DO PUBLIC LIBRARIES NEED TEENAGE STOCK?

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RACHEL EVANS

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Abstract

Background. Teenage fiction is a growing industry with many adults starting to read it as well. However, this is not being reflected in teenage fiction issue figures in the public library service studied.

Aims. The study aims to investigate whether public libraries should continue to have teenage fiction stock, and how to manage it, by exploring the current understanding and problems faced by staff working in these libraries.

Methods. The research is based on a case study of four public libraries within a large city council public library service. Questionnaires to front line members of staff at these libraries have been carried out as well as interviews of the librarians. To support the research, the issue figures for the four libraries have been collected and analysed.

Results. There are differences in opinion about the age range of teenagers, what teenage fiction is and whether there is a difference between teenage and young adult fiction, presenting a problem in creating consistent and relevant stock. Existing problems with teenage fiction are: being behind trends; not promoting enough; publishing and how that influences stock; teenager’s perceptions of libraries. Alternatives to existing management of stock are: better promotion that is more up to date; distinguishing between teenage and children’s fiction; aiming teenage fiction at an older audience, part of which could be to change the terminology to young adult fiction.

Conclusions. There is a clear need for public libraries to have a teenage fiction section that should be distinct from the children’s section and more associated to the adult’s section. To expand the research a larger number of libraries could be included, further research could look at who is borrowing the teenage books, and interviewing teenagers would provide an understanding of their opinions of teenage fiction in public libraries.

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Contents

Abstract .................................................................................................................................................. 2

1. Introduction ........................................................................................................................................ 6
   1.1. Background ................................................................................................................................. 6
   1.2. Aims and objectives .................................................................................................................... 6
   1.3. Brief methodology ....................................................................................................................... 7
   1.4. Outline .......................................................................................................................................... 8

2. Literature review .................................................................................................................................. 9
   2.1. Teenager view points .................................................................................................................... 9
   2.2. Giving teenagers their own area in the library ............................................................................. 11
   2.3. Reader development .................................................................................................................... 12
   2.4. Classifying books by genre .......................................................................................................... 13
   2.5. Conclusion ................................................................................................................................... 14

3. Methodology ....................................................................................................................................... 16
   3.1. Theoretical approach ................................................................................................................... 16
       3.1.1. Inductive / Deductive Theory ................................................................................................. 16
       3.1.2. Quantitative / Qualitative ..................................................................................................... 17
   3.2. Methodological approach .......................................................................................................... 18
       3.2.1. Grounded Theory ................................................................................................................ 18
       3.2.2. Mixed methods .................................................................................................................... 18
   3.3. Questionnaire .............................................................................................................................. 20
       3.3.1. Design of the questionnaire .................................................................................................. 20
       3.3.2. Piloting the questionnaire .................................................................................................... 21
       3.3.3. Implementing the questionnaire .......................................................................................... 22
   3.4. Interviewing .................................................................................................................................. 23
       3.4.1. Different types of interview .................................................................................................. 23
       3.4.2. Designing questions and probing ......................................................................................... 24
       3.4.3. Conducting the interview .................................................................................................... 24
       3.4.4. Limitations of interviews ..................................................................................................... 25
   3.5. Sampling ........................................................................................................................................ 26
   3.6. Issue figures ................................................................................................................................... 27
   3.7. Data analysis .................................................................................................................................. 27
       3.7.1. Coding ................................................................................................................................... 27
3.7.2. Descriptive statistics

3.8. Ethical implications

4. Discussion of results

4.1. Defining teenage fiction

4.2. Teenager’s use of public libraries

4.2.1. Competition from school libraries

4.2.2. Competition for teenager’s time

4.2.3. Technology

4.2.4. Perceptions of libraries

4.3. Librarian’s reflections on teenage fiction stock in public libraries

4.3.1. Reading development and age

4.3.2. Parental guidance

4.3.3. Signposting

4.4. External influencing factors

4.4.1. Trends

4.4.2. Publishing and suppliers

4.4.3. Library location and layout

4.5. Internal influencing factors

4.5.1. Promotion of material

4.5.2. Staff involvement

4.6. Future development

4.6.1. Teenage books as a genre

4.6.2. Interfiling teenage stock

4.6.3. Making libraries even more genre specific

4.7. Issue figures for teenage fiction

5. Conclusions and recommendations

5.1. Conclusions

5.1.1. Introduction

5.1.2. The need for teenage fiction in public libraries

5.1.3. Management of teenage fiction stock

5.1.4. Promotion and accessibility

5.1.5. Trends

5.1.6. Other reflections

5.2. Recommendations
5.2.1. Alternative ways of stocking and managing teenage fiction .......................... 58
5.2.2. Limitations of the research ........................................................................... 59
5.2.3. Recommendations for further research ...................................................... 60
6. References ............................................................................................................. 61
7. Appendices ........................................................................................................... 66
   Appendix 1 – Ethical approval proposal ............................................................... 66
   Appendix 2 – Letter of ethical approval ............................................................... 74
   Appendix 3 – Interview consent form .................................................................. 75
   Appendix 4 – Questionnaire consent form ........................................................... 78
   Appendix 5 – Questionnaire ................................................................................ 81
   Appendix 6 – Interview guide ............................................................................. 85
   Appendix 7 – Questionnaire results ..................................................................... 86
   Appendix 8 – Issue figures by library, month and year ........................................ 89
   Appendix 9 – Access to dissertation form ............................................................ 90
   Appendix 10 – Address and first employment details ......................................... 92

List of figures

Figure 1 – Defining teenage fiction .......................................................................... 30
Figure 2 – Age range of teenage and adult fiction ................................................. 31
Figure 3 – Teenage / young adult sections ............................................................. 37
Figure 4 – Splitting teenage stock by age ............................................................... 39
Figure 5 – Teenagers choosing books from adult fiction ....................................... 41
Figure 6 – Shelving teenage fiction ....................................................................... 46
Figure 7 – Rebranding teenage fiction to young adult fiction .............................. 48
Figure 8 – Genrefication ....................................................................................... 51
Figure 9 – Teenage fiction issue figures ............................................................... 53
1. Introduction

This dissertation looks into teenage fiction stock in public libraries using a city council library service as a case study. It aims to investigate whether public libraries should continue to have teenage fiction stock, and how to manage it, by exploring the current understanding and problems faced by staff working in these libraries.

1.1. Background

Teenage fiction is a growing industry; it is increasing in popularity with many adults starting to read it as well. Successful adult fiction authors are crossing over into teenage fiction (Coppella, 2010). Popular teenage fiction books are being turned into successful films and there has become a large market for teenage fiction (Koss & Teale, 2009). However, this is not being reflected in teenage fiction issue figures in the public library service studied.

Falling issue figures leads to the question of whether public libraries need teenage fiction. However, the growing popularity of the genre suggests that public libraries should have teenage fiction but need to address how to properly stock and manage it. This has been investigated as outlined in the sections below.

1.2. Aims and objectives

The dissertation aims to investigate whether public libraries need teenage fiction by exploring the following:

- The understanding that staff working in public libraries have about teenage fiction.
- What staff see as the existing problems with teenage fiction.
- What alternatives can be offered.
The specific objectives are to:

- Gain understanding of teenage fiction in public libraries including current issues and opportunities.
- Recommend alternative ways of stocking and managing teenage fiction in order to improve issue figures.

1.3. Brief methodology

The research is based on a case study of four public libraries within a large city council public library service. The libraries studied entered a trial to attempt to find ways of improving teenage fiction issues; one was a control and the other three each changed how they managed teenage fiction. One maintained their existing teenage fiction section but concentrated on keeping an up to date display in a prominent location. Another took half of the teenage fiction and interfiled it with the adult fiction and the other half remained in its own section but was rebranded as young adult fiction. The final library relocated the teenage fiction so that it was next to the adult fiction rather than being in a separate part of the building.

Questionnaires to front line members of staff at these libraries have been carried out as well as interviews of the librarians involved in the case study. These people have been chosen as they have different views and perspectives to offer.

As the research has been done using the theory of mixed methods, the information collected via the questionnaires and interviews is both quantitative and qualitative. The qualitative data has been analysed using thematic coding; different themes have been identified that enabled greater analysis and classification of sub groups. The quantitative data has been analysed using descriptive statistics.

To support the research, the issue figures for the four libraries have been collected and analysed. Issue figures from previous years have also been collected to identify any
patterns that may affect the result and to give an overview of how the libraries have performed.

1.4. Outline

The dissertation has been split into a further four sections, with references and appendices at the end. The four sections are as follows:

A literature review was carried out to understand current thinking in the area of teenage fiction. Research into teenager’s views on libraries and the idea of having a separate fiction section for teenagers is presented, as well as the importance of reader development. Finally, there is a review of research into classification and genrefication.

The methodology section presents the theoretical influences behind the research and why mixed methods has been chosen. It explains how the research has been conducted, including any limitations and ethical implications.

There is then a discussion of the findings covering the issue of defining teenage fiction, teenager’s use of public libraries, and librarian’s views of the problems and issues with teenage fiction. Both internal and external influencing factors are also discussed, as well as potential developments that were identified by the participants. Finally, the issue figures are presented to show the results of the trial.

The last section is a presentation of conclusions and recommendations based on the research undertaken. Ideas for further research have been suggested based on the known limitations of this study.
2. Literature review

The following literature review considers four key aspects of teenage fiction in public libraries; teenager’s viewpoints, separating teenage fiction from adult and children’s fiction, the importance of reader development and looking at classification of all fiction.

Research into teenager’s views on libraries suggests that they do not think that libraries are suitable for them. This could be because they associate them with their childhood and therefore want to distance themselves from them as they mature, or that they are not specifically catered for.

The idea of having a separate fiction section for teenagers is presented, as well as the view that libraries should do more to offer the service teenagers require from a technological point of view and offer the type of bespoke service they are used to from other services.

Reader development is extremely important for teenagers so that they can develop and learn as individuals. As such, research is presented that argues that fiction is important for reader development as well as non-fiction. It is also presented that reading fiction for pleasure is often overlooked, or is too easily subject to corporate and marketing influence.

Finally, there is a review of research into classification, presenting the pros and cons of genrefication, which is an alternative to the typical layout of having separate adult, children’s and teenage fiction sections.

2.1. Teenager view points

Agosto’s (2007) survey of why teenagers use libraries concluded that the main reason teenagers use public libraries was for information seeking; mainly researching for school projects. Reading for pleasure was second and the public library as a place for socialising
was not considered very often. The notion that teenagers associate public libraries with school is a hard perception to overcome.

In public libraries there has been little attention paid to teenagers and they are often left out of national schemes and overlooked for library development programmes (Tveit, 2012). A difficulty when considering teenagers is that they are a unique demographic group moving from childhood into adulthood and often need specific services designed for them. However they are often added on to an already existing children’s service (Blair, 2010). This lack of knowledge and awareness can make teenagers feel unwelcome in public libraries.

A survey by Tvlit (2012) studied teenager’s reading habits and library use; most said they found public libraries unwelcoming. Cook et al (2005) discovered that the image of public libraries declines with age, with libraries offering nothing relevant to them and being treated like children by unfriendly staff. Corradini’s (2006) study asked teenagers to analyse their public library and they found that the library is an important place for both pleasure and information and that they may use it in the future when they were adults. The study found that the library is closely connected to the idea of school and that social peer pressure plays a role in not going to the library. Another important aspect was that teenagers find library systems confusing but are often too embarrassed to ask for assistance or feel that they will be judged by the library staff on what they have chosen to read.

