Bringing the Arts into the Library:
An evaluation of the role of Nottinghamshire County Council Libraries in engaging new audiences with arts and culture.

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ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND

Public libraries have traditionally hosted arts exhibitions and cultural activities. Nonetheless they have been limited in scope and tentative in approach, taking place in an ad hoc basis. An increasing interest on arts and cultural programming within public libraries has been noted in the literature, however it is an under researched topic, focusing on punctual events without going further of identifying benefits and best practices.

AIMS

The purpose of the research is to develop an understanding of Nottinghamshire County Council Libraries in engaging new audiences with arts and culture, evaluating the impact of their Strategic Cultural Programme. The study investigates the level of community engagement with cultural activities to develop an understanding of people’s perceptions of the public library as a cultural centre and evaluates whether it is attracting new audiences. It aims to identify the degree of institutionalization of cultural programming within NCCL, analysing librarians and staff perceptions in cultural programming and its relationship with the Arts Council. Finally the research aims to assess the benefits of partnering and identify best practices and recommendations in cultural programming within public libraries.

METHODS

The study adopts a mixed methods approach, combining a qualitative and quantitative methodology, incorporating case study elements as it focuses on the case of NCCL strategic cultural programme. A questionnaire was distributed among three library cultural events to understand attendants’ vision on cultural activities. Interviews were carried among NCCL staff, partners and a representative from the Arts Council.

RESULTS

Questionnaire findings show that NCCL users engage with cultural activities held in the library, stating the importance of providing a variety of events and valuing positively their experience. Although they do not consider cultural events as the main reason they visit the Public Library, the majority of respondents highlighted the importance that the public library
promotes cultural activities. NCCL Cultural Programme is embedded in a strategic level and cultural programming is considered within staff structure. Benefits and best practices have been identified, as well as the importance of partnerships. Finally, being merged within the AC contributes in raising the profile of the public library as a cultural hub.

CONCLUSIONS

NCCL Strategic Cultural Programme is an illustrative example of the potential that developing a cultural programme embedded and planned strategically has for a public library service. Cultural activities are increasingly becoming a key measure for the library services and a cultural hub for the community. Audiences value positively engaging with the arts in public libraries. Benefits and best practices have been identified from partnering, as well as Arts Council support. The study identifies a need to develop further promotion in order to reach new audiences as well as gives recommendations, supported by the literature reviewed.
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1. INTRODUCTION

Many public library services have expressed their interest in engaging with arts and culture through cultural and learning events (Monroe, 1980; Robertson, 2005). Nonetheless, although traditionally libraries have hosted arts exhibitions and cultural activities, it is usually noted that these have been limited in scope and tentative in approach, and the relationship with the arts community has been ad hoc (Coalter, 2001; Smallwood, 2014).

The cultural role of the library is closely connected with its educational role in long-life learning (Robertson, 2005). During the years it has moved from activating and interpreting the library’s collection to strengthen life-enhancement (Monroe, 1980). In his widely cited report, Matarasso (1998) identified six broad areas in which social and cultural activities had an impact in their communities, such as personal development, social cohesion, community empowerment, local image and identity, imagination and creativity and health and well-being.

On the other hand, libraries are known for being open to all (Scott, 2011), reaching users across age, gender, class, and cultural and ethnic minorities. In addition, public libraries are much more spread than any other cultural institutions and even art organizations have recognized the importance that libraries have in communities (Raphael, in Smallwood, 2014, vii). Cultural programming provides public libraries with a valuable mean of reaching wider audiences, becoming a key cultural institution in their community (Boaden, 2005).

1.1 Rationale

The impetus for this research stems from an understanding that cultural programming is increasingly becoming a key role of public libraries, yet under researched. Numerous examples of cultural activities are supported by the literature but regularly these activities are presented as one and off events and scholarly research about the topic are scarce. The aims of this research started with the idea to investigate what the role of public libraries in engaging audiences with arts and culture was. Initial research was conducted and a gap in the literature identified. The opportunity came when Nottingham County Council Libraries (from now on, NCCL) expressed their interest in the topic, as they had been running a Strategic Cultural Programme since spring 2013, and therefore it was considered convenient to run some
evaluation in order to determine its impact. The aims and objectives stated in the corresponding section were jointly accorded between the researcher and the Team Manager of Libraries (Reading and Programmes) of NCCL.

1.2 Context

This research is focusing on the Strategic Cultural Programme of NCCL. In NCCL Strategy 2010 – 2014 (NCC, No date), it is stated that NCCL “aim to be at the heart of its community, stimulating and encouraging cultural activities, committed in maximising the use of libraries, developing new audiences, increase community involvement and having positive social, economic and educational outcomes in order to be at the heart of their communities”. Created in 1974, “it has enjoyed a national reputation for excellent and innovative library and archive services” (NCC, No date).

NCCL are divided into four tiers of service provision based on their levels of use, location of the library building and the population served. On top of them stand the three strategic libraries that this research is focusing: Worksop, Mansfield and West Bridgford, which act as the pivotal library of the areas where they are settled. They are characterised by being new designed library buildings, with large multi – use flexible spaces, as well as meeting rooms to hire, gallery spaces, or even a theatre or café, with the objective to create spaces that allow the development of regular programmes of activities “to engage people with reading, learning, heritage and culture” (NCC, No date).

A pilot project was developed between 2010 and 2011 in Worksop Library in partnership with the Arts Council, and served as a basis to develop further the strategic programme. Published as a case study as part of the Arts Nation, a major pilot national programme to investigate models to engage more people with the arts, the study identified new ways of working collaboratively and develop tools and resources aimed to support arts organisations in engaging with audiences (AC, 2014).
1.3 Research Aims and Objectives:

The purpose of this research is to investigate the role of public libraries in engaging audiences with arts and culture in exploring its community building opportunities and partnership with other institutions and organizations within the community from the case study of NCCL. The research will focus specifically on three public library services: Worksop, West Bridgford and Mansfield as well as having a broader picture of the cultural strategic program of the County and which is the role of the Arts Council in promoting arts in libraries.

The objectives of the research are summarized as it follows:

**OBJECTIVE 1**
- To assess, and throughout the objectives, to what extent arts and cultural programming promotes community engagement within Nottinghamshire County community

**OBJECTIVE 2**
- To evaluate the extent to which the cultural strategic programme of Nottinghamshire County Libraries is encouraging new audiences to use the library services of these three communities

**OBJECTIVE 3**
- To investigate the cultural role of the public library. In order to achieve this objective, the research will:
  - Investigate the extent that the cultural strategic programme is changing people’s view of libraries in Nottinghamshire County.
  - Investigate the perceptions of public librarians, community and partners regarding the role of public libraries in arts and cultural programming in Nottinghamshire County Council.

**OBJECTIVE 4**
- To identify the degree of institutionalization of cultural programming within public libraries in Nottinghamshire County Council and analyse how the cultural strategic program fits into the Arts Council vision and the arts sector

**OBJECTIVE 5**
- To assess the benefits of partnership with other cultural and community institutions.

**OBJECTIVE 6**
- To identify best practices and recommendations in cultural programming within public libraries

*Figure 1. Research objectives*
2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Cultural activities have been part of the library function for long time, but traditionally the relationship with the arts has been ad hoc (Coalter, 2001). In keeping current regarding advances in technology, cultural programming advances may have passed unnoticed, not being a focus of scholarly research (Raphael, in Smallwood, 2014, vii).

