AN INVESTIGATION INTO DERBYSHIRE LIBRARIES
“BOOK CHAT” MODEL
IN THE CURRENT ECONOMIC CLIMATE

A study submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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by

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Abstract

Background. The current austere economic climate has focused attention on expenditure forcing Local Authorities to look at the cost effectiveness of their services. The Derbyshire Libraries “Book Chat” model, the scheme that supports Reader Groups via Derbyshire County Council’s forty five Branch Libraries is examined within the context of Reader Group expansion.

Aims. The study aimed to investigate the sustainability of Derbyshire Libraries “Book Chat” model, within the constraints of the present economic circumstances of limited resources and reduced budgets.

Methods. A mixed methods approach was undertaken using thematic analysis to establish key points affecting the sustainability of the “Book Chat” model from the perspectives of Management, Staff and Customers. A focus group interview, semi-structured interviews, Staff questionnaire and Customer questionnaires were deployed. Limitations of the methodology included contacting Reader Group members and a poor response rate of 19.8% from the Customer questionnaires.

Results. The “Book Chat” scheme supports 60% of Reader Groups with book stock. Of the 60% of Reader Groups 45% access their full allocation of eight title sets per year resulting in an additional 1500 books per month ordered from the general catalogue. Four overarching themes were identified possibly affecting the sustainability of the current “Book Chat” model, Constraints, Staff perception, Customer expectation and eBooks.
Conclusions. Stock provision, stock choice and customer choice of stock are contributory factors effecting Reader group sustainability. Two potential solutions to the sustainability of Derbyshire Library Reader Group support are outlined. Recommendations for change are highlighted and areas for further research identified.
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<td>eReader</td>
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<td>purpose of reading digital books and periodicals</td>
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Chapter One: Introduction

1:1 Introduction

A National Public Library Development Programme for Reader Groups prepared by the Reading Agency (TRA) as part of the Framework for the Future Action Plan 2004 established the need for a modern mission for Libraries that could be clearly communicated to the communities they serve (TRA, 2004:2). The report highlights the process of “defining what a National Public Library Reader Group offer might look like and the benefits for readers, Libraries and their partners” (TRA, 2004:2). The main strands of the mission include:

**Evolution:** Reader Groups build on Libraries’ traditional core skills in promoting reading, informal learning and self-help.

**Public value:** Reader Groups deliver benefits to society and to the individual. They provide support, for instance, for adult literacy and children’s learning.

**Distinctiveness:** Reader Group provision builds on Libraries’ open, neutral and self-help culture and provides a distinctive service that, at the same time, shares common ground with private and public-sector partners.

**Local interpretations of national services:** a National Library Development Programme for Reader Groups will provide equal access to common library services adapted to local needs.
Clearly, the National Public Library Development Programme for Reader Groups is a fundamental document in guiding the growth and expansion of Public Library Reader Groups throughout the United Kingdom (UK).

1:2 Research context and background

The researcher is an employee of Derbyshire County Council (DCC), based at a Branch Library having a particular interest in reader development and Reader Groups. Derbyshire Libraries (DL) promote reading as an important social activity and encourage anyone who wishes to meet and share their reading experiences with others. The “Book Chat” model, the scheme that supports Reader Groups via DL forty five Branch Libraries has been running for over twelve years, having approximately two hundred registered groups. This scheme is accessible by Library users and provides a wealth of information including guidance about books, author events and reader based activities. In addition, Reader Groups have available for free loan, for a period of two months, a special collection of over two hundred book sets. Reader Groups select a Library as their collection point however; some groups choose to meet in the Library whilst others meet elsewhere.

The “Book Chat” resources are stored at DL Head Quarters (HQ) and are administered by one or more Staff including the maintenance of a database for bookings and tracking books and loans. In addition, books are delivered to the collection Libraries selected by the Reader Groups, where local Branch Library Staff take responsibility for organising, maintaining and administering the stock. When “Book Chat” collections are unavailable for Reader groups, it is essential that Staff
order books from the general Library catalogue to form additional sets and satisfy Reader Group demand.

1:3 Rationale for research

The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) (2012) establish that Library cuts and closures have been a cause for public concern over the past year, citing evidence of various local and national campaigns that have attempted to raise media attention to the issues. The CILIP (2012) study further confirms that grant funding to local authorities will be reduced by 28% over the next four years as a result of the Government’s Comprehensive Spending Review.

Additionally, The Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy statistics (CIPFA) (2012) also confirm that the annual addition of stock to Public Libraries has seen an actual decrease of 13.6% since 2006.

DCC (2012) when approving their budget for 2012/13 detailed their promise to keep council tax as low as possible stating:

“During these tough economic times, we aim to keep providing the highest-quality services and good value for money, and plan to make £25m of efficiency savings in 2012/13 that will be ploughed back into safeguarding services. We also plan to save money by doing more with the money we have and working efficiently with our partner organisations”.

The Cultural and Community services budget 2012/13 (DCC, 2012:7) details Derbyshire’s approach to reduced budgets to “drive the maximum efficiency from
staffing resources; e.g. through a management and professional restructuring of the Library service completed in 2011/12, some modest reductions in Library opening hours and a reduction in the materials fund”.

It is apparent from the foregoing context that book stock will need to be utilised effectively and efficiently within Public Libraries in order to maintain their current levels of service provision. An investigation evaluating the sustainability of the current DL “Book Chat” model would appear to be therefore particularly timely.

The coordination, organisation and maintenance of “Book Chat” stock and additional stock supply will be addressed as part of the proposed investigation. The wider services of the “Book Chat” scheme, listening groups and children’s Reader Groups, will not be investigated.

1:4 Research aims and objectives

The aim of the proposed work is to investigate the sustainability of Derbyshire Libraries “Book Chat” model within the constraints of the present economic circumstances imposed on DCC of limited resources and reduced budgets.

The objectives for this study are to;

1. Analyse the benefits of Public Library Reader Groups within the wider context of reader development based on the currently available literature.

2. To establish how Reader Groups are supported by Public Libraries across Derbyshire with reference to a number of key issues such as co-ordination of
book sets, availability of Staff time, cost of service provision and storage of Reader Group materials.

3. To evaluate the effectiveness of the current DL Book Chat” model from a Customer perspective with focus on group participation, choice of books and reader satisfaction.

4. To review how neighbouring Public Library Authorities support their Reader Groups with reference to key issues such as funding and the development of eBooks.

5. To establish and highlight best practice in order to make further recommendations to support Reader Groups throughout Derbyshire.

1:5 Dissertation Structure

This dissertation is divided into six chapters. Chapter one details the research context and background, rationale for the research and research aims and objectives. Chapter two aims to present an historical contextualisation of Reader Groups and Public Libraries within the current literature whilst providing a background to the research being undertaken. Chapter three identifies the specific research methodologies to be deployed during this investigation as well as providing a rationale for the selection of specific strategies. The results are presented in chapter four divided into three sections, Staff data, Customer data and External Authority data, then discussed in chapter five. The final chapter details the conclusions drawn from the research alongside any recommendations for change or further research.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

2: 1 Introduction to the literature review

This literature review aims to present an historical contextualisation of Reader Groups and Public Libraries whilst providing a background to the research being undertaken. According to Patten (2007:31) a literature review can also help to “justify a study if the literature is used to establish the importance of a research topic”. Therefore, the literature review will also be used to establish the context of the work within the arena of DL and thus justify the proposed study.

The historical context and development of Reader Groups will be evaluated as a means of identifying those factors that are associated with Reader Group sustainability.

Additionally, existing research specifically associated with Reader Groups and Public Libraries will be analysed and key themes for discussion highlighted. Findings will be evaluated in an attempt to identify the impact they may have on the proposed research. Within the literature the following key themes can be identified;

- Reader development
- Choice of book
- Group discussion
- Recommendations
- eBooks and eBook Readers
The outcome of the literature review will be used to identify any gaps in the current body of evidence regarding the sustainability of Reader Groups and Public Libraries. Moreover, it is hoped that the literature will point to key factors that will promote the sustainability of DL “Book Chat” model in the current economic climate.

2.2 Historical context of Reader Groups

Many studies (Balling *et al.*, 2008; Barstow, 2003; Bell, 2001; Long, 2004; Silverman, 1996) establish that literacy was reserved for the wealthy, well-educated, members of society evidencing males as being the first to popularize the concept of a Reader Group as far back as the early eighteenth century. The above studies establish however, that confined by the contextual social parameters of their sex, women slowly shifted their activities from sewing circles and church groups to the eventual formation of their own Reader Groups. According to Bell (2001:203) “*The Blue stocking Society of the 18th century, the French salons and summer reading schools, all academic in nature were seeking shared enlightenment rather than individual pleasure*”

The late 1990’s saw an increase in Reader Group popularity and parallel media interest resulting in thousands of Reader Groups throughout the UK (Butler *et al.*, 2005; Hoffert, 2006; Robertson, 2002). According to Hartley (2002, xi) “*Reader Groups are undoubtedly a success story, and mark the arrival of a new and independent player on the literary scene: the active reader*”.

A vast body of evidence relating to Reader Groups coincides with what has since become to be known as the “Oprah effect” (Butler *et al.*, 2005; Daniels, 2006; Farr,
2005; Hall, 2003; Hartley, 2002; Peck, 2010). As Hartley (2002:4) succinctly points out “Reader Groups famously went mass media in 1996 in America with Oprah’s Book Club, one of the most staggering phenomena in the history of collective reading”. Many of the aforementioned authors believe that the introduction of Oprah’s Book Club in 1996 led to a cultural phenomenon that not only skyrocketed Oprah’s book selections to the top of the bestsellers list, her choice of book gave fiction a new cultural clout and brought stardom to literary novelists. Furthermore, the literature claims that Oprah’s book selections influenced how people read with Oprah’s book recommendations prompting individuals to obtain selected books, read collectively and follow with devoted discussions. It appears Oprah’s ability to maintain a rapport with her audience whilst cutting across class and race was a revolutionary success (Hartley, 2002). In the UK context, Richard and Judy’s Book Club has the same kudos as Oprah’s Book Club does in the United States of America (USA). Jeffries (2004:6) points out that although some people may well be derisory about Richard and Judy’s knowledge about books, every book recommendation featured on their television show becomes an instant bestseller.

The Reader Group model continues to grow in strength particularly throughout the USA and the UK (Farr, 2005; Hoffert, 2006; DeNel, 2002). The literature highlights that the cultural significance of Reader Groups should be celebrated, however they also note that Reader Groups are of great value to a variety of other organisations including Publishers, Book Shops and Public Libraries particularly when it comes to the promotion of additional resources and services (DeNel:2008). Since Reader Groups can be placed in an historical context and are easily identifiable within...
western civilization today, an indication of Reader Group sustainability is established thus these findings in their entirety will be relevant to the proposed research.

2: 3 Reader Groups and Public Libraries

As part of the UK Government’s strategy for the development of the Public Library service, The Framework for the Future Action Plan (TRA, 2004), established that there was a firm foundation on which to build a national approach to Public Library Reader Group development. The study found that Public Libraries were supporting a diverse and thriving network of over 4000 Reader Groups, and as such could be considered to be central players in the Reader Group movement.

The Reading Partners five-year report (TRA, 2012) also indicates that now there are over 10,000 Reader Groups with some 100,000 members, representing an increase of 150%. As noted by key writers in the field (Train, 2003; Van Riel & Fowler, 1996) these findings signify a remarkable achievement, additionally they emphasise reader development as a model of best practice when bringing literature to readers. This point is reinforced in a study by Sherman (2008:63) who confirms reader development is now genuinely embedded within the Library service. The study further cites strategic framework indicators such as Opening the Book’s ‘Frontline’ training and regional support ‘Time to Read’ as contributory factors. The literature uncovered in this section will have a major impact on the proposed research as reader development is clearly a key factor in sustaining Reader Groups in Public Libraries.
2: 4 Reader Development

Studies by Hartley, 2002; Radway, 1997; Train, 2003; Van Riel & Fowler, 1996 establish that several benefits are to be gained from joining Reader Groups and sharing reading experiences. However, the overarching reader development themes that emerge from the above literature are identified as expanding reading choices and empowering readers. As Hartley (2002:55) points out “wanting to be stretched”, is recognised as one of the most frequently given reasons for starting or joining a Reading Group. Van Riel and Fowler (1996:115) suggest that “for readers who wish to make a conscious effort to expand their reading, Readers’ Groups provide an informal and stimulating catalyst”, additionally:

“Sharing your reading is a pleasure only if you can find the right person or the right situation to do it in. Your local Library provides a safe environment for getting to know other readers without making a big commitment of time or exposing your privacy”

(Van Riel and Fowler, 1996:115)

Early tensions between the above authors are identified in some studies which indicate that Staff reluctance and lack of training could be a barrier to active reader development in Public Library Reader Groups. As noted by Scothern (2000) and Train and Elkin (2001), Staff are key in taking responsibility, being pro-active and enthusiastic when encouraging people to read and sustain Reader Groups. The aforementioned studies suggest that individuals in charge of coordinating and delivering Reader Groups need to be adequately trained so that they can provide potential Reader Group members with the opportunity to experiment with books they
may not usually choose to read. According to Train and Elkin (2001) it is vital that Librarians disseminate reader development knowledge to all Staff including frontline Staff and heads of service. The authors recognise however, that not everyone organising and delivering Reader Groups in Public Libraries has the time or indeed is equipped with adequate reader development skills. In this sense it is paramount for Managers to identify and train individuals who are interested in and enthusiastic about reader development and Reader Groups per se in order to maintain a positive direction. Providing a sense of ownership can ultimately help reinforce best practice and promote success when delivering services.

Conversely, further studies (McMenemy, 2007; Robertson, 2002; Rogers, 2002) suggest that reader development is not necessarily about stretching one’s self, but being able to identify what factors make a good Reader Group book and subsequent discussion. Controversially, literary standards are discussed widely in the literature, notably, the consideration of ‘worthy’ stock. As Kappel (1948:243) points out, ‘good’ fiction is that which is critically acclaimed books that shape ideas and attitudes. The author suggests that organisations which promote Reader Group clubs using Book Club choices are lowering literacy standards and reading tastes, basing the claim upon the assumption that the Book Club choices are of poor quality and low literary standards. It is suggested that this is a potential reason why people drop out of Reader Groups as they do not like the selection of books.

