WHY DO SOME CHILDREN’S LIBRARY SERVICES TAKE A DISNEYIZED, THEMED APPROACH TO THE DESIGN OF THEIR LIBRARY SPACES?

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

at

THE UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD

by

MARIA O’HARA

September 2012
Structured abstract (approximately 300 words)

Background

Library design is highly influenced by contemporary issues. Modern libraries are increasingly involved in the provision of informal learning to children. As society becomes more ‘Disneyized’ and concerned with the user experience environment themed environments are moving beyond the theme park. This study was initiated to explore the theming of children’s library environments.

Aims

To investigate the similarities and differences in the planning and implementation of themed and non-themed approaches in children’s libraries by means of two case studies.

Methods

A case study approach was adopted. It was hoped this would allow the researcher to develop a hypothesis as to why the two library services created such different children’s areas. Interviews, observational data and documents relating to the redevelopment project were used to collect data. Data analysis was a constant, reflective process. Results were presented in a thematic format and a comparative discussion of each category included.

Results

Both libraries had a theme; however, that of the non-themed library was deliberately kept inconspicuous. All frontline staff were involved in planning the themed library studied. Library managers controlled the development of the non-themed library. While the themed library was intended to be fun the non-themed library was built to be flexible. The themed children’s library was refurbished as part of a special project intended to connect with users. The non-themed children’s library was refurbished as part of a library-wide redevelopment.

Conclusions

The different approaches were probably due to the different nature and aims of the two projects. The non-themed library was creating a design to fit the needs of the whole community. Their children’s library is a flexible space which can be used for library activities and community events. The themed library wanted to create a fun children’s area which would engage very young users. Their creation resembles a playground which children enjoy. Both libraries successfully created libraries to suit their very different purposes.
Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the Sheila Webber (Lecturer, iSchool) for her assistance with this project. She would also like to thank Sonya, Rita, Kathryn and all other staff members of the Sheffield and Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Councils who assisted with this project. Finally the author would like to thank Debbie Southwell and Katherine Whittington for their help in locating valuable resources.
# Contents

Structured abstract (approximately 300 words) .......................................................... i
Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................ ii
Contents ......................................................................................................................... 1

1 Introduction and Context .............................................................................................. 5

2 Aims and Objectives of this Research .......................................................................... 7
   2.1 Research Aim ......................................................................................................... 7
   2.2 Research Objectives .............................................................................................. 7

3 Literature Review ......................................................................................................... 8
   3.1 Introduction .............................................................................................................. 8
   3.2 Library Design ....................................................................................................... 10
   3.3 Disneyization and the Experience Economy ......................................................... 15
   3.4 Interactive Learning and the Library .................................................................... 19
   3.5 Summary of Key Findings ..................................................................................... 22

4 Methodology .................................................................................................................. 23
   4.1 Qualitative Research .............................................................................................. 23
   4.2 Case Study Research ............................................................................................. 24
   4.3 Arrangement of Current Study .............................................................................. 25
   4.4 Limitations of Current Study ................................................................................ 30
   4.5 Analysis .................................................................................................................. 31

1
6.1.1 Discover how far each library consulted children and young people themselves when creating an environment for them. ........................................ 57
6.1.2 Determine whether either case study can accurately be described as Disneyized. ........................................................................................................ 57
6.1.3 Isolate factors which may have caused them to take such different approaches ........................................................................................................ 59
6.1.4 Look at staff perception of how their effective the redesign was and how it was received by users ....................................................................................... 60
6.2 Limitations of Research Findings .................................................................................................................. 62
6.3 Recommendations for Future Research ........................................................................................................ 64
7 References .................................................................................................................................................. 65
8 Appendices ............................................................................................................................................... 72
8.1 Case Study A .......................................................................................................................................... 72
  8.1.1 Interview Questionnaire (completed by Library Manager) ........................................ 72
  8.1.2 Supplementary Interview Transcript (with KP, Library Assistant involved in project at Case Study A and MOH, Researcher) ........................................................................... 73
  8.1.3 Observational Data for Case Study A ....................................................................................... 79
8.2 Case Study B .......................................................................................................................................... 80
  8.2.1 Interview Transcript (with SW, Case Study B’s Library Manager and MOH, Researcher) ................................................................................................................... 80
  8.2.2 Observational Data for Case Study B ....................................................................................... 93
8.3 Ethical Approval ..................................................................................................................................... 96
  8.3.1 Ethics Application Form .......................................................................................................... 96
8.3.2 Participant Information Sheet..................................................... 102
8.3.3 Example Participant Consent Form........................................ 105
8.4 Required Dissertation Forms...................................................... 107
1 Introduction and Context

The design of children’s libraries in the UK has, from their inception, been largely linked to British social attitudes towards education and leisure (Black & Rankin, 2009). When the Victorian ideal of self-improvement was paramount, children’s libraries closely resembled their schoolrooms and encouraged silent study. Our society, by contrast, values informal, interactive learning and shows increasing interest in the benefits of games-based education (Singer, Golinkoff, & Hirsh-Pasek, 2006) and has a deeper understanding of the pedagogical value of play (Goldstein, 1994). As such, it is unsurprising that this fresh (though not necessarily new) emphasis on ‘play’ as a learning tool is having an impact on the design of new library spaces for children.

This emphasis can be seen in official reports reviewing the needs of children and young people when using the library. These now discuss not only the resource-based needs of young people but also their environmental needs, and look at how library environments support activities. The ‘Start with the Child’ CILIP (2002) report recommends that the percentage of the children and young people in a public library’s local population should be reflected in the budget. It suggests that these percentages should match up not only with the percentage of the bookfund dedicated to children but also other heads of expenditures such as furniture and fittings. It calls for funding opportunities to be used by libraries to create safe and welcoming environments. The report (CILIP, 2002) outlines an appropriate library environment as one that provides a welcoming space to support diverse activities and in which children will want to ‘hang out’. It also recommends the use of interactive displays and activities as well as the provision of technological resources to support learning.
Changes in the ways that children’s libraries are leveraging their services, as with most other cultural institutions, are motivated not only by this emphasis on ‘learning through play’ but also by their need to compete with commercialised leisure activities (Moore, 1997). Libraries do not exist within a vacuum but are influenced by trends in popular culture as when the genesis of television, for example, displaced leisure reading and in extreme cases may have affected the literacy levels of children (Neuman, 1988). Academics such as Pine and Gilmore (2002) argue that we are moving towards an experiential rather a goods – or service – based economy. Thus, with neighbouring sectors like museums incorporating games into their exhibitions (Asma, 2003) and creating atmospheric ‘funhouses’ (Schoenberg, 2004) it is unsurprising that libraries too are responding to the challenges of a Disneyized consumer market (Bryman, 2004).

In their struggle to compete with the leisure industry libraries often adopt the methods of their rivals. Both inside and outside the UK children’s libraries are appearing with the themes so popular in restaurants and theme parks (Black & Rankin, 2009). Even when a themed approach is avoided, new library designs attempt to create attractive environments that are capable of competing with commercial competitors. While some commentators have recognised the influence of this potential Disneyization trend in libraries (Black & Rankin, 2009), however, little research has been carried out into the phenomenon. It is the influence of this Disneyized approach to children’s library design that this dissertation intends to examine: how and why are children’s libraries taking a thematic approach to spatial design and are there any obvious benefits and drawbacks for their users?
2 Aims and Objectives of this Research

2.1 Research Aim

- To investigate the similarities and differences in the planning and implementation of themed and non-themed approaches in children's libraries by means of two case studies.

2.2 Research Objectives

- Discover how far each library consulted children and young people when creating an environment for them.
- Determine whether either case study can accurately be described as Disneyized.
- Isolate factors which may have caused them to take such different approaches.
- Look at staff perception of how their effective the redesign was and how it has been received by users.
3 Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

This project aims to examine the design of children’s libraries within the context of our current societal emphasis on play and activity based learning. This emphasis can be seen in official reports reviewing the needs of children and young people when using the library. These now pay attention not only to the resource-based needs of young people, but also their environmental needs, and look at how library environments support activities. The ‘Start with the Child’ CILIP (2002) report recommends that the percentage of the children and young people in a public library’s local population should be reflected in the budget. It suggests that these percentages should match up not only with the percentages of the bookfund dedicated to children but also other head of expenditures such as furniture and fittings. It calls for funding opportunities to be used by libraries to create safe and welcoming environments. The report (CILIP, 2002) outlines an appropriate library environment as one that provides a welcoming space to support diverse activities and in which children will want to ‘hang out’. It also recommends the use of interactive displays and activities as well as the provision of technological resources to support learning.

Of particular interest in this context is the theming phenomenon. A growing number of themed environments are now found in the public sector, including those in libraries. It seems reasonable to hypothesise that their multiplication owes much to the success of the theme park industry and that the existence of themed libraries could be due to the ‘Disneyization of society’ as suggested by Bryman (2004). Therefore an attempt will now be made to contextualise this project within three key concepts. The first and possibly most crucial concept to be explored will
be library design. This section will examine the tensions between practical and aesthetic concerns in library design. It will then survey some academic responses to the theming of children’s library services in the literature. In the subsequent section there will then be an explanation of Byman’s (2004) ‘Disneyization’ theory along with an introduction to other relevant ideas including the concept of the experience economy (Pine & Gilmore, 2002). The final section will then look at the growth of both interactive learning and the library’s role in non-formal education.
3.2 Library Design

In their survey of children’s library designs over the past one hundred and fifty years Black and Rankin (2009) identified a strong correlation between the arrangement of space and contemporary social and educational concerns. For example, in the Victorian era of self-improvement children’s spaces tended to be arranged to promote individual study and good behaviour. With the growing interest in pedagogy in the twenties and thirties, circular tables and flexible space allowed for the incorporation of play in learning. While separate provision for children was initially concerned with preventing children from distracting adult readers, attention was increasingly paid to the importance of creating inviting and attractive children’s spaces. Modern library design is equally open to the influences of contemporary issues. With the rise of the internet and the increase in consequential challenges to the traditional library service, a fresh emphasis is put upon children’s library services, particularly in the public library sector.

As the leisure industry multiplies and demands more and more of the public’s attention, libraries are increasingly called upon to justify their presence and create attractive environments that will attract and hold their users’ collective interest. Libraries now have to compete with increasingly dynamic commercial environments targeted at children. The Spanish toy store chain Imaginarium, for example, has two entrances to every store, one for adults and the other for children (Imaginarium Corporate Video, 2012). Restaurants like McDonalds and Burger King often sport a kids corner with themed decorations or, in larger outlets, a play area. Some British shopping centres are even following the lead of North American malls like the Edmonton Mall in creating exciting, stylised environments that transform a trip to the shops into an exciting experience (The Trefford Centre, 2012; West Edmonton Mall, 2012).
While children’s library services increasingly recognise the need for attractive library environments, however, much of the academic literature examining library design concentrates on practical concerns (Bernstein & Schalk-Greene, 2006; Rohlf, 1986; Sandlian & Walters, 1991). True, examples of stunning, aesthetically pleasing libraries are easy to find both in academic journals and on professional webpages (Designing Libraries, 2012a, 2012b; Landgraf, 2011; Walter, 2001). As far back as the 1980s, many of the children’s library designs that are lauded as exemplars include a thematic element and most are highly stylised. In her examination of revitalised children’s services, for example, McCormick (1986) praises the transformation of a school bus into a ‘secret place,’ the introduction of a nautical theme complete with a reading boat and the creation of an ‘AV Express’ train for multimedia sources in a number of library services.

However, at times an undercurrent of scepticism towards design trends can be detected among some professionals. Rohlf (1986), commenting in the same year as McCormick, suggested that - while dramatic lighting was a popular contemporary feature – it was not fit for purpose. He went on to advise librarians to stay in control of their library’s design, a sentiment echoed fifteen years later by Bazillion (2001) when he warns against inexperienced library architects who compromise functionality for design-winning features.

Instead LIS professionals tend to emphasise practicality, and a key emergent factor is the need for flexibility to allow for changes in services (Bernstein & Schalk-Greene, 2006; Walter, 2001). Thus, librarians are advised to ensure that furniture is not bolted down, and to integrate both areas for quiet study and those for group work (Walter, 2001). Despite these practical concerns, however, the need to compete with attractive commercial designs has ensured that aesthetic design elements cannot be ignored. In the face of challenges to the survival of public library services
the importance of children’s library services has grown as a means of recruiting future readers and a means of justifying the continued funding of the library service (Webster, 2005). The design of the children’s area has become even more important and attempts have been made to make these areas attractive and engaging.

Given the proliferation of themed environments and their popularity among children and young people, it is unsurprising that many libraries do adopt a themed approach to designing library spaces for children. Creating a themed space seems in many ways a straightforward means of demarcating a children’s area and making it interesting and attractive for children and families (Feinberg & Keller, 2010). Visual stimulation plays a key role in child development, with children comprehending pictures in books long before they understand the accompanying text, and visual stimulation can provoke a strong response even in adults (Feinberg & Keller, 2010). Creating a strong visual environment can help stimulate the imagination and aid in brain development. Themed library spaces can present a cost-effective way of doing this since theming can be achieved with something as simple as a wall mural.

Much of the literature, however, warns library professionals to adopt this approach with caution, suggesting that less is more and that themes can become overbearing and limiting (Feinberg & Keller, 2010). Lushington (2008) argues that environments that try too hard to simulate a particular theme, such as space travel or pirates, are likely to become boring once the novelty wears off. Instead he recommends that any libraries attempting to introduce a theme should use books themselves as their inspiration (Lushington, 2008). However, even this suggestion may be problematic as the formats in which children encounter stories become increasingly diverse. While Feinberg and Keller (2010) warn against patronising themes that stifle children, they also acknowledge that a well-executed theme can be a very useful
tool in engaging young users. While there is little library-specific literature examining children’s attitudes towards theming, there is relevant literature on children’s hospitals. In their study of young people’s preferences in the design of their hospitals, Coad and Coad (2008) found that the majority of their participants did prefer a themed ward. However, participants differed in what they would like this theme to be and chose increasingly abstract ideas as they got older. Younger participants, for example, favoured explicit cartoon-esque beach themes, while older children were more likely to favour images that suggested waves or the sea (Coad & Coad, 2008). Interestingly in the context of this research project, Feinberg and Keller (2010) identify theme parks and the entertainment industry as a central influence on themed libraries. Black and Rankin (2009) go so far as to specifically identify ‘Disneyization’ (see next section) as an influence on modern children’s library design.

