

THE PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF READING AND BOOK
KNOWLEDGE AMONG PUBLIC LIBRARY STAFF

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EWAN FRANCES

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Abstract.

Background. The background to this investigation was the apparent contradiction between two competing views of library staff's reading habits. While the general public tended to assume that library staff were all avid readers, authors in the LIS literature expressed concerns about the number of non-readers within the profession who lacked book knowledge.

Aims: The primary aim of this project was to investigate the perceived importance of fiction reading and book knowledge among public library staff. A secondary ambition was to examine the significance attached to these activities in libraries where respondents worked, in job advertisements in the professional press and in the modular content of current LIS courses.

Methods. A questionnaire was developed and piloted among MA Librarianship students who had worked in public libraries. The revised questionnaire was then distributed by email to public library staff at services in Sheffield, Lancaster and Essex. Two audit exercises were conducted to provide a contextual background to the investigation into the attitudinal perceptions of public library staff. A job vacancy profiling exercise investigated the extent to which qualities such as 'book knowledge' and 'love of reading' were specified as essential or desirable candidate attributes for public library posts advertised in the *CILIP Gazette*. The modular content of CILIP accredited LIS courses was examined to determine whether any of these programmes included units on reading or literary study.

Results. All of the respondents surveyed read imaginative literature regularly. Staff regarded reading and book knowledge as being advantageous for a range of library roles, but these competencies only appeared in the person specifications of a few advertisements for public library posts. The majority of respondents believed that current library school courses should include modules on reading and literature, but only five library courses featured any modules of this nature.

Conclusions. The vast majority of public library staff perceived reading and book knowledge as valuable competencies. The same significance was not attached to these traits by library management and staff recruiters, or by the professional bodies and academic institutions responsible for offering degrees in the LIS discipline. More could be done to raise the status of reading and book knowledge within the profession as a whole.

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1. Introduction

The general public often assume that library staff are all voracious readers. Anecdotal evidence from library employees points to the prevalence of this perception. Tales abound of staff being asked by friends and relatives whether they “spend all day reading” when they reveal that they work in a public library. This association between library staff and books may in part be attributable to the literacy events and reader development activities that many public libraries support. However the reading habits and book knowledge of those individuals whose job it is to deliver these services have rarely been explored. This dissertation will seek to address this gap in the literature by examining the perceived importance of reading and book knowledge among public library staff. Briony Birdi suggested this dissertation topic as a suitable research area. The topical relevance of the proposed study was emphasized by the reported concerns of a senior adult services librarian who was worried that a number of her colleagues were not reading enough fiction.

Another context informing this investigation is the changing role of the public library. There has arguably been a decline in emphasis on books as services increasingly focus on providing patrons with IT training and support. In response to these apparent changes, this dissertation will investigate whether job advertisements for current public library posts specify book knowledge and an enthusiasm for reading as essential or desirable qualities for applicants to possess. The dissertation will also examine whether any attention is paid to these kinds of competencies in the curricula of UK library schools. The training opportunities available for public library staff to develop their reading and book related knowledge and skills will also be explored.

1.1 Aims and Objectives

The primary aim of this project is to investigate the perceived importance of fiction reading and book knowledge among public library staff. A secondary ambition is to examine the significance attached to these activities in libraries

where respondents work, in job advertisements in the professional press and in the modular content of current LIS courses. The specific research objectives for the study are as follows:

- To investigate the imaginative literature reading habits of public library staff, examining what staff read, how regularly they read and where they read.
- To examine the reading and book culture of libraries where respondents work.
- To investigate whether reading and book knowledge are seen as advantageous for all library roles, and to explore the importance attached to these attributes in recruitment terms.
- To investigate whether the professional education of staff included the study of content on reading or books, and to examine whether current LIS courses are offering modules in these areas.
- To investigate whether staff had undertaken any training that focused on book knowledge or reader-centred work in the course of their current job.

2. Literature Review

It is customary to include a review of the methodologies and findings of past studies when undertaking a research project. However the fiction reading habits and book knowledge of UK public library staff has received little scholarly attention. Literature on staff reading habits and attitudes towards reading and books in general has therefore been included in this review.

2.1. **The personal and professional reading of library staff.**

Dilevko and Gottlieb (2004) investigated the reading habits of academic reference librarians and public library reference personnel in the US and Canada. Their research examined the extent to which librarians read newspapers, periodicals, fiction and nonfiction as a way of keeping up to date with current issues. The study found that regular reading helped staff in answering reference queries from library users. Weaver (2002) examined the professional reading habits of US librarians. Different types of libraries were represented in the study, though academic libraries featured most prominently. The research investigated what librarians read, how they selected reading material and how they used the literature to inform their decision-making process. The study found that librarians regarded reading librarianship literature as an important part of their professional life. Many respondents wanted to read more but cited "lack of time" as a constraining factor.

Montanelli and Mak (1988) studied library practitioners' use of library literature by examining interlibrary loan requests at the University of Illinois. The practical and technical aspects of librarianship were found to be the most requested topics. Mathioudaki (2005) investigated Greek public librarians' attitudes towards reading as part of a wider study exploring the factors influencing Greek people's reading habits. All of the librarians interviewed read, though some were more prolific readers than others. Respondents reasons for reading included the fulfillment of psychological needs and for education, information and recreation. Most librarians read at home in the evening and

chose their books in a variety of ways. Some titles were selected on the basis of recommendations, others were chosen because of the author or genre, and some were picked randomly.

2.2. The public library's role in relation to books and reading.

The lending of books and the promotion of reading are seen as core public library activities. Forrest (2001:168) argues that: "the major part of a public library service's business is, and will remain for a long time, the lending of books." Toyne and Usherwood (2001: 6) note that "book lending is still perceived to be the major function of the public library, and libraries are seen as natural places for those who wish to develop as readers." Denham (in Elkin and Kinnell, 2000) asserts that the promotion of reading, books and literacy should be placed in the centre of library service development. There is consensus in the literature that reading plays an important role in people's lives. Train (2003: 30) observes that one of the major goals of the public library is to encourage reading among its members and in wider society:

Proponents of the public library service believe that reading has an intrinsic value to all citizens, not only in a formal educational setting, but as a means of informing and enhancing the lives of all who choose to do it.

Many authors state that libraries have a crucial role to perform in reader development. Packwood (1994:28) notes that libraries should "encourage the reluctant reader, support the less experienced reader and stretch the eager reader, building in all of them a sense that reading is a pleasure not a pain." Genoni (2003: 405) advocates a role for librarians as "the champions of literacy and its related accomplishments."

Toyne and Usherwood (2001) examined the views of people who read fiction and other forms of imaginative literature borrowed from public libraries. To establish a greater understanding of the function of the public library in providing a reading experience, they compared these views with those of other stakeholder groups including library professionals. Participants in the study reflected on the individual and social impact of the public library reading

experience. Interviewees were asked how they would explain the value of the public library, and the benefits available through book reading, to their local councillor. Their responses touched upon concepts such as personal development, social cohesion, community empowerment, culture and identity, imagination and creativity, literacy skills and health and wellbeing. The data presented in the report demonstrated the positive influence that imaginative literature can offer to an individual and, in turn, society. There was a general consensus among the librarians interviewed that a love of reading and strong literacy skills should be a pre-requisite in recruitment. However, twenty-five per cent of all the librarians interviewed: “spoke about colleagues who had been appointed with no interest in reading” (Toyne and Usherwood, 2001: 121)

2.3. The need for staff to read and possess book knowledge.

Not all library staff are informed enough about books to adequately assist readers. Harrison (1996: 21-22) notes that library users are often faced with librarians who display “an appalling lack of... book knowledge” and reflects that such ignorance “lets the profession down very badly in the estimation of users.” Van Riel (1993: 81) links librarians’ ignorance in the field of literature to a lack of professionalism: “Asked for a ‘good read’ they hesitate and tend to fall back on their own personal tastes. Is this a professional response?” Forrest (2001: 168) warns that: “libraries have lost confidence in ... the book. Low confidence stems from lack of knowledge: of publishing trends; of readership; and of how to use the one to serve the other.”

Many authors agree on the need for librarians to acknowledge the value of reading for pleasure and to be informed about what is happening in the world of books. Shearer (in Katz, 2001) asserts that “public librarians must themselves view leisure reading as a worthwhile activity” if they are to nurture a love of reading in others. Kinnell and Shepherd (1998:72) claim that librarians need “literacy knowledge and experience” in order to advise readers. Ross (in Katz, 2001:20) argues that: “the successful matching of book to reader requires a lot of meta-knowledge about books, genres, authors, publishers, etc.” Towey (in

Katz, 2001: 135) contends that:

The librarians' role in the service has to begin by thinking and talking about books on a regular basis. Individual staff should evaluate their own personal reading patterns and preferences. This will help them understand the type of books they personally enjoy and engender more sensitivity to patrons' preferences.

3. Methodology

Little previous research has been undertaken into the imaginative literature reading habits of public library staff and their attitudes towards the importance of reading and book knowledge. The current study is therefore primarily exploratory in nature and should be viewed as a preliminary investigation forming the basis for future research. This chapter describes the research methods that were used to undertake fieldwork for this investigation. It also documents how the original aims of the study had to be modified when the researcher was forced to abandon his initial choice of data collection technique as a result of difficulties encountered during the participant recruitment process.

3.1 Theoretical basis of the methodological approach.

Stone & Harris (1984: 5) assert that the primary aim of outlining a research report's methodology is to "provide sufficient information to enable the reader to understand and evaluate the findings." Whether a quantitative or a qualitative approach is employed depends upon the types of questions that the researcher wishes to examine. As this study aimed to obtain information about the attitudes, opinions and behaviours of a range of subjects, the researcher chose to utilise a qualitative approach. Gorman & Clayton (1997: 23) describe qualitative research as a means of "attempting to describe and understand a situation by looking at it through the perspective of those involved in it, and using induction to reach a fuller explanation." This approach reflected the line of enquiry that the researcher intended to take in examining the different meanings attached to particular activities, such as book reading, among a range of public library staff.

3.2 Initial choice of data collection technique.

Silverman (2000: 8) notes that:

The methods used by qualitative researchers exemplify a common belief that they can provide a 'deeper' understanding of social phenomena than would be obtained from purely quantitative data.

In order to obtain detailed information about participants' views on the issues being explored by the dissertation, the researcher had intended to conduct a series of interviews with members of staff at Sheffield and Lancaster central libraries. The researcher contacted these libraries, outlining the aim of the research project and enquiring about the possibility of arranging interviews with members of library staff. The researcher explained that he was seeking to recruit around five participants for the study and was especially keen to canvas the views of individuals with the following job roles:

- Library manager/Head of service
- Children's librarian
- Librarian
- Member of enquiry desk staff
- Member of technical services staff

The researcher met with a senior member of staff at Sheffield central library who explained that, because of the way that the service was structured in Sheffield, some of the job roles that the researcher had identified did not correspond to any specific individuals within the central library. There were no specific employees whose principal role was that of enquiry desk staff. Nor was there a designated 'children's librarian' based at the central branch. The decision was therefore taken to adopt a 'best match' policy and to approach individuals who held similar responsibilities relating to these posts.

The researcher acquired the contact details of several suitable members of staff at Sheffield who were willing to participate in the research. However difficulties arose when the researcher contacted these individuals to arrange dates when they would be available for interview. Several individuals were due to be taking leave during the period when the researcher was in Sheffield. Other individuals were unavailable because of work demands or were located at different library sites in Sheffield that the researcher had not previously visited.

3.3 Consideration of alternative data collection methods.

At this juncture, the researcher considered conducting telephone interviews with participants as an alternative to face-to-face interviews. This data collection technique seemed to offer a number of benefits. Chief among these was the extended access to individuals that telephone interviewing could potentially provide. Geographical distances could be overcome by telephone, making it possible to interview participants regardless of where they happened to be physically located. Telephone interviewing also had the advantage of offering a means of 'real-time' synchronous communication between researcher and interviewee that would enable each individual to directly react to what the other was saying. This gave the researcher the opportunity to obtain natural, spontaneous responses from interviewees, as participants would not have time to deliberate for too long over questions or to carefully rehearse their answers. Unfortunately, telephone interviewing did not turn out to be a viable data collection method. This was primarily due to the technical difficulties involved in obtaining audio recordings of telephone conversations that were of a sufficiently high quality to be accurately transcribed.

Other factors also contributed to the researcher's decision to abandon telephone interviewing. Because the interviewees involved in this process would be physically separate from the interviewer, the researcher feared that the nuances of nonverbal communication normally present in face-to-face interview situations would be lost. While cues such as the tone of the interviewee's voice and their intonation would still be available to the interviewer for analysis, the body language of the interviewee could not be perceived or recorded. Another disadvantage of the telephone interview method was that the researcher would be unaware of the situation in which the interviewee was placed. This would have made it difficult for the researcher to create an appropriate interview ambience. It also introduced the possibility that the interviewee may have been within earshot of senior staff, or library managers, when they were being interviewed. This posed a problem because some of the questions that the researcher intended to ask called for

respondents to give honest answers about the reading and book culture of the library where they worked and the provision of fiction stock.

3.4 Implementation of revised data collection method.

Having discounted the telephone interview method, the researcher was forced to abandon the idea of conducting face-to-face interviews with members of staff at Sheffield and Lancaster central libraries as a result of difficulties encountered during the participant recruitment process. The researcher was advised by a senior librarian at Sheffield library that staff would be more receptive to answering questions via email than to being interviewed. Distributing questions to participants via email seemed like an efficient way to collect data so the researcher chose to adopt this method in the hope that it would yield a high response rate.