2.1 Definition: The cultural role of the Public Library

For the purpose of this research cultural and arts programming will refer to any activity presented by libraries that seek to entertain, enlighten, educate, stimulate dialogue and discussion, and involve adult and family audiences (Robertson, 2005). The cultural role of the Public Library springs from the library’s educational mission (Scott, 2011), as centres of expanding knowledge, encouraging people to be active in their communities. Cultural activities encourage thinking and talking about ethics, other cultures, art, history, literature, music, and creative process but public libraries, through cultural programming, also place the arts in a context of all the other cultural and information needs of the community (Meade & Van Riel in Hinton, 1990; Brandehoff, 1997). The library inherent cultural role lies in being the point of access to the world culture. In their joint report, the Public Library and the Arts Committee of Ireland (1998) found that the position of trust enjoyed by libraries provides a reassuring and unintimidating environment, emphasising the suitability of the public library for the practice and enjoyment of the arts. The idea of the public library as a cultural centre is mentioned by most of the research, emphasising its role of widening access, bringing the arts to many people who probably have never experienced them because of location, cost or other cultural and social barriers (Monroe, 1980; Arts Council, 2013; Smallwood, 2014).

In the present research events are differentiated following Smallwood (2014) categorization between Literary Arts, including reading, book, poetry or author events, Visual Arts, like exhibitions and displays, Performing Arts, covering music and theatre events, Creative Arts, for example writing workshops or craft activities, and including as Others, talks and Local Heritage events.
2.2 An overview to the provision of cultural activities in Public Libraries

The provision of the arts in public libraries was early studied in 1974 by D.W. Davis (1974), who traced the origins of non-book activities in Public Libraries through the realization of festivals, exhibitions, or other activities not primarily concerned with books. Davis related the cultural role of the library as heir of the goal of athenaeums, and lyceums of the XVIII and XIX centuries. He emphasised the idea that if libraries confined themselves to books and reading they would be narrowing their public. Citing Charles A. Cutter (in Davis, 1974, 65) stated that “exhibitions attract people to the library who would not otherwise enter its doors”. Therefore, the idea of introducing the arts in libraries to widen its audience is present since the XIX century.

The dawning of the 1990s saw an increased interest in the links between arts and libraries, examining potential partnerships. Brandehoff (1997) emphasised that libraries reported that attendance at some cultural events was larger than other library programs. More recently, Smallwood (2014) gathered numerous successful cultural programming examples in the United States, giving an overview on how the library plays a central role in engaging the community not only the literary arts but also the visual and performing arts. The United States have a long tradition on public programming, supported by the American Library Association Public Programs Office.

2.3 Provision of cultural activities in Public Libraries in England

In England, the provision of arts in Public Libraries has been open to debate since the early 1970s. In 1975, the Library Advisory Councils of England and Wales published a joint report aimed to consider whether it was desirable that public libraries developed as cultural centres, concluding in setting out a series of arguments in favour of using the public libraries as major centres for cultural activities in the communities they serve (LAC, 1975: 18) encouraging library and local authorities to consider the inclusion of these activities in the library. A decade later, the conference “Libraries and the Arts: in action or inaction?” (Coleman, 1987) examined the widespread discussion about the potential for Libraries and Arts partnerships, looking on the benefits for both institutions of such collaboration.
Subsequently, the Heeks’ report (1989) intended to map out the relationship between Public Libraries and the arts in the UK. It was identified that 48% of library authorities had a weak link with the arts, not holding regular arts events other than clubs and book weeks. The final objective was to encourage a greater involvement of Public Libraries in the arts provision and promote effective cooperation.

A decade later “Libraries and the Arts: Pathways to Partnership” (Hicks et al. 2000), aimed to map current art provision within Public Libraries, identify good practice and assess the extent to which partnerships had developed and investigate what scope existed for developing partnerships in art forms apart from literature, building on and extending the mechanics of partnerships already developed, and to see whether there was a role for libraries to play in strengthening the support infrastructure for the arts at local, regional and national level. The report noted that some librarians still regarded involvement in the arts as not being one of the libraries core function and therefore not a priority for resource provision. Nonetheless the report outlined the benefits of partnership and pointed out the importance of having local, regional and national strategies as well as built upon good practices some of them identified in the report. Finally, a report by the Centre for Leisure Research at the University of Edinburgh (Coalter, 2001) highlighted the inclusiveness and safety of libraries and its potential to offer arts organisations access to a socially diverse community of users. Nonetheless it was also emphasised the need for a wider sharing of best practice and more systematic collaborations.

In October 2011 the Arts Council England assumed the responsibilities for the support and development of museums and libraries which had until that date the Museum, Libraries and Archives Council. The principal responsibilities assumed are in encouraging and supporting the development of libraries in order to “empower and enrich people through cultural experience” working together with cultural organisations (AC, 3 October 2011).
2.4 Benefits of cultural programming within the Public Library

Early in the 1980s, Margaret E. Monroe (1981), an adult library services pioneer, carried a research that focused on the cultural role of the Public Library, identifying six functions of the library in fulfilling this role (1981: 12-13):

- To serve the arts information needs of the community.
- To provide a showcase for the arts in the local community.
- To facilitate arts program coordination among community organizations and groups.
- To provide a network of cultural outreach centers for the community.
- To stimulate the consideration of public issues in the light of humanistic values, building such values into the everyday culture of our society.
- To provide the fundamental cultural literacy needed for experience the arts.

On the other hand, benefits of including cultural programming can be distinguished between the benefits for the library itself and for the public who attend the events. Cultural and arts events widen the audiences that visit the library (Eyman, 2014). In hosting these kinds of activities, the library becomes more recognizable as a venue for artistic and cultural programs, gaining a greater visibility within the community, reaching greater numbers of people and building new audiences (Robertson, 2005; Boaden, 2005; Zabriskie et al. 2014). Grieco (2014) emphasized that cultural activities benefit the library in becoming an integral part of the life in the community, maybe even the focal point of culture. In many local authorities, where there are no specific structures for implementing an arts function, libraries have been given this role (Hinton, 1990). In addition, cultural and art activities offer an innovative way for interpretation of the collection, boosts circulation of material related to the program topic, fosters bonding among coworkers, teamwork pride and enthusiasm and network with the profession (Robertson, 2005). It is also emphasized that successful programs can increase visibility of the library among potential community partners as well as favors funding opportunities (Robertson, 2005). In conclusion, cultural activities can strengthen the libraries as a cultural hub, specially serving as cultural centres where there are no alternative agencies or where the mobility of the population is limited (Monroe, 1981).
Public Libraries and the Arts share a common objective in community development and life-long learning (Smallwood, 2014). Benefits of the arts for the community have long been studied and the literature mentions numerous examples on how conducting arts programs inspire learning and creativity, enhances learning experience, interest and enthusiasm, self-expression, team building or improves communication, contributing to personal development (Kay, 2000; McCarthy & Jinnett, 2001; Jermyn, 2001). At the same time the arts are sources of entertainment, enrichment and fulfillment at the individual level, creating at a community level, a more livable environment, a sense of local identity, and develop a positive attitude towards the arts (Kay, 2000; McCarthy & Jinnett, 2001; Boaden, 2005).

