“TO LEARN WHAT LIBRARIES ACTUALLY DO”: THE GRADUATE TRAINEESHIP AS PREPERATION FOR A PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION IN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION WORK

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

at

THE UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD

by

Hannah Wood

September 2009
Abstract

**Background:** There is a large volume of literature concerned with the professional education and skill set of library and information professionals. However, despite the fact that graduate traineeships are a key entry point into the profession, and the first stage of a professional education for many, little recent systematic research has been conducted into traineeships.

**Aims:** The study aimed to establish the nature of current graduate traineeships and investigate the ways in which they prepare participants for a professional qualification in library and information work.

**Methods:** This study employed largely qualitative methods to generate data. A content analysis, using an interpretative analysis approach, of thirty-three job advertisements for graduate trainee positions was undertaken. This data collection method aimed to provide a sense of the role of the trainee, as presented by employers. Semi-structured interviews with ten former graduate trainees studying for an MA in Librarianship at the University of Sheffield were subsequently carried out. This was intended to generate data which illustrated how trainees themselves understood their experience and how they related this to academic study. A coding method based on the principles of grounded theory was employed in order to extract the central themes from the interview transcripts.

**Results:** Despite the changes in the profession, there was a strong sense of continuity in the nature of the traineeships described in the studies undertaken in the 1970s and 1980s. The same range of largely paraprofessional tasks were undertaken, and the dominance of the academic sector in providing opportunities remained. However, the trainees interviewed for this study viewed their experiences largely positively. They described that the opportunity to experience
many different aspects of librarianship, experience project work and undertake additional training lifted their position beyond that of a library assistant. The ways in which trainees applied their trainee experience to the postgraduate qualification were complex and defied easy categorisation.

**Conclusions:** It was concluded that graduate traineeships have a valuable role to play in preparing prospective information professionals for a professional qualification. This manifests itself in factors such as gaining a sense of how a library organisation operates as a whole, some experience of professional tasks, a sense of professional identity and a sense of direction for their future career. However, management competencies were identified as an area not adequately addressed in by traineeships. Moreover the dominance of the academic sector in providing traineeships could adversely affect the supply of new professionals to other areas. It was concluded that the ways in which knowledge is transferred to the MA from the traineeship must be considered in greater depth with reference to pedagogical theory.
Acknowledgements

Thank you to Barbara Sen, my supervisor, for advice and encouragement during the course of this project.

Thank you to my interviewees for giving up their time and responding to my questions so eloquently.
Table of Contents

1. Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 8
   1.1 Professional education for library and information staff .............................................. 8
   1.2 Graduate traineeships defined ...................................................................................... 9
   1.3 Value of the dissertation .............................................................................................. 11
   1.4 Current research concerns ........................................................................................... 12
   1.5 Outline of the dissertation ........................................................................................... 12
2. Aim and objectives............................................................................................................. 13
3. Literature review ................................................................................................................ 13
   3.1 Body of professional knowledge .............................................................................. 13
   3.2 Professional education ............................................................................................. 16
      3.2.1 A philosophical or practical education? ............................................................... 17
      3.2.2 Weaknesses in professional education ................................................................. 18
   3.3 Graduate traineeships.................................................................................................. 20
      3.3.1 Relationship between graduate traineeship and professional qualifications ...... 22
      3.3.2 Knowledge transfer between workplace and academic settings ......................... 23
   3.3 Practicums, internships and residencies...................................................................... 24
      3.3.1 Experiential learning ............................................................................................. 25
4. Methodology ...................................................................................................................... 28
   4.1 Content analysis ........................................................................................................... 29
      4.1.1 Content analysis sampling .................................................................................... 30
      4.1.2 Content analysis design and implementation....................................................... 32
   4.2 Interviews ..................................................................................................................... 33
      4.2.1 Interview design and implementation .................................................................. 34
      4.2.2 Sampling ............................................................................................................... 35
      4.2.3 Interview pilot ....................................................................................................... 38
      4.2.4 Interview analysis ................................................................................................. 38
   4.3 Ethical considerations .................................................................................................. 39
5. Results ................................................................................................................................ 40
   5.1 Content analysis of job advertisements ................................................................. 40
   5.2 Semi-structured interviews with former trainees ................................................... 43
6. Discussion ........................................................................................................................... 50
   6.1 Sectors in which traineeships are carried out.............................................................. 50
6.1.1 The impact of traineeship sector ................................................................. 51
6.2 Role undertaken by graduate trainees ........................................................... 54
   6.2.1 Opportunities for development ............................................................... 58
6.3 Former trainees’ experience of the role .......................................................... 61
   6.3.1 Gaps in the learning experience provided to trainees ......................... 63
   6.3.2 Graduate traineeships and professionalism .............................................. 67
6.4 Relationship between the graduate traineeship and the professional qualification .. 71
   6.4.1 “To learn what libraries actually do” ..................................................... 73
   6.4.2 Reflection ............................................................................................... 74
   6.4.3 Focusing learning experiences .............................................................. 76
   6.4.4 Theoretical and practical knowledge ..................................................... 76
6.5 Summary of key issues arising from the results and discussion ..................... 78
7. Conclusions ........................................................................................................ 79
8. Recommendations ............................................................................................. 81
   8.1 For future research ..................................................................................... 81
   8.2 For library services ..................................................................................... 82
   8.3 For CILIP ..................................................................................................... 83
   8.4 For departments of library and information studies ................................... 83
References ............................................................................................................. 85
Appendix 1: Information sheet for interviewees ................................................ 95
Appendix 2: Consent form for semi-structured interviews ................................... 97
Appendix 3: Guide questions for the semi-structured interviews ....................... 98
List of figures and tables

Figure 1: Experiential learning model (adapted from Kolb, 1984). ....................................... 26

Table 1: Make up of interview sample ................................................................................... 36

Table 2: Results from the content analysis, duties of graduate trainees .............................. 41

Table 3: Results of the semi-structured interviews, synopsis of key issues ......................... 44
“To learn what libraries actually do”: the graduate traineeship as preparation for a professional qualification in library and information work.

1. Introduction

This project arose from the researcher’s interest in the professional education of library and information staff. Initial research found that although there is a substantial body of literature concerning the content and design of postgraduate information and library courses, very little has been written on graduate traineeships. This is surprising as graduate traineeships are an entry point into the profession for many prospective information and library workers in the United Kingdom. It is hoped that this exploratory study will go some way to address this research gap by seeking to understand how such traineeships contribute towards the development of future professionals by providing preparation for postgraduate study.

1.1 Professional education for library and information staff

Rees (2005:1) describes a typical model of career development for a librarian in the UK, outlining the “career passages” that they must follow in order to gain professional recognition from both other practitioners and professional associations. She states that a graduate will typically undertake a yearlong placement on a trainee scheme after which they will complete a postgraduate qualification accredited by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals [CILIP]. Completion of the course allows a move to a professional post and application for Chartership status. Rees describes this final stage as something that “in theory, guarantees professional recognition....a landmark which determines the transfer from the theoretical to the practical” (2005:1).

Although library and information staff have historically been able to achieve professional status through alternative means, Wood (1997) outlines how a postgraduate professional qualification has become increasingly expected. This can be understood in the context of the increasing number of professions taking
advantage of higher education in order to control entry. Eraut (1994) explains this development as a consequence of the importance that professions place on a specialist knowledge base; a degree-entry route is seen as one of the key ways in which a claim to such a base can be validated.

CILIP accredited postgraduate degree courses set their own entry criteria; typically at least one year's experience in an information setting is required or strongly recommended. Graduate traineeships were conceived as a way to provide this experience (Brewerton, 2001).

1.2 Graduate traineeships defined

The SCONUL [Society of College, National and University Libraries] trainee programme began in 1961 as a national placement scheme for graduates without a background in information and library work. The scheme offered participants a one year, fixed-term salaried post in a national or university library (Brewerton, 2001). A smaller number of public library authorities offered their own trainee posts which, although separate to the SCONUL scheme, were similar in purpose and design (Loughridge, 1987b). The posts were intended to provide the practical experience and training to enable the entry criterion for postgraduate courses in information and library studies to be met. Each placement was run independently by the institution concerned; SCONUL’s role was to collect and consolidate information about available placements and to coordinate the promotion of the scheme. SCONUL also developed a code of practice to guide the design and implementation of such traineeships. The Code stipulates that “systematically planned and supervised experience of library work” should be provided (SCONUL, 2007). Employers adhering to the Code are further required to provide trainees with an overall view of the service and its relationship with partners, give experience equal to ability in the day to day operation of a major area of activity, and supply structured training.

CILIP have now taken on the administration of the scheme, although the SCONUL Code of Practice has been retained. However, adherence is optional and as the CILIP website advises employers, “there is nothing to sign and no accrediting procedure”
Organisations are also able to apply the CILIP Framework for Continuing Professional Development (1992) to graduate traineeship placements, although this too is on a self-certification basis. CILIP therefore does little to govern the content or character of graduate traineeship positions advertised on its web pages. It does however provide an online forum called Chapter One, which is intended to allow trainees and their supervisors to network and collaborate on development opportunities (CILIP, 2009b).

Although graduate traineeships are not the only way to fulfil the entry criteria of library schools, the CILIP web pages appear to promote the traineeships over other methods of gaining experience such as voluntary or paraprofessional work. Potential applicants are informed that if they are looking for a career in information or library work then graduate traineeships are, “the scheme for you” (CILIP, 2008a). CILIP (2009a) goes on to stress the benefit that such traineeships have on future careers claiming that,

> “University courses...view these traineeships very favourably. The graduate has not only gained valuable experience but has been given expert training. It also supports your application for a bursary. And what makes participants in this scheme attractive to admissions tutors and funding bodies will impress future employers”.

In 2007 CILIP introduced a trainee scheme, Encompass, specifically for prospective information and library professionals from black and minority ethnic [BME] backgrounds. The aim of this initiative is to make the profession more representative of society as a whole (CILIP, 2009c). BME candidates are able to apply to a three year trainee scheme which they undertake whilst studying part-time for a professional qualification, with a proportion of the funding coming from CILIP themselves (Buckley-Owen, 2007). Therefore, the scheme is very different to traditional trainee schemes which are undertaken independently of library schools and professional association. For this reason, and the fact the scheme is still in its infancy, Encompass trainee placements are outside of scope of this study.
1.3 Value of the dissertation

Graduate traineeships are a valid topic of study as they are a key entry point into the profession. Those undertaking traineeships are likely to be shaping the library and information sector in the future, and many former trainees are currently occupying senior positions within the sector (Brewerton, 2001). Therefore it is important to ensure that such schemes adequately prepare future library and information workers for professional qualifications and beyond.

The role of the traineeship in professional preparation is especially important as there is currently concern within the profession that library school graduates do not possess the range of skills necessary to meet the needs of the ever-changing information environment. A survey of specialist library and information recruitment agencies by Stephens and Hamblin (2006) revealed recent graduates are lacking in both core professional competencies and soft, transferable skills. Gorman (2004) has repeatedly stressed that library schools are not equipping their students with the appropriate professional knowledge. He argues that librarians are graduating without an understanding of core skills such as cataloguing and collection management as the curriculum has become divorced from the practical reality of library work.

New professionals have further recorded the difficulties they face in making the transition to a first post (Newhouse & Spisak, 2002). Understanding how graduate traineeships currently prepare participants for professional study could allow for modifications to the scheme to ensure that required competencies begin to be facilitated at the earliest possible stage and that theory and practice are better integrated.

Moreover, in recent years a number of institutions such as the University of Warwick, University of Bradford and University of Sheffield have halted their trainee schemes and the parallel scheme run by public library authorities is no longer in operation. A better understanding of how traineeships prepare future library and information staff for a professional career could help demonstrate the value of such
schemes and justify the financial investment and staff commitment they necessitate.

1.4 Current research concerns

Despite the role graduate traineeships play in producing new professionals, little real research has been conducted in this area. At the most basic level, there has been no research into the content of traineeships since the 1980s when the professional environment was very different to today. Many of the published works in this area are found in practitioner’s periodicals and either promote their own institution’s scheme (Powell and Roberson, 2006) or provide basic guidance in successfully administrating a traineeship (Wilson & Gibbons, 1996). These reports do not represent systematic research and overwhelmingly consider the issues from the perspective of the library rather than the trainee. This is something that this dissertation will seek to address.

During the late 1970s and 1980s several MA dissertations that were concerned with graduate traineeships were conducted at the University of Sheffield’s Department of Information Studies. This research went on to inform two papers by Loughridge (1987a, 1987b). Data was gathered from former trainees studying at both the University of Sheffield and other UK library schools using quantitative collection methods. Although they touch on the ways in which trainees applied their work experience to postgraduate study they are largely concerned with counting objective information such as salary and the nature of the tasks undertaken (Ardern, 1971).

This research will respond to this lack of qualitative data by undertaking qualitative, semi-structured interviews with former trainees to investigate how the traineeship has informed their experience of professional education.

1.5 Outline of the dissertation

This dissertation is divided into seven discrete parts. This first section, the introduction, has provided the context in which the study is situated and demonstrates why the research adds value to the existing body of knowledge. Next,
the aims and objectives of the research are outlined and a comprehensive literature review is provided. This review outlines previous studies into graduate traineeships and draws on theories of experiential learning and professional education in order to provide a synthesis of the existing literature and show how the research undertaken builds on what has been completed to date. The methodological approach and findings are then fully described before the results are discussed in greater depth with reference to the literature. Finally the conclusions will be presented, alongside recommendations for further research and for CILIP, institutions employing graduate trainees, and library schools.

2. Aim and objectives

Aim

- Investigate the role of the graduate traineeship in preparing participants for a professional qualification in library and information work.

Objectives

- To review and analyse the nature and content of graduate trainee positions currently offered in the UK.
- To understand how recent graduate trainees relate this employment experience to postgraduate study.
- To identify any gaps in the experience provided by graduate traineeships in the context of preparation for postgraduate study.
- To consider how well graduate traineeships meet the needs of the library and information profession in the context of preparation for postgraduate study.

