernable attitudes towards adults were identified in the analysis of data collected from YP1. This could be because the participant worked closely with staff as a library group helper and did not feel comfortable voicing any opinions on staff. Only 1 explicit example of an attitude towards adults was identified in YP2 when, in response to Question 3, a participant said:

YP1-1 “Why don’t you ask the adults? [gestures towards library staff]”

This could be indicative of disinterest or a feeling that their opinion did not matter (a statement was made to reassure the group that their opinions did matter at this point). On the other hand it could have been because YP1-1 had just lost a democratic vote as to whether the group considered Idea C to be innovative and that they were light-heartedly looking for more support in their favour. The participant’s tone remained neutral during when asking this question, making further analysis difficult.
4.7 Factors that affect innovation

In YP1, the availability of suitable materials for use within groups was recognised as a factor that could affect innovation within that group:

YP1-1 “I think that people with learning difficulties. I know that they like maybe to touch [pauses] they like things that feel good. And if they’re doing stuff with paper or just drawin’ they’ll find that really boring.”
R “Right, I get you.”
YP1-1 “So, you know, to make something innovative you have to broaden what they use to get different types of people involved.”

Here it appears that the participant is defining things as ‘innovative’ if they provide a new and valuable experience to an individual. Whether an idea had been previously been executed elsewhere does not seem to be a factor. The necessity for even the most basic materials was highlighted in YP2. One participant, in response to Question 6, emphatically answered “Books!” (YP2-1) and another contributed “New books!” (YP2-5). But some participants felt that certain library facilities hindered innovation:

YP2-3 “Computers!”
R “In what sense do computers stop [tails off]?”
YP2-2 “Cause people just mess around on them and play games instead of reading books.”

This displays a conservative view of what facilities public libraries should provide and how they should be used. It is unclear why the participants in question feel that computers and their ‘improper’ use stop people being innovative; perhaps misuse of computers disturbed a new and valuable experience for this participant.

The activities undertaken within library groups were also identified as a factor that affected whether innovation could take place. One participant
suggested a particular activity, “You can write some reviews.” (YP2-3) where, again, the implication is that this particular activity will allow those who partake in it to experience something new and valuable. Logically, the novelty of activities was singled out as a factor upon which the novelty of group attendees’ experience depended:

YP1-1 “Sort of lack of variation in the type of things that they do. So activities sort of [pauses] not because they don’t do things that people expect them to do but because they do the same things over and over again. It can become very mundane, I think. That won’t help at all, I think.”

Promotion of library groups was mentioned as a factor that affected innovation, in that could increase the amount of young people who could experience something new and valuable. Promotion by word of mouth was given as an example:

YP1-1 “That way more people’ll come, y’know, ‘cause obviously a lot of people with learning difficulties go to different groups in different places and people say ‘Oh, I’ve been to so and so’, ‘I went with so and so’, ‘I went to this place’ and then they’ll all come and they’ll all enjoy it and I think that’d be really good.”

LM1 described libraries’ image as a factor that could affect innovation. It was felt that the move towards housing libraries in buildings with other public services was “bound to make libraries more attractive” (LM1-1) and would shift the general public away from seeing libraries as a separate entity. LM1 hoped this would result in increased library use and therefore an increase in the amount of new and valuable experiences within libraries.

LS2 also talked about the library building as a factor that could affect. The qualities of the physical space available to staff for the running of events were discussed:
LS2-1 “And probably in some libraries space [is a factor]. ‘Cause we’re alright ‘cause we’ve got a nice space."
LS2-2 “We’ve got quite a big space, yeah."

The implication here is that not all libraries do have a space with the qualities necessary to run certain events and that this limits how innovative they’re able to be. On a similar theme, members of YP2 believed that physical barriers could affect innovation:

R “What do you reckon [YP2-1’s name]?”
YP2-1 “Walls between you and the books...Having the library closed down so you can’t get any books anyway!”
R “That would be a big problem."
YP2-2 “The library being blown up!”

Whilst these comments may have been made in jest, they actually raise serious issues- library closure and destruction would prevent people from access to innovative ideas.

People were identified as a factor that affected innovation. When asked what they felt stopped libraries being able to be innovative, participants in YP2 answered:

YP2-7 “People!”
R “People! In what sense do people make it more difficult?”
YP2-7 “Not lots of people like new things.”

YP2-1 “Mean, strict people!”

The first of these responses could potentially refer to both adults and young people whereas the second response seems to refer more clearly to adults. It seems more likely that these young people would see adults as being in a position whereby they could be strict because adults in general have more authority than young people in a traditional library environment.
All three adult groups mentioned the impact that front-line staff attitude could have on a service’s ability to be innovative. LS1 believed the support of library staff in general was conducive to innovation:

LS1-1 “You’ve got to have your staff on-side haven’t you?”
LS1-2 “Yeah, staff on-side. Get your staff interested. Your ground, y’know, your ground force staff, your front line staff. Get the interest.”
LS1-1 “You need the interest don’t you? Otherwise it rubs off if not.”
LS1-2 “Ask don’t tell. Ask for the interest and ask for ideas.”

LM1 acknowledged front-line staff as “the key” (LM1-1) to being able to implement innovative services and felt that new members of staff, in particular, could help kick-start innovation as they brought new ideas with them and were less likely to accept the status quo. LS2 felt that it was only front-line staff members who helped to make innovation possible rather than library management or external agencies:

LS2-2 “It helps having other colleagues that will support you and, you know, bounce ideas. Like me and [LS2-1’s name] will have a think about and try and think of things we can do and that’s good. We’ll, you know, help each other [pauses] but not from management point of view is there?”
LS2-1 “No. Or from outside.”