Even when overt library themes are avoided, however, academics such as Feinberg and Keller (2010) suggest that a ‘Wow’ factor be introduced to capture people’s attention and encourage them to use the service. Children’s library services need to be fit for purpose and create a friendly and welcoming atmosphere (Maxwell, 1993) but given other demands on the child’s attention they also need to be engaging, attractive environments. While Rohlf (1986) may criticise the impracticality of award-winning architectural features, they can serve an important purpose. Black and Rankin (2009) found that even libraries avoiding the themed approach were creating highly-styled, attractive environments that owe much to domestic design companies like Ikea. Young people tend to enjoy ‘cool’ environments (Meyers, 1999) and incorporating a ‘Wow’ factor into library design can help create a space with which all of the target users are willing to interact, not just the bookish ones.
It would be remiss to discuss children’s library design without mentioning one important dimension that should play a role in any library development project: consultation (Feinberg & Keller, 2010). As Sandlian and Walters (1991) point out, an adult may think they have the perfect vision for a youth library but their target audience could completely disagree. Children’s spaces, for example, are often stamped with a popular cartoon character to appeal to children, but in a survey of children’s views on how their hospital wards should be themed this was not a particularly popular choice (Coad & Coad, 2008). In the same study Coad and Coad (2008) also found that while children were not overly fond of white spaces, nor did they like brightly coloured hospitals, preferring milder colours. As Maxwell (1993) found in the 1990s, children are often happy to help adults design appropriate spaces for them. They like to be consulted and doing so can lead to the creation of a more appealing service.
3.3 Disneyization and the Experience Economy

Disneyization is a concept described by Bryman (2004) to explain the process by which the principles and techniques of Disney theme parks are coming to dominate more and more sections of our society. It does not suggest that these principles originated with Disney; simply that they were popularised by the Disney corporation. The crux of the theory is that Disney’s methods of deploying its services are being adopted by other companies and industries. Thus the themed service environments, hybrid deployment of services, performative labour and merchandising synonymous with Disney are increasingly found elsewhere.

Just as the Twentieth century saw Western society shift from an industry based economy to a service based one, commentators like Pine and Gilmore (2002) suggest that yet another economic shift is underway. They argue that consumers are beginning to demand not only goods and services but also experiences and memories. As leisure time becomes increasingly compartmentalised, consumers are attempting to escape their everyday, information-saturated worlds and enter the escapist, experiential ones created by businesses like The Rainforest Café, Planet Hollywood and Disney (Benedikt, 2001; Clavé, 2007; Pine & Gilmore, 2002; Simpson, 2003). For Pine and Gilmore (2002), experiences have long been the lifeblood of the entertainment industry. Their importance to consumers allow businesses such as theme parks, water parks, theatres etc. to charge admission fees just to enter their environments without necessarily exploiting the services offered (although this is implied). As evidence that selling “experience” is moving beyond the entertainment industry, they cite the example of British Airways, which sells travel service as a haven from everyday life (Pine & Gilmore, 2002).
However, Disney theme parks are still identified as the prime example of how an experience-based business can attract clients (Bryman, 2001; Clavé, 2007; Pine & Gilmore, 2002). In fact – as Bryman (2001) points out – Walt Disney did not intend Disneyland California’s appeal to lie in its thrill rides but in the park’s carefully constructed themed environments. Thrill rides were actually a late addition, introduced to appease the younger audience who found the park rather tame. Pine and Gilmore (2002) identify theming as the key element of an experiential business, and it is perhaps telling that Disney chose to differentiate its parks from standard contemporary amusement parks by theming (Bryman, 2001). Theming provides a coherence that can help immerse the customer in the experience offered. It is because of the success of Disney’s theme parks that Bryman (2001) suggests that their principles and the way in which they deploy their services are coming to dominate more and more of the world through a process of Disneyization. Adapted from Ritzer’s (1983) concept of McDonaldisation, Bryman (Bryman, 2004) identifies four main trends that Disney has propagated: theming, hybrid consumption, merchandising and performative labour.

As primarily economic theories that use the language of consumerism and business, these concepts may seem far removed from cultural institutions like libraries and museums. Nevertheless, cultural institutions are acutely aware of the challenge posed by entertainment venues like theme parks, and are attempting to respond accordingly (Anderton, 1997). Just as businesses are adopting the language of an experience economy, so too are some museum-based academic researchers (Anderson, Piscitelli, Weier, Everett, & Tayler, 2010). More telling than the academic literature on the subject are the practical examples of experiential museums available. The new Titanic Belfast attraction is a prime example: architecturally designed to evoke the image of the eponymous ship, the building houses traditional
museum exhibits on Belfast as an industrial city, life on the ship and the disaster, alongside evocative museum experiences (Titanic Foundation, 2012). Visitors can take a ride around the “shipyard” and watch the Titanic being built; immerse themselves in a journey up the ship from hull to deck; and stop in a cinema to see the Titanic as she is today. With the multiplication of information and books easily available online, libraries too need to diversify and adopt new approaches to public service provision. Many libraries are recognising the need to attract and connect to users in new ways, as will be discussed further below. As libraries compete with commercial leisure entertainment, concepts relating to the experience economy and Disneyization are consequently extremely relevant to service developments.

In Bryman’s (2001; 2004) analysis, theming relates to the multiplication of environments that are given their own narrative, hopefully enhancing users enjoyment of these environments. It is the most obvious facet of Disneyization as it affects the visible environment so profoundly. It therefore provides an excellent tool with which to identify potentially Disneyized library environments. Hybrid consumption relates to the interlocking and increasing integration of forms of consumption generally associated with different institutions (Bryman, 2004). The themed hotels of Las Vegas, for example, are relatively cheap to stay in because they make their money from the casinos and other amusments provided inside them (Bryman, 2004). Likewise, the primary function of an airport is air travel, yet they also act as shopping hubs (Bryman, 2004). In the case of non-profit public institutions ‘hybrid services’ may be a more appropriate term than ‘hybrid consumption’.

Merchandising, the promotion of branded goods, is unlikely to be found within public libraries. While some libraries are moving in that direction - modern national libraries often now include a gift shop (Green, 2002) – this is unlikely to be of
relevance in community libraries. Nonetheless, it may be interesting and relevant to observe the level of branding present in different library services. Finally, the concept of performative labour (closely associated with emotional labour) suggests that service work may be increasingly akin to a theatrical performance with employees acting out a particular role to contribute to the visitors’ experiences (Bryman, 2004). In libraries this is unlikely to be as obviously present as it is in Disneyland, where employees are ‘cast members’ (Bryman, 2004) but Bryman’s (2001) earlier mention of ‘emotional labour’ as one of his four trends may be more applicable to libraries. Emotional labour describes situations in which employees are expected to display positive emotions to consumers, thereby improving their overall experience of the service (Bryman, 2004). For the purposes of this discussion I shall, therefore, consider emotional rather than performative labour within libraries.

Bryman (2001, 2004) is careful to differentiate his concept of Disneyization from the more commonly used and more loosely defined term ‘disneyfication’. The latter is often associated with some level of trivialisation, while Bryman (2004) is examining the adoption of some of Disney’s extremely successful business strategies by other companies and in other sectors. Regardless of whether all the dimensions of Disneyization are present, the trend in themed children’s library environments does appear to be influenced by wider, social moves towards a more experience-based economy. As will be discussed in greater detail below, this trend represents attempts by library services to compete with other attractive demands on children’s attention. However, only time will tell whether this particular manifestation of commercialisation in libraries represents a passing fashion or a long-term change.

18
3.4 Interactive Learning and the Library

Perhaps one of the most obvious reasons that libraries and museums may be adopting the strategies of experiential entertainment venues is because of the increasing currency of interactive and experiential learning in education. The central role of play in child development has long since been identified and examined by researchers such as Piaget (1962). As mentioned above, as early as the 1920s and 1930s children’s library services were beginning to introduce circular tables and flexible space to accommodate learning activities (Black & Rankin, 2009). Researchers such as Sarland (1985) have identified leisure reading, a central activity in both education and library services, as a potential form of learning through play. Thus, children reading an Enid Blyton book could be said to be engaging in symbolic play, using the generic characters and plots as a framework through which to explore the world (Sarland, 1985). The concept of ‘learning through play,’ therefore, can be integrated into the most basic, traditional purpose of a children’s library service: the promotion of reading for pleasure and the stimulus of the imagination.

Over the last few decades, however, the role of ‘play’ in not only libraries but the education sector in general has expanded. With the expansion of the internet and the development of an omnipresent digital infrastructure, the supremacy of book-based literacy has been shattered. The Oxford internet survey shows that the British population is increasingly likely to search for and locate information not via traditional reference sources but using the internet (Dutton & Blank, 2011). Although book-based literacy continues to dominate formal education, particularly at school level, it is no longer the only form of literacy children need.

In order to successfully navigate the new information landscape children will need to develop a number of digital literacies (Ashton, 2005). Research suggests that girls
are the more likely to read books and boys count more avid gamers among their numbers (Brosnan, 1998; Monitor, 2003). It could be argued that within a digital environment as much time should be devoted to encouraging gaming by girls as is spent trying to get boys to read. At the very least, other forms of media can help develop children’s literacy and it has even been suggested that literacy programmes based only on ‘quality’ literature may disadvantage children developing literacies through other mediums such as television at home (Arthur, 2001; Ashton, 2005). There have even been attempts to develop comic book based literacy programs, a form of literature which was burned for its supposed negative effects on child development during the 1950s (Bitz, 2004; Twomey, 1955).

Given the importance of play in child development and the growing importance of information technology in everyday life, it is unsurprising that not only activity-based learning but also gaming is being integrated into formal and informal education. In the museum sector, for example, Everett and Piscitelli (2006) found that child-centred play-trolleys enriched children’s experiences, engaging all the senses and allowing learning to become an active rather than passive experience. Equally Lucas et al (1986) found that interactive displays could both entertain children and stimulate inquiry, with their young participants discussing ideas as they interacted with exhibits.

Popular concerns about the negative effects of gaming on child development have been academically refuted (Kutner & Olson, 2008). Squire and Jenkins (2003), meanwhile, argue that the commercial games market is already an engaging educational forum. They argue that games like Civilisation III and Revolution not only teach students about history but require them to apply the knowledge they gain to progress within a challenging game that strives to strike a balance between
‘do-able’ and difficult (Squire & Jenkins, 2003). Thus the use of gaming in education is likely to increase.

Libraries have already begun to adjust to the new information architecture; both children’s areas and their adult counterparts tend to be designed with increasing flexibility as has been discussed. This increased flexibility is a reflection of the rapidly changing needs of library services. The Peoples Network in UK libraries, for example, called for floor space to be given over to PCs yet as the use of tablet computers increases this space may become obsolete (The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, 2009). Children’s library services also tend to incorporate space for PCs and in many cases gaming is becoming a regular library fixture (Neiburger, 2007). Some libraries, however, have gone further in incorporating games into their services. When the Marion County Public Library in Indianapolis refurbished its library, for example, it rebranded it as “The Learning Curve” and created a complementary virtual world – Curve World – to develop its users’ information literacy skills (Funny Garbage, 2012; Stop-Motion Tour of the Learning Curve, 2010; The Learning Curve, 2012). The refurbished library space was designed to support a children’s service in which a digital infrastructure had been integrated. Like museums, therefore, libraries have the potential to create highly immersive, entertaining educational experiences that engage users and are able to compete commercially. Like the experience economy itself (Pine & Gilmore, 2002), however, such environments are still in the early developmental stages.
3.5 Summary of Key Findings

Library design is heavily influenced by the contemporary social context (Black & Rankin, 2009). Given the alternate sources of information now available to the general public, greater attention is being paid to the library’s role in children’s education, particularly in the younger years. Attempts are being made to create attractive environments to entice children’s attention away from competing activities. Theming has been identified as a useful tool for creating interest, but some feel themed designs should be used with caution (Feinberg & Keller, 2010).

Theming is an increasingly popular mechanism for enhancing the user experience (Pine & Gilmore, 2002) as we move from a service-based economy to an experiential one. Bryman (2004) suggests that this signifies part of a process by which the principles of Disney theme parks, (theming, emotional labour, hybrid consumption and merchandising) are coming to dominate more and more of society.

The user experience is of particular interest to institutions involved in informal education given the increasing currency of experiential learning. Games and activities are interactive activities that are becoming increasingly integrated into the learning process (Squire & Jenkins, 2003). The ‘Start with the child’ (CILIP, 2002) report specifically calls on libraries to provide technological resources and interactive displays to their younger users. Thus themed libraries may reflect our movement towards an experience-driven society.
4 Methodology

4.1 Qualitative Research

As this research project attempts to understand the phenomenon of Disneyized themed library services and its causes, a qualitative approach seems most appropriate. While quantitative studies are often said to provide stronger scientific results, qualitative research allow the researcher to capture more depth of the topic studied (Dawson, 2009). The emphasis of this project is not on quantifying how many libraries have adopted a theme design, but rather to identify why they felt this was the best type of environment to create. A qualitative approach gives study participants greater scope to share their motivations and opinions in greater depth (Dawson, 2009). Qualitative research has been criticised for the subjectivity of its results and it has been argued that the perceived objectivity of quantitative research is more reliable (Stake, 1995). However, as Stake (1995) points out this very subjectivity can be a strength rather than a weakness since it can be a vital ingredient for understanding.
4.2 Case Study Research

There are a number of different qualitative research approaches that it would be possible to take. While each have their strengths and weaknesses, for the purposes of this research query a case study approach has been chosen as the most appropriate method. Case studies are often criticised for lacking scientific rigour due to their narrow focus, concentration on one specific situation and inherent inability to provide the researcher with universally applicable conclusions (Dawson, 2009; Thomas, 2010; Yin, 2008). However, they can provide an excellent tool to explore a research area more specifically in order to develop hypotheses.