3. Literature review

3.1 Body of professional knowledge

Central to any profession’s conception of itself is the specialist body of knowledge specific to its members. It is this shared knowledge that defines the profession as something apart from other occupations and thus justifies its existence (Eraut,
Professional organisations are therefore very concerned to protect and define their specialist knowledge bases. CILIP (2004) has produced a document to describe the specific subject knowledge that library and information professionals are expected to acquire and demonstrate in their practice. The core schema of this framework incorporates a set of essential interlinked components:

- **Knowledge** underpins the entire schema and is understood as both shared and collective understanding. Information and library professionals must design and employ conceptual structures such as classification schemes, taxonomies and thesauri to provide a semantic map of this knowledge.
- **Documentation** is described as recorded knowledge that information and library professionals must generate and disseminate, including through activities related to publishing.
- **Communication** refers to the means by which knowledge is transmitted. Library and information professionals should understand the information needs and behaviours of users to enrich their relationship with information. They must also undertake operations on document content such as abstracting, structural tagging and hypertext linkage.
- **Information Resource Management** encompasses selection, acquisition and weeding of materials in addition to the ways in which resources are displayed, stored and organised. These organisational elements include both tradition cataloguing and the creation of metadata.
- **Information Service Provision** incorporates providing access to, and the means to exploit, collections. This includes information literacy related activity, information retrieval and maintenance and design of websites or portals.

Competences that are required to apply these core components to practice in different settings are also outlined. These include an awareness of the ethical and legal frameworks the individual professional is operating within. Finally, CILIP (2004) states that in addition to their specialist competencies, library and information professionals require generic skills and attributes. It is stated that these include
computer and information literacy, management skills, marketing skills, an ability to train and mentor and knowledge of research methods.

The American Library Association’s [ALA] *Core Competences of Librarianship* (2009) are much more prescriptive than CILIP’s (2004) document, setting down lists of required standards to be attained. The ALA intend their document to mandate the skills that librarian’s should have gained upon graduation from an accredited postgraduate programme. CILIP (2005: 4) explicitly state that their schema is not intended to provide any sort of model curriculum, although for a degree course to be accredited by CILIP the association would expect, “the aims and objectives of the course(s) to be consonant with the Body of Professional Knowledge”. Despite the differing aims and design of the documents, they cover broadly similar areas and thus represent a loose consensus on the body of professional knowledge specific to the information sector.

This is not a conception of the professional body of knowledge that is held uniformly throughout the profession; Gorman (2004) has been an especial critic of the amount of technology related competencies which are now seen as central to library and information work. However, the ALA and CILIP are the figureheads of the profession in the UK and the USA and therefore this study will use their understanding of the body of knowledge as a reference point when considering the extent to which graduate traineeships meet the needs of the profession.

The skills required by library and information professionals are extensively discussed in the literature, particularly in reference to the significant changes to the environment in which they operate. These changes have led many to question whether new competencies and attributes need to be developed in current and future staff. Corrall (2005) describes the advances information and communication technologies, the growth of the information and knowledge economy, the convergence of previously separate service areas, and the expectation of value-added services as having key roles to play in this transformation of the information and library environment. It is reported that in response to this information
professionals should develop a broader set of skills including specialist ICT knowledge and generic business skills to “develop and promote their understanding of the specific business context in which they [information professionals] work” (Corrall, 2005: 36).

Two recent studies by Orme (2008) and Gerolimos and Konsta (2008) have used content analyses of job advertisements to determine the skills and attributes required of information and library professionals by employers. Both articles assert the importance of generic and personal qualities to employers, particularly communication, team working and customer service skills, which were found as frequently as specific professional knowledge. Orme (2008) further reported that of the professional skills required, prior experience was the most important. It is suggested that this poses a significant challenge for newly qualified professionals.

As graduate trainee positions are intended to develop future professional library and information staff, it seems logical that the schemes should attempt to facilitate the skills, competencies and knowledge that the profession sees as critical to its identity and survival. However, the literature concerned with a professional body of knowledge has not considered the role of the graduate traineeship in developing staff in this manner.

3.2 Professional education

Much of the literature is concerned with developing future information and library professionals through the medium of formal, postgraduate education. Fisher and Matarazzo (1993: 290) underline the importance the importance of education for professions stating that;

“...the educational foundations of a profession are of paramount importance. Through educational processes, the body of principles, issues, skills and attributes that anyone entering the profession needs to know are transmitted.”
A point repeatedly stressed in the literature is that this professional education is more than simply training people to undertake the tasks required. Instead it is seen as important that it provides a deeper learning experience that produces employees capable of questioning and analysing circumstances and producing innovative solutions (Middleton, 2003). Professional education is expected to provide professionals able to challenge and improve existing services not just those that will maintain the status quo.

This is echoed by library schools themselves; a report into development of the public library workforce (Usherwood et al., 2001) found staff from departments of library and information studies stressing that they were not interested in meeting checklists of competencies required by the current market. Instead they sought to create professionals with an awareness of the broader picture and the skills to continually develop and grow.

3.2.1 A philosophical or practical education?

Related to this concern with transmitting more than just practical competences is the debate over which aspects of professional education are best suited to the classroom and which need to be mastered in practice. Brodman (1968) compares the formal academic training for a career in medical librarianship with practical, on the job training and argues that learning must be both philosophical and practical. Academic training is crucial because it teaches knowledge that simply cannot be transferred in a workplace setting such as the theoretical understanding necessary to reflect on practice. Brodman (1968) sees practical, post-qualification internships as important also because the knowledge gained through mentorship by experience professions cannot be replicated in the classroom.

Three decades later, this division between theory and practice is still of concern as Fisher and Matarazzo (1993) cover much of the same ground. They argue that while many specific aspects of the professional role can be learnt in the field, the ability to compete successfully in the twenty-first century information environment can only come from an understanding of the philosophical underpinnings of librarianship which are best studied in an academic setting.
There are implications for graduate traineeships here; to fulfil the definition of professional education such schemes must provide participants with a broader understanding of the library and information sector, not simply the ability to undertake core tasks.

### 3.2.2 Weaknesses in professional education

There is a general sense in much of the literature that improvements need to be made in professional education as graduates from library schools are not prepared for practice in the current information environment. This manifests itself in different ways; Gorman (2004) argues that library schools have failed to equip recent graduates with the core skills of the profession, such as collection management, and have instead taught peripheral technological competencies. This view is supported to some extent by Usherwood et al. (2001) who found that public librarians frequently complained that newly qualified staff were only immediately competent in the ICT aspects of their role.

However, a blog posting by Farkas (2006) presents a divergent view. She argues that professional education should place a much stronger emphasis on information and communication technology, stating that the courses she took in HTML were more useful than those covering theories of librarianship.

This division over the role of ICTs in professional education could be explained by sector. Whereas Underwood et al. (2001) were concerned with the public library sector, Farkas (2006) writes from her own experience as a librarian in a higher education setting. The user needs and expectations in higher education are very different to those in the public library sector therefore necessitating differing levels of engagement with technology. This debate illustrates the difficulties in designing and implementing a professional education that satisfies the needs of multiple, diverse information environments.

Leadership qualities are a further area of concern, Mason and Wetherbee (2004) note in their analysis of the contemporary training programmes for library leadership that this activity is nearly exclusively offered in the context of continuing
professional development. They conclude that such competencies should be considered by library schools in the design of their curriculums in order to ensure that the profession has an adequate supply of future managers to aid succession planning.

Recently qualified librarians have also entered the debate, Newhouse and Spink (2002) were motivated by their disillusionment with their first professional post to undertake a survey of 124 of their peers from the public library sector. The results of the survey pointed to a lack of practical training at library school, postgraduate library and information courses were felt to be too dominated by theory and there was a disconnect between the curriculum and the realities of employment. As a result respondents did not feel prepared for the level of responsibility they were expected to assume in post.

Oud (2008) further discusses problems for newly qualified librarians, identifying the ability to work within the organisational culture of their employing institution as a serious problem. She argues that this is often a consequence of a lack of experience claiming that,

“...new employees who enter with better knowledge of the job and the environment have an easier adjustment process and are less likely to leave their jobs”. (Oud, 2008: 253).

The difficulty of operating within the organisational culture of a first employer is also identified by Hicks (2008) as an area which professional education must address. It is argued that although new staff are likely to have the skills that make them a good librarian, this does not correspond to making them a good professional. Thus Hicks (2008) suggests that new professionals are assigned mentors who can provide access to the institutional memory, provide a safe place to ask questions and encourage continuing professional development.

The graduate traineeship could also be seen to play a role in this context. A well designed traineeship exposing students to the realities of professional work and nature of the workplace would go some way to prepare prospective librarians for
their future careers. Despite this, the graduate traineeship is not considered in this literature as a way to address the perceived weaknesses of professional education for library and information staff and bridge the divide between theory and practice.

3.3 Graduate traineeships

It has been demonstrated that although the literature is concerned with both the professional body of knowledge and professional education within the library and information sector, the graduate traineeship is not considered in this context. The role of traineeships in preparing prospective information professionals for their careers is neglected with the focus remaining on higher education.

The literature that does deal with graduate traineeships is often purely descriptive in nature and written by participating institutions in order to promote their particular schemes. Although some accounts of the traineeship are written by trainees themselves and describe their first-hand experiences (Newlands, 2001), often the literature comes from the perspective of the employer (Mowat, 1980).

Powell and Robertson (2006) describe the evolution of the trainee programme at Oxford University, particularly stressing the benefits of having trainees complete their own project and enabling them to take part in a structured training programme. The offer of training beyond that which would be required to undertake the role is an often repeated theme in institution’s accounts of their programme (Mowat, 1980, Wilson & Gibbons, 1996). Herman (2004) describes a London-based initiative to collaborate on training sessions for graduate trainees on a regional basis. This approach proved valuable in facilitating professional networking with peers and proved a cost and time efficient way to provide training on topics such as career development and applying to library school.

Some larger trainee schemes, notably Oxford and Cambridge Universities, have a web presence both to promote the scheme to prospective applicants and to provide information for current participants (OULS, 2009 and Cambridge University, 2009). Such websites provide a profile written by the current trainees describing their post and their graduate trainee experiences. These are nearly exclusively positive,
something that is to be expected from statements that appear on the web pages of the institutions employing the authors. The range of duties the trainees describe correlate closely with those recorded by the previous research in this area such as that by Loughridge (1987a), and other more contemporary accounts (Newlands, 2001). Although each trainee post has a slightly different emphasis, the same core tasks of cataloguing, acquisitions, serials and enquiry and circulation work are repeatedly cited. The trainees also manage their own web pages, a process described by Evans (2004). She states that setting up and the maintaining the site taught key skills such as the principles of web design, indexing content and HTML. This suggests that although there are many similarities to the traineeships of the 1970s and 1980s, the schemes at these institutions are making efforts to engage participants in contemporary technologies.

Accounts often claim that trainees are able to experience the full range of activity that takes place in the service, often this is said to be achieved by rotating the trainee between different departments (Mowat, 1980). However, it is important to note that this full range of activity does not necessarily relate to the opportunity to undertake professional level duties. One of the most frequent complaints from trainees in the literature is the dull, menial nature of the role and this remains constant over a significant period of time (Cooper, 1971, Loughridge, 1987a, Adeeb, 1997, Powell & Roberson, 2006). When professional level experience is reported, then this often takes the form of shadowing senior staff rather than hands-on participation (Newlands, 2001). Loughridge (1987b) argues that this is something that should be addressed as although day to day tasks give trainees a sense of the variety and scope of library services; this in itself is not a sufficient basis on which to build a career.

The systematic research that has been conducted into graduate traineeships was largely carried out in the 1970s and 1980s at the Department of Information Studies of the University of Sheffield and takes the form of unpublished MA dissertations (Arden, 1972, Brazier, 1981, Cooper, 1971, Sutton, 1987). The results of this work were synthesised and incorporated into papers published by Loughridge in the late 1980s (1987a, 1987b). Although the dissertations each had a slightly different focus,
many of their findings are very similar. This could reflect something particular to the circumstances in which the research took place; they were produced in the same department, under the same supervisor, using similar methodologies. Largely quantitative data collection methods were reflecting the researchers’ interest in measuring largely objective phenomena such as salaries and duties undertaken.

Although the majority of respondents in all the studies were satisfied with their experiences, in some key areas it was felt significant improvements could be made. Loughridge (1987a) reported that only 48 per cent of the former and current trainees who responded to his questionnaire felt that the scheme honoured all three requirements of the SCONUL Code of Practice; provision of an overall view of the library service and its relationship with partners, experience equal to ability in the day to day operation of a major area of activity, and the provision of structured training. There was also a strong sense of a lack of planning and coordination involved in the schemes which, Brazier (1981) argued, meant that the potential of the experience was not always fully realised.

3.3.1 Relationship between graduate traineeship and professional qualifications

The dissertations from this period also briefly address the relationship between graduate traineeship and a professional qualification in varying levels of detail. Loughridge’s (1987b) survey of Department’s of Library and Information Studies revealed that for many institutions the value of the graduate trainee scheme was simply the large number of prospective postgraduate students that it produced.

The structured interviews undertaken by Brazier (1981) further revealed a disconnection between graduate traineeships and further study. Former trainees reported that they were surprised that there was little integration between the traineeship and the professional qualification they subsequently undertook. Brazier (1981) concluded that library schools and professional associations should take responsibility for forging a stronger connection between the graduate traineeship and postgraduate study to prevent the traineeship becoming merely a hurdle to get through before a career in libraries can get properly underway.
Arden (1971) also noted the inadequacies in the relationship between traineeships and library schools. It is stated that the haphazard nature of much of the training creates a lack of standardisation in learning experiences, thus making the prerequisite of prior experience before beginning a MA almost useless. To combat this Arden (1971) advocates the development of a basic training framework to govern graduate traineeships, giving sufficient training, knowledge and experience to allow participants to obtain the most from their time at library school.

3.3.2 Knowledge transfer between workplace and academic settings

This lack of cooperation between practice and academia does not appear to be an issue specific to the library and information sector as illustrated Rynes’ (2001) discussion of the lack of knowledge transfer between academic research and the corporate world. Although this is a slightly different context as the authors are concerned with management theories and the settings in which they are employed, there is still relevance to this study. It is argued that management theories are little used in corporate settings to formulate strategy as practitioners tend to utilise their own experience and tacit knowledge. Equally academics do not turn to practitioners when formulating research questions and identifying profitable areas for study. Shrivastava and Mitroff (1984) see this division as a result of the fundamentally different frames of reference employed by academics and practitioners which are extremely difficult to overcome.