Contemporary literature (McMenemy, 2007; Peoples and Ward, 2007) suggest that famous celebrity Book Clubs have had a major impact on publishing and sales, with Reader Group members generally valuing their suggestions. Although commercial
clubs have raised the profile of reading, McMenemy, (2007:354) claimed their emphasis is on “purchasing the titles not lending them”. The abovementioned studies point out that celebrity Book Clubs notably, Oprah’s Book Club, The Richard and Judy Book Club and Channel 4’s Book Club are considered a valuable asset to Public Libraries because they provide popular titles for Reader Groups and increase book issues in general. McMenemy, (2007:356) suggests that Librarians who purchase material for their Reader Groups based on celebrity choice may well degrade the Library service as “demands for a popular title may well potentially lead to a reduction in the breadth of stock and the availability to invest in other areas”. This can be taken to mean that Librarians will have to draw on their professional judgement and objectivity when choosing appropriate stock.

In addition, (Hermes, et al, 2008; McArdle, 2009; Peoples and Ward, 2007) establish that there are vast benefits when introducing a range of literature to Public Library Reader Groups, mixing both literary and contemporary works. Reader Groups come in all shapes and sizes ranging from book group therapy to cross border reader development projects such as “Inspiring Readers”, aimed at facilitating social and cultural diversity initiatives (Peoples and Ward, 2007). This can be taken to mean that it is extremely important that individuals choose a Reader Group that is right for their circumstances. Often the emphasis for Reader Groups lies in aspects other than reader development, including intergroup relationships, social activities, and conviviality taking precedent. As Bell (2001) argues, when individuals join a Reader Group for other reasons than literary discussion, the content and significance of books becomes watered down and dilutes member’s attention with other matters.
These factors need to be taken into account when addressing the sustainability of Reader Groups in Public Libraries.

2: 5 Choice of book

According to Van Riel and Fowler (1996:13) there are many different ways people use reading in their lives, for escapism, to gain knowledge or deal with a life crisis. However, the above authors suggest that once a book has been chosen, a “unique creative partnership is generated between reader and author allowing the reader to embark on a personal journey”. Furthermore, Usherwood & Toyne (2002:40) suggest that “the reading identity is not fixed but changes according to time and personal development”. Many studies (D’Astous et al, 2006; Kaptein et al, 2010; Ooi and Liew, 2009) have been undertaken in an attempt to evaluate the factors that influence a reader’s choice of book. However, the above authors establish that the process is a personal experience.

Some studies (Anh-Hong, 2009 and Zunshine, 2006) argue that mood and emotional state play a part in an individual’s choice of book. Conversely, other studies (Graham, 2007 and Parker, 2006) claim that the physical aspects associated with the book itself influence choice. Contemporary studies (Huang and Yang, 2010; Kaptein and Eckles, 2010) when evaluating the factors that motivate individuals who choose reading material online have identified that persuasion techniques which adapt to previous buying or borrowing history, using the information to provide further recommendations is also an influential factor of choice.
In an attempt to identify the motivating factors behind people making the decision to participate in Reader Groups and share book choice some studies suggest that there are a common set of problems that a Reader Group may face (Bolin, 2000; Hermes, et al, 2008; McArdle, 2009; Rogers, 2002; Rua, 2011). The main obstacle identified by the foregoing researchers is recognised as the inability of Reader Group patrons to successfully find a novel that will provoke an interesting and varied discussion. The aforementioned authors claim that Reader Group members need to be flexible and experiment with innovative and creative ways to gain book recommendations to obtain the ‘right title’ and generate the right environment for Reader Group discussion. Much work has been evidenced in the literature establishing factors that may influence a reader’s choice of book. In this context the choice of book is a predominant feature of Reader Group sustainability.

2: 6 Group Discussion

Several studies evaluate the many possibilities of Reader Group book selection and the effectiveness of Reader Group discussion (Hoffert, 2006; McArdle, 2009; Pearl, 2001). The literature claims that there are multiple ways of ensuring a good group discussion ranging from ‘thematic discussions’, with each member of the group reading a different book but on the same theme, to exploring human truths mirroring life and the promotion of interesting three dimensional characters. Pearl (2001:192) points out that plot driven novels, best sellers and most genre novels “don’t lend themselves to book discussions, novels that are well written, explore basic human truths, and those that end ambiguously are always good for debate”. McArdle (2009:125) suggests that a book preapproved by other Reader Groups is the most useful way to ensure a good Reader Group discussion and point out that books that
encourage “people to think, keep them engaged, introduce them to a new culture, or give them a new way to look at the world” are firm favourites promoting illuminating conversations. The aforementioned literature therefore has reported significant findings pointing towards the sustainability of Reader Groups and thus will have an impact on the proposed research.

2: 7 Recommendations

Book recommendations are readily available from an array of sources including Publishers, Newspapers, Books and Websites. Contemporary literature (McArdle, 2009; Ooi & Liew, 2009; Trott, 2005) establish that book recommendations are a way of building enthusiasm amongst Reader Group participants and claim that online resources have adequate facilities to provide a range of inspirational Reader Group book recommendations. Furthermore, a small pool of recent literature (Abram, 2008; Starr, 2008; Wakeling et al, 2011) claim that the use of Social Media and interactive services provide an excellent resource for Customer engagement and sharing recommendations thus appropriate for Reader Group recommendations. In contrast some literature points out that Library Staff recommendations and personal recommendations provide the ideal solution to finding a compulsively good read (Dempsy, 2009; Rua 2011). The studies claim that getting Staff excited about a book and providing a positive impression to Reader Group patrons starts in the Library and is only generated by providing adequate training in order to build Staff confidence. The studies highlight trust as important factor, suggesting that personal recommendations subsequently draw out deeper, richer discussions. Staff knowledge
and confidence therefore, can contribute significantly to Reader Group success as evidenced in the literature.

2: 8 eBooks and eBook Readers.

A vast body of research has been undertaken in recent years evaluating the introduction, growth and provision of eBooks and eBook Readers (Ashcroft, 2011; Duncan, 2010; Gibson & Forbes, 2010; Herther, 2011). According to the above studies eBooks account for 6-7% of the user market in the US and Britain indicating that their use may have a bigger impact on literacy rates and trends than previously imagined. Nonetheless, the above studies acknowledge that eBook Readers are still relatively new in the marketplace with the Amazon Kindle by far the most popular eReader. Amazon now sells more eBooks than traditional paperback books suggesting that the eBook concept may be about to reach critical mass growth and here to stay (Herther: 2011).

At present, the Amazon Kindle is not compatible with Public Library systems in the UK. However, Moyer and Thiele (2012:263) point out that in the US Amazon are currently partnering with Overdrive and Kindle in an attempt to promote eBook lending in conjunction with Public Libraries. The study establishes that the model was extremely successful and particularly accepted by Public Library patrons. This may be an indication that the UK may follow suit.
2: 9 eBooks and Public Libraries

Although initial focus on eBooks pertained to academic Libraries, it is relevant that focus has now moved to Public Libraries. According to Ashcroft (2011:402) figures suggest that at present, digital books represent less than 1% overall acquisition budget in American Public Libraries, however, the study points out that “free downloads, and circulation is up more than 170% from 2009”. This evidence is supported in many studies indicating a move towards eBook preference amongst Public Library borrowers (Woods & Ireland, 2008).

Early problems associated with digital rights management and the lack of demand from the public resulted in a slow uptake of eBooks in Public Libraries (Duncan, 2011). Contemporary literatures establish that there is an increasing acceptance amongst the public to upload eBooks from Public Library catalogues (Duncan, 2010; Moyer & Thiele, 2012; Woods & Ireland, 2008). Nonetheless, the studies claim that it is paramount that Public Libraries address the adaptability and impact of current technologies against the eBook service they offer to Public Library users. For example Duncan (2011:44) explains technologies including iPads, iPhones, eReaders and Netbooks are not always compatible with Public Library downloads resulting in a “lack of quality device on which to read material”. Additionally, eBooks are treated like printed books in the sense that only one borrower at a time can check it out, furthermore after the loan period has expired the eBook will automatically expire and delete form the eReader device. Thus it is clear that issues regarding licencing, costs and platform will continue to erupt as Public Libraries face added pressure to find sustainable models to meet the continuing growth and Customer expectation. According to Woods and Ireland (2008), sustainability is only
achievable when Publishers, Libraries and users share the common goal of seeing eBooks more accessible. Consequently, the fast evolving environment of eBooks, makes it difficult to predict the future of eBook use in Public Libraries.

2:10 eBooks and Public Library Reader Groups

There are few studies evaluating the incorporation of eBooks into Public Library Reader Group settings, however, a small pool of research establish that recent experiments have been undertaken in an attempt to evaluate possible scenarios (Balling et al, 2008; Landoni & Hanlon, 2007). The studies suggest that offering Reader Groups new media text in electronic print is advantageous having a positive impact on the Library environment. According to Landoni et al (2007:600) eBooks “have the potential to be cheaper, easier and quicker to produce than paper copies, furthermore on a practical level, there is no chance of eBooks going missing or being damaged in the same way as print books”, moreover, evidence suggests that eReader lending programs are genuinely valued by participants and should be further developed (Goodwin et al, 2012). The aforementioned authors address the idea that Libraries of the future will be hybrid environments where different media contribute towards an evolving service. In this sense Reader Groups need not be static, according to Balling et al (2008:59) Reader Group members may even be spread all over the county and participate in discussion when it suits them. Thus, digital Reader Groups served by Public Libraries have the capability to reach a wider audience and ultimately contribute towards Customer usability within a changing environment. According to Landoni & Hanlon (2007:606) “a wholly electronic scenario- that is a virtual book discussion group to be implemented via the Library website”, would be
the most obvious progression. Clearly these researchers have indicated that eBooks may well be the answer to Reader Group sustainability in Public Libraries thus their findings will have a major impact on this research.

2: 11 Conclusions

Reader Groups are not a new phenomenon with their roots traced back as far as the eighteenth century. However, many believe that the introduction of Oprah Winfrey’s Book Club in 1996 led to a cultural phenomenon that not only skyrocketed Oprah’s book selections to the top of the bestsellers list, her choice of book gave fiction a new cultural clout and brought stardom to literary novelists. Today, it is established that the Reader Group is revitalised and with it a community of like-minded people who share the same literary interests. Public Libraries share an interest in Reader Groups; both to support their communities and to try and understand reading habits; moreover, Public Libraries are supporting a diverse and thriving network of over 4000 Reader Groups, and as such could be considered to be central players in the Reader Group movement. Many advantages are to be gained by joining a Reader Group supported by a Public Library; however the overarching theme that emerges from the literature is reader development, particularly expanding reading choices and empowering readers. Controversial tensions can be identified in the literature including book choice, recommendations and discussions, nonetheless, appropriate solutions are identified to resolve these issues. eBooks are now available via Public Library catalogues and may offer alternative reading material for Reader Groups however, the most popular eReader, the ‘Amazon Kindle’ is not compatible with Public Library catalogues. Few studies exist regarding digital reading groups indicating a need for further research. Although a vast body of research has been
undertaken regarding Public Library Reader Groups, it is evident from the literature review that the proposed investigation can utilise findings in order to establish the sustainability of the current DL “Book Chat” model as well as investigate the possible use of eBooks within Reader Groups supported by DL.
Chapter 3: Methodology

3: 1 Introduction

The specific research methodologies to be deployed during this investigation are outlined beginning with definitions of qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods techniques and developing a rationale for the selection of specific strategies.

The selected research methods are evaluated for limitations in application, validity, bias, practical implications and ethical impact.

Qualitative research is concerned with personal accounts, understandings, stories and feelings. Data collection is associated with the expressions and words of the individual research participants. According to Bryman (2001:20);

- Emphasis is placed on the generation of theories:
- Emphasis on the ways in which individuals interpret their social world:
- Embodies a view of social reality as a constantly shifting emergent property of individuals’ creation:

By contrast quantitative research is concerned with gathering and working with structured data that can be analysed statistically. According to Bryman (2001:20);

- The accent is placed on the testing of theories:
- Has incorporated the practices and norms of the natural scientific model of positivism:
• Embodies a view of social reality as an external objective reality:

A mixed methods approach employs both qualitative and quantitative within a single study, often gaining an understanding of a social phenomena from different perspectives. According to Creswell (2003:210) researches employ a mixed methods design to “expand an understanding from one method to another, to converge or confirm findings from different sources”.

3: 2 Rationale for choice

This investigation makes use of a mixed methods approach. The ‘Concurrent Embedded Strategy’, will be used, in which both quantitative and qualitative data sets are collected simultaneously during one collection phase. Creswell (2009; 214) confirms that this model may be employed when a researcher “chooses to utilise different methods to study different groups or levels”. This methodology is beneficial for this project as it allows the researcher to examine usage of the DL “Book Chat” model from the differing perspectives of: Management, Staff and Reader Group members.

Creswell (2009:215) outlines the limitations when using the ‘Concurrent Embedded Strategy’ in that the data needs to be transformed in some way so that it can be integrated within the analysis phase of the research and in addition databases need to be compared and any discrepancies resolved. Furthermore, as the methods used in this ‘Concurrent Embedded Strategy’ approach are unequal in their priority, unequal evidence usually occurs within the study which may be a disadvantage when interpreting the final results.
3: 3 Methods of investigation

3:3:1 Literature Review Strategy

“A literature review is a systematic, explicit, and reproducible method for identifying, evaluating, and interpreting the existing body of recorded work produced by researchers, scholars, and practitioners” Fink (1998:3).