Teenagers surveyed by Rothbaver (2009) in rural Canada perceived public libraries in three ways; as places to use computers, as negative spaces considering what they do not offer, and as places from their childhood. This idea of the library as childlike was a persistent theme where teenagers either associated the library with memories of when they were a child and as such is a suitable place to go when you were younger, or as place that only offers childish reading and not what teenagers want now. By becoming more mature, teenagers often want to distance themselves from things that remind them of their
childhood and so it could be a natural progression for teenagers to distance themselves from libraries (Nowak, 2012).

Agosto et al (2005) investigated the library use of urban teenagers and found that the majority felt that libraries were uninviting places with unfriendly staff and they believed the library did not supply culturally relevant material for them. The teenagers felt that the library served children and adults with little for them.

Howard’s (2011) survey of what teenagers think about their public library found that most libraries do not offer suitable programmes for teenagers, that there is little or no marketing directed at them and that teenage collections were often too outdated. The survey also found that teenagers would rather have books organised by genre, making it easier to find and more like websites that they mostly use for finding their reading material.

Teenagers do not want to use library catalogue systems; they would rather go and search the shelves themselves or ask a friend to help (Walter, 2003). This could be because teenagers feel that there is nothing specific for them (Howard, 2011). An area that some researchers are investigating is to have an interactive catalogue for teenagers where they could contribute to the catalogue record allowing them to tag and rate the book (Hall et al, 2010). A common complaint was that the teenage section was often near the children’s area and that the teenagers surveyed preferred the adult section as it is quieter and more grown up.

2.2. Giving teenagers their own area in the library

It has been argued that there is a generation gap in libraries and that young adults between the ages of 14 to 20 disappear from libraries (Snowball, 2008). This could be because the desire to read for pleasure is reduced as it can be seen as an old-fashioned pastime or it could be argued that public libraries make no effort to encourage teenagers into the library. Young people in the media are often perceived as troubled and dangerous
These negative views could affect the importance placed on dedicating funds and space to improving and maintaining teenage space and collections.

Teenagers can be a difficult group to serve effectively in libraries because they have a unique relationship with technology. They are the generation that is most proficient with the internet and are used to an anytime anyplace service. This expectation on easy service may mean that libraries are not places that teenagers would think of to go for instant access to information and books (Nowak, 2012). There is also the expectation of a customised service with a wide range to choose from. A personalised service may not be possible in public libraries because they have to offer a wide range of services suitable for the majority of customers (Swleny, 2005).

2.3. Reader development

There has already been a large amount of research carried out about information and information seeking, however the importance of reading for pleasure has largely been overlooked (Howard, 2011). Reading for pleasure is very important for development in teenagers; it allows them to experience a multitude of different life situations in safe environments.

Howard’s (2011) study of teenage reading determined that teenagers are aware of the link between reading for pleasure and success at school. Through reading for pleasure teenagers are increasing their literacy skills and can develop social consciousness by engaging and experiencing other people’s lives through reading. The study demonstrates that the act of being a critical reader is more important than the quality of the text being read, leading Howard to argue that books for teenagers should not be stigmatised with high/low quality.

Research carried out on the benefits of public library services have found that fiction can aid in study through giving readers insights and information (Ooi & Liew, 2011). Fiction is not only chosen for entertainment but for a variety of different reasons that include
personal development and emotional support. Readers may choose books based on the situations they themselves are facing which can help them understand and deal with highly sensitive emotional issues.

There are still disagreements within the library community about the importance of reading fiction books for pleasure (Ross, 2009). There has been a large development in reader based services offering readers advice and help in finding the right book. Despite this, some such as Dilevko and Magowan (2007) argue against these services. They believe that readers are unable to make sound judgments on their own through either their own weakness or through outside forces. In their view the library and the librarian are there to be an educational force and to not cave into popular cultural demands. Ross (2009) analyses the importance of different reader models and he argues that these are important as they are used by libraries to develop their reader collections. These different models handle fiction and its readers in different ways, for example the “reader as a dupe” suggests that the reader’s choice is an illusion and that the choice of books is a corporate decision. While the “reader as a poacher” gives all the choice to the reader who takes and disseminates only what is important to them.

2.4. Classifying books by genre

There have been different studies done to look at how fiction should be displayed in public libraries. One area that has been successful has been genrefication (Mayer, 2005). Genrefication is where books are categorised and shelved by genre, rather than grouping all fiction together by author. Many readers choose their books through browsing, which Yu and O’Brien (2005) define as a method of book selection. If public libraries do not support this method of serendipitously browsing then borrower satisfaction will decrease (Mayer, 2005). Through using genrefication readers are able to find authors that they have enjoyed reading and to browse similar genres as the books would be shelved together in a collection. As such borrowers are able to easily find books they want and leave the library feeling satisfied.
There are arguments against genrefication. There can be the problem that some books easily fit into certain genres while others fit into more than one. Some authors write books for more than one genre, which could lead to borrowers becoming confused about where they will find their favourite author (Maker, 2008). It can also be subjective as to where a librarian decides what type of genre a book is. The book shop model classifies its books for marketing reasons, for example they are able to separate popular fiction and literary fiction. Basing library classification on the book shop model can be problematic as it can result in having too many genres, which can lead to books being miscategorised and shelved in the wrong place. This could frustrate borrowers who cannot find a book they want to read (Maker, 2008).

2.5. Conclusion

The different arguments discussed above outline the different views regarding teenagers and teenage fiction in public libraries. It is important for teenage development that they engaged with fiction, however the literature presented suggests public libraries could do more to support and encourage this need.

Public libraries need to improve how they are perceived by teenagers in order to encourage them to use the services available. Research suggests that this could be done in part by removing any connection to the children’s section as teenagers prefer to be associated to adults. Additionally, the relationship and perception between teenage customers and staff needs to be improved.

Teenagers also have specific needs, especially with regards to technology and cataloguing. Using digital technology, aligning to flexible and “24 hour” ways of getting information would encourage teenage use, although would be a significant investment.

As well as encouraging teenagers to use libraries and enhancing the experience for them, libraries should not lose sight of the importance of reader development. In particular, the contribution to development that fiction of any type can have.
A final consideration for libraries is the idea of genrefication, which is what teenagers are used to from retailers, but brings with it potential issues such as limiting browsing and shelving complications.
3. Methodology

3.1. Theoretical approach

3.1.1. Inductive / Deductive Theory

The researcher must consider the relationship between research and theory, as Bryman (2001: 8) states:

“Theory is something that guides and influences the collection and analysis of data. In other words, research is done in order to answer questions posed by theoretical considerations. But an alternative position is to view theory as something that occurs after the collection and analysis of some or all of the data associated with a project.”

A deductive theory is a linear approach, where one step follows the next. The researcher deduces a hypothesis based on what is already known. The next step is to test the hypothesis then analyse the findings to ascertain whether the hypothesis can be confirmed or rejected.

Theory $\Rightarrow$ Hypothesis $\Rightarrow$ Data Collection $\Rightarrow$ Findings $\Rightarrow$ Hypothesis confirmed / rejected $\Rightarrow$ Revision of theory (Bryman 2001: 9)

An inductive approach is where theory is the outcome based on observations and findings.

Observations / Findings $\Rightarrow$ Theory (Bryman 2001: 10)

With inductive theory the research may entail multiple sets of data collection to try and establish whether a theory can be applied under different conditions. Inductive theory can often involve a backwards and forwards process between the findings and theory.

Observations / Findings $\Leftrightarrow$ Theory
3.1.2. Quantitative / Qualitative

Quantitative research usually has a deductive approach. Quantitative research is based on empirical data where the aim is to measure and analyse relationships between variables (Sale et al, 2002). Main methods of data collection include highly structured protocols, questionnaires with predetermined answers and randomisation. With quantitative research the sample sizes used are usually larger than qualitative research; this enables statistical methods to be used to ensure the samples are representative of those being studied.

Qualitative research is usually inductive. Sale et al (2002 : 45) bases qualitative research on “interpretivism and constructivism.”

“Through qualitative research the investigator and the object of the study are interactively linked so the findings are mutually created within the context of the situation which shapes the enquiry. The emphasis of qualitative research is on process ad meaning.”

With qualitative research the techniques used for data collection include observations, focus groups and in-depth interviews. Qualitative sample sizes are usually small. They are usually purposefully chosen to provide in depth knowledge of the area being studied and are not usually representative of a larger group (Sale et al, 2002).

For this study it was decided to take a mainly inductive approach to the research as this would produce a better understanding of the topic and would give a richer set of data. This is because information collected from interviews and questionnaires would be learnt from, and therefore enhance the subsequent interviews.
3.2. Methodological approach

3.2.1. Grounded Theory

Initially, grounded theory was considered. Strauss and Corbin (1994: 273) discuss grounded theory as:

“General methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analysed. Theory evolves during actual research and it does this through continuous interplay between analysis and data collection.”

Grounded theory does not necessarily follow a more traditional research approach of identifying and naming research problems, collecting data, analysing the results and reporting the conclusion. The stages of data collection, data analysis and the forming of theories can all happen at the same time (Backman, Kyngas, 1999).

The difficulty with using grounded theory, and why alternative research methodologies were considered, is that one of the most important aspects of grounded theory is that the researcher must remain detached and ideally should not have prior knowledge of the subject being researched (Backman, Kyngas, 1994).

Having worked in public libraries for some time and having conducted a significant literature review on the subject of teenage fiction, it was felt that remaining detached would not be possible as too much prior knowledge had already been established. As such, ground theory was rejected as a suitable method.

3.2.2. Mixed methods

Through studying qualitative and quantitative methods of gathering data it was found that there was merit to both. An approach that would allow the combination of both methods was chosen enabling the richest data possible to be gathered. As such a mixed methods approach was taken.
Johnson and Onwvegbuzie (2004: 14) state:

“Both quantitative and qualitative research are important and useful. The goal of mixed methods research is not to replace either of these approaches but rather to draw from the strengths and minimise the weaknesses of both in research studies.”

It was felt that through using a mixed methods approach to the research it would allow the most appropriate collection method to be used. Mixed methods allowed flexibility to select the correct method based on a needs approach, rather than restricting the method to a particular research philosophy. For this study it was important to combine quantitative information such as issue figures and multiple choice questionnaire responses with qualitative information such as views and opinions of librarians.

A further argument for the use of mixed methods is that the combination of multiple methods can be used to confirm or corroborate each other through triangulation (Rossman and Wilson, 1985 and Greene et al, 1985). Mixed methods offers complementary results in that the researcher can elaborate or clarify results from one method with results from the other.

For this study, having a combination of methods of data collection allowed for a more in depth discussion of findings to take place. Results from interviews could be combined with results from questionnaires and issue figures, which would allow for either corroboration or contradiction of the result. Whether the results complemented each other or not, richer conclusions could still be drawn due to multiple sources being used.

Additionally, the limitations and biases found in each of quantitative and qualitative methods are offset by each other (Green et al, 1989). For this study, the limitation of the quantitative data collected was that the information is not as rich but could be collected quickly and easily from more people. However, the limitation of the qualitative data
collected was that it was time consuming and only from a small group, although the information was very rich and in depth.