In fact, the personal experiences of participants in LS2 lead them to feel that management offered little in the way of support or guidance and that this was a hindrance to innovation:

LS2-1 “There’s basically no guidance on how you should actually do it so, like, with teenage ones you just basically make it up ‘cause there’s no-one going ‘Oh yeah, you should do this, this and this’ so [tails off]”
LS2-2 “Nobody really supports you, nobody helps you [pauses] and it really knocks it on the head sometimes doesn’t it?”

This is further evidence of the negative effects of a poor staff-management relationship. Again, staff appear to feel under-valued and disillusioned. The
lack of faith demonstrated in management would suggest that these participants would have reservations about contacting management for their co-operation or support regarding innovative ideas. Innovation will be restricted as a result.

LS2’s felt there was little to encourage innovation in general. When asked if they felt there were any factors that helped libraries to do innovative work with young people they answered:

LS2-2 [long silence] “Not really is there?”
LS2-1 “No.”
LS2-2 “No.”

One factor they identified is that there is no institutionalised incentive for staff to work with young people, let alone be innovative:

LS2-2 “There in't an incentive!”
LS2-1 “No.”
LS2-2 “None at all.”
LS2-1 “I mean you do enjoy it.”
R “Right.”
LS2-2 “You do it for the love of it I suppose, don’t you? That’s all. No other incentive whatsoever.”
LS2-1 “No.”
LS2-2 “You don’t get recognised, you don’t get any extra pay. You just do it for job satisfaction, if you like…That gives me a reason to come to work. But that’s the only reason.”

It appeared that front-line staff are only obliged to provide basic library services to young people such as the issue and return of materials and answering of general enquires. If they do not want to run activities with young people then they do not have to. Yet it is evident that LS2 feel that little was done to attract staff that would want to work with young people. They suggested that clearly defined job roles would solve this problem, easing staff tension and encouraging innovative work to be done with young people:
LS2-2 “I think you probably need a dedicated person to do that sort of thing [work with young people] in a library and not expect them to actually run the counter as well”

LS2-1 “Mmm [in assent].”

LS2-2 “I think that’d be really helpful…y’know if there were just like a dedicated person, children’s librarian, that wasn’t expected to do all the other stuff as well. I think that’d be really good. It used to be like that, I think, didn’t it?”

LS2-1 “Yeah, they’ve altered job roles now haven’t they? ’Cause now everybody’s meant to do everything.”

R “Yeah.”

LS2-1 “But it doesn’t always work like that. If you employ someone and, if you’ve not got it in the job description that you want them to run a book group or do under-5’s, they can just turn round and go ‘Well it’s not in the job description so I don’t have to do it’.”

R “I see.”

LS2-2 “It’s not what everybody always [pauses] what people want to do, is it? Whereas if you advertise for a job that is, like, a children’s librarian, whatever, and that’s what you’d be expected to do, the others won’t feel resentful because they know their place sort of thing, what they’re gonna do.”

R “Right.”

LS2-2 “And the children’s person doesn’t feel resentful ’cause, y’know, that’s what they’re there to do.”

This calls SLAI’s recruitment policy for branch libraries into question, implying that it is not conducive to work with young people, let alone high quality or innovative work with young people. But in LS1 it was felt that separating involvement in work with young people would not always be valuable to young people. When describing one of their ideas in answer to Question 5, LS1-2 said:

LS1-2 “I’ll just put ‘contact with youth workers and youth clubs’ and I’m gonna put ‘all staff’ not just designated children’s workers because you don’t know who a youngster’s gonna relate to.”
Low staffing levels in libraries were seen to restrict innovation:

LS1-2 “No staff!…No staff, staff on long-term sick who aren’t replaced, staff who get jobs elsewhere and they’re not replaced.”
LS1- 1 “And it’s difficult then.”
LS1-2 “And there’s less staff but the same amount of work has got to be done.”

Sheffield City Council’s (SCC) political agenda was also identified as a potential hindrance to innovative work with 12-17 year olds. As mentioned in §4.4 the targeting of certain groups of young people was not always seen as valuable by LS1:

LS1-2 “Somewhere along the line, if you just target 1 or 2 little groups, you’re annihilating, is that the right word?”
LS1- 1 “You’re cutting off the other groups.”

Targeting groups in this way could be seen as a direct result of SCC’s Closing the Gap\(^\text{10}\) initiative. Similarly LS2 identified SCC’s commitments to the Sure Start\(^\text{11}\) programme as a potential reason why more work was done with children aged 0-5 than with those aged 12-17:

LS2-1 “It’s probably because they’ve got more, like, involved with Sure Start isn’t it? So they’ve sort of got that in there and they think it’s more important to target younger kids because supposedly, if you get them early enough, they’ll be a reader for life.”

They also felt that an equal emphasis should be placed on work with 12-17 year olds:

LS2-1 “They should target them as well at the minute because, if they get them doin’ somethin’, they’re not gonna be hanging round on the streets getting into trouble. But it’s what you target them doin’ and I think its not just the library,

\(^{11}\) http://www.surestart.gov.uk/
you need to work with other people...to get them in ‘cause it has to be more controlled than just goin’ ‘Oh, come in here and play on our Playstation’ or whatever.”

LS2-2 “It’s got to be a lot more controlled than that, hasn’t it?”

Here, one of the consequences of targeting young people, reducing antisocial behaviour, would be in fitting with one SCC’s claim that they “approach anti-social behaviour with interventions and diversionary work” (SCC, 2007) particularly as they identify young people as a likely cause of such behaviour (SCC, 2006).