The benefits of the arts also contribute in expanding and fulfilling the library’s’ broad civic role (Public Library and the Arts Committee of Ireland, 1998), improving the quality of life of the community (McDonough, 2013), fostering new relationships and breaking downs social isolation, bringing people together and promoting participation and community involvement (Matarasso, 1998; Scott, 2011; Moody & Phinney, 2012). Through programming, public libraries are broadening their community’s cultural understanding and awareness of the world and cultural diversity, increasing tolerance and bringing together people from different cultures (Kay, 2000; Scott, 2011). Cultural programming is redefining the perception of what the library is, “no longer as a storehouse of content, but a place where minds can rally around content” (Levine, in Scott, 2011, 201), and become a community cultural centre (Matarasso, 1998; Robertson, 2005).

2.5 Best practices in cultural programming

The American Library Association has a long record of providing best practice in cultural programming. “Cultural Programming for Libraries: linking libraries, communities and culture” (Robertson, 2005), aimed to be a guidance to excel in cultural programming and help the library to become a cultural hub, providing practical steps and advise in assessing community needs and interests, set goals, establish measurable outcomes and develop partnerships, as well as marketing and funding opportunities. Other support sources is the Public Programs Office website of the ALA (No date): The Programming Librarian, designed to provide online resources related to cultural and community programs such as articles in marketing, fundraising and advocacy, programming initiatives, etc.
Boaden (2005) identified as one of the challenges in cultural planning, the difficulty of engaging with a broad cross section of the community. The literature emphasizes the importance of knowing one’s audience, developing programs according to its interests, assessing trends and needs (Grieco, 2014), knowing about their lifestyles, interests and leisure activities, in order to be able to adapt their programming scheduling, pricing and marketing efforts to the specific needs of the potential audiences (Mc Carthy and Jinnet, 2001). In reaching the underserved, it is important to determine the intended audience of the program, identifying and removing barriers of participation. Robertson (2005) suggests inviting and working with community groups and individuals to identify and attract desired audiences, with consultations occurring regularly, to understand motivations and attitudes.

In order to be effective, managers need to think strategically and embed cultural planning in the library’s strategic planning (Boaden, 2005). Moving from a dependence on grant funds to a regular budget for cultural programming and resources and a restructuring of staff to accommodate the new functions that cultural programming involve are two signs of the institutionalization of cultural programs in the library (Monroe, 1981). Robertson (2005) emphasizes that in order to be effective; programming has to be an intentional part of the library’s mission, being essential a commitment at all levels of management and administration, reason of which advocacy and making the case for cultural programming it is highly important.

Mc Carthy and Jinnet (2001:42) defined a four steps integrative approach in order to build participation in arts and cultural events:

1. “Linking the organizations’ participation building activities to its core values and goals”.
2. “Identifying target groups and learning about them in order to develop appropriate strategies to build engagement”.
3. “Understanding internal and external resources that can influence in building participation”
4. “Establishing processes for feedback and self-evaluation”.

In this sense, an effective planning it is essential in order to set the goals and objectives as well as the evaluation of the progress (Robertson, 2005). Art and cultural programs need to demonstrate why, how and to what degree they are an effective tool in regeneration (Kay,
determining how to measure success, what information will help in determining it through measurable or observable targets.

In order to increase visibility and public awareness about the cultural programs it is necessary to have a strong and structured Marketing and Public Relations plan. Robertson (2005) recommends four actions:

1. Start promoting at least two months in advance.
2. Determine the best communication methods for each audience.
3. Contacting media and using the web as key to get the message out
4. Follow up the press release about a week before the event by faxing a media alert to key contacts.

It has been noted that recently new library buildings and library refurbishment are being built with the vision of libraries as cultural facilities, and apart from incorporating meeting rooms, many new public libraries now include a gallery space and lifelong learning facilities, with contributes in enhancing the library’s role in broad cultural development (Boaden, 2005). Finally Grieco (2014) mentions the importance to allow the programs to evolve and develop according to community interest, as support from the community raises the bar for public programming.

2.6 Partnership with the Arts and other cultural organizations

From the literature reviewed the theme relating to the importance of partnership with the arts and other cultural organizations appears frequently (Hinton, 1990), as good partnerships can be extremely beneficial for both parts as well conceptualized and executed partnerships help in expanding the library’s reach and its ability to serve specific groups in richer ways (Holt & Holt, 2010). Robertson (2005) reported art groups, historical societies and community based organizations as the most frequently collaborators of public libraries in cultural programming. Most of the reports carried out during the 80s and 90s emphasized the need to encourage partnerships (Coleman, 1985; Heeks, 1989; Matarasso, 1998, Hicks et al. 2000) and more recently the Arts Council is committed in fostering partnerships between arts and cultural organizations, including libraries (AC, 2011).
Partnerships allow both the library and the partner to offer improved services to a wider range of people in a more economical way (Burmagen & Hylen, 2014; Goldman & Wedell, 2014). In partnering, libraries can reach new users and engage with current users in a new way, enhancing the presentation of resources to the community by working with already established trust that the partner has built up and maintains, benefiting from the partners existing communications mechanisms, and gaining from the unique expertise of the partner which combined with the library strengths creates new resources and services for both (Crowther & Trott, 2004). By collaborating with community and arts organizations the library is looking outside its walls, expanding its reach and increasing their advocates (Goldman & Wedell, 2014).

The literature gathers numerous examples of excellent partnerships both, with arts organizations and community entities (Matarasso, 1998; Hicks et al. 2000, Moody, & Phinney, 2012; McDonough, (2013). Particularly of interest is the recently published ALA book, Bringing the Arts into the Library (Smallwood, 2014), which provides excellent cases on partnering with arts. As an example, Eyman (2014) highlights how working with the Art Walk Nashua committee allowed Nashua Public Library to develop relationships with artists who might not have otherwise used the library, at the same time stimulated users’ imagination.

On the other hand, partnerships raise the profile of the library service (Goulding, 2009), as successful partnerships show that libraries are good community partners and an essential piece of healthy communities (Goldman & Wedell, 2014). It contributes in making the work of the library known, expanding their reach and increasing their advocates which is key in getting sustainable funding. Partnerships are defined as a winning combination, where all partners benefit from collaborating (Eyman, 2014; Goldman & Wedell, 2014), as both increase their visibility in the community, the audiences they reach and demonstrate the value of interorganizational cooperation (Robertson, 2005; Goldman & Wedell, 2014).

In establishing good partnerships McCarthy and Jinnet (2001:102) identified five characteristics:

1. Choosing organizations with similar or complementary mission

2. Choosing organizations with complementary assets and strengths.


4. Understanding mutual capabilities
5. Maintaining commitment over the long term.

The literature mentions numerous recommendations in carrying successful partnerships:

- Assess the library strengths and benefits that it can offer as a community partner, contributing to make the case of the collaboration (Crowther & Trott, 2004; Robertson, 2005).