There are arguments against mixed methods as a suitable method, such as the researchers belonging to different cultures or that qualitative and quantitative researchers hold different epistemological assumptions (Brannen, 2005). However, it was felt that mixed methods was a suitable method as at the core both have the same goal of using information and theory to understand the area being researched.

3.3. Questionnaire

In order to achieve research quality, a questionnaire needs to be valid, reliable and unbiased. Validity means that they measure what they are intended to measure. Reliability is important so that the questionnaires are not subjected to random error. Through being unbiased, the true mean value would be the same for a sample as it would be for the population (Thomas, 1996).

Thomas (1996: 115) defines questionnaires as:

“... a procedure in which information is collected systematically about a set of cases. The cases are selected from a defined population and the aim is to construct a dataset from which estimates can be made and conclusions reached about this population.”

3.3.1. Design of the questionnaire

It is important that the questionnaire is clear and simple to follow. If it is not then it may lead to low levels of response or lack of quality data. If the design of the questionnaire is properly executed then any variations in response of answers would be due to “real” variations and not due to the execution of the questionnaire (Bryman, 2001).
Questionnaires can be comprised of open or closed questions. With closed questions the respondents answer with predetermined answers. This usually means that the questionnaire is shorter with an easier design. Open questions allow the respondent to answer with their own terms (Bryman, 2001).

It was decided to compose a questionnaire of mainly closed questions as it was felt the advantage of closed questions, such as reducing the chance of respondent fatigue and increasing the chance that all the questions are answered, outweighed the advantages that a questionnaire of open questions offered. Whilst open questions offer the participant the opportunity to answers questions in their own words it was felt that the disadvantages of open questions, such as respondents being put off answering as they have to write a large amount of information, was greater than the richer data that might be collected.

It was acknowledged that having more closed questions could lead to less rich data than if more open questions had been chosen but it was felt that it would be more useful to receive a larger amount of replies to generate a broader understanding of views than to receive a small amount of what could be richer data.

3.3.2. Piloting the questionnaire

Thomas (1996 : 122) states:

“A pilot has two main functions. The first is development of instruments and procedures where the pilot is a step on the way to the final design. The second function is rehearsal of instruments and procedures, where the aim is to fine tune a design.”

As the questionnaires were sent out to the respondents to answer independently it was very important that the questionnaires were piloted. A first draft of the questionnaire was sent to a small number of colleagues who had a good understanding of the subject being researched, but they were not included in the research sample.
They were able to give feedback on how easy the questions were to understand and answer. The comments were then used to improve the questionnaire, which would lead to a higher return rate.

The questionnaires were designed for the respondents to give their views and opinions on teenage and young adult fiction. The questions were divided into defining an understanding of the terms teenage fiction and young adult fiction, defining an age range, where a suitable place for teenage or young adult fiction would be best situated in a library and asking whether it was important to have a teenage / young adult section at all. There was also a final section of open questions that related to the trial that each library was taking part in.

The full and final questionnaires can be found in appendix 5.

3.3.3. Implementing the questionnaire

Thirteen questionnaires were sent to the libraries taking in part in the trial and the control library. The questionnaires were word processed; initially using an online questionnaire such as surveymonkey was considered but decided against this as the questionnaires had to be emailed to the library’s inboxes rather than personal inboxes. As online questionnaires only allow one response per email address, this was therefore not feasible. If there had been access to personal emails then using them with an online questionnaire would have been more suitable. It was felt that perhaps not everybody at the libraries had seen the group email, or found it difficult to download the questionnaire, answer the questions and attach on an email to send back.

The researcher received eight questionnaire replies back, which were very rich in qualitative data. As such some of these responses were considered when analysing the transcripts from the interviews.
3.4. Interviewing

Patton (1980: 196) states “the purpose of interviewing is to find out what is in and on someone else’s mind. We interview to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe.” In qualitative interviews the researcher is interested to discover what the participant’s feelings or points of view are about the area being studied (Bryman, 2001).

3.4.1. Different types of interview

There are different types of research interviews; structured, semi-structured and unstructured.

A structured interview is where each interviewee is given exactly the same questions with the intention that they are delivered in exactly the same way. This is so that each interviewee is responding to the same stimulus. The positive of this is that it should reduce interviewer error to a minimum (Frey, Dishi, 1995).

A semi-structured interview is where the researcher has a set of questions or a topic area that they wish to question the participant on. This semi-structured interview guide means that in each interview similar questions and ways of wording will be asked but it allows more flexibility for the interviewer to ask additional in depth questions and to follow up themes the interviewee offers.

An unstructured interview is where the interviewers may only use prompts or ask one question and the interviewee is able to respond freely. The unstructured interview can be like a conversation between the interviewer and interviewee.

It was decided to use a semi-structured interview as that would produce the best result. By using an interview guide there would be consistency through each interview to enable a
cross comparison of the results, yet would not be too constricting, enabling the researcher to follow up on interesting points raised and question in further detail.

3.4.2. Designing questions and probing

To enable the flow of the interview and to prevent the interviewee becoming fatigued or feeling like they are repeating themselves the questions were designed to be grouped together (Frey, 1995 and Hughes, 1996). The interview questions were split into four areas; definition, explanation, specific to the trial, and recommendations.

The first set of questions was based on allowing the interviewees to bring their own thoughts and experiences in to define the terminology and age range for teenage and young adult fiction. Building on the interviewee’s definition the next questions were designed to allow the interviewees to explain and to offer their own experiences to why they thought teenage fiction was an important area and why they thought libraries are having problems with it. The next set of questions were concentrated on the trial that had been taking place in their specific library, asking for their views and thoughts on how successful it had been and if it had been worthwhile. Finally, the recommendation section allowed the interviewees to bring their own experiences and thoughts to a conclusion and offer their own recommendations to the research topic.

3.4.3. Conducting the interview

Four different ways of conducting the interviews were considered; face to face, by telephone, through instant messenger and by email. Each method does have its advantages and disadvantages. Through using either the telephone, instant message or email the interview could take place at any time and would not be reliant on both participants being in the same place. However, instant messenger and email were ruled out as the disadvantages to each method, such as the time it takes to type out replies on instant messenger and the interviewee having to put aside time to read and compose responses, were greater than the convenience of not having to arrange a place to meet for the interview (Opdenakker, 2006).
Both face to face and on the telephone would enable follow up questions and probing on interesting points that the interviewee made so both methods were preferable to email and instant messenger. However, face to face was chosen as it offers more in the way of social cues. This was rich data that would be missed if the interviews were done by telephone.

Six interviews were conducted; the shortest interview was 20 minutes long whilst the longest was 50 minutes. Each interview was audio recorded and transcribed to allow analysis of the resulting text.

The interview guide used can be found in appendix 6.

3.4.4. Limitations of interviews

There are limitations in conducting research interviews. The interviews often depend on the participation of a small group of people, and the interviews themselves are usually hard to replicate. The data can often be misinterpreted and can be subjective.

People’s beliefs and views are usually shifting and can be contradictory. As humans we want to appear consistent with our views and often want to present what we think would be the most socially acceptable and is not necessarily what we actually believe (Van de Mortel, 2008).

As Myrdal (1969 : 30) states:

“A persons “private” or “personal” opinion and his “public” or “political” opinion on the same question...do not normally agree: in fact they seldom agree.”
This was true in one of the interviews where an interviewee was worried that their views and opinions might not fit in with what their work culture deemed was acceptable or that an opinion might be formed of them based on their responses. The interviewee had to be reassured that all responses were anonymous and that responses would only be used for the research. Even then, it is possible that their responses were influenced by their fears.

The role of the interviewer is to gather information that is as truthful and accurate as possible. They should not bias the interviewee and should remain objective (Frey, 1995). This was important as some of the interviewees were close colleagues. It was important to remain objective to what the interviewees were saying and to not cross into the role of two colleagues discussing work issues. As some of the other interviewees were superiors within the workplace, it was key to keep the balance of power equal throughout the interview and to not be intimidated by interviewing a superior.

3.5. Sampling

Sampling is an important aspect of the research process. As Lynn (1996 : 129) states:

“Any method of selective sampling for scientific study should be objective and should result in a representative sample. Objectivity is usually interpreted as meaning that the selection method should not permit any subjective influence and should be unbiased.”

The target population that was chosen was librarians and front line staff that work in public libraries. This is a large population so the sampling was to look at staff who worked in four specific libraries. The libraries were chosen as they were taking part in a teenage fiction trial and therefore the front line staff would have rich information to offer. As it was not possible to interview everyone, it was decided to interview the librarians and invite the front line staff to take part in the questionnaire. This further supported the use of mixed methods.
As the research population was reduced through sampling it must be considered that any inferences made through the research may not be applied to all the target population and may only be applicable to those who participate in the research (Lynn, 1996).

3.6. Issue figures

Issue figure data was collected from the four libraries that were part of the trial. This was analysed to see if there had been any increase in the individual libraries from previous years. The data was also used to see if the different methods that the libraries were using could be compared to one another and see if any recommendations could be made.

3.7. Data analysis

3.7.1. Coding

The interview transcripts were analysed using a thematic approach whereby key themes from the data are identified and all data sorted into those themes. Relationships between themes are then identified and linked together, so that multiple themes are grouped into higher level categories. Two important points of thematic analysis are that it is objective and systematic. By analysing and coding the research into categories it helps the research to become more transparent. This should prevent any researcher bias from influencing the conclusions drawn and also allow others to draw the same conclusions (Bryman, 2001).

From applying a thematic approach to the analysis of the transcripts, twenty themes were identified. Following further investigation of these themes they were grouped into four categories: teenager’s use of public libraries; librarian’s reflections on teenage fiction stock; influencing factors (both internal and external); future developments.

3.7.2. Descriptive statistics

The results of returned questionnaires were analysed using descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics were also used to enable trends in teenage stock issues to be
highlighted. This was how each individual library compared to itself before and after the trial. It was also how each library performed against each other to compare the merits of the different trials, and how they performed compared to the control.

Summaries of the quantitative data are presented graphically in the discussion of findings, but full results can be found in appendices 7 and 8.

3.8. Ethical implications

Full ethical implications of the research were considered, documented and submitted to the University of Sheffield Information School Ethics Board. The research commenced once a letter of approval had been received. The request form and letter of consent can be found in appendices 1 and 2.

All participants in the questionnaire and interviews were able to stop participating at any time. All were made aware of the nature of the research and had the chance to ask questions before participating. This was done by emailing information and consent forms out before questionnaires were sent round and before the interviews took place. Copies of the consent forms can be found in appendices 3 and 4.

All participants were informed that their responses could be included in the report and if included would be given a code, such as “Participant 1” or “Library 2,” to anonymise the response.

All data, both written and recorded, was stored securely and was only seen and heard by the researcher. Once the research project has been completed all data will be deleted.
4. Discussion of results

4.1. Defining teenage fiction

To discuss the question of whether public libraries need teenage stock it was important to define what teenage stock meant to the participants. One of the main themes was that there are different interpretations of the term teenage fiction. Some made the distinction that teenage books have teenage protagonists whilst for others teenage fiction had connotations with school reading material.

“I would call it fiction that maybe involves teenagers as the main protagonists in that fiction, fiction that covers subjects that might be of particular interest to a teenage audience ie first love kind of like relationship difficulties, young people who are going through really bad or challenging experiences.” Participant 4

“I always picture it as books that are aimed at the older end of children, younger end of teen sort of and its more sort of schooly type fiction erm, some popular stuff but more sort of … reading scheme type stuff.” Participant 2

There was also the view that teenage fiction is a step between children and adult fiction.