It is acknowledged that SCC and SLAI have a limited budget with which to provide services and that the problems identified may not be easily solved and solutions suggested not easily implemented. This brings us to an important factor that was seen to affect innovation in library services for 12-17 year olds: money. Every adult group recognised money as a factor and that many other factors ultimately relied on availability of funds:

LS2-1 “But its also money isn’t it?”
LS2-2 “That’s right.”
LS2-1 “Because if you wanna do, like, a special activity you haven’t got the money to do it. There’s no budget really.”

LS1-1 “Funding.”
LS1-2 “And funding. That’s the big issue. I think funding comes before’staff. With the funding you get the staff. But then you get the staff and you haven’t got the funding, as [LS1-1’s name] rightly says, to do what you need to do. ‘Cause you can’t buy anything ‘cause you’ve got no funding.”

LM1 believed that innovation implied cost and that the lack of resources resulting from lack of money hindered innovation. The fact that no young person recognised money as a factor reflects the fact that they were not involved in the organisation of groups. YP1-1 may have been an exception to this but, even then, it seems unlikely that they would have had any
involvement with the financial aspects of running a group that library staff have.
5. Conclusions

Evidence shows that ‘innovation’ is a familiar word to all participants. Both adults’ and young peoples’ understandings of innovation shared themes such as ‘novelty’, which appeared in general understandings and understandings in relation to libraries. This is in keeping with Allen’s (1991) definition. The emphasis participants placed on novelty of ideas is shared with TRA (2008). This suggests that there is at least some degree of similarity in understandings of innovation between participants in this study and library literature. In general understandings of innovation, value was not seen to be implicit. Yet value was widely used a criteria for the innovativeness of an idea in relation to libraries. If an idea was not valuable to a participant then they did not consider it to be innovative. This inability or unwillingness to distinguish between whether an idea was valuable or whether it was innovative could be a result of participants letting their personal feelings on an idea take precedence over whether the idea was new and original or not. This could be because all participants felt strongly about libraries due to their personal involvement with them and did not want anything that they thought could impact negatively on libraries to have a potentially positive association with them. Another possibility is that participants thought more about the practical implications of innovative ideas (such as their value to users) once they were placed in the context of libraries, a context in which the practical implications of ideas must be thought through very carefully. This suggests that understandings of innovation in relation to libraries were shaped by participants’ experience of libraries.

The theme of context also arose in participants’ understanding of innovation in relation to libraries – it was identified that an idea could be defined as innovative in one context and as not innovative in another context. Adoption of the relative definition of innovation put forward in LM1 would mean that ideas could be shared between libraries nationwide as suggested in DCMS (2003) and still be considered innovative as they would potentially
be new to the geographical area, library authority, individual branch and its staff and users.

Vaizey (2007), DCMS (2003) and CILIP working group on library provision for children and young people (2002) appear to necessarily associate innovation with value. In contrast LS1, LS2 and LM1 did not, with some participants questioning “change for change’s sake” (LS1-2). Innovation was valued but on the conditions that it was made valuable to young people, other library users, front-line staff and that was in fitting with their ideas of what a library should be like. It is possible that the authors of the aforementioned texts do not have recent experience (if any) of running services in the same way that current library staff and management will. From the authors’ remote vantage point, innovation may seem necessarily valuable whereas library staff and management have a better understanding of the conditions which an idea must fulfil in order to be valuable and are more likely to be sceptical as a result. Necessarily associating innovation with value raises the possibility that national bodies such as DCMS and CILIP may place too much emphasis on innovation for these participants’ liking; indeed a number of negative references were made to the emphasis placed on innovation:

LM1-2 “I think sometimes we can get hung up on ‘everything’s got to be the latest and the newest innovation’ and sometimes it doesn’t have to be.”

LS2-2 “There’s always this emphasis on ‘Ooh, new, different, bright is better’. Not always. Sometimes tried and tested is just as good.”

No evidence was provided to show that innovation had been forced upon participants but they provided a number of examples of when innovative ideas turned out to be less valuable than intended:

LS1-1 “I think sometimes, I know they’ve done it in the past, and that the people [pauses] it’s gone really well and yet the other staff, if you like, that’s been there [pauses] the kids have only come for the pizzas and coke.”
LM1-2 “It’s been more about the special relationship built up with the person who’s doing the project rather than the [pauses] taking on board the library service as a good thing.”

Young people also specified criteria that must be fulfilled in order for them to consider an idea to be innovative. Personal interest, material gain, novelty of experience, compatibility with ideas of what libraries should be and value to other young people were all mentioned. As the criteria vary, national bodies, library management and front-line staff would have to ensure they have extensive information regarding what young people want in order to create valuable innovative groups for them.

As demonstrated in §4.3 and §4.4, LS1, LS2 and LM1 had complex attitudes towards the value of innovation and ideas had to meet a number of criteria before they would be considered valuable. It appears that these criteria were formed as a result of participants’ work in libraries and it can be assumed that they would make participants’ less likely to consider an idea innovative than people without their experience and the resulting criteria.

All participants’ positive emphasis was on innovation that they valued therefore the term valuable innovation will henceforth be used to refer to innovative ideas that were valued by participants in this study.

All participants’ central concern was the value of an idea to library users. This attitude is also apparent in Vaizey (2007), DCMS (2003) and CILIP working group on library provision for children and young people (2002). It is positive to see that all adult participants placed emphasis on value to young people as the needs of young people should be central to any library service (CILIP, 2002) or, indeed, any local authority service (DfES, 2005) developed for young people.

Whether such positive attitudes translate into valuable innovative services for 12-17 year olds is not covered by the scope of this study. Equally no generalizations can be made regarding young people’s attitudes towards the
services provided for them by adults suffice to say that, whilst some young participants stated that existing ideas were valuable (YP2-2, YP2-7), everyone in YP1 and YP2 could think of new ideas for services they would value. This suggests that much more valuable innovation could be implemented.