- Establish the terms of the partnership (Robertson, 2005), being beneficial to have letters of agreement (Crowther & Trott, 2004) as it defines expectations, clarifies responsibilities and contributes in minimizing misunderstandings and addresses potential areas of conflict.

- Communicate effectively with the partner organization, creating and maintaining a positive working relationship (Robertson, 2005).

- Ensure that the staff feels comfortable about working with the representative of the partnering organization (Robertson, 2005).

- Partnership should be defined in the library’s strategic plan and having it publicly available as it is an effective method of attracting partners and clarifying expectations (Crowther & Trott, 2004).

- Specifically emphasized is the importance of partnership evaluation (McCarthy & Jinnet, 2001; Robertson, 2005; Crowther & Trott, 2004), as allows assessing whether the partnership is working for both parts and if the goals sets are being achieved.

In conclusion, establishing collaborations with arts and cultural organizations, the public library becomes more recognizable as a venue for artistic and cultural programs, assuming a reputation as a prime cultural centre in the community it serves (Eyman, 2014; Zabriskie, 2014). Partnering brings new ideas, greater resources, allowing doing more with fewer, and increases the audience reach of the cultural program.
2.7 Conclusion

The literature supports that cultural activities have been part of the library function for long time but under researched. Benefits of cultural programming have been identified and although scholarly research is scarce, abounding books gathering good examples or short magazine entries, but except from official reports, it has not been identified comprehensive research with serious methodology. This dissertation expects to contribute in the scholarly research of this topic.

Public Libraries are becoming increasingly important as community centers for learning and cultural access (McDonough, 2013). Boaden (2005) identified changes and new roles emerging, as an example, with the manager of Seachange Point Library (Australia), evolving into library and heritage resource centre manager, moving from library planning to a broad range of responsibilities in cultural planning and delivery. On the other hand, challenges are also identified, such as the lack of specialist skills in cultural programming or librarians not having the tools to promote this new role (Boaden, 2005). In this sense, advocacy becomes of greater importance (Scott, 2011), requiring librarians stepping out of their comfort zone and become advocates of this expanded role as cultural hubs (Boaden, 2005).
3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

The research takes an inductive framework, adopting a mixed methods approach, characterized by combining qualitative and quantitative methodology in a single research project (Denscombe, 2012) as it arguably facilitates a better understanding of the research problem than either form of data alone (Creswell, 2014). Case study elements have been also incorporated as it entails the detailed analysis of a single case (Bryman, 2012) in this case the cultural role of NCCL, analysing its strategic cultural program. The data collection strategy is comprised of three methods of investigation: a literature review, a questionnaire, and interviews. In analysing the data a triangulation strategy is taken so that the finding can be cross-checked in order to enhance consistency and accuracy of the results (Bryman, 2012).

3.1.1. Rationale of the Research Strategy

In choosing a mixed methods approach, benefits for the research strategy and outcomes have been identified as it allows to obtain two different perspectives, close-ended and open-ended, to obtain a more comprehensive view and more data about the problem, and providing strengths that offsets the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research (Creswell, 2010). Adopting a triangulation strategy will increase validity and reliability of the results (Bryman, 2012). Objective 6 draws upon the three methods of investigation using a triangulation strategy (Creswell, 2010) to identify best practices and recommendations in cultural programming.

3.2. Methods of Investigation

3.2.1. Literature Review

The literature contributed in analysing relevant research on the role of public libraries in cultural programming, identifying major themes and gaps, and supporting the methodological approach (Connaway & Powell, 2010). The themes reviewed focused on defining the cultural role of the Public Library, giving an overview of cultural activities in public libraries as well as potential partnerships. The existing literature has been critically examined, contributing to develop the research questions as well as linked with the findings and discussions as it demonstrates credibility and contribution of this research project (Bryman,
The literature review was an ongoing process, to keep discovering and relating results with relevant material (Walliman, 2001).

3.2.2. Questionnaire

Questionnaires were distributed among participants of three different cultural library events in order to investigate objectives 1, 2 and 3. The questionnaire was designed using the web-based tool Survey Monkey and distributed in person. The appropriateness of this method has been assessed as it will allow obtaining large number of respondents in different location (Denscombe, 2012).

The questionnaire combined gathering factual data (Q. 1 – 6; 10 – 11) about respondents use of the public library, the cultural events hold in it and other cultural venues; with questions about attitudes, focusing on people’s opinions in attending library events, their level of engagement and the library as a cultural events provider (Q. 7 – 9; 13) its role as a cultural centre within the community (Q. 12) as well as their viewpoint in events cost (Q. 14). In order to investigate participants attitudes a Likert Scale was used (Bryman, 2012) to measure respondents’ intensity of feelings and level of agreement. The final section focused on personal factual questions such as age, gender and level of education (Q. 15 – 17). A copy of the questionnaire is included in Appendix B.

3.2.3 Interviews

Semi-structured face-to-face interviews aim to obtain an insight of which are the opinions and experiences that librarians, community partners and the Arts Council have about the cultural role of the library in order to meet objectives 3, 4 and 5. Qualitative interviewing is particularly useful as a research method for accessing individual’s attitudes and values (Bryne in Silverman, 2006; 114). The rationale of choosing semi-structured interviews is to facilitate flexibility regarding the development of ideas that may appear during the interview (Denscombe, 2012). An interview guide (Appendix D) was elaborated in order to have the sequence of themes to cover in the interview and suggested topics were also pointed to favour openness (Kvale, 1996).

Although focus groups were considered, it was finally discarded as the aim of the research was to assess individual opinions. Disadvantages were considered than could affect the quality and variety of the data gathered, such as a tendency to express agreement than disagreement as well as grouping together work colleagues could cause discomfort among participants (Connaway & Powell, 2010; Bryman, 2012).
3.3. Conducting the research

3.3.1. Conducting the Literature Review

Keyword searches were carried in Scopus, Emerald Management, LISA ProQuest and EBSCO databases. Relevant results were retrieved which were used as a starting point for further browsing and allowed to identify previous studies and literature as well as key authors.

3.3.2. Piloting

3.3.2.1. Questionnaire

Following Bryman (2012) recommendation to pilot the questionnaire, one member of the senior library management of NCCL evaluated it, as having an expert on the topic can help in assessing the validity of questions (Connaway & Powell, 2010). Although, ideally the questionnaire should be pre-tested by selected sample of the participants in the final study (Connaway & Powell, 2010), due to time limitations, it was opted to use a small sample of volunteers (n=2) from MA Librarianship students. Questions that could be easily misunderstood were identified and as a result the wording of some questions was changed.

3.3.2.2. Interviews

Time limitation did not allow to pre-test interview schedules as recommended (Connaway & Powell, 2010). Nonetheless the interview guide was evaluated by the researcher’s supervisor and some changes in the questions wording and order were made. The interviewer became familiar with the interview schedule and themes, as well as with the recording equipment (Connaway & Powell, 2010). As recommended by Kvale (1996) before the interview started, the interviewees were provided with a context, defining the purpose of the study, as well as clarifying key definitions.