Case studies can give an in-depth, holistic picture which it was felt could be useful within the current context (Thomas, 2010; Yin, 2008). While results gathered cannot be generalised, an in-depth analysis of a specific situation can provide a valuable insight into a wider phenomenon and enrich our overall knowledge and understanding of a subject. It is hoped that by examining why specific children’s library services in Yorkshire adopt a themed approach to library design we will gain some insight into why other libraries might conceivably take the same approach. Random sampling would have been inappropriate for this project as libraries containing themed children’s areas needed to be targeted. The case study approach allows the researcher to select samples based on such theoretical grounds, and in this case two were selected to represent polar types for comparison (Eisenhardt, 1989).
4.3 Arrangement of Current Study

A literature review was conducted to build a solid knowledge base on key concepts and to contextualise the subject. It examined three key concepts; library design, Disneyization and the experience economy; and finally interactive learning and the library. Materials were identified using a variety of methods. Some were sourced from the university library while others discovered using online databases such as Emerald or search engines like Google Scholar. A number of additional resources were recommended by colleagues or tutors from the course. Finally, some relevant resources with which the researcher was already familiar were considered for this project.

A number of participants were then invited to join the research project. They were selected using a number of practical and theoretical criteria. For practical reasons, the libraries contacted were geographically accessible from Sheffield, falling either within Sheffield’s city limits or in areas easily commutable from Sheffield.

The research was also due to be conducted during a period which tends to be busy for children’s library services in the public sector. Over the summer 97% of UK public libraries run the Summer Reading Challenge for 4-11 year olds (The Reading Agency, 2012) and face short term staffing problems as staff members take annual leave.

Perhaps because of these problems the response rate from libraries contacted was low. Of those who did respond some unfortunately had to be ruled out as the library redevelopment took place more than ten years ago. In other cases staff turnover in the intervening period since the redevelopment had been high; leaving none of those involved with the project then still in post now.
Ultimately it was decided to carry out a comparative case study looking at one themed and one non-themed library. Using two case studies allowed the researcher to compare and contrast the two approaches and identify and isolate possible factors which may be unique to each.

By isolating such factors it was hoped that a theory could be developed to explain why some libraries choose to take a themed approach to their design of children’s library spaces while others avoid it. Using more than one case study strengthens research results, helping to mitigate some of the weakness of case studies as an examination of the unique. However, for practical reasons the number of case studies undertaken for this project had to remain low to allow in-depth analysis to take place within the scope of the project. It quickly became clear that it would be possible to collect a large amount of material for each case study and both time and word count limitations would have prevented a full analysis of this material had further case studies been undertaken.

However, two potential case studies who replied met the necessary criteria. Both were refurbished relatively recently, Case Study A in 2007 and Case Study B in 2011. While Case Study A had adopted a clear themed approach, none was apparent in Case Study B, so they could offer a comparison between the two approaches. Both libraries also offered interesting documents connected with the refurbishment. Case Study A could provide the full records of their project while Case Study B had photographically documented the refurbishment project on Flickr. It was therefore decided to proceed with these two libraries as case study subjects. It is worth noting that both libraries had included separate provision for children and teens. For the purposes of this study it was decided to concentrate on the areas designated for children below secondary school level. Due to the low response rate and competing demands on the research participants it proved impossible to conduct a pilot case
study. Instead, data was collected at times convenient for the participants and both case studies were conducted simultaneously.

As is normal with case studies, a number of methods were used to collect data, allowing for the triangulation of key trends (Yin, 2008). In this case research data was gathered via observation, interview and the study of relevant documents pertaining to the redevelopment of the two libraries. One of the key aims of this research was to understand the decision making process undertaken by staff involved in managing a redevelopment project. As such, interviews were the primary method of gathering data. By directly talking to the library managers it was hoped the reasons they decided to adopt or avoid a themed approach could be quickly identified and explored.

A semi-structured approach was taken towards the interviews to allow unanticipated, relevant information to emerge while still collecting answers to a specific set of questions for comparative purposes (Dawson, 2009). This approach was particularly useful in Case Study B, where the interview began with a tour of the library that covered much of the pertinent information. The number of interview questions prepared was kept low in deference to the busy schedules of research participants. Each question was designed to directly address one of the research objectives. The intention was to conduct face-to-face interviews with library managers as the staff member likeliest to have an in-depth grasp of the project. However, some flexibility was required due to competing demands on the attention of participants. In Case Study A the library manager was unable to conduct a face-to-face interview for health reasons. Instead she provided answers to the interview questions via a written questionnaire and this data was supplemented by a face-to-face interview with another staff member who had been involved with the project.
Interview participants were given a copy of the questions before the interview in order to allow them to reflect on and recall the relevant data. Giving participants an opportunity to prepare their answers to questions afforded them an opportunity to recall details of a project that happened some time ago, mitigating the ravages of time on human memory somewhat. Had the interviews been conducted cold it is conceivable that important information would have escaped the participants’ memory. Recordings were made of all face-to-face interviews using a dictaphone. This helped to put participants at ease with the interview process. The use of recording equipment in interview allows a full record of the conversation to be kept for reference purposes, allowing the interviewer to concentrate fully on what the interviewee is saying without having to worry about writing it down (Dawson, 2009).

While some observation of how general users interacted with the library environment was undertaken, the bulk of the observational data collected related to the researcher’s evaluation of the environment. This was in part due to the high number of children using the area: had extensive observation of their use of the space been undertaken it would have been necessary to obtain parental consent (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). A group of observational questions were drawn up but these were not intended to be exhaustive and strictly adhered to. Rather it was hoped that they would provide a structure for the observational component of the data collection and allow easy comparison between the two case studies. The questions provided a form which was filled in by the researcher as soon as possible after the observational visit had been carried out.

In the initial stages of the research project it was unclear how much related documentation would be available for consultation. Any documents directly related to the refurbishment projects were considered for inclusion in the project. Given
the variable nature of project management structures under which library refurbishments can take place some inconsistency between cases was expected from the outset. This did indeed prove to be the case, with Case Study A providing a comprehensive collection of documents related to the project while Case Study B was unable to do so. Despite this handicap, related documentation provided a rich source of information on the refurbishment projects. As extenuating circumstances precluded an interview with the library manager of Case Study A, the related documentation filled in many of the details of the project. In Case Study B, a similar in-depth picture was provided via the interview with the library manager.
4.4 Limitations of Current Study

Inevitably this research project was faced with a number of problems. The most obvious was the limited amount of time available in which to complete the project. Had more time been available it would have been possible to do a more in-depth and systematic study using a greater number of participants. As noted above, the research necessarily had to take place during a far from ideal time of year, so that response rates were disappointing and it was difficult to arrange a convenient time in which to conduct the research.

Another of the key limitations of this project is that there is a strong bias towards qualitative research data methods. Of the three methods employed for data collection two resulted in subjective data. The interview participants were involved in developing and implementing their respective refurbishment projects and thus could have had a skewed perception of events. Equally, observational data collected is subject to the researcher’s personal biases. While the related documents that were consulted could mitigate this effect, they themselves often concentrated on qualitative data. However, Dawson (2009) suggests that complete objectivity is a feature of scientific, quantitative research methods. She suggests that its application to qualitative studies can be inappropriate, because at times the subjective experience of the researcher or research participant is a factor which adds value to the research results.
4.5 Analysis

In order to support the researcher’s ability to study the selected cases in the greatest possible depth a reflective, thematic approach was adopted to the analysis of data collected. Reflective analysis allows data to be subjectively analysed and interpreted by the researcher both during and after the data collection process, with ideas being constantly developed and adapted as new information emerges (Dawson, 2009). It was felt that a reflective approach could assist the researcher in evolving and refining possible explanations why different library services adopted different approaches to their library’s design. Admittedly this highly subjective approach does little to mitigate the supposed unscientific nature of qualitative research results so often denigrated by quantitative researchers (Dawson, 2009). Nonetheless, given the exploratory nature of the current study, which seeks to understand a phenomenon and develop rather than test a theory, it was felt that a decidedly qualitative approach to the data analysis would prove more appropriate and rewarding.

The thematic system of analysis is an inductive analytical system which allows the researcher to identify themes that emerge from the data rather than imposing them (Dawson, 2009). This is particularly useful in the current study as the aim was to identify key themes and aspects influencing the redevelopment of different libraries. A thematic analysis also allows the researcher to analyse data throughout the data collection process and to leverage background reading to support and refine their interpretation of the data and explain emerging themes (Dawson, 2009). Thus data analysis was a constant process taking place both during and after the data collection process as a growing understanding of the research topic emerged. While the majority of the themes emerged naturally from the data collected, one was imposed to meet a specific research objective. The section
examining the extent of Disneyization was specifically included to determine whether it could provide a reasonable explanation for the theming phenomenon. A comparative approach was taken to the analysis with each theme studied in turn for cross-case patterns (Eisenhardt, 1989). The findings for each case study were related and a comparative discussion included for each theme.
4.6 Ethics

The utmost care was taken to ensure that the results and findings related in this report are an accurate reflection of the data gained via interviews, observation and the study of related documents during the research process. Steps were also taken to maintain as much consistency as possible in data gathering and handling across case studies. As mentioned above, it was not possible to conduct both interviews in the same manner. However, attempts were made to mitigate the effects of necessary variations in data handling with the creation of a structured set of interview and observational questions used in both case studies. Informed consent was also obtained from all research participants and contact details provided to allow them to seek further information or withdraw their consent with ease.

Due to the complications involved in conducting research with vulnerable individuals such as children, this research involved no direct contact with young people. However, one key component of the research process did involve the collection of observational data in a public space designed for and frequented by children. As such a great deal of care was taken to ensure the anonymity and protection of children indirectly encountered during the data collection process.
5 Summary of Case Study findings

5.1 Introduction to Case Study contexts

5.1.1 Case Study A
Case Study A is a public library run by a metropolitan borough council located in a local shopping precinct in a 1970s building. It refurbished its children’s area as part of a service development project entitled ‘Creating Audiences’ in 2007 (Langley & Durant, 2005). There is separate provision for children and teens, with the services for the two treated separately during the redevelopment. The majority of the area’s population are white British with only 0.78% of the population identifying themselves as black and minority ethnic (BME) (Rainsforth, 2004). Educational attainment levels are below the national average: 38.3% of the population between 16-74 years old have no qualifications compared with 36.8% in the metropolitan borough as a whole and 29% across England (Rainsforth, 2004). Given the below average levels of educational achievement within the area, supporting the development of children and young people is seen as a priority. As such the main aim of the project was to draw in younger users in the hopes of nurturing the adult users of the future (KP, 2012).

5.1.2 Case Study B
Case Study B is a public library administered by a metropolitan borough council. Situated in attractive parklands, it is located inside a listed period building. It house’s a completely separate children’s library with its own entrance and counter which was refurbished in 2011 along with the main library. Again, there is separate provision for children and teens with services for the latter located within the main library. It is located in a relatively affluent area of the city and 23% of the ward’s residents are aged between 0-19 years old (LASOS, 2012). Educational attainment
levels are relatively high with 73.52% of pupils gaining 5+ GCSEs in 2009-2010, compared with a city-wide average of 72.62% (LASOS, 2012). The redevelopment was initiated primarily to repair damages to the building and introduce self-service (SW, 2012). As the library is highly integrated with the local community, creating a usable space for community activities was an important concern (SW, 2012).
5.2 Purpose of redevelopment projects

The two redevelopment projects were initiated for very different purposes. Case Study A drew its funding from a project entitled ‘Creating Audiences.’ The specific aim of the redevelopment project was to draw new users into the library by improving the existing library environment. One of the conditions for the funding was that all frontline staff be involved in the decision as to how best to spend the money. The staff of Case Study A’s library felt that the money would best be spent in refurbishing the children’s and teen’s areas of the library (‘Creating Audiences Project (unpublished mss)’, 2010). Specifically they wanted to create a fun environment to increase the enjoyment users drew from their library experience and thus encourage young patrons to use the library habitually in the hope of nurturing future adult users (KP, 2012). In this library the refurbishment specifically concentrated on the use of space for children and young people with the adult area left as it had been before.

Case Study B, on the other hand, was motivated by more practical considerations. Skylights on a flat roof had been leaking badly and causing damage at a time when the library was due to introduce self-issue machines (SW, 2012). It had also been some time since any care had been given to the decoration and design of the library space. All of these aspects needed attention which would have necessitated short closures, and it was decided that the needs of the community could best be served by one long closure which addressed all these issues. The majority of the metropolitan budget for library refurbishments in that year was devoted to the project (SW, 2012). It was decided to “make a good job of it” (SW, 2012) and update the library as a whole to best meet the needs of its users. While every attempt was made to create a model contemporary library environment, there were some restrictions because the library was situated inside a listed period building to which
the redesign had to be sympathetic. One other key difference between the two projects is that, while Case Study A’s refurbishment concentrated specifically on the children’s area and thus so did the designs created by potential design companies, Case Study B was refurbishing their service as a whole. The designer of Case Study B, therefore, was creating a design for a space for adults as well as one for children (SW, 2012).

5.2.1 Discussion
The differing aims and focus of the two projects obviously had a fundamental effect on the approach they took to the design of their children’s environments. Case Study A, concerned with encouraging fun experiences for users and focusing on the design of children’s areas, took a themed approach. This is perhaps a reflection of the perception in our society that themed environments are synonymous with children’s settings (Bryman, 2001, 2004; Clavé, 2007). So creating a themed space can often be used as a way to demarcate it as one set aside for children. It has been pointed out that the child’s imagination is such that they can draw entertainment from something as simple as a cardboard box (Feinberg & Keller, 2010). However, colourful, visually stimulating environments do help develop the child’s imagination, an important function of a library service. Thus Case Study A, when constructing a fun environment specifically targeted at children, created the sort of themed environment which our society interprets as well suited to childhood play.