It is acknowledged that front-line staff’s close relationships with young people mean they should be consulted regarding the design and execution of ideas (YP1-2). However, for better or worse, ideas which do not fit in with library staff or management’s views of value to young people, to other library users, to themselves and to libraries as a whole do exist and may be valued by users. This is shown by the fact that both YP1 and YP2 said that Idea E would be more likely to make them come to a library group yet it was very unpopular in LS1 who did not think it would attract young people and did not feel it was in fitting with libraries’ or library workers’ roles. Whether consideration and implementation of such ideas would be of benefit to any of the parties concerned is beyond the scope of this study. It is simply acknowledged that, the fewer boundaries that exist in terms of attitude, the more innovative ideas could be implemented.

This brings us on to the debate raised in Usherwood (1996), Pateman, (2008) and Hartridge (2008) – whether public libraries should provide what they think their users want or what their users say they want. This debate will not be entered into at length but suffice to say that if libraries’ were to implement ideas purely on the basis of user demand, putting staff concerns second, they would potentially have a wider selection of innovative ideas to choose from. Again, whether this would be for the good of libraries as a whole is beyond the scope of this study but a more customer-focused approach may attract more users.

Which innovative ideas would attract more users whilst meeting front-line staff and management’s criteria for value is a complex issue. A number of the ideas put forward by participants in this study such as contemporary art
workshops (YP1-1), sport workshops (LS1), music workshops (LS1 & LM1) and provision of food (YP2-7) involve libraries expanding upon their traditional roles and creating competition with other organisations that provide such services, a factor mentioned by LS1-2. As it is already recognised that competition with other organisations is reducing library use (DCMS, 2003), perhaps expansion of this nature would not be beneficial. Encouraging young people to see their library as a place where they can engage in innovative activities will also involve something of an image change for libraries. Opinion is split as to whether this would be a good thing. LS2 were concerned that implementation of Idea A would compromise libraries’ image:

LS2-1 “If you just have games consoles that’s literally gonna be a youth club inside the library.”
LS2-2 “That’s right!”

Yet LS1 and LM1 acknowledged that libraries did not necessarily have a positive image amongst young people. Similarly, the use of Web 2.0 technology to promote libraries, as suggested by LM1, has some support (Lancaster, 2008) but it also has a number of critics (Holmes, 2008; Buckley Owen, 2008).

The major factor affecting libraries’ ideas is the availability of funds, identified by LS1, LS2 and LM1 as well as in DCMS (2003), Comedia (1993) and Goulding (2006). The fact that YP1 and YP2 did not recognise money as a factor that affected innovation is potentially due to the fact that they have no involvement in running or planning groups. Perhaps if young people had the level of involvement envisioned by CILIP working group on library provision for children and young people (2002) then they would have a greater awareness of factors that affect innovation in library groups.

How the financial can be solved is, again, a complex issue. DCMS (2003) suggest that library authorities should network on a regional basis to save money by sharing resources and bulk buying and that they should form
partnerships with businesses that could help supply funding among other things. The role of partnerships was recognised by LM1 in their response to Question 5 (see §4.4). The importance of money as regards innovation in services that promote reading to 12-17 year olds is potentially increased by the value that young people put on material gain (YP2). However, lack of finances need not necessarily hinder innovation in public libraries. Schaper (2005) describes how a tight budget was a driver in Fayetteville Public Libraries development of an innovative self issue and return system.

Money has the potential to ease the problems regarding staff incentives as mentioned by LS2-2 who felt that staff should be financially rewarded for their work with young people. It would also allow for an increase in front-line staff, the need for which was identified by LS1-2. The solving of both of these problems potentially removes barriers that restrict innovation. However, would not necessarily solve the issue of the poor relationship between front-line staff and management. The fostering of motivation amongst staff is identified as a positive trait of library management and managers have to understand staff needs and the factors that lead to staff adopting a certain attitude or behaviour (Wagner, 1998). However, LS2 and, to a lesser degree, LS1 illustrate that not all SLAI staff feel that their management demonstrate an understanding of these needs and factors. It is recognised that people are an organisation’s most valuable asset (Redman & Wilkinson, 2001), that recognition goes a long way towards motivating staff (Wagner, 1998) and that motivation reduces staff turnover, absenteeism and other grievances (Armstrong, 1984). It follows that the disillusionment and lack of motivation described by LS2 is not conducive to innovation in services for 12-17 year olds or to the successful running of their branch in any way. The fact they do not feel that management value them could be easily solved by management and with positive results for all concerned. Better communication between staff and management may also help ease the tension LS2 felt with colleagues who did not value work with young people. The fact that such attitudes still exist suggest that nothing has changed since the reports of The Library and Information Services Council Working Party on Library Services for Children and Young People (1995) and Messenger (1997).
Overall, evidence shows that innovation is a subjective term, particularly in relation to library groups for 12-17 young people. There appeared to be more similarity in participants’ general definitions of innovation than in their definitions of innovation in regard to libraries. The results of Question 3 (Appendix 14) show the extent to which participants’ definitions of innovation in relation to libraries varied. The value of innovation in relation to libraries was equally subjective, illustrated by the fact that LS1 valued the idea of games consoles for young people highly whereas YP1-1 and LS2 did not.

This study describes a scenario not unlike that depicted by Vaizey (2007), DCMS (2003), where there is a large scope and demand for innovation. The lack of groups that promote reading to 12-17 year olds suggest that SLAI will have considerable work to do in order to achieve the vision for 2013 set forth in Framework for the Future, in which:

“All school age children can join a homework club, engage in summer activities or join reading groups.”