A review of the existing literature regarding the research topic began when preparing for the research and continued throughout the dissertation process. An initial search of The University of Sheffield’s Star library catalogue, eResources, eBooks, subject databases and eJournals was undertaken leading to primary information regarding Reader Groups and Public Libraries. This process provided background information ‘around’ the topic whilst highlighting any previous research, thus placing the study into a context. A further detailed search using specific search terms (Appendix: A) on databases, Emerald, Library and Information Science Abstracts, ProQuest, Web of Knowledge and Literature online produced a vast array of sources leading to a comprehensive record of information. Additionally, Internet, media, external Library catalogues and professional Library and Information magazines were explored for further information on the subject matter. The ensuing information was evaluated and synthesised before completing the structure and production of the final review, addressing research objective 1.
The focus group method of qualitative research was employed allowing the researcher to explore in depth, the key issues surrounding the current DL “Book Chat” model with Staff directly involved in the process. This methodological approach falls within a definition offered by Bryman (2001:336) that allows the researcher to draw on the expertise and experience of a small group of individuals known to have an interest in the topic being accessed. Essentially the researcher has the opportunity to build up a view of the interaction that takes place and witness how people respond to each other’s views regarding the “Book Chat” scheme. Krueger (2009) also explains that focus groups tend to work because participants feel comfortable and respected and are therefore more likely to give their opinion without feeling they are being judged. The literature and the issues relating to objectives 1 and 2 of the research were used to inform the design of the focus group questionnaire (Appendix: B).

A number of criticisms have been levelled at focus group interviewing, Krueger (2009) summarises the main points as:

- Participants tend to intellectualize for example there is a tendency for participants to portray themselves as thoughtful, rational and reflective when there is evidence that behaviour may be unthinking or unconscious.
• Focus groups do not tap into emotions, individuals may not be aware of the driving emotions that influence their behaviour.

• Participants may make up answers resulting in trivial results.

• Dominant individuals can influence research resulting in a lack of dependability.

According to Krueger (2009:13) “no method is perfect and research methods are highly situational, in that they are highly dependent on how they are used, the expertise of the researcher and the environment in which the research is undertaken”.

3:3:2:2 Semi-structured interviews

To consider the views of Staff that organise and coordinate Reader Groups at Local Branches, the researcher employed the semi-structured interview technique. This falls into the description of research as described by Matthews and Ross (2010) that enables research participants to express opinions and feelings in their own words about the topic. Bryman (2001) also confirms that by using an interview guide (Appendix: C) the researcher can be thought of as the ‘primary instrument’ in gathering in-depth data about the research topic whilst providing a degree of flexibility. For example, questions that are not included in the guide may be asked or the interviewer may pick up on additional comments made by the interviewees. The semi-structured interview technique permits room for both researcher and participant to pursue topics of particular interest to the subject matter thus allows the researcher to address the issues relating to objective 2 of the research topic.
Two further questionnaires were developed using a quantitative, cross-sectional survey, one to gather statistical data from the remaining population who coordinate and organise Reader Groups (Appendix: D), and one to gather data from Reader Group members who use the service (Appendix: E). The literature and objectives 2 and 3 informed the design of the questionnaires, additionally, a great deal of care was taken to ensure that the questionnaires were meaningful and answerable by all of the respondents. Demographic information regarding gender was omitted from the Customer questionnaire as it was felt that participants may be reluctant to provide personal information. A pilot-test of the questionnaire definitions was carried out by one member of Staff and a selection of Reader Groups participants to ensure they made sense. A small sample of data was also collected systematically from neighbouring Public Library Authorities surrounding Derbyshire thus addressing objective 4 of the research.

3: 4 Data Collection

3:4:1 Data Analysis

The qualitative data set, transcripts of the focus group interview and semi-structured interviews were analysed employing Thematic Analysis, outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006:5) as “a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide rich and detailed, yet complex account of data”. The analysis was used within an
essentialist or realist method framework, which reports experiences, meanings and the reality of participants. Initial codes as described by Taylor & Gibbs (2010) were identified by continuous familiarisation of the transcripts and recorded in an electronic code book (Appendix: F). The entire data set was systematically coded and analysed in order to get a sense of predominant or important themes of meaning. The emerging themes were identified in an inductive, “bottom up” way, in this way “the themes identified were strongly linked to the data themselves, collected specifically for the research via interview or focus group and bore little relationship to the specific questions that were asked of the participants” (Braun & Clarke, 2006:12). Themes were reviewed, re-coded and indexed by constantly moving back and forth between the data with the focus exclusively on one level. Once the overarching themes were generated they were named in a concise format in order to give the reader of this project a sense of themes (Appendix: G). Braun & Clarke (2006) suggest that limitations of Thematic Analysis include:

- Lack of clear terminology and definition of process:
- Lack Kudos of Grounded Theory:
- Lacks clear epistemological starting point:
- Loss of character of individual accounts:

3:4:1:2 Quantitative data analysis

Quantitative data from the Staff and Customer questionnaires was entered into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), a computer software programme used to organise, analyse and present numerical data in different formats. SPSS can be helpful for exploring relationships and comparing groups, additionally it is a
powerful data package that can handle very complex statistical procedures (Pallant, 2001:106). However, according to Bryman (2001:214) “quantitative data analysis is something that occurs typically at a late stage in the overall process and is also a distinct stage”, therefore it is imperative that the researcher is fully conversant with the ways in which the variables are classified on SPSS and thinks carefully how these may be analysed when planning and executing research questions. Acton et al (2009:38) observes that a great deal of work has to be undertaken before the dataset can be analysed such as:

- It is important to give the variables important names:
- To assign the appropriate levels of measurement:
- To allocate variable and value labels and to declare missing values:

Descriptive statistics only have been used in the analysis as a means of summarising the gathered data in relation to each variable in terms of:

- The frequency of each answer or code:
- How the answers are distributed across the codes:
- Summary statistics: for example, means, medians and modes, and percentiles:

(Matthews & Ross, 2010)

According to Matthews & Ross (2010:348) “this allows the researcher to ‘shape’ data and to describe or summarise the data relating to each variable using simple charts and some descriptive statistics”.

28
3:5 Validity and bias

Concerned with the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from the research, Bryman (2001) suggests that a researcher who develops any new measure should at the very least establish that it has *face validity* in that it reflects the content of the concept in question. Face validity was established in the course of this research during the focus group method and semi-structured Staff interviews of qualitative research. Furthermore, a pilot test of the questionnaires was undertaken in order to test a data collection method on a small sample of individuals before the main research gathering took place.

According to Bryman (2001), reliability is concerned with issues of consistence of measures, as a member of Staff and participants of a Reader Group understood and completed the questionnaires the method appeared sound. As the researcher is an employee of DCC some degree of bias was unavoidable however, every attempt was made to analyse the data in a consistent, sound methodical manner thus minimising any bias effects.

3: 6 Practicalities

As a work-based project it is anticipated that the research will have some practical implications for reader development within DL. Additionally it is envisaged that the work will help develop the present “Book Chat” model by providing recommendations to aid the current administration and supply of Reader Group stock throughout the County.
Initially the investigation concentrated on employees of DL, a relatively straightforward case of organising dates and times to collect data. As the initial data was necessary to complete further questionnaires, it was paramount that data analysis commenced as soon as possible. As Derbyshire Reader Groups meet at different times of the month the questionnaires were available for dissemination in early May 2012 and to be returned no later than the end of June 2012.

A digital voice recorder was used to record the focus group discussion and Staff interviews. According to Bryman (2001:317) “this procedure is important for detailed analysis required in qualitative research to ensure that the interviewees’ answers are captured in their own terms”. Transcribing of the interviews afterwards is acknowledged as a time consuming process, Bryman (2001) explains that it is best to allow five to six hours for transcription for every hour of speech, in total the process took twelve hours before coding and analysis could begin. Further practicalities include:

- As individuals attending Reader Groups do not provide email address details for group participation, and some meet away from the Library setting, paper versions of the questionnaires were required for the survey resulting in an uncertainty of the population reached.

- The cost of printing over two thousand paper version questionnaires was vast and resulted in a staggered procurement. Although the questionnaires were due to reach Local Branches before the beginning of June, some groups may not have received them in time.
As the research concentrates specifically on Reader Groups supported by DL, the results do not represent a wider population therefore the findings may only be relevant to the organisation in question.

3:7 Ethical Aspects

As the research relates to humans and their data, it was necessary to agree to and abide by the University of Sheffield’s *Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participants, Personal Data and Human Tissue*. In order to fulfil the criteria, measures were taken to ensure all research was conducted ethically (Appendix: H). A participant information sheet (Appendix: I) was provided to all individuals who were invited to take part in the research outlining the project’s purpose and providing them the opportunity decline. In addition, the participant information sheet clearly stated that any information collected would be kept strictly confidential and that any media recordings will be used only for analysis. All candidates who agreed to take part in the research were asked to sign a consent form (Appendix: J) before any data was used and informed that they were able to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. Furthermore, the Staff and Customer surveys contained a statement providing information relating to the ethical use of information as well as researcher and supervisor contact details. The degree of harm during the research was expected to be limited to that of minor inconvenience for example time and effort. Measures were taken to ensure that personal information was kept in a secure environment at all times and disposed of when no longer necessary for the research activity.
Chapter 4: Results

4:1 Introduction

This chapter contains three sections of results analysis:

- **Staff perspectives**
  - Focus group interview
  - Three Staff semi-structured interviews
  - Staff questionnaire

- **Customer perspectives**

- **External authority perspectives**

4:1:1 Staff perspectives

**4:1:1:1 Focus group interview**

Four members of DL Senior Staff that are directly involved in the organisation and coordination of the DL “Book Chat” scheme were invited to participate in the focus group interview. Comments made by the focus group participants are identified with the prefix FG.

**4:1:1:2 Semi-structured interviews**

Three semi-structured interviews were conducted with members of Staff who organise, coordinate and supply Reader Groups at three Local Branches. The first member of Staff coordinates Reader Groups that choose predominately from the
“Book Chat” annotated list, the second member of Staff coordinates Reader Groups that choose exclusively from the general Library catalogue and the final member of Staff coordinates Reader Groups that choose from the “Book Chat” annotated list and from the general catalogue. Comments made by the Staff interviewees are allocated the prefix SI and will be analysed and synthesised together with the data derived from the focus group comments.

4:1:1:3 Staff questionnaires

An initial contact with Branch Staff of the forty five Library Branches within DCC established that thirty six Branches coordinated Reader Groups servicing an approximate population size of two thousand Reader Group members. Staff questionnaires were distributed to the thirty six relevant Branch Libraries and thirty three were received back thus attracting a 91.6 % response rate. According to Gillham (2000:9) a ‘captive’ group, for example Staff belonging to an organisation, can attract a response rate of nearly 100% confirming a typical response rate was achieved. Comments made by the Staff participants are identified with the prefix SQ; descriptive statistics resulting from the Staff evaluation are presented in the text and illustrated with charts and graphs.

4:1:2 Customer perspectives

4:1:2:1 Customer questionnaires

Two thousand questionnaires were distributed to Reader Group participants with three hundred and ninety six responses forming a response rate of 19.8%. According
to Gillham (2000:7) ‘impersonal questionnaires typically attract a response rate of around 30%’. One of the main reasons for this response noted by Gillham (2000:7) is that; ‘few people are strongly motivated by questionnaires unless they can see it as having personal relevance, for example gathering information and opinions on job organisation, status and salary’. The anticipated response rate was not achieved thus proved disappointing. This section presents the descriptive statistics taken from the Customer questionnaires in the form of charts and graphs. Customer participant comments will be identified with the prefix CQ.

4:1:3 External Authority perspectives

4:1:3:1 External Authority questionnaires

The data results gathered from Local Library Authorities neighbouring Derbyshire are detailed in this section. Comments made by the External Authority participants are identified by the prefix EA1, EA2, EA3 and EA4. Questionnaires were distributed to six organisations and four responses were received achieving a 66.6 % favourable response rate.

4: 2 Findings

4:2:1 Staff perspectives

Thematic analysis of the focus group discussion and Staff interviews resulted in the emergence of four overarching themes; Constraints, Staff perception, Customer expectation and eBooks.
4:2:1:1 Constraints

Interpretation of the documented data derived from the focus group meeting and Staff interviews generated the initial overarching theme ‘constraints’. This theme was used in an attempt to identify any perceived barriers currently imposed on the DL “Book Chat” scheme. Within the constraints theme the following sub-themes can be found:

- **Budgets**
- **Resources**
- **Staff time**

**Budgets**

DL purchase their “Book Chat” Reader Group sets by means of a special order called a “promotions fund” (FG2) and not out of the general stock budget. In addition, (FG3) indicated that funding for the purchase of “Book Chat” stock is available in the immediate future albeit in a different guise arising from a fund for reader development as opposed to coming out of a materials fund (FG3). Clearly, a financial commitment towards the future of the “Book Chat” scheme exists and with it a reassurance of future longevity.

An air of caution was palpable amongst the focus group as (FG2) vocalised that there was a “diminishing materials fund at the moment”. Although one respondent (FG1) explained that funding allocated to the purchase of “Book Chat” stock had previously “gone through leaner periods” but continued to thrive, it was apparent that any
future financial restraints could impact on the sustainability of the “Book Chat” scheme in the present form.

Respondent (FG1) voiced that the rapid growth in Reader Groups had led to a “change in focus and a realisation that the groups needed more books on the list”. In order to overcome this problem clearly more stock is required. The crux of this stock problem, one of the main constraints on the current “Book Chat” scheme appears to be the quantity of sets purchased.

Alternative solutions to the aforementioned issues have been considered. Explained by respondent (FG1) as; “buying double sets, reducing set allocations to groups from twelve choices a year down to eight and putting the Orange Prize books together or having a box of pick and mix or on a theme”. These alternative solutions have resulted in limited success as far as reducing the strain on the current “Book Chat” scheme.

The focus group respondents acknowledged that some of the Reader Groups do not actually borrow books from the “Book Chat” scheme thus compounding the aforementioned stock problem further. Figure.1 (Appendix: K) shows that at present out of the 205 reading groups coordinated at Branch Libraries, 60% (n=122) groups access the “Book Chat” scheme. Notably, the analysis highlights Bakewell library coordinating 25 Reader Groups without accessing the “Book Chat” scheme. Figure.2 shows that of the 122 groups that access the “Book Chat” scheme 45% (n=56) access their full allocation of 8 title sets per year. Branch Library Staff believe this may be symptomatic of book availability. Table.1 (Appendix: L) detail staff comments.
Figure 2

The storage of “Book Chat” sets held at HQ was not considered an issue by focus group respondents per se, in addition the difficulties associated with storing “Book Chat” sets elsewhere were identified as; “full storage areas” (FG2) and “no other Libraries big enough” (FG3). Respondent (FG4) noted that the “Book Chat” sets were well used with most of the books out. Nonetheless, respondent (FG3) indicated that “Book Chat” stock can be sitting on a closed access shelf at HQ meaning that some of the books are never borrowed.