“It takes similar subject matter that adult books have and making them more suitable for teens, perhaps having the protagonist as a teen so that makes it easier for the teens / young adults to relate to.” Participant 3

The fact that there are several ways that teenage fiction as a term can be interpreted presents a difficulty for the library service when trying to decide on what a teenage collection should be. These different views on teenage fiction could cause different libraries to have different teenage collections, which could cause problems in building a collection that has consistency and relevance for the audience.
Figure 1 shows none of the questionnaire respondents felt that teenage fiction was specifically for teenagers. Half felt that teenage fiction related to anything that was not suitable for children, whereas the majority of the rest felt that teenage fiction was for anybody.

![Graph showing the understanding of teenage fiction](image)

**Figure 1 – Defining teenage fiction**

In the process of trying to define “teenage” as a term it was also apparent that most of the participants felt that there was a distinction to be made between “teenage” and “young adult”. The term “teenage” was typically seen to be a younger age range; more of an older child into a young teen such as 10 up to 14. Conversely, most participants felt that “young adult” related to an older age range encompassing more of the older end of teenage years into early 20s.

“Yes it [young adult] would be older I would think. It starts at 16. Not 13, it’s too young. They may think they are [young adults] but they’re too young.” Participant 1

Figure 2 shows the different age range that respondents associated to teenage and young adult fiction. There was a divided opinion (38% each) about whether teenage fiction was for 13 to 19 year olds or whether the suitable age range finished earlier at 16 year olds. However, the majority of respondents agreed that young adult fiction was suitable for 18
to 22 years olds. This indicates that the respondents think that young adult starts at the end of the teenage years. This further supports the idea that there is a distinction between teenage and young adult fiction.

Some participants felt that teenage fiction should be branded as young adult fiction to avoid any negative connotations that the word “teenage” might have. However, one participant felt that both terms were interchangeable and either term could be seen as being patronising to a teenage audience.

“If you were looking at rebranding it, anything drawing attention to the fact that teenagers are young they are not going to like that anyway. I don’t think teenagers like to be told they’re teenagers, … so I probably think in my mind the two are interchangeable so there isn’t a distinction between the two. But I can see from a teenager’s point of view I don’t think young adult would be any better than teenage.” Participant 5

A final viewpoint that came from a questionnaire response was whether there would be any merit in not using the term teenage or young adult at all.
“Given the broad range of the type of book in this area a more expansive name is needed in order to avoid this broad genre becoming too exclusive to a limited age group.”

Questionnaire participant 1

4.2. Teenager’s use of public libraries

Throughout the interviews and questionnaire responses the idea emerged that there is a lack of teenagers using public libraries. This is an important issue because if public libraries stock books that are aimed at a teenage audience but that audience are not making use of the service, there could be problems in justifying having that stock.

“If as a service every penny matters we need these books to go out on loan and not just sit on our shelves as the service is then just wasting money” Questionnaire participant 5

There were several themes about why teenagers are not using public libraries, which covered competition, technology and perception.

4.2.1. Competition from school libraries

One of the main themes that participants discussed was competition, both for teenager’s time and for where they are finding their reading material.

The quality and availability of high school libraries was considered an important factor for why teenagers may not be coming into public libraries.

“It might be that they’re getting books from school, even for leisure they’ve got school libraries ... where they can borrow items as well so again there’s more competition and different methods of access.” Participant 2
School libraries can also offer teenagers many different activities such as book groups and writing groups that most public libraries do not have the time for. The conveniences of school libraries mean that teenagers have easy access to libraries where they can visit at lunch time or break time. The library will be designed for their use with a large range of books, whereas public libraries may not have the same amount of space to dedicate to a collection aimed at teenagers. The school libraries may be run by very knowledgeable librarians whose main focus is on teenage books. In public libraries there may not be that person in the building dedicated to teenagers.

For some participants this did question the need for public libraries to have a teenage collection if most schools have a library dedicated to teenagers. The concern was what public libraries can offer to them that school libraries cannot. If they cannot provide anything of value to this audience would the service be better to spend the money elsewhere and make the assumption that teenagers can get their reading material from a school library.

There was also a concern that public libraries are not always physically accessible for teenagers if they are not near where they live or go to school, or if they are not open at relevant times.

“Quite often we are in the wrong place for teens to get to; we’re open at the wrong times for teenagers to get to us. I think we have to be realistic about that especially if you are working against a really good, well stocked, well run library within a school with a school librarian that’s very on the ball with what teens are after.” Participant 4

4.2.2. Competition for teenager’s time

Reading as a leisure activity was considered by the participants to be low down on teenager’s use of time. There are so many different activities for teenagers to be
participating in that most participants felt that reading was not very important in comparison. There was also the opinion that teenagers still feel that reading is not a “cool” way to spend their time; that it is still considered to be a “geeky” or school related activity.

“There’s so much more competition for things for leisure activities. I think that ... to them reading is related to school and study so it’s work rather than leisure.” Participant 2

One response from a questionnaire felt that there was just too much of a demand placed on teenager’s time with school exams, GCSE’s, A Levels and getting ready for university, that even those who did like to read and who would come to a library do not have the time to spend reading for pleasure.

4.2.3. Technology

The use of technology could be affecting the number of teenagers that are visiting public libraries. As one participant discussed, this generation of teenagers are a lot more confident and comfortable with technology. It may be that teenagers do not necessarily feel that they have to physically enter a library building to satisfy their need for reading material.

“I think it’s because teens are ... more technology aware so they’re probably more likely to have e-readers or smart phones that they can read things on. They’re less frightened about using that kind of technology so they don’t need a paper copy.” Participant 2

Teenagers may feel more comfortable entering a virtual library than a physical one and if public libraries are going to best meet the needs of a teenager audience then perhaps in the future public libraries may need to look at having a virtual stock of books aimed at teenagers, rather than a physical stock of books in a library building.
4.2.4. Perceptions of libraries

A theme that was discussed often was that teenager’s negative perceptions of public libraries, that they are old and unwelcoming, is a major barrier for getting teenagers into public libraries.

“Teen readers are very rare in public libraries. It would be great to find a way to attract them in but we aren’t cool.” Questionnaire participant 2

It was felt that there was a need to work on the relationship between public libraries and teenage users. To encourage teenagers to use public libraries they would need to try and move away from this perception that they are not welcome in libraries and that they are going to be classed as trouble makers and made to feel like they do not belong in the library.

“As a library service we’ve got places to go with our relationship with teens and that realisation that for whatever reason they are in the library they are welcome.” Participant 4

Peer pressure was also felt to play a large part in teenager’s perception of reading and visiting libraries. One questionnaire response relayed a story about parents having to come into the library to pick up their teenage daughter’s book as she did not want any of her friends to know that she read books from a library.

4.3. Librarian’s reflections on teenage fiction stock in public libraries

There are several reasons as to why teenagers may not be choosing to enter public libraries to borrow reading material, as has been discussed. However, the participants also discussed what type of service public libraries should be providing to those who do enter the library, as well as some ideas as to how things could be improved. Different themes were discussed regarding what would best fit to teenager’s needs and why perhaps as a
library service we offer teenage stock the way we do. All participants were most concerned with a person’s reading ability.

4.3.1. Reading development and age

All participants discussed a person’s reading development as being of major importance and relevance when discussing teenage stock. Tying back to trying to define teenage stock, bridging the gap between children and adults is importance for developing a reader’s ability.

“I think it very much depends on reading ability, ... you could have a 13 year old that could read stuff that was aimed at older teens and equally you could have a 17 year old that’s struggled to read something that was for 12 or 13 year olds.” Participant 2

All interview participants felt it was important to have a section of books between children’s and adult’s fiction to facilitate reader development. Most felt that there needed to be a cushion for those younger people who were perhaps not the strongest and most confident of readers, who would struggle to leap straight from children’s to adult’s fiction. Having a collection between children and adult was felt to offer a gradual move towards adult. As one participant discussed, the library service has started to put some authors who write adult fiction, such as James Patterson and Stephen King, in the teenage fiction collection to give the opportunity to start to read adult fiction without the pressure of having to go and choose from an adult fiction section.

Figure 3 shows that half of the questionnaire respondents felt that a teenage fiction section was necessary, whereas over half felt that a young adult fiction section was necessary.
Another important aspect of reader ability and development that was discussed by participants was that there should be no age guiding put on stock that is aimed at teenagers. As reading ability is very subjective, and not specifically age dependent, it was felt that it could have detrimental effects on teenagers who perhaps would not be able to read books that were aimed at their age group. It was felt that readers who were not as advanced as others in their age group would be discouraged from reading.

The library service previously had a section called “Stories Plus” that was a section that followed on from children’s stories and was supposed to be the next step before children started reading teenage books. When participant’s discussed the old system of Stories Plus they felt that it did not work for a variety of reasons, the most important being that nobody really knew what it was and what books to put it in. The name of “Stories Plus” was also felt to be a barrier, as there was the opinion that children might misconstrue what the name meant; instead of it being something that was meant to be based on an age range it was felt that children might have thought it represented an advanced reading ability.

“I don’t like that it reminds me of A and A* at GCSE, if I was a child I might think that I can only read Stories Plus if I was really clever rather than because it is aimed at an age range.”
Participant 2

Figure 3 – Teenage / young adult sections
Because of this previous classification system there was mixed feeling about splitting teenage fiction into “younger teenage” and “older teenage” sections. Classifying anything by age was felt to be inappropriate.

It was also felt that splitting teenage fiction by age would cause confusion for those wanting to take books out by certain authors. This is because some authors write books for a variety of audiences, spanning children to young adults. If teenage fiction was split by age then these authors who be shelved in multiple places.

Through splitting teenage fiction by age it could cause negative perceptions for teenagers who perhaps would fit into the older end of the teenage age range but needed to pick books from the younger teenage section for their reading ability.

“I think that teenagers are very sensitive creatures on the whole I’ve tended to find that a lot of them are very self-conscious and if maybe their reading ability isn’t on par with their age level ...it’s not just the peer thing it’s also for themselves, it’s quite lowering in some ways to say “I can’t read a book at my age level” you know that means that “I’m stupid” or something, you don’t want to be doing that to them.” Participant 6

The responses from the questionnaires about splitting teenage fiction into older and younger teen are shown in figure 4. There was a split response, with half of the respondents wanting public libraries to split teenage fiction into an older and younger section.
4.3.2. Parental guidance

A theme that most participants felt affected what went into collections of teenage fiction was that public libraries feel a responsibility to provide some sort of parental guidance and censoring. This was felt to be wrong and that parents need to take responsibility for what their own children are reading so that library stock collections are not impacted.