3.3.3. Samples

3.3.3.1. Questionnaire

The questionnaires were administered face – to – face to respondents by the researcher. Three library events were selected by the researcher, in agreement with the Senior Library Management of NCCL. The rationale for choosing was the following:

- An event for each one of the three strategic libraries.
• Events that exemplify the diversity of activities that take place in those libraries.

• Events that are expected to attract a wide range of audiences.

• Events expected to be highly attended in order to get a higher level of respondents.

3.3.3.2 Interviews

The interview sample was selected from NCCL staff involved in cultural programming in a strategic level. The library managers of the three strategic libraries where the cultural programme is developed were also selected in order to comprehend the different levels of involvement as well as obtain the opinions of a diversity of staff levels. As for the community partners, the researcher wanted to get experiences from a diverse background, chosen in a way which represented different areas of collaboration, relating also to the variety of events where the questionnaire was distributed: a health community organisation and a local music charity. Finally, the Relationship Manager from the Arts Council for the Midlands was also contacted in order to get the AC perceptions.

3.4. Data Analysis

3.4.1. Quantitative Data

Survey Monkey collected and collated the questionnaire results and its software allowed exporting it into Microsoft Excel for further analysis of the qualitative data. Considering the quantity of quantitative data gathered is small, it was decided not to use more specific quantitative software tools.

3.4.2. Qualitative Data

In analysing qualitative data, a thematic approach has been taken in order to examine the data to extract core themes (Bryman, 2012). The main element of the identification of the themes was through coding each interview transcript, searching for recurrences and patterns in the coded text and links between different codes (Saldaña, 2009). The cyclical coding process defined by Saldaña (2009) has been followed in order to theme and interpret the data, involving a First Cycle and a Second Cycle of coding. The First Cycle is the first stage of coding, involving different methods, with the following being chosen:
In the Second Cycle of Coding data coded is reorganized and reanalysed in order to develop a sense of categorical, thematic, conceptual and/or theoretical organization from the array of the First Cycle codes (Saldaña, 2009). The Second Cycling coding methods used in this research are:

**Figure 2. First Cycle of Coding**

**Figure 3. Second Cycle of Coding**
The last phase involves Post-Coding and Pre-Writing, the “transitional analytic process between coding cycles and the final write-up” (Saldaña, 2009: 185), characterized by focusing strategies in order to prioritize emerging themes and reflect on their essential meanings, and rising above the data, in order to get a richer interpretive meanings.

3.5. Validity and Reliability

The main reason on taking a mixed methods research approach was to increase validity and reliability of the findings, benefiting from the strengths of both, quantitative and qualitative data in order to get better understanding of the topic (Creswell, 2014). In analysing the data a triangulation strategy has been taken, which involves cross–checking the results associated with both methods, improving accuracy of the findings and get a fuller picture (Bryman, 2012; Denscombe, 2012).

It is important to take into account that this research draws from case study elements. External validity and generalizability of case study research has raised concern and generated debate (Bryman, 2012). In this sense this study is focusing on NCCL and the results and conclusions cannot be generalizable and applied to other cases, although it can be considered a starting point for a wider research project.

3.6. Limitations

The research study has its own limitation, the main one being time, which has limited both the number of events attended and the sample of people interviewed. In order to evaluate effectively the impact of cultural programming in NCCL, a long-term project should be conducted as it would increase validity and reliability of the results drawn from this study.

On the other hand, specific methodological limitations have also been detected:

- Questionnaire. Time had an effect on the number of events where the questionnaire was distributed. In addition, each of the events attended was different and that had a consequence on how the questionnaire was distributed. In two cases the researcher asked the questions directly to the participant. As a result of being face to face some bias from the researcher in selecting which person to stop may have been possible. One of the events involved families with under 5 years children going out from a theatre event, which complicated the data collection as parents were busy taking care of their children. In another event, attendants where sitting in groups of four or five
and preferred to answer the questionnaire together, which although they agreed in all the questions it has consequences in the demographic section.

- Interviews. The setting where the interview was carried provided in some cases limitation. Although as it is recommended by the literature (Connoway and Pawell, 2010) silent and conductive places where chosen, it was not always easy to find and external noise or unexpected phone calls. On the other hand, the library's environment on the day proved to be challenging as in some cases it was difficult from the interviewees to assign the same amount of time for the interview. In this case, the interview focused on the topics that were producing more interesting data. In one cases the interview guide was e-mailed.

3.7. Ethics

The research was approved by the Information School Research Ethics Panel from the University of Sheffield. The research was classified as “low – risk” as it did not involve data collection of sensitive topics or participants. During the data collection process, before handing the questionnaire the researcher informed the potential participants of the purpose of the research, what the participant would be asked to do, what data will be collected, what the researcher would do with the data and how participation will be confidential and anonymous. The researcher had also Consent Form documents in case any participant wanted to keep a record of participating (Appendix C). In agreeing to complete the questionnaire respondents were giving their informed consent in being part of the research. As for the interviewees, a consent form was also completed by each participant (Appendix E).
4. FINDINGS CHAPTER

4.1 Questionnaire results

The data presented in this section summarizes the key findings from the questionnaire responses.

4.1.1 Response rate

Overall 38 responses were collected, being respectively 18, out of 70 attendants, for the Creative Arts event; 6 out of 54, for the Music event; and 14 out of 250 for the Theatre event. Response rate is considered satisfactory as total number of participants for the Creative Arts and the Theatre event include families with children and therefore just an adult member of each of the families answered the questionnaire.

4.1.2 Library Use

4.1.2.1 Library membership

The questionnaire asked participants whether they had a library card, and in case not, if after attending the event they were considering on signing for one: 95 % (36) stated that they do have a library card and only 2 respondents (5%, n=2) indicated that not. From this two which answered no, one was considering in joining the library whereas the other one was not.

4.1.2.2 Frequency of use of the Public Library

Participants were asked on their frequency of use of the Public Library: 38 % (14) use the library around 2 or 3 times a month, while 27 % (10) visit once a week. Overall, approximately 70 % (16) of respondents use the library quite regularly.
4.1.2.3 Visiting the library for cultural events

Respondents were asked if they previously had attended any library cultural event, the number of it and the nature of the event. Only 32 % (12) said that they hadn’t attended any library event before and therefore that was their first experience with library cultural events. On the other hand, 68 % (25) were recurrent attendants.

From this 68 %, most of the respondents (79 %, n = 19) had attended between 1 – 3 other library events, being Performing Arts events the more popular (77 %, n=20), followed by a great difference, for creative arts events (27 %, n = 7). Surprisingly, literary events gather just a 12 % (3) of attendants.