Case Study B, conversely, was creating an environment for children in conjunction with one for adults. The aesthetic appeal of the space was only one factor of the redesign and it coexisted alongside more practical, immediate concerns (SW, 2012). This impacted on the choice of designer, Case Study A chose a design company which specialised in the creation of themed environments for children (Animania, 2011), Case Study B chose a company who developed an appropriate design for the
library as a whole. Their situation inside a listed building had to be taken into account during the design process; overly modern furniture or design would not have been in keeping with the period features already in place. As such these two case studies represent very different projects with very different aims. While one was all about creating a design aesthetic that would appeal to children the other was concerned with creating a practical, usable space for the whole community.
5.3 Choice of design and/or theme

Case Study A took an explicitly themed approach to their redesign, and the creation of a themed environment that would heighten the user experience was a specific aim of the design. The decision to adopt a themed approach was made as a group after formal and informal consultation with library users young and old (KP, 2012). Staff members decided on an appropriate theme for the project and invited applications from potential designers matching their chosen ‘Farmyard Fun’ brief (‘Creating Audiences Project (unpublished mss)’, 2010). The staff chose the theme of ‘Farmyard Fun’ as one that would not only appeal to users and create a colourful, fun environment but also because they felt it was a theme that would help their young users feel safe and secure while using the library (‘Creating Audiences Project (unpublished mss)’, 2010). The staff were particularly eager to attract younger children to the library, and the farmyard theme was based partially on their observations of pre-school children in the library (KP, 2012). Apparently the children had always responded well to the animal props used during the library’s weekly Rhyme Time (KP, 2012). The resulting design, they hoped, would be fun and imaginative but still remain familiar and thus would not present too great a challenge for their youngest users. It is worth noting that the staff also devoted some of their budget to revamping the teenage section of the library (Langley & Durant, 2005). While they felt a theme was appropriate for young children, they did not take a similar approach to the young adult section.

In individual diaries recording the project it is clear that staff had to choose between Animania and another company that presented a more subtle, unusual design (‘Creating Audiences Project (unpublished mss)’, 2010). Senior staff members in particular noted that they would have happily gone with the unique ideas of the other company. It is possible that frontline staff members
unaccustomed to making such important decisions decided to play it safe with the design that they chose, selecting the most obvious themed design. However, in interview it was clear that the key reason Animania was preferred was because of their use of bright, vibrant colours which staff felt would be better enjoyed by children (KP, 2012).

In contrast no specific intentional theme was included as part of the brief for Case Study B when applications were sought from designers. The key concern was to create a flexible space designed in a manner sympathetic to the building’s existing period features. While there was no intention at any point of creating a themed environment, the library does have a subtle underlying theme. While the metropolitan council that administers the library service for Case Study B typically use Demco Interiors in their refurbishment projects on this occasion they instead used The Design Concept, a company they had not previously employed (SW, 2012).

One of the reasons for this change was The Design Concept’s idea of bringing the outdoor environment into the library. While not an explicit theme it does provide a unifying narrative to the design. Unless pointed out, however, it is unlikely to be noticed by patrons (SW, 2012). It is notable that, even without any knowledge of this subtle theme, the consistent use of colours can be identified as a key unifying factor of the design. In fact the pinks, blues and greens found throughout both the children’s and adult sections reflect the colours of the park through which patrons pass on their way into the library. While the theme remains inexplicit throughout, in the children’s section it is present in a manner that reflects a slightly more themed approach than in the adults section. Children participating in library activities such as Story Time can sit on flower shaped cushions or even a dog shaped stool that mimic some of the sights of the park outside in a more direct manner (Sheffield Libraries and Archives, 2011).
5.3.1 Discussion

Despite their use of a unifying concept, Case Study B stopped short of creating a fully themed environment, an overtly themed environment may have worked in the children’s section but might not have been appreciated in the adult library. The library managed remarked that unless the theme is pointed out it is rarely noted (SW, 2012). Nonetheless, Bryman (2003, 2004) argues that even factors as subtle as the consistent use of colour can be used to create a themed narrative. In light of this, it could be argued that the non-themed children’s library examined in this study is in fact part of an entirely themed library. Ironically this could arguably make it more of a themed environment than Case Study A, in which only one section of the library has been themed. For the purposes of this study, however, Case Study A is the more themed environment as it attempts to create an explicitly themed experience for its users.

The theming of Case Study B is part of an attempt to create a pleasant yet practical space that takes advantage of the library’s location inside an attractive park (SW, 2012). Attempts to bring the exterior environment inside are subtle, relying on colour more than props, and thus go largely unnoticed by library visitors. The fundamental difference is that while both designs attempt to heighten the user experience one concentrates solely on this aim while the other is concerned with practical issues of usability.
5.4 Practicality of design

The main practical concern with the design of Case Study A was to create design features that could be integrated into the existing space. Some of the existing features were seen as unsuitable for a children’s area and were duly replaced. Thus some uninspiring dark wooden kinder boxes were replaced with new kinder boxes fashioned to look like animals or tractors (KP, 2012). Likewise a high room divider was replaced with a blue picket fence. In other cases existing features were adapted to fit the new theme. In this way; the existing wooden shelving was topped with green hedging and animals, and a pillar was transformed into a tree.

The removal of the tall division between the adult and children’s sections has made the space brighter and allows adults to easily supervise their children from other parts of the library. The project also saw walls in that part of the room repainted from a rust colour to a light blue which apparently made the section feel much more spacious and open (KP, 2012). The furniture is cleverly designed to integrate with the theme and children appear to enjoy it immensely, reportedly playing on top of the tractor tinder boxes (KP, 2012). However, there is one way in which is falls down slightly. Most of the seating is wooden and quite a bit of it is built for decidedly small proportions. For parents and older children, therefore, it can be less comfortable.

One important, multi-purpose feature was the Story Horses. The Story Horses serve as a spot for staff to sit while storytelling or during Rhyme Time but also conceal a CD player that can play stories to young visitors. Thus the theming conceals the relatively low-tech workings of an apparently high-tech feature. On the whole, however, the focus of the design was on playfulness rather than practicality.
The opposite could be said to be true of Case Study B. While it certainly includes playful elements such as the dog shaped seat, it is an impressively flexible design. The wheeled shelving means the space can be rearranged to accommodate both library activities and community events. A kitchen cupboard allows sticky children to clean up and experimentation found the furniture to be generally comfortable for children and adults alike (Sheffield Libraries and Archives, 2011; SW, 2012). While Case Study A makes no separate computing provision for children, Case Study B makes two computers available in the children’s area.

Had the original plans to use Case Study B’s children’s library as an activities room been followed, the library would be even more practical. Currently the library management finds it difficult to staff two separate service desks. This is particularly true as the separate entrances mean the staff in the main library have little idea how busy the children’s library is at any given time (SW, 2012). However, this is a common problem when library provision for children and adults is separate rather than open plan (Sisson, 1997).

5.4.1 Discussion
Both library designs incorporated practical aspects, albeit in very different ways. Case Study A cleverly incorporated theming into new and existing furniture. Simple changes such as the colour of the wall and the height of the room divider were used to make a huge impact. The space became brighter, more inviting and appeared more spacious (KP, 2012). The practicality of Case Study A lay in how simple techniques were used to make big changes. The design of Case Study B, meanwhile, placed a greater emphasis on how the space’s potential could be maximised. Thus a kitchen space was introduced and shelves were put on wheels to create a flexible, multi-purpose space (SW, 2012). However, the greater attention to practical details in Case Study B extends beyond the flexibility of the space. While Case Study A
contains an array of attractive wooden seats, Case Study B contains comfortable chairs big enough for adults or children to curl up with a book. While it is difficult for an adult to comment decisively on the comfort of seating designed for children, it is also possible that the flower-cushion seats available for their use in Case Study B are more comfortable than the wooden stools provided by Case Study A. Thus it seems clear that Case Study B produced the more practical of the two designs.

Nonetheless, both libraries are certainly fit for purpose and both make good use of the available space to achieve their aims. However, the main aim of Case Study A was to create an aesthetically pleasing space (KP, 2012). By contrast, the redevelopment project at Case Study B was initiated for practical purposes. The main aims of the project were to repair problems with the building and install self-service machines (SW, 2012). The design of the space, though an important concern, was not the driving force behind the project. The practical features included in the design may reflect the practical frame of reference in which the project was carried out.

Case Study B explicitly attempts to keep any theming unobtrusive, even in the more vibrant children’s section. This is perhaps partially because of their need to create an environment suitable for the whole community; the children’s section had to act as an extension of the design as a whole. The restrictions in place upon listed buildings also played an important role. It was noted that when choosing furniture some attractive modern pieces had to be rejected because they were not in keeping with the period features of the space (SW, 2012). An overly explicit themed environment may not have been in keeping with the library’s existing environment.

Unlike Case Study B, Case Study A had no restrictions on the design beyond budgetary concerns. They had a relatively small amount of funding available and had to target this money at areas of the library service where they felt they could
make the most impact (‘Creating Audiences Project (unpublished mss)’, 2010). Given the need to create the greatest possible impact, the staff involved clearly felt a need to be more explicit in their aims. Given the group decision to go with the more obviously themed environment by the frontline staff involved in the ‘Creating Audiences’ project, it seems possible that a lack of confidence and inexperience played some role in the strength of the theming in Case Study A. Some of the reasons for the differences between the two library designs may therefore be due to the type of staff involved in the decision making process. The subtle theme was chosen by library managers while the vibrant, predominant themed environment was selected by a majority vote of an entire library staff eschewing a subtler option.
5.5 Consultation with target users

The front line staff administering the redevelopment project in Case Study A felt very strongly that the funding received ultimately belonged to their users (KP, 2012). Thus they engaged in both formal and informal consultation with the public throughout the redevelopment process. Case Study A conducted a survey to establish the preferences of parents and children and discover how the public felt the money should be used. Frontline staff also informally gathered the opinions of users on a day to day, conversational basis as they developed their own ideas in preparation for presenting a pitch to senior management. The decision to create a farmyard theme was based both on this consultation process and on children’s interaction with the existing library stock (KP, 2012). It was felt that one of the advantages of giving junior staff such an integral role in the project was that they were in constant contact with library users. As such they were potentially more in touch with the public’s preferences than library managers may have been.

While Case Study B did not consult with users before beginning the selection process they did engage in a consultation process once a design had been chosen. Some of this consultation was conducted in-house: pictures of potential furniture put up inside the library and patrons were asked for their opinion on which was best (SW, 2012). The librarian also conducted some research outside the library; visiting two primary schools and one secondary school. Photos were brought along to these visits and children were asked for their opinions on the library as a concept as well as what they used the library for and what they would like to use the library for. It was reportedly an entertaining and rewarding process, with the librarian commenting that she enjoyed giving the children a sense that they could have a say within their own space (SW, 2012).
Evidently not all of the consultation process was so enjoyable. Plans to move the children’s collection into the main library and use the existing children’s library as a children’s activities room and community space were vociferously opposed by the community (SW, 2012). The public made it clear that they did not want the children’s library closed. A compromise was reached with the children’s section remaining separate but designed with an inherent flexibility which would allow it to be used for community space out of hours. There are still some problems – particularly in terms of staffing two separate service desks – but the results demonstrate that public feedback was taken on board and integrated into the final design.

5.5.1 Discussion
Both library projects involved some form of consultation with the public. In both cases this process also had an impact on the finished design as library staff responded to the feedback they were given. However, there were some key differences in the nature of this impact. In Case Study B the changes to the design that resulted from the consultation process were due to a negative reaction to some of the existing plans (SW, 2012). Case Study A, however, initiated consultation at an early stage and used the feedback they collected to develop their ideas prior to publicly advertising for design pitches (KP, 2012).

It could be argued that the emphasis placed on consultation by the staff at Case Study A may have resulted in a children’s library environment which better reflected their users’ preferences. Children certainly seemed to enjoy their space in Case Study B and it is a pleasant library environment. Case Study A, however, is able to produce a plethora of evidence which suggests that children truly love their themed area of the library (‘Creating Audiences Project (unpublished mss)’, 2010). In the final report, one staff member relates how she saw a mother and child
passing the library, the child was straining to go in while the mother struggled to move them on by promising them they could visit the library the next day (Langley & Durant, 2005). The number of children attending Rhyme Time has continued to grow since the official re-launch in 2007 (KP, 2012). Case Study A emphasised how integral they felt consultation was to creating this popular children’s area. They appear to have drawn more input from children and parents when creating and choosing their design. As such the themed environment they created may be a closer reflection of what children wanted than that of their un-themed counterpart.
5.6 Reception of Design

As intended, the public appears to thoroughly enjoy the stimulating environment created by Case Study A. User feedback describes the new children’s space as “more welcoming for the little ones” and “fun and...entertaining” (‘Creating Audiences Project (unpublished mss)’, 2010). Usage numbers increased in the wake of the redevelopment with 345 people attending the official re-launch and an increase in new under-18 members joining the library throughout the following year (‘Creating Audiences Evaluation (unpublished mss)’, 2010). One particular growth area was in the 0-3 age range; an audience the library staff were particularly interested in attracting to the library. Since the re-launch of the children’s library space the number of children participating in activities has risen. The number of pre-schoolers attending Friday Rhyme Time sessions rose in the wake of the redesign and apparently remaining high regardless of factors such as bad weather (KP, 2012). Another group who reportedly found the new environment a stimulating and fun experience to use were the pupils of the local special needs school who constituted the first visitors to the refurbished space (‘Creating Audiences Project (unpublished mss)’, 2010).

All of the staff members appeared to be equally enthused with the results of the refurbishment, commenting on how much their younger users enjoyed the new space. In one diary a staff member discusses Animania’s design. She mentions that children seem particularly attracted to the bird and animal paintings and that the company seemed “clued” in to what the children would like (‘Creating Audiences Evaluation (unpublished mss)’, 2010). Another commented that the positive reaction received from the public visitors of all ages had provided a personally affirmative experience as she had helped to create the space. The new space seems
to have succeeded in creating a positive energy in the library, energising the staff and attracting the public to their service.

The reception of the newly refurbished library for Case Study B was somewhat affected by the perception that they had been planning to close the children’s library (SW, 2012). Nonetheless, when the library reopened the public reception was good. There was a temporary rise in usage as people assuaged their curiosity and numbers have since levelled out. While library numbers in general have tended to drop in recent years, Case Study B feels that their own library has managed to remained steady and perhaps even performed slightly above average (SW, 2012). This suggests that the redevelopment project succeeded in creating a pleasant, usable space that the public wants to visit. Both during observation and while the interview was taking place it was evident that the library was well-liked by younger users. Children were seen choosing books as well as playing; in fact, the latter activity at one point became so loud it obscured a small part of the audio record of the interview.