“I don’t think it’s for us to say what age a child can read what book. A parent knows what his child can read we don’t. We can guide them to what kind of book would be useful for that age group.” Participant 2

There was the opinion from the participants that the public library service was leaning more to trying to classify books by age to be of convenience to parents; so that the parents can come into a library and see that their child is picking a book from the right section for them rather than picking something that would be unsuitable.
“I do find it very strange that we want to seem to want to age everything. Particularly for children ... it’s all aged and I think it is because we feel parents find it convenient.”
Participant 2

In conjunction with trying to offer parental guidance, it was felt that the library service may be trying to avoid complaints from parents about unsuitable books in the children’s collection. This influences the teenage fiction collections. As has been previously discussed there is a large problem about what “teenage fiction” is and the problems of building suitable collections. At the present time public library collections for teenagers range from 13 to 19 which is a huge range with different reading abilities and tastes. If you add into this books that should be in children’s sections, that are written in a childlike manner but perhaps have issues that libraries feel parents will complain about, putting the book in a teenage collection can be seen as an easy option to avoid the potential complaint. However this could dilute an already stretched collection.

“I think we probably do [move children’s books into the teenage section to avoid complaints], I think we worry a lot about what might happen instead of having a section and letting them use their own judgement on it.” Participant 4

There is a need to not be completely blasé about what books end up in a children’s section as public libraries do need to take some responsibility, but it should not be used as reason to put books in certain collections based on whether people will complain about it or not.

Although there was concern that parent’s complaints come from unsuitable books being in the children’s section, figure 5 shows that almost all questionnaire respondents felt that there would be no concern with having teenage fiction in the adult’s section, even though that would mean potentially young teenagers browsing fiction that can have adult themes.
4.3.3. Signposting

An area of concern for all participants was the idea of making teenagers aware of where fiction stock books that may be appropriate for them are located in a library.

Participants felt that a lot of the time teenage fiction areas in libraries had not been clearly signposted, leading them to suspect that teenagers that had come into the library had not seen an area specifically for them and felt that they may not belong.

“In a lot of libraries the teenage sections are at the other end of the building far away from the counter so you’re sort of put out of sight out of mind effectively tucked away somewhere.” Participant 6

Clear guidance and signposting was seen as a priority for teenage fiction. If there was going to be a move away from having a traditional teenage section, whether that was incorporating teenage fiction into adult fiction, then there had to be clear signposting, as it was felt that teenagers are the group least likely to ask for help on finding books to read. There is a need to work more on the relationship between those coming in to borrow teenage books and library staff, to help teenagers find what they want.
“They’re not as likely to go ask, they just want to come in and go, they don’t want to interact, they don’t want to have to ask where something is, so we need to make it obvious for them where it is.” Participant 1

It was also felt to be important to try and help teenagers find books they may want without having to come and talk to anyone; to try and be a bit more like a book shop or a recommendation service that teenagers may be more comfortable with. This would mean that rather than having to ask for help, there was enough information available for them to navigate the library or find alternatives. If a teenager comes into the library wanting a book, they can find it, they can find other books like it, or they know they can reserve it if it is not available.

4.4. External influencing factors

There are other factors that influence teenage stock in public libraries. Some of these are external to the public library system and therefore out of their control, but some specifically relate to the libraries themselves.

Trends, publishing and physical location and layout of libraries are the types of external factors that are outside of the public library’s control, and affect the service that public libraries can offer.

4.4.1. Trends

One of the most important factors about books marketed at a teenage audience is that it is almost solely dependent on trends. It is an area of publishing that moves very quickly and is much more trend based than either adult or children’s fiction. It is also based a lot on film tie-ins and popular television series.
“It changes so regularly. So you had your whole phase of Twilight and your vampire romance which then went into zombies which then went into werewolves and the new trend is going into fairies and dystopia ... the Hunger Games type thing.” Participant 1

With teenagers a lot of trends are passed through word of mouth, which for today’s teenage generation means a lot of what is trendy is passed through social media. Through social media these trends can take off very quickly and change just as fast. Also a lot of these trends originate in America which can affect how quickly public libraries in Britain can pick up these trends.

Most participants thought public libraries were not quick enough to respond to these new trends, which meant that the books were not available to those who wanted to borrow them, which could impact on their future use of the service. It was also discussed that by the time the library has purchased the book the trend has changed. This leaves the library with a stock that is not popular and reinforces the idea of libraries always being behind what is popular.

“We don’t buy the right stuff ... we don’t somehow manage to catch on to trends quick enough and even stuff like we know there’s films coming out that are going to have real teen appeal that are based on a teen book and we’ll have 2 or 3 copies in stock and we won’t buy it until the films out.” Participant 1

4.4.2. Publishing and suppliers

Publishing is very closely related to trends; sometimes trends influence publishing and sometimes publishing can influence trends.

“There is a huge marketing push in terms of films and things towards teens, recognising that teenagers spend quite a lot of time going to the cinema because it is one of the things
they do with their friends, and I think there is a lot of film adaptations from those books.”
Participant 3

There is a big marketing push around what is actually quite a new area of stock, so public libraries need to become more proactive about investigating new trends to add to collections. It could be that by trying to buy everything published on what is trendy at the moment may have a negative impact on creating a collection of books aimed at teenagers. Some participants felt that publishers did not really know why some books become popular and others found that when publishers find something that works they flush the market with the same product.

“One of things that I would suspect is that publishers seem to jump on a bandwagon. In that Twilight was hugely popular so now there is a whole raft of paranormal romance all in black covers.” Participant 4

It was felt that this could frustrate some teenagers if all they see in a collection of stock aimed at them is a set of books all based on paranormal romance; this is only one trend in what a wide range of teenagers want to read.

An alternative view that one of the participants had was that the publishing was not there to support the new market. The problem is not with the public library not being able to respond quick enough to attract the attention of its borrowers, but that the fault is with the product that the publishers are trying to push. This is certainly a valid point that public libraries are trying to work within a new area in which publishers themselves do not know what to push.

“I think that the problem we have with it is ... the product it’s not really anything that we have got control over because obviously we only have access to the stock that’s there and I
“think that because the market is relatively new I just don’t think the publishers have got the product right.” Participant 5

Another area of concern that was discussed was the relationship that the public library has with their supplier. Previously the library system would send the supplier a list of specifications to cover the year; the actual choice of books in some part was then left up to the supplier.

“Something we are looking at is trying to alter our buying. So rather than do it all from a spec through the year we actually do a couple of buys.” Participant 3

Building a better relationship with the supplier was felt to be important to try and give the public library service some control back over book buying, which would enable the service to be more proactive in being able to buy books tied in with new trends. It would also give the library the ability to act on what new trends publishers are trying to push and buy the books in quicker.

“Maybe we don’t have as an effective relationship with the supplier as we should do in getting the kind of stuff that could work better.” Participant 4

4.4.3. Library location and layout

It was felt that public libraries are constrained as to what they can offer due to size and location. Through the service there is a wide variety of sizes and locations of library. The size of the library building was something that could not be controlled but was felt to have a large implication on what the library could offer.

“I think there are things like physical layout of a building that will determine what you can do with it [teenage stock], where you can have it, some libraries have a separate room and
you could put as much teen stock as you could in there, some little branches just have a stand, it’s very difficult when we have such a variety of libraries.” Participant 2

Figure 6 shows that half of the questionnaire respondents want to have teenage fiction on its own and nobody felt that teenage fiction should be with the children’s stock. However, it is not always possible to have a distinct section for teenage fiction, and sometimes it has to be next to or in with children’s or adult’s.

![Bar chart showing shelving preferences for teenage fiction](image)

*Figure 6 – Shelving teenage fiction*

It was felt that although there has to be consistency across the library service there should be more effort made to tailor a service that would best support the community that the library is there to serve. What may work in one library may only be suitable for that library. It was felt that perhaps libraries should be looked at individually depending on the community they are based in.

“Maybe it’s not the best way, to have exactly the same way of doing stuff at every single place, because things do vary, you do get different types of readers at different places or … different types of communities.” Participant 4
It was felt that trying to tailor a collection of teenage stock to specific libraries would be better than sending out a generic stock to every branch. Each library could work out what is popular there and would work to satisfy the needs of that community.

“I don’t know if it is at all around tailoring the collection around individual libraries, I think that probably is a part of it, like looking at the type of community setting that the library is in and then thinking about the usage and possible usage you can get.” Participant 4

Another view was that within some communities there is a completely different perception of libraries. People in the area may not know about the facilities that could be offered. Public libraries may also be working against people’s attitudes and perceptions about libraries.

“In certain areas ... with the ethnic mix in the community you do have some cultures that don’t find it appropriate for their children to be going into a library, particularly unattended, without an adult, or they just don’t have a culture of reading so no one actually thinks to bring them into the library so you get a lot of teenagers who don’t know where the library is.” Participant 6

4.5. Internal influencing factors

Although there are a lot of external factors effecting teenage stock, it was felt that there were areas that the public library service could work on internally regarding teenage stock.

4.5.1. Promotion of material

The promotion of teenage fiction was felt to be important to the success of having a well-used collection, but it was felt that promotion often gets overlooked. The nature of teenage fiction is that it encompasses difference genres, with the one thing in common being the age of the target audience. This makes it hard to put together an effective
display without focussing on the common feature of them being teenage. Having a “teenage fiction display” can actually have negative effects, especially for adults.

“I’d be very keen on when people are doing displays and things not to call it a teen display; it’s a display of good books that we are recommending therefore adults will feel more able to access those books. Calling it teen would even put off teens.” Participant 3

It was the view of participants that one potential way to change the promotion of teenage fiction would be to rebrand it as young adult fiction. This would be to remove the stigma associated with the term “teenage” for the younger audience as well as making it more accessible for the older audience. Figure 7 shows that the majority of questionnaire respondents thought that rebranding to young adult would be more suitable.

![Figure 7 – Rebranding teenage fiction to young adult fiction](image)

There was a feeling that libraries may need to look at the example of bookshops to be successful in the promotion of material. This was felt to be especially important to a teenage audience who may be more use to and comfortable in a bookshop setting, with more face-on book displays and more guiding.
“I feel like if we can display books more in the manner that book shops display books and
guide people round the premises then that might be more helpful, welcoming and
accommodating to people.” Participant 4

4.5.2. Staff involvement

Finally there was the feeling that staff involvement may play a part in how effective
teenage stock may be. There is a need to work harder with front line staff so that they are
more aware of and knowledgeable about teenage fiction. Front line staff play a vital role as
they are the ones who will be answering queries and shelving the books away. If these
front line staff are not aware of what the teenage collection is then they may shelve books
in the teenage section that are unattractive to teenagers. There perhaps needs to more
communication between those who are responsible for buying the books and watching the
trends and front line staff, so that they are aware of what books are going to be popular so
that they can meet the needs of those who come in and ask.

“... communicate more with front line staff as to what is popular, “here’s great new stuff
that is coming out,” ... maybe we do need to think more about that.” Participant 4

4.6. Future development

As well as improving ways that public libraries deal with teenage stock today, there are
some future developments that were discussed.

4.6.1. Teenage books as a genre

One way of trying to think about teenage stock is to try to think of it more as a genre,
rather than something that is aimed at an age range; to specifically select books that have a
fresh, modern appeal rather than thinking of it as a stepping stone between children and
adult.
“I think you could ... turn it into a bit of a genre and say if you like your funky type books these are them, in the same way you’ve got crime, horror or sci-fi.” Participant 2

4.6.2. Interfiling teenage stock

Another potential future development may be to interfile teenage stock into an adult collection. This idea highlights that it is not just teenagers who want teenage books. Much of the rise in the popularity of teenage fiction is actually due to adult readers. Every single questionnaire participant stated that they have noticed a cross over with adults reading teenage fiction in their libraries. Public libraries could capitalise on this cross over. It is considered to be an area of publishing that is going to continue to grow and perhaps public libraries are denying adult borrowers the chance to see these books if they continue to be placed in specific teenage fiction sections.