DCMS (2003 : 51)

5.1. Recommendations for future research

There are numerous ways in which this study could be improved and expanded upon.

It is possible that participation could have been increased. Groups of 4-6 young people were identified as being ideal (Gibson, 2007) but a group of 1 and a group of 7 were achieved. Groups of 6-8 adults were identified as being ideal (Krueger & Casey) but 3 groups of 2 were achieved. In the case of the groups with young people it is not possible to pinpoint exact reasons for non-participation but factors may include a complex and time consuming procedure for obtaining signed consent, the fact that
potential participants did not feel that participation was in their interests or that participation took up too much of their time. Simplifying the consent procedure and assuring potential participants of the value of the research could help solve these problems. In adult groups, worries about confidentiality were voiced. A separate sheet on confidentiality of information could be issued to participants in order to reassure them further and encourage participation.

All focus groups with young people were held in the libraries that they attend. However, Krueger & Casey (2000) believe that focus groups with young people should not be held in environments where they can be subordinate to adults. France et al., (2000). Also believe that holding groups in public places, especially in the presence of adults with which young participants have a particular power relationship (such as library staff) compromises absolute confidentiality. Therefore it may be valuable to find a neutral venue for focus groups where staff will not be present.

Groups were not divided by gender but Krueger & Casey (2000) and Efken (2002) believe that separating young participants by gender can improve the quality of information gained from a group. This could, however, eliminate some of the benefits of working with pre-existing groups.

To avoid confusing participants, all questions relating to general understandings of innovation should come before questions about innovation in regard to libraries.

Giving young participants stickers on which they can write their name is a good way to break the ice and engage with them. It also helps researchers address participants by name, making them feel that their individuality is recognised and their contributions valued.
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Appendix 1

Advisory Questions

Design

- Has a need for this idea been identified?
- Is there any evidence to suggest this idea will be successful?
- To what degree have young people been consulted in this idea’s design?
- What are the goals of this idea?
  - How can they be achieved?
  - Are they realistic?
  - Are they in the best interests of:
    - Young people?
    - Other library users?
    - Library staff?
    - Your library authority?
- To what degree have front-line library staff been consulted in this idea’s design?
- What resources will be needed to carry out this idea?
  - Are they available?
  - If not, can they be made available?
- Are there any other instances of this idea being used:
  - In your library?
  - In your library service?
  - In libraries in general?
  - Outside of libraries?
  - If so, does this present any opportunity to seek advice or improve the idea at all?
- Would any form of partnership benefit this idea?
  - Who are potential partners?
  - How would they benefit this idea?
• How can a partnership be established?

**Execution**

• In what venue will this idea be held?
  o Is this suitable?
  o Can it be improved if necessary?
• In what particular room/environment this idea be held?
  o Is this suitable?
  o Can it be improved if necessary?

**Workplace**

• Is an innovation culture in place?
• Is a knowledge management culture in place?
• What condition are staff-management relations in?
• Are staff motivated?

**Value**

**To young people**

• What do young people want?
  o How can you find out what they want?
• Are these demands reasonable?
• How can they be achieved?
• To what extent does this idea treat young people as a homogenous group?
  o Is this suitable?
  o Is this desirable?
  o Can specific interest groups be targeted?

To other library users

• Is this idea likely to upset other borrowers?
  o Who?
  o Why?
  o How can this be solved?

To library staff

• Does this idea allow staff a reasonable working environment?
  o If not, can this be solved?
• Are uninvolved members of staff supportive of this idea?
  o If not, can this be solved?

To libraries

• Is the idea in fitting with the image of:
  o Your library?
  o Your library service?
  o Libraries in general?
• Is this necessarily a good thing?
• How can this idea be maximised to promote your library/library service/libraries in general in a positive way?

To local authority
• Is this idea in keeping with you local authority’s agenda?
  o Is this in the best interests of:
    ▪ Young people?
    ▪ Other library users?
    ▪ Library staff?
    ▪ Your library authority?
Appendix 2

Methodology details

1. Focus Groups

Focus groups lasted approximately 30 minutes. There were 2 focus groups for young people, 2 for library staff that worked with young people and 1 with members of library management with responsibility for services for children and young people. Krueger & Casey (2000) state that, ideally, 3 or 4 groups should be carried with each type of participant until saturation is reached. This was not possible, due to practical constraints. As a result, saturation was not reached. It was possible, however, to avoid mixing different types of participant within groups. This prevented participants from feeling unable to express themselves as a result of having somebody who they perceived to have more power or knowledge of a topic than they did (Krueger & Casey, 2000; Morgan, 2004). It also allows for greater depth of data (Knodel, 1993).

This study used pre-existing groups. This increases the possibility that participants will feel comfortable in the group scenario and that high quality data will be yielded (Bloor et al., 2001).

All focus groups followed the same structured format and were asked the same questions. This enabled direct comparison between responses both within and between groups.

The proceedings of each focus group were recorded using a Dictaphone and additional written notes were taken by the researcher in order to capture both recorded and observed data, a strength of focus groups (Hargie et al., 2004).

The researcher has consciously rejected any attempts at triangulation, following Bloor et al. (2001) who assert that the concept of using one method
to validate another is flawed as it incorrectly assumes that a number of methods are equally suitable in researching the same topic and that data produced by these different methods can be directly compared.

For focus group outlines, including questions, see Appendices 7 & 8.

The wording of all the written material that participants were exposed to was evaluated using the FORCAST formula (Johnson, 1998) to ensure its suitability for its intended audience. FORCAST was chosen as it was created to analyse individual words. A reading age of 14.8 years was calculated.