4.1.2.4 Opinion on the library event

Part of the questionnaire was designed in order to explore respondents’ opinions on the library cultural event they were attending. In asking to rate their experience, all the respondents were positive about it, with 71 % (27) considered it was Excellent, and 29 % (11) that it was Good. No one expressed a negative opinion about it.
On asking them if they could further explain their answer, 22 of the 38 total respondents answered:

**Evaluation of the event:**
- **Enjoyment:** "very happy"; "felt very entertained"; "children really enjoyed it"; "fantastic experience for all the family"
- **Engagement:** "interactive and imaginative"; "encourages their creativity"
- **Accessibility:** "taking place in the library makes it more accessible"

**Opinions on the delivery/performance:**
- **Performers:** "brilliant sopranos"; "beautiful music and voice"; "quality musicians"; "friendly leaders"
- **Venue:** "excellent facilities and environment"; "good hospitality and friendly"

Figure 4. Attendants' opinion on the event

Generally, responses are consistent with the previous question (Q.7) results, with attendants' evaluation being extremely positive. Respondents were also positive in evaluating the delivery of the event. Two of the respondents specifically mentioned that with the event taking place in the library, it made it more accessible for them. Just one person pointed out the need for more advertisement.

The questionnaire also aimed to investigate the channels of communication asking where they had heard about the event they were attending. One person skipped the question but from the 37 remaining, 35 % (13) were aware thanks to the promotion inside the library (either posters or staff), and another 25 % (9) read about it in the Library What’s On leaflet. A total of 18 % (7) stated they knew about it because someone told them about, whereas a 16% (6) mentioned, they “bumped into” without knowing it was taking place. Only 5% (2) of respondents used the Council Events Newsletter.
Finally the last question focused on assessing the level of engagement of the participants, in a scale from 1 to 5, being 1 “not at all”, and 5 “to a great extent”. Only one respondent refuse to answer, getting a 99% of response rate (Chart 3).

Chart 2. Channels of communication

As for the first question, 31% (11) of the respondents expressed that they developed new skills or learnt something to some extent, rating it in the middle point. Similar amount of respondents (29%, n=10) answered that they didn’t develop new skills at all. Only a 9% (3) stated they learnt something to a great extent. On the other hand, half of the respondents (51...
% (n=19) mentioned they had enjoyed themselves and felt entertained and a 38% (14) rating it as nearly to a great extent. Not one respondent considered they hadn’t felt entertained. Conversely, no one considered they didn’t enjoy the event. Finally, regarding if they had met new people as a result of attending the event, equally responses are detected with both a 17% (6) stating that “not at all”, and another 17% (6) answering “to a great extent”. At the same time, 28% (10) of respondents considered they had met someone to some extent and another 28% (10) nearly to a great extent. Therefore it seems adequate to conclude that more than half of the respondents felt that they had met someone as a result of attending the event.

### 4.1.3 Library as a cultural events provider

#### 4.1.3.1 Type of events

Participants were asked to state their opinion on how important they considered their public library should provide different kind of events. Chart 5 summarizes the results. Surprisingly, creative arts events as well as other activities like, talks and local history events are the two considered as most important by respondents, with a 37% (14) response rate in both cases, followed closely by literary events, with a 32% (12) of the answers.
4.1.3.2 Events recommendations

Nine participants answered the open-ended question about what kind of events they would like their library held.

- Kind of events: "folk music"; "fashion show"; "more children events"; "more interaction with 10+"; "history and authors"
- About scheduling: "evening events"; "regular events"
- Other: "well covered for the town"

Figure 5. Events recommendations

4.1.3.3 Users views on the public library as a cultural institution

The questionnaire asked participants to state their level of agreement to five statements regarding their opinion and use of the public library as a cultural institution. For the first statement, more than half of the respondents (57 %, n= 21) agreed that the Public Library plays a major role as a cultural institution in their community, which increases to nearly 87 %, adding the 30 % (11) which strongly agreed to this statement.

For each of the following statements please indicate your level of agreement:

Chart 5. The Public Library as a Cultural institution
The second statement aimed to assess whether respondents increased their use of the Public Library thanks to attending library cultural events. Interestingly, 39% (14) neither agree nor disagree with the statement, being the same percentage of respondents who consider that their used has increased. On the other hand, Cultural events are not for nearly 50% (18) of the respondents, one of the main reasons why they visit the public library. Nonetheless, around 67% (24) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that public libraries have an obligation to promote the arts, with also a 67% (25) considering that the library should provide art and cultural events.

### 4.1.4 Frequency of use of other cultural institutions

Respondents were asked the frequency they attend other cultural events outside the Public Library in order to assess if they were active consumers of cultural activities. Overall most of the respondents (56%, n=20) stated that they attend other cultural events a few times a year, with just a 14% (5) visiting other cultural institutions 2 or 3 times a month.

![Chart 6. Frequency of use of cultural institutions](chart6.png)
4.1.5. Cost opinion

In order to examine attendants’ opinions regarding charging for the events, respondents were asked whether in case of having paid for the event, what they thought of the cost. In this answer is where the response rate differs more from the rest of the questionnaire, with almost half of the respondents skipping the question. Although the researcher thought that the question made it clear that the participant should only answer if they had paid for the event, the researcher detected that some of the attendants on the free events answered the question too. Overall, 85% (17) of the respondents, whether they paid or not for the event, considered that the cost was the appropriate, with a small 10% (2) even considering it too cheap.

4.1.6 Demographic results

In the end of the questionnaire some demographic questions were asked in order to get some factual personal data about attendants to library cultural events. The following three charts focus on presenting the data gathered regarding the age, gender and level of education of the respondents. The rationale for choosing to collect this data was to know whether the cultural library events were attended by a wide range of people from different ages, gender and levels of education.

![Chart 7: Age demographics](image)
Chart 8. Gender demographics

Chart 9. Education demographics
4.2 Interview results

The following section presents the results of the interviews carried with NCCL staff, two members of partnering institutions, as well as a representative from the Arts Council were also interviewed. A coding process has been taken set out by Saldaña (2009) in order to identify emerging themes and analyze results.

4.2.1 Institutionalization of cultural programming.

The Strategic Cultural Program has been running approximately for a year. One of the interviewees emphasized a change in senior management (from now on SM) which had a “forward thinking”, with a different vision of what libraries were for. At the beginning, a Cultural Programming and Marketing team was created but recently the marketing part had been taken apart, so more time could be spent developing and promoting the cultural program. These changes in the structure had a direct effect on the roles and responsibilities in the SM, with the Principal Librarian focusing only in the cultural part, or the creation of a new position, the Library Events Officer.

In addition, it was pointed out as essential in the developing of this strategic program, a major capital investment the aim of which was to refurnish the three strategic libraries. Cultural programing was considered in the physical development of the buildings, in creating flexible and exhibitions space, as well as a theatre in one of the cases. Library staff from both senior management and library managers emphasized the importance to have these new, adequate spaces.
4.2.1.1 Roles in cultural programming

NCCL have designed three posts in a strategic level of SM in charge of developing the cultural program for the three strategic libraries.

Underneath, the library managers (from now on, LM) of the three strategic libraries have an important role in ensuring that the program takes place in a local basis, being delivered as expected. Promotion is a key part of their role, both, in overseeing staff awareness of the program and making sure that programs are widely available, encouraging people to attend events. In terms of cultural planning their involvement focuses on providing the community background input, thanks to their understanding of the community synergies and demographics.
On the other hand, each library has their own distribution of tasks and responsibilities involving planning and delivering events. Libraries organize also regular events which are not part of the strategic cultural program and in this case, members of the staff have the responsibility of developing the events.