Respondent (FG4) voiced that one problem associated with loaning “Book Chat” sets to Reader Groups was that they sometimes came back as incomplete sets. This causes a knock on effect for other users as they would be expecting ten copies and only six would arrive (SI1) Clearly, the process of restoring incomplete “Book
Chat” sets can impact on the “Book Chat” resource as well as on Staff time as they pursue outstanding books.

Staff time

The focus group analysis indicates that the coordination and maintenance of “Book Chat” sets held at HQ does have a negative impact on Staff time. Respondent (FG2) explains; “the main problem is that we are all working with smaller Staff” and “fewer people to manage it” (FG3). Respondent (FG1) confirmed that Staff time can also be an issue at some of the Local Branches; “Where they’ve got a lot of Reader Groups I think you find it takes quite a lot of Staff time even if they are using the “Book Chat” list”. The alternative to using “Book Chat” stock as explained by (FG1) is by pulling the Reader Group books from the general stock. Figure.3 shows that Branch Library staff dedicate approximately 152 hours each month coordinating Reader Group book stock.

Figure.3

![Chart showing staff hours spent each month coordinating Reader Group stock]

- Number of libraries
- Number of hours
- Staff hours spent each month coordinating Reader Group stock
In addition, local Branch Staff feel a degree of conflict between using “Book Chat” stock and ordering stock from the general catalogue. Interviewee (SI1) points out that it is difficult to keep “Book Chat” sets together once they have been dispatched to members of the Reader Group. Once the books have left the Library there is no guarantee that Reader Group members will return the books at the allocated time which can then result in split sets. However, if titles are ordered from the general catalogue the system appears more flexible because Reader Group members can sign a check in check out sheet taking responsibility for the books. Additionally, members can be tracked resulting in less pressure for Staff to get the books back for a deadline. This point was reinforced by respondent (SI2) who chose all of the Reader Group stock from the general catalogue resulting in a more flexible approach. Nonetheless, when a title is suitably identified on the general catalogue it appears that often there is a lack of available copies.

Figure 4 shows that these figures equate to approximately 1500 books ordered per month to support “Book Chat” and to supply the remainder of Reader Groups supported by DL.
The analysis shows that “Book Chat” sets can be convenient for many of the Branch Library Staff. In addition, respondent (SI3) explains; “you can get the whole set of books in one go and when you are ordering from the catalogue you’re never sure that you’re going to get enough copies by the date you need them”. This means that Local Branch Staff are acting as a ‘go-between’ Reader Groups and the “Book Chat” scheme, therefore taking less of a personal responsibility.

4:2:1:2 Staff perception

Staff perception, the second overarching theme derived from analysis of the focus group and Staff interview data was used in an attempt to establish Staff members’ views and experiences of the DL “Book Chat” scheme. Within the Staff perception theme the following sub-themes can be found;
• Choice and feedback
• Relationships
• Visibility

Identifying and revising stock for the “Book Chat” scheme is Management led and draws largely on the expertise of Staff. Respondent (FG1) points out that this has not always being the case; “historically we had a lot more input from Reader Groups and members of Staff, that tends to have drifted a little bit”. This situation is also reflected by respondent (SI1); “I think it’s put together with good insight from Prize winners … they put a lot of research into it so I do think there’s good quality and a broad choice of books … I’ve just got my reservations about how it how successful it is”.

Clearly, it is difficult for the Staff who have the responsibility for managing the “Book Chat” scheme to pre-empt what type of reading material Reader Group participants may require. Respondent (FG1) explains; “people often say I’m stuck in a rut and they want something different, additionally you have got adventurous groups that read very widely”. Respondent (FG2) voiced that “in general people join Reader Groups to explore and get introduced to different genres”. Conversely, respondent (FG3) felt that Reader Groups should “be willing to have a go at reading something a bit different”. These findings highlight the complexities involved in identifying what Library Staff consider suitable book stock for diverse Reader Groups.
Choice and feedback

Providing a variety of books for the “Book Chat” scheme and thus widening the choice of titles for Reader Group selection should in theory appeal to Reader Group participants. Respondent (SI1) points out that this is not always the case; “I'm getting very negative feedback from one of my group” and “I feel that they're blaming Staff, blaming Staff for the choices, whereas the Staff didn’t choose them, the group chose them”. It appears that Reader Group participants are frustrated about the availability of their choice of title. In addition, some Reader Group participants are only willing to choose from a select number of books as explained by interviewee (SI3): “she was very explicit in what she wanted and when she wanted it and when they weren’t available for next month she wasn’t very happy”. Figure.5 shows that 55% (n=18) Branch Staff who coordinate Reader Groups are flexible with their book choices and Figure.6 shows that 55% (n= 18) of Staff are satisfied with the ease of availability of books chosen by Reader Groups. Table.2 (Appendix: L) shows the responses made by the Staff who are not satisfied with the ease of availability of chosen books. The main problems include:

- Chosen titles are often not available
- Not enough copies
- Have to wait too long for titles
Negative feedback from the Reader Group participants appears to have an impact on some Staff emotionally as voiced by respondent (SI2); “I just felt really demoralised to be honest, I feel like I’ve felt like saying I don’t want to put more input in this”. Additionally, negative comments also seem to impact on Staff confidence as discussed by (SI2) “I wouldn’t feel confident recommending a book that I’ve not
read I’d go along with something because I think it would provoke a good discussion”.

However, **Figure.7** shows that 94% (n=31) of Staff that coordinate Reader Groups at local Branches are happy to recommend books to Reader Groups. These findings confirm that Branch Staff are knowledgeable and confident when suggesting book recommendations and titles in general, thereby reinforcing reader development “best practice” throughout the Library service.

**Figure.7**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch Staff happy to recommend books to Reader Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It seems that Reader Groups are very particular when it comes to choosing their books. Respondent (SI2); “Well with one Reader Group … they will put forward titles or they are happy for me to suggest a title, but with the other group it seems to me they want it all on a plate, it seems to me they want to do as little as possible when it comes to choosing a book”.
Relationships

Staff getting ‘a feel’ for Reader Groups and understanding group dynamics in addition to identifying group reading choices were highlighted as key factors in maintaining Reader Group satisfaction. Interviewee (SI1) explains that if a Reader Group requests a popular title, for example “The Help” and it is unavailable for a few months, after explaining the situation the group are happy to wait. Additionally, it is evident that Staff experience an increased sense of responsibility as they become familiar with the groups that they coordinate.

Nonetheless, there does seem to be a marked difference in the relationship of Staff and groups that meet in the Library and Staff and groups that choose to meet elsewhere. As respondent (SI2) notes; “I suppose people have different reasons for going to a Reader Group”, “for some people it might be pure social, and the reading of the book is just a side issue”. Clearly, not all group members are available or may choose not to meet when the library is open. **Figure.8** shows that 18% (n=36) of Reader Groups meet at the Library.
However, books that are supplied for Reader Groups that choose to meet elsewhere generate an increase in book stock issues. In addition, as Reader Groups are required to collect their books from a designated local Branch an opportunity arises for individuals to access alternative Library services. Furthermore, Library Staff can promote events and attract volunteers as explained by respondent (FG1); “There is this untapped potential for Reader Group members to help at events or be volunteers bringing the Library to life”. Clearly, Reader Groups can potentially reach out into the wider community, act as advocate and thus promote sustainability.

Visibility

The “Book Chat” annotated list can be used as a visible aide to Reader Group members when identifying and choosing their books. Respondent (FG4) explained that once the list had been complied, the system was managed on a database which then tracked the issue and return of book sets. Respondents (FG1, FG2) indicated
that it would be appealing if the database could be modified to allow Reader Groups to view the availability of books for themselves. One respondent (FG2) mentioned that it would be useful if the database at the very minimum could be accessed by Library Staff. Respondent (FG3) suggested that the ideal situation would involve Reader Group participants booking their own group books thus allowing them to monitor availability. This was also voiced by respondent (FG4) who explained that it would stop Reader Groups from requesting books that just weren’t there. This would be beneficial facilitating Reader Groups themselves taking control of their book stock.

4.2.1:3 Customer expectation

Customer expectation emerged as a theme from the analysis of the data and was used in an attempt to identify Staff perceptions of their Customers’ use of the “Book Chat” scheme.

As previously noted a pivotal concern for Staff appears to revolve around the idea of Reader Groups generally insisting on a particular set of books and then expecting to receive them on a specific date. Respondent (FG1) voiced that individuals who have got access to computers and the internet often identify titles themselves. In addition, respondent (FG3) notes that a book can sometimes just get “talked about” and then become unexpectedly popular thus leading to Reader Group demand and increased expectation. Nonetheless, respondent (FG1) explains that some groups do like to be guided when it comes to identifying suitable titles and points out that a lot of groups have adapted to the idea that you do not need to use the “Book Chat” annotated list.
4:2:1:4 eBooks

Respondent (FG2) reported that currently eBooks work on the same model as a physical Library in that once an eBook has been purchased it can only be issued to one person at a time. Furthermore, (FG2) explained that the current digital rights management ensures that once an eBook has been uploaded on to a borrower’s eReader it will automatically vanish after the allocated loan period.

Respondents (FG1, FG3) could see a potential for the development of eBooks within the Library service however voiced that there are barriers concerning its progression. Respondent (FG2) voiced that there are several issues regarding Publisher resilience at the moment with suppliers and The Society of Chief Librarians trying to persuade Publishers to make their books available in e-format Respondent (FG2) pointed out that any decision to move forward with eBooks will need to be implemented at a national level.

As far as Reader Groups are concerned, the focus group respondents voiced that eBooks could be used as a means of supplementing the existing Reader Group service by offering titles in an additional format. However, respondents (FG1 and FG3) noted that the option to change the background colour and text size on eReaders can be particularly beneficial for individuals with a disability or dyslexia and therefore could see the potential of developing additional eReading Groups.

Conversely interviewee (SI2) highlighted the difficulties associated with eReaders; “when someone buys a Kindle they can’t download on to it from the Derbyshire catalogue”. In addition respondent (SI3) voiced “I could see there would be
advantages if it guaranteed they could all download it at the same time but I’m not sure any of my Reader Groups would have enough members that would have eReaders at the moment to make that feasible but who knows in years down the line they might”. This confirms that the implementation of eBook Reader Groups is problematic at present, nevertheless, Figure.9 shows that 48% (n=16) of Branch Staff could foresee a potential for eBook Reader Groups.

Figure.9

Staff suggestions

Table: 3 shows the responses made by Staff on how to improve the “Book Chat” model.
4:2:2 Customer perspectives

1. Are you aware of the list from which you choose your Reader Group books namely ‘Derbyshire Libraries Book Chat’?

Figure.10 shows that 86% (n= 341) of respondents were aware of the “Book Chat” annotated list.

![Chart showing 86% aware and 14% not aware of the Book Chat list.]

2. Have you every chosen a book from the Derbyshire Libraries “Book Chat” list either as a group or individually?

Figure.11 shows that 87% (n=298) of the respondents that were aware of the “Book Chat” list had chosen a book from it.
3. Given the choice would you prefer to:

Choose your own book for your Reader Group

Be allocated a book for your Reader Group

Figure.12 shows that 61% (n=241) of participants would prefer to choose their own book, 28% (n=113) would prefer to be allocated a book and 11% (n=42) indicated that they would prefer a mixture of both.
4. When you choose a book for your Reader Group what factors influence your choice and are most important to you?

**Figure.13** shows that the most important factor to influence choice was group recommendations.
5. Please circle the answer that reflects your opinion on each of the following statements.

Overall 95% (n=376) of respondents agreed with the statement “I like to go to Reader Groups to broaden my experience of reading and challenge myself”.

Overall 97% (n=384) of respondents agreed with the statement “I like to go to Reader Groups to read and discuss popular literature in an informal relaxed atmosphere”.

Overall 92% (365) of respondents agreed with the statement “I think of the Reader Group as a social event with an opportunity to meet like-minded people”.

Overall 39% (n=115) of respondents agreed with the statement “My chosen book is always available”.

6. Do you own an eReader?

Figure.14 shows that the majority of respondents do not own an eReader, but of those that did the most popular was the Amazon Kindle.
7. Would you like to use an eReader for Reader Group?

Figure 15 shows that overall 12% (n=47) of respondents would like to use an eReader for Reader Group.

Figure 15
8. Which Library provides your Reader Group books?

**Figure 16** shows which Library provides respondents Reader Group books.

**Figure 16**

9. Is there anything else you would like to say about Derbyshire Libraries “Book Chat” scheme?

**Table: 4** details Customer comments, general themes were;

- Brilliant
- Helpful
- Informative
- Excellent service
- Choice of book not always available
4:2:3 External Authority perspectives

1. Does X Authority have a reader development policy/strategy incorporating Reader Group support?

All respondents confirmed that they had a reader development strategy incorporating Reader Group support. Respondents (EA1) noted that their original strategy (2004) was out of date but that a new strategy in development makes reference to Reader Groups. Whereas respondents (EA2 and EA4) explain that they are moving away from staff supported Reader Groups and encouraging members to run groups themselves.

2. Could you explain how you support Reader Groups in X Authority with reference to key issues such as provision of stock, Staff time and funding?

Respondent (EA3) have a system whereby groups can have up to twelve reservations ten times a year. They do not pay fines and in some cases have free venues. Respondent (EA1) offer a Reader Group service that groups can subscribe £20 a year, for this they get sent a list which they can choose from. Sets are then sent to Libraries for collection for up to twelve meetings per year. Additionally, one collection officer is responsible for the service including buying titles, and a collection assistant works full time on getting the sets out to groups and managing the return. Respondents (EA2 and EA4) are moving towards Reader Groups being self-sufficient although provide books and Staff still support in terms of advice and helping groups set up.
3. Do you think X Authorities provision of Reader Group support is sustainable or are you thinking of moving towards another model. If so what will this be?