This suggests it may be challenging for a correlation between the graduate traineeship and professional study to be established because these settings have conflicting priorities about what is important. However, this could equally provide an opportunity for the graduate traineeship to act as a bridge between the two, forcing academics to consider the issues and concerns currently of concern to practitioners. A small number of the library school staff interviewed for Brazier’s (1981) unpublished dissertation identified this as one of the benefits former trainees brought to their departments. Although not a graduate trainee scheme, the practicum completed by students at Liverpool John Moores University also had
the benefit of keeping academic staff connected to the concerns of practitioners (Sen, 2004).

3.3 Practicums, internships and residencies

Practicums and internships are a common feature of professional education in the United States and typically form part of the library school curriculum. Students are expected to spend a small proportion of their course on a work experience placement in a library or information setting, and are often required to complete a piece of academic work based on this experience (Claggett et al., 2002). Although such internships are not directly comparable to the UK graduate traineeship, they still have relevance in that they are designed to support the formal education of library professionals by providing workplace experience.

Like the literature concerned with graduate traineeships, published work in this area is largely descriptive and reports the initiatives of the author’s own institution (Luzeckyj, 2000, Doyle, 2008). Meulemans and Brown (2001) describe a project at the University of Hawaii to provide students studying for professional librarianship qualifications with practical experience in teaching. Students undertook a semester long practicum in which they taught on an information literacy module for first year undergraduates. The central learning experience for participants was an appreciation of the difference between theory and practice, something the authors state would be very hard to transmit in a purely classroom-based setting. The importance of a practicum in filling the gaps in traditional, academic learning experiences is also described by Claggett et al. (2002). The authors report that students undertaking practicums often experience a “light bulb” moment when something they had previously only an abstract concept of becomes fully understood through exposure in the workplace (Claggett, 2002: 38).

Residency programmes fulfil a similar function to internships or practicums, although they are typically undertaken after the completion of a Master of Library Science qualification. These residency programmes are often seen as an opportunity to encourage the career development of BME librarians (Brewer, 1997 and Brewer and Winston, 2001) suggesting that for some practitioners getting involved in
professional education is a way to shape entrants into the profession to meet their requirements. This is something that CILIP has since tried to achieve in the UK with the development of a parallel trainee scheme, Encompass, for prospective librarians from BME backgrounds (Buckley-Owen, 2008). Claggett et al. (2001:44) have also promoted the practicum to their peers by suggesting that it is an opportunity for institutions to “grow their own” and produce the future professionals their service requires.

3.3.1 Experiential learning

Some authors from the US have written about internships or practicums in the context of experiential learning, a educational concept popularised by Kolb (1984) in which learning is shaped by direct experience. Ball (2008) describes how experiential learning has provided a way in which library schools can respond to criticism that they are removed from the realities of the profession. Work placements, often referred to as service learning, are fully embedded into the curriculum with courses designed to facilitate reflection of experiences in order to develop personal and professional values (Becker, 2000). It is this element of reflection that is a core component of experiential learning.

As stated, Kolb (1984) is one of the theorists credited with bringing experiential learning into mainstream use. Figure 1 illustrates his model of experiential learning; individuals reflect on an experience either alone or through discussion with others and from this form ideas, beliefs or understandings about a situation or phenomena. These beliefs or understandings are then tested in practice when they are applied to new situations and result in a new experience. This new experience then becomes the new object of reflection, continuing the cycle.
Therefore, in this model it is the process of learning that often becomes more important than the subject studied. It is the ability to reflect on new situations and then act accordingly that is the true learning aim. This has led Schön (1987: xiii) to argue that professional education cannot take place solely in the classroom because it does not offer enough opportunities to undertake this process of “reflection-in-action”.

Experiential learning gained great currency in the UK higher education system in the late 1980s and early 1990s which is perhaps reflective of the economic and political climate. Educationists such as Scott and Ruddock (1989) discuss how experiential learning was viewed as a way to extend access to those excluded from higher education and improve opportunities for the large number of unemployed people. An initiative called Assessment of Prior Learning Experience and Learning [APEL] was introduced that considered previous lived experience as entry criteria for university courses, rather than academic qualifications (Scott & Ruddock, 1989). While this application of experiential learning is not necessarily relevant to the context of this
study, other writers had explored experiential learning in a way that is more appropriate to the research question in hand.

Taylor (1997) argues that experiential learning cannot happen organically and it is a central function of professional education is to facilitate the ability of students to recognise how their knowledge is based on their particular assumptions and interpretations. Professional education must teach the reflective skills required to “enable these assumptions to be brought under critical control” and bring into full consciousness what has been learnt so that experience can be effectively employed in practice (Taylor, 1997: 37). Boud (1993) provides an example of this in practice in her discussion of the use of experiential education in the training of social workers. She states that students were shown how to identify relevant experience and link it to the academic theories they had encountered in the classroom in order to subject these experiences to critical scrutiny.

Boot and Reynolds (1983) argue that experiential learning is student centred and therefore cannot be transmitted but is created and negotiated. Professional education must move beyond work placements which simply act to reinforce the academic theories taught in the classroom. Instead, Boot and Reynolds (1983) prescribe a system in which students are instead enabled to develop and explore their own knowledge. This echoes Warner Weil and McGill’s (1993) assertion that experiential learning requires a fundamental change in the structure, purpose and curriculum of higher education.

Experiential learning has therefore been shown to have relevance to professional education and has been discussed in the context of library internships in the US. This is a concept that also has relevance to the graduate traineeship, as it is one of the central ways in which students gain the experience that should be reflected on as part of an experiential professional education. However, there is a lack of discussion in the literature concerning the ways in which library school curricula can best exploit the learning experiences of the graduate traineeship.
3.4 Conclusions from the literature review

In conclusion, the body of professional knowledge and the way this is transmitted through professional education is very important to the library and information sector and has been considered at length in the literature. There is a strong sense that improvements in the education of library and information professionals must be made to meet the needs of the sector and the wider employment market, although there no consensus on how this should achieved. There is however, a shared belief that professional education should not be restricted to simply transmitting the set of skills necessary to undertake the core tasks a librarian will undertake. Instead a more holistic education is desired which equips students to continually develop and grow; something that corresponds to the goals of experiential learning.

Graduate traineeships are not considered as a way to supply the type of professionals desired, and there is a paucity of quality literature dealing with traineeships in general. This is something which this study intends to discuss by investigating the ways in which graduate traineeships prepare students to undertake a professional library and information qualification.

4. Methodology

As outlined in the aims and objectives section, this dissertation aims to investigate the role that graduate traineeships play in preparing participants for a professional qualification in library and information work. The review of the literature has demonstrated that little substantive research has been conducted into graduate traineeships in general. It is hoped that the results from this study will provide an initial indication of key issues and thus identify profitable areas for further research. Therefore, this study is exploratory in nature and adopts an inductive approach. There were no preconceived expectations of the research findings, as there was little pre-existing information on which to form a hypothesis.

Bryman (2008) defines the two key features of qualitative enquiry as an interpretivist epistemological position and a constructivist ontological stance.
Interpretivism can be described as an understanding of the social world based on an examination of the way in which that world is interpreted by its participants. Constructivism is a related concept which views social properties as the outcome of interactions; they are not neutral, objective or independent from social actors. A qualitative enquiry is therefore appropriate because this study is interested in the way students undertaking a professional qualification perceive their experience of a graduate traineeship and how they understand the relationship between this employment and academic study. This is something that is not easily quantifiable, the purpose is not to measure neutral ‘facts’ but instead explore social abstractions through the eyes of those that participate in them.

A mixed method approach was adopted. An initial content analysis of job advertisements for graduate traineeships was undertaken, followed by a series of semi-structured interviews with former graduate trainees studying for an MA in Librarianship. This section will fully describe these data collection methods, the justification for their use and the theoretical position that informed them. The way in which the data was coded and analysed is also discussed, as are ethical considerations and the limitations of the methodological approach.

4.1 Content analysis

A content analysis of advertisements for graduate trainee posts was intended to address the lack of understanding as to what a contemporary traineeship actually entails; the last surveys of this nature were undertaken in the 1970s and 1980s. Notably this was before widespread automation of library systems and the explosion of electronic information; it was thought important to investigate whether the content of traineeships had altered in keeping with the changes taking place in the wider profession. Gaining an understanding of how traineeships had developed was also important in shaping the selection of themes to explore during the semi-structured interviews, the second data collection method.
Several previous studies into careers in the library and information sector have used content analysis of job advertisements as a primary data collection method. Both Gerolimos and Konsta (2008) and Orme (2008) carried out large content analyses in order to determine the skill requirements of library and information professionals in the current employment market. Orme (2008: 620) states that studying advertisements in this way was undertaken because they are “perhaps the most obvious way in which its [the employment markets] needs are articulated” and outline working conditions, salary and opportunities for progression. Applying this methodology to advertisements for graduate trainees should therefore contribute to the research’s objective to investigate the nature of traineeships.

The content analysis will reveal the tasks that employing institutions regard as central to a graduate trainee’s role. However, it cannot confirm if these were the duties that trainees actually undertook in practice nor their individual experience of this role. Therefore the interviews complement the data resulting from the content analysis by providing a sense of the nature of traineeships “through the eyes of the people being studied” (Bryman, 2008: 385). The relationship between the interviews and the content analysis is a mutually supportive one. The national scope of the content analysis sample allowed responses from the interviews to be considered in a broader context. The descriptions of graduate traineeships given by respondents could be compared to those from a wider sample.

4.1.1 Content analysis sampling

As the CILIP web pages act as a clearing house for graduate trainee posts they were identified as an appropriate place from which to select the sample for this research (CILIP, 2009b). Although it is not possible to claim that all positions appear on these pages, CILIP are the main administrators and promoters of the scheme and it is reasonable to suggest that the majority of UK traineeships are represented in this population.

The sample was made up of all the advertisements found on the web pages on both February 1st 2009 and June 1st 2009. These dates were chosen to allow the inclusion of advertisements from both the beginning and the end of the recruitment cycle.
This is not ideal as any posts recruited between these slightly arbitrary points were excluded. However, the sampling method was necessitated by the nature of the CILIP web pages. Advertisements appeared to be added to the listings as they were submitted, often a number of months before the closing date, and were removed periodically in the weeks after the position was filled (CILIP, 2009b). The constantly fluctuating nature of the advertisements, and the time and resource constraints placed upon this study, meant that selecting the sample from a fixed point was most appropriate.

Thirty-three advertisements appeared on the dates selected and were therefore included in the study. It is regrettably not possible to determine what proportion of the total number of advertised positions this represents as a request to CILIP for this information did not receive a response.

Bryman (2008) states that a key criticism of content analysis is that it can only be as good as the documents it utilises. This was borne out by this study; sampling advertisements rather than the full job description proved problematic. Some institutions provided very little information and simply referred interested parties to their website or gave a postal address from which further details could be obtained. Therefore, the sample contained some advertisements which did not give a full account of the duties expected of the post holder. Using the fuller job description was considered but this could not be pursued because many employers did not make this documentation available on their web pages. To request paper copies from human resource departments would have been prohibitively time-consuming within the constraints of this study and institutions may have been unwilling to provide their documentation for research.

These weaknesses mean it is only possible to use the data as an indication of the type of graduate trainee positions available, in keeping with the exploratory nature of this study. A more systematic examination of the nature of such posts will be a recommendation arising from the research.
4.1.2 Content analysis design and implementation

Neuendorf (2002: 1) defines content analysis as the, “systematic, objective, quantitative analysis of message characteristics”. The conception of content analysis as a purely quantitative data collection method is forcibly stressed; it is stated that unless research is designed to “meet the standards of scientific method” it is not true content analysis (Neuendorf, 2002: 10).

These standards of scientific method include objectivity or intersubjectivity, generalizability, and replicability. An a priori design is also viewed as a component of true content analysis. Measurables, for example coding categories, must be decided in advance. To take an inductive approach, such as formulating categories cumulatively, is seen as violating the scientific guidelines on which content analysis should be based.

However, this strictly quantitative model of content analysis was not deemed appropriate for this study. As no attempt has been made to provide an outline of the tasks typically undertaken by graduate trainees since the 1980s it proved difficult to produce coding categories prior to analysis. Codes for the sector and number of trainees at each institution were predefined, as were three factors that the literature indicated were specific to graduate traineeships and not routinely found in other paraprofessional posts. These were the opportunity to rotate around several areas of work, the undertaking of project work and the provision of structured training opportunities. This was intended to allow a comparison between the graduate traineeships as they are described in the literature and as they appear in practice.

The majority of coding categories were developed using an approach Neuendorf (2002, 6) terms “interpretative analysis”. A key feature of this methodology is that coding categories are formed during the data collection in a constant process of comparison and revision. As tasks or functions were extracted manually from the advertisements they were grouped together with similar or related tasks in order to create categories of analysis. For example, instances of the terms “issue desk work”, “circulation duties”, and “issuing and returning materials” were pooled together to
create a category of analysis called “circulation-related”. This process of category creation was constant and categories were sometimes redefined or altered several times during the course of the research.

At the end of the data collection process frequency counts for each category were produced, allowing this descriptive, non-experimental methodology to identify the most prevalent types of task found within advertisements for graduate trainee positions.

Although it was appropriate for this study to carry out a content analysis that was not strictly quantitative, this did not mean that there was no concern for reliability and validity. Bryman (2008) states that content analyses always entail interpretation on behalf of the researcher; the categories of analysis that are applied cannot be objective as the coder inevitably brings their own experience to bear on the data. In order to provide an indication of the reliability of the categories produced Neuendorf (2002: 12) stresses the importance of “inter coder reliability”. In the case of manual content analysis this involves using at least one other researcher to code the texts in order to ensure that categories are being applied consistently and therefore demonstrate their reliability. However, the constraints of time on this research meant that it was not possible to recruit another researcher to replicate the coding process. It is therefore important to acknowledge this methodological weakness.

4.2 Interviews

Seidman (2006) describes interviewing as a valuable data collection method because it provides an understanding of the interviewees own behaviour and the meaning they attach to it. Interviewees are able to provide context to their actions, not just what they did but why. This allows social abstractions or phenomena to be investigated through the eyes of those that experience them, illuminating the meaning-making process individuals go through.