Oppenheim (2008: 47) notes that: "Questionnaires do not emerge fully-fledged; they have to be created or adapted, fashioned and developed to maturity after many abortive flight tests." In this instance, the researcher had to adapt the original schedule of interview questions into a questionnaire format that could be circulated among participants. Every aspect of the constructed questionnaire had to be tested beforehand to make sure that it worked as intended. The survey passed through a number of stages before it was ready for distribution. The revision and refinement of the questionnaire was a gradual, iterative process. During the initial piloting stage, the questionnaire was distributed to a number of students on the MA Librarianship course who had experience of working in public libraries. The feedback from this exercise helped the researcher to make some amendments to the wording and sequencing of particular questions. Once the questionnaire had been revised to incorporate these changes, it was tested on the same sample of students. The updated version of the questionnaire received unanimously positive feedback and the researcher considered that it was now ready to be distributed to study participants.

3.5 Participant selection and recruitment.

The original intention of the dissertation had been to interview a range of library staff at the main central lending libraries in Sheffield and Lancaster. As it was not possible to study the complete population of each library, a sample was to be drawn from the employees who worked at each branch. However, the researcher could not obtain access to the range of individuals who he wanted to interview at Sheffield and only two members of staff at Lancaster library showed any willingness to participate in the study. This meant that any comprehensive evaluation of the two services proved impossible to undertake.

Piloting of the questionnaire showed that respondents often skipped questions or provided short 'yes/no' style answers that did not provide the researcher with much information to analyse. In a face-to-face interview situation, the researcher could address this issue by introducing follow up prompts to elicit additional information from respondents, or by asking interviewees to expand upon aspects of their answers. However, because respondents would be completing the questionnaire independently, neither of these options was available to the researcher. The researcher added notes after some questions asking respondents to 'please provide details' in their answers, but the impossibility of ensuring respondents' compliance with these requests was a limitation of the data collection method.

This issue had a direct bearing on the participant selection process as the researcher felt that the existing number of respondents who had been recruited from Sheffield and Lancaster would not provide a large enough quantity of data to analyse. In order to obtain a sufficient number of completed questionnaires, the researcher chose to expand the scope of the investigation to include members of staff at other UK public library services. The researcher aimed to collect a total of twenty completed questionnaires, as it was felt that this amount of responses would be sufficient to provide a useful insight into the attitudes and perceptions of library staff toward the research topic. The researcher considered distributing the questionnaire to UK public library staff at different services using the JISC mail LIS-PUB-LIBS discussion list. However, it

was not possible to post the questionnaire to the list as an MS Word attachment and the length of the questionnaire meant that it was not possible to create an online web-hosted version using free tools such as SurveyMonkey. The researcher therefore chose to distribute the questionnaire via email.

The researcher circulated the questionnaire among the members of staff who had already been recruited from Sheffield and Lancaster central libraries. The researcher also chose to contact a number of libraries in Essex. A copy of the questionnaire was emailed to ten libraries in this county, along with a covering letter giving details about the research project and a participant information sheet. The libraries contacted were located in Basildon, Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Colchester, Harlow, Rochford, Holland, Saffron Walden and Witham. Completed questionnaires were received from staff at over half of these libraries. In order to recruit additional participants, the researcher used a 'snowballing technique' (Oppenheim, 43). Individuals who completed questionnaires were encouraged to forward the questionnaire to any members of library staff they knew of who they thought would be interested in participating in the research. This approach yielded the researcher's target number of study participants.

The researcher encountered a high non-response rate among members of staff at the library services that he approached. This had the potential to introduce a degree of bias into the research as the respondents who completed and returned the questionnaire were largely self-selecting and may have chosen to assist with the study because of their belief in the importance of reading and book knowledge.

3.6 Ethical considerations.

Since the study involved human subjects, some form of consent procedure was required for each participant. Participants received information about the research in the form of an information sheet. If the respondent completed and returned the questionnaire voluntarily this signified 'implied consent' and

negated the need for them to sign a consent form. Personal data was anonymised when the research was written up so that participants could not be identified.

3.7 The completed questionnaire.

In order to obtain respondents' direct, personal experiences with reading and their subjective meanings that they attached to this activity, the researcher chose to use 'open' questions rather than attitude scales or predefined answer categories. The final form of the questionnaire, a copy of which is included in the Appendices, was composed of twenty-five questions spread across five different sections. The first section gathered information about the job titles and roles and responsibilities of respondents. The other four sections were grouped thematically. Each addressed one or more of the research objectives outlined in the introduction to this dissertation.

3.8 Other research methods used in the investigation.

Two separate audit exercises provided a contextual background for the investigation into the attitudinal perceptions of public library staff. A job vacancy profiling exercise was undertaken in order to investigate the extent to which qualities such as 'book knowledge' and 'love of reading' were specified as essential or desirable candidate attributes for public library posts. This process involved examining the person specification qualities listed for jobs advertised in the *CILIP Library + Information Gazette* over a three-month period. In a separate task, the modular content of CILIP accredited undergraduate and postgraduate LIS courses at UK institutions was examined in order to ascertain whether any library school programmes offered modular units on reading or literary study. The results of these audits have been included in the relevant sections of the questionnaire findings that now follow.

4. Reading habits and book knowledge.

This chapter sought to address the following research objective:

- To investigate the imaginative literature reading habits of public library staff, examining how often staff read, what they read and where they read.

4.1 How often public library staff read.

Respondents were asked: 'How often, if ever, do you read 'imaginative literature' such as fiction, drama and poetry?' A large proportion of subjects provided a single word answer to this question, so the data obtained was not as illuminating as it could have been. Nevertheless, it was possible to build a preliminary picture of the reading habits of library staff from the information that respondents provided. 12 of the 20 respondents (60%) who answered this question indicated that they read 'daily' or 'every day'. Other individuals stated that they 'tried to' read every day, that they read 'every other day' or that they read 'quite a lot.' Even the respondent who read the least, in comparison to the other subjects in the study, still read 'several times a week.'

These findings show that the public library staff sampled all read much more often than the average person in the UK. A poll carried out on behalf of the National Reading Campaign by the Office of National Statistics found that quarter of the 1,700 adults surveyed had not read a single book in the last twelve months (Office of National Statistics, 2002). A more recent report into the reading habits of UK residents commissioned by Arts Council England found that a third of the 2,000 adults polled claimed never to read any books at all (BML, 2005).

4.2 How much public library staff read.

The Office of National Statistics survey found that nearly half of adults had read at least five books in the past year (Office of National Statistics, 2002). When respondents were asked how many novels they had read in the past

twelve months, estimates ranged from ‘approximately ten’ to ‘over 80.’ The average figure given by library staff was in the range of the low to mid twenties. Several respondents reported reading different titles in tandem and having ‘a few books on the go’ at any one time. There was no correlation between the regularity with which respondents read, or the amount that they read, and their job title. Respondents who claimed to read daily included a range of both professional and paraprofessional staff with a variety of different library roles.

4.3 What public library staff read.

The only respondent to explicitly link the types of materials that they read to their work was a Children’s librarian:

I often have to read for what I’m doing at work because I do a teenage email newsletter, so I’ve got to review books for that, so I often read teenage stuff or younger stuff. Occasionally, I’ll get hold of an adult book and read that for a change but a lot of the stuff I do read is junior.

This respondent was also the only individual to report reading teenage or junior fiction in addition to adult fiction. Among the rest of the respondents, adult fiction was the most widely read literary genre, followed by poetry then drama:

I read fiction continually i.e. every day, poetry less often and drama less than that, maybe a play per year. [Resource Assistant]

I read fiction daily. Drama and poetry less frequently. [Library Assistant]

I read fiction regularly but seldom drama and poetry. [Library Advisor]

Some respondents provided details about their preferred fiction genres and favourite authors. Their choices showcased a range of literary tastes. One male children’s librarian enjoyed reading ‘action stuff like Andy Mcnab’ and ‘lad-lit’ by the likes of Nick Hornby and Tony Parsons. Another male respondent enjoyed the semi-autobiographical short stories of Charles Bukowski. Two female library assistants both named ‘crime’ as their favourite fiction genre. One of these individuals stated that Val McDermid was her favourite writer.

All of the authors identified by library staff were relatively well known contemporary writers. The books that respondents cited as favourites were also popular titles with mainstream appeal. The only novels specifically named were: *The Time Traveler's Wife* (2003) by Audrey Niffenegger and *The Lovely Bones* (2002) by Alice Sebold. Both of these novels first gained prominence as Richard & Judy book club choices and were later made into highly publicised feature films. Pre twentieth century writers and literary works did not feature in the answers of any respondents. However, as the book knowledge self-assessment exercise discussed later on in this chapter shows, this did not mean that library staff lacked an awareness of the works of canonical authors from bygone eras.

4.4 Where and when public library staff read.

Respondents were asked: 'Where and when do you normally read?' The vast majority of subjects reported that they did most of their reading at home in the evening and during weekends. Preferred locations included 'in bed', 'in the bath', and 'in the garden (weather permitting).' Several respondents read on public transport, 'the train, the bus', while commuting to and from work. A large proportion also read at work during 'tea breaks', 'break times' and 'lunchtimes.' Many also read while on holiday abroad. No public library staff reported reading during work hours as part of their job. This finding is discussed in more detail in the next chapter, which focuses on the reading and book culture of the libraries where respondents worked.

4.5 Why public library staff read.

Numerous research projects have examined the act of reading in an attempt to explain the unique role that this activity can play in people's lives. Studies have demonstrated that reading can serve to satisfy a range of needs. In order to examine what motivated public library staff to spend their time engaged in this activity, and to understand what benefits they derived from the experience, respondents were asked: 'Why do you choose to read?' Subjects

cited several different reasons for reading imaginative literature. One of the most frequently mentioned motivations was the enjoyment and pleasure that this activity could bring:

I read because it is one of life's great pleasures, it can be informative, exciting, sad, funny, it can appeal to all our emotions. [Library Assistant]

It's an enormous pleasure – an escape and a glimpse into another mind. [Library Assistant]

I enjoy it. It takes me into other worlds, keeps my brain active, widens my knowledge and experiences. [Library Advisor]

Many respondents stated that reading provided them with an enjoyable distraction from the pressures of everyday life by allowing them 'to escape into other places and worlds' or to 'lose themselves' in a story. Reading was often portrayed as an immersive, escapist activity that helped respondents to 'relax' and 'unwind.' Several individuals described 'taking time out' to settle down with a book as a 'luxury' or 'treat.' One respondent regarded reading as an indulgence:

It is the most relaxing thing to do, there isn't a lot of time in the day to indulge myself but that is how I choose to do it. [Service development librarian]

One children's librarian, who read 'purely for enjoyment,' had a tendency to limit his reading to particular types of texts that he thought he would enjoy.

I know I shouldn't do it but, when I'm reviewing books for the newsletter, I do tend to stick to the ones that I know I'm going to enjoy... I do get criticized for it from the other staff who say that I should pick the pink, girly books, but I enjoy doing it.

Other respondents stated that they read 'for information' and 'to gain knowledge.' For many subjects, reading offered an opportunity for 'insight into another mind' as well as 'personal insight' and self development.' Other individuals had more pragmatic reasons for reading. One library assistant

stated that she read for pleasure, but also because she was a member of a book club.

4.6 The degree of attachment library staff felt toward reading.

Respondents were asked 'What impact would it have on your life if you were unable to read imaginative literature?' All of the subjects stated that, in the event of such a situation, the loss of literature would have a decidedly negative effect upon their lives. The severity of the privation that respondents expected they would feel varied. One service development librarian described reading as one of her 'main hobbies' but not necessarily a key priority in her life. For other individuals, reading appeared to be a primary interest. Some respondents described having a 'compulsion' to read or 'needing' to spend some time everyday reading. Several staff stated that being unable to read imaginative literature would prove highly detrimental to their personal wellbeing:

Life would be unbearable. [Library Supervisor]

Cannot imagine that, I would be devastated. [Library Assistant]

It would be very distressing. I'd miss it badly. [Library Assistant]

One respondent even claimed that:

If asked to choose to be blind or deaf I would always go for deaf. I have been a voracious reader since I first learnt. [Library Assistant]

Other individuals reported that they would find the experience of being unable to read dull:

It would be terribly boring. [Library Assistant]

I would be bored beyond belief. ... Since a young age, I've always had books with me wherever I've gone. I would really miss them. [Children's Librarian]

Most respondents described how being unable to read imaginative literature would effect them as individuals on a personal level. Some staff felt that they might lose skills or facets of their personality as a result of being unable to read:

I would be concerned that it might affect my imagination and so potentially my ability to be creative. [Enquiry Officer]

Two respondents reflected on how their ability to perform their jobs could suffer as a result:

It would have a huge negative impact on my life. I would feel a great impoverishment of the mind. I would not be able to do my job as well. [Collections and Reader Development Manager]

It would certainly restrict my ability to advise and empathise with library users. [Library Assistant]

Over half of the respondents stated that they would attempt to compensate for the loss of imaginative literature from their lives by reading other types of material instead or by focusing on other forms of recreational entertainment.

I would have to find something else to fill my time. I would probably read non-fic instead eg biographies, but would still be at a bit of a loss. [Library Assistant]

I would listen to spoken word or read non-fiction. [Resource Assistant]

I'd probably watch more TV for the escapism, but it would take a lot of pleasure away. [Enquiry Officer]

Most respondents expressed the view that none of these alternate activities could ultimately serve as a satisfactory substitute for fiction reading.