The library staff are now more comfortable with the new design, which they feel has removed a large physical and metaphorical barrier between themselves and the public. The old library space greeted visitors upon entry with a large wooden counter behind which staff members stood (SW, 2012). Now upon arrival visitors can see right through to an attractive arched window overlooking a duck pond. The new counter is more of a reception desk at which users can sit and relax while they talk to librarians instead of having to stand. The refurbishment also saw the old wooden shelving replaced with more streamlined shelving units which made the existing space feel more open. In the children’s library a large counter was also removed and replaced with a smaller, more accessible one creating more space for children to run around (Sheffield Libraries and Archives, 2011; SW, 2012). Thus the
refurbishment created a space which was received well not only by the public but by the staff, who felt better able to connect with their users.

5.6.1 Discussion

The redesign projects in both libraries appear to have been positively received. In general this suggests that the themed library was not necessarily received more positively by the public. Usage numbers in both libraries rose after the reopening of the refurbished library before levelling off. Equally, visitors in both locations appear to like the new library environment. The redesigned space also had a positive impact on staff in both cases. In Case Study A the staff were energised by the overwhelmingly positive response of children, while in Case Study B they felt more comfortable after the removal of old fashioned counters, which had felt like a barrier between themselves and their users.

The improved library spaces also seemed to be well enjoyed by children in both libraries, and they clearly felt at home in the areas designed for them. It is notable that Case Study A provided more detail on both the reception of the library and the reaction of children in particular to the new design than their non-themed counterpart. From the available data, it would appear that young visitors to Case Study A had a more marked, positive response to the new children’s section than users of Case Study B. This could simply be because they were only refurbishing the areas of the library used by children and young people and thus the reactions of this section of the community were of greater importance. Equally, the reticence of Case Study B on the subject could be a result of the negative reaction which sections of the public had to some of the early plans for the children’s library space. Thus it is difficult to conclude whether the positive reaction recorded from children in Case Study A indicates a clear preference among children for the themed library environment or not.
5.7 Presence of other dimensions of Disneyization

The two case studies were initially chosen to facilitate comparison between one themed and one non-themed redevelopment project. As has been discussed above, however, it emerged during the data collection process that the non-themed library environment actually had an underlying theme (SW, 2012). While this theme is subtle enough to go unnoticed by most users it nonetheless suggests that both libraries fit well with the theming dimension of Bryman’s (2004) Disneyization concept. However, theming is only one of four dimensions outlined in Bryman’s (2004) theory. While theming is the most obvious to the naked eye, merchandising, the presence of hybrid consumption and performative labour are of equal importance. Some effort was therefore made to establish whether any of these three elements were present in either of the libraries studied.

5.7.1 Merchandising

There was little to be said for the presence of merchandising in the two case studies for the simple reason that no evidence of merchandising was found in either library. This is perhaps unsurprising: while libraries of cultural importance are increasingly introducing lines of merchandise (Green, 2002) there is little demand for this from local branch libraries. Merchandising could conceivably emerge in a more mature experience economy (Pine & Gilmore, 2002) where an experiential library is more carefully conceived and created. In the present examples, however, this is not the case.

5.7.2 Hybrid consumption

As discussed in the literature review, ‘hybrid consumption’ is perhaps not the best term to apply to a public sector service such as a library whose services are largely free. It could be more useful to talk about the hybridization of services or the multipurpose use of space.
While it is possible to hire out a meeting room, and there is an exhibition space in the library, the children’s area in Case Study A is not particularly multipurpose. Instead it is well designed as a space to facilitate traditional library activities. Equally, while an array of activities take place within the library, many are directly related to reading and writing. Children’s activities, for example, include a writer’s group, Rhyme Time and a Manga teenage drawing group (Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, 2012).

The children’s section of Case Study B, on the other hand, is a surprisingly strong example of both of these concepts. In terms of services, the library brings in volunteers or outside contractors to work with the public to provide computing or careers support (SW, 2012). They also work with local partners such as the Children’s Centre, the local traders association and even the local football club to run various activities and events for children (SW, 2012). As this suggests, the library is highly integrated with the local community and is eager to serve not only the educational but the general needs of the community. As such, part of the library’s redevelopment was actually targeted at making the children’s area of the library not only a more flexible library space, but also a community space (SW, 2012). All of the new shelving brought into the library during the refurbishment was on wheels to allow it to be easily moved to make space for community activities. A kitchen was also installed inside a cupboard so that groups could bring along tea and coffee and serve drinks at events (Sheffield Libraries and Archives, 2011).

5.7.3 Emotional labour

Unlike employers such as Disney, public libraries do not call upon their staff to provide a theatrical experience to the service users they encounter. Even the concept of emotional labour calls on employees to portray positive emotions they may not be feeling. The libraries encountered in this case study did not go so far.
However, both case studies reported factors such as friendliness, customer care and approachability as central to their recruitment process (SW, 2012). Traditional stereotypes often represent the librarian as a severe disciplinarian; almost a police officer (Kiladitis, 2011; Seale, 2008). It was important to staff in both libraries to challenge this image.

One of the key aims of the Creating Audiences project at Case Study A was to challenge the image of the libraries as silent and boring. The interview participant noted that many of their older users comment on the difference between the current staff and the ferocious librarians of the past (KP, 2012). Clearly the staff are concerned with creating and maintaining a positive, friendly image.

Case Study B has also employed staff who would be able to encourage users rather than enforce rules. They also stated that a love of books was essential so that staff members could engage in discussion with users (although it was also noted that the necessary knowledge could be learned (SW, 2012).

5.7.4 Discussion
Both libraries, to a greater or lesser extent, fitted Bryman’s (2004) themed dimension of Disneyization. Case Study A had created an explicitly themed children’s area while the apparently non-themed Case Study B arguably fitted Bryman’s (2004) model more closely, with an underlying thematic narrative running through the library’s design as a whole. However, neither library completely fitted the additional dimensions to Bryman’s (2004) model.

For example, there was no merchandising available in either library. While this does reflect the immaturity of the experience economy it also reflects the difficulty in applying economically based social theories to the public sector. Bryman (2004) emphasises the importance of merchandising to the Disney business model,
pointing out that Disney theme parks often generate more income from merchandise than entry fees. Public libraries are non-profit organisations and while they could undoubtedly do with some extra income they are less likely to engage in money-making enterprises. Both of the case studies also represent small branch libraries attempting to achieve relatively modest local aims. Merchandising is more likely to be found in culturally significant libraries such as the Linen Hall Library in Belfast, which has not only an on-site but also an online shop (Linen Hall, 2012), or the British Library in London, which has a significant merchandising range.

While there is relatively clear evidence of hybridization in Case Study A, the children’s area in Case Study B was specifically designed to double as a community space. Some of the key features of the design were intentionally introduced to make the children’s area multi-purpose (SW, 2012). This library service also actively seeks to deploy services for children in conjunction with other local partners. Some of these are not specifically geared towards reading and learning but rather towards sports or healthy living. Case Study B, therefore, represents a relatively strong example of the hybridization of services in libraries. The redevelopment, in fact, enabled the library to follow this trend with greater ease.

Both libraries placed an emphasis on the friendly staff service. However, neither could be said to be attempting the sort of behavioural control found in some large corporations. Both Disney and MacDonalds run pseudo-universities which train their staff how to behave towards customers (Bryman, 2003, 2004). However, both case study libraries do attempt to hire friendly staff who can relate to their users. Emotional labour is not fully present in either library in the sense that staff behaviour is not rigidly enforced. Nonetheless the tenets of our current service-based economy have been embraced (Pine & Gilmore, 2002), both libraries attempt
to employ staff who will treat customers in the sort of friendly manner Walt Disney would have approved (Bryman, 2001).

Neither library could be described as fully Disneyized by Bryman’s (2004) standards. It is interesting to note, however, that the supposedly non-themed library (Case Study B) fit Bryman’s criteria more closely than did its themed counterpart. While its subtle theme goes largely unnoticed, it does create a narrative that runs through the space as a whole rather than one section. More significantly, the children’s section was designed to act as a hybrid service space, movable furniture and a kitchen ensuring it doubles as community space when needed. Of the two, Case Study B is the more Disneyized library service. However, this could be a reflection of the staff members involved in the project. In Case Study A the project was led by frontline staff members while Case Study B was more traditional, with library management taking responsibility for the project. It is perhaps unsurprising that the management-led project fitted more closely with a theory developed from a corporate behemoth like Disney.

The popularity of theming in children’s library spaces may still owe much to the theme park. A comparison between these two case studies, however, suggests that Bryman’s (2004) Disneyization does not provide an adequate tool for understanding theming within the library sector.


6 Conclusion

6.1 General Conclusions

6.1.1 Discover how far each library consulted children and young people themselves when creating an environment for them.

It was emphasised in the literature that consultation with children was a crucial element in developing services for children and young people. Both library services studied in this project were aware of this and engaged in some form of consultation with their users. However, the nature of the consultation was different in each case. Case Study A conducted a formal survey and engaged in informal consultation with children and parents before choosing a design, thus giving their users a substantial input. They felt that the money ultimately belonged to the public and that their users should therefore have a say in how it was spent. While Case Study B undertook a substantial formal consultation process this took place at a later stage, after a design had been chosen. While their young users had less input into the overall design of the space, however, they could help choose furniture (SW, 2012). Visits were conducted to two primary schools and children were also able to provide more general feedback on what they wanted from their library service. In both cases consultation with children was substantial. Nevertheless, as the consultation at Case Study A took place at an earlier stage it gave the children more scope to have an impact upon the design of their library space.

6.1.2 Determine whether either case study can accurately be described as Disneyized.

Disneyization, as a theory examining the influence of the theme park industry on society (Bryman, 2004), seemed like a theory that could conceivably develop our understanding of the phenomenon of themed library environments. The cases
examined in this research, however, did not fit the Disneyization model. Both libraries did have a theme, but they displayed only limited elements of the other dimensions which supposedly hallmark a Disneyized institution. Both libraries looked for friendly, approachable staff and appeared service-oriented. The staff at Case Study A in particular were concerned with dispelling negative librarian stereotypes (KP, 2012). It could therefore be argued that both libraries expect some level of emotional labour from their staff. However, it is important to note that they do not attempt to engage in the sort of behavioural control found at companies like Disney. Equally, neither library had any plans to introduce a line of merchandise. Of the two libraries, one could be said to reach an approximation of hybrid consumption: Case Study B designed their children’s area to double as a community space. The primary purpose of the kitchen installed was not to enhance services for the children using the library but rather to make the space more suitable for community groups. Thus Case Study B’s children’s library space could be said to be relatively well hybridized. However, as this was chosen as the non-themed of the two case studies, this could not be said to indicate a strong correlation between theming and Disneyization in libraries.

The original intention had been to conduct two comparative case studies, one in a themed and one in a non-themed library. However, during the data collection process it emerged that both libraries actually had a theme, albeit in one case this was subtle enough to be barely noticed. It is therefore possible that theming is simply a design mechanism currently in vogue among architects. The popularity of the approach, particularly for children’s spaces, is such that the design company employed by Case Study A specialise in creating themed environments (Animania, 2011). Pine and Gilmore (2002) would doubtless argue that the multiplication of themed environments in libraries as elsewhere is symptomatic of our evolution
from a service-based economy to an experience-based one. Certainly the staff of Case Study A emphasised that they wanted to make sure children had fun in their library. In fact Pine and Gilmore’s (2002) theory that, having progressed from a good-based economy to a service-based on we are now moving on to the experience based economy, may provide a better apparatus for understanding the theming phenomenon in libraries than the specific Disneyization model.

Many modern library staff, including those working at Case Study A, are constantly frustrated by librarian stereotypes. The image of librarian as police officers ready to clamp down on transgressors (Kila ditis, 2011; Seale, 2008) frustrates library staff who are eager to engage in conversation and connect with their users. Clearly, library staff have moved beyond a focus on their books, the goods they have to offer. Instead modern library services emphasise the importance of good customer service and have accepted the tenets of the service economy. The theming of children’s libraries could indicate that the sector is slowly making another move, this time towards Pine and Gilmore’s (2002) experience economy. Not only did both the themed and non-themed libraries have a theme, but both of these attempted to add something to the user experience. Case Study A attempted to make visiting the library a fun experience for children. Their children’s area is something of a playground where children can pretend to drive a tractor or milk a cow. Case Study B, meanwhile, uses subtle design features such as colour and flower-shaped floor cushions to try to bring the outdoor environment inside with their users.

6.1.3 Isolate factors which may have caused them to take such different approaches.

While both libraries had a theme, few would notice that of Case Study B. The two library projects served two very different purposes and created two very different
environments. A number of factors identified in the data help to explain the differences between the two designs. Case Study B was a listed building, so there were restrictions on what designers could do within the space, and the final result had to complementing the period features of the building. A fully themed environment may, therefore, not have been in keeping with the building as a whole.

One crucial difference was the divergent focuses of the two projects. In Case Study A, the redevelopment project focused on the children’s area while Case Study B redeveloped their service as a whole. Thus the latter had to choose a design which worked for the whole library while the former were able to choose a company who specialised in designing spaces for children. The two projects also involved very different staff members, Case Study A empowering frontline staff to control the redevelopment while Case Study B was controlled by library managers. These two groups probably had quite different outlooks which potentially had a significant impact on the final design. Perhaps as a result of this, the two projects aimed to achieve two very different results. While Case Study A wanted to create an enticing space, Case Study B wanted to make a flexible one.

6.1.4 Look at staff perception of how effective the redesign was and how it was received by users

The differing aims were perhaps the most fundamental difference between the two libraries. Case Study A created a farmyard-themed playground for their users which, after five years, still attracts large numbers of pre-schoolers to their Friday afternoon Rhyme Time. Case Study B produced a space where staff can wheel away the books, make hot drinks and accommodate readers and belly dancers alike. While one space is all about the children, the other seeks to meet the needs of the
community as a whole in a way that an overtly themed environment might not be able to.