Qualitative interviewing strongly corresponds to the objectives of this study and is therefore an appropriate choice of methodology. The study is concerned with
individual’s experiences of the graduate traineeship and the ways in which they have applied this experience to study for a postgraduate qualification. Interviewing allows these experiences to be explored and articulated in the individual’s own terms. Moreover, the research is concerned with a social abstraction; the education system for prospective library and information workers. Such an abstraction cannot be easily framed using the relatively simple questions required by quantitative methods such as structured questionnaires. Instead a two-way, in-depth dialogue between the interviewer and interviewee is necessary for a full exploration of the concept (Mason, 1997).

Qualitative interviewing is an intensive process in terms of the time and effort required by the researcher and it routinely results in large quantities of data. Silverman (2005: 9) states that the consequence of this is the “sacrifice of scope for detail”. The data collected from qualitative research is complex and has depth, in contrast to the broader surveys of surface patterns identified by quantitative methods (Mason, 1997). Although it is not possible to make wide ranging and generalisable claims from the results of qualitative interviewing, this is not what this study aims to achieve. Therefore, an electronic questionnaire was excluded as a potential instrument despite the fact that it would have allowed access to a wider population of former graduate trainees. Interviews were more appropriate to collect the rich data required to fully explore an under-researched area.

4.2.1 Interview design and implementation

The interview design for this study conformed to the characteristics of qualitative interviewing as described by Mason (1997). The setting was informal and discussion took the form of a conversation rather than a structured question and answer session. Therefore a rigid list of questions was unnecessary. Although an outline of areas to cover and sample questions were prepared in advance, this was not strictly adhered to. This schedule is included in the appendices and demonstrates how the guide questions were formulated to cover each of the research objectives and sequenced to allow conversation to flow logically between subjects. For example, the interviewees were initially asked to describe their average day as a graduate
trainee. As well as providing a relatively easy introduction to the interview process, this allowed the nature of the tasks undertaken to emerge. A more abstract concept, the transfer of knowledge between the graduate traineeship and a postgraduate qualification, was explored by asking the interviewee to provide a concrete example of a situation during the MA course when they were able to use something they learnt as a trainee. Mason’s (1997) prescription that interview questions should be meaningful to the subject and related to their experience was therefore adhered to.

This semi-structured approach proved profitable, allowing the conversation to follow areas of interest as they emerged. This can be illustrated by the two participants who reported during the interview process that they had experience of teaching at secondary school level. The flexibility of the interview design allowed this to be fully explored and useful data about the difference between library traineeships and training in other graduate professions emerged. This would not have been possible if a more rigid data collection instrument, such as a questionnaire, had been employed.

The longest interview was 58 minutes, and the shortest 34 minutes. The average interview time was 41 minutes. A vast quantity of rich data was therefore generated.

4.2.2. Sampling

A convenience sample was used, based on the geographical location of the participants. All students who were studying for an MA in Librarianship at the University of Sheffield’s Department of Information Studies and had completed a graduate traineeship prior to embarking on the course were invited by email to participate in the research. Of these students, ten out of a possible twelve (83 per cent) agreed to be interviewed.

This sample was appropriate as the participants had recent experience of both the traineeship and postgraduate study and were therefore able to give an account of the relationship they perceived between the two. The location of the sample also
meant that it was possible to conduct face to face interviews within the constraints of the study. This was very valuable; face to face conduct better allowed a rapport with the interviewee to be established, making it easier to fully explore their career histories and the meanings they attached to this (Robson, 1993). Kvale (1996) states that a successful interview affords empathic access to the world view of the interviewee and this is transmitted not just through speech but by tone, body language and expression. The ability to use these methods to transmit meaning would be limited by interviewing remotely.

The participants had undertaken traineeships in a range of settings covering academic, healthcare, legal and corporate libraries and information units (Table 1).

**Table 1: make up of interview sample**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The dominance of the academic library sector in terms of the number of trainee places offered is documented by Loughridge (1987a, 1987b) and the postgraduate dissertations such as that by Cooper (1971) which informed his research. Therefore the concentration of participants with traineeship experience in this setting is not problematic and ensures the sample corresponds to the wider population of former graduate trainees.

It could be argued that drawing a sample from peers of the researcher is detrimental to the reliability, and therefore validity, of the research. The quantitative research perspective implies an epistemological standpoint that values “replicability” (Bryman, 2008: 156). This approach seeks to limit the influence of the researcher’s biases and values on the research and so present an objective account of the social phenomena studied. This objectivity can be demonstrated by the ability of another researcher, following the same methodology, to achieve very
similar results. By interviewing a sample with which the researcher has a personal relationship this objectivity is compromised. It would be very difficult to replicate the dynamic between the interviewer and respondents.

However, the theoretical position that informs this study discounts the importance of objectivity and replication. As previously stated a qualitative stance has been adopted, in particular one that stresses the importance of reflexivity. Reflexivity refers to the belief that the interviewer is instrumental in shaping and creating the information gathered during research. This concept has led Mason (1997) to suggest that it is inappropriate to talk of data collection as it implies that data is something neutral and pre-existing. Instead she favours the term data generation as it acknowledges the importance of the interaction between the researcher and the respondent in forming the research output. Mishler (1991:52) states that reflexivity ensures that bias cannot be eliminated by the interview design strategies advocated by some writers, instead variation is “endemic and unavoidable”.

Therefore in the context of this study, acknowledging the bias inherent in all research and recognising and considering the role of the interviewer is all that can be achieved. Selecting a sample unknown to the researcher would not have produced more objective, valid findings as achieving this is an impossibility.

Despite this position of reflexivity it was still important to recognise avoidable bias within the interview process. A key weakness of selecting a sample from one library school is that the institution could attract a particular type of student who are not representative of library and information students as a whole. For example, the interviews conducted in the course of this study yielded little discussion of special collections librarianship. However, if the same interview schedule had been used on a sample from University College London’s Department of Information Studies perhaps the topic would have had more prevalence due to the modules the institution offers in preservation and manuscript studies (University College London, 2009). This bias should be taken into account when considering how far the conclusions of this research can be further applied.
4.2.3 Interview pilot

A pilot interview was carried out prior to the main data collection. Robson (1993) states that pilots are essential in nearly all instances as they allow for the testing of the research instrument, for example by identifying questions that were unclear or resulted in irrelevant data. Although a single pilot may not have been sufficient to reveal all potential difficulties, the scope of the research and the small sample frame meant that this was all that was feasible in this context. The pilot demonstrated that the themes covered and the types of question asked were largely unproblematic and few serious amendments were required. Where the pilot did prove valuable was in the refinement of the interviewer’s technique, identifying the need for more probes to be used in order to explore responses. Familiarity with the instrument and confidence in employing it was also enhanced, something identified by Bryman (2008) as an important function of a pilot.

As the participant met the criteria for inclusion in the study, and the interview schedule remained largely unchanged, the transcript from the pilot was included in the main research findings. Due to the small size of the sample it was considered inappropriate to discard relevant data.

4.2.4 Interview analysis

The interviews were fully transcribed and the resulting data was analysed drawing on grounded theory, a strategy for turning data into theory devised by Glaser and Strauss (1987). In this approach theory is generated from data as it is collected during the research process.

Since the publication of this theory there has been a divergence between the two writers on the ways in which grounded theory should develop. There is therefore much controversy about what grounded theory actually entails. Bryman (2008) recognises this and outlines the key features which he feels are common to all strands of the approach. These are the coding of data into categories, something that takes places cumulatively rather than using predefined code books, and the close relationship between data collection and analysis. This relationship ensures
that the two can inform each other; for example categories of interest in the data can be quickly identified and the research instrument modified to further investigate these findings in subsequent data collection.

It is these broad principles identified by Bryman (2008) which were used to inform the analysis of interview transcripts resulting from this research. This inductive, iterative approach fits closely with the aims and nature of the largely exploratory study. As there was little published evidence on which to form a hypothesis or formulate coding categories it was appropriate that the theories that emerged were largely grounded in the data rather than the literature.

Codes were applied manually as the data was collected, using Charmaz’ (2006) two phases of coding; initial and selective. This two step method proved a manageable way to analyse the large volumes of data whilst still retaining the core principles of grounded theory. The initial coding stage involved an in-depth exploration of the data, indicating all the themes and topics of interest in order to give a sense of each interview as a complete narrative. The subsequent selective coding emphasised the most frequently applied codes from the initial coding, along with the those that were the most interesting or valuable. As data collection and analysis progressed initial codes were combined or reconfigured, sometimes several times, in order to complete the selective coding process. Relationships between these coding categories were also considered.

4.3 Ethical considerations

Although the study was classified as low-risk by the Department of Information Studies Ethics Committee it was still important that the University of Sheffield Ethics Policy was rigidly observed. All potential interviewees were given an information sheet, found in the appendices, containing the information required to make an informed decision on their participation. It was clearly indicated that participation was voluntary and that withdrawal was possible at any point in the research. Signed consent forms, an example is also included in the appendices, were obtained from all interviewees to affirm that they were clear what their participation would entail.
This dissertation does not involve vulnerable groups, or especially sensitive issues. However, people’s careers and related aspirations can still be a difficult area to explore and therefore special care was taken. In particular, ensuring the anonymity of data resulting from the interviews was extremely important. Participants were asked to comment on past workplaces, sometimes critically, and it was therefore crucial that former or future employers could not identify individuals from their comments. Interviewees are referred to by a reference number only and all identifying information, such as the name of previous employers, was excluded from the transcripts. Despite these efforts to anonymise the data it still proved impossible to include full transcripts in this report. Even with names and places obscured it remains theoretically possible for participants to be identified from the accounts of their career histories. As a consequence, interview transcripts are only quoted selectively, these quotations are unattributed and the complete data set remains accessible only to the researcher and project supervisor.

5. Results

The results from both the content analysis and the semi-structured interviews are presented below. The meaning and implications of these results will be analysed with reference to the literature in the discussion chapter to follow.

5.1 Content analysis of job advertisements

Thirty-three advertisements for graduate trainee positions were included in the sample. Of these:

- 22 (67 per cent) were in academic libraries in the higher education sector
- 3 (9 per cent) were in the health sector
- 2 (6 per cent) were in government libraries
- 2 (6 per cent) were in the libraries of non-profit organisations
- 1 (3 per cent) was in the legal sector
- 1 (3 per cent) was in a corporate library
- 1 (3 per cent) was in an academic library in the further education sector
- and 1 (3 per cent) was in a secondary school library
The content analysis therefore demonstrated the dominance of higher education libraries in the provision of graduate traineeships.

The majority of advertisements (26, or 79 per cent) were for a single graduate trainee position. Seven advertisements (21 per cent) were recruiting more than one trainee; mostly two or three although one large academic library was looking to fill up to eight positions over different sites.

Just over half (17, or 52 per cent) of the advertisements explicitly stated that the positions adhered to the SCONUL Code of Practice for graduate trainee schemes. A much smaller proportion (5, or 15 per cent) explicitly stated that the post adhered to the CILIP Framework for Continuing Professional Development.

The content analysis attempted to measure the advertisements against three key features of graduate traineeships identified by the literature review:

- 25 (76 per cent) explicitly mentioned training opportunities beyond those required to carry out day to day duties
- 11 (33 per cent) explicitly mentioned the opportunity for the trainee to undertake project work
- 17 (52 per cent) explicitly mentioned that the trainee would experience several areas of library operations

The duties the advertisements stated the trainees would undertake were divided into categories and are presented in the table below. Quotations are provided to demonstrate the type of duties which make up each category and illustrate the ways in which they were presented in the advertisements.

Table 2: Results from the content analysis, duties of graduate trainees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of work</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enquiry work</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>“support the work of the research desk”, “enquiry work, including the use of online, electronic databases”, “bibliographic research using internet sources”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquisitions and related</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>“ordering, receiving and processing of monographs”,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“learning about the acquisition and organisation of our online and printed resources”,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“assisting with acquisitions work including checking publisher catalogues, placing orders, reviewing legal deposit claims”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circulation related</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>“you will also work at the Service Counter”,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“day-to-day supervision of the issue desk”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cataloguing</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>“cataloguing (MARC21 with LCSH) – full training provided”,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“participate in a major project to upgrade short catalogue records”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non specified routine duties</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>“and undertaking more routine duties”,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“a variety of experience carrying out routine duties is provided”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unspecified reader services work</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>“varied experience in Reader Services”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Periodical related</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>“processing periodicals – receipt of issues on Voyager, collecting and sorting issues for binding, security tagging and labelling”,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“duties include managing journals”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information literacy related</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>“being involved in teaching information skills sessions and new student induction”,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“new user inductions and user-training”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classification and indexing</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>“post holder will spend a significant proportion of their time working on a reclassification project”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation/repairs</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>“opportunity to gain experience with special collections and in conservation”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelving</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>“daily clearing and shelving of books from desks”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet/Intranet updates</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>“developing the information centre’s online presence on the school’s learning platform”,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“updating of the Intranet”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining databases</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>“maintaining our database of standing orders”,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“portal and collaboration database development”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special collections/archives</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>“attached to Special Collections and Archives”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
related | where the main duties will be to act as the first point of contact for researchers visiting the reading room”.
---|---
Inter-library loans | “The post holder will be given training in a variety of areas, including... interlibrary loans”.
Serving committees/meetings | “attend and minute senior team meetings”.
Reprographics related | “scanning examination papers and reading lists onto the Intranet”, “supervising the self-service photocopying system”.
Supervision of library | “Sole supervision of the Library when working Saturday morning”.
Current awareness related | “specific work areas will include... current awareness services”, “press cuttings”.
Marketing activities | “marketing and publicizing the enquiry services and the e-library”, “promoting reading for pleasure”.
Subject team support | “assistance to the subject teams and special projects”.
Basic IT support | “some reader induction and basic level IT support”.