Respondents (EA2 and EA4) are moving towards a more self-sustaining model as described above. Respondent (EA1) has no plans to change the service they offer at present, however whether it is sustainable in the long term would depend on budgetary decisions that the Council make. In addition, respondent (EA1) noted that the Reader Group service does take up a large proportion of Staff time and does not think that “it would not be an option to launch such a service if starting from scratch again”. Nonetheless, respondent (EA1) explained that a dedicated service does have the impact of relieving pressure on the main Public Library stock. Respondent (EA3) explains that they only plan to develop online Reader Groups.

4. Has X Authority considered the possibility of implementing eBook Reader Groups?

Respondent (EA3) have considered the possibility of implementing eBook Reader Groups. Respondents (EA1 and EA2) have suggested that members of Reader Groups use eReaders where possible however, (EA2) explain that they do not currently lend eBooks so could not support groups with material. Respondent (EA1) cannot think of a practical way this done with licensing and technological barriers however, they do make eBooks available from their eBook lending service that are on the Reading Group Service list of titles. Respondent (EA4) explains that one of the challenges of implementing eBook Reader Groups is that many Customers have purchased Kindle’s which are not compatible with their eBook service.
Chapter 5: Discussion of Results and Presentation of Findings

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this dissertation was to investigate the sustainability of DL “Book Chat” model within the constraints of the present economic circumstances of limited resources and reduced budgets. This chapter will aim to respond to the research objectives by analysing the current “Book Chat” model from the differing perspectives of Management, Staff and Reader Group members. Any comparisons and contrasts between the themes identified in the results chapter and themes in the literature will be discussed in detail.

5.2 Reader development

The development and growth of Reader groups throughout Derbyshire concurs with the literature depicting Reader Group expansion within the UK (Butler et al, 2005; Daniels, 2006; Farr, 2005; Hall, 2003; Hartley, 2002; Peck, 2010). Examination of the results within the constraints theme indicates that the DL “Book Chat” model, the scheme that supports Reader Groups throughout Derbyshire is extremely well used. Additionally, the budget for the purchase of “Book Chat” sets will continue for the foreseeable future signifying a firm commitment by DL towards the future sustainability of Reader Groups in addition to maintaining Reader Groups focused within the wider context of reader development. External Authority respondents also confirmed that a reader development strategy including Reader Group support was a central theme within their Library services agreeing with findings from within the
literature (Sherman, 2008), that reader development is now genuinely embedded within the Library service.

Analysis of the results within the Staff perception theme relating to Branch Staff recommendations illustrates that 93.9% of Branch Staff are happy to recommend book titles to Reader Groups. These findings reflect similar discoveries in the literature indicating that Staff hold the solution to finding a compulsively good read (Dempsy, 2009; Rua 2011). The results also suggest that Library Staff are knowledgeable and comfortable within the wider context of reader development activities identified in the literature as expanding reading choices and empowering readers (Train, 2003; Van Riel & Fowler; 1996). Moreover, analysis of the results within the Staff perception theme establishes that trust is an important factor, reinforcing the importance of Staff and Reader Group interaction. The literature recognised that Staff taking responsibility, being pro-active and enthusiastic when encouraging people to read, is an effective way to promote and sustain Public Library Reader Groups (Scothern, 2000, Train and Elkin, 2001). The findings illustrate that DL Branch Staff are well placed to develop and sustain the Reader Group service. However, only 18% of Reader Groups actually meet at the Library, making it difficult for Branch Staff to get a ‘feel’ for groups and to guide them effectively.

Clearly, these findings impact on satisfying objective 1 of the research in establishing the benefits of Public Library Reader Groups within the wider context of reader development.
5.3 Derbyshire Libraries Reader Group Stock

Analysis of the results within the constraints theme shows that out of the 205 Reader Groups registered with DL 122 access the “Book Chat” scheme and of these groups, 56 take advantage of their full allocation of eight title sets per year. Therefore, the “Book Chat” title sets only contribute towards approximately half of the Reader Group stock requirements.

Branch Library Staff increasingly order extra Reader Group stock from the general catalogue to support current sets and supply additional groups. This process results in a two-tier stock provision scenario. Additionally, evaluation of the results within the constraints theme establishes that Reader Group growth would impact dramatically on resources, Staff time and Customer expectation. The above findings indicate that any additional pressure on the two tier system outlined will result in greater stock confusion for Branch Staff and Reader Group members.

Literature regarding the sustainability of Public Library Reader Group stock is evidently lacking. However, Public Library Reader Group expansion as predicted in the literature (TRA, 2012) will undoubtedly place an increased strain on Public Library book stock. This can be taken to mean that Reader Group book stock will become an important factor of Reader Group sustainability.
5.4 Management and Branch Staff perspectives

5.4.1 Advantages of using “Book Chat” sets

The organisation and coordination of the “Book Chat” sets works effectively in the sense that book sets are continually moving between HQ and Library Branches for Reader Group collection. Furthermore, the majority of “Book Chat” sets are out on loan most of the time indicating continued sustainability. Staff compiling the “Book Chat” list for subsequent Reader Group selection is consistent with findings in the literature (Bell; 2001) that the content and significance of the books are appropriate for Reader Group discussion. Additionally, the findings within the constraints theme also confirm that some Branch Staff appreciate the convenience of the “Book Chat” sets as it reduces their personal input in identifying and ordering additional Reader Group stock. This point was also reinforced by External Authority respondent EA1 who claimed that a dedicated Reader Group service does have the impact of relieving pressure on the main Public Library stock.

5.4.2 Disadvantages of using “Book Chat” sets

Conversely, analysis of the results within the constraints theme establishes that the coordination and maintenance of “Book Chat” sets at HQ does have a negative impact on Staff time resulting in Senior Staff having to manage with less Staff time. In addition, evaluation of the results also demonstrate that when Branch Library Staff acts as a go-between the Reader Groups, requesting “Book Chat” sets, and Staff at HQ, problems can occur. Branch Staff can become frustrated by the unavailability of requested “Book Chat” sets which can result in several emails or telephone calls to
HQ regarding availability, potentially, wasting time. Additionally the “Book Chat” sets can become incomplete which then causes a knock on effect for other users.

5.4.3 Advantages of using general stock

Analysis of the results establishes that the main advantages of ordering Reader Group stock from the general catalogue are control and flexibility. Books can be ordered intermittently and returned individually resulting in less pressure for Staff in getting books back for a deadline.

5.4.4 Disadvantages of using general stock

An increase in the withdrawal of stock from the general catalogue would influence the availability of stock for the general public. Furthermore, when Reader Groups order titles independently of the “Book Chat” annotated list, Branch Staff are often unable to order sufficient copies and formats which can result in Reader Group disappointment. Some Branch Staff believe that the “Book Chat” annotated list could be enhanced by improving the choice, availability and accessibility of stock as shown in Table. 3 (Appendix: L). In addition the process of ordering Reader Group stock from the general catalogue is a time consuming process. Figure.3 illustrates that the process of supporting the current “Book Chat” sets with extra stock from the general catalogue takes Branch Staff over 152 hours per month. Nonetheless, a member of Staff coordinates twenty five Reader Groups from one Branch Library, ordering stock exclusively from the general catalogue. This is a remarkable example of satisfying Reader Group demand as well as managing Staff time.
Consequences of Reader Groups selecting titles from the “Book Chat” annotated list or selecting titles to be ordered from the general catalogue can result in Reader Groups receiving titles that happen to be available rather than receiving their actual choice resulting inevitably in frustration and disappointment as indicated in Table 4 (Appendix: L).

These findings satisfy objective 2 of the research to establish how Reader Groups are supported by Public Libraries across Derbyshire with reference to a number of key issues such as co-ordination of book sets, availability of Staff time, cost of service provision and storage of Reader Group materials.

5.5 Customer perspective

Analysis of the results establishes that in general Reader Group members feel that they receive an excellent Reader Group service. However, findings suggest that there are a common set of problems faced by Reader Groups when choosing a book for their Reader Group as acknowledged by (Bolin, 2002; Hermes, et al, 2008; McArdle, 2009; Rogers, 2002; Rua, 2011). Table 4 (Appendix: L) indicate that Reader Group participants believe these problems are symptomatic of title choice.

Figure.10 indicates that some Reader Group members are unaware of the “Book Chat” annotated list and in this sense are unsure of how and from where they receive their books. Nonetheless, it has been established that Reader Groups prefer to choose their own book title for Reader Group discussion based on their own group recommendations whether from the “Book Chat” annotated list or independently. Analysis of the results within the Customer expectation theme suggests that once
Reader Groups have selected their title they are often unhappy that they have been sent for some unknown reason a title that they did not choose. Figure: 6 shows that 55% of Reader Group members voiced that they did not receive their desired titles and are subsequently disappointed. These findings may be explained by the notion that individuals prefer to choose their own titles based on individual choice, as evidenced in the literature (D’Astous et al, 2006; Graham, 2007; Huang, 2010; Kaptein et al, 2010; Ooi and Liew, 2011; Usherwood & Toyne, 2002).

The evaluation also confirms that individuals attend Reader Groups to broaden their experience of reading as well as to read and discuss popular literature and regard it as a social event providing an opportunity to meet likeminded people. These findings support the literature stressing the importance of individuals choosing a Reader Group that is right for their circumstances (Hermes, et al, 2008; McArdle, 2009; Peoples and Ward, 2007). The present work has not taken into consideration the issues regarding Reader Group diversity owing to the constraints of the dissertation structure. However, (Appendix M) demonstrates an awareness of their importance within Public Library environments. The findings confirm the many benefits to be gained by supporting external Reader Groups throughout Derbyshire including the increase in book issues as well as promoting the wider services that DL have to offer.

The above findings relate partly to objective 3 of the research owing to the evaluation of a relatively small data set. It is recognised however, that the Customer trends highlighted in the research can be developed further in order to understand reader group sustainability from a Customer perspective.
5.6 eBooks

Analysis of the results within the eBooks theme confirms that there are several problems associated with eBooks and eBook Reader Groups. Currently, the Digital Rights Management prohibits multiple copies of an eBook to be downloaded, additionally the eBook model is regarded the same way as physical model in the sense that it can only be loaned to one person at a time. Reader Group members would require an eReader for eBook use. However, analysis of the results establishes that at present the majority of respondents do not own an eReader. Amongst the respondents that do own an eReader, the most common make is the Amazon Kindle which is not compatible with the DL electronic catalogue.

Additionally, Reader Group members do not favour eReading Groups and prefer physical books which conflicts with the findings of Woods & Ireland (2008). External Authority EA1 reinforces the impracticalities associated with the licensing and technological barriers of eReading Groups, EA1 however, do make eBooks available from their eBook lending service for their Reader Group members. This may be a partial answer to the integration of eBooks into Public Library Reader Group settings.

This section partly relates to objective 4 of the research in reviewing how neighbouring Public Library Authorities support their Reader Groups with reference to key issues such as funding and the development of eBooks. However, the data sets forming the basis of this analysis are small and act only as an indication of future possibilities.
5.7 Solutions

5.7.1 Using “Book Chat” stock

Ideally, an increase in the number of “Book Chat” sets would take the strain off the general catalogue as well as provide an increased selection of stock. Clearly, this process would have an impact on the DCC Library stock budget. Findings indicate that Council Authority (EA1) has addressed the aforementioned situation charging an annual £20 fee to registered Reader Groups. A similar model, if administered by DCC, could generate sufficient funding to increase the “Book Chat” sets therefore promoting sustainability.

Analysis of the results suggests that a visible ‘read only’ database accessible by all Staff involved in the coordination of Reader Groups would partly alleviate issues of Staff time and book selection. A widely accessible database would allow Staff to monitor the actual availability of “Book Chat” sets as well as providing Staff with a ‘tool’ to manage Customer expectation. It would appear that further improvements are to be gained if Customers could manage the database themselves by taking control of their Reader Group stock.

5.7.2 Using general stock

Implement an enhanced annotated title suggestion list to be accessible by all staff involved in the coordination of Reader Groups. Analysis of the results suggests that the list could be used as a tool when Branch Staff order stock, ideally specifying book title, genre, format, availability, number of pages, and an accurate synopsis. It
would appear that further improvements are to be gained if staff could add titles to the list themselves and if the list was made available to Reader Group members should they wish to access recommendations.

5.8 Customer perspective

Clearly, additional support and information regarding Reader Group routines would ease Customer expectation. Findings demonstrate that External Authorities (EA2 and EA4) are moving towards Reader Groups becoming self-sufficient when it comes to ordering Reader Group book stock. Proactive Customer control of Reader Group routines may possibly hold one key to future sustainability.

5.9 Best Practice and further recommendations

Research objective 5, to establish and highlight best practice in order to make further recommendations to support reading groups throughout Derbyshire will be discussed within chapter 6.
Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations

This aim of this research to investigate the sustainability of DL “Book Chat” model within the constraints of the present economic circumstances of limited resources and reduced budgets has been met within the constraints of the research. This chapter presents the conclusions to this research drawn from the key findings outlined in the previous chapters. Any recommendations for future modification of the DL “Book Chat” model based on the conclusions will be highlighted. Reflections on this research project will be outlined and suggested areas for further research identified.

6.1 Key findings

6.1.1 Positive aspects of the current DL “Book Chat” model

- The DL “Book Chat” model is sustainable at present levels of interest.
- Generally the “Book Chat” titles are chosen by experienced Staff.
- The content and significance of “Book Chat” sets are appropriate for Reader Group discussion.
- The “Book Chat” set are convenient to use for Branch Staff as they reduce their personal input in identifying and ordering additional Reader Group stock.
- The DL “Book Chat” model is extremely well used.
- The DL “Book Chat” model is popular.
6.1.2 Negative aspects of the current DL “Book Chat” model

- The “Book Chat” sets only contribute towards approximately half of the Reader Group stock requirement.
- The “Book Chat” sets need to be increasingly reinforced with additional stock ordered from the general catalogue.
- The coordination and maintenance of “Book Chat” sets at HQ does have a negative impact on Staff time.
- If Staff acts as a go-between the Reader Groups requesting “Book Chat” sets and Staff at HQ, problems can and do occur.
- Branch Staff can become frustrated by the unavailability of requested “Book Chat” sets which can result in several emails or telephone calls to HQ regarding availability, potentially, wasting time and generating a negative impact on the scheme.
- Branch Staff are often unable to access the database which then leads to a supply problem for the Reader Groups as they are unable to access the books that they desire.
- The “Book Chat” sets can become incomplete.