“Not making the stock exclusive to particular age groups, because I think then you are kind of limiting your audience, so if you sort of embolden a sign above stock and say it’s for teen the implication is that if you’re not 13 to 19 maybe you shouldn’t really be touching it.” Participant 2

Interfiling would also start to encourage teenagers to look though the adult section and to start to give them some independence in their borrowing choices. However, it was considered that this may be a problem for some teenagers as it could be quite a daunting task for those who are not used to a library and who do not have an idea of author or genre to browse through. There was also a concern about the affect it may have on teenagers with poor reading ability, having to pick from the adult section. A public library would also have to accept that there may be complaints from parents, and libraries may have to put books into a children’s section that are just too young to go in with adult’s books.
4.6.3. Making libraries even more genre specific

Another possible solution that was discussed, but that has much wider implications than just teenage stock, was to make libraries even more genre specific; to base them more on a bookshop model. This would get round the issue with interfiling where teenagers would find it difficult to find what they want.

The idea is to break genres down into subgenres, so for example to not just have a crime section, but to break it down into subcategories such as historical crime, American crime and European crime. As teenagers are unlikely to come and ask for help, by having more genres this may overcome the problem of them feeling confused and unsure of where to start looking for books.

There was split opinion amongst the questionnaire respondents about genrefication, with half thinking that it would be more suitable than having teenage fiction and adult fiction sections, as can be seen in figure 8.

The possible advantage for having more genres may be that it offers people quick browsing; they could come in and quickly choose their books. It may also promote an area of stock that people did not know existed before as it was lost in the overall adult fiction
section. It was also discussed that at the moment library genres may be stuck on old publishing trends and are not up to date enough, which can lead borrowers to having to search for books in two or more different places, whereas books shops have better guidance.

“You get new publishing phenomenons like the paranormal romance, like the misery books that come out of nowhere, and again they are dotted around all over and it’s how you find them, how you shelve these new things. I don’t think we are very good at keeping up sometimes with the new trends; our genres are genres that we have always had for years and they have never changed and yet publishing trends do change.” Participant 2

However there was the overall feeling that by becoming more genre specific it would take away what a library is about; the joy of browsing for books and reader development. While it may be beneficial for those who want a bookshop environment it was felt that a library is more than that. A library should offer the reader the chance to explore and develop, to discover new authors and new genres. By offering more genres it was felt that this could just restrict people’s reading. A library should offer the borrower chances for a serendipitous discovery where they find a new book or a new author, and not narrow down choice or allow people to restrict themselves.

“Reader development is all about helping customers finding their next read. I think narrowing down the genres just means they would become even more focussed on what they like or what they think they like, and stay within that section, and then it is quite difficult to move them out of that section because they think “it’s not for me.” Participant 3

4.7. Issue figures for teenage fiction

The library service studied has done a trial in three branches, with one control branch, to try and find ways of increasing issue figures. The trial worked as follows:
- Library 1 was the control, with no change to the way that teenage fiction was shelved or displayed.
- Library 2 maintained their existing teenage fiction section but concentrated on keeping an up to date marketing display in a prominent location.
- Library 3 have taken half of the teenage fiction and interfiled it with the adult fiction. The other half has remained in its own section but has been rebranded as young adult fiction and is being managed as more recently published stock.
- Library 4 have relocated the teenage fiction so that it is next to the adult fiction rather than being in a separate part of the building.

The trial started in January 2013. Figure 9 shows the teenage fiction issue figures for these four libraries for January to June in 2010 to 2013. The percentage change from 2012 to 2013 is also shown.

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*Figure 9 – Teenage fiction issue figures*

The figures across each library show that teenage fiction issues reduced between the same period in 2010 to 2011 and from 2011 to 2012. This supports the idea that there is an underlying problem with teenage issue figures. However, this data does not show us the overall trend in issue figures for all fiction. Over this time period, footfall into libraries and issue figures have both been decreasing.

That said there are positive results from the trial indicating that teenage fiction issue figures can be improved if action is taken. Although the overall numbers are lower and so more subject to volatility, Library 2 has seen a 26% increase in issue figures for teenage fiction. This shows that concentrating on the display and marketing of teenage fiction does encourage more issues.
Library 3 has seen a very small increase to teenage fiction issue figures, and has stopped the downward trend. It is difficult to determine what impact rebranding to young adult fiction and interfiling with adult fiction have had individually. If more data was available this could be understood further.

There has been a significant increase in Library 4 (22%) suggesting that the location of teenage fiction is important. Originally this library had the teenage fiction near the computers and away from the rest of the fiction stock, whereas it was moved to be with the rest of adult fiction. The increased figure could be contributed to by adults taking out more teenage fiction as it is now stocked right next to the adult fiction. As such adults are browsing the teenage fiction much more than they did before. Also teenagers could be encouraged by this move as the teenage fiction is now much more accessible and more clearly signposted.
5. Conclusions and recommendations

5.1. Conclusions

5.1.1. Introduction

The original aims and objectives of this research have been met.

- Explore the understanding that staff working in public libraries have about teenage fiction.

The discussion of findings illustrated that staff working in public libraries understood teenage fiction differently to each other. There were differences in opinion about the age range of teenagers, what teenage fiction is, whether there is a difference between teenage and young adult and if a distinction should be made between the two.

- Explore what staff see as the existing problems with teenage fiction.

The commonalities of opinion in public library staff tended to be their views of the existing problems: being behind teenage fiction trends; not promoting teenage fiction enough and in the right way; issues around publishing and how that influences stock; teenager’s perceptions of libraries not being socially relevant for them.

- Explore alternatives that can be offered.

Staff were also in agreement about, and the literature review suggested that, alternatives to existing management of stock are: better promotion that is more up to date; distinguishing between teenage and children’s fiction; aiming teenage fiction at an older audience, part of which could be to change the terminology to young adult fiction.

It has been possible to draw the conclusions about teenage fiction in public libraries as presented in following sections. This has been through gaining an understanding of teenage fiction in public libraries including current issues and opportunities. The result of
this is a set of clear recommendations for alternative ways of stocking and managing teenage fiction in order to improve issue figures.

5.1.2. The need for teenage fiction in public libraries

There is a clear need for teenage fiction in public libraries. This is because there is a large and growing market for it and publishers continue to push it.

There is also a clear need for public libraries to have a specific teenage section. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, teenagers are the population least likely to ask for help in a public library and so they need a clear section that they can go to for material that is most appropriate to them. Secondly, having a teenage fiction section is important with regards to reader ability, providing a clear bridge between the harder end of children’s fiction and adult fiction. Thirdly, it is a marketing opportunity for public libraries to be able to boast having a teenage fiction section as it shows that the library is catering for a wide range of society.

The most popular alternative to having a teenage fiction section from the literature is genrefication. This has the advantage of aligning library stock methods with that of bookshops and so might make finding books easier. However, it was clear from the research that complete genrefication would have negative impacts on reader development and would remove serendipitous browsing; two key things that libraries offer that bookshops perhaps do not.

5.1.3. Management of teenage fiction stock

A strong theme from both the literature review and research was that the teenage fiction section should be distinct from the children’s section and more associated to the adult’s section. This is due to the fact that teenager’s do not want to be associated with children and are wanting to mature to adulthood. As such, the teenage section should be next to the adult section and any marketing or displays of teenage fiction should be more closely
associated to adults and avoid “teenage” branding. It is also important not to dilute the teenage fiction section by shelving children’s books there, as that might put teenagers off from borrowing the books and returning back in the future.

The other key theme in this area is the difference between the terms teenage fiction and young adult fiction. Young adult has an older connotation associated to it and it is thought would have a greater appeal for teenagers and be more accessible for adults.

5.1.4. Promotion and accessibility

There needs to be a greater awareness that teenage fiction needs promoting. This is because it is an area of stock that is closely linked to recent trends and because teenagers spend less time in the library, less time browsing and are less likely to ask for help. As such promotion needs to be more dynamic and up to date in order to keep up with trends and to aid and attract teenagers. The promotion of teenage fiction is even more important when libraries have limited shelving options.

There is a gap in public libraries for offering technological solutions for teenagers. As a generation they are used to sophisticated technology giving them lots of choice and flexibility, whereas a traditional library catalogue system does not offer that. There is also increasing popularity in digital media rather than physical media, which extends to reading books through the use of e-readers.

5.1.5. Trends

Teenage fiction is a fast trending area and is constantly changing, especially with trends coming to the UK from America. This makes it very difficult for public libraries to keep a contemporary stock. Although public libraries make an effort to buy in the most popular stock, due to constraints with buyers and publishers there can often be a new trend by the time the books reach the shelves. There are also limitations with publishing itself in that
some new material is only available in a digital format, and that publishers themselves are not correctly investing in what is most popular.

This issue means that there is a potential problem that resource is being spent on books that end up not being issued as much as they should. That raises the question of whether that is an effective use of resource and puts teenage stock in danger for the future.

5.1.6. Other reflections

Whether public libraries should be concerned with the number of books that teenagers issue or the number of teenage fiction issues is an important distinction. Public libraries need to decide what is more important; to have an area of fiction stock that is aimed and designed for teenagers, or to make every book issue as many times as possible, in which case libraries could look to get rid of a designated teenage section and interfile books with the adult section to broaden the opportunity for issues. There is a growing market for young adult books and whilst libraries may struggle to keep up to date with trends and publishing it appears to be a market that is not going away and has an appeal to a wide range of people.

Secondly, there is increasing competition from school libraries. If school libraries are growing and offering an improving service to teenagers, there is an argument for public libraries conceding to this competition and reallocating teenage fiction resources elsewhere. If this trend continues then this will become an important question for public libraries.

5.2. Recommendations

5.2.1. Alternative ways of stocking and managing teenage fiction

Taking into account all of the knowledge gained through the literature review and research, the following recommendations can be made. Some of these focus purely on increasing the number of issues of teenage fiction from both teenagers and adults, rather than just
increasing the number of issue that teenagers make. Although encouraging teenager issues and reader development is important, it is also important for the future prospect of teenage stock in public libraries to keep issue figures up in all ways possible.

- Public libraries should keep teenage stock because there is demand for it and it plays an important part in bridging the gap between children’s and adult’s fiction.
- Teenage fiction stock should not be positioned near the children’s area. Where possible it should be next to the adult’s section. The problem of having teenage fiction near or in a children’s section is that it is closes off the adult audience and gives the impression to teenagers that they are considered as children.
- Libraries should not move children’s books into the teenage fiction section through fear of parental complaints, as that dilutes the teenage section.
- Teenage stock should be renamed to young adult fiction as this would take away the stigma that some people feel is associated with “teenage” and it would also open up the collection to a wider audience as adults may feel more comfortable choosing from the section too.
- If it is not possible to have teenage fiction separate from children’s fiction then there should be a display in a prominent position near the adult section that is kept up to date with new trending young adult fiction.
- Libraries should commit to maintaining an up to date display of teenage fiction in order to enhance the promotion and signposting of the material, specifically for the benefit of teenagers who are less likely to ask for recommended reads.
- The final recommendation, and one that requires more significant cost and time, is to invest in online resources. Most importantly, this should cover having a wide range of e-books for use on e-readers, but also include enhancing online catalogues so that entries can be rated, “liked” and shared via social media.