I suppose I could survive. I have read some great non-fiction, so it wouldn't be the end of reading for pleasure, but it would be a huge loss. [Library Assistant (Children's)]

I do love the newspaper, and I sometimes read non-fiction, but the quality of my life would be poorer without a good story. [Customer Services Supervisor]

4.7 Book knowledge self-assessment exercise.

In order to investigate the book knowledge of public library staff, respondents were asked to indicate on a scale of 1 (poor) to 10 (outstanding), where they would rate their level of knowledge in four different categories of literature. The categories were:

- Literary classics by canonical writers: e.g. Charles Dickens, Jane Austen
- Works of major contemporary writers: e.g. Ian McEwan, Margaret Atwood
- Classic works of children's literature: e.g. Lewis Carroll, C.S. Lewis
- Contemporary children's illustrated literature and Young Adult fiction

The results of this exercise are presented in the table below in descending order of highest combined score across all four categories:

Job title	Literary classics	Contemporary novels	Children's classics	Contemporary children's lit and YA fiction	Combined total (/40)
Children's librarian	8	7	9	9	33
Enquiry officer	9	6	9	8	32
Library Assistant (Children's)	8	7	8	7	30
Service Development Librarian (Children's)	6	5	10	9	30
Library Assistant	8	8	8	6	30
Resource Assistant (Bibliographical)	8	8	7	7	30
Library Assistant	7	7	8	7	29
Customer Services Supervisor	5	8	8	8	29
Service Development Librarian	8	8	8	3	27
Library Assistant	8	7	6	5	26
Library Assistant	5	5	8	7	25
Collections and Reader Development Manager	6	7	6	4	23
Library Supervisor	5	3	7	4	19
<i>Not stated</i>	7	4	6	2	18
Library Assistant	4	5	4	3	16
Library Advisor	5	2	5	3	15
Customer Service Assistant	3	5	3	3	14
Enquiry Officer	5	1	3	1	10
Combined total (/180)	115	103	123	96	

A third of respondents achieved a combined total score of 30 or more across the four categories, indicating a strong level of book knowledge. Three quarters of respondents achieved a total score above 20 across the four categories, demonstrating an above average level of book knowledge. All of the public library staff who worked in roles that involved services to children and young people ranked highly on this exercise, scoring well across all categories. The cumulative scores of all staff were greatest in the area of classic children's literature (123/140), closely followed by literary classics (115/140). In terms of more contemporary works, combined scores were greater for contemporary adult fiction (103/140), than for contemporary children's literature and Young Adult fiction (96/140).

4.8 Conclusions.

This chapter investigated the reading habits and book knowledge of public library staff. It found that respondents all read imaginative literature far more frequently than the average adult resident in the UK. The most popular reading material among respondents was fiction, followed by poetry then drama. Reading was an established part of the daily routine of many respondents. Staff read in a variety of locations, though the majority of their reading took place in the home. This choice of location reflects the idea, articulated by many respondents, of reading as a private pursuit or solitary indulgence. The main reasons given by respondents to explain why they read were pleasure and enjoyment, escapism and relaxation. All of the respondents stated that being unable to read imaginative literature would have a negative effect upon their lives.

Respondents who identified favourite authors or books chose popular contemporary writers and texts. However, the cumulative 'book knowledge' scores of staff as a group were higher in the areas of classic works of literature, both adult and children's writing, than in the areas of contemporary fiction and current children's literature. This would seem to suggest that many respondents who reported reading only current titles had an existing grounding in more

classic works. The issue of how public library staff acquired their level of book knowledge is explored in a later chapter that examines the professional education of library staff and the existence of reading and book related training opportunities.

5. Reading and book culture of public libraries.

This chapter sought to address the following research objective:

- To examine the reading and book culture of libraries where respondents worked.

5.1 Provision of time to reading during work hours.

The next section of the questionnaire examined the reading and book culture of the libraries that respondents worked in. In order to determine whether reading imaginative literature was seen as a legitimate job-related activity for employees to engage in within the workplace, subjects were asked whether the library where they worked provided them with any time to read. The vast majority of respondents stated that there were not any officially sanctioned periods in which they could read during the working day. This is not to say that library staff did not read at all in their places of work. As reported in the previous chapter, many respondents read at work during tea breaks or lunch periods, but this was always done on their own time rather than within official work hours.

While staff were not encouraged to read imaginative literature at work other types of reading material were permitted in some cases. One respondent, a collections and reader development officer, noted that, 'reading management textbooks or related works' was generally seen as acceptable. Another individual stated that senior staff at their service would read articles in LIS journals during work hours.

Two respondents, both professional staff at children's libraries, revealed that they occasionally got the opportunity to read imaginative literature at work, even though they were not officially allocated any time in which to do this:

Officially, no - but occasionally I do get a chance. The library recently had a refurbishment during which time it offered a minimal service and not all staff were needed. This gave me an opportunity to go away and spend time reading and reviewing books for my newsletter, which is normally something that I have to do in my own time. [Children's Librarian]

Not official time to read, but I do try to glance at all the new stock coming through. I would always read through a book that I was going to use with a story time or class visit to familiarize myself with it. Also if we get any customer comments about particular books (good or bad) then I would make a point of reading them. [Service Development Librarian (Children's)]

Both of these respondents reported that they often spent considerable periods of time reading outside of work hours in order to keep on top of the material that they felt it necessary to be knowledgeable about for their respective job roles.

5.2 Availability of reading materials in library staff room.

Respondents were asked whether books and novels were available in the staff room of the library where they worked. Most staff answered that such reading materials were not available 'unless we put them there,' but that they were was 'nothing to stop people taking books in':

If staff want something they usually take it off the shelf and bring it in. Most staff do read and if not a book then a magazine or a newspaper. [Service Development Librarian]

Staff have the whole of the Central lending library downstairs to choose from, and will take their own choices into the staffroom with them. [Collections and Reader Development Manager]

5.3 Discussion of books and reading among library staff.

Respondents were asked whether they ever discussed books that they had read with work colleagues. All of the subjects who answered this question stated that they did. The frequency with which individuals discussed books varied from 'every day' to 'only occasionally,' but for most respondents talking

about books was a common occurrence. Staff at all levels regularly discussed titles that they had read and would routinely 'recommend things to one another.' As one respondent explained:

If it's a good book then I'll let people know about it. If something is a good read then you tend to pass it on. [Library Assistant]

Most discussions about books took place informally in an impromptu manner as part of everyday conversation. Other discussions took place in the more formal context of staff reading groups or meetings. One respondent recounted how:

There were some staff meetings where at the start of every meeting two people would say what they had enjoyed reading recently: "I've just read ---- and it was about --- and so on." This got staff talking about books [Children's Librarian]

5.4 The opinions of staff on their library's fiction stock.

Respondents were asked: 'What is your opinion of the range of fiction currently stocked by your library?' All staff stated that they believed the range of fiction stocked by their library was good, very good or excellent, though a few individuals did identify aspects of the collection that they felt could be improved. On the whole though, the comments of respondents were positive. Some staff singled out specific sections of their library's collection for praise:

The Young Adult stuff is really good at the minute. There's a lot of new teenage stock coming through and at the moment Teen stuff seems to be in with the vampire things like 'Twilight.' [Children's Librarian]

Excellent and very up to date selection of bestseller type fiction and very good selection of most other genres eg classical fiction [Library Supervisor]

Most respondents reported that their users were generally satisfied with the fiction stock that their library provided. Only one respondent reported criticism that had been received from library patrons over the selection of stock on offer:

I think we've got a reasonable amount [of fiction]. It's something that's been criticized since we've had the new (refurbished) library.

People say we haven't got a lot but the shelves are full and there is a good mix out there. [Children's Librarian]

Several respondents noted that stock selection was often led by user demand:

We have a fairly extensive range of fiction, but we do tend to follow the trends of the public. [Customer Services Supervisor]

Some respondents believed that this resulted in more literary contemporary works and older classic novels being underrepresented in the library collection:

I think there should be more classics and modern classics both in branch and throughout the county. I would not read a large proportion of our fiction stock but I recognise that it is important to have books which are popular with our users and am pleased that we issue large amounts of that fiction. [Library Assistant]

I'm impressed by the range of popular contemporary authors, but the classics are a bit sparse. [Enquiry Officer]

One library assistant stated that the range of fiction were she worked was 'biased towards middle aged to elderly female readers ... But it is a good range (I fit into this category !)' These comments could perhaps be construed as suggesting that this library stocked a greater proportion of certain types of genre fiction than literary titles. However, as the respondent failed to provide any details about the type of material that she believed 'middle aged to elderly female readers' typically read, it is unclear whether or not this was the case.

Several individuals made the point that any titles that had not been bought by the library, or had been withdrawn from the shelves during stock editing, could be obtained for users via inter-library loan:

We're pretty well stocked and anything that we don't have here people can order for free [via ILL] so whatever you want is there. [Children's Librarian]

We offer free reservations so that all material can be read even if it isn't present in the local library. [Collections and Reader Development Manager]

The system we have makes it is very easy to order titles that are not in stock for our customers. [Library Assistant]

The majority of staff reported that inter-library loans were the normal way in which requests for titles that weren't stocked in the library were satisfied. One respondent noted that their library tried to add requested titles to the collection.

5.5 Promotion of reader development within library services.

In order to investigate the importance attached to reading initiatives in the libraries where respondents worked, staff were asked to describe the ways in which reading and reader development were promoted at their library service. Reader development (RD) is a major and growing area of work in public libraries that aims to promote reading to users, and help them to expand their reading into unfamiliar areas, through the active intervention of staff. This body of practice encourages readers to share their reading experiences and aims to raise the status of reading as a creative activity. The respondents who completed the questionnaire all worked at libraries in Lancashire, Sheffield or Essex. Reading and RD was promoted in libraries in all of these areas in a variety of ways. The most popular activities and initiatives that were offered are discussed below.

5.5.1 Reading groups.

Staff from Sheffield libraries mentioned reading groups such as 'Chatterbooks', aimed at children aged 8-12 years, and 'Shelf Life', aimed at young people aged 13-18 years. The 'Chatterbooks' group is a nationally coordinated reading group scheme for children, delivered through a partnership between The Reading Agency and Orange. 'Shelf Life' is a Sheffield initiative that encourages teens to read graphic novels as well as more conventional materials. Both of these reading groups were said to 'lively and well attended.'

Essex libraries supported over five hundred reading groups, many of which met in libraries within the county. One respondent noted that their branch also ran in house reading groups for particular groups of users: 'one for people with vision problems, one for service users in conjunction with S Essex Primary Care trust.' This library supported local reading groups by offering them free requests for the books that they chose.

5.5.2 Book promotions.

Lancashire libraries are currently promoting crime fiction. A different sub-genre or theme is promoted each month with 'recommended reads' in true crime, classic crime, psychological crime and American crime. A variety of author events, competitions and activities have been running throughout the year. Another promotional initiative mentioned by staff was 'Lancashire Reads.' In previous years, this campaign has highlighted the work of some of the novelists, children's writers, playwrights and poets who were born or worked in the county. This year, the 'Lancashire Reads' promotion has attempted to get everyone in the county reading the same book - *Up On Cloud Nine* by Anne Fine.

Essex Libraries actively promote the 'Quick Reads' and 'Fresh Start' book series. 'Quick Reads' are 'short, fun books by bestselling writers and celebrities.' These titles, which have a dedicated display in library branches, are marketed towards 'regular readers wanting a short, fast read, and those who have lost the reading habit.' There are currently 50 titles to choose from by authors such as Andy McNab, Joanna Trollope, Rolf Harris and Ruth Rendell. The 'Fresh Start' book series are a set of titles aimed at individuals with a lower reading level who may have been discouraged from reading previously because they found it difficult. Both of these collections were said to be popular among borrowers.

5.5.3 Reading challenges.

Respondents were asked to provide details of any liaison between their library and other organizations concerned with the promotion and development of reading. A large number of staff mentioned that their libraries

were involved in initiatives created by The Reading Agency (TRA). The most popular of these were the national 'Summer Reading Challenge' for children and the 'Six Book Challenge' for adults.

Founded in 2002, TRA is an independent charity that is funded by arts, libraries and government bodies. TRA's mission statement details the ways in which reading for pleasure is seen to have a positive impact on individuals:

We believe that reading can transform people's lives. The more you read the more you know. The more you read, the more you imagine. The more you read, the better you understand, and the better you can connect to people. Our mission is to inspire more people to read more.

TRA believes that reading for pleasure can have a profound impact on local communities and runs training courses that support the development and promotion of reading programmes. In addition to developing national reading programmes and partnerships it also provides advocacy, research, training and promotional materials to support work with children, young people and adults. The researcher contacted TRA to see whether Miranda McKearney, or another representative of the agency, was willing to answer some questions on the subject of the importance of reading and book knowledge for public library staff. Unfortunately, the researcher did not receive a reply to this enquiry. A follow up email also went unanswered.

5.5.4 Book awards and festivals.

Lancashire libraries run a 'Shout about Books' children's literature festival, with events throughout the county including visits from authors and illustrators. Sheffield libraries promote the 'Sheffield Children's Book Award,' which encourages children and young people to read and vote on the best children's books published each year. Sheffield libraries also host events such as author readings, poetry workshops, talks, exhibitions, and storytelling sessions as part of the annual 'Off The Shelf' literary festival. Essex libraries host similar events as part of the annual 'Essex Book Festival.'

5.5.5 Other services and activities.

Other ways in which RD was promoted within library services included discussions with users on their reading habits, recommending books and authors and school visits. Essex libraries offered outreach to groups such as local housing complexes and had a fleet of mobile libraries that offered a 'Library Direct' service for housebound individuals. Essex libraries also hold Baby and Toddler rhyme times. Lancashire libraries run similar 'bounce and rhyme' sessions.

5.6 Conclusions.

The extensive promotion of reading and reader development services within the libraries where respondents worked would seem to suggest that these types of activities still enjoy a high profile within the public library world. Respondents provided details of numerous initiatives that were intended to persuade library users to share their reading experiences and explore different types of literature. Staff regarded encouraging a love of reading and a passion for books among the public as an important undertaking. Yet little was done to foster a comparable level of interest in reading and enthusiasm for literature among the staff responsible for cultivating these qualities in library users. No libraries made any provision for members of staff to read imaginative literature during work hours, even when a good current awareness of such material was a seemingly essential part of employees' jobs. A culture of reading and book-talk did exist at many libraries, but this was wholly dependent upon the individual inclinations of staff. Many respondents chose to read outside of work, or during breaks, and discussed their reading with colleagues and library users. However, aside from a few staff reading groups, there was little evidence of any officially sanctioned library initiatives that had been set up to encourage staff to read.