2. Visual aids

Visual aids were used to ensure a common level of understanding of the term ‘innovation’ following Question 2 (Appendix 4). Wordings were selected as they were deemed to be understandable and accessible by all participants. They were based on definitions from the Oxford School Dictionary (Delahunty, 2002), the Oxford Children’s Dictionary (Allen, 2003a) and the Oxford Children’s Thesaurus (Allen, 2003b). These texts were used as they are tested on young people.

A separate visual aid was created for Question 8 (see §4).

3. Participatory Techniques

Question 1 functioned as a focusing exercise, gently engaging participants with topics without swamping them with information. Participants were presented with 3 statement cards (see Figs. 1-3) and asked to rank them in order of importance. The statement cards were printed on coloured card and cut into irregular rounded shapes in order to stimulate participants visually and kinetically. Responses were recorded on a custom response sheet (Appendix 9).

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12 The researcher coded the cards Cards 1-3 for ease of reference (as shown in Figs. 1-3). This was important in the recording and presentation of results (see Appendices 12 & 13).
Question 3 tested groups’ understanding of innovation in relation to library literature. Seven descriptions of innovative ideas for library services aimed at young people were adapted from library literature. These were printed on coloured slips (Figs. 4-10) in order to stimulate participants visually.

**Fig. 4 - Idea A**

Making games consoles available for use in the library
Fig. 5 - Idea B

Having youth workers in the library who can help library users with personal problems

Fig. 6 - Idea C

Running football related reading and writing events

Fig. 7 - Idea D

Library staff working with young people to make videos about their everyday lives

Fig. 8 - Idea E

Having a 'book bar' - a comfy zone in which special 'book waiters' will serve refreshments and suggest books and magazines

Fig. 9 - Idea F

Allowing young people a say in what materials their library stock, what activities are run and what the interior of the library should be like
Fig. 10 - Idea G

Having libraries for young people in youth clubs or cafes

Participants had to reach a group decision as to whether these ideas were ‘innovative’ or ‘not innovative’ and place the slips in the relative envelope (Figs. 11 & 12). Responses were recorded on a custom response sheet (Appendix 10).

Fig. 11

Innovative
Question 4 asked participants to make an individual decision as to whether they thought the ideas on the slips used in Question 3 would attract them (in the case of YP1 and YP2) or young people in general (in the case of LS1, LS2 and LM1) to library groups. The idea behind this question was to test the way in which participants valued innovation in relation to libraries. Participants had to respond using a cup and ball method based on the ‘pots and beans activity’ described in O’Kane (2004) who states this type of activity provides additional insight into the participation process and makes participation easily accessible. If participants thought the idea was more likely to make the audience in question attend a library group, they placed their ball of paper in a plastic cup labelled ‘Yes’ (Fig. 12). If participants did not think the idea was more likely to make the audience in question attend a library group, they placed their ball of paper in a plastic cup labelled ‘No’ (Fig. 13). Responses were recorded on a custom response sheet (Appendix 11)
Question 5 required participants to brainstorm their ideas for innovative library services. Participants were encouraged to draw their responses if they desired as with Question 8.3 (see §4). Drawing was emphasised as it can help participants communicate their ideas (Krueger & Casey, 2000).
4. Critical incident technique (CIT)

This study followed the 5 steps for CIT advocated by Flanagan (1954) but encompassed Edvardsson’s (1992) model, which recommends:

- Explaining what a ‘critical incident’ is, preferably by providing an example, in order to ensure validity of results
- Focusing upon specific events which the participant remembers clearly and probe them to gain the most comprehensive
- Using a simple model of a critical incident

As regards the latter, Edvardsson uses a ‘cause, course and result’ model but this does not suit the purpose of this study therefore a ‘what, why and result’ model is proposed:

- What is the service that the participant believes is innovative?
- Why do they believe it is innovative?
- Result – what outcomes did contact with this innovative service have?

A visual aid was provided in order to define the concept of a ‘critical incident’ and ensure a common level of understanding in groups (Appendix 5). Again wording was based on Delahunty (2002), Allen (2003a) and Allen (2003b). It encompasses the meaning of the following definitions in an accessible format:

“extreme behaviour, either outstandingly effective or ineffective with respect to attaining the general aims of the activity”

Flanagan (11 : 1954)

“a major turning point within the…process which resulted in change(s)”
Heppner & Roehlke (85 : 1984)

“interaction incidents, which the customer perceives or remembers as unusually positive or negative when asked about them”

Edvardsson & Roos (253 : 2001)

The CIT element of this research took place in Question 8. Three written questions were presented on a sheet (Appendix 6) and are referred to as Question 8.1, 8.2 and 8.3 respectively. Questions 8.1 and 8.2 required written responses. This was in order to try and gain the insights that CIT allows for whilst reducing the extent to which group members would influence each other's responses and having the practical effect of taking less time than a verbal response. Participants were verbally informed by the researcher the Question 8.3 could be answered via picture and/or words depending upon which medium they felt comfortable with. This was done in order to gain an additional level of data. Barker & Weller (2003) show that pictorial responses are an inclusive media.
Appendix 3
Pilot group details

1. Focus group with young people

As no other groups that explicitly promote reading to 12-17 year olds were accessible, a reading group in Sheffield aimed at 8-12 year olds was contacted.

Question 1 was easily understood by participants who appeared comfortable in providing and justifying their responses.

In Question 2 no participant understood what the word ‘innovation’ meant. The need for clear, comprehensible and attractive visual aids was identified in order to ensure that all participants would have the same basic level of understanding within the focus group.

Examples of innovative library services for 12-17 year olds were given with the aim of establishing a basic level of understanding in this area. The presentation of these services took too much time and involved too little interaction with participants in spite of the use of visual aids. Provision of examples in this fashion adversely affected responses to other questions (see Question 5 below).