6.2 Summary

The research concludes that development and growth of Reader Groups throughout Derbyshire agrees with the views expressed in the literature depicting Reader Group expansion within the UK. Additionally, it is evident that Derbyshire Library Staff are knowledgeable and comfortable within the wider context of reader development activities such as expanding reading choices and empowering readers. In this sense,
DL are sufficiently equipped having a strong foundation of knowledge to support a sustainable Reader Group service.

Analysis of the results establishes that the main problem scenario regarding the current “Book Chat” model is stock related resulting in an inconsistent service. The results indicate that stock provision, stock coordination and customer choice of stock are contributory factors effecting Reader group sustainability. The data is inconclusive about a firm way forward; however, analysis of the data suggests two potential solutions to the sustainability of the DL “Book Chat” model. A cost benefit analysis of Staff time versus the cost of Reader Group books may be beneficial in determining the appropriate solution.

6.3 Proposed solution A – retain “Book Chat” sets.

Proposed solution A is to retain “Book Chat” sets and Branch Staff increasingly order books from the general library catalogue to form additional sets and satisfy Reader Group demand. It is concluded that current DL “Book Chat” model is sustainable within the constraints of the present economic circumstances of limited resources and reduced budgets if;

- The stock materials fund remained the same.
- The current “Book Chat” was increasingly reinforced with additional stock ordered from the general catalogue.
- DCC Library Staff remain knowledgeable and comfortable within the wider context of reader development activities.
6.3.1 Recommendations for change, proposed solution A include;

- Implement an annual £20 fee per registered Reader Group in order to generate sufficient funding to increase the “Book Chat” sets and promote sustainability.

- Enhance the “Book Chat” list by clearly indicating stock availability, genre, improved synopsis, number of pages and age appropriate details.

- A widely accessible database was implemented. This database would be enhanced if access rights were to be granted to Staff and Reader Group participants.

6.4 Proposed solution B – order all Reader Group stock from the general catalogue

Proposed solution B is to order all Reader Group stock from the general catalogue. It is concluded that DL Reader Group support could be made sustainable if;

- All Reader Group stock was ordered from the general catalogue. Although presenting the consequential increase in the withdrawal of stock from the general catalogue limiting the availability of books for loan for the general public.
6.4.1 Recommendations for change, proposed solution B include;

- An enhanced annotated title suggestion list was implemented accessible by all Staff involved in the coordination of Reader Groups. The list could be used as a tool when Branch Staff order stock ideally specifying book title, genre, format, availability, number of pages, and accurate synopsis.

- Further improvements are to be gained if Staff could add titles to the list themselves.

- Utilise Staff knowledge in identifying appropriate Reader Group stock with sufficient stock availability on the general catalogue.

6.5 Recommendations for change - Reader Group members

It is concluded that Reader Group members receive an excellent service in general. Sustainability could be enhanced if:

- All Reader Group participants were aware of the “Book Chat” annotated list.

- Reader groups actually receive the book titles that they choose whether from the “Book Chat” annotated list or general catalogue.

- If clear information and guidance relating to the availability of Reader Group titles and stock availability were to be made available to Reader groups.
6.6 Recommendations for change – eBooks

It is concluded that eBooks and eBook Reader Groups are currently unattainable in Public Libraries. If DL were to pursue an eBook strategy in the future, eBook Reader Groups could be made sustainable if;

- The DL electronic catalogue were to be modified to become compatible with all variants of eReaders.
- There were to be an increase in use of eBooks and eReaders amongst Reader Group members.
- Present difficulties associated with licensing and technology barriers are resolved.

6.7 Recommendations for further research

- The present work has not taken into consideration the issues regarding Reader Group diversity owing to the restraints of the dissertation structure. However, (Appendix: M) demonstrates an awareness of their importance within Public Library environments. A similar study could be conducted with a focus on Reader Group diversity using a qualitative methods approach.
- Identification and evaluation of the factors that affect a Reader Group’s choice of title.
- Further investigation of Public Library Reader Group stock may be relevant to future research regarding the sustainability of Reader Groups.
- Further investigation of the development of eBook Reader Groups within a wider context of DL may be a topic of relevance in the future as current data
suggests a conflicting situation is present to that outlined in the current literature.

- A cost benefit analysis of Staff time versus the cost of Reader Group books.

### 6.8 Reflections

The chosen methodology was beneficial for this project as it allowed the researcher to examine usage of the DL “Book Chat” model from the differing perspectives of Management, Staff and Reader Group members. However, the chosen techniques resulted in unequal data collection and subsequent over emphasis on Staff views.

Having made the decision to gain a customer perspective of the DL “Book Chat” model via the questionnaire technique and achieving a disappointing response rate, the researcher believes that a qualitative method may have enabled research participants to express opinions and feelings in their own words about the topic that would result in producing more comprehensive data sets. Nonetheless, the Customer questionnaire method did provide an opportunity for all of the DL Reader Group members to participate in the research project.

The data sets forming the analysis from the External Library Authorities were small and can only act as an indication of future opportunities. These results do, however, provide a glimpse of how neighbouring Public Library Authorities support their Reader Groups with reference to the key issues of funding and the on-going development of eBooks.
The supply of Reader Group stock either via “Book Chat” sets or via the general catalogue clearly creates a logistical penalty. If budgetary constraints in Public Libraries become restrained in the future, stock provision will most certainly become a major factor of Reader Group sustainability. Further analysis of the impact of stock reduction on Public Library Reader Groups may be of benefit to DL in the future.
Bibliography


Appendices

Appendix A: Detailed Search Terms

Reading Groups/ Reader Groups/ Book Clubs
Reading Groups/ Reader Groups/ Book Clubs and Public Libraries
Reading Groups/ Reader Groups/ Book Clubs and sustainability
Reading Groups/ Reader Groups/ Book Clubs and public Library funding
Reading Groups/ Reader Groups/ Book Clubs and Stock
Reading Groups/ Reader Groups/ Book Clubs/ Public Libraries and stock
Reading Groups/ Reader Groups/ Book Clubs and reader development
Reader development and Public Libraries
Reading Groups/ Reader groups/ Book Clubs and choice
Reading Groups/ Reader Groups/ Book Clubs and discussion
Reading Groups/ Reader Groups/ Book Clubs and recommendations
Reading Groups/ Reader Groups/ Book Clubs and history
Reading Groups/ Reader Groups/ Book Clubs and Oprah Winfrey
Reading Groups/ Reader Groups/ Book Clubs and Richard and Judy
eBooks and Public Libraries
eBooks and Readers and Public Libraries
eBooks and eReaders and Public Library Reading Groups/ Reader Groups/Book Clubs
Appendix B: Focus Group Questionnaire

A focus group topic guide

Title
An investigation into the sustainability of Derbyshire Libraries “Book Chat” model in the current economic climate

Objectives

1. Analyse the benefits of Public Library Book Clubs/Reader groups within the wider context of reader development based on literature located within library and information science research.

2. To establish how Public Libraries across Derbyshire support Reader Groups with reference to a number of key issues such as co-ordination of book sets, availability of staff time, cost of service provision and storage of reading group materials.

3. To evaluate the effectiveness of the current Derbyshire Libraries Book Chat model from a Customer perspective with focus on group participation, choice of books and satisfaction.

4. To explore how neighbouring Public Library authorities support their Reader Groups with reference to key issues such as funding and the development of eBooks.

5. To indicate best practice and make further recommendations to support reading groups throughout the County.
**Introductions**

Thank you for coming along, this will take about one hour, and anything you say here will be confidential in that none of you will be identified in any report about the meeting. I’d like to ask each of you to identify yourself by just saying your name and saying how long you have been involved with Book Chat.

**Questions**

1. I’d like to start by talking about how Derbyshire Libraries currently organise and co-ordinate their Book Chat stock.

   **Prompts**
   
   Storage
   Cost/funding
   Allocation

2. What factors do you take into account when you choose the books?

   **Prompts**
   
   Reader Development
   Prize winners
   Recommendations

3. What do you see as the main benefits of the current Book Chat model?

   **Prompts**
   
   Reader Development
   Choice of books
   Supporting reading groups

4. What do you see as the main problems of the current Book Chat model?
Prompts
Book Choice
Staff time
Storage
Cost of service provision

Objective 2, 4

5. Can you suggest anything that would improve your involvement with the current Book Chat model?

Prompts
Recommendations

Objective 5

6. How do you see the development in technology, particularly ebooks affecting Derbyshire Reader Groups in the future?

Prompts
Cost
Availability
Choice
Co-ordination

Objective 2, 4

7. Is there anything else you would like to add?
Appendix C: Staff Semi-structured Interview Guide

Introductions

Thank you for coming along, this interview will take approximately half an hour. Anything that you say here will be confidential in that none of you will be identified in any report about the meeting. I’d like to ask you to identify yourself by just saying your name and saying how long you have been involved with Derbyshire Libraries Book Chat and Reader Groups.

Semi-structured Interview Questions

Local staff coordinating Reader Group stock

1. I’d like to start by talking about how you currently organise and coordinate book stock for Reader Groups serviced by this library.

    **Prompts**
    
    Book Chat  
    Derbyshire library catalogue  
    Storage  

2. What factors do you take into account when you choose the books?

    **Prompts**
    
    Reader Development  
    Prize winners  
    Recommendations  
    Book Chat list  
    Customer choice  

3. What do you see as the main benefits of the current Book Chat model?
4. What do you see as the main problems of the current Book Chat model?  

Prompts  
Book Choice  
Staff time  
Storage  

Objective 2, 4

5. Can you suggest anything that would improve your involvement with the current Book Chat model or when ordering reading group stock from the Derbyshire library catalogue?

Prompts  
Recommendations  

Objective 5

6. How do you see the development in technology, particularly eBooks affecting Derbyshire Reader Groups in the future?

Prompts  
Cost  
Availability  
Choice  
Co-ordination  

Objective 2, 4

Thank you for your time.
Appendix D: Staff Questionnaire

We wish you to complete this questionnaire for a dissertation study at The University of Sheffield. We want to find out what you think about Derbyshire Libraries Book Chat Scheme. Any data we collect will be kept confidential.

1. What band is your library in?
   
   Name of library ---------------------------

2. How many Reader Groups do you coordinate from this library?

3. How many groups meet at the library?

4. How many groups access the Book Chat Reader Group sets?

5. Do all of the groups request the full allocation of 8 title sets per year? (please tick)

   Yes

   No

   Sometimes

   Please explain why not?

6. Are the groups flexible with their book choices? (please tick)

   Yes

   No

   Sometimes
7. Approximately how many books do you order from the open catalogue each month for Reader Groups?

8. Do the Reader Groups provide book titles for you to order? (please tick)
   Yes  
   No  

What factors affect your choice of titles?

9. Approximately how much time do you spend each month coordinating Reader Group stock?

10. Are you happy to recommend stock that may be appropriate for Reader Groups? (please tick)
    Yes  
    No  

11. Are you satisfied with the ease of availability of chosen books?
    Yes  
    No  

   Please explain why

12. Can you see a potential for using eBooks at Reader Group sessions?
    Yes  
    No  

13. Do you have any suggestions on how to improve the current Book Chat model?

Thank you for your time
Please return this questionnaire to Michelle Parker @ Newbold Library

Contact details
Michelle Parker Lip10mjp@Sheffield.ac.uk
Pam McKinney Supervisor P.McKinney@Sheffield.ac.uk

0114 2222630
Appendix E: Customer Questionnaire

We wish you to complete this questionnaire for a dissertation study at The University of Sheffield. We want to find out what you think about Derbyshire Libraries Book Chat Scheme. Any data we collect will be kept confidential.

1. Are you aware of the list from which you can choose your Reader Group books namely ‘Derbyshire Libraries Book Chat’? (please tick)

Yes  [ ]  No  [ ]  Please go to Q3

2. Have you ever chosen a book from the Derbyshire Libraries Book Chat list either as a group or individually? (please tick)

Yes  [ ]  No  [ ]

3. Given the choice would you prefer to (please tick)

Choose your own book for your Reader Group  [ ]
Be allocated a book for your Reader Group  [ ]

4. When you choose a book for your Reader Group which of these factors influence your choice and are most important to you? (please circle one)

- Staff recommendations
- Popular Culture eg film, TV
- Group recommendations
- Prize winner books eg Orange prize etc
- Genre
- Book Chat annotated list
- Commercial reading group books eg Richard & Judy, Channel 4 Book Club
- Other (please state)

5. Please circle the answer that reflects your opinion on each of these following statements.

- I like to go to Reader Groups to broaden my experience of reading and challenge myself.
• I like to go to Reader Groups to read and discuss popular literature in an informal relaxed atmosphere.

• I think of the Reader Group as a social event with an opportunity to meet like-minded people.

• My chosen book is always available.

6. Do you own an eReader? (Please tick)
   Amazon Kindle ☐ No ☐
   Sony ☐
   Kobo ☐
   Other ☐

7. Would you like to use an eReader for reader group? (Please tick)
   Yes ☐
   No ☐
   Maybe ☐
8. Which library provides your Reader Group books?

9. Is there anything else you would like to say about Derbyshire Libraries Book Chat Scheme?

Thank you for your time.
Please hand in the questionnaire to a member of library staff.