Given the importance attached to reading imaginative literature by staff, it seems strange that this activity was not officially recognized as a legitimate activity for employees to engage in within the workplace. It appeared to be

taken for granted that staff read what they felt they needed to in their own time. The fact that so many respondents were able to critically appraise the depth and breadth of their libraries fiction collections shows that staff were aware of the different genres, authors and works that one might expect to find on the shelves. In the majority of cases, this level of literary awareness would appear to have resulted from respondents' own personal reading rather than any work related activities or training.

6. Library roles and recruitment.

This chapter sought to address the following research objective:

- To investigate whether reading and book knowledge were seen as advantageous for all library roles, and to explore the importance attached to these attributes in recruitment terms.

6.1 The benefits of reading for library activities.

Respondents were asked to provide details of any ways in which reading imaginative literature had been of benefit to them in the course of their library work. A number of staff stated that reading had helped them to develop their awareness of different types of fiction and had given them the confidence to discuss different genres and authors and to recommend titles to users:

It has allowed me to recommend books that might be of interest to borrowers, has taught me which authors have written which books and given me an understanding of the appeal of various works and genres. [Library Assistant]

An enthusiasm for books and reading can 'rub off' on our borrowers. People often ask for advice and I'm confident suggesting authors and genres likely to appeal. [Library Assistant]

A lifelong reading habit had enabled one respondent to acquire a high level of specialist book knowledge in their current area of professional expertise:

As I have read books from a very early age it has given me a great depth of knowledge, built up over the years, of Children's stock. This helps when dealing with customer enquiries about recommendations for particular authors or what to follow on with next. [Service Development Librarian (Children's)]

Many staff stated that reading imaginative literature helped them to introduce readers to books that they may not have been aware of previously. Respondents' own reading and book knowledge was seen as an invaluable asset

when it came to encouraging users to expand their reading into unfamiliar areas:

I enjoy offering something a bit different that maybe doesn't fit with their usual choices. If I didn't read myself, I don't see how I'd manage to do this successfully. [Library Assistant]

To be able to recommend titles to customers is a great bonus, it makes them read something outside their comfort zone, to expand their horizons and to increase issues. [Library Supervisor]

By having read a good cross section of fiction I can recommend titles to borrowers that they may not have chosen for themselves, this can be very rewarding especially when a book is returned and the reader says how much they enjoyed it. [Library Assistant]

One respondent believed that reading imaginative literature helped them to offer a high level of customer care because it provided them with an insight into the importance of imaginative literature for library users.

It has been invaluable. I understand and appreciate the value of reading and how important it is especially to those who live alone and people who want to keep their minds active. With an increasingly elderly population this is something I care about. [Library Assistant]

A respondent who worked as an enquiry officer revealed that reading imaginative literature had helped them to create promotional library displays as it gave them an idea of what sort of books to include as a starting point. Another individual stated that reading helped them make more informed decisions when it came to stock acquisition:

It helps with stock purchase to know who the most popular authors are and what type of books will issue. [Service Development Librarian (Children's)]

Several respondents described how reading titles from stock, and having a good knowledge of the library collection, helped them to field enquiries from users about materials for different age groups or books dealing with specific topics.

I get a lot of parents saying to me “what can you recommend for this age or that age. The dog’s died, can you recommend a book that would help”. Because I’ve read a lot of the junior stock, you get to know what you’ve got—so I can find particular books for people. ... Reading is a definite help in terms of being aware of what you’ve got in terms of stock. [Children’s Librarian]

Reading titles from stock also aided staff in locating books that users wished to borrow but were unable to find on their own because they could not recall enough information about them to identify them without assistance:

Knowing what they are asking for when they come in to ask for a book with a half remembered title [Enquiry Officer]

It helps my general awareness of the books available and I can recommend titles to our readers or recognize them in their enquiries. [Enquiry Officer]

6.2 Interview questions about reading and books.

Respondents were asked whether they had been required to answer any questions relating to reading or books when they were interviewed for their current position. Fifteen of the twenty respondents answered this question. Four of these individuals stated that they had not been asked any such questions when they were recruited. Two of these individuals were enquiry officers, one was a library supervisor and one was a library assistant. All worked at different library branches.

Eleven of the fifteen respondents (73%) reported that they had been asked some sort of question pertaining to reading or book knowledge during their interview. The most common question that staff was asked related to their own personal reading preferences. Eight respondents had been asked about what they were currently reading, had last read, or what they liked or disliked reading. All of these individuals were paraprofessional members of staff, the vast majority of which worked as library assistants. Two of these respondents

had also been asked questions relating to book promotion and reader development work:

An interest in reading was a requirement in the application form and during my interview I was asked to give a short summary of a book I had recently read and why I would recommend it. [Library Assistant]

I was asked to describe a book that I'd recently read and how I would promote that to a borrower. [Library Assistant]

Three members of professional library staff had been asked questions relating to reading or books during interviews for their current position. These respondents had all been questioned about aspects of service delivery, rather than on their personal reading and literary tastes. All three had been asked about reader development. The first of these respondents, a customer services supervisor, had been asked to 'contribute ideas for extending book groups and staff training'. The two other respondents, both service development librarians, had been required to answer questions on stock management and promotion.

6.3 Reading and book knowledge in job advertisements.

Respondents were asked whether they believed that advertisements for public library posts should specify an enthusiasm for reading, or a good level of book knowledge, as essential or desirable qualities for applicants to possess. Three quarters of all respondents believed that either one, or both, of these qualities should be included as essential or desirable criteria in recruitment ads. The remaining respondents stated that they did not think that it was important for applicants to possess these traits, or that the importance of these attributes was role dependent.

The general consensus among staff was that an enthusiasm for reading and/or a good level of book knowledge should be listed as essential skills for candidates to possess:

I think it is essential to be honest. Our aim is to encourage people into the library and to use our services and read our books and I think an

enthusiasm for reading makes that easier to achieve. [Library Assistant]

I think that a good level of book knowledge is essential as is an open mind about what a user might request. An enthusiasm for reading would probably be taken for granted but the skills picked up through that enthusiasm would be of great use in library work. [Library Assistant]

I think an interest in reading is definitely a requirement for working in a library environment, customers would be concerned if a front facing member of staff didn't have a clue about fiction. [Library Assistant]

Some respondents ranked the importance of reading and book knowledge in relation to other competencies that were often specified in job adverts:

Yes they should definitely put more emphasis on it, rather than on qualifications and how to deal with difficult customers and health and safety issues. [Library Advisor]

Most definitely essential, along with the equally vital 'people skills' that are key when dealing with the public. You've got to love books, but you've got to love people more. [Library Assistant]

Several respondents believed that having an enthusiasm for reading was more important than possessing a good knowledge of books, as knowledge of stock could be developed while working in a library. One respondent felt that an enthusiasm for reading could even compensate for a lack of book knowledge:

The more I delve into the world of literature the more I realise how little I do know, but I do have a huge enthusiasm for reading which makes up, I think, for any shortfall in knowledge. [Library Assistant]

Only one of the respondents who believed that an enthusiasm for reading or a good level of book knowledge should be advertised as an essential or desirable candidate attribute had actually been involved in staff recruitment. All of the other respondents who had experience of this activity stated that the issue of individual applicants personal reading or book knowledge either did not warrant inclusion in job ads or was only of relevance for particular library roles:

There is so much to do everyday that the amount of free time for talking about books is small. As a recruitment manager I look for customer service skills more than their reading habits. Even if they don't read much the atmosphere at work should encourage them to read more. If they do enjoy reading that's a bonus, but not a requirement. [Library supervisor]

I think it's more important for library staff to like dealing with people, we can teach them about books and authors. Many applicants put 'love of reading' on their forms but it's a bit of a turn-off for recruiters as these candidates tend to be too earnest about literature. [Customer Services Supervisor]

It depends on the post, and also the understanding of the role of the applicant. We often get people who apply for posts who stress they love reading, and think that they will spend all day reading books. What I really want is people who love reading, have a wide awareness of reading tastes and more importantly see the value of reading in the context of their job role, who can pass on and share their enthusiasm to others, and understand that not everyone has the same taste in reading. [Collections and Reader Development Manager]

6.4 Library roles and activities for which reading and book knowledge are advantageous.

Respondents were asked whether there were any library roles for which they believed that reading regularly, and having a good level of book knowledge, could be seen as advantageous. All respondents identified at least one role or activity for which they believed that these particular qualities could be of benefit.

The most commonly mentioned roles and activities identified by respondents included the running of reading groups and recommending books:

Having book knowledge helps if you're doing reader development and reading groups. [Children's Librarian]

When liaising with book groups and offering suggestions of titles to read it's good to have knowledge of the current 'buzz books.' [Library supervisor]

It is very useful to know about literature in terms of advising customers, or being up to date, when it comes down to reading or book groups. [Library and Information Assistant (Children's)]

A number of respondents stated that reading and book knowledge were particularly important attributes for members of frontline staff and individuals involved in undertaking reader development work:

I think all front facing staff must have some knowledge in order to help people and show some understanding of the world of books. People want to ask us about their choices and like to know what is new and good. [Library Assistant]

People often need help in finding new books to read and although we have lots of resources to do this I think it helps if customers perceive us as readers ourselves. [Library Assistant]

However, one respondent noted that:

For counter staff, it's not essential that they read fiction but it is important that they know what's in stock, so having book knowledge in this sense is important. We have tools to assist with recommending books, such as: "Who writes like..." There are also electronic resources that can help. [Children's librarian]

While most respondents commented on library roles and activities that they had direct experience of, some subjects also speculated about the possible benefits of reading and book knowledge for tasks that they had not undertaken themselves. Discussing the topic of stock selection, one respondent stated:

I imagine having a good level of book knowledge would be advantageous for acquisitions, but I have never worked in this area so cannot say for certain. [Enquiry Officer]

Another respondent, who had experience of recruiting staff with responsibilities for this area of library operations, revealed that these qualities were seen as important for this role:

At posts for Reader Development or stock purchase specifically, I'd expect evidence of enthusiasm and book knowledge. [Customer Services Supervisor]

However, another respondent stated that having a good level of book knowledge was not a necessary requirement for stock selection at their service because library suppliers controlled this activity, rather than individual members of staff.

We don't have a great deal of say in stock selection, it's done by the suppliers so it's taken out of our hands. There are times when books come through and you do think: "why have they bought that?"
[Children's Librarian]

Many respondents regarded an enthusiasm for reading and a good level of book knowledge as particularly important traits for those involved in delivering services to children and young people. A children's librarian, and service development librarian from a children's library, both stated that book knowledge was useful for class visits and story times. Respondents working in adult lending libraries also emphasized that being knowledgeable about books, and able to enthuse about literature, was especially important when working with children.

Children are like sponges and talk more openly about their reading. They are more willing to take your recommendations and try them than established readers. One of our class visit packs is 'choosing fiction' so a good knowledge of new and old children's books is a big help.
[Library supervisor]

When working with children it can be very helpful to be able to talk to them about books that are current to them. When they are brave enough to come to the enquiry desk it does help to be able to put them at ease quickly if you know and recognize the books they are talking about. [Enquiry Officer]

Any staff who are working closely with children need to have a good knowledge of the stock in order to promote it effectively. [Customer Services Supervisor]

6.5. Library roles and activities for which reading and book knowledge are unimportant.

Respondents were asked whether there were any library roles or activities for which they believed reading regularly, and having a good level of

book knowledge, could be seen as unimportant or irrelevant. Two respondents, one a library and information assistant, the other a collections and reader and development manager, stated that there weren't. The remaining respondents all identified at least one role or activity for which they believed that these qualities were not strictly necessary. Activities mentioned by respondents included physical tasks such as packing boxes, administrative duties such as faxing and photocopying and financial tasks such as paying suppliers invoices. In terms of library specific activities, staff felt that reading and book knowledge was not important for craft activities, IT services or answering Council queries.

6.6 The status of reading and book knowledge in professional terms.

Respondents were asked whether they believed that fiction reading and book knowledge were seen as high profile in professional terms. The vast majority of respondents indicated that these attributes were positively perceived within the library world. Book knowledge was seen as particularly important:

I think for professional purposes a good knowledge of the classics or contemporary fiction would be seen as a good thing [Library Assistant]

Several respondents expressed the belief that knowledge of literature, was perceived as more important than fiction reading:

Book knowledge, yes; fiction reading, not necessarily. Anyone working in libraries would be expected to have some level of book knowledge that would allow them to help customers with enquiries. [Library Assistant]

Fiction reading was seen as high profile by some staff. One respondent noted that this activity could even assist those seeking to advance their careers:

Libraries are all about reading, in one form or another, for pleasure, learning & information. If you work in a library lending fiction it is very important and as far as promotion goes has a high profile professionally. [Service Development Librarian]

Other respondents felt that reading and book knowledge were seen as important in libraries, and did make a difference to a persons' profile, but were not given the same level of recognition in the LIS literature or by external organizations .