5.2.2. Limitations of the research

The research carried out was only a small project that was restricted by time. The research only focussed on four libraries in one public library service and as such any recommendations made are only based on the results from the issue figures from these libraries and the research data gathered from a small number of staff.
The research only looked at the issue figures for teenage books rather than who was borrowing those books. As such it was not possible to determine if changes made by those libraries impacted teenager’s issues or adult’s issues of teenage fiction.

The research project only looked at having teenage fiction in libraries from a staff perspective. It did not consider the opinions of teenagers directly.

5.2.3. Recommendations for further research

To expand the research a larger number of libraries could be included in the sample. This would cover more library’s issue figures and more qualitative data from other librarians and front line staff. Additionally, this research could be repeated on or extended to other public library services in other regions of the UK or abroad.

For a more detailed picture further research could look at who is borrowing the teenage books. This could give indications of whether there is a more adult audience borrowing these books or if it is still mainly teenagers.

It would be beneficial to try and interview teenagers to gain an understanding on their thoughts and opinions of teenage fiction in public libraries. It would be beneficial to the library service to understand what teenager’s expectations of public libraries are.

Finally, if high school libraries are a source of growing competition then it would be beneficial to learn from high school librarians to understand their success and see if it can be repeated in public libraries.

Word count: 14,980
6. References


http://web.ebscohost.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/ehost/viewarticle?data=dGJyMPPp44rp2%2fdV0%2bnjifsfk5le46a9lt6mx57Ck63nn5Kxes95uXxjl6rrUmwpbBlr6meUbipt1Kyr55Zy5zyit%2fk8Xnh6ueH7N%2fiVa%2btsEuqq65Otq%2bkhN%2fk5VXj5KR84LPqhOSc8nnls79mpNfsVbOmsFGvq65Ispzkh%2fDj34y75uj%2bxOvqhNLb9owA&hid=125 (Accessed 19/04/13)


http://ir.uiowa.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1005&context=bsides (Accessed 27/04/13)


Appendix 1 – Ethical approval proposal

The University of Sheffield

Information School

Proposal for
Research Ethics Review

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Project Title: Do public libraries need teen stock?

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<td>September 2013</td>
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Principal Investigator (PI): (student for supervised UG/PGT/PGR research) Rachel Evans

Email: rcevans1@sheffield.ac.uk

Supervisor: (if PI is a student) Joanne Bates

Email: jo.bates@sheffield.ac.uk

Indicate if the research: (put an X in front of all that apply)

- Involves adults with mental incapacity or mental illness, or those unable to make a personal decision
- Involves prisoners or others in custodial care (e.g. young offenders)
- Involves children or young people aged under 18 years of age
Involves highly sensitive topics such as ‘race’ or ethnicity; political opinion; religious, spiritual or other beliefs; physical or mental health conditions; sexuality; abuse (child, adult); nudity and the body; criminal activities; political asylum; conflict situations; and personal violence.

Please indicate by inserting an “X” in the left hand box that you are conversant with the University’s policy on the handling of human participants and their data.

| X | We confirm that we 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 |
Part B. Summary of the Research

B1. Briefly summarise the project’s aims and objectives:
(This must be in language comprehensible to a layperson and should take no more than one-half page. Provide enough information so that the reviewer can understand the intent of the research)

Summary:

The aim of the project is to investigate whether public libraries should have a separate shelving category of ‘teen fiction’ in order to generate increased interest in fiction aimed at this age group. There has been a recent growth in the popularity of teenage fiction especially in connection to films such as Twilight and Beautiful Creatures, however teenage fiction book issues continue to drop. Through using a study of four different libraries that are trialling different ways to classify teenage stock the project aims to make recommendations on how public libraries should classify and shelve teenage stock.

The three different methods being trialled in the study are: Library 1 has reduced the size of its teenage collection by half, leaving only the most popular and has re-shelved the rest in the adult fiction section of the library; Library 2 has re-branded all teenage stock as “Young Adult” and moved it to its own location in the library; Library 3 has re-branded the teenage stock as “Young Adult” but left it in the children’s section. There is also a fourth library which shall remain unchanged and used as a control.

B2. Methodology:
Provide a broad overview of the methodology in no more than one-half page.

Overview of Methods:

For the project I will gather data in a variety of ways. I will use quantitative research methods to analyse and compare anonymised book issue data from the participating libraries. This will enable me to analyse if one method is issuing more than another and to compare the figures with the previous 2 years to see if there are any patterns.

I will also gather qualitative research data through interviews and questionnaire to analyse librarians and frontline staff on their perceptions about the classification and shelving of teenage stock.

I would interview the librarians that work in the four different libraries that are trialling how teenage fiction is classified and shelved to learn about their understanding of teenage stock classification and the motivation behind the trial.

I would survey paraprofessional and frontline staff at each of the participating libraries about their perceptions and views about the classification and shelving of teenage stock.

If more than one method, e.g., survey, interview, etc. is used, please respond to the questions in Section C for each method. That is, if you are using both a survey and interviews, duplicate the page and answer the questions for each method; you need not duplicate the information, and may simply indicate, “see previous section.”
**C1. Briefly describe how each method will be applied**

**Method (e.g., survey, interview, observation, experiment):** Survey of members of staff working in public libraries on their views about the classification and shelving of teenage stock.

**Description – how will you apply the method?** The survey will be created on a computer and emailed to frontline staff at the participating libraries.

**About your Participants**

**C2. Who will be potential participants?** Members of staff who work in public libraries.

**C3. How will the potential participants be identified and recruited?** An invitation to participate in the survey will be emailed to each participating library with the survey attached.

**C4. What is the potential for physical and/or psychological harm / distress to participants?** The potential for harm or distress is no greater than what might be experienced in everyday life.

**C5. Will informed consent be obtained from the participants?**

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If Yes, please explain how informed consent will be obtained The first and second page of the survey sent out will be the information/consent form and will describe what the survey will ask of the participants.

If No, please explain why you need to do this, and how the participants will be de-briefed?

**C6. 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 compensation or payment will be provided.

**About the Data**
C7. What data will be collected? (Tick all that apply)

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C8. What measures will be put in place to ensure confidentiality of personal data, where appropriate? Any identifying data will be removed from the survey response, and each response will be given an arbitrary number. The responses will be pseudonomised in the write up of the report.

C9. How/Where will the data be stored? The results of the survey will be typed up on to a password protected computer and kept in a password protected file until the end of the dissertation study, after which it will be deleted.

C10. Will the data be stored for future re-use? If so, please explain. Once the dissertation study is complete and a grade received all data will be destroyed.

C11. Does your research raise any issues of personal safety for you or other researchers involved in the project (especially if taking place outside working hours or off University premises)? If so, please explain how it will be managed. There are no anticipated issues to personal safety to the participants or the researcher.
C1. **Briefly describe how each method will be applied**

**Method (e.g., survey, interview, observation, experiment):** Interview librarians who work at the libraries that are participating in the trial for classifying teenage fiction.

**Description – how will you apply the method?** I will interview a number of people who work for the library service. I will email the participants to make initial contact and if the participants are willing I will organise a suitable date to go and conduct the interviews. Before the interviews the participants will be asked to read the information sheet/consent form. The interview will only take place once the consent forms have been signed. The interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed.

---

**About your Participants**

C2. **Who will be potential participants?** Librarians who work with teenage stock.

C3. **How will the potential participants be identified and recruited?** The potential participants would be the librarians who work with teenage stock, who are participating in the three library case studies and those who are responsible for Reader Development. Each potential participant will be sent an email containing the information/consent form which outlines the project and will be invited to be interviewed.

C4. **What is the potential for physical and/or psychological harm / distress to participants?** The potential for harm or distress is no greater than what might be experienced in everyday life.

C5. **Will informed consent be obtained from the participants?**

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**If Yes, please explain how informed consent will be obtained?** Before the interviews take place I will send out an email containing the information/consent form. The form will be reviewed before each interview to answer any questions the participant may have.

**If No, please explain why you need to do this, and how the participants will be de-briefed?**
C6. 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 compensation or payments will be provided.

### About the Data

**C7. What data will be collected? (Tick all that apply)**

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**C8. What measures will be put in place to ensure confidentiality of personal data, where appropriate?** When using the information received from the different people all personal data will be pseudonmised during the storage and transcription of audio recordings, and write up of dissertation. The content of the audio recording will only be reviewed and analysed by the researcher. All participants will be given a random code such as Participant 1.

**C9. How/Where will the data be stored?** The interviews will be recorded and from these recording they will be transcribed. Each recording will be given a random number to represent the participant, there will be no key match and the researcher will be the only one to review the data. The transcription will be held on a password protected computer in a password protected file until the end of the dissertation study, after which it will be deleted.

**C10. Will the data be stored for future re-use?** If so, please explain, Once the dissertation study has been completed and a grade received all data will be deleted.

**C11. Does your research raise any issues of personal safety for you or other researchers involved in the project (especially if taking place outside working hours or off University premises)?** If so, please explain how it will be managed. There are no anticipated issues to personal safety to the participants or the researcher.
Title of Research Project: Do public libraries need teen stock?

We confirm our responsibility to deliver the research project in accordance with the University of Sheffield’s policies and procedures, which include the University’s ‘Financial Regulations’, ‘Good Research Practice Standards’ and the ‘Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participants, Personal Data and Human Tissue’ (Ethics Policy) and, where externally funded, with the terms and conditions of the research funder.

In submitting this research ethics application form I am also confirming that:

- The form is accurate to the best of our knowledge and belief.
- The project will abide by the University’s Ethics Policy.
- There is no potential material interest that may, or may appear to, impair the independence and objectivity of researchers conducting this project.
- Subject to the research being approved, we undertake to adhere to the project protocol without unagreed deviation and to comply with any conditions set out in the letter from the University ethics reviewers notifying me of this.
- We undertake to inform the ethics reviewers of significant changes to the protocol (by contacting our academic department’s Ethics Coordinator in the first instance).
- We are aware of our responsibility to be up to date and comply with the requirements of the law and relevant guidelines relating to security and confidentiality of personal data, including the need to register when necessary with the appropriate Data Protection Officer (within the University the Data Protection Officer is based in CiCS).
- We understand that the project, including research records and data, may be subject to inspection for audit purposes, if required in future.
- We understand that personal data about us as researchers in this form will be held by those involved in the ethics review procedure (e.g. the Ethics Administrator and/or ethics reviewers) and that this will be managed according to Data Protection Act principles.
- If this is an application for a ‘generic’ project all the individual projects that fit under the generic project are compatible with this application.
- We 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 the Student (if applicable):
Rachel Evans

Name of Principal Investigator (or the Supervisor):
Joanne Bates

Date: 07/06/2013
Appendix 2 – Letter of ethical approval

Information School Research Ethics Panel

Letter of Approval

Date: 18th June 2013
TO: Rachel Evans

The Information School Research Ethics Panel has examined the following application:

Title: Do public libraries need teen stock?

Submitted by: Rachel Evans

And found the proposed research involving human participants to be in accordance with the University of Sheffield’s policies and procedures, which include the University’s ‘Financial Regulations’, ‘Good Research Practice Standards’ and the ‘Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participants, Personal Data and Human Tissue’ (Ethics Policy).

This letter is the official record of ethics approval by the School, and should accompany any formal requests for evidence of research ethics approval.