5.2 Semi-structured interviews with former trainees

A key criticism of grounded theory is that it results in artificial categories of analysis that obscure narrative and an understanding of data as a whole (Bryman, 2008). To help overcome this, and the fact that concern for anonymity meant it was impossible to include full transcripts, the significant issues emerging from each interview are presented in the following table. There was great diversity in the responses received during the interview process and this justified the choice of semi-structured interviewing as a data collection method. A questionnaire or other more quantitative method could not have generated data of such variety and scope.
Table 3: Results of the semi-structured interviews, synopsis of key issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Traineeship undertaken</th>
<th>Synopsis of key issues emerging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| GT01        | Legal sector           | • Vast majority of time spent cataloguing.  
                |                        | • Time in other work areas tended to be shadowing rather than hands on experience.  
                |                        | • Repetitive, unchallenging nature of duties.  
                |                        | • Purpose of graduate traineeship was to give a basic grounding in what a library does; purpose of the MA is to move towards a higher level of library work.  
                |                        | • Importance of manager as a role model for career development. |
| GT02        | Academic – higher education | • Role of traineeship is to learn what a library does by experiencing all aspects of its operation and management - lack of knowledge about this previously.  
                |                        | • Lack of set criteria on what trainees should achieve during their year.  
                |                        | • Traineeship seen as a foundation to which more theoretical knowledge gained on the MA can be applied.  
<pre><code>            |                        | • Importance of traineeship in |
</code></pre>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Academic – higher education</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **GT03** | allowing the differences between theory and practice to be distinguished.  
- Value of both generic and professional skills and knowledge.  
- Lack of development in the type of skills undertaken.  
- Would have appreciated a greater level of autonomy and responsibility as a trainee.  
- Feeling that the role of a library cannot be understood without practical, workplace experience.  
- Difficulty in linking the basic tasks undertaken as a trainee with advanced theories taught on MA.  
- Identifies lack of management and financial experience as a major weakness of both MA and traineeship. |   |
| **GT04** | Experience of traineeship was a balance of professional and paraprofessional tasks.  
- Function of traineeship was to understand how libraries operate as a whole.  
- Significant role of the traineeship in helping to explore and plan future career and direction of the MA. |   |
| GT05 | Academic – higher education | • Lack of expectations on embarking on the traineeship.  
• Importance of reflecting on the experience of the traineeship during the MA.  
• Majority of work was paraprofessional but this was valuable in preparing for a post with managerial responsibility for these activities.  
• Training gave a sense of wider library profession.  
• Traineeship gave a base of knowledge which could be further explored through the MA.  
• Comparison of experiences of graduate traineeship and previous career in teaching.  
• Managerial and financial experience not adequately addressed by either traineeship or MA. |
| GT06 | Academic – higher education | • Role was focused in technical services.  
• Felt the difference between the traineeship and a professional post was a lack of decision making. Would not have wanted this responsibility as a trainee.  
• Difference between the |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traineeship and previous experience of teaching.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Purpose of traineeship is to test whether you want to pursue a career in libraries – this is the only connection between the traineeship and MA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Poor perception of senior managers in the library sector.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GT07</th>
<th>Academic – higher education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Importance of project in providing a professional edge to a role that was otherwise that of a library assistant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Traineeship should be a “midway step” between professional and paraprofessional.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Traineeship did not provide an understanding of key professional issues, such as information literacy, which proved problematic at the start of the MA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Generic competencies learnt during the MA and the traineeship were just as valuable as professional knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Would have liked more practical activities, such as cataloguing, as part of the MA in order to forge a link with the traineeship.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| GT08   | Academic – higher education | • Role of trainee is a “baby librarian”, mix of professional and paraprofessional experience.  
|        |                            | • Learnt about professional issues in a way that wouldn’t be possible in a library assistant post.  
|        |                            | • Value of rotation around departments in identifying areas of interest for future career.  
|        |                            | • Felt traineeship lacked a mentorship element and also the opportunity to participate in the wider professional community.  
| GT09   | Corporate sector           | • Felt role very comparable to that of professional librarians – part of this due to necessity after a major change in the organisation increased workload.  
|        |                            | • Previously library assistant experience did not give the same opportunity to comprehend how the library works as a whole.  
|        |                            | • Corporate setting resulted in learning experiences, such as exposure to knowledge management, not necessarily shared with trainees from other sectors  
|        |                            | • Traineeship developed a strong sense of professional identity.  |
| GT10 Health sector | • Role equal to that of library assistant, no direct involvement of professional tasks.  
• Difficulty in the short term nature of the traineeship – no opportunity to develop further within the organisation.  
• Traineeship taught specific library skills, MA was much less library specific and taught generic competencies.  
• Manager during traineeship fulfilled a mentorship role.  
• Perceived lack of management experience from both the traineeship and MA.  
• Main learning needs in first professional post will be specific to role – not necessarily something that could have been taught previously. |

The results from the semi-structured interviews will be presented thematically in the following discussion section. Presenting the results from the interviews in this way allows them to be considered alongside the data from the content analysis. A thematic approach further allows the results to be discussed with reference to relevant literature.
6. Discussion

6.1 Sectors in which traineeships are carried out

The content analysis of job advertisements for graduate trainee positions found that opportunities were disproportionately concentrated in higher education libraries. This is further supported by the sectors in which the former graduate trainees interviewed had worked. Seven of the ten participations had gained their pre-course experience in the academic sector.

This is perhaps influenced by the historical development of the trainee scheme. It was originally overseen and administrated by SCONUL and therefore the participating institutions were largely restricted to national and university libraries (Cooper, 1971). Studies into the nature of graduate trainee schemes undertaken during this period found a majority of former trainees reporting that they had worked in higher education settings (Brazier, 1981 and Loughridge, 1987b).

However CILIP, which covers all UK library and information settings, has had the responsibility for the scheme for a number of years and yet the type of institutions represented has not significantly changed. Although the content analysis found positions offered in healthcare, legal, non-profit and corporate libraries these are still small in number compared to those in the academic sector. It is true that higher education is a major employer of library staff, however this does not necessarily justify the relatively few opportunities provided elsewhere. For example, information services in the National Health Service are becoming increasingly important with an interim report by Lord Darzi (2007: 47) recommending a,

“National clinical evidence base...housing what local, national and international clinicians believe to be the best available evidence about clinical practice, pathways and models of care and innovations. This will be available to commissioners, practitioners, patients and the public alike”.

The Department of Health therefore recognise the importance of information to the provision of high quality care and in 2008 there were 1,275 librarians and information professionals working in the NHS to support this (Hill, 2008). However,
opportunities to develop future professionals with a background and interest in this field could be limited by the relatively small number of graduate trainee positions available.

The same is true of the public library sector. Loughridge (1987b) states that a parallel trainee scheme was run in the public library sector during the 1970s and 1980s. Such schemes were reported to be particularly good in developing professional public librarians as authorities often sponsored the postgraduate studies of their trainees. However, such schemes are no longer in operation; no current trainee positions in the public library sector were discovered through the content analysis, interviews, or review of the literature. The public library sector is one of the largest employers of professional librarians in the UK, in 2007/2008 this amounted to 5,298 professional staff, but this is not reflected in their involvement with pre-professional training (LISU, 2009).

6.1.1 The impact of traineeship sector

This lack of provision in many sectors has important consequences for the recruitment of professional staff into these areas. Interviewees reported that their choice of future career was heavily influenced by their traineeship experience;

“I want to work in a university library once I’ve completed the course, so I suppose that [the traineeship] has directly influenced my thinking because of the experience I had working at the University Library. I’d ideally like a position that involves subject liaison work because that was the most enlightening and enjoyable thing from the traineeship”.

Eight of the ten interviewees stated that they wanted to remain in the sector in which they’d undertaken their traineeship either because they had enjoyed particular aspects of the work or because the traineeship made them feel confident and competent in that environment;

“The reason I want to go into legal libraries is because I have that experience, I know what they do, I know how they work, I know what the resources are.”
This identification with a particular sector, fostered during the traineeship, did not appear to be mediated or altered by exposure to a larger variety of information settings during the MA course. Although respondents stated that their postgraduate qualification had led them to consider a broader range of library roles, necessity was the most frequently cited reason for considering a job in a sector other than that in which the traineeship was completed. Interviewees retained their preference for the setting in which they had completed their traineeship even though the employment market may have forced them to consider alternative options;

“I guess I’ve got a job in another sector, but that’s not necessarily a bad thing, a lot of people on the course have been saying it is good to get experience in different sectors...I guess I still see myself working in academic libraries though...I’ll get a qualified job, get a couple of years experience and see what happens.”

It could be argued that former trainees chose to undertake a traineeship in a sector in which they had a pre-existing interest, explaining the correlation between the traineeship and future career plans. However, data generated during the interview process does not support this viewpoint. Former trainees describe having little knowledge of the library and information environment at the point they were applying for their trainee posts;

“It wasn’t something I’d really thought long and hard about, I just kind of fell into it”.

“I don’t think I had any expectations, I didn’t really know what I was letting myself in for, having not had any library experience I don’t think I was sure what was going to go on really”.

This suggests that it is the traineeship itself that has a large influence on the sector in which participants wish to work, more so than a pre-existing interest or the experience of the MA course.
One of the two trainees who did not necessarily want to work in the academic setting in which they had undertaken their traineeship described a long standing interest in public and children’s librarianship;

“We were sent on visits to special libraries, to the Dickens Library and the Johnston Library and also the Wellcome Institute and there was a visit to a prison library, but because I am very interested in public and children’s librarianship this wasn’t an aspect that was particularly covered.”

Although the trainee scheme did provide visits to libraries in other sectors, public librarianship was not covered by this programme. There was no opportunity for this interest to be pursued through the graduate trainee scheme.

Although the individual interviewed remained committed to public librarianship, and pursued this goal during the MA, Underwood et al. (2001) report that there is felt to be a general disinterest in public libraries among library school students. It is stated that this is in part due to a negative perception of the status and role of professionals in this field. The graduate traineeship does not seem to give prospective information and library professionals the same chances to experience public libraries as it does the academic sector. Trainees are therefore unable to test their negative perceptions against the realities of work in this area.

A number of former trainees commented that they enjoyed the diversity of the experiences that students brought to the course;

“There’s an opportunity if someone’s done something in a particular area, if someone has learnt about something they could share with the class...for example when we’ve been doing workplace libraries it’s been really interesting for me as some people, they have experience in areas I know nothing about”.

This sense of collaborative learning and learning from the experience of peers is a key feature of experiential learning. Boud (1993) describes how deep-learning took place among a group of social work students when they were able to discuss professional issues in the context of their own experiences. The diverse range of
experiences in the group allowed members to examine why they had different views and conceptions of the same issue or event. This can be seen to some extent in the views of a former trainee, who stated that they had a very clear conception of the financial pressures on library services from working in a small, corporate library;

“But because of the corporate setting everything is very much money, money, money and I’m not sure other people had the same experience of that and I could bring that to a group”.

She recalled that she was able to bring her experience of the importance of monetary constraints to group discussions and encourage others to consider the financial implications of the issues they were examining.

However, the lack of traineeships in sectors other than academic threatens the ability of postgraduate students to consider their own experiences in the context of the experiences of their peers, something that provides valuable discussion and learning opportunities. A cohort with wide variety of pre-course experience becomes particularly important as constraints on time mean that some sectors are felt to be covered in less depth than others during the MA programme;

“The course sort of spurs people on to public or academic because of the emphasis of the course itself”

“If you think about the academic and special libraries module, it was actually more on academic and one session covered the whole of law or whatever”.

Students with a wide range of experience could allow the sharing of knowledge between peers to compensate for a lack of timetabled, formal teaching in some areas of practice.

6.2 Role undertaken by graduate trainees

The content analyses of job advertisements revealed that the tasks undertaken by graduate trainees were concentrated in a few core areas of work. Answering enquiries, acquisitions, circulation work and cataloguing were the duties most frequently cited by employers. This corresponds with the data generated from the
interviews; when asked to describe an average day as a trainee, respondent’s recollections tended to concentrate on the areas listed above. Therefore the experiences of the former trainees from one department of information studies were broadly similar to the national picture obtained through the content analysis.

There was, however, some divergence in that interviewees mentioned shelving much more frequently than would be expected given the relatively few mentions of this activity in the job advertisements. This can perhaps be explained by the fact that advertisements for jobs are as much to encourage people to apply as to provide information. Therefore it makes sense that employers would not give prominence to the most menial and unappealing duties.

Cataloguing was also an area in which the interview process revealed a slightly different sense of the graduate trainees’ duties than the content analysis. Cataloguing was one of the most cited areas of activity in the job advertisements, and several trainees stated that they were given extensive experience in this field. One respondent reported that the majority of her time was spent creating catalogue entries for journal articles. However, there were also a number of respondents who identified cataloguing as an area where they would have expected to gain experience yet didn’t;

“The main thing that I haven’t physically ever done is any cataloguing, we only did that on the MA and it was more the theory behind it really”.

This is perhaps due to the uncertain status of cataloguing and the debate over whether it is a professional task or something that can be undertaken by unqualified staff (Rider, 1996). As a result, different institutions may have contrasting views on whether cataloguing is a suitable job for a trainee. This goes some way to support the conclusions of Ardern’s (1971) study, that there was little standardisation in the experience of graduate trainees. Although most trainees appear to gain experience in the core areas of enquiry, circulation and acquisitions work, cataloguing is an area where experience varies widely. For some trainees cataloguing was a central aspect of the experience, whilst for others it was not covered at all.
Ardern (1971) suggests that a lack of standardisation causes difficulty for library schools and this is borne out by the opinions elicited during the interview process. Whereas the students who had undertaken large amounts of cataloguing as part of their traineeship were satisfied with the coverage of the topic on the MA, those who had not catalogued as trainees reported that they would have liked practical sessions in this area. The diversity in experience makes it difficult for a postgraduate curriculum to meet the needs and expectations of all students in this area.

In addition to a broad correlation between the roles cited in the job advertisements and those recollected by former trainees, there was a distinct overlap with the descriptions of traineeships found in the work of Loughridge (1987a, 1987b) and the unpublished dissertations he supervised (Arden, 1972, Brazier, 1981, Cooper, 1971, Sutton, 1987). They too stressed that circulation, enquiry, acquisitions and cataloguing were the most common areas of work undertaken by trainees. This illustrates continuity in the tasks performed by contemporary trainees and those who were employed during the 1970s and 1980s. Although the technologies used to perform these routines have changed, and recent trainees made a few references to ICT-based activities such as web design and the development of electronic collections, the essence of the job appears to be very much the same. Therefore, the trainee positions studied do not appear to have been effected by the changes in the profession described by Corrall (2005). This, however, may be more of a reflection on the institutions that employ trainees rather than the scheme itself. It is not clear whether traineeships tend to be offered in traditional information environments, or if it is just the trainee that is given a traditional role.