Contact details
Michelle Parker Lip10mjp@Sheffield.ac.uk
Pam McKinney Supervisor P.McKinney@Sheffield.ac.uk
0114 2222630
## Appendix F: Initial Codes

### Transcript Codes Alphabetical

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity- Job</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Alternative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
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<td>Alternative formats</td>
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<td>Bad influence</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>Benefits to Libraries</td>
</tr>
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<td>Budgets</td>
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<td>Cautious</td>
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<td>Communication</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>Comparison</td>
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<td>Consequence</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Cost/Budget</td>
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<td>Customers central</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Development</td>
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<td>Differences</td>
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<td>Discussion</td>
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<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>Draining</td>
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<td>eBooks tentative</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>Economic environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
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<td>Feelings</td>
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<td>Free</td>
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<tr>
<td>Future</td>
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<td>Good book</td>
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<td>Good staff</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Group Dynamics</td>
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<td>Influential</td>
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<td>Improvement</td>
</tr>
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<td>IT</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>Lack of publisher support</td>
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<td>Library Space</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>Management</td>
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<td>Missing stock</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>Mixed up</td>
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<td>Need help</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Negativity</td>
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<tr>
<td>No Good</td>
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<td>Not liking books</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not procedure</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Not sure</td>
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<td>People traits</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>Personal Choice</td>
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<td>Personal choice does not make good reading group book</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Popularity</td>
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<td>Pressure</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>Process/Method</td>
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<td>Public library policy</td>
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<td>Quality</td>
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<td>Reader development</td>
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<td>Reservation Service</td>
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<td>Staff Knowledge</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>Staff time</td>
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<td>Stock Improvement</td>
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<td>Storage</td>
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<td>Support</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>Sustainability</td>
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<td>The whole point</td>
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<td>Time</td>
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<td>Unaware</td>
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<td>Unsure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Waste</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Works well</td>
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## Appendix G: Emerging Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constraints/Positives</th>
<th>Staff perception</th>
<th>Customer expectation</th>
<th>Visibility</th>
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<td>Staff knowledge</td>
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<td>Consequence</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Visible booking system</td>
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<td>Comparison to other authorities</td>
<td>Decision making</td>
<td>Not liking books</td>
<td>Customer awareness</td>
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<td>Unique</td>
<td>Practicalities</td>
<td>Popular</td>
<td>Promote other services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Too many groups</td>
<td>Reader development</td>
<td>Process</td>
<td>Alternative formats</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff time</td>
<td>Pressure</td>
<td>Good resource</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waste</td>
<td>Not working</td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Variety</td>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>Discussion book</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storage</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Group dynamics</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Promotes library</td>
<td>Pressure</td>
<td>Inconvenient</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>Reassurance</td>
<td>People traits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library Space</td>
<td>Feelings</td>
<td>Customers central</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Library development</td>
<td>Staff training</td>
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<td>Missing stock</td>
<td>Consequence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Benefits to libraries</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Stock improvement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>eBooks</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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</table>
Appendix H: University Research Ethics Application Form

**University Research Ethics Application Form**

for Undergraduate & Postgraduate-Taught Students

This form has been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC)

**Complete this form if you are an undergraduate or a postgraduate-taught student** who plans to undertake a research project which requires ethics approval via the University Ethics Review Procedure.

Your Supervisor decides if ethics approval is required and, if required, which ethics review procedure (e.g. University, NHS, Alternative) applies.

If the University's procedure applies, your Supervisor decides if your proposed project should be classed as 'low risk' or potentially 'high risk'.

*PLEASE NOTE THAT YOUR DEPARTMENT MAY USE A VARIATION OF THIS FORM: PLEASE CHECK WITH THE ETHICS ADMINISTRATOR IN YOUR DEPARTMENT*

This form should be accompanied, where appropriate, by all Information Sheets / Covering Letters / Written Scripts which you propose to use to inform the prospective participants about the proposed research, and/or by a Consent Form where you need to use one.

Further guidance on how to apply is at: [www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/approval-procedure/review-procedure](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/approval-procedure/review-procedure)

Guidance on the possible routes for obtaining ethics approval (i.e. on the University Ethics Review Procedure, the NHS procedure and the Social Care Research Ethics Committee, and the Alternative procedure) is at: [www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/approval-procedure/ethics-approval](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/approval-procedure/ethics-approval)

Once you have completed this research ethics application form in full, and other documents where appropriate, check that your name, the title of your research project and the date is contained in the footer of each page.

**If your Supervisor has classed the project as 'low risk':**

- Email this form, together with other documents where applicable, to your Supervisor; and
- Sign and date Annex 1 of this form and provide a paper copy to your Supervisor.
Important Note for Supervisors:
Following the ethics review the Supervisor must provide the academic department’s Ethics Administrator with a copy of the ‘low risk’ research ethics application that s/he reviewed and a completed Ethics Reviewer’s Comments Form indicating the ethics decision that s/he took in relation to it. The Ethics Reviewer’s Comments Form can be downloaded here: www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/further-guidance/universityprocedure2/reviewersc The Ethics Administrator reserves the right to consult the Chair of the academic department’s Ethics Review Panel (or equivalent) of s/he has concerns that projects classed as low risk should in fact have been classed as potentially high risk.

If your Supervisor has classed the project as potentially ‘high risk’:
• Email this form, together with other documents where applicable, to your department’s Ethics Administrator; and
• Ask your Supervisor to sign and date Annex 2 of this form and provide a paper copy of it to your department’s Ethics Administrator.

Ethics Administrators are listed at:
www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.99105!/file/Ethics-Administrators.pdf

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/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy

A1. Title of research project:
An investigation into the sustainability of Derbyshire Libraries Book Chat model in the current economic climate

A2. Name of Student: Michelle Joye Parker

Department: Information School Email: lip10mjp@sheffield.ac.uk
Tel.: 0114 2222630

Name of Supervisor: Pam McKinney

A3. Proposed Project Duration:
Start date: May 2012 End date: September 2012
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 additional radiation above that required for clinical care *
- involves investigating a medical device *

* 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 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.
A5. Briefly summarise:

i. The project’s aims and objectives:

Derbyshire libraries Book Chat model is the scheme that supports adult Reader Groups throughout the County. Book Chat has been running for over twelve years and has over two hundred groups currently registered accessing the system. The scheme provides various areas of support, however for the purpose of this project the investigation will concentrate on the maintenance, selection and distribution of book collections and Customer satisfaction. The aim of the project is to investigate if the Book Chat model is sustainable in the current economic climate and whether alternative solutions can be implemented to maintain the current service level. The objectives are:

- Analyse the benefits of Public Library book clubs/Reader Groups within the wider context of reader development based on literature located within library and information science research.
- To establish how Public Libraries across Derbyshire support book clubs and Reader Groups with reference to a number of key issues such as co-ordination of book sets, availability of staff time, cost of service revision and storage of Reader Group materials.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the current Derbyshire Libraries Book Chat model from a Customer perspective with focus on group participation, choice of books and satisfaction.
- To explore how neighbouring Public Library Authorities support their reader groups with reference to key issues such as funding and the development of eBooks.
- To indicate best practice and make further recommendations to support Reader Groups throughout the County

ii. The project’s methodology:

The project aims to take a mixed methods approach collecting and analysing data from both quantitative and qualitative strategies. Methods for data collection include:

- A focus group comprised of the Derbyshire Libraries Book Chat team to identify the main problems/issues.
- Interview Assistants in Charge of Book Chat (one member of staff from each of the three bands of library to provide an overview of organisational problems/issues).
• This will then inform the development of a questionnaire for the rest of the Assistants in Charge of Book Chat groups, approximately 25 staff.

• Short questionnaire for Reader Groups 10 questions max approximately 200 groups.

• A questionnaire sent to neighbouring Public Library Authorities evaluating their provision of Reader Group support.

By using multiple methodologies, both quantitative and qualitative data taken from different perspectives, it is believed that a holistic overview of the research problem will be provided.

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

The degree of harm expected during the research process is expected to be of minor inconvenience. For example it is intended that the project’s objectives will be addressed by focus group participation and semi-structured interviews which will require individuals to volunteer time and effort. In addition questionnaires will be sent out to all key organisers of Reader Groups and to the groups themselves which may also cause inconvenience.

Consideration will be given to all foreseeable factors that may influence the potential for harm/distress to participants. The participant information sheet will explain that the project is voluntary and individuals will be asked to sign a consent form. However, it will be explained that participants may withdraw from the project at any time without having to give a reason why.

It is not anticipated that any incidental findings of the research will result in embarrassing or awkward situations for the participants.

A7. **Does your research raise any issues of personal safety for you or other researchers involved in the project?**

The research will be taking place off University premises thus will raise issues of personal safety and that of potential participants.

**If yes, explain how these issues will be managed.**

It is intended that the focus group discussion and interviews will be held on Derbyshire County Council property and during opening times in recognition off any
potential safety issues. All face to face participants will be members of Derbyshire County Council staff reducing the risk further. It is intended that a risk assessment will be made in conjunction with the University supervisor and the Head of Department.

A8. How will the potential participants in the project be:

i. Identified?

All potential participants will be competent adults who work for Derbyshire County Council Libraries and Heritage Department or members of the general public who participate in adult Reader Groups throughout the County. Also a small selection of staff from neighbouring authorities will be approached in order to evaluate their current support of Reader Groups.

ii. Approached?

A small selection of Derbyshire County Council staff that organise and run the Book Chat materials from Head Quarters will be approached by email requesting participation in a focus group.

An email will be sent to approximately four members of staff who organise Reader Groups at individual libraries requesting a one-to-one semi structured interviews.

Information gathered at the two previous stages will then inform questionnaires that will be sent to the rest of staff who organise Reader Groups and the Reader Group participants themselves via the internal mail system.

Contact email addresses have been provided by the Reader Development Librarian at Derbyshire County Council of other neighbouring authority Librarians who organise and/or support Reader Groups. A further questionnaire will then be sent to gather further information.

iii. Recruited?

Participants will be recruited by offering an information sheet explaining the research project.

It is considered that once recruited there will be a sufficient range of participants to provide a large enough sample size of data. Furthermore by using a mixed methods approach it is intended that a rich source of data will be gathered covering the investigation from a variety of angles.

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/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/policy-notes/consent

A9.1. This question is only applicable if you are planning to obtain informed consent:

How do you plan to obtain informed consent? (i.e. the proposed process):

Potential participants of the research project will be given an information sheet to enable them to make an informed choice regarding whether or not to participate in the research project. It will clearly state that participants are free to withdraw at any time and will require their signature. The information will be legible and understandable from a lay person’s perspective. Care will be taken to ensure that the participants understand what the researcher means by terms such as anonymity and confidentiality, in the context of the specific project being undertaken.

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

The researcher will comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and the Common Law duty of confidence when collecting, storing, using, disclosing or destroying identifiable personal information. The researcher will aim to ensure that its processing is defensible as both ‘fair and lawful’. Personal information will be kept secure at all times and disposed of when no longer necessary for the research duration.

The information sheet will state that all information collected about individuals will be kept strictly confidential and state that they will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications.

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)

No

A12. Will the research involve the production of recorded media such as audio and/or video recordings?

NO

A12.1. This question is only applicable if you are planning to produce recorded media:
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?

A question will be added to the information sheet explaining to participants how they will be recorded, and how the recorded media will be used. Participant's permission will be obtained to record their activities on audio media and an explanation will be given stating that the research will only be used for the project in question. It will be explained that no one outside the project will be allowed access of the original recordings and that they will be destroyed afterwards.

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/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/policy-notes

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: An investigation into the sustainability of Derbyshire Libraries Book Chat model in the current economic climate

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
- 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
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: Pam McKinney

Name of student: Michelle Joye Parker

Signature of student: Michelle Joye Parker

Date: 25.3.2012

For Undergraduate & Postgraduate-Taught Students

Supervisor Declaration

(The Supervisor completes Annex 2 if s/he has classed the student’s proposed research project as potentially ‘high risk’)

An investigation into the sustainability of Derbyshire Libraries Book Chat model in the current economic climate

In signing this Supervisor 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

The above-named project will abide by the University’s ‘Ethics Policy for Research Involving Human Participants, Data and Tissue’: www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy

Subject to the above-named project being ethically approved I will undertake to ensure that the student adheres to any ethics conditions that may be set.

The student or the Supervisor will undertake to inform the Ethics Administrator of significant changes to the above-named project that have ethical consequences.

The student or the Supervisor will undertake to inform the Ethics Administrator if prospective participants make a complaint about the above-named project.

I understand that personal data about the student and/or myself on the research ethics application form will be held by those involved in the ethics review process (e.g. the Ethics Administrator and/or reviewers) 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 and/or the student wish to appeal against the decision made, this must be done through the original department.

- Name of Supervisor: Pam Mckinney

- Name of student: Michelle Joye Parker

- Signature of Supervisor: Pam McKinney

- Date: 3/4/2012
Appendix I: Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

Research project title
An investigation into the sustainability of Derbyshire Libraries “Book Chat” model in the current economic climate

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.

What is the project’s purpose?
This project is being undertaken as part of a Masters Degree in Librarianship at the University of Sheffield and will be running from May 2012 to September 2012. The aim of the project is to investigate the sustainability of Derbyshire Libraries Book Chat model in the current climate.

Derbyshire Libraries encourage reading as an important social activity, and support anyone who wishes to meet and share their reading experiences with others. The Book Chat model is the scheme that supports Reader Groups throughout Derbyshire and has been running for over twelve years with over two hundred registered groups.

The process of organising, maintaining and administrating circulating Book Chat collections has now developed into a complex time consuming practice. With this in mind it is felt that the opportunity to the research the effectiveness of Book Chat from a staff and user perspective would provide a realistic view of its sustainability in the future.

Why have I been chosen?
You and other participants have been chosen to take part in the research project because you are a member of Derbyshire County Council libraries and Heritage staff dealing with Book Chat and Reader Groups or a member of a Reader Group run by Derbyshire Libraries.
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.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you are asked to participate in a focus group the session will last for approximately half an hour. Within this focus group the researcher will lead an informal discussion around the issues that are considered key to the research topic. This will range from a general discussion about reading groups to specific questions about the ordering, maintaining and distribution of Book Chat collections.