Effective Date: 18th June 2013

Dr. Angela Lin
Research Ethics Coordinator

74
Appendix 3 – Interview consent form

**The University of Sheffield. Information School**

Do public libraries need teen stock?

---

**Researchers**

Rachel Evans  [rcevans1@shef.ac.uk](mailto:rcevans1@shef.ac.uk)  Jo Bates [jo.bates@shef.ac.uk](mailto:jo.bates@shef.ac.uk)

---

**Purpose of the research**

The research is the subject of my MA librarianship dissertation, which will be submitted in September. The aim of the project is to investigate whether public libraries should have a separate shelving category of ‘teen fiction’ in order to generate increased interest in fiction aimed at this age group.

---

**Who will be participating?**

Librarians responsible for the stock at the four public libraries being researched will be invited to participate.

---

**What will you be asked to do?**

We will ask you to take part in an interview answering questions about your views on the shelving of fiction aimed at teenagers. The interviews will be no longer than an hour.

---

**What are the potential risks of participating?**

The risks of participating are the same as those experienced in everyday life

---

**What data will we collect?**
The only data being collected is what you provide at the interview. The interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed.

**What will we do with the data?**

We will be analyzing the data for inclusion in my master’s dissertation. After the dissertation has been completed the data will be destroyed.

**Will my participation be confidential?**

Any data that you give us will be treated confidentially and will be anonymised during the write up of the research.

**What will happen to the results of the research project?**

The results of this study will be included in my master’s dissertation which will be publicly available.

I confirm that I have read and understand the description of the research project, and that I have had an opportunity to ask questions about the project.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences. If I stop participating at any time, all of my data will be purged.

I understand that I may decline to answer any particular question or questions, or to do any of the activities.

I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential, that my name or identity will not be linked to any research materials, and that I will not be identified or identifiable in any report or reports that result from the research.

I give permission for the research team members to have access to my anonymised responses.
I give permission for the research team to re-use my data for future research as specified above.

I agree to take part in the research project as described above.

Participant Name (Please print)  Participant Signature

Researcher Name (Please print)  Researcher Signature

Date

Note: If you have any difficulties with, or wish to voice concern about, any aspect of your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Angela Lin, Research Ethics Coordinator, Information School, The University of Sheffield (ischool_ethics@sheffield.ac.uk), or to the University Registrar and Secretary.
The University of Sheffield. Information School

Do public libraries need teen stock?

Researchers

Rachel Evans rcevans1@shef.ac.uk Jo Bates jo.bates@shef.ac.uk

Purpose of the research

The research is the subject of my MA librarianship dissertation, which will be submitted in September. The aim of the project is to investigate whether public libraries should have a separate shelving category of ‘teen fiction’ in order to generate increased interest in fiction aimed at this age group.

Who will be participating?

All frontline staff who work in the chosen libraries being researched will be invited to participate.

What will you be asked to do?

We will ask you to complete a questionnaire about your views and opinions about teenage stock. This will involve both open and closed questions; some questions will be multiple choice and others will ask for your comments. The questionnaire should take between 10 – 15 minutes.

What are the potential risks of participating?

The risks of participating are the same as those experienced in everyday life.

What data will we collect?
The only data being collected is what you provide on the questionnaire.

**What will we do with the data?**

We will be analyzing the data for inclusion in my master's dissertation. After that point, the data will be destroyed.

**Will my participation be confidential?**

Any data that you give us will be treated confidentially and will be anonymised during the write up of the research.

**What will happen to the results of the research project?**

The results of this study will be included in my master's dissertation which will be publicly available.

I confirm that I have read and understand the description of the research project, and that I have had an opportunity to ask questions about the project.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences. If I stop participating at any time, all of my data will be purged.

I understand that I may decline to answer any particular question or questions, or to do any of the activities.

I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential, that my name or identity will not be linked to any research materials, and that I will not be identified or identifiable in any report or reports that result from the research.

I give permission for the research team members to have access to my anonymised responses.
I give permission for the research team to re-use my data for future research as specified above.

I agree to take part in the research project as described above.

________________________________________________________________________
Participant Name (Please print)          Participant Signature

________________________________________________________________________
Researcher Name (Please print)           Researcher Signature

________________________________________________________________________
Date

Note: If you have any difficulties with, or wish to voice concern about, any aspect of your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Angela Lin, Research Ethics Coordinator, Information School, The University of Sheffield (ischool_ethics@sheffield.ac.uk), or to the University Registrar and Secretary.
Appendix 5 – Questionnaire

1) What age range do you think of for teenage fiction?
   13-19  13-16  Other

2) What do you understand the term teenage fiction to mean?
   Books only suitable for teenagers to read
   Books unsuitable for children to read
   Books anyone can read
   Other

3) Where would you want to shelve teenage fiction?
   With the children’s stock
   With the adult’s stock
   On its own
   Other

4) What age range do you think of when you hear the term Young Adult?
   12-16  12-18  18-22  21-25  Other

5) What do you understand the term Young Adult fiction to mean?
   Books only suitable for teenagers to read
   Books unsuitable for children to read
   Books anyone can read
   Other

6) Do you think the term Young Adult fiction would be more suitable than the term teenage fiction for labelling books aimed at this age group?
7) Where would you want to shelve Young Adult fiction?
   With the children’s stock
   With the adult’s stock
   On its own
   Other

8) Do you think that teenage books should be split, for example having a younger teen section and an older teen section?
   Yes
   No

9) Do you think public libraries need a teenage fiction section at all?
   Yes
   No

10) Do you think public libraries should have a Young Adult section?
    Yes
    No

11) Do you think public libraries should just have an adult fiction section and child fiction section?
    Yes
    No

12) Do you think there would be concerns if teenagers were choosing their books from adult fiction?
    Yes
    No

13) In your library have you noticed a cross over with adults reading teenager’s books?
    Yes
    No
14) Do you think public libraries should not differentiate between teen, young adult and adult, and instead classify by genre?

Yes  No
Trial Specific Questions

The next set of questions are specific to the trial that your library is involved with. It asks for your views and opinions of what you have thought of the trial.

15) Do you think that the trial you have been involved with has been successful in terms of generating interest in the “teen” literature?
   Yes                        No
   Why?

16) Do you think it has had any impact on the issue figures?
   Yes                        No
   If yes, what impact?

17) Would you have liked to do a different trial from the one selected by your library?
   Yes                        No
   Which one?

18) After the trial is over would you like to stay the same or return to how you had it before?
   Stay the same       Return to original
   Why?

19) Have you had any comments or complaints from the public about the trial?
   Yes                        No
   If yes what have they been about?

20) Do you have any comments or complaints about the trial?

21) Do you have any more comments about teenage fiction in public libraries?
Appendix 6 – Interview guide

What do you think of when considering teenage fiction?

What age range do you think of for teenage fiction?

What do you think of when considering the term Young Adult fiction?

What age range do you think of for Young adult?

Do you think there is a cross over between adults reading teenage fiction?

If there is do you think there is any way that libraries could capitalise on this?

Why do you think issue figures on teenage fiction are down?

 Whilst the trial has been going on have you noticed any difference in the stock?

Are you aware of any comment or complaints that have been received about the trial?

Do you think that there is a need to have a set of books between children and adult?

Do you think that it would be better to split teenage books for example having younger and older teen books?

If libraries did decided that there was not a need to separate teenage stock where do you think it would best fit in a library?

Do you see any benefit to incorporating teenage stock into adult fiction?

Would there be any problems do you think?

How would you feel if libraries became more genre specific for example splitting fiction into sub categories - would not just have a crime section but Historical crime, European crime, American crime, cosy crime?

Do you see any advantages to this?

Disadvantages to this?
Appendix 7 – Questionnaire results

1) What age range do you think of for teenage fiction?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13-19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (unspec.)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2) What do you understand the term teenage fiction to mean?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Books only suitable for teenagers to read</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books unsuitable for children to read</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books anyone can read</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books for anyone, but tailored to teenagers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (not specified)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

("Books suitable for 11+ to read" interpreted as the same as "books unsuitable for children to read")

3) Where would you want to shelve teenage fiction?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shelve Location</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>With the children’s stock</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With the adult’s stock</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On its own</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4) What age range do you think of when you hear the term Young Adult?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12-16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5) What do you understand the term Young Adult fiction to mean?

- Books only suitable for teenagers to read: 0 (0%)
- Books unsuitable for children to read: 3 (38%)
- Books anyone can read: 3 (38%)
- Books for anyone, but tailored to teenagers: 1 (13%)
- Other (not specified): 1 (13%)

6) Do you think the term Young Adult fiction would be more suitable than the term teenage fiction for labelling books aimed at this age group?

- Yes: 6 (75%)
- No: 2 (25%)

7) Where would you want to shelve Young Adult fiction?

- With the children’s stock: 0 (0%)
- With the adult’s stock: 4 (50%)
- On its own: 3 (38%)
- Other: 1 (13%)

8) Do you think that teenage books should be split, for example having a younger teen section and an older teen section?

- Yes: 4 (50%)
- No: 4 (50%)

9) Do you think public libraries need a teenage fiction section at all?

- Yes: 4 (50%)
- No: 3 (38%)
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

10) Do you think public libraries should have a Young Adult section?

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<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13%</td>
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</table>

11) Do you think public libraries should just have an adult fiction section and child fiction section?

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

12) Do you think there would be concerns if teenagers were choosing their books from adult fiction?

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<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13) In your library have you noticed a cross over with adults reading teenager’s books?

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14) Do you think public libraries should not differentiate between teen, young adult and adult, and instead classify by genre?

<p>| | | | |</p>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 8 – Issue figures by library, month and year

Numbers in bold from January 2013 are after the teenage fiction trial started.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Library 1</th>
<th>Library 2</th>
<th>Library 3</th>
<th>Library 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan-10</td>
<td>456</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb-10</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar-10</td>
<td>593</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr-10</td>
<td>678</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May-10</td>
<td>605</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun-10</td>
<td>618</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jul-10</td>
<td>685</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug-10</td>
<td>781</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep-10</td>
<td>607</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct-10</td>
<td>686</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov-10</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec-10</td>
<td>518</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan-11</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb-11</td>
<td>493</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar-11</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr-11</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May-11</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun-11</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jul-11</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug-11</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep-11</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct-11</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov-11</td>
<td>427</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec-11</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
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<td>Jan-12</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb-12</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>134</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar-12</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr-12</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>137</td>
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<td>Jan-13</td>
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<td>249</td>
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<td>Mar-13</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>194</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr-13</td>
<td>381</td>
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<td>259</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun-13</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 9 – Access to dissertation form

Access to Dissertation

A Dissertation submitted to the University may be held by the Department (or School) within which the Dissertation was undertaken and made available for borrowing or consultation in accordance with University Regulations.

Requests for the loan of dissertations may be received from libraries in the UK and overseas. The Department may also receive requests from other organisations, as well as individuals. The conservation of the original dissertation is better assured if the Department and/or Library can fulfill such requests by sending a copy. The Department may also make your dissertation available via its web pages.

In certain cases where confidentiality of information is concerned, if either the author or the supervisor so requests, the Department will withhold the dissertation from loan or consultation for the period specified below. Where no such restriction is in force, the Department may also deposit the Dissertation in the University of Sheffield Library.

To be completed by the Author – Select (a) or (b) by placing a tick in the appropriate box

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