The tasks reported as central to the trainees’ role in the 1970s and 1980s, and found to be dominant the duties of recent trainees, appear to be largely paraprofessional in nature. The exception is cataloguing but, as has been described above, its status as a professional competency is contested (Rider, 1996). Activities such as circulation desk and acquisitions work are tasks that would be typically expected of a library assistant, something recognised by trainees themselves;
“For most of my role I was working with the library assistant, and we had almost exactly the same job description...I wasn’t doing anything like what the librarians were doing”.

Only one trainee reported that professional level duties, such as working on a knowledge management tool and training users, were a core component of her role. However, she recognised that this was largely due to necessity and commented that her successor was unlikely to have a similar experience;

“the whole graduate traineeship changed slightly because there was so much work to do and I became almost a normal member of staff. For me, that was great and it gave me lots of experience, more so than had I stuck to the proper route.”

This experience of professional level tasks as day to day duties was unusual. This is supported by the content analysis, which recorded only a couple of instances of tasks that might be unambiguously classed as professional such as marketing activity and website design. However, the remainder of the interviewees still reported that they had some experience of professional level work. This took place outside of their usual duties and took the form of shadowing, extra training sessions, visits or project work. This training, beyond that required to undertake the day to day duties of the post, appears to be common to traineeships more generally and was explicitly mentioned by 76 per cent of the job advertisements studied. All interviewees described this element of the role as valuable and something that gave their position the status of “midway to being a professional” or a “baby librarian”. It was recognised by some however that there was more scope for integration between this exposure to professional duties and their day to day work;

“We’d have a session with the subject librarian, then with another one, then we’d go on a visit, but a lot of the training opportunities were set that way. So although you’d have specific on the job training such as circulation desk, it was very much routine when you were doing those things, it was very much about the operation of the library rather than the skills you can get from it.”
An opportunity for a more holistic model of training in professional level duties has therefore been identified, with trainees being allocated some of these tasks as part of their role rather than as an extra training opportunity. An analysis by Orme (2008) indicated that the most desired professional competency desired by employers was experience and allowing trainees some scope to carry out selected professional duties themselves could be a way to meet this need.

6.2.1 Opportunities for development

The majority of respondents reported that the type and level of duties they undertook remained constant throughout the year long traineeship. The dissatisfaction with this situation was particularly acute in the trainees who had worked in the academic sector. They found that once the teaching year had ended, there was little to challenge them during the summer vacation. Those trainees who did feel that they experienced an escalation in their responsibilities often attributed this to the opportunity to undertake an individual project;

“ I had to make a website for [non-profit organisation], so I had to go to their meetings...because I was a trainee I my boss thought it would be good for me to go round to all the organisations and get ideas from them about what they wanted on the website...I had to make the website and then present it to them...which was a whole technical thing I hadn’t done before but I had the time as it was the summer and I wasn’t really in contact with students anymore”.

In this case, the summer vacation was used to provide experience of project management and the activity assigned included several professional level competencies as outlined in the CILIP Body of Professional Knowledge (2004) and the ALA’s Core Competences for Librarianship (2009). These include working in partnership with stakeholders, something mandated by the ALA (2009) and the information service provision aspect of the CILIP document (2004) which incorporates website design and maintenance.
The value of the project in further developing skills and providing experience of professional level tasks was recognised by several interviewees. Those whose trainee experience did not incorporate a project stated that they felt that this was something they had missed out on;

“I would have liked to have done a project but I think that is something I’m lacking from my graduate traineeship that’s an issue during my career search, rather than to the course I’ve done”.

As the above quote illustrates, the skills developed through the project are seen by some trainees in the context of allowing them to fulfil the job specifications of professional posts; rather than something that is of especial benefit in terms of the MA;

“I’ve gotten so many different skills; even if they’re not great...it gave me a lot to talk about in interviews which is really useful”.

The ways in which the traineeship was seen to relate specifically to the professional qualification will be addressed in section 6.4.

Aside from project work, trainees reported that the ability to rotate around different working areas of the library helped to develop new skills and provide a variety of experiences;

“...there were mini rises when you went from one department to another and learnt a new thing, and once you’ve done that you moved onto something else... [the rotation] was interesting and fun and also helped you to think about what you might like to do in the future”.

The ability to rotate around different departments was reported only by those who had worked in large academic libraries, most likely because smaller institutions are unlikely to have such clearly demarcated areas of work. Those who had completed traineeships in other organisations were more likely to describe the frustrations of a repetitive workload;
“I basically just catalogued journals...by the end it was repetitive so my expectations were quite low at that point because there was nothing to do. I knew there was nothing to do, my manager knew there was nothing to do, I was just going into work to read the papers.”

However, some smaller libraries were able to offer their trainees experience of several aspects of the work of the service. One trainee suggested that the size of the organisation was actually an important factor in facilitating the wide range of experience they gained;

“I think I was probably given more opportunities than I would have done in a massive university library because it was very small, I was sitting next to the senior librarian and she would say “have a look at this”, “can you do this”. I was a key part of the team not someone moving from department to department in order to learn”.

This suggests that the type of institution in which the traineeship occurs does not necessarily prohibit the provision of a range of duties. There is therefore little reason why traineeships should not contain this breath of experience, something compounded by the fact that experience in more than one area of library operations is something mandated by the SCONUL Code of Practice (2007). Despite this, only 55 per cent of the advertisements studied explicitly stated that the post would provide this variety.

The literature has indicated some instances in which graduate trainees felt rotating between different departments was not a positive learning experience. Adeeb (1998) felt particularly strongly that constantly moving meant she was unable to get a real sense of any of the areas and how they worked as a whole. Although this was not an experience shared by any of those interviewed in the course of this study, it is still something which institutions employing graduate trainees may need to be aware of when designing training programmes.

This research has demonstrated that although graduate traineeships offer opportunities for development through project work and rotation to different
service areas, this is not something that all trainees are able to benefit from. A lack of progression and development opportunities within the traineeship is problematic as it could make it difficult for the library sector to attract and retain the ambitious and dynamic staff it requires. Some of the comments generated by the interviews illustrate this with a former trainee stating that they were happy not to have responsibility as they “didn’t want to make mistakes” and another commenting that “I’m quite adverse to change”.

Although the context in which these remarks were made was a light-hearted one, it still illuminates a worrying issue. If the initial experience of the library and information work is restricted to unchallenging tasks this could deter candidates with the required attributes from entering the profession. This is of special concern in the current climate when pro-active and dynamic individuals are needed to act as advocates for libraries as professional posts and services are cut (Newman, 2009 and Harris, 2009). People who do not relish change and challenge will not necessarily be the best place to secure the future of the profession.

6.3 Former trainees’ experience of the role

Interviewees reported an overwhelmingly positive experience of the role, with all ten participants stating that they would recommend the scheme to someone interested in pursuing a career in librarianship. However, it is important to qualify this with the nature of the sample that formed the basis of the study; drawing the interviewees from an MA course meant that they had all chosen to pursue a career in librarianship. Therefore individuals who may have abandoned their interest in the sector due to a negative traineeship experience were not represented. A paper by Mowat (1980) suggests that a significant minority of trainees do not pursue librarianship further and this, in some cases, could be a consequence of the nature of the traineeship.

The former trainees that were interviewed reported that their experience of the traineeship was different to the way a library assistant would understand their role. Although there was a strong sense of an overlap with the duties of a paraprofessional (explored further in section 6.3.2) nearly all trainees identified
aspects of their role that were distinct. Crucial to this was the ability to see and experience more areas of library operations than an average library assistant;

“I wouldn’t have been able to work in all these different departments if I was a library assistant, as far as I’m aware, you know, there aren’t any library assistant jobs like that, you stay in one place.”

This feeling that they were able to get the sense of the library service as a whole was a recurring theme in the responses received. Two of those interviewed had held library assistant posts before they applied for a trainee position and stated that this experience did not give them an understanding of how the library worked beyond the circulation area they were assigned to;

“I felt I could have come on the course with just that [library assistant] experience, but I felt personally I didn’t know enough about libraries just from working on the frontline. It was good experience in terms of interactions with users and I learnt a bit about teaching information skills but I had no idea about what went on behind the scenes in terms of work like ordering and cataloguing”.

This is important as there is anecdotal evidence, supported by comments made during the interview process, that financial constraints have led to several large institutions closing their trainee schemes. The evidence collected in the course of this study suggests that unique learning experiences are lost with these positions and they cannot necessarily be replicated by traditional library assistant or paraprofessional positions. Interviewees also strongly articulated that they felt practical experience in the form of an internship embedded into a MA programme was not comparable with a graduate traineeship;

“...one of the things I found most rewarding about my job was doing all the long term stuff, it made me feel part of the team, it made me feel valued, rather than just doing the day to day stuff you feel you’re making a contribution”.

One of the most important benefits of the traineeship is therefore seen to be the opportunity to really become involved with service delivery and be fully integrated in the team. This study suggests that former trainees believe this is only possible in the context of post of at least a year in length. Although they did not discount the idea of an internship or practicum in addition to the traineeship, the US model as described in pieces such as Claggett et al. (2002) was not felt to meet the learning needs of prospective library and information professionals.

6.3.1 Gaps in the learning experience provided to trainees

Competencies related to management were the areas that former trainees reported were the least satisfactorily addressed by traineeships. This supports the findings of the content analysis; although there were a few instances of trainee positions that involved the management of journal subscriptions, the majority of advertisements did not mention any degree of management responsibility.

Several trainees reported that they had the opportunity to shadow senior staff and attend meetings as observers but they did not tend to equate this with ‘real’ management experience and still identified this area as their main learning need.

This is particularly important as the interviewees also suggested that their lack of management experience was not rectified by undertaking a professional qualification;

“We had a brief session on financial management, but it was glossed over I think. We didn’t learn all the technical jargon that goes with it...I think it is interesting that a lot of people who become library managers do go on and do an MBA. It’s almost like we do the business stuff and then we do the business stuff like it’s a separate thing.”

Further to this, there was a sense that management training was something that could only be taken so far in the classroom setting. An element of practical engagement was felt to be necessary in order for such competencies to be developed adequately;
“I’ve read some of the literature on it [management] and it’s very, it doesn’t mean anything, it’s very conceptual...I feel like it’s something that if you did in practice you would really understand it more thoroughly.”

Therefore management remains a learning need that is not satisfactorily fulfilled by the graduate traineeship or the MA. Graduates from library schools are entering the profession lacking confidence in their abilities in this area, despite the fact that related competencies are presented in the literature as central to the profession (Corrall, 2005, Mason & Wetherbee 2004).

Although respondents felt to some extent management competencies would be developed in post as part of continuing professional development, there was still a desire for more consideration of these skills during the initial stages of professional education. There was, however, little consensus on how this might be achieved. Some interviewees stated that they did not feel ready to undertake this type of activity during the traineeship and saw the MA as the most appropriate setting for this type of learning;

“..the problem is you’re inevitably coming in [to the traineeship] without experience so you have to be quite low levelled...I don’t think there’s any way to change that. So I think the graduate traineeship does have to focus on library skills; that’s all it can do really”.

Other former trainees argued that management experience could be introduced in a graduate traineeship setting, with one respondent describing a model for two year traineeships that could allow for the position to develop into one with a greater level of responsibility;

“maybe if you had a two year traineeship...and towards the end of the first year you started to be put in charge of a section, say I would be put in charge of periodicals...obviously you’d have to consult with academics as well, but I could have tried to survey what was used and what other resources were, and tried to make some savings or whatever”.
One thing all responses had in common was an awareness of the difficulties in transmitting managerial competencies in the first stages of professional education. This was articulated in a number of ways. Several mentions were made of the difficulties in giving trainees responsibilities beyond those of other paraprofessional staff, stating that this could cause resentment and discord. Another former trainee questioned whether it was appropriate to expect staff to invest time in training for high-level tasks for what is essentially a temporary post.

This illustrates that former graduate trainings are very aware of the practical realities of the setting in which they worked, and do not have unreasonable demands in terms of development opportunities. The best model to address the learning needs of prospective information and library professionals in this context, however, remains unclear and requires further investigation.

In addition to the concerns reported about the lack of learning related to managerial competencies, several respondents commented that they were not made aware of important professional issues. It was claimed that in several cases these were only introduced to them during the MA;

“Something like open access, I’m not sure that was covered during the traineeship. It certainly wasn’t talked about in my college, my library...it definitely was an issue during my traineeship so I wonder why it wasn’t mentioned”.

“Information literacy was a term I hadn’t come across and even at the start of the MA I was still thinking in terms of user education which is probably an outdated term which isn’t used anymore”.

On occasions this lack of awareness or experience of professional issues was attributed to the setting in which the traineeship took place. A former trainee stated that they felt they did not have a real understanding of reader development work as this was not a priority for the higher education sector in which she was employed. Two interviewees reported that the culture of the academic libraries
they were employed in had affected their ability to experience the possibilities of ICTs in a library setting;

“Let’s just say RFID systems were not on the Librarian’s to do list”.

The literature has made it clear that an awareness of the wider professional landscape is considered a key aspect of a professional education (Middleton, 2003). The interviewees who reported a lack of awareness around ICTs in a library setting independently stated that they had embraced the opportunity to make up for this lack of technological experience whilst studying for a professional qualification;

“...that really enhanced my interest in technology and how it could be applied to the library and that’s something that I have followed up on the course, so that’s enhanced my perspective and the way I approach things career-wise”.

In this context, the postgraduate qualification enables students to follow up areas that they felt the graduate traineeship did not adequately equip them for. However, given the importance of an understanding of the professional landscape the graduate traineeship may be considered a setting where such knowledge can be transmitted at the earliest possible stage. Although the interviews have suggested their ability to do this could be limited by the setting and culture in which they operate, visits to other libraries and information environments and collaboration between institutions could be a way to overcome this difficulty.

Several trainees, when asked what they perceived their main learning needs in a first professional post would be, believed that it would be getting to know the sector and the institution that they would be working in;

“All the jobs that I’ve been applying for have been in the college rather than the HE sector, so getting to know the sector and the students, because I’ve only worked with the eighteen plus group, I’ve never worked with younger students. That will be a challenge to get to know their curriculum and what their learning needs are”.
“I know how a library works from my traineeship, and I have a professional edge from the MA, so then it’s going to be implementing that...I think the hardest piece actually is going to be drawing it all together in a particular context”.

The fact that these interviewees identified their main learning needs as something specific to their first professional post does not, however, mean that there is little that either the graduate traineeship or a professional qualification can do to support this. Literature concerned with the experiences of newly qualified librarians has stated that new professionals often have difficulties in understanding and working within the organisational culture of their employers (Hicks, 2008, Oud, 2008). This is attributed to a lack of experience in the workplace environment, something that the graduate traineeship could address.