Both libraries achieved their aims and created attractive children’s environments. However, what met the needs of one probably would not accommodate the needs of the other. Although the children visiting Case Study A reportedly love their library, the children using Case Study B clearly enjoyed using theirs as well. Despite children’s enjoyment of themed environments, they may not fit the needs of every library and perfectly viable alternative designs exist. Which approach best suits their needs is a decision every library should make for itself.
6.2 Limitations of Research Findings

This research project could have benefitted greatly had it been possible to devote a greater length of time to the research. A greater number of case studies would have strengthened the results and allowed a more nuanced response to the research question to be developed. As the researcher was new to social sciences and had previously conducted only desk studies, some beginner’s mistakes were also made. As the researcher had not previously conducted any research involving human participants she was unprepared for both the time and difficulties involved in doing so. The most problematic result was an underestimation of how difficult it would be to contact and arrange meetings with practitioners for whom the research project was a low priority. Partially due to the researchers inexperience there was some difficulty in striking a balance between politeness and appreciation with persistence and firmness to effectively gather the necessary data from participants.

Initially it was hoped that interviews could be conducted with a wide range of individuals involved in the design process. It was hoped that all relevant library staff, members of the public and the library’s designers could be consulted. However, this proved to be impractical and eventually only the library manager could be consulted in each case. In one case staff diaries documenting the refurbishment project went some way to mitigating this problem. However, had it been possible to interview a wider range of participants a more nuanced understanding of the redevelopment projects may have emerged.

Equally, it would have been very valuable to have consulted with children on their opinions of the different library designs. As the literature constantly emphasises, consultation with children and young people is vital if a true understanding of their needs and preferences is to emerge (Coad & Coad, 2008; Meyers, 1999). In this
research project it unfortunately proved impractical to engage directly with children and the results represent adult’s impressions of environments designed for children and do not illuminate the child’s point of view.
6.3 Recommendations for Future Research

When examining the public reception of the refurbished libraries in the two case studies there was significantly more evidence of a strong positive reaction among the young users of Case Study A. However, it was impossible to draw any strong conclusions from this due to the wider focus of the redevelopment project in Case Study B and the lack of available data there. Upon observation it was also clear that the children enjoyed using both libraries. Therefore no reliable inferences can be made as to whether children preferred the themed or non-themed environment. In their study into the preferences of children for the design of their hospital spaces, Coad and Coad (2008) found that children did have a preference for themed environments. A similar study of children’s preferences in their library space design would be beneficial in understanding how best to create spaces which engage children’s interest. Such research could replicate Coad and Coad’s (2008) approach and gather children’s opinions directly or it could be based on the observation of children’s interaction with existing library environments.

The results of this research suggest that the approach taken to the design of a library space can be highly contingent on secondary issues. Factors such as the purpose and focus of the redesign or restrictions on how space can be altered for multiple purposes have an important impact on the final design which emerges. However, this project examines the specific redevelopment projects undertaken by just two library services. More case studies would have to be conducted to determine whether this reflects a consistent trend or simply a contrast specific to this project. Should this be the case a larger survey could be conducted to test how far this is a common pattern.

Word Count: 15318
7 References


Case Study B: Interview with library manager SW
(pseudonum).http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R4AzsL9GDtE&feature=youtube_gdata_player


8 Appendices

8.1 Case Study A

8.1.1 Interview Questionnaire (completed by Library Manager)

Contextual Questions:

1) Do you think your library has any theme?
   The refurbishment of the children’s area has a farmyard theme.

2) Was the refurbishment associated with any other changes to your service?
   No other than always looking to increase usage.

3) If so, how did your library redesign play any role in achieving your aims?
   The changes did lead to an increase in younger readers and in book issues.

4) What general services are deployed through the library?
   Other than books, dvd’s, spoken word, general enquiries etc we have a meeting room for hire, exhibition space, quiet study space and free public internet access.

5) Are there any particular traits you look for when recruiting frontline staff?
   We have a job specific description and specification for each individual post but the main emphasis is on customer care, good communication skills and IT skills.

Design Specific Questions:

1) What motivated your library to undertake a redevelopment project?
   The funding was on offer externally [TWO LOCAL LIBRARIES] were chosen to take part in the Creating Audiences project.

2) What do you feel the key benefits of your library’s design are?
It’s really attractive to our target audience, younger readers, the colours are bold and books easily accessible to little people. They have certainly taken ownership of the space.

3) **How does you design attempt to connect with users?**
   It provides a space that allows for play and storytelling and a space for parents to read to their children while in the library.

4) **What made you take a themed/un-themed approach?**
   We invited tenders from various companies who came up with the themes then we chose the one we liked the best. We also stipulated that they would have to be flexible and fit in with what we wanted for our younger readers. They would have to make changes if we requested them.

5) **Did you consult with users?**
   Yes, a survey of parents and children.

6) **How has/was your library’s design received by different users?**
   Compliments all round from every age group.

7) **Has the redesign increased user engagement with the library?**
   Yes, we compared statistics at the time and over the years the activities we do have attracted more young readers particularly the Rhyme Time sessions every Friday afternoon.

8.1.2 Supplementary Interview Transcript (with KP, Library Assistant involved in project at Case Study A and MOH, Researcher)

**MOH:** Okay, so I guess if we start on the first question and work out way through them?

**KP:** Okay, yep

**MOH:** Does your library have a theme?
KP: Yes, and it’s quite an obvious one ours. And I can’t remember quite how it came about except that we do a Rhyme Time session on a Friday and the library as it was before it was quite em...we had dividers, you know this section between the teenage and the children’s where the little fence is? It was like an old fashioned divider, really dark and drab and not very inviting for kids so we just knew we wanted something bright and vibrant and that they could interact with

MOH: So does the farm thing come from Old MacDonalds?

KP: Eh, it might have come from the song actually, yeah, because that’s one of the favourites. And we have a box of eh, props that we use and we sort of wave the animals about and they always get really enthusiastic about that so maybe that came from there

MOH: Was the refurbishment associated with any other changes to the service?

KP: There were quite...I’ve gone through this list this morning and I don’t know if you’ve got any of this but there were quite a few changes at the time in terms of management, in fact I’ll photocopy that for you if you’d like?

MOH: yes please...[long pause as KP skimmed through document]...I know you brought in some sort of iPod Challenge?

KP: yes that was for new members we put into a draw and every week we drew one out – it was fab, they got an iPod shuffle! It was amazing we kept wanting to put our own names in but they wouldn’t let us [both laugh] but yeah that was good and we got graphs showing how the membership just sort of...I think word got round at school and they all just sort of wanted to come in and join but yeah it was brill, and it wasn’t just one big prize we did it every week...and we’ve got all the figures to show how it sort of all improved
MOH: Did the library redesign help to achieve your aims?

KP: Yes, definitely! As the graphs show it sort of went through the roof and not only that but just seeing the kids face as the came in, they were really enthusiastic and we were sort of hoping it would be a lifelong memory as well, you know? And we get kids coming in now making all the animal noises or some go straight to the tree and...[here we were interrupted by a user query]

MOH: So then there is...What general services are deployed through the library?

KP: Right I did you a list [passes list to MOH] they’re all the things we do just sort of apart from everyday library stuff and ther es probably all sorts of things I haven’t thought of like...we do job clubs [adds this to list]

MOH: so you’ve got a lot going on.

KP: yeah we do, that’s the frustrating thing now because people think it’s literally just stamping books and yet there’s so many people coming in for different things. And not only that but there’s people coming in that live on their own and we’re the only ones they’ve spoken to all day and they tell you their problems and it’s a real sort of hub for the community.

MOH: Okay, so there’s a lot going on...and you’ve already given me the sheets on employment...so what motivated you to undertake a redevelopment project?

KP: It was the grant that we were offered originally. It was us and another local library that were given 20000 each and we all did the research on it and just chatting to people as well just to see what they wanted...is that okay?

MOH: Yeah, that’s fine...and then...what do you feel the key benefits of your library’s design are?
KP: It’s just seeing the kids’ faces when they come in. they absolutely love it, as I said at the Rhyme Time on a Friday they’ve been doing it maybe 8 years now and we’ve just seen it get bigger and bigger. The youngest one we had was a day old and he was coming right up to starting school, week in week out and I think it was just seeing all that enthusiasm really. Kids running in when they come and crying when they leave, which is a good sign, it’s not the other way round

MOH: So is it still growing?

KP: Yeah, then we lose some when they start school but we’ve got babies at the other end and we run it through the holidays as well so you get the bigger ones coming and remembering why they loved it in the first place. But we do song time first and then activities after and it is sort of meant to be a half hour session but the beauty of it is a lot of the mums that come have older ones at the school so they sort of come for an hour or so to kill time before they pick the other kids up so it is like a real family affair, its lovely. And it is nice that we’ve kind of lost that image that libraries are quiet and the old image that went with it all

MOH: Yeah I know I’ve heard stories about old libraries where children were terrified to talk...

KP: Yeah I don’t know if you’ve...did you come up from the train station? Did you see just before you get to this building there’s an old building that’s been made into flats and it says ‘knowledge is power’ above the door? That’s the old library and we still get the older end coming in and saying they remember the old librarian and being absolutely petrified of her. Se we’re just glad that that horrible image is, you know, gone.

MOH: Okay, so how does the design connect with the users? For the children I’d guess that they just love the animals
KP: oh yeah they loved it. On the launch day with the money that was left over we got circus performers in and it was like massive, we had loads of people in and there was one girl on the um, she was dressed like this dragonfly, she had on those stilts what have springs on and she was walking round on those and we had jugglers, it was fantastic! And we’ve kept a lot of the kids that came in on the day just because they came in and seen how much fun it was

MOH: It’s a good way to get people in...so then what made you take a themed approach?

KP: ehm...again just going back to chatting with parents and grandparents and even the kids and the kind of books they were taking out and then again Rhyme Time did come into it a lot. And then we had the three companies in that came to do presentations for us and one of the companies they did animals but they were kind of, erm, really dull colours and we wanted something really sort of fun and bright and that’s why we went for that one. And we’ve also got, I don’t know if you’ve seen it but in the horses stable we’ve got a tape that plays nursery rhymes and things so kids and sit and listen through the horse’s stable

MOH: So then we have...did you consult with users? It sounds like you did a lot

KP: We did yeah and we had a, we did some questionaires, I can photocopy this for you. Just basically because it was, you know, their money really so we wanted to gear it to what people were asking for.

MOH: So you handed out questionnaires to everyone who came in?

KP: Yeah!

MOH: It seems from the report that the farmyard theme came because you were trying to connect with the younger kids?
KP: That’s right yeah.

MOH: And then how was the design received by users?

KP: Ah yeah they loved it, really enthusiastic comments, we’ve got a whole page of some of them that I can copy for you...here you can see there were kids all over.

MOH: It seemed from the report that the response the library got really enthused the staff as well

KP: Yeah! I think because when we first started it was just an idea that was put to us and then because we were all...not dropped in the deep end but doing things outside out comfort zone, when we had to go to the meeting and put forward what we wanted we were all sort of nervous about it and then seeing that was the end results, it was almost like child-birth or something. We’d gone through all that and then it was fabulous on the day

MOH: Do you think it was an advantage having frontline staff involved instead of just management?

KP: Yeah and it was rewarding, it was good

MOH: I know a lot of libraries have had users drop off recently, have you had that as much?

KP: I don’t think from that end, like I said the Rhyme Time on a Friday just keeps getting bigger and bigger. And I don’t think we’ve had any week...well maybe two or three weeks, where nobodies come. Even you know it can be howling it can be gale, absolutely lashing it down and you think that’s it nobody will be turning up today and then they all come in with their macs on and their wellys so that is fantastic. And then you get grandparents bringing them in during the week and its great.
**MOH:** And then the answer to this may be obvious but has the redevelopment increased user engagement with the library?

**KP:** Yes! Again I can give you all the graphs and the facts and figures which I think speak for themselves.

**MOH:** It’s a lovely, bright space

**KP:** It is, it’s lovely. In fact they came to paint it – because the walls were all this sort of orangey colour – and it was on my day off. I think I’d had a couple of days off and they came in and painted it and when I came it literally looked like we’d had a ten foot extension, just the colour alone had made it look a lot bigger. I can copy you anything you like!

### 8.1.3 Observational Data for Case Study A

**Observational Questions:**

1) **Is it themed/un-themed and are there any unifying design factors?**
   The Library had a decided farmyard theme. Bright colours and animals were used to create a vibrant children’s area cordoned off with a garden-esque blue picket fence.

2) **Is any merchandise available?**  
   No line of merchandised was advertised within the library

3) **What are the key features/focal points of the space’s design?**  
   A lot is happening in the space and there are many competing focal points. Each animal or tractor attracts attention. The key focal points are probably the story horse stable in the corner and the pond themed table in the centre of the space.

4) **What facilities does the space have?**
The space shares a service desk with the adult and teen sections. The children’s boasts a story-telling point where children can hear stories from either a person or a recording. There is plenty of seating, though much of it is for young children.

5) Is it well used?
   It was quiet throughout the observation period, however, those children who did come in were clearly drawn to the space and enjoyed using it.

6) Does it seem to engage the target audience?
   Children appeared to enjoy the space, however, few visited during the observation period.

7) Is there evidence that the space could be multi-purpose?
   There is little evidence that the space could be multi-purpose, it is tailored very specifically towards the reading needs of young children and it would be difficult to use the space for other purposes.

8) Is it fit for its primary purpose?
   If the primary purpose is taken as inculcating a love of the library in young children then yes, this space is perfect for its remit.

9) General Observations:
   The library in many ways feels like a playground with bright colours and an array of different features to attract the child’s interest. The books nestle beneath shelves topped by animal-infested grass or inside themed kinder boxes and do not necessarily draw the eye of the beholder.

8.2 Case Study B

8.2.1 Interview Transcript (with SW, Case Study B’s Library Manager and MOH, Researcher)

SW: This is a separate children’s area, it’s one of only three separate libraries in the city which have a separate children’s and adult’s section.
MOH: I think I’ve been to all of them

SW: [laughter] so this one was refurbished along with the other side, we did a few little things like put all the shelves on wheels because what we wanted to do was we wanted to use it as a community space out of hours so we could have it for meeting and talks and things like that so we can actually wheel all the shelves to one end or if we want to have activities or author visits we can seat people and we can use the space. Linking in with that we’re very proud of our kitchen in a cupboard! [laughter]

MOH: It is very cool...

SW: we’ve got this so that if a group does want to have an event at night they can bring their own tea and coffee and they’ve got everything they need to make drinks for however many people

MOH: and do you use that for the children as well?