If you are asked to participate in a semi-structured interview the session will last for approximately half an hour. During the interview the researcher will ask both open and closed questions. The open questions will provide an opportunity for the participant to discuss in some depth issues regarding the administration of stock used for reading groups. The closed questions will enable the researcher to gain information that can be counted or expressed numerically.

If you are asked to fill out a questionnaire you will be asked between five and ten questions relating to your experiences regarding Reader Groups. This will vary depending on the type of questionnaire you receive. For example you may be asked about the administration of stock and support you provide to reading groups, the administration of Book Chat stock or your experiences of reading group books from a group member perspective. The questionnaire will contain both open and closed questions in an attempt to provide an opportunity for the researcher to gather a vast range of information. The questionnaires will also provide an opportunity for the participants to make additional comments.

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 have some practical implication on reader development within Derbyshire Libraries. Additionally it is hoped that the research will help develop the present Book Chat model in providing additional recommendations to aid the current administration and supply of reading group stock throughout the County.
What if something goes wrong?

If you have any complaints about the way this research project has been conducted, you may raise this with the Head of School and supervisor of this project:

Professor Philippa Levy  
Head of School  
Professor of Higher Education  
Information School  
The University of Sheffield  
Regent Court  
211 Portobello Street  
Sheffield  
S1 4DP  
p.levy@sheffield.ac.uk

Pam McKinney  
Information School  
The University of Sheffield  
Regent Court  
211 Portobello Street  
Sheffield  
S1 4DP  
P.McKinney@sheffield.ac.uk

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 able to be identified in any reports or publications.
Will I be recorded and how will the recorded media be used?

The audio recordings of your activities made during this research will be used only for analysis and for illustration in conference presentations and lectures. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the projects will be allowed access to the original recordings.

What will happen to the results of the research project?

The results of this research project will be published at the University of Sheffield in September 2012. You will not be identified in the publication of this dissertation.

Who has ethically reviews the project?

This project has been ethically approved via the Information School department’s ethics review procedure. The University’s Research Ethics committee monitors the application and delivery of the University’s Ethics Review Procedure across the University.

Contact for further information

The participant will be given a copy of the information sheet and, if appropriate, a signed consent form to keep.

I would like to thank all participants for taking part in the project.

Michelle Joye Parker
Information School
The University of Sheffield
Regent Court
211 Portobello Road
Sheffield
S1 4DP
Lip10mjp@sheffield.ac.uk
Appendix J: Participant Consent Form

Participant Consent Form

Title of Research Project: An investigation into the sustainability of Derbyshire Libraries “Book Chat” model in the current economic climate

Name of Researcher: Michelle Joye Parker

Participant Identification Number for this project: Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet/letter (delete as applicable) dated 23rd May 2012 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.

Lip10mjp@sheffield.ac.uk.

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Participant</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Signature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(or legal representative)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of person taking consent</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Signature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(if different from lead researcher)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lead Researcher</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Signature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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.
Appendix K: Figure. 1 Number of Reader Groups that access “Book Chat” sets

Reader Groups

- Chesterfield
- Alfreton
- Ripley
- Belper
- Heanor
- Somercotes
- South Normanton
- Pinxton
- Duffield
- Bolsover
- Shirebrook
- Bingham
- Whitwell
- Dronfield
- Clay Cross
- Eckington
- Newbold
- Killamarsh
- Old Whittington
- Wingerworth
- Glossop
- Chapel
- Whaley Bridge
- Hadfield
- Hayfield
- Buxton
- Matlock
- Ashbourne
- Bakewell
- Wirksworth
- Swadlincote
- Ilkeston
- Long Eaton
- Borrowash
- Sandiacre
- Melbourne

Legend:
- Reading groups coordinated
- Access "Book Chat" sets
Appendix L: Tables

Table 1: Do all reader groups request the full allocation of 8 title sets per year? If not please explain why.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“They prefer to choose their own titles” SQ3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Sets are not always available so I will choose a title from the groups list of chosen titles” SQ4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Some request their own titles and choose not to use the “Book Chat” list” SQ5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“One of the groups doesn’t meet regularly. They decide their next meeting as and when they meet therefore making it difficult to request items from the “Book Chat” list” SQ6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“They make their own choice” SQ7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“On the whole we prefer to pick our own choices and often what we do want from the list is not available” SQ8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“We do not use the “Book Chat” scheme as we are waiting too long to receive any of the titles we order and more often than not they become available sooner on the open catalogue even after waiting six months for the newer titles” SQ9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“One group is school based and meets half-termly so only six meetings a year” SQ11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Group tends to pick titles from earlier years list to meet demand” SQ14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Not the books they want, I guess” SQ15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Their choices are different. There are no books or a few that they want to read. Things that are popular that they do want to read are only available in 18 months’ time” SQ18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“We had some difficulties with supply and number of sets so we order from the” SQ16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library catalogue” SQ19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Group meets every other month and does not get the books back on time” SQ22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“All groups choose their own titles” SQ23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“On occasions titles required not available when the group wants them” SQ27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Issues of availability” SQ29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“One reads titles recommended by members- not many new titles” SQ32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table.2: Are you satisfied with the ease of availability of chosen books?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Respondent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Often the chosen titles are not available and this entails several phone calls and e-mails to check second choices”</td>
<td>SQ1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Some of the more popular titles are hard to supply in multiple copies to a deadline”</td>
<td>SQ5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Often sets are booked up fully for many months ahead”</td>
<td>SQ8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Fairy satisfied but there are always some books that are difficult to get”</td>
<td>SQ11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Often not enough stock on catalogue or unavailable from HQ”</td>
<td>SQ13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The books from HQ if popular get booked up really quickly, so if the group is late with giving you titles you find that the books they want are already fully booked for the year”</td>
<td>SQ16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Not enough copies”</td>
<td>SQ17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Nearly every book that one group suggested I could not get in all three formats which they need so unable to get enough copies”</td>
<td>SQ18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Many recent ‘classics’ have only one or two copies”</td>
<td>SQ19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Groups often want popular titles that are on loan, and are disappointed when not available”</td>
<td>SQ20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The group normally have to wait until a new list is published to get the titles wanted on the previous list”</td>
<td>SQ21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Groups seem to request titles that other groups need/have and there are not enough copies available- have to jiggle dates/choices to provide full numbers- newer titles are very popular”</td>
<td>SQ24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“One group had to wait over four years for Black Diamonds! More often we can’t get enough copies of titles which I know we had, and which worked well in the past”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Spies by Michael Frayn” SQ25

“Do not always receive quantities ordered” SQ27
Table 3: Do you have any suggestions on how to improve the current “Book Chat” model?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestion</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Could the system be computerised and booked by placing holds”</td>
<td>SQ1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Would appreciate more training”</td>
<td>SQ7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“More stock available to reduce waiting times”</td>
<td>SQ9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It would be easier and quicker if there was a bulk hold facility on Symphony”</td>
<td>SQ13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I feel that a lot of the titles are stodgy”</td>
<td>SQ17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Have more books that people want to read- be able to order them online”</td>
<td>SQ18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“We need to ensure groups return the boxes complete with all copies. Fines may be appropriate”</td>
<td>SQ19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Difficult financial constraints mean that titles are restricted. It would be impossible to have a much longer list, plus more groups are joining all the time which adds to the problem”</td>
<td>SQ20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My personal opinion is that the list needs work- a lot of the books are very obscure and do not really appeal”</td>
<td>SQ22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Multiple sets of titles”</td>
<td>SQ25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Making a system online so that library staff can clearly see availability, advise borrowers directly and book a time for them to have a title”</td>
<td>SQ29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“As this is a new group very diverse range of readers and titles not suitable for all. Some of our members would like ‘lighter’ fiction”</td>
<td>SQ26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table.4: Is there anything else you would like to say about Derbyshire Libraries “Book Chat” scheme?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Identifier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Staff always helpful and ready to offer advice on alternative titles and generally make every effort to provide books as requested”</td>
<td>CQ18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It is quite a large list- we tend to discuss a bit, then follow up on recommendations by the book group members anyway- sorry”</td>
<td>CQ141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Although we choose 12 books per year, we do not always get the book we ordered”</td>
<td>CQ59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The brief descriptions of the books from which we make our choices are poor and often don’t reflect the contents accurately”</td>
<td>CQ 155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“When it works it is excellent but too often the books we request do not appear”</td>
<td>CQ268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I would like to know a) how many pages in book, b) age group targeted (once had a book written for early teens)”</td>
<td>CQ329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Sometimes the books have been around for a long while and recent publications aren’t available. This mean I’ve read the book before we read it for Book Group”</td>
<td>CQ299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The ones we have had seem very heavy &amp; quite obscure”</td>
<td>CQ311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I would prefer a good/variety of books”</td>
<td>CQ314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“We would like to have access to more popular books, could the library service buy some popular books in sufficient quantities, we are restricted by the number of a book available”</td>
<td>CQ321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The reviews in “Book Chat” are not always accurate, we have sometimes received teenage books and had other surprises”</td>
<td>CQ324</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
““What is the length of each book?” CQ331

“Would like more questions for each book “ CQ343

“Not aware of the scheme” CQ27

“I wish new book chat lists were printed without all the previous books in it so I only need to print out say 10 pages instead of 40 with many duplicates” CQ49

“Not been advertised or promoted” CQ30

“Some books make us wonder why they are on the list!” CQ86

“Sometimes the timings to return the books are too tight” CQ80

I would like more information e.g. does this deal only with current books. Our group likes to read books from the past as well as the present” CQ147

“Can we have less American titles, in fact more sets of books available” CQ143

“It has given me the opportunity to read a wide variety of books that I wouldn’t have normally chosen, some better than others! It would be good to have some classic books on the list as well as the modern” CQ335

“We are often disappointed in the books as they do not match up with the descriptions of them on the Book Chat list. Also we feel that the list lacks depth being only modern novels with no ‘classics’ CQ172

“Appreciate service but it is rather cumbersome” CQ220

“A good idea for people who enjoy discussing books but have little opportunity at home. Gives a well balance chance to read a variety of authors and genre” CQ228

“It would be nice to have more influence on the order of books from our request list and know next book in advance” CQ139

“Last time I looked at it there were few new books on it & we had, as a group, read all the books that appeared to us” CQ392
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Please include classics and more autobiographies”</td>
<td>CQ381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The description of the books on the book chat list does not always match the content”</td>
<td>CQ370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Frustrating if not enough books for group e.g. 13 copies”</td>
<td>CQ359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“When it works it is excellent but too often the books we request do not appear”</td>
<td>CQ268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Wider distribution/better publicised (Only seen once when asked to make selections for reading group)”</td>
<td>CQ261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“A couple of times a year we have read books off the list which have been disappointing for all, probably little or no discussion, some strange books on the list! The best books are those which are readable, well written and provide discussion eg orange prize winners”.</td>
<td>CQ 92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix M: Reader Group Diversity and Bibliotherapy Reader Groups

Introduction

The initial literature search highlighted information relating to Reader Groups and Public Libraries that due to the constraints of the dissertation were not included in the main body of the research. Reader Group diversity and Bibliotherapy Reader Groups however, may be of some interest within a wider context than the Derbyshire Library “Book Chat” model.

Reader Group Diversity

Public library Reader Group members come in a variety of forms, however, many studies claim that the vast majority of members tend to be white, middle-class, well-educated women (Barstow, 2003; Bell, H; DeNel, 2002, Marshall, 2006). In 2006, a study by Ross et al, established that in a survey of 350 UK Reader Groups, 69% were all-women groups though only 6% of groups were held in Public Libraries. This point would suggest that Public Libraries were not tapping into the potential growth and diversity that Reader Groups could offer. Marshall (2006:81) confirms that “despite the apparent flexibility of the Reader Group model and the clear potential for Reader Groups to be more relevant to the needs of a diverse range of defined groups, they largely are not”. Marshall (2006) also points out that Public Library Staff are enthusiastic and willing to offer and run diverse Reader Groups.

In contrast to the above findings however, a small pool of researchers find evidence of diversity within Public Library Reader Groups citing Gay Men’s Reader Groups, all male groups, bilingual book clubs and Reader Groups for the disabled (Barstow, J. M, 2003; Pruitt, 2010; Rene, 2009).
Much debate has been generated in recent years about the benefits of ‘therapy Reader Groups’ (Bolitho, 2011; Brewster et al, 2012; McLaine, 2011; Walwyn & Rowley, 2011). In this sense, Public Libraries have been at the forefront of redefining their distinctive service, “particularly for those groups in society that might otherwise be disadvantaged” (Walwyn & Rowley, 2011:302). This can be taken to mean that Public Libraries have moved forward in addressing the needs of their communities and providing a much needed service.

**Bibliotherapy Reading Groups**

Bibliotherapy is widely adopted and considered a successful model of self-help for patients particularly as an aid to providing accessible mental health treatment. Studies by Bolitho, 2011; Brewster et al, 2012; McLaine, 2011; Walwyn & Rowley, 2011 indicate that there are two main theories associated with therapeutic Reader Groups and Public Libraries. Brewster et al, 2012 and Turner, 2008 conclude that one of the most successful schemes linking health professionals and Public Libraries and the most common form of bibliotherapy in the UK, is the use of self-help books, namely the “Books on Prescription” model. Key writers in the field, Brewster et al (2012:89) establish that “there is a complex debate about the precise relationship between the evidence base and health care policy”, in this sense caution has to be exercised to ensure that self-help bibliotherapy is used under strict medical conditions. An earlier study undertaken by Brewster (2009) claims that informal bibliotherapy, the use of creative bibliotherapy techniques in an unstructured manner in the form of a Reader Group, allows participants to discuss their feelings about literature and fulfils many psychological needs.
Further studies (Bolitho, 2011; Sturm, 2003; Turner, 2008) reinforce this idea suggesting that there are different types of biblotherapeutic work that can provide health information and support individuals, including therapeutic Reader Groups. The above studies suggest that the primary aim of creative bibliotherapy was not to improve the mental health of individuals; rather, it is a way of sharing good quality literature that has potential to improve wellbeing and social connection.

**Conclusions**

The aforementioned researchers have reported in a similar area to this dissertation project therefore their findings may of interest to any future research that may be undertaken understanding the temperament and character of Reader Group participants.

**References**