4.2.1.2 Skills and Training

Interviewees were asked which skills they considered were essential for librarians involved in cultural programming. SM emphasized that whether being a qualified librarian or not, it’s more important to have a specific set of skills and understanding of the cultural sector. Other skills mentioned are:

![Skills in cultural programming](image)

**Figure 7. Skills in cultural programming**

In asking if they considered that further training was needed, most of them agreed that it would be beneficial but there is limited training available and time is a factor. SM mentioned that including cultural programming as part of librarians formal training would be useful. Interestingly one interviewee pointed out that cultural program allows librarians and staff to bring and enhance their own hobbies and passions.

Finally, in the library level, LM emphasized the importance of staff awareness on promoting events. The “Creating the Buzz” workshop that the Principal Librarian delivers before each events program is considered useful and beneficial in increasing staff confidence and feeling part of a team.
4.2. 1. 3 Developing a Cultural Program

Planning the Cultural Program

Quarterly meetings are held where SM, LM and staff involved in the activities get together to discuss the next Cultural Program. The SM are in charge of developing the events, contacting the partners and coming up with new ideas but at the same time, these meetings are an opportunity for each of the libraries to suggest events and activities that they believe it would work well in their library. As a LM mentioned, it is “linking community interests with the senior management”.

Events promotion

Events promotion was highlighted by all interviewees, being the printed program (What’s On leaflet) the most valuable channel of communication. The printed program is useful for the staff in the ground to promote the events, as well as it is distributed within other community areas to reach wider audiences. SM mentioned the importance to liaise with the marketing team as it is the one in charge to institutional promotion.

Promotion is a huge role for each one of the three strategic libraries. Once they got the program is their responsibility to promote it within their community. They distribute the program with community partners and other community venues. Taking the program out to the community is one of the main challenges highlighted by LM, as sometimes there are extra expenses for getting the program in local venues. Evidence of the importance of promotion is that LM are constantly thinking on how to get information out to the community. From the interviews different levels of formalization of the promotion process have been detected. A need of clarification of which promotional material the library does locally was mentioned as well as the publicity and promoting materials are sent with enough time to promote the event.
Best practices in cultural programming

A number of recommendations in programming library cultural events have been identified through all the interviews. The following figure highlights the most recurrent:

### Planning

- Consider resources and spaces of each of the strategic libraries.
- Planning ahead and jointly
- Opportunity of each of the libraries to feed on possible events considering the community
- Finding balance of events
- Thinking strategically, consider yearly regular events
- Being collaborative, art of a team

### Community knowledge

- Be aware of opportunities in the community
- Develop the program with our community
- Knowing your audience and potential audience
- "Essential to match what we provide with the local community wants and needs"

### Others

- Being open to new ideas and ways of working
- Importance of reflection in overcome problems
- Staff awareness of the cultural programme
- Valuable partnerships
- Having enough time to promote events effectively

Figure 8. Best practices in cultural programming

Challenges

Challenges whilst programing or delivering the event were frequently mentioned. Budget constraints and funding were mentioned by SM. In addition partnerships were considered challenging in terms of being time consuming and budget negotiation. Other problems encountered involve resources availability and the need to consider public liability and health and safety issues with partners and attendants. In general, from SM, challenges were considered as practical considerations to overcome but experiences from they could learn and build on, without detecting any overarching problems.

On the other hand, LM mentioned challenges more related of the role of each library as:

- Having several events close together can be demanding in getting enough audience for everything.
Lack of communication and therefore importance of knowing the background of the planning.

Programing for the sake of programming.

Mismatch whether the activity is going to work on that library.

Staff awareness of the program considering that there is a considerable amount of part-time staff.

Finally, both SM and LM pointed out the difficulty to engage with some audiences, for example young adult events, which sometimes are covered by other venues but specifically adult working population, generally male.

**Funding**

Most of the events are funded directly from the library’s budget which set out an amount of money destined to strategic events. There is a central budget for Reading and Programing specifically aimed to the three strategic libraries. In addition there are separate budgets for other teams which plan local events, for example the Learning Team or the Children’s’ Team. Charging for events it is only considered where there is a need to support that the activity breaks even.

On the other hand, NCCL are looking for other opportunities of external funding which involves finding innovative and creative ways to fund events. A combination of different approaches has been detected:

- 50/50 funding with partners.
- Sharing benefits and resources with partners, with partners applying for external funding for the event and the library offers the venue and staff resources.
- Arts Council funding streams
- Sponsorship

**Extending the program**

At the moment, considering the budget constrains it is not possible to extend the cultural program across NCCL. Smaller libraries (Level 2) don’t have the capacity (staff, resources, money, space) to hold events. The three strategic libraries are geographically
spread and have the facilities and resources necessary to hold this kind of events. The idea is to act as a focal point for the Level 1 and 2 libraries close to the same geographical area, and delivering events that the people from those communities are willing to travel to. Level 1 hold principally Local events and in some cases that those libraries are being refurnished, it is being considered to get dedicated gallery or flexible spaces. The approach that SM has taken is that focusing on these three strategic libraries does not mean that those libraries are treated better but it is improving the library service for all Nottinghamshire people.

4.2.2 The Library as a Cultural Hub

All librarians interviewed emphasized the library key role in cultural and arts programming. It was noted that although not a new role and events have been programmed for a long time, they were focused on the reading development side. Instead, now, is widely promoted and incorporates different cultural expressions. It is increasingly becoming fundamental and being embedded in libraries’ management and staff structure, getting a higher profile. At the same time, other cultural organizations are seeing the value of partnering with libraries. Finally interviewees highlighted that often libraries are the only or principal culture venue in a community, especially in small towns where there are not many cultural venues, having the potential to become the cultural hub, considering its position and accessibility within the community.

On the other hand, partner organizations interviewed refer to the changing vision of libraries, from the traditional old image of book stacks to engaging with the community through experiencing art, seeing its potential to becoming part of the cultural hub of the community. It was also emphasized the role that partnership has in widening the opportunities of the library and bringing expertise, pointing out that more changes can come up with collaborating.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For the public:</th>
<th>For the library:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• People’s first encounter into culture; attracting people who would not go to strict artistic venue.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Enjoying cultural experience in a different way; Enjoyment in a welcoming environment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Broaden audiences’ horizons; enhance people’s lives; increase people well-being.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• People can stay local.</td>
<td>• Key measure for libraries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Widening library’s role; changing people’s perceptions about libraries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Raising the profile of the library in the community; enhance community engagement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Getting new audiences; increment of visitors, book issues and footfall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Become a cultural hub.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Enhance library offer.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 9. Benefits of the library as a cultural hub
4.2.3 Partnership

4.2.3.1 Reasons

Librarians emphasized two main reasons for partnering: looking for the expertise of the partner institution and the proximity of both institutions, in being community based. On the other hand, partners value the library as a community hub and its accessibility. Among other reasons mentioned stands out the libraries facilities and staff, being a welcoming environment and versatile space, and becoming a channel of reaching out a diverse audience.

4.2.3.2 Process of partnering

Librarians and partners highlighted that each partnership is different; therefore a need to adapt to each situation is essential. At the same time it was also pointed the importance to take risks and “think outside the box” as partnering usually involves new and challenging ways of working.