This fits closely with educational theories related to experiential learning, which suggest that professional education should develop the skills needed to practice “reflection-in-action” (Schön, 1987: xiii). This can be defined as the ability to reflect on new situations in the context of past experiences and then act on these accordingly. Graduate traineeships can be seen as important in providing the experience which will allow newly quality professionals to critically reflect on the new situations they experience in their first posts.

6.3.2 Graduate traineeships and professionalism

Ball (2004) argues that an important role of practicums in the US Master of Library Science curriculum is to foster a sense of both professional identity and values in students. For one interviewee, this sense of professional identity seemed to be strongly fostered by the graduate traineeship and they reported that workplace experience strengthened their desire to assert themselves as a professional;

“...when I first started, chatting to people on the graduate scheme [at the organisation] they didn’t realise you have to go to university to be a librarian, and a lot of them [library users] were of a certain generation, in their 50s and 60s, they saw us very much as secretaries, admin. It’s made me
passionate about seeing the library as a place of professionalism; you know we’re qualified people, not secretaries. So yes, it has changed my perceptions.”

However, this was not an experience described by the majority of the former trainees interviewed. It was often reported that they identified more strongly with the paraprofessional staff, the group they spent the majority of the working day with;

“we did all the kind of basic things to do with the library, we both had some sort of longer term projects that we were working on...so in that sense there wasn’t much difference between me and an average library assistant”.

This identification with a library assistant role was something that could be reinforced by the behaviour of the professional staff; in some accounts supervisors did not appear to view the trainee as a fledgling professional;

“I think they [professional staff] viewed my role more as a library assistant, there was kind of an us and them thing and I was with the library assistants.”

Furthermore several interviewees recollected a hesitance on behalf of the qualified staff to allow them autonomy in their role as a trainee, and could be distrustful in their ability to carry out more professional level duties;

“...it was always important to double check things with the librarian and I think ultimately in a small library the librarian could get involved in the more bottom level stuff and she’d always want to know what was going on and what was happening”.

“...it is only towards the end that they start to trust you a bit more, they trust you a bit more with more in-depth enquiries at the enquiry desk, they don’t just jump in when hear anything.”

Although Kolb (1984) and those that have further developed his theories stress the importance of learning by doing, in some cases professional staff have not enabled trainees to understand the role of a professional librarian through an exploration of
some elements of the role. Moreover, there is evidence that the comments and actions of qualified staff can, and have, discouraged graduate trainees from pursuing a senior role within the library sector. This negative view of the work that staff on management grades undertake seems to be directly shaped by their observations as trainees;

“I remember the librarian saying she was basically an administrator in a way…I think, I wondered how much the higher up you go, the less it becomes librarianship and it’s just more sort of general management.”

“I don’t want to be a library manager or anything like that, I’ve seen them, and all they seem to do is go to meetings and struggle with the budget. They just look really harassed all the time”.

Professional library staff may be viewed as archetypes of the profession by graduate trainees and this has implications for the way their behaviour is interpreted. Something that managers may see as a throwaway comment about their role has been shown to make a significant impression on graduate trainees and their conception of senior staff. Activities such as allowing a trainee to shadow a senior manager for a small period of time may help to address negative perceptions by giving a real sense of the role such staff undertake.

One trainee felt strongly that the key element lacking from her traineeship experience was an element of mentorship and an opportunity to network with the wider library community;

“I get the impression there are more mentorship schemes in other professions...there wasn’t that element of training you in up terms of getting you to think about your future career”.

“I know there is a CILIP thing, a scheme where graduate trainee schemes join together to do things. That would have been really nice to have felt part of a wider community of librarians, whereas at [name of institution] it was quite isolated’’.
This interviewee later stated that she was very concerned with continuing professional development and engaging with CILIP which is perhaps why she was the only former trainee to specifically flag this as an issue. However, the fact remains that although the _CILIP Chapter One_ scheme (2009b) has a fairly strong presence on the CILIP web pages none of the trainees in this admittedly small sample reported any former interaction with those on parallel schemes.

Furthermore, the literature contains only one mention of institutions collaborating on the provision of additional training opportunities (Herman, 2004). This appears to be a missed opportunity as interviewees from institutions that employed more than one trainee commented that they thought this ability to communicate with peers gave their experience something extra;

“*That there was more than one trainee, it added a really interesting aspect, there were three of us and it was really nice to have a community...you could share tips with each other and be enthusiastic about what you’d learnt and share ideas and decide whether you had something that was worth taking forward [to other senior staff]*”.

An opportunity for employers of graduate trainees to forge closer links in order to provide opportunities for networking and peer-learning amongst trainees has therefore been identified.

It is important to note that this negative view of senior staff, and a lack of a sense of professional identity, was by no means the dominant view presented in the interviews. An equal number of former trainees reported that the professional staff took significant amounts of time to contribute to their development and were proud of the fact their institution was helping to develop the next generation of librarians;

“*...they did take the time to tell me why they were doing things, and if I wanted to ask questions they could do because they knew I was there because I wanted to be a librarian and they were very much “oh I remember*"
this and this from library school”. So they were very supportive and things and they defiantly wanted to help me develop professionally”.

Professional staff were also seen as acting as positive career role models for students; in contrast to the accounts that suggest the traineeship discouraged trainees from coveting senior positions. A former trainee reported that working for a female manager was particularly inspiring,

“She’d got quite high up, she was seen as an associate although I think she’d had to fight for that...so I think she was a good role model, to get that for future career plans, to think yes I can do it, I’m going to get there”.

In this context an important learning experience from the graduate traineeship came from simply an observation of the workplace environment and the behaviours exhibited within it. The traineeship in this respect appears to fit with the more holistic model of professional education supported by Middleton (2003) and the ideas of theorists of experiential learning (Schön, 1987). It is not just through undertaking practical duties that graduate trainees feel they are gaining valuable knowledge and understanding but also from reflecting on a wider set of workplace experiences.

6.4 Relationship between the graduate traineeship and the professional qualification

Two interviewees reported that they did not see any real connection between the traineeship and the postgraduate qualification they went on to undertake. The both argued that this was due to the largely theoretical nature of the MA, which gave them little opportunity to utilise the learning experiences of the traineeship which were largely practical in nature;

“What I did on the traineeship was dealing with users, and front line work, and a lot of this bibliographic work. There’s been very little bibliographic stuff on the MA...and dealing with users, it has come from a theoretical angle, a management perspective.”
Instead they viewed the role of the traineeship as confirming that librarianship was a career path that they wanted to follow, and only believed they would use the practical skills they learnt on the traineeship in a first professional post;

“I just feel it is there to help people decide if they want to go on”.

Another trainee felt that the role of the traineeship in the context of the MA was limited because the course tried to move you quickly beyond the largely paraprofessional role undertaken in that context, and onto a higher understanding;

“…obviously a lot of the tasks don’t link up very neatly as I think that’s [the traineeship] quite low level practice and I think what I’ve learnt on the Masters is some very sophisticated ideas, some very advanced ideas. I don’t necessarily feel the theory is linked up to practice”.

As the Masters was understood as teaching skills and knowledge above and beyond those transmitted during the traineeship, this was seen as “levelling the playing field” between those that had completed a traineeship and those that had not. The content of the course was viewed as something that no one had previous experience of, making any perceived benefits of the traineeship irrelevant.

This disconnection between traineeships and postgraduate courses was a very strong trend in the responses to Loughridge’s (1987a) survey of the late 1980s. He stated that former trainees felt a sense of dismay when they arrived at library school and found that they did not have to draw on their workplace experiences. Although there is still evidence of this view among contemporary MA students, it was much less prevalent. This could indicate that improvements have been made since the 1980s and library schools have attempted to encourage students to consider their previous experience more explicitly. However, there was no evidence in the literature or the data collected of departments of information studies trying to build relationships with institutions employing trainees in the way Loughridge (1987a) recommended.
The way which trainees understand the connection between the traineeship and the professional qualification was articulated in a number of ways.

6.4.1 “To learn what libraries actually do”

The strongest theme extracted from the interview transcriptions can be described by the phrase “to learn what libraries actually do”. This phrase, or variations on it, was used in nearly every interview;

“I know it sounds stupid but looking back you don’t actually know what librarians do, do you?”

“It’s not just here’s a job, go and do it, you should get an idea of what libraries do, the kind of things they do when they’re operating and a bit more about the staff that work there and that kind of thing”.

This understanding was described as a “base” or a “grounding” on which the learning experience of the postgraduate qualification was built. Sometimes the interviewees reported that this grounding came from the practical duties that they undertook on a day to day basis, with collection development being cited several times in this context;

“Collection management, the theory of that, I can see quite clearly how that relates to the practice of collection management because [during the traineeship] you’ve got the cycle of books coming in and out, how you weed books, how the librarian selects books, and we did a stock review so I was involved in selecting books and checking the reading lists”.

The practical experience of collection development related very strongly to the more theoretical approach to the topic taught during the Masters programme. Former trainees were therefore able to see how their duties fitted into the wider professional theories. However, students were also able to relate knowledge that was gained on the traineeship in a context other than their core tasks. Several interviewees reported that they were able to exploit the tacit knowledge they gained from the workplace environment. Examples of this included conservations
which revealed the opinions of professional staff about open access, and observing
the managerial style of supervisors. Learning opportunities on the traineeship did
not have to be practical for them to be utilised as part of the MA; relevant
knowledge was also gained in other, more abstract ways.

This understanding of “what libraries actually do”, gained through the experience of
the traineeship, was important as many interviewees stated that they did not have
this prior to taking up their post. Several trainees commented that people on the
course without workplace experience may not fully understand how libraries
function and therefore have unrealistic expectations about what the sector actually
involved. It was stressed that there are differences between the theories of
librarianship and what routinely happens in practice and this was something that
could not have been fully realised without practical experience;

“I know that [Student A] has never worked in a library so I guess it must be
harder some ways...they don’t know how these things come out in practice
...they might not know how libraries work as organisations, how slow things
can move”.

However, it is not clear whether this grounding in librarianship is something that is
unique to the experience provided to by the traineeship, or whether it could have
been gained through a standard paraprofessional role. Although trainees
interviewed during the course of this study indicated that they believed they had a
broader range of experiences they did not necessarily feel this gave them a
significant advantage over their peers on the MA programme with experience in
library assistant posts.

6.4.2 Reflection

The trainee experience was used by all interviewees as a basis for reflection. This
was sometimes a result of the explicit teaching strategy of the MA course.
Interviewees reported that they drew heavily on the trainee year in a reflective
journal concerned with management and in classroom discussions;
“[In the journal] I wrote about the differences between professional and paraprofessional staff and actually my experiences of the traineeship were particularly valuable there, thinking about the sort of difference between the upstairs and the downstairs staff...it made me think about how it was really important to think about staff dynamics and how you could manage those”.

The knowledge gained on the course was considered in the context of the traineeship and this led to an understanding of the phenomena that was grounded in experience. This demonstrates that even though there is little literature considering how UK library schools can best exploit pre-course experiences, there is evidence in practice of teaching methods that explicitly encourage students to critically examine their time in the workplace. In doing so they are meeting some of the key aims of experiential education (Kolb, 1985, Taylor, 1997).

As well as evidence of formal teaching and learning methods inciting reflection on the traineeship, the interviewees report undertaking this process themselves in their day to day experience of the course.

“...it was also a very small library so a lot of what they were talking about [on the course] were academic libraries, very big university libraries, a very different world to what I’ve experienced...I quite liked being able to relate what they were saying about another sector to my own experience and seeing it in that context.”

“...the library [I was a trainee at] was only slowly embracing new technologies I’d say...it was a really good contrast to look at the library I was in and then think about some of the technologies on the course, to think about those differences and what they meant.”

The traineeship appears to have provided the trainees a strong basis on which to reflect, suggesting that students have the necessary experience to undertake the “reflection-in-action” Schön (1987) sees as so vital to professional practice.
6.4.3 Focusing learning experiences

It was demonstrated in section 6.1.1 that the traineeship has a significant impact on the sector in which participants in the scheme wish to work as professionals. The interview process has also shown that for some trainees the graduate traineeship is a tool which is used, in the words of one former trainee, “to map a course through the MA”. The traineeship was seen as providing a sense of the direction in which the interviewee wanted their career to progress and as a result they were able to focus their learning on the Masters course accordingly;

“If you know what your expectations of libraries are, and where you want to head, although you don’t have to stick to that obviously, it was really good for me to know that I wanted to work in a university library so I could tailor what I was choosing in my modules to that kind of work, and write essays and things from that perspective.”

For this interviewee the perspective that the traineeship provided was a valuable tool when it came to determining the focus of a postgraduate qualification. They were able shape the MA to best meet their needs in terms of their career aspirations. However, it should be noted that there are potential in this application of the graduate traineeship, for both the individual and the profession as a whole. Areas or sectors which are not covered as a graduate trainee may not be considered and therefore excluded from further exploration. Thus, the importance of offering the graduate trainee a wide range of experiences is again illustrated. It is crucial that they had access to all the information necessary in order to make informed decisions in their educational choices and do not prematurely close off options.

6.4.4 Theoretical and practical knowledge

Former trainees reported that many of the learning experiences they gained from the graduate trainee could not have been gained in the classroom. One interviewee described how they were given the opportunity to lead a training session for users and saw this experience as specific to the professional setting in which it occurred; it could not have been replicated on the MA;
“It was important that came from practice, there is a difference between standing up in front of your peers [on the course] and doing it in front of people senior to you, who want to learn something from you, and you’re the only one with that knowledge and you have to be a professional”.

This corresponds with the assertion of Fisher and Matarazzo (1993) that there are some aspects of professional education that must be taught in a classroom setting. This relates to accounts of traineeships and practicums, such as that by Claggett et al. (2002), which see the practical element of professional education as separate from that which is undertaken in higher education. The traineeship relates to a Masters level qualification in that it provides a learning experience that the classroom cannot.

However, this clear separation between theoretical and practical learning is not borne out by the experiences of the trainees interviewed in the course of this study. They reported a more holistic model in which a both practical and theoretical learning experiences were extracted from both settings. Practical, more generic skills, such as presentation skills and teamwork were fostered both in the workplace and in the teaching and assessment strategy of the MA. Equally an understanding of the theories and values that underpin the information and library professional were described as being developed both through writing assignments and the additional training opportunities offered to graduate trainees.