SW: we do, we make soft drinks and it can be used to wash hands. We have a couple of activities which are temporarily being held here at the moment; we work with lots of partner agencies in the area and we work with the children’s centre and at the moment they’re having some work done in the school where they’re based and it’s too noisy and dusty for events like baby massage, breast feeding support group so we’re actually accommodating them in here. So Monday mornings when we’re not open we have baby massage and Monday afternoons when we are open we have breast feeding support group so they actually use the kitchen as well. We do actually work with quite a few groups of other people and make use of the space...so that’s this area..

MOH: I see you’ve also got a wall mural
**SW:** Yes, and a dog – it actually glows in the dark!

**MOH:** a glow in the dark dog? That’s cool!

**SW:** yeah the kids love it, they all sit on it and try to ride it. This is the adult area which we tried to keep as open as we could because before (there are some pictures actually) shelves were very old, very wide. They didn’t adjust so this has opened it up and what we wanted was to make the most of the features we had got and like if you see the arched window at that end now when you come in you can see right through to the window at that end whereas before it was blocked by shelves. Not today but when the weathers nice we open up the doors there and you get a nice breeze and can look straight out to the pond and the park. Here we have a study and coffee area, this morning its really busy as we had a coffee morning which is run by volunteers and we have a coffee machine for the rest of the week so people can purchase tea and coffee. This area is quiet – it’s for young adults and we don’t get a lot of teenagers. You’ve sort of got them till 11 and 12 and then a lot of children just don’t ‘do’ libraries until they have to or they get older and they’re not studying anymore.

**MOH:** well if it helps the other day my friends and I spent ages in that section

**SW:** yes there’s some nice ones, I took quite a few on holiday this year...So we’ve got a computing area here that’s been updated and we added two new computers during the refurbishment and as I say we’ve got an open area and we’ve got displays that we put on every now and again. Now I know in some of your questions you said about a theme and we’ve not really got one but part of the idea one of our managers liked when we were doing the refurbishment was that as we were in the park we should try and bring the outside inside. So some of the colours and things
are natural colours, we’ve got greens and things on the chairs – the ones over there we’ve got earthy stripes see, we’ve got different greens and things like that.

**MOH:** yes once you can say you can totally see it

**SW:** yeah we did try and bring that in, the bright wall was sort of to reflect some of the blossoms but they’ve all gone at this time of year so that as you walked in through the gardens you would bring that sense of the...

[at this point we were interrupted by a query from a library user. We resumed conversation in the office with greater reference to the questions]

[Do you think your library has any theme?]

**SW:** I’ve just been looking through these [questions] because I started to fill them in a while ago and then left off so I’d better have a look what I put and see if I’ve changed my mind! So we didn’t have a specific theme but the design company which we used which was the Design Concept. It was actually the first time we’d used that company and they were used at [TWO COUNCIL LIBRARIES] really one virtually ran into the other project. Usually we use Demco or [Reswells ?] they’re sort of the same company. But this time we chose a slightly different one because they were offering a slightly different...different furniture and we felt they were offering a better package when we were looking at the option so I think that’s why we went with them and the idea of bringing the outside and the park into the inside was quite nice

**MOH:** Yes it’s really nice because it’s such a nice placement for the library you’ve got here, when you first come it’s really striking
SW: Yes it really is a lovely building, it has some faults in that the age of it means we can’t do certain things as its listed so we have a lot of issues around that but I think we’ve done really well with this one.

MOH: yeah I think you have too, um, the theme of bringing the outdoors inside, is that why there’s sort of flower shaped seats for the kids and that?

SW: yeah, yeah, it was all sort of trying to keep with in that same...I don’t think anyone would really – unless you say it I don’t think you’d look at it and it would really...but when you know it..

MOH: ...it makes a nice gentle background..

[Was the refurbishment associated with any other changes to your service?]

SW: yeah, yeah. The main sort of reason that we were doing the refurbishment, well there’s two really. One that [THE COUNCIL] was introducing self-issue machines so we knew that that was going to happen but at the same time the skylights out there on the flat roof near the window were very badly damaged and leaking and causing lots of problems year on year. So it was decided that something needed to be done but it was a big job, it needed listed building consent and it was going to be quite a big piece of work and this library had not had much in the way of sort of decorating or any major sort of refurbishment for a long time so what happened is instead of doing a few libraries most of the budget for refurbishments for that year we put in one and made a good job of this one. So it tied in with having the work that we needed doing for the roof and the skylights along with introducing the self-issue machines. So instead of having the work done for that and then tinkering around with the décor and then closing again to put in self-issue we had one closure and we did it all in one fell swoop.
[What general services are deployed through the library?]

MOH: [laughs] makes sense...yes so you said a bit about the general services deployed through the library and how you use the children’s space as a community centre..

SW: Yeah the sort of services we offer, you’ve got the sort of general library services (the loaning of books, DVDs, CDs and so on) and you’ve got the people’s network and we have two machines in the children’s library for them to use for study and homework and we’ve got six in the adult one. We also have a volunteer who comes in and runs UK Online sessions for people who are not confident in IT so they can use from the very basic ‘what is a mouse and how do I use it’ to feeling secure doing online shopping and banking. So it’s all done in modules so they can work their way through from where they need to be to where they need to get to.

MOH: So for people like my mum

SW: And my dad...so that’s, we have that every...I’m trying to remember...Tuesday morning, we have a gentleman that comes in and runs the session for us. So we have people signed up for the program and we have people signed on for a list so when that’s finished they can start. We have just this past week started with employability sessions where we have external providers coming in to work with people if they are looking to either get into work or if they’ve been made redundant get back in to work, do training, voluntary things. We get quite a few people sent from the job centre and they’ll say ‘go up to the library and you’ll be able to use a computer and fill in your CV’ but a lot of the time people haven’t got much in the way of computer skills and haven’t got an e-mail account. So then they’ve got to set up an e-mail account and know how to make up a CV and so it’s very time consuming and this company can come in and do a lot of that and it frees up our
time to do what we’re here to do instead of doing a lot of job searches and things.
We do still help with that on other days of the week but if they do need help getting
started right from the beginning then we can signpost them to a specific day when
there’s someone trained to do that.

MOH: That’s great to have because I know nowadays there’s an assumption that
everyone, particularly those over a certain age, have all these computer skills and it
isn’t necessarily the case.

SW: Yeah and there are a lot of people who are older who just don’t know how to
do that and that’s the difficulty because now every job has it in some way or
another so now we have that...We have a coffee morning every Friday morning
which is run by volunteers who are actually ex-staff and who have retired but carry
on coming in and setting up a coffee morning and then we have...When the children
are at school we have sort of term-time activities so we have story time for pre-
school children we have baby time, toddler time and we have school visits from
local schools who come down and do project work and school instruction and as I
say we have the children’s centre come in as well so we have quite a few different
things going on throughout the week. Um...I’m trying to think if there’s anything I’ve
missed...Oh we do have exhibitions or displays and we do try to have sort of an
author’s visit or a talk by the archives department or something history related or
something like that so we try to fit that in and have at least one a year just so we
get something more for adults because a lot of what we do is sort of tends to be for
children, families.

MOH: Because there’s so much you can do for children...

SW: And in some ways they’re more of a captive audience because a lot of them will
have a parent or a grandparent who will bring them and the school children come
with the school so we try to do things for adults where we can. What other questions were there...

**MOH:** the one which might seem a bit weird it ‘what do you look for when you’re hiring staff’ that’s basically to do with some of the theories I’m looking at in my dissertation that link theming to things like emotional labour...

**[Are there any particular traits you look for when recruiting frontline staff?]**

**SW:** I mean mainly we want people who are friendly and approachable. They’ve got to be numerate literate and have IT skills these days and an interest in books and reading because sometimes if you’ve got all the rest of it but you’ve not got someone who’s interested in books and reading then they’re sort of a little bit behind everyone else

**MOH:** because quite often users want to have a conversation about the books?

**SW:** I mean it is something that you can learn because we all have our favourite areas that we like to read and like I always profess that I will watch some science fiction but I will not read any so if anyone needs information about that you can learn to recommend that sort of ‘this author is like that one’ or you’ll know which is in which series and what goes in what order so a lot of that is just like any job where you learn on the job some of the skills that you do need but it does help if you’ve got an interest.

**MOH:** So you’ve talked about what motivated the redevelopment...hmm...What do you think the key benefits of the design are?

**SW:** I think it’s a lot brighter and I don’t know whether it is more spacious but it feels more spacious..
**MOH:** Yeah it does feel spacious especially since I think some of the shelves have been moved back since I was last here and it feels more open.

**SW:** Yeah we’ve not jiggled things about too much...the end of July, it was to do with the Olympics, we’d linked up with the local traders in [THE LOCAL AREA] which we’ve done occasionally and they launch their sort of traders’ events in the library. So they had an event at Christmas where we had the children coming in and doing lots of arts and crafts activities and then they’d had some funding to put up a tree in the park so then we had the children go from the library singing carols round the tree to have the lights switched on and then they’d do a little treasure trail around [THE LOCAL AREA] collecting goodies as they’d go. And then at Easter we had a colour in an Easter egg competition and then there was another sort of treasure hunt trail. And then in the summer for the...trying to link in with the Olympics although we could have the rings and we couldn’t have the name and all the rest of it umm...we had a sort of official opening if you like and we had some belly dancers and so we had to move the shelves back so that we could sit people down and give them space to dance. Then the children got little bags and they collected jigsaw pieces of the Olympics to win some prizes and then that ended up in a pub where the belly dancers performed again at the end. So it was like we had the whole of the event opening ceremony, closing ceremony, do your treasure hunt in between. So we do move the shelves about for that, we can’t move the shelves about in the adult, we didn’t put the ones in there on wheels but we don’t have the need to move them as much really. We can move some of the stuff around but in there it is very, very flexible. I think the main reason we seem to have more space is really before we used to have a big, big counter, like a barrier really. It used to be the first thing people saw as they came in the door was members of staff stood behind this wood counter and it sort of put up this...and now it’s a lot more open.
MOH: You seem to have staff members walking around as well...

SW: Yeah, part of the RFID was...and I hate the term floorwalking but that’s the terminology that they give it...was that we should have more staff members out on the library floor so that they could give assistance sort of as I did earlier out there if someone’s not quite sure or they don’t know what button to press or they want help using the copier we should have people out and about not just behind the desk. But the desk now is more of a reception area because the staff are seated and it’s more approachable like you do in a bank or building society or something like that so you can sit on the other side of it and get a conversation you’re not sort of stood talking to somebody. So it does feel a lot more spacious and the children’s area it is a lot more spacious in there because we removed the counter from one end and put a desk in the middle so its...its...and lot more open.

MOH: And a lot more space for the kids to run around in...

[What made you decide to take a themed approach?]

SW: Yeah...which they do [laughs]...let’s see, yeah the sort of themed or un-themed approach most of that’s partly because of where we are in the park and the age of the building that you couldn’t go too mad with...because there were some lovely sort of really modern furniture and things but they just would have been too out of place given the age of the building.

[Did you consult with users?]

SW: So we did, I know there was one about consulting, we did do some consultation. We put some photographs from the website of the company up and we put pictures up of furniture to show that there were these options for study seating and these for kind of comfy seating and that and we asked the public to
choose ones that they would prefer. So we’d sort of chosen a few that we thought would fit in and then they chose which ones they thought would fit in what with the colours and everything else that we wanted. We did some consultation in the library with the photographs up. I also went out into two of the local primary schools and one secondary school to discuss with children and we took photographs out and asked what do they think about a library; what do they want use it for; what would they like to use it for. It was very interesting – they wanted all sorts of things [laughs]. Um...so we got a lot of different views but it was really nice to get the children to feel that they could sort of have a say of what they wanted in their space.

[How has/was your library’s design received by different users?]

SW: The other side of that was – and I think it goes on to your other question – how was it received by different users and I sort of scribbled on there, mixed, partly because the initial plan, sort of the very early stages of the plan for the redevelopment of the library was to put the children’s library services in with the adult library services so we could have a joint staffed counter which is easier for us to staff and sort of use that space for us to use for our children’s activities and make it more of a community space for more of the week but the way that that was interpreted by a lot of people was that we were closing the children’s library. So we had a bit of an uproar on various draw rooms and things with people saying ‘we don’t want to close the children’s library’ and we couldn’t do too much to remedy that and in the end the decision was that we wouldn’t put the children’s library in with adults. We did what we could to make sure we could put it in there but we still did what we could to make sure it was a community space which was why we put everything on wheels and we put the sort of kitchen area in there and everything
else. So it met what we wanted and what the public wanted in the end but it was a bit difficult getting there.

**MOH:** But were people impressed with it when they saw it? Because it is a lovely space.

**SW:** Yeah, I think they were but it does have its difficulties because it was completely separate ahh...as you can see we’re in a staff workroom but we don’t have any staff in here. There’s lots of work to be done but we just don’t have the staff numbers any more to do that. So it’s normally one member through there, if we can send another member through when it’s really busy we do but it’s usually one through there and two on the other side and if we’re lucky then we might have another floating around between the two if there’s an extra like today when we have four staff members in. It does become difficult because the public enter through a completely different entrance and we have no idea if it’s busy through there and what’s needed apart from popping through or if Gill picks up the phone and goes ‘Help!’ It is like running two separate libraries which is a bit of a problem. In the other libraries with separate children’s areas the children still come in the main door and past the counter so you can see them go upstairs so you know they’re there and you know they might need help whereas here we don’t have that and we’ve constantly got to keep checking.

**MOH:** Of course they don’t even have to walk past the window because there’s a separate path...

**SW:** No, no because you just don’t know if someone’s been sat in there on her own for half an hour or if she’s got forty people in so it’s difficult to pick up

**MOH:** and how has the redesign increased user engagement and the amount of people using the library?
SW: I think initially it did, I think we had a big increase in numbers and I think a lot of it was curiosity – people coming in sort of ‘oh, what they been doing? The library’s been closed.’ Um…and then it sort of levelled off a bit and I think generally library numbers have sort of had a slight dip but we’re sort of just holding our own or might sort of be just above average.

MOH: So you think people are liking the library?