I still think that book knowledge is seen as important in libraries, and younger staff do aspire to build the knowledge held by those with longer service. In professional literature however, it hardly ever features now. [Customer Services Supervisor]

Within the library service, yes, but not necessarily within the councils who run libraries. North Somerset Council seems more interested in promoting its own services via the library. The 'secret shoppers' who come in and test our service only ever ask about council related information – never anything book related. I think that is very telling. [Library Assistant]

Two respondents revealed that they did not believe reading and book knowledge were seen as high profile in professional terms:

I think reading is seen more as a personal preference than a professional prerequisite It's good if you do choose to do it, but it's not necessarily viewed as all that important. I think it matters more to the person doing it than it does to the management. For me it is important as it helps me with my job. [Children's librarian]

I have worked for Essex libraries for 14 years and have seen huge changes across the service. Now we offer other services and books are just a small part of our work. We spend more time signposting people to other services and giving information than we do issuing books. Sad but true. [Library supervisor]

6.7 Job vacancy profiling exercise.

The researcher conducted a job vacancy audit in order to examine the extent to which qualities such as an enthusiasm for reading, or a good level of book knowledge, were listed in job advertisements for public library positions. The purpose of this exercise was to investigate the range of skills, competencies and experiences expected of candidates for public library posts. Public library vacancies advertised in the *CILIP Library + Information Gazette* were profiled over a three-month period: from 25th March to 20th June 2010. A total of

twenty-two public library posts were advertised during this time. Some of these vacancies were excluded from the audit because they were specialized roles that did not involve work with reader development activities or book stock. Examples of jobs that were omitted on these grounds included: Senior Librarian – Music (8th April), Senior Librarian – IT (20th May) and E-Services manager (17th June)

A total of sixteen public library posts were selected for inclusion in the job vacancy audit. Fourteen of these advertised positions were professional posts. The other two were paraprofessional trainee roles. The advertised jobs were spread across twelve different regions within the UK. For each of these positions, the researcher recorded the date of the *Gazette* issue that the job had appeared in, the title of the vacancy, the local authority where the job was based, the yearly salary and details of the person specification provided in the advert. Full details of all the posts included in the audit can be found in the Appendices. The researcher examined the skills and competencies listed in each job advert that made up the person specification for each post. This was done to establish whether qualities such as an enthusiasm for reading, or a good level of book knowledge, were listed as important characteristics for applicants to possess.

Five of the sixteen job advertisements included in the audit did not provide any information about the types of candidate who were being sought for the role. Of the eleven vacancies that did specify details of the skills and competencies required of applicants, only three posts specifically mentioned items related to reading or book knowledge. Two of these vacancies were for senior librarian positions. The first of these jobs, a ‘senior librarian - educational and cultural development’ post in Aberdeenshire, required prospective applicants to have a ‘knowledge of reader development principles.’ The advertisement for the second of these roles, a ‘senior librarian - adult and community services’ post in Bedfordshire, stated that applicants should be ‘interested in reading development.’ The only other advert in the audit that mentioned reading and books was a Children’s librarian post in Wiltshire. The advert for this post stated that applicants should ‘enjoy children’s books’, be

'passionate about books and learning' and 'agree that a love of reading can make a real difference to a child's life.' This advert placed a far greater degree of emphasis on the importance of reading and books than any of the other adverts that were analysed in the study.

Most of the job adverts included in the audit provided details of the main duties and responsibilities of the advertised positions in addition to listing the skills that applicants were expected to possess in order to undertake these roles. Several adverts contained job descriptions that mentioned activities relating to reader development work or the promotion and management of book stock. These vacancies included a librarian post in Bournemouth (8th June) that involved reader development work, a senior librarian post in Murrumbidgee (6th May) that entailed promoting reading, and two librarian positions in Halton (20th May) that involved assisting with book groups. There was also a 'reading and learning manager' post in Brighton and Hove (17th June) that entailed 'leading the development and delivery of reading, literacy, learning and leisure services.' However, none of the adverts for these vacancies stipulated that applicants needed to possess any related skills or competencies, such as an enthusiasm for literature or a good knowledge of books, in order to fulfill these roles.

A cumulative total of 60 skills and attributes were listed within and across the advertised vacancies. These competencies were categorized into four main groupings:

- 26 (43%) of the specified competencies referred to interpersonal skills, communication skills or attitudes and behaviours linked to personality traits.
- 18 (30%) of the competencies referred to knowledge, experience or skills that were explicitly linked to library work related activities.
- 11 (18%) of the competencies referred to generic skills and attributes

that could be associated with a range of posts and sectors: for example problem solving skills or the ability to work under pressure.

- 5 (8%) of the competencies requested experience, skills or enthusiasm in the areas of reading, reader development work or book knowledge.

The most commonly requested attributes specified in job advert person specifications were communication skills, ICT skills, flexibility and enthusiasm.

6.8 Conclusions.

Reading imaginative literature helped staff to deliver a high standard of service to library users because it gave them the knowledge necessary to talk confidently about books and to recommend different titles in a variety of areas. Having an enthusiasm for reading and a good knowledge of books was seen as particularly advantageous for individuals involved in running reading groups and delivering services to children and young people. Three quarters of all respondents believed that advertisements for public library positions should specify these types of competencies as essential or desirable candidate skills. The majority of staff also indicated that these attributes were positively perceived within the public library world and made a difference to a person's profile.

Reading and book knowledge were not valued in the same way by everyone though. Several respondents who had been involved in recruiting individuals for public library jobs expressed negative opinions about candidates who mentioned an enthusiasm for reading or a love of literature in their applications. This was seen as 'a turn-off for recruiters' as it was assumed that these individuals would prove to be 'too earnest about literature' or would expect to 'spend all day reading books.' The prevalence of these prejudicial perceptions among senior members of library staff with responsibilities for recruitment activities was worrying, not least because it ran completely contrary to the importance that the vast majority of respondents attached to

these traits. The apparent reluctance of some members of library staff to acknowledge the importance of reading and book knowledge in recruitments terms may explain why so few relevant items of this kind appeared in the person specifications for public library posts included in the audit. Nevertheless, it is clear that some degree of significance is still attached to these kinds of qualities by recruiters as nearly three quarters of respondents reported that they had been asked some sort of question pertaining to reading or book knowledge during their interview.

7. Professional education of public library staff.

This chapter sought to address the following research objective:

- To investigate whether the professional education of staff had included the study of content on reading or books, and to examine whether current LIS courses were offering modules in these areas.

7.1 LIS courses taken by respondents.

Respondents were asked: 'If you have taken a postgraduate degree or diploma in librarianship, did this course include any modular content on reading or fiction?' The majority of respondents reported that they had not covered any such material at library school. A follow up question asked these individuals whether they believed that the inclusion of such content would have been of any benefit to them. Responses to this question varied but most respondents expressed the opinion that study of such content would not have benefited them. Only one respondent stated that they would have welcomed the inclusion of material that would have helped them to 'learn about different reading styles.' The general consensus among staff was that studying reading or fiction as part of a degree what not have had any significant bearing on their ability to undertake library work:

I'm not sure that it would have benefited me. It's been an on-going learning process in the years before and after I qualified. I can't see that a short module would have made much impact. [Service Development Librarian]

No, I think that fiction reading is probably so personal that on the whole our customers only want suggestions as to future reading and you can help them with this by using books such as 'Who writes like who'. There is such a large amount of fiction published that it is not possible to be aware of everything and I think as long as you have the skills to help your customer find the right book for them, that is more important. [Customer Services Supervisor]

For respondents who had taken modules on reading or fiction during their time at library school, a follow up question asked them to describe what form this took and to provide details of any benefits they gained from the experience. A total of four respondents reported having taken modular content relating to reading or fiction. In terms of the type of material covered, three of the four respondents had studied some aspect of children's literature while the fourth had focused more on literary history and the works of classic English authors. Respondents were evenly split between those who stated that they did not gain much from studying this material and those who identified ways in which their study of these topics had helped them in the course of their library work:

When I did it, I took an elective module on children's books. I think a lot of the courses now are more to do with information and management rather than the books side of librarianship. ... I don't think I gained much from it as when you're working with the public the majority of it is stuff that you learn yourself and common sense and things change, libraries are changing all the time. [Library Advisor]

We covered the History of the Book and an English literature module (Chaucer, Metaphysical poets, Shakespeare etc) ... I didn't find it particularly useful as I had already done English Literature at A and O level. [Collections and Reader Development Manager]

It's a long time ago now, but [taking a module on Children's literature] gave me a useful outline of the best books in each genre. [Children's Librarian]

Bibliography of Children's literature gave me knowledge and confidence in the subject and the ability to help customers and staff. [Service Development Librarian (Children's)]

These answers appear to imply that at least two of the respondents had taken their degrees some time ago. This is explicit in one case: 'it's a long time ago now' and may be inferred in a second instance by the implied contrast between then and now: 'When I did it ... a lot of the courses now.' In a third case, a respondent mentions having taken O-level qualifications, which were replaced in the UK by GCSE's from 1988 onwards. However, it is possible that this individual had taken time out between finishing these qualifications and starting their LIS degree. Though the fact that the knowledge gained from these

programmes was evidently still fresh enough in their mind to render the literary elements of the library degree largely irrelevant perhaps suggests that there wasn't a large gap.

7.2 Views on current courses.

Respondents were asked whether they believed that current library school courses should include modules on reading and literature as part of the curricula. The vast majority of respondents stated that they believed library school courses should contain modules of this nature. The prevalence of this attitude was surprising given that some of the same respondents had previously expressed the belief that studying such content at library school would not have benefited them in their subsequent library work. Nevertheless, this question evoked strong reactions among some respondents. One individual was strident in their insistence that such content should be included on LIS courses:

*Yes-why wouldn't it? Why would you enter the profession if reading & literature wasn't important to you? Surely it is a vital part of the course.
[Library Assistant]*

Another respondent appeared to be unaware that there were any courses that didn't currently offer such material as part of the core curricula:

I would have thought that was the case and that it was an essential part of the course. [Enquiry Officer]

Several respondents stated that they believed such modules would be useful preparation for future work in a library setting but failed to elaborate on this further or to provide any specific examples to support this point. A minority of respondents provided details of the types of topics that they believed it was important for students to study in the course of their time at library school:

New entrants need to have awareness of publishing, popular material, bookshops, media book groups, how to promote display, think imaginatively about helping your readers to get the most out of the library's resources. [Service Development Librarian]

I think they should cover the idea of Reader Development in public

libraries [Library Assistant]

Another respondent was of the opinion that modules on reading and literature, while potentially helpful for individuals intending to pursue certain specific roles within the profession, were not a strict necessity for students who already read:

I think it would be useful, especially if you want to specialize. If you want to be a children's librarian then you need to know your stuff. But at the same time it isn't essential, it does come down to you and your own personal reading. [Children's Librarian]

It was generally felt that the inclusion of modules on reading and literature would give new professionals 'a good base to work from' but that the real responsibility for development in this area lay with the individual and the extent of personal reading that they were willing to undertake. Only one respondent stated that they did not believe library school courses should include a module on reading and literature as part of the curricula. The individual in question felt that this type of content was 'more relevant and better suited to English courses.'

7.3 LIS education in the UK: past and present.

Mackiewicz (1993: 286) notes that in the 1920s "there were two qualifications available in librarianship, the Fellowship of the Library Association and the Diploma of the University of London School of Librarianship." For many years, the Library Association syllabus included a compulsory examination in the history of English literature. This test was part of the six sectional certificates that ran until 1932, then later formed part of the intermediate and final exam papers, from 1933 to the early 1960s. In order to pass these exams students had to study the development of English literature from the time of Chaucer through to the works of mid-twentieth century writers. They also had to develop a good knowledge of different literary forms, groups and movements. As Harrison (1997: 23) explains:

Entrants had to be ready to demonstrate what they knew about the Elizabethan sonnet, the rude mechanicals, the Caroline lyrists, Restoration drama, the Augustan age, the Gothic novel, the Romantic revival, the Pre-Raphaelite writers, and so on.

The study of English literary history was removed from the Library Association syllabus in 1962. Harrison (1997: 22) states that this was done because the topic was deemed to have “little or no relevance for the increasing number of students working in or aiming for the fields of special, industrial and government libraries.” Harrison (1997: 23) laments the fact that “no attention has been paid to literary history in the curricula of the library schools” since the 1960s and argues that the book knowledge of modern librarians has suffered as a result. Other writers have also attributed the apparent decline in book knowledge among librarians of today to the fact that current library school courses rarely feature modules on reading or literature. As Mathioudaki (2005: 25) observes, “today, librarians lack of book knowledge is often considered to be the fault of the educational system.”

Librarianship has been a graduate profession in the UK for a number of years (Huckle, 2004). An historical review of Library and Information Science (LIS) professional education in the UK may be found in Wood (1997). The vocational orientation of the LIS discipline has meant that a professional accreditation body has traditionally overseen the delivery of academic courses in this subject area. The Library Association (LA) and the Institute of Information Scientists (IIS) originally performed the role of reviewing and accrediting LIS courses. These organisations were the first professional bodies to equip themselves with accreditation instruments designed to assist in the recruitment of quality-assured graduates into the LIS profession. As Enser (2002: 214) notes: “these instruments provided a conceptual map of the subject discipline against which the content of each submitted course could be compared.” In 1999, the LA and IIS merged their accreditation operations under the umbrella of a Joint Accreditation Administration (JAA). In 2002, the IIS joined with the LA to become the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) and the JAA became the Accreditation Board of CILIP.