Overall, there was a strong sense of diversity in the experiences reported. Each trainee extracted something different from their experiences which they brought to the course, strongly supporting the experiential learning standpoint that learning is constructed by the individual (Kolb, 1984). This is too complex an area to explore fully in this exploratory study but it is hoped that highlighting the issue will prove useful in formulating questions for further research into graduate traineeships.
6.5 Summary of key issues arising from the results and discussion

- The majority of traineeships take place in the higher education sector. No evidence of trainee positions in the public library sector was found in either stage of the data collection process, or the review of the literature. This is problematic as the interviews showed that the sector in which the graduate traineeship was undertaken was extremely important in shaping the type of role that former trainees aspire to as professionals.

- The core duties of trainees appear to be very similar across institutions, with the exception of cataloguing where differences in the level of experience in this area are pronounced. The tasks current trainees most frequently undertake are also very similar to those undertaken by trainees in the 1970s and 1980s although it is not clear

- Trainees day to day duties are largely paraprofessional, although they are exposed to a range of professional level tasks as ‘extra’ training. Some trainees reported that they would have preferred this professional training to be better incorporated into their everyday activities. Greater scope for development within the role was also identified as an area where improvements could be made.

- The trainees interviewed for this study reported overwhelmingly positive experiences. That understood their experience as distinct to that of a library assistant, chiefly because they were able to get a sense of how the library worked as a whole. This suggests there is something unique about traineeships as a learning opportunity that cannot be easily replicated in other paraprofessional roles.

- Management skills and related competencies were frequently cited by former trainees as the element they felt their professional education to date had not addressed. However, a model for providing satisfactory experience in this area before the commencement of a first professional post has not been identified. More research is required in this field.
• Although some former trainees felt that they developed a strong sense of professional identity as graduate trainees, this was not a universal experience. Other interviewees reported that they were not given an introduction to key professional issues, were given a negative conception of the role of senior managers, and were not able to effectively network with peers.

• On embarking on the traineeship, trainees have very little concept on the realities of library work and an understanding of this is one of the key learning experiences they take to the postgraduate qualification.

• Trainees applied knowledge from both their day to day duties and wider learning experiences to the MA and saw this as providing “a grounding” in the subject. Students reported deeply reflecting on their experiences as trainees during their time on the course. However, the diversity in the learning experiences reported was so great it is impossible to neatly categorise this in an exploratory study. However, it is clear there is no neat division between the learning experiences provided on the traineeship and as part of the MA.

7. Conclusions

This study has gone some way met the aim of investigating the role of the graduate traineeship in preparing participants for a professional qualification in library and information work. It is felt that that the nature of traineeships, and the gaps in the learning experience they provide, have been well defined. However, the objective to identify the ways in which former trainees apply their experience to postgraduate study have been addressed less satisfactorily. The complexity of the learning experiences reported meant it was difficult to give a full account of the ways practical experience is related to classroom-based teaching within the confines of this exploratory study. An in-depth understanding of pedagogical theory is felt to be necessary in order to do justice to this topic. Some recommendations for further research have therefore been identified.
Despite the changes in the profession, there was a strong sense of continuity in the nature of the traineeships described in the studies undertaken in the 1970s and 1980s (Arden, 1972, Brazier, 1981, Cooper, 1971, Sutton, 1987) and those of contemporary traineeships. Although many positive comments were received about the traineeships it was felt that tasks could sometimes be too repetitive, with limited opportunities to develop as a professional. These issues were addressed by Loughridge (1787b) in a report commissioned by SCONUL, however the fact that these issues are still outstanding suggests that the recommendations arising from this work have had little impact.

However, the interviews undertaken during this study reveal several areas of good practice which trainees believed where central to their positive experience of the scheme. The opportunity to experience multiple areas of work and take on project work where widely praised as providing a real sense of library work, including professional level duties. These are seen to provide an edge to the role of the trainee that makes it more valuable than simply a library assistant post. It is important that these examples of good practice are shared widely and collaboration between institutions employing trainees is fostered.

Experience of management related competencies was the main learning need identified by graduate trainees and this is of more concern that the lack of awareness of some professional skills also cited. Unlike areas such as information literacy and open access, managerial skills were not felt to be fully addressed on the course and therefore new professionals are entering the work place lacking confidence in this area. There was no consensus on how these skills might best be fostered, highlighting a need for more research in this area.

The trainees were largely concentrated in the academic sector which was problematic given the large influence that the traineeship has on determining the career aspirations of participants. This is particularly problematic in the public library sector who do not appear to recruit any trainees. They are therefore unable to address the largely negative views of this sector.
Less dissatisfaction with the relationship between the graduate traineeship and the postgraduate was reported by current trainees than those surveyed in earlier works (Arden, 1972, Brazier, 1981, Cooper, 1971, Sutton, 1987). Trainees reported using their in experience in a number of ways, most importantly in giving them a thorough grounding in the role of a library which they could build on during the course. However, it is unclear to what extent this is something that is unique to the traineeship and therefore more research is required.

The most important finding in this area was the complexity of the learning experiences of trainees which defied easy classification. It is clear that there was much overlap in the learning experiences reported, making it impossible to simply classify the graduate traineeship as a sphere for practical skills and the MA for theoretical knowledge. However, it is difficult to explore this more in detail with the data available and the researcher’s knowledge of pedagogical theory. In retrospect the complexity of this area was underestimated at the outset of the study, limiting its ability to fully meet this research objective. However, it is hoped that highlighting the issue will prove useful in formulating questions for further research into graduate traineeships.

8. Recommendations

8.1 For future research

- The ways in which graduate trainees apply their experience to a graduate traineeship should be considered in greater depth, with reference to a wider range of pedagogical theories.

- The best way to provide training in the management-related competencies desired by trainees is unclear. Further research should be conducted to assess the best model for transmitting such skills and knowledge.

- This study has not considered the experiences of those who undertook pre-course preparation in a setting other than a graduate traineeship. Interviews or focus groups with such students could identify whether they apply their experience to postgraduate study in a similar way as former graduate
trainees. The results would ascertain whether graduate traineeships are ‘special’ or whether similar learning experiences could be gained in other, less resource intensive settings.

• The experience of the institutions employing graduate trainees should be investigated in order to assess the impact that they have on the service which employs them. Such an audit may prove a valuable tool for library and information services to justify the investment of resources participation in the scheme necessitates.

• It would be beneficial to repeat the content analysis exercise using full job descriptions, from a larger more representative sample.

• A longitudinal study to understand the ways in which learning experiences from the graduate traineeship are applied beyond the attainment of a professional qualification is recommended. This will more satisfactorily address whether graduate traineeships meet the needs of the profession.

8.2 For library services

• Institutions currently participating in the scheme should strive to continue to offer trainee placements.

• A larger number of institutions from outside the academic library sector should consider creating graduate trainee positions. This is important given the influence that graduate traineeships have in determining the future career choices.

• Where budgetary or other constraints make this impossible, libraries should consider offering visits or shadowing opportunities to trainees at other institutions. This would be particularly valuable in the public library service.

• This study had demonstrated the value trainees place on peer learning and a sense of being part of a wider profession. Therefore relationships between participating institutions should be maintained and expanded. Good practice should be shared and collaboration on training opportunities encouraged.
• A JISC-mail discussion list specifically for graduate trainees would provide a low cost and low effort method for graduate trainees to contact and interact with each other to again foster a sense of professional identity and shared learning experiences.

• Trainees should be encouraged to reflect on their learning throughout their traineeship. This could take the form of a diary or blog, discussions with other staff or trainees, or the production of reflective articles for the library newsletter.

• Project work has been identified as a key area of learning for former trainees and therefore this should be incorporated into all trainee positions.

8.3 For CILIP

• CILIP should build on the SCONUL Framework to develop a skills framework for graduate traineeships which strikes a balance between ensuring high quality learning opportunities, and discouraging institutions from participating in the scheme by being overly prescriptive. Adherence to this scheme should be a condition of advertising on the CILIP web pages and should be developed with reference to the CILIP Body of Professional Knowledge and the curriculum of UK library schools.

• CILIP should use its position to encourage a wider range of information settings to offer graduate trainee positions. This may take the form of providing practical support such as funding, especially in the public library sector.

8.4 For departments of library and information studies

• Teaching and assessment strategies should continue to encourage both reflection and the sharing of experiences.
• Library schools should explore the ways in which they could incorporate more practical activities into the curriculum.

• Library schools should endeavour to gain an up to date understanding of the typical range of activities undertaken by graduate trainees. This will enable identification of any outstanding learning needs that they may be able to address within a formal education setting.

Word Count: 23,073
References


Appendix 1: Information sheet for interviewees

Participant Information Sheet

Project title: The graduate traineeship as preparation for a professional qualification in library and information studies.

You are being invited to take part in this research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

What is the project’s purpose?

The research aims to investigate how a graduate traineeship prepares individuals to undertake a professional, postgraduate qualification in library and information studies. It is hoped that this work will enable some recommendations on the structure and content of graduate traineeships to be made.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been invited to take part in this survey because you are currently completing an MA in Librarianship at the University of Sheffield and have previously undertaken a graduate traineeship.

Taking part in this research is entirely voluntary. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and you can still withdraw at any time. You do not have to give a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be asked to take part in one interview with the researcher, at a time convenient to you. Although a face-to-face interview is preferred, a telephone or Skype interview can be undertaken if this would be more convenient. The interview will last no more than one hour.

The interviews will consist of open, semi-structured questions which focus on the participant’s experience of a graduate traineeship and how this experience relates to their current studies and future career plans.

Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

The interviews will be recorded. This data will be stored securely stored and will only be accessible to the researcher and the project supervisor. All recordings will be destroyed by September 1st 2009, on completion of the project. Transcripts of the recordings will use anonymised codes rather than the names of the participants. Although the written report may include
direct quotations they will be anonymous and will not include any
information that allows the individual to be recognised.

Any additional information that may be collected about you during the course of the
research will be kept strictly confidential. You will not be able to be identified in any
reports or publications.

What will happen to the results of the research project?

The primary purpose of the results is to inform an MA Librarianship dissertation at
the Department of Information Studies, University of Sheffield.

Data collected during the course of the project may also be used for additional or
subsequent research.

How is the research funded?

This research is funded by the researcher, Hannah Wood.

Who has ethically reviewed the project?

This project has been ethically approved via the Department of Information Studies’
ethics review process. The University’s Research Ethics Committee monitors the
application and delivery of the University’s Ethics Review Procedure across the
University.

Where can I direct questions or complaints?

Please contact the researcher (Hannah Wood, lip08hew@shef.ac.uk) or the project
supervisor Barbara Sen (b.a.sen@shef.ac.uk) in the first instance. However if you
feel that any issues have not been handler to your satisfaction please contact
Sheffield University’s Registrar and Secretary.

Thank you for your participation in this project.
Appendix 2: Consent form for semi-structured interviews

**Title of Research Project:** The graduate traineeship as preparation for a professional qualification in library and information studies.

**Name of Researcher:** Hannah Wood

Participant Identification Number for this project: Please initial

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet which explains the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. Contact number: 07905231712 (Hannah Wood, researcher).

3. I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential, stored in a secure location, and destroyed on completion of the research.

4. I understand that my name will not be linked with research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.

5. I agree to take part in the above research project.

_________________________ ________________
Name of Participant Date Signature

_________________________ ________________
Lead Researcher Date Signature

*To be signed and dated in presence of the participant*

Copies:
Appendix 3: Guide questions for the semi-structured interviews

Thank you for participating in this study. If you could please read through the information sheet and then read and sign the consent form. You will get a copy of each of these for future reference.

I am going to ask you some questions about your experiences as a graduate trainee and how this relates to your academic studies and your future career. I’d like to remind you that all responses will be anonymised and you are free to withdraw from the research at any time.

Section A – Introductory questions

1. What sector did you complete your traineeship in?

2. How long did it last?

3. How many other trainees participated in the scheme?

Section B – Nature of the traineeship

1. Can you describe average day as a graduate trainee?

2. How did the tasks you undertook at the beginning of the traineeship compare to those you did at the end?

3. What do you understand the role of a trainee to be?

4. What do you think of that role as you’ve described it?

5. How did your post relate to the role you’ve described?

6. How did post compare/not compare to the job of a professional librarian/library assistant?

7. How do you think the librarians/ library assistants viewed your role?

8. How do you think the post compared or didn’t compare with entry-level graduate jobs in other sectors?

9. Do you have any other work experience - library or otherwise? Can you tell me how this compares to traineeship?

10. What were your expectations of the traineeship? Were these met?
Section C – Traineeship’s relationship to professional qualifications

1. Can you describe the relationship between the traineeship and MA as you understand it?

2. The traineeship is traditionally seen as a foundation on which to build future studies – how do you feel about that conception?

3. Can you give me an example of a situation during the MA when you used something learned during traineeship?

4. Can you give me an example of a situation during the MA when there was a gap in your knowledge you felt the traineeship should have addressed?

5. So were there any aspects of the course that would have been more challenging without the traineeship. What were they?

6. How do you think somebody who hasn’t gone through a traineeship would experience an MA?

7. What did the traineeship suggest were important skills for librarians?

8. How did this correspond to what was learnt on the course?

9. What was the most important skill/learning experience/knowledge you gained from the traineeship? It does not have to be something practical.

10. What was the most important skill/learning experience/knowledge you gained from the MA. It does not have to be something practical.

Section D – Traineeship and career plans

1. How does the traineeship relate to your future career plans? Probe on sector and status.

2. How does the MA relate to your future career plans?

3. From your experience of applying for professional posts, are there any criteria you are finding it hard to fulfil? How might the graduate traineeship have addressed this?

4. Thinking about your first professional post, what do you envisage your main learning needs in this post to be?

5. Could the graduate traineeship have addressed these needs? How might they have done this?
Section E – Concluding questions

1. What would you tell someone wanting to begin a career in libraries with regard to graduate traineeships?

2. On reflection, how do you think the course could have better exploited your experiences as a graduate trainee?

3. Is there anything you else you would like to raise?

Thank you very much for your participation in this study.
References


http://www.pla.org/ala/educationcareers/careers/corecomp/finalcorecompstat09.pdf  
[Accessed 15 August 2009].