SW: I think people are liking it, yes, and we keep doing different things so er, we had a project over the summer where we linked up with the local football club [CLUB NAME REMOVED] and they had a national citizenship scheme and we had some volunteers. We did it last year for one week and we did it this year…well really we did it for three weeks. We did it for two weeks with a big group of volunteers and then some of them who had not done enough hours to finish their certification came for the third week. So they did activities and [background noise from children playing rises and makes some sentence unclear] …it all tied in with the Olympics and so they brought along little hurdles and had sack races and egg and spoon and all sorts of things. We had one day that we made into a sort of teddy bears picnic and we had a races for adults and children and so we had a parents and grandparents doing sack races and things they hadn’t done since they were six, so that was good. We try to link up with as many of the other local groups as we can so we do quite a bit with [THE LOCAL FOOTBALL CLUB], sometimes they approach us sometimes I’ll approach them. The Children’s Centre we quite often link up with; if they’re doing teddy bears picnics in the park then we go along and tell stories so we bring the big books and do some story sessions and things. And the traders as I say we’ve begun to link up with them and it attracts people to their shop but it also gets people who maybe don’t know that the library’s here to come to us and then the children can trek off to get all their goodies. We sort of try to work together so
everybody gets something out of it and promote what we’ve all got to offer. At the beginning of the summer we had three Wednesdays when we linked with [THE LOCAL FOOTBALL CLUB] and the Children’s Centre together and we called it fun to be fit. [THE LOCAL FOOTBALL CLUB] were doing a thing aimed at pre-schoolers to sort of try and stop them becoming couch potatoes really. So they brought the sports kits and had them on balancing balls and things and we did the reading, shared reading and stories and rhymes and songs to keep the healthy mind and the Children’s Centre were doing the sort of healthy eating and snacks so we all sort of split them in two and moved them round the activities but in the end they’d all made a little healthy wrap. So we did different things so that they got the learning from the library and the sports and the health tying it all together. We have had people going ‘can you do it again’ but it’s trying to get everybody when they have time to do it. Everybody’s got to look at ‘does that fit in with our plans for this year’ and can we do it without having to charge for it. Usually when we’re all doing a bit like that we’re all like ‘ah we’ll make it work’ and nobody charges anybody….so I think that’s everything.

8.2.2 Observational Data for Case Study B

1) Is it themed/un-themed and are there any unifying design factors?
There is a consistent use of colours throughout the library which provides some coherency to the design. Some of the furniture in the children’s area would not be out of place in a themed library, flower shaped floor cushions and a dog-shaped stool are there for children. There doesn’t appear to be any clear theme. There is a wall-mural but this does not appear to relate to anything else in the room.
2) **Is any merchandise available?**
No – the library does not appear to advertise any line of merchandise within the children’s area.

3) **What are the key features/focal points of the space’s design?**
The walls are bright and attractive colours which are reflected in the seating. On first entering the room the stock draws your attention as the first thing you see. When moving further into the room the story area at the back draws your attention due to the bright carpet and wall and the wall mural.

4) **What facilities does the space have?**
There are 2 computers, a story area, a separate, staffed service desk, comfortable seating and a cosy homework area.

5) **Is it well used?**
The library appeared to be relatively busy and particularly well used by younger children visiting with parents. The pre-school area was busiest with children playing and using books, however, an older child was also seen using one of the two available computers.

6) **Does it seem to engage the target audience?**
Children appeared to be enjoying the space, playing loudly, looking through books and using a computer.

7) **Is there evidence that the space could be multi-purpose?**
The children’s library has a kitchen cupboard and wheeled shelving to allow the space to be rearranged effectively and events to be hosted.

8) **Is it fit for its primary purpose?**
Yes, it’s a good basic library space which seems to accommodate all primary library purposes.

9) **General Observations:**
The library was a pleasant environment in bright colours with comfortable furniture and children appeared to enjoy it. There were some elements which seemed to poorly thought out, such as the wall mural which doesn’t
tie in with anything else in the room and a carpet which does not match with the colour scheme. The study area was cleverly tucked away to give the impression of privacy.
### 8.3 Ethical Approval

#### 8.3.1 Ethics Application Form

**University Research Ethics Application Form for Undergraduate & Postgraduate-Taught Students**

I confirm that I have read the current version of the University of Sheffield *Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participants, Personal Data and Human Tissue*, as shown on the University’s research ethics website at: [www.sheffield.ac.uk/its/other/gov-ethics/ethics-policy](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/its/other/gov-ethics/ethics-policy)

**A1. Title of research project:** Why do some children's library services take a disneyfied themed approach to the design of their library spaces?

**A2. Name of Student:** Maria O'Hara  
**Department:** Information School  
**Email:** mtohara1@sheffield.ac.uk  
**Tel.:** 07576757994  
**Name of Supervisor:** Sheila Webber

**A3. Proposed Project Duration:**  
**Start date:** 15/06/12  
**End date:** 30/07/12

**A4. Mark ‘X’ in one or more of the following boxes if your research:**

- [ ] involves adults with mental incapacity or mental illness
- [ ] involves prisoners or others in custodial care (e.g. young offenders)
- [ ] involves children or young people aged under 18 years
- [ ] involves using samples of human biological material collected before for another purpose
- [ ] involves taking new samples of human biological material (e.g. blood, tissue) *
- [ ] involves testing a medicinal product *
- [ ] involves taking new samples of human biological material (e.g. blood, tissue) *
- [ ] involves investigating a medical device *
- [ ] involves additional radiation above that required for clinical care *

* If you have marked boxes marked *, then you also need to obtain confirmation that appropriate University insurance is in place. To do this email [insurance@shef.ac.uk](mailto:insurance@shef.ac.uk) and request a copy of the ‘Clinical Trial Insurance Application Form’.

It is recommended that you familiarise yourself with the University’s Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participants, Personal Data and Human Tissue before completing the following questions. Please note that if you provide sufficient information about the research (what you intend to do, how it will be carried out and how you intend to minimise any risks), this will help the ethics reviewers to make an informed judgement quickly without having to ask for further details.
A6. Briefly summarise:

i. The project’s aims and objectives:
   (this must be in language comprehensible to a lay person)

   To investigate the reasons why libraries adopt a themed disney-like approach to
design in their children’s library spaces. To see if there are any obvious impacts on
service quality.

ii. The project’s methodology:
   (this must be in language comprehensible to a lay person)

   Research will be conducted via a case study approach. Between one and four case
studies will be conducted dependant on the need to balance the collection of a rich
base of data with the researcher’s ability to realistically analyse the data collected.
Various methods will be used including observation within the children’s library(ies)
chosen, interviews with staff members and those involved in choosing the design and
the study of any documents available related to the design.

A6. What is the potential for physical and/or psychological harm / distress to
participants?

None are anticipated.

A7. Does your research raise any issues of personal safety for you or other
researchers involved in the project? (especially if taking place outside working
hours or off University premises)

Although research will not be conducted on university property, no serious risks are
anticipated. Research will be taking place within public spaces which are open to all.
However, as their target audience are children they are secure environments.

If yes, explain how these issues will be managed.

If case studies are located within areas which have a high crime rate care will be
taken when travelling to and from the library and a companion may be brought.
A8. How will the potential participants in the project be:

i. Identified?

Potential participants have been identified via literature on the topic, the examples presented on a library design webpage and the site of a design company which specialises in themed children’s environments.

ii. Approach?

Potential participants will first be approached via e-mail to see if they are willing to participate in research. Case studies will be chosen on the basis of proximity. If no local libraries are willing to participate others will be contacted. Any potential participants who indicate their willingness to take part in the project will then be contacted via phone to discuss the project further.

iii. Recruited?

Any potential participants who indicate their willingness to participate will be contacted for some initial discussion of the project. An attempt will be made to determine whether current library staff were involved in the library’s development/redevelopment. Some attempt will also be made to ascertain the existence of any documents related to the library’s design. Based on the results of this discussion it will be decided which libraries will provide the richest sources of information and how many case studies will be needed. A final list of potential participants will then be compiled, their willingness to participate finalised and an appropriate time arranged.

A9. Will informed consent be obtained from the participants?

YES [x] NO [ ]

If informed consent or consent is NOT to be obtained please explain why.
Further guidance is at: www.sheffield.ac.uk/rsa/other/gov-ethics/ethics/policy/policy-notes/consent
A9.1. How do you plan to obtain informed consent? (i.e. the proposed process?):

Staff members participating in the research will be given the information sheet and asked to indicate their consent by signing. No direct interaction with parents or children is intended to form part of the research material gathered. However, as observation is one of the main information gathering methods which will be employed, the presence and purpose of the research will be explained to library visitors and they will also be given the information sheet and the chance to grant or withhold informed consent on behalf of themselves or their children.

A10. What measures will be put in place to ensure confidentiality of personal data, where appropriate?

No data will be gathered relating to any of the adults or children using the library. If children’s interactions with the library environment are discussed any data related to age or gender will be non-specific and based upon educated guesswork (i.e. The age of a child may be represented as around 9 or 10). As the case studies will be composed of children’s services it may be appropriate to anonymise them completely. If so, or if members of staff participating in the research wish to remain anonymous, pseudonyms will be given to interview subjects.

A11. Will financial / in kind payments (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants? (Indicate how much and on what basis this has been decided)

There are no plans to offer any kind of payment to participants.

A12. Will the research involve the production of recorded media such as audio and/or video recordings?
A12.1. How will you ensure that there is a clear agreement with participants as to how these recorded media may be stored, used and (if appropriate) destroyed?

Recordings of interviews and potentially the researcher’s observations will be made for reference purposes only. With the prior agreement of participants, these recordings will be kept securely, will remain confidential and will be destroyed once the research has been completed.

Guidance on a range of ethical issues, including safety and well-being, consent and anonymity, confidentiality and data protection are available at www.sheffield.ac.uk/res/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/policy-notes
Annex 1

For Undergraduate & Postgraduate-Taught Students

**Student Declaration**

(The student completes Annex 1 if the Supervisor has classed the student’s proposed research project as ‘low risk’)

The Supervisor needs to receive an electronic copy of the form, and other documents where appropriate, plus a signed, dated paper copy of this Annex 1 ‘the Student Declaration’.

Full Research Project Title: Why do some children’s library services take a disneyified themed approach to the design of their library spaces?

In signing this Student Declaration I am confirming that:

- The research ethics application form for the above-named project is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.
- The above-named project will abide by the University’s ‘Good Research Practice Standards': [www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/good](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/good)
- The above-named project will abide by the University’s ‘Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participants, Personal Data and Human Tissue’: [www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy)
- Subject to the above-named project being ethically approved I undertake to adhere to any ethics conditions that may be set.
- I will inform my Supervisor of significant changes to the above-named project that have ethical consequences.
- I will inform my Supervisor if prospective participants make a complaint about the above-named project.
- I understand that personal data about me as a researcher on the research ethics application form will be held by those involved in the ethics review process (e.g. my Supervisor and the Ethics Administrator) and that this will be managed according to Data Protection Act principles.
- I understand that this project cannot be submitted for ethics approval in more than one department, and that if I wish to appeal against the decision made, this must be done through the original department.

Name of Supervisor: Sheila Webber

Name of student: Maria O’Hara

Signature of student: *Maria O’Hara*

Date: 11/06/12
8.3.2 Participant Information Sheet

Information sheet

Research Project Title: Why do some children's library services take a disneyfied themed approach to the design of their library spaces?

1. Invitation paragraph

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

2. What is the project's purpose?

- To determine why libraries adopt a themed approach to their children's library services
- To examine how libraries go about implementing such designs
- To determine what factors lead libraries to decide against this approach
- If possible, to identify any positive or negative impacts this approach may have on service quality

3. Why have I been chosen?

This library has been chosen either because it has recently undertaken a redevelopment project or is a new service and it is hoped you can therefore provide insight into the design process and its impact on service quality.

4. Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep (and be asked to sign a consent form) and you can still withdraw at any time without it affecting any benefits that you are entitled to in any way. You do not have to give a reason.

5. What will happen to me if I take part and what do I have to do?

The library service will be observed for between one and two days. You may be asked to participate in a short, informal interview which should last no more than half an hour.

6. What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?
We do not anticipate that there will be any disadvantage in taking part in this research, other than the time you give up by participating in the project.

7. What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that this work will deepen our understanding of the design process of children’s libraries. This will hopefully facilitate the creation of better library environments for children.

8. What happens if the research study stops earlier than expected?

If the research stops earlier than expected, then you will be informed promptly and no further input will be required.

9. What if something goes wrong?

If you are unhappy about any aspect of the project, then please contact us, using the details at the end of the sheet. If you do not wish to contact the researchers themselves, then please contact our supervisor, who is also identified at the end of the sheet. If you feel that your complaint has not been handled to your satisfaction by the researcher or supervisor, you can contact the University's Registrar and Secretary (details are on the university website, http://www.shef.ac.uk/).

10. Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

All the information that we collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. You will not be identified in any report or publication, unless you have specifically required that you should be identified. The data we collect will be kept secure.

11. What will happen to the results of the research project?

The data will be used for a Masters dissertation at the University of Sheffield iSchool. This dissertation may be published electronically on the iSchool’s website, and the findings of the dissertation may be used in published articles.

12. Who is organising and funding the research?

The research is organised by the Information School, University of Sheffield. Any incidental expenses are being covered by the researchers and/or the Information School.

13. Who has ethically reviewed the project?

This project has been ethically approved via the Information School’s ethics review procedure. The University of Sheffield’s Research Ethics Committee monitors the application and delivery of the University's Ethics Review Procedure across the University.
14. Contact for further information

Researcher
Maria O’Hara, mtohara1@sheffield.ac.uk, 07578757994

Supervisor
Sheila Webber, Information School, University of Sheffield, s.webber@sheffield.ac.uk

You will be given a copy of this information sheet to keep.

Thank you for taking part in this project!
8.3.3 Example Participant Consent Form

Participant Consent Form

Title of Research Project: Why do some children’s library services take a disneyfied themed approach to the design of their library spaces?

Name of Researcher: Maria O’ Hara

Participant Identification Number for this project: Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated 14/06/12 explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. (To do so please contact Maria O’ Hara at 07578757994).

3. I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential. I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.

4. I agree for the data collected from me to be used in future research

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

Name of Participant (or legal representative) Date Signature
To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

Copies:

Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, the letter/pre-written script/information sheet and any other written information provided to the participants. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be placed in the project’s main record (e.g. a site file), which must be kept in a secure location.