CILIP assess both undergraduate and postgraduate degree level courses, looking for evidence that these programmes of study foster the development of appropriate knowledge and skills for entry into the information profession. Sixteen UK universities currently offer accredited courses within the LIS discipline. A full list of these institutions is given in the table below:

England			
University of Brighton	University of the West of England	Liverpool John Moores University	City University London
University College London	London Metropolitan University	Thames Valley University	Loughborough University
Manchester Metropolitan University	Northumbria University	The University of Sheffield	
Scotland		Northern Ireland	Wales
Robert Gordon University		University of Ulster	Aberystwyth University
University of Glasgow			
University of Strathclyde			

The modular content of CILIP accredited LIS courses can vary widely. Many institutions offer general courses in Librarianship, Library Science, Library and Information Studies and Library and Information Management. However, other courses can be much more specialized. The table below provides some examples:

CILIP accredited course	Academic Institution
MSc Chemoinformatics MSc Health Informatics MSc Electronic and Digital Library Management	The University of Sheffield
MSc Information Systems PG Dip /MSc Records Management	Aberystwyth University
MSc Geographic Information Management	City University London
MSc Digital Information Management	London Metropolitan University
PG Dip/MA Electronic Communication and Publishing	University College London

The differences in course content between these various programmes of study raises the question of whether there is a shared knowledge base or essential set of skills that unifies the LIS profession. Various inventories and frameworks have been devised in an attempt to define the core capabilities and proficiencies common to all library and information professionals. CILIP's (2004, 2) 'body of professional knowledge' (BPK) is a publication that aims to establish "the unique knowledge, which distinguishes library and information professionals from other professionals." The document describes some of the underpinning knowledge and skills required for a career in library and information work. Examples of "what members of the profession must know in order to practice" include information resource management operations such as selection, acquisition and disposal of items, cataloguing and classification, metadata construction, provision of access to content and preservation of materials. Other skills mentioned in the document include abstracting, indexing and content evaluation, information retrieval, data mining and website and portal design and maintenance. Reading and book knowledge are not mentioned anywhere in this publication.

CILIP (2004) have published a supplementary 'guide for course designers' that provides details of how the skills and knowledge described in the BPK document should be delivered on LIS courses. The impact of this guidance is immediately evident when one examines the learning outcomes of many LIS courses and the subject benchmark statement for the LIS discipline. Subject benchmark statements describe the attributes, skills and capabilities that a graduate with a degree in a specific subject might be expected to have. Each statement has been written by a group of academics and other specialists from the subject area. Benchmark statements help to ensure that the standards of degree courses across the UK meet an agreed level.

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) subject benchmark statement for librarianship and information management outlines the skills, knowledge and understanding that should be acquired by students on LIS courses. It suggests that departments should provide education in two areas: "subject knowledge, skills and understanding in librarianship and information management" and "generic transferable skills" (QAA, 2010). There is no mention of the importance of reading or book knowledge in either of these sections. This omission is perhaps unsurprising given the broad, general nature of the QAA statement and the CILIP BPK publication that helped to inform it. As the decision of the LA to remove the study of literature from the LIS syllabus in the 1960s shows, an enthusiasm for reading, and a good level of book knowledge is generally only seen as relevant within a public library context. The CILIP BPK framework and QAA statement have a necessarily wider focus since they attempt to delineate a set of core skills and areas of understanding that are applicable to practitioners working in a range of different library and information settings.

These publications nevertheless provide an important contextual background to the current investigation as they go some way to explaining the type of course content that is offered by many of today's library schools. Hornby (2000: 194) provides a comprehensive list of some of the areas of professional expertise that LIS students will typically cover during their time at university:

Web page design, knowledge management, information auditing, information and communication technologies, search engines, information systems design, financial management, human resources management, legislation, political and governmental information, information access, information retrieval, censorship, surveillance, privacy, confidentiality, information for education, health, business, information literacy ... and on and on.

Reading and book knowledge are notably absent from this wide-ranging set of topics. There is a general consensus in the literature that today's library schools tend to overlook the importance of knowledge and understanding in these areas. Shearer (in Katz, 2001) notes that literary history and literature are no longer being taught in library schools. Towey (in Katz, 2001: 132) contends that most contemporary courses "reflect the importance of fact and information and the tools and skills required to store and access information but virtually ignore narrative for adults." McCook and Jasper (in Katz, 2001:52) similarly state that many library schools neglect to emphasize the act of reading, preferring instead to focus on "the act of technology to organize and access material."

The absence of such course content may also reflect the apparent lack of significance attached to these skills by employers. Orme (2008; 619) suggests that those responsible for the training of future LIS professionals should "use the requirements of the employment market to inform the development of library school curricula." As the audit of job advertisements demonstrated, literary expertise and an enthusiasm for reading are not held to be important candidate attributes for the vast majority of public library posts.

7.4 Audit of CILIP accredited LIS courses.

Writing in the early 1990s, Van Riel (1992: 50) noted that: "of the sixteen UK institutions offering degrees in librarianship, only two offered specialized training in reading." The situation in US library schools at the time appears to have been similar. Saricks (in Katz, 2001: 116) recalls how:

for years, no one learned about readers' advisory in library school, or had professors who acknowledged that there was more to working with patrons, even in public libraries, than finding answers to factual questions.

Saricks (in Katz, 2001: 116) goes on to reveal that this is no longer the case, noting that readers' advisory is now "being increasingly taught in library schools" and that "there has been a real change in the profession's commitment to training in this growing field."

In order to see whether there had been a similar resurgence in UK library schools, or if the numbers of institutions offering such courses had actually declined since Van Riel's time, the researcher conducted an audit of current CILIP accredited LIS courses. Details of current accredited courses in library and information studies were obtained from the CILIP website. It was found that sixteen UK universities offered a combined total of fifty-two courses within the LIS discipline. This figure included both undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, pre-experience and post-experience pathways and full time, part time and distance learning modes of study. From these fifty-two courses, the researcher selected all those that could reasonably be expected to include modular content on subjects such as reader development and imaginative literature. Where institutions offered several courses that could conceivably contain modules focused on literature and reading, these were all included in the audit. This was done in order to ascertain the extent to which any relevant modules were replicated across courses within the institution.

Highly specialized courses like 'Geographic Information Management' and 'Chemoinformatics' were excluded from the study because it seemed doubtful that they would feature any modules on reading or imaginative literature. Universities that failed to offer any courses that the researcher regarded as relevant enough to warrant inclusion in the audit were excluded from the study. The University of Glasgow was omitted because the courses that it offered, in 'Information Management and Preservation (Digital)' and 'Archives and Records Management,' were deemed unlikely to feature modules related to books or

reading. London Metropolitan University, which offered courses in 'Information Services Management,' 'Information and Knowledge Management' and 'Digital Information Management,' was also excluded from the audit for the same reason.

A total of seventeen LIS courses, spread across fourteen different UK universities, were selected for inclusion in the audit. A full table showing details of all of these courses can be found in the Appendices. The researcher examined each of these courses in turn to establish whether they offered any modules relating to reading or literature. In the vast majority of cases it proved possible to obtain this information directly from the university website of the relevant academic institution. On the occasions when it wasn't clear whether any such modules were being offered, the researcher contacted the department in charge of delivering the course for clarification.

All of the LIS courses that were examined offered modularized programmes of study that enabled students to navigate pathways of their choice by taking elective units in areas that were of particular interest to them. The study therefore examined elective modules, as well as core modules, in order to investigate the choices that were available to students. With such an expanded syllabus one might expect to find that units focusing on subjects such as imaginative literature and reader development were being widely offered as potential options for students to pursue. However, the audit found that none of the courses examined featured any core modules that covered these types of subjects as part of the library syllabus. Aberystwyth University offered a joint honours BA in 'Information and Library Studies and English' that included core modules on literary studies. However, this material was part of the English subject strand rather than the Information and Library Studies syllabus.

A total of five modules containing content on reading or books were offered as elective modules by UK universities. Four of the modules focused exclusively on imaginative literature for children and young people, the fifth also examined literature for an adult audience.

Academic institution	Courses offered	Core Modules on reading/book knoweldge (Y/N)	Elective Modules on reading/book knoweldge (Y/N)
Aberystwyth University	BSc Information and Library Studies (Single Honours)	No	No
	BA Information And Library Studies And English (Joint Honours)	Yes, but only as part of English course content.	Yes, but only as part of English course content.
Liverpool John Moores University	PgDip/MA Information and Library Management	No	Children and Young People
University College London,	PgDip/MA Library and Information Studies	No	Services to children and young people
Loughborough University	PgDip/MA/MSc Information and Library Management	No	The Child and The Book
Manchester Metropolitan University	BA(Hons) Librarianship	No	Literature and its Readers
	PgDip/MA Library and Information Management.	No	Literature and its Readers
University of Sheffield	MA Librarianship.	No	Library Services for Children and Young People

7.5 Aberystwyth University, 'Information & Library Studies and English'

The 'Information and Library Studies and English' course at Aberystwyth is a joint honours degree programme in which two separate subjects are studied concurrently. While the dual majors are equally weighted, the modular content relating to book knowledge and reading is not evenly distributed between the two subjects. All of the elements of literary study that the course involves come from the 'English' modules that students take, rather than anything that they cover in the 'Information and Library Studies' half of the

course. Nevertheless, the very existence of such content on the course means that, of all the degrees examined in the audit, this programme provides the most comprehensive grounding in literature to students pursuing a CILIP accredited LIS qualification.

Students enrolled on the course take two core modules in English during their first year. In semester one, 'Encountering Texts' examines issues of literary language, form and genre and the relationship between literary texts and their cultural contexts. In semester two, 'Aspects of Genre' considers aspects of the three main literary genres - poetry, drama and prose fiction - with the emphasis mainly on pre-twentieth century writing. Students must also take one elective English module during each semester. In semester one, they can choose between either 'Greek and Roman Epic and Drama' or 'Re-writing, Re-visioning Texts.' In semester two, they are free to pick from 'History of Greek and Roman Ideas,' 'Contemporary Writing,' or 'Introduction to American Literature and Culture.'

In their second year, students take one core English module during the first semester: 'Reading Theory/Reading Text 1.' This module introduces the work of a range of literary theorists and major theoretical schools. Students must also take two elective modules in English over the course of the year. In semester one, the options are: 'Medieval and Renaissance Writing' and 'Nineteenth Century Literature.' In semester two: 'Restoration and Eighteenth Century Literature' and 'Twentieth Century British Literature' are all available.

In their third and final year, students again take a core English module on 'Reading Theory/Reading Text' in the first term. They must also take one elective module in English. The only option offered in semester one is 'Post War Women's Life Writing of the United States.' Semester two offers six more possibilities: 'Victorian and Modern Ghost Stories,' 'Postmodern Fictions,' 'UK Poetry Since 70s Remapping,' 'Detective and Crime Fiction,' 'Desire and Death in the English Renaissance' and 'African American Literature.'

Individuals graduating from this course should have developed a good awareness of a range of classical and contemporary works of prose and poetry. Prudent module selections could enable students wishing to work in public libraries after qualifying to gain a more specialist knowledge in areas that could prove useful in their future career. A module on 'African American Literature' may serve as a springboard for someone interested in promoting minority ethnic genre fiction in public libraries. A unit focused on a particular literary genre that is popular in public libraries, for example 'Detective and Crime Fiction,' may help individuals to offer guidance to library users on titles in this area.

7.6 Manchester Metropolitan University, 'Literature and its Readers.'

This was the only module available as part of a LIS programme of study that covered fiction and imaginative literature for adults as well as looking at the needs of younger readers. The module has now been running for a decade. During the academic year 2000-2001 the undergraduate programme offered by the Department of Information and Communication at Manchester Metropolitan University was reviewed. In the course of this process, Susan Hornby and her colleague Margaret Kendall decided to create a unit that would enable students to reflect on the pleasures and benefits people of all ages gain from reading imaginative literature. Hornby (2008, 193) and her colleague worked together to design a unit that would educate new professionals in reader development and "meet both the academic requirements of the university and the professional standards required by CILIP accreditation." As Hornby (2008: 197) recalls:

We wanted students to explore the full range of imaginative literature, the needs of readers of all ages, the organizations providing access and support and the issues currently affecting the industry.

The unit was implemented as an elective. This meant that students on all programmes offered by the department could choose to take the module, assuming that it did not clash with any of their other timetable commitments.

The course was, and still is, open to both undergraduate and postgraduate students. Since the unit was not compulsory, student uptake differed from year to year. As Hornby (2008: 194) explains: “in one year 35 students enrolled, and in another only 12.” While student numbers may have fluctuated, the type of student taking the course remained the same. As Hornby (2008: 198) reveals: “it was clear early on that the unit had been chosen by lively students who enjoyed reading and enjoyed talking about the things they read.” As Hornby (2008: 199) explains, the unit was assessed via two pieces of coursework: “one relating to children’s literature and reading development, the other relating to the promotion and management of literature for adults in libraries.”

The current incarnation of the ‘Literature and its Readers’ module runs across two terms. In the first semester, the majority of the material that the unit covers focuses on books and reading in relation to children and young people. This part of the module details the historical development of children’s literature, considers what makes a ‘classic’ children’s book, and examines contemporary children’s literature prizes. It explains the different stages in reading development and explores books for pre-school, infant and primary school age children, teenagers and young adults. The module also examines literacy and reading initiatives, including Bookstart, and the use of electronic resources, including websites to support children in their reading. Current issues and trends in reader development work with children and young people are also discussed.

The last two weeks of the first term examine poetry and its readers and ways in which literature can be used to tackle social exclusion. The focus for these sessions is primarily on adult readers and many of the topics covered in the second term of the unit are also geared toward literature for this audience. In the second term, the module surveys the range of literary and popular fiction available for adults, looks at authorship and readership of different genres of popular fiction and examines the roles of imaginative literature in people’s lives. The module also gives an holistic overview of the different constituencies involved in the reading industry and the relationships between them. The roles

played by writers, illustrators, publishers, booksellers, libraries, literature officers and the arts funding system are all explored. The unit also examines the role of public libraries in reader development, including advising readers, organizing events, activities and reading groups and the use of ICT software to assist readers with choosing books. Other content covered in the module includes management of imaginative literature in libraries, sources of information for stock selection, creation of acquisition policies, promotion and stock display, user surveys, monitoring and evaluation and strategies for providing socially inclusive services.

7.7 Modules on reading and literature for children and young people.

Four of the modules included in the audit focused solely on reading and literature in relation to children and young people. These modules were all part of postgraduate programmes of study. Loughborough University offered a module on 'The Child and the Book'. University College London offered a module of 'Services to children and young people.' The University of Sheffield offered a module on 'Services for children and young people', and Liverpool John Moores University offered a module on 'Children and Young People.' These modules differed slightly in their emphasis but all addressed the same types of topics and shared similar learning outcomes. All of the modules examined the issues involved in the provision of services to children and young people through school and public libraries. They also emphasized the significant role that reading could play in the educational and social lives of users within this group.