Questions 3 and 4 asked participants to be critical of the group they attended in front of other group members. This was identified as bad research practice as it potentially placed participants in an uncomfortable position. It risked making participants unwilling to give their honest opinions and compromising the quality of data recorded as a result.

Question 5 was comprehended by participants. However, no quality data was gained from this question as participants repeated the examples of
innovative services given earlier in the group when asked for their own ideas of innovation.

Question 6, was well understood and provided a good depth of response. As a result this question remained unaltered.

In Question 7 participants had trouble understanding the concept of a ‘critical incident’ and the need for an attractive visual aid was identified to provide a comprehensible definition of the term. Problems with participants’ understanding of the term ‘innovation’ were also exposed. The need for clear and attractive visual aids to provide a comprehensible definition of this word was reinforced.

2. Advisory group with young people

As no other groups that explicitly promote reading to 12-17 year olds were accessible, a reading group in Sheffield aimed at 8-12 year olds was used. It is acknowledged that the researcher runs this reading group and was previously acquainted with all participants.

Many methods had been adapted since the initial pilot group with young people and it was hoped that the suitability of these would be judged and improvements suggested. However, participants were very excitable and extremely difficult to keep on task therefore little quality data was gathered and the session was ultimately abandoned.

In spite of this, it was established that, although all participants claimed they had understood the provided definitions of ‘innovation’, approximately 50% could not answer questions that included the word ‘innovation’ because they did not actually understand what the term meant. In contrast, all participants demonstrated understanding of an alternative question sheet that replaced the word ‘innovation’ with the phrase ‘new and different’. This alternative wording was used in the final study.
Participants appeared to easily understand the concept of the newly introduced ‘cup and ball’ exercise and stated that they did not find it to be too childish in nature. Participants were tempted to misbehave with the foam ball provided. As a result, this type of ball was replaced with scrunched up balls of paper in an attempt to retain the exercise’s tactile appeal whilst reducing the potential for participants to be distracted.

No objections were raised to the use of coloured pencils or felt tip pens in order to complete any drawing exercises. The wording of these questions was, however, later revised in order to ensure reliability.

Virtually none of the participants said that they understood the CIT question. This lead to the wording of the question and its explanation being simplified once more.

3. Focus group with adults

The description of Idea D used in Questions 3 and 4 was found to be confusing and was altered as a result. The need to create set wording for the explanation of Question 5 was identified in order to ensure that all participants understood the question. Participants suggested that young people would benefit from definition sheets being pinned up throughout the session rather than just shown at the point of explanation.

Overall, this pilot was felt to be a success and participants voiced enthusiasm about the methods used:

ADPI1- 4 “Yeah, it’s engaging. I wasn’t sat there thinking ‘Aww, what next?’, I was thinking ‘Oooh, what next?!’ [laughter]”

ADPI1- 3 “I think it’s a great method.”
ADPI1-3 “I thought it was lots of fun especially when we got into that ball thing, like the more you got into it the more fun it was.”

ADPI1-4 “I thought it was really good and I really enjoyed it.”

ADPI1-1 “I think your results will be a lot better with the methods that you’ve used there, the practical way in which we’ve voted and thought about the answers we were going to give. It makes you think about your answers a lot more than if you just [pauses] ticked them”

It is acknowledged that all participants were previously acquainted with the researcher.

4. Advisory group with library staff

2 members of front-line staff at a branch library in Sheffield participated in this group.

Participants felt that the proposed methods would be suitable for young people and library staff and encouraged the use of participatory methods in particular. All wording was deemed easily understandable.
Appendix 4
Question 2 visual aids

Introducing new things or new methods

A completely new process or way of doing things that has just been introduced

New

Original

Not been done before
Appendix 5

Question 8 visual aid

An important time when something unusual and interesting happened
Appendix 6
Question 8 answer sheet

Name:

What did you do that you think was innovative?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Why do you think it was innovative?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
How did it make you feel?
Appendix 7
Focus group model – young people

- **Introduction**
  - Hello!
  - Make name stickers
  - Offer refreshments
  - Promote interaction between participants
  - Who I am
    - MA Librarianship student
  - What I am doing
    - Focus group
    - Looking at innovation in groups that promote reading to young people in public libraries
    - Will take 30 minutes
  - What I would like participants to do
    - Answer questions about your library group
    - You can say anything (within reason) and be honest
    - Please contribute and respect the contributions of others
    - I would really like to know what you think

- **Question 1**
  - Focusing exercise (the importance of innovation)
    - Have a set of three statement cards each
    - Ask participants to place them in order of which statement they agree with most
    - Can discuss with each other and consult other participants
    - Why have you put the cards in this order?

- Today we will be looking at innovation

- **Question 2**
Can anybody tell me what ‘innovation’ means?

- Innovation definitions
  - Use cards
  - Stick on wall

- **Question 3**
  - Understanding of innovation exercise
    - Place statements slips in relevant envelopes
    - Work as a group
    - What have you put in each envelope?
      - Starting with ideas considered to be innovative
      - Justify each choice

- **Question 4**
  - Value of innovation of innovation exercise
  - Use same slips as above
  - Would each of these ideas make you more likely to come to the library?
  - Respond with cup and ball

- **Question 5**
  - If your library group was to do anything (else) new and different/innovative, what do you think it should be?
    - Work in twos or threes
    - Please brainstorm answers on paper
      - Draw
      - Write
      - Whatever you like!

- **Question 6**
• What things do you think help innovation in library groups?

• Question 7
  • What things do you think stop innovation in library groups?

• Question 8
  • Critical Incidents
    ▪ Please tell me about one time that your library group did something that you feel was innovative (new, different, exciting ideas)
    ▪ Prompt only if necessary For example:
      ▪ When you did a new activity
      ▪ When you went somewhere different
      ▪ When you used some different equipment
    ▪ Please draw a quick picture to show how this time made you feel
      ▪ It doesn’t have to be your best drawing
      ▪ You can include:
        ▪ Pictures of your face (expressions)
        ▪ Pictures of the new and different things you did, had or visited or wished you did, had or visited
        ▪ Words
    ▪ If you haven’t done anything you feel is innovative
      ▪ Please write down that you haven’t done anything you feel is innovative
      ▪ Write down why you think you haven’t done anything (if you can)
      ▪ Please illustrate how this made you feel
      ▪ This is all useful information!

Thank you for your time and have a nice day!
Appendix 8
Focus group model – adults

- **Introduction**
  - Hello!
  - Make name stickers
  - Offer refreshments
  - Promote interaction between participants
  - Who I am
    - MA Librarianship student
  - What I am doing
    - Focus group
    - Looking at innovation in groups that promote reading to young people in public libraries
    - Will take 30 minutes
  - What I would like participants to do
    - Answer questions about your library group
    - You can say anything (within reason) and be honest
    - Please contribute and respect the contributions of others
    - I would really like to know what you think

- **Question 1**
  - Focusing exercise (the importance of innovation)
    - Have a set of three statement cards each
    - Ask participants to place them in order of which statement they agree with most
    - Can discuss with each other and consult other participants
    - Why have you put the cards in this order?

- Today we will be looking at innovation

- **Question 2**
Can anybody tell me what ‘innovation’ means?

- Innovation definitions
  - Use cards
  - Stick on wall

- Question 3
  - Understanding of innovation exercise
    - Place statements slips in relevant envelopes
    - Work as a group
    - What have you put in each envelope?
      - Starting with ideas considered to be innovative
      - Justify each choice

- Question 4
  - Value of innovation of innovation exercise
  - Use same slips as above
  - Would each of these ideas make young people more likely to come to the library?
  - Respond with cup and ball

- Question 5
  - If your library group was to do anything (else) new and different/innovative, what do you think it should be?
    - Work in twos or threes
    - Please brainstorm answers on paper
      - Draw
      - Write
      - Whatever you like!

- Question 6
  - What things do you think help innovation in library groups?
• **Question 7**
  o What things do you think stop innovation in library groups?

• **Question 8**
  o Critical Incidents
  ▪ Please tell me about one time that your library group did something that you feel was innovative (new, different, exciting ideas)
  ▪ *Prompt only if necessary* For example:
    - *When you did a new activity*
    - *When you went somewhere different*
    - *When you used some different equipment*
  ▪ Please draw a quick picture to show how this time made you feel
    - It doesn’t have to be your best drawing
    - You can include:
      - Pictures of your face (expressions)
      - Pictures of the new and different things you did, had or visited or wished you did, had or visited
      - Words
  ▪ If you haven’t done anything you feel is innovative
    - Please write down that you haven’t done anything you feel is innovative
    - Write down *why* you think you haven’t done anything (if you can)
    - Please illustrate how this made you feel
    - *This is all useful information!*

Thank you for your time and have a nice day!
Appendix 9

Question 1 – custom response sheet

Date:

Location:

Group:
Appendix 10

Question 3 – custom response sheet

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<tr>
<td>G</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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Date:

Location:

Group:

13 The letters A-G on the left hand side correspond to Ideas A-G as detailed in Appendix 2 §3.
Appendix 11
Question 4 – custom response sheet

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14 The letters A-G on the left hand side correspond to Ideas A-G as detailed in Appendix 2 §3 and the numbers 1-6 along the top correspond to participant numbers as detailed in Appendix 17.
Appendix 12

Question 1 – results\textsuperscript{15}

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\textit{YP2}

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\textsuperscript{15} Codes A-G in the response section of the table correspond to the possible orders in which Cards 1-3 could be placed. See Appendix 13 for an explanation of the codes.
**LS2**

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**LM1**

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**Overall**

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\(^{16}\)Figures rounded to 1 decimal place hence discrepancy in final total.
Appendix 13

Question 1 – results

Explanation of response codes

Each possible order in which Cards 1-3 could be ranked was given an individual code. There are 6 different possible responses.

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Appendix 14

Question 3 – results

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**LS1**

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### LM1

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### Overall

#### Ideas

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## Appendix 15

### Question 4 – results

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Appendix 16
Success of participatory techniques with adults

Overall it was felt that the participatory techniques used in this study were successful with adults. This is of particular interest as their design was informed by techniques developed exclusively for children. No adult participants displayed any negative attitude towards any participatory technique. Some participants actively voiced their enjoyment when using these techniques:

LM1-2 “I like this”
LM1-1 “I can do this...I could do this all afternoon”

Here, Question 1 proved to be accessible and functioned as an ice-breaker, lightening the mood of the group.

Question 4 was also popular; some participants did not want the activity to end:

R “Let’s pop the cups out of the way for the moment. Thank you very much”
LM1-2 “Awww”
[laughter]
LM1-1 “It was good that, I enjoyed that [pauses] we’re easily pleased in here, we don’t get out much”
[laughter]

Again, the mood of the group was lightened and the activity appeared to have engaged participants. It is felt that techniques that engage participants in this way will help improve the quality of data harvested from a focus group.
## Appendix 17

### Group and participant codes\(^{17}\)

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\(^{17}\) A participant’s code is composed of their group code and their individual number. Numbers were assigned based on the order in which participants sat in relation to the researcher. For example, participant 1 in group YP1 was assigned the code YP1-1.