The modules aimed to give students an awareness of the key stages of child development in cognition and reading. They also described the historical development of reading material for children and critically assessed the range of current literature available to children in their early years, at primary school age and at secondary school age. Several of the modules also examined noted awards for children's literature such as the Carnegie Medal for writing, the Kate Greenaway Medal for illustration and the Nestle Smarties book prize. The social

significance of children's literature was examined as part of each module and students were encouraged to read and discuss different children's books and related material. Book selection approaches in relation to children's libraries were also analysed. By the end of these modules students should have acquired a good understanding of the diverse user needs within this client group.

7.8 Discussion.

The results of the LIS course audit would seem to suggest that reading and book knowledge are still largely overlooked in terms of the professional education of students wishing to enter the library and information profession. Not a single LIS course anywhere in the UK featured core modules that looked at literature or subjects such as reader development as part of the library syllabus. The omission of such material from the kinds of library school courses that those wishing to work in public libraries after qualifying are likely to take is deeply disturbing given that the lending of books and the promotion of reading are still seen as core public library activities. While only a minority of respondents had taken modules on reading or literature as part of their LIS degrees, the vast majority of respondents stated that they believed that current library school courses should contain modules of this nature as part of the curricula. In reality, less than a third of the courses included in the audit contained any modules that focused on these types of materials. In the minority of cases where such course content was available it was always offered in the form of a non-compulsory elective module. All five of the library course modules covered literature and reading for children and young people, four of them exclusively so. This finding accords with the views of respondents, recorded in an earlier chapter, who believed that enjoying reading and knowing about books was particularly important for staff working with children and young people. However, several staff also stated that these qualities were important for frontline staff in adult lending libraries. This was not reflected in the modules offered on LIS courses as only one module, 'Literature and its readers,' examined this issue in any detail.

8. Job related training of public library staff.

This chapter sought to address the following research objective:

- To investigate whether staff had undertaken any training that focused on book knowledge or reader-centred work in the course of their current job.

Noting that steps must be taken to improve the book knowledge of librarians, Harrison (1996: 24) contends that:

If nothing can be done to re-introduce a study of English and other literatures into the curricula of the library schools it may become necessary for librarians to include the study in their in-service training programmes.

McKearney (1990) and Denham (in Elkin and Kinnell, 2000) both advocate the need for in-house training to provide staff with the requisite knowledge and skills to promote and market books in public libraries. Such training should “spark off enthusiasm” and “engender confidence” in promoting books and reading. However, as Van Riel (1993:81) notes, many librarians are reluctant to attend training courses and acquire book knowledge because of: “the complicated taboos and snobberies, which surround attitudes to reading.”

8.1 Training undertaken.

Respondents were asked whether they had undertaken any training that focused on book knowledge or reader-centred work in the course of their job. If respondents answered that they had then they were asked to describe the impact of this training on their practice. Sixteen respondents (80%) had completed some kind of relevant training. Some staff failed to identify specific courses that they attended and described their experiences in general terms:

We have undertaken various training, both in house and external training from various sources. ... Training of this kind is to help staff gain confidence when dealing with customers, talking to them and recommending authors and titles. Ideas for promotion and display of stock. Help with ideas for running book groups and delivering story

time sessions. [Library Supervisor]

I have been on an outside course regarding reader choices and I found it very enlightening, it was especially valuable to hear the contributions of other participants. [Library Assistant]

The majority of staff did identify the courses that they had attended. Twelve individuals had undertaken 'Frontline' reader development training from 'Opening the book.'

8.2 'Frontline' training from Opening the Book.

Opening the Book (OtB) is the leading provider of training and consultancy in reader development for libraries. OtB works with libraries to change the look and feel of library buildings and spaces, the skills and confidence of library staff and the management and presentation of collections. OtB runs national training programmes in the UK and Ireland and has introduced the reader-centred approach to many other European countries. One of OtB's main roles involves training library staff in reader development. The training program Frontline is an online course in the basic theory and practice of reader-centred work for frontline staff in the adult lending library.

The Frontline course is designed to embed the reader-centred approach in the everyday thinking of staff who work directly with books and readers in public libraries. Frontline is currently used by 102 English public library services, including Essex and Sheffield. The full Frontline course consists of 7 modules that combine online exercises with practical library tasks. Modules 1 – 4 can also be taken as a short course. These modules cover a variety of topics:

Module 1. 'Readers', introduces the fundamental principles of reader-centred work and explores how libraries can widen choice for readers. As part of this module, trainees have to talk to 5 different borrowers about how they choose what to read. The module also examines a reader-centred website and considers how this resource can be used in the library.

Module 2. 'Library staff', explores the difference between personal reading and the job-related skills of reader-centred work with books. The module examines the impact of staff views about books, including the views of those who consider themselves non-readers. It also explains the difference between recommending and promoting books and shows staff how to promote titles they haven't read.

Module 3. 'Books and audiences', introduces ways in which staff can improve and update their stock knowledge by learning to analyse book covers. Trainees learn about how books are targeted to readers using book cover signals and are shown how to use this knowledge in order to choose which books to promote.

Module 4. 'Displaying books', explores the importance of browsing to library customers and demonstrates how to use book covers to make effective displays that aid borrower selection. As part of this modules trainees must create a small face-on display and monitor how it issues.

Module 5. 'Reader-to-reader', introduces ways to use reader recommendations. Trainees must create and run a small promotion that uses the power of reader recommendations.

Module 6. 'Targeting a promotion', discusses how to differentiate reading audiences and meet different readers needs. Trainees must identify a target audience, consider their needs and plan an appropriate location in the library for a promotion.

Module 7. 'Running a promotion', introduces how to identify and manage stock for the targeted promotion. Trainees must set up, run, monitor and evaluate the promotion.

8.3 Respondents views on Frontline.

The majority of respondents who had undertaken Frontline training had found the course beneficial:

During the [Frontline] course I had to interview a number of people about their reading habits and I realized just how much people enjoy sharing the books they've read. I now spend much more time talking and listening to our readers. I share what I know myself and learn from them. [Library Assistant]

I now feel more confident helping readers with their choices and recommending books that they might not normally have chosen. [Library Assistant]

Frontline library training has had an enormous impact on my professional practice mostly because I enjoy the job even more. It should be compulsory for being a library assistant. [Library Assistant]

Frontline ... I am the Coordinator and supervisor for staff taking the course and it gives me an extra insight as to staff's perceptions of their readers and their role. [Service Development Manager]

A few respondents found Frontline less helpful, or limited in its scope. None of these respondents mentioned learning about running book promotions in their answers, so they may have attended the shorter course Frontline course.

I have taken part in 'Frontline' training online and found it entertaining although I didn't feel that I learned a great deal that I hadn't already picked up through working in the library. [Enquiry Officer]

I've done Frontline but this was more to do with the promotion of books than the content of books, stuff like face on displays and things like that. [Library Assistant]

I have done Frontline but it was mostly about displaying books to increase issues. [Library Assistant]

8.4 Training as part of CPD.

Respondents were asked whether they believed that all library staff should be given the opportunity to develop their reading and book knowledge as part of their continuing professional development. 75% of respondents stated that they believed staff should be given this opportunity. Many respondents felt that such training was necessary because of the service expectations of library users:

Yes. The public want and expect a good level of book knowledge. The rise of reading groups and the success of TV book programmes (such as Richard & Judy) show that reading is still hugely popular. We should be part of that. It's what libraries have always been good at and shouldn't be undermined. [Library Assistant]

Yes because better book /author knowledge enables library staff to provide a better service for the customer [Library Assistant]

Yes. You can only pass on knowledge you have acquired. As a lender of books, libraries should ensure that staff have a wide knowledge of literature to enable them to guide readers to appropriate material. [Customer Services Supervisor]

One respondent felt that book knowledge was better acquired through individuals own reading than via library training:

The opportunity should definitely be there for those who feel they need it but I think that the willingness to read a variety of different books and on-the-job experience are the most useful methods of attaining this knowledge. I also feel that most library staff I have encountered do have a good level of book knowledge achieved in this way and that each individual has specific areas of expertise, creating an efficient team and a breadth of book knowledge. [Service Development Manager]

Other respondents had some qualms, though no one answered 'no' outright. The most common reason why such training should not be offered was a consideration of the cost that this would involve:

Ideally yes, but in practical terms (cost) it maybe isn't a priority. [Library Assistant]

I don't think we can afford this luxury in current times, and staff do pick up book knowledge on the job. Staffing is very tight now and we need to have everyone employed on frontline tasks for most of the time. It would be difficult for managers to assess staff's knowledge as part of performance management. [Service Development Librarian]

8.5 Views of OtB representatives.

The director of OtB, Rachel Van Riel, and the training director of OtB, Anne Downes, were also asked whether they believed that all library staff should be

given the opportunity to develop their reading and book knowledge as part of their continuing professional development. Both believed that staff should be given this opportunity since 'books are the core business of libraries.' Anne Downes stated that, if she were able to influence the matter, then she would encourage library staff to read at least one book that they would never normally choose for themselves. It was suggested that staff reading groups could serve as a vehicle to facilitate this with staff choosing books for each other, or individuals simply 'selecting something from the shelves that they wouldn't normally touch.' This purpose of this exercise would be to help inform the way in which books were offered in the library. It was noted that this reading programme would need to include timetabled discussions in order to give a focus and provide a practical outcome. Discussion would not be about the content of the books that staff read, but about how their reading experiences could inform change. For instance, staff could use the experience of reading something outside of their comfort zone to inform effective promotions, displays or messages that would help other readers to gain the confidence to give something unfamiliar a try.

8.6 Discussion.

The fact that 80% of respondents had completed some type of training that focused on book knowledge or reader-centred work was encouraging as it showed that some provision was being made to help staff develop these kinds of job skills. Over half of all respondents (60%) had taken 'Frontline' training. The majority of these respondents had found the course beneficial. This showed that this training was addressing a real need and helping to fill a possible skills gap. The content of the Frontline modules demonstrated that the successful promotion of books and reading in a library was not necessarily based on the books that staff themselves had read. Frontline training taught staff how to recognise the appeal to readers of different types of books and how to talk positively about books that they may not have personally liked. Following the Frontline methods, even non-readers could learn to gauge the appeal of a book, to identify what kind of read it was offering, and to talk positively about it. Though staff who did read were likely to find it easier to do this effectively.

9. Conclusions and recommendations.

Section 1.1 of this dissertation outlined the key aims and objectives of the study. This conclusion addresses those objectives directly and reflects upon the overall findings of the research. It also makes a number of recommendations. The majority of points included in the discussion are drawn from the specific chapter that each individual research aim prefaced. Where relevant findings from other chapters are included, the numerical section location of this material within the dissertation is indicated in parenthesis.

- **To investigate the imaginative literature reading habits of public library staff, examining what staff read, how regularly they read and where they read.**

This dissertation's examination of the perceived importance of fiction reading and book knowledge among public library staff had been prompted in part by the concerns of a senior librarian who was worried that her colleagues were not reading enough fiction. Authors in the professional library literature had also expressed anxieties about the apparent lack of book knowledge and disinterest in reading displayed by many members of public library staff. While there are undoubtedly those within the profession whose lack of interest in such activities does present a cause for concern, the study found that the presence of such individuals was not as widespread as some had feared. All of the respondents surveyed read imaginative literature regularly. This included paraprofessional staff as well as those in professional posts. Staff read in a variety of locations, many as part of an established daily routine, and all stated that being unable to read imaginative literature would have a negative effect upon their lives.

The most popular reading material among respondents was fiction, followed by poetry then drama. The cumulative 'book knowledge' scores of staff as a group were higher in the areas of classic works of literature, both adult and

children's writing, than in the areas of contemporary fiction and current children's literature. This finding should serve to further quell the anxieties of those authors who expressed concerns that members of modern library staff were no longer well versed in 'classic' works of literature. The fact that a large proportion of respondents were able to critically appraise the depth and breadth of their libraries fiction collections (5.4) is further evidence of the generally high level of literary awareness displayed by members of public library staff. One particular group of staff appeared to be particularly knowledgeable about books. All of the individuals who worked in roles that involved services to children and young people scored highly across all categories in the book knowledge self-assessment exercise. This finding was the first of many in the dissertation to establish an explicit link between reading and book knowledge and staff who worked with children and young people.

- **To examine the reading and book culture of libraries where respondents work.**

Another contextual backdrop to this dissertation was the arguable decline in emphasis on books in public libraries as services increasingly focused on providing patrons with IT training and support. Once again, the findings of the dissertation would seem to suggest that this concern may have been misguided. Book lending was still perceived to be the major function of the public library among respondents, and libraries were still seen as playing an important role in reader development. Reading and reader development services were extensively promoted within the libraries where respondents worked through activities such as reading groups, reading challenges, book awards and literary festivals. Library users were encouraged to share their reading experiences and a thriving culture of book-talk also existed among members of staff at many libraries who regularly discussed their reading with colleagues and library users. The majority of staff firmly believed that an enthusiasm for literature and a good level of book knowledge were positively perceived within the public library world and made a difference to a person's profile (6.6). However, the

distinct lack of any officially sanctioned library initiatives that had been set up to encourage staff to read, or to talk about books, would appear to suggest that these activities were actually either taken for granted or undervalued by members of library management. There seemed to be an expectation that staff would read what they felt they needed to on their own time in order to perform the responsibilities associated with their post. No attempt was made to harness the specialist book knowledge of different staff members in a way that could benefit the service.

Recommendation: The researcher believes that reading imaginative literature should be recognized as a legitimate job-related activity for employees to engage in within the workplace. If allocating a set period of work time for reading is not possible then the creation of a staff reading group could also help employees to explore their personal reading preferences and widen their stock knowledge.

- **To investigate whether reading and book knowledge are seen as advantageous for all library roles, and to explore the importance attached to these attributes in recruitment terms.**

Reading and book knowledge were seen as advantageous for a range of library roles and activities. They were regarded as particularly valuable for staff running reading groups and undertaking reader-development work that involved recommending titles to users. Staff who read could talk to library users about books confidently, secure in the belief that they had enough knowledge to support their side of the conversation. Having the confidence to talk to borrowers about books and reading enabled staff to deliver a high level of customer service. Three quarters of all respondents felt that advertisements for public library positions should include reading or book knowledge as essential or desirable candidate skills for applicants to possess. A similar proportion of staff reported that they had been asked questions about their reading habits or literary preferences while being interviewed for their current post. This seemed

to suggest that reading and book knowledge were valued in recruitment terms. However, other research findings appeared to contradict this view.

Several respondents who were involved in library recruitment expressed negative opinions about candidates who specified an enthusiasm for reading or a love of literature in their applications. The results of the job audit exercise also revealed that these qualities were not accorded much recognition in recruitment terms. Very few advertisements for public library posts mentioned any reading or book related competencies within the person specification, even though several of these roles involved activities relating to reader development work or the promotion and management of book stock. The most commonly requested attributes specified in job advert person specifications were communication skills, ICT skills, flexibility and enthusiasm. The only advert that placed any real significance on the importance of reading and books was an ad for a Children's librarian post which stated that applicants should 'enjoy children's books', be 'passionate about books and learning' and 'agree that a love of reading can make a real difference to a child's life.' This finding served to reinforce the already strong association between reading and book knowledge and staff who worked with children and young people. The questionnaire results also revealed that an enthusiasm for reading and a good knowledge of books was seen as particularly advantageous for individuals involved in delivering services to children and young people.

Recommendation: The researcher believes that job adverts for public library positions that involve reader-centred work or the promotion of book stock should specify an interest in reading somewhere within the person specification. The accounts given by staff in this dissertation of the numerous ways in which reading and book knowledge have helped them to undertake these types of activities show that these skills are an important part of the job and should be viewed by recruiters in positive rather than negative terms.

- **To investigate whether the professional education of staff included the study of content on reading or books, and to examine whether current LIS courses are offering modules in these areas.**

The majority of respondents who had taken a postgraduate degree or diploma in librarianship had not covered any modular content on reading or fiction as part of this course. Of the staff that had studied these topics at library school, only half felt that the inclusion of such content had been of benefit to them in the course of their subsequent library work. This finding would seem to suggest that respondents did not attach much significance to the academic study of this type of material. However the research found that the vast majority of respondents believed that current library school courses should include modules on reading and literature as part of the curricula. Some staff were even surprised that such content did not constitute a core part of current LIS courses.

In order to ascertain the extent to which modules on reading and literature were being made available to students, an audit of the course content of UK universities offering CILIP accredited LIS courses was undertaken. The audit revealed that none of the seventeen courses selected for inclusion in the study contained any core modules that covered these types of subjects as part of the library syllabus. Five library course modules containing content on reading and books were offered as elective modules by UK universities. Four of these focused exclusively on reading and literature in relation to children and young people, the fifth also examined imaginative literature for an adult audience. This finding suggests that reading and book knowledge are professionally recognized as important skills for individuals delivering services to children and young people. However, the fact that only one library module examined imaginative literature for an adult audience indicates that these skills are not considered to be of equal importance for individuals undertaking reader development work with adults. The only course in the audit that provided students with a comprehensive grounding in literature for an adult audience was a joint honours degree in 'Information and Library Studies and English' that included study of literary materials as part of the English subject strand.

Recommendation: The researcher believes that a greater proportion of LIS courses should include elective modules that focus on reading and books for an adult audience. At present, only the 'Literature and its Readers' module offered by Manchester Metropolitan University addresses this topic. The fact that this unit has been running for a decade shows that there is sufficient interest among students to justify the existence of similar optional modules on other LIS courses.

- **To investigate whether staff had undertaken any training that focused on book knowledge or reader-centred work in the course of their current job.**

80% of respondents had completed some type of training that focused on book knowledge or reader-centred work in the course of their current job. Some of this training took place in-house and some took place externally. 60% of respondents had undertaken online 'Frontline' reader development training from 'Opening the book.' From the answers of respondents, it appeared that the majority of staff had taken the shorter version of the Frontline course that consisted of modules 1-4. This course primarily focused on recommending and promoting books to users, analyzing book covers and creating effective stock displays. The full 7 module Frontline course included additional content and practical exercises on running, monitoring and evaluating targeted book promotions. The majority of respondents who had undertaken Frontline training had found the course beneficial, especially for reader development activities.

Frontline training was aimed at staff that worked in adult lending libraries. No respondents had completed any type of training that focused on the theory and practice of reader-centred work within a children's library. The lack of specialized on-the-job training available for those working with children and young people was surprising. The job advertisement audit (6.7) and LIS

course audit (7.4) exercises had both indicated that reading and book knowledge were regarded as more important skills for library staff working with children and young people than for those working with adults. 75% of respondents believed that all library staff should be given the opportunity to develop their reading and book knowledge as part of an ongoing Continuing Professional Development programme.

Recommendation: The researcher believes that all library staff should have the opportunity to take courses such as Frontline, or equivalent training that focuses on children's libraries, as part of their professional development. If external training is not available because of cost then staff reading groups, along the lines of those suggested by Rachel Van Riel and Anne Downes from *Opening the Book*, could also help to meet the training needs of staff by enabling them to develop their reading and improve their knowledge of library stock.

This dissertation is 22,482 words long.

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Appendix A - Questionnaire distributed to study participants.

ROLE & RESPONSIBILITIES

(1). Where do you work?

(2). What is your job title?

(3). What are the main duties and responsibilities of your job?

READING HABITS & BOOK KNOWLEDGE

(4). How often, if ever, do you read 'imaginative literature' such as fiction, drama and poetry?

(5). Where and when do you normally read?

(6). Why do you choose to read?

(7). What impact would it have on your life if you were unable to read imaginative literature?

(8). Please indicate where, on a scale of 1 (poor) to 10 (excellent), you would rate your level of book knowledge for each of the categories below:

- Literary classics by canonical writers: e.g. Charles Dickens, Jane Austen
- Works of major contemporary writers: e.g. Ian McEwan, Margaret Atwood
- Classic works of children's literature: e.g. Lewis Carroll, Enid Blyton
- Contemporary children's illustrated literature and Young Adult fiction

READING & BOOK CULTURE OF LIBRARY

(9). Does your library provide you with time to read during work hours?

(10). Do you ever discuss books that you have read with work colleagues?

(11). What is your opinion on the range of fiction stocked by your library?

(12). Please describe the ways in which reader development is promoted within your library service.

(13). Please provide details of any liaison between your library and other organizations concerned with the promotion and development of reading.

LIBRARY ROLES & RECRUITMENT

(14). Please detail any ways in which reading imaginative literature has been of benefit to you in the course of your library work.

(15). When you were recruited for your current position, were you asked about anything relating to reading or books in your interview? Please give details.

(16). Do you believe that advertisements for public library posts should specify an enthusiasm for reading, or a good level of book knowledge, as essential or desirable qualities for applicants to possess? Please give details.

(17). Are there any library roles or activities for which you believe reading regularly, and having a good level of book knowledge, could be seen as advantageous? Please provide as much detail as you can in your answer.

(18). Are there any library roles or activities for which you believe reading regularly, and having a good level of book knowledge, could be seen as unimportant or irrelevant? Please provide as much detail as you can in your answer.

(19). Do you think that fiction reading and book knowledge are seen as high profile in professional terms? Please give details.

EDUCATION & TRAINING

(20). If you have taken a degree or diploma in librarianship/information studies, did this course include any modular content on reading or fiction?

(21). If yes, please describe what form this took and any perceived benefits that you gained from it.

(22). If no, please explain whether you believe that the inclusion of such content would have been of any benefit to you?

(23). Do you believe that current library school courses should include a module on reading and literature as part of the curricula? Please give details.

(24). In your current job, have you undertaken any training that has focused on

developing literary knowledge or the importance of reader-centred work? If yes, please describe the impact of this training on your professional practice.

(25). Do you think that all library staff should be given the opportunity to develop their reading and book knowledge as part of their continuing professional development?
Please explain your reasoning.

CILIP Gazette vacancies.

Interpersonal - communication skills, attitudes or behaviours linked to personality traits (26)

Library specific – knowledge, experience or skills explicitly linked to library work. (18)

Generic - skills and attributes that could be associated with a range of posts and sectors. (11)

Reading and book knowledge based – experience, skills or enthusiasm in these areas. (5)

Gazette issue	Vacancy title	Authority	Salary	Chartered/qualified librarian required	Person specification (according to advert)
08/04/2010	Librarian	Bournemouth	£27,849 - £30,011	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent communication skills • Excellent problem solving skills • Strong team focus
08/04/2010	Learning support librarian	Westminster	£30,345 - £31,935	Not specified	Not specified. Advert only gives details of job role and responsibilities
06/05/2010	Senior librarian	Murray	£31,366	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outgoing • Enthusiastic • Motivated
06/05/2010	Learning and information services manager	Plymouth	£30,011 - £33,661	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enthusiastic • Talented • Passion for delivering and developing learning and information opportunities • Excellent interpersonal skills
06/05/2010	Assistant Librarian	Cheshire West and Chester	£16,830 - £19,126	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible • Well organised • Good ICT skills • Good communication skills • Ability to work under pressure • Ability to meet deadlines • Ability to lift and carry packs of books

20/6/2010	Senior librarian – educational and cultural development	Aberdeenshire	£34,426 - £35,977	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of reader development principles and literacy support • Experience of e-learning • Knowledge and awareness of Scottish curricular support • Experience of outreach services to communities • Self-motivated • Experience in collections management and selection • Awareness of local and national priorities • Experience of managing, coordinating and motivating a team and identifying targets • Experience of applying performance management and quality assurance techniques
20/06/2010	Senior librarian – service development and support	Aberdeenshire	£34,426 - £35,977	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge and understanding of the impact and application of ICT across library services • Ability to identify areas for development including via external funding • Self-motivated • Experience in collections management and selection • Awareness of local and national priorities • Experience of managing, coordinating and

					motivating a team and identifying targets
20/05/2010	Senior librarian – adult and community services	Central Bedfordshire	£28,636 - £30,011	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly motivated • Forward thinking • Enthusiastic • Interested in reading development, • Interested in e-library provision, promotion and working with all ages and communities • Experience of working in public libraries
20/05/2010	Librarian	Halton	£22,221 - £24,646	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lively • Enthusiastic • Good communication skills • Commitment to public libraries • Positive attitude to change
20/05/2010	Temporary Trainee Librarian	Halton	£14,841 - £16,541	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good communication skills • Enthusiastic • Committed to working with the public • Working towards a library and information qualification or waiting to commence or enroll on a appropriate degree or post-graduate course
03/06/2010	Trainee library and information officer	Newcastle	£17,161 - £21,519	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good interpersonal and communication skills. • Ability to work well

	Trainee library and information officer (cont.)				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> independently and as part of a team. • Commitment to high level customer service. • Flexible approach. • Interest and awareness of ICT and its potential in a modern library service.
03/06/2010	Children's librarian	Wiltshire	£26,276 - £28,636	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passion for working with children of all ages and their families • Enjoy children's books • Agree that a love of reading can make a real difference to a child's life • Experience of working with children and teens in a library or educational context • Familiarity with national policies • Passionate about books and learning • Great customer care skills • Strategic planning ability
03/06/2010	Sunday librarian	Hertfordshire	£20,753 - £25,201	Yes	Not specified. Advert only gives details of job role and responsibilities
03/06/2010	Stock and reader development librarian	Hertfordshire	£20,753 - £25,201	Yes	Not specified. Advert only gives details of job role and responsibilities
03/06/2010	Customer services librarian	Hertfordshire	£20,753 - £25,201	Yes	Not specified. Advert only gives details of job role and responsibilities
17/06/2010	Reading and learning manager	Brighton and Hove	£29,236 - £31,754	Not specified	Not specified. Advert only gives details of job role and responsibilities

Appendix C - CILIP accredited LIS courses included in course audit.

Academic institution	Courses offered	Core Modules on reading/book knoweldge (Y/N)	Elective Modules on reading/book knoweldge (Y/N)
Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen	PG Dip/MSc Information & Library Studies.	No	No
Aberystwyth University	BSc Information and Library Studies (Single Honours) Bachelor of Arts Information And Library Studies And English (Joint Honours)	No Yes, but only as part of English course content.	No Yes, but only as part of English course content.
University of Brighton	MA Information Studies	No	No
Leeds Metropolitan University	PG Dip/MSc Information Studies	No	No
Liverpool John Moores University	PG Dip/MA/MSc Information and Library Management	No	Children and Young People
City University London	PG Dip/MA/MSc Library Science.	No	No
University College London,	PG Dip/MA Library & Information Studies.	No	Services to children and young people
Thames Valley University, London	PG Dip/MA Library and Information Management.	No	No
Loughborough University	PG Dip/MA/MSc Information and Library Management	No	The Child and The Book
Manchester Metropolitan University	BA(Hons) Librarianship PG Dip/MA Library and Information Management.	No No	Literature and its Readers Literature & its Readers

Northumbria University	BSc (Hons) Librarianship	No	No
	MA/MSc/PG Dip Information & Library Management.	No	No
University of Sheffield	MA Librarianship.	No	Library Services for Children and Young People
University of Strathclyde	PG Dip/MSc Information and Library Studies	No	No
University of Ulster	MSc/PG Dip Library and Information Management.	No	No