Partnerships are usually initiated by the SM of NCCL, although each of the strategic library have their own input regarding local community institutions, having noted an increment of partners who contact them locally. Library interviewees mentioned that at the beginning some partners express concern in collaborating with the library as they didn’t see the need or thought it could be not worth it. In this sense, advocacy has become an important tool for librarians in encouraging potential partners.

Usually initial meetings are held in order to explore whether the partnership is going to be successful and decide each ones responsibilities. In the cases gathered for this study, the partnership institution brings the expertise but events are co-organized, co-produced and co-run, by both the library and the organization. In one of the cases it was emphasized the importance to share channels of promotion in order to reach a wider audience.

Evaluation:

Partnership evaluation consists of gathering feedback from the events evaluation cards and audience numbers. Both partners emphasized the importance of being reflective and in engaging in conversation with attendants in order to get feedback. Usually there is no formal evaluation or regular post events meetings but it is managed in ad hoc basis, depending of the partnership. Having a formal evaluation was considered by NCCL senior management as useful in helping to set standards when looking for quality partnerships, as well as spot possible not successful partnerships in an early stage, but time was a constrain in doing it.
### 4.2.3.2 Benefits

The following figure (10) categorizes the main benefits of partnering by stakeholders identified by interviewees:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>For local audiences</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Cultural enrichment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Varied forms of feeling entertained</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Making music more readily accessible by being in close proximity to audiences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Different and new kinds of engagement with the arts works</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Break barriers down</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• &quot;Widening opportunities for audiences to appreciate diverse styles of jazz music&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>For performers/musicians/volunteers</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Networking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learning new skills: &quot;Artistic expression growth&quot;; &quot;develop confidence&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Impact on their health and well-being</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Raising awareness of their potential</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• &quot;Developing the careers of local jazz artists&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>For partners</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Networking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increase institutions' visibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Develop new audiences</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Build further skills and experience of the organizations' staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Develop an understanding of what local audiences' value</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Growth of working relationships with local libraries to mutual benefit</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Strengthen team working</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Unexpected benefits</td>
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<td>• Develop new venues or sources of funding</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>For the library as a venue</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>• Brings expertise from the partner in programming quality events</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Allows to program a diversity of events</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Develops publics' perceptions of libraries as cultural hubs of the community</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Promote community engagement</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Sharing resources funding, marketing and promotional channels</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Develops new audiences</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Networking</td>
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**Figure 10. Benefits of partnering**
4.2.3.3 Best practices:

Best practices have been identified by responses given by the interviewees, which are presented in the following figure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Best practices in partnering</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Looking for the common ground</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Being a &quot;win-win&quot; situation for both parts</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Foster trust and equal relationship</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Link in when there is an opportunity</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Feel appreciated by the other organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Clarify responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Be aware that every library/partner is different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Good communication that fosters openness and transparency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Keep regular contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Team working in sharing success, feeling of working together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Be realistic on what you can do and offer. Not being too ambitious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Understand each other’s possibilities and procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Having a local knowledge, understanding synergies and attitudes of each community.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 11. Best practices in partnering

4.2.3.4 Challenges.

Challenges were also identified, considered as a way of positive learning. One of the library partners specifically mentioned the newness about the partner relationship. Other challenges noticed were:

- Building audiences can take time
- Misunderstand expectation
- Resources constrains
- Partnerships are time consuming.
- Consider each other’s procedures and finding the way to merge together, as sometimes each partner has their own priorities
4.2.3.5. Conclusions

Both NCCL and the partner institutions consider beneficial their collaboration, having developed a positive trustful relationship. Partnership work is becoming more visible within the community and it is breaking the traditional, stereotypical perceptions of a library, as a quiet space and focused on its reading role, incrementing the number of institutions interested in partnering with the library. Long term partnerships were preferred as it creates a more embedded culture in the library. Finally, no significant needs for improvement were mentioned although one partner did mentioned the need to reward performers when they are volunteers, as well as linking more in an strategic level in order to feed and exchange ideas so it can influence them.

4.2.4. The Arts Council and Nottinghamshire County Libraries.

Libraries merged with the Arts Council (from now on, AC) in 2011, being before under the Museum, Libraries and Archives Council. The AC representative interviewed pointed out the differences of approach that the AC have with the former MLA regarding libraries. Previously it was more from a leadership point, in terms of setting standards and measuring them whereas now libraries are more embedded in an strategic level, included in policies and the AC acts more as a development agency, with libraries, museums and galleries considered “on a par” with the arts.

The interviewees’ role was Relationship Manager for Libraries for the Midlands, being in charge of broadening the knowledge of cultural organizations of the area and support Public Libraries collaboration with the arts. The interviewee emphasized the importance of the role in acquiring a broader look, covering a vast geographical area, where synergies sometimes are not the same as regional boundaries.

4.2.4.1 Grants for the Arts Libraries fund

The Grants for the Arts is a three years flexible fund intended for encouraging all the arts forms in libraries, funding arts and creative activities on ad hoc basis. Before the AC took over libraries, most of the activities were reading based, and even if libraries were eligible, the AC got very few applications for funding.

In being under the Arts Council, the interviewee mentioned that the process of application has become easier, and although it is noted that it took a while for libraries to get the confidence to apply and built relationships with cultural organizations, the number of application has increased. The interviewee considered this shows libraries are becoming more
confident, noting an increasing quality and success of the projects presented. The main criteria in which the projects are assessed are: artistic quality, community engagement and public benefit, management of the activity and financial set up. The interviewee mentioned that libraries usually do well in the management and finance part but a need for support with demonstrating the artistic quality and audience development and community engagement. The interviewee believes that librarians have those skills and knowledge but they need to get more confidence. That is where the support from the AC comes in giving advice pre application, looking at their strengths and suggesting partnerships. The Grants for the Arts funds contributes in demonstrating libraries as cultural organizations. In addition, connections between cultural organizations are stronger, fostering an ongoing relationship that goes further from the funding period.

Challenges were also identified by the interviewee, highlighting getting a balance between arts responsibilities and the “wider non arts side of libraries; libraries capacity to see the arts as a way to deliver their other priorities, noting some resistance to the idea of focusing on the arts, lack of confidence by some libraries in the application process, and the continuous changing structures of local authorities and councils. Finally the interviewee emphasized the good relationship with NCCL, valuing positively Nottinghamshire attitude in being open to cultural activities provision, taking advantage of the AC support.

4.2.4.2 Nottinghamshire view of Arts Council support

SM consider the role of the AC very important as it brings the expertise on different kind of audiences to consider when programming, as well as its linking position between cultural institutions. Librarians expressed satisfaction in being part of the AC, seeing it as a natural progression and emphasizing that reading is an art form and being under the AC is “where we fit”. NCCL value positively the Relationship Manager support through the grants application process SM highlighted the lack of time to apply properly, considering it a hard process and time consuming. Interviewees emphasized that in being covered by AC helps in raising the profile of the library as a cultural centre. Other benefits highlighted were the facilities in networking and accessing potential partners. On the other hand, it was also mentioned that there is a still long way to go, and that more tailored workshops about programming and cultural awareness as well as more network opportunities would be useful.
4.2.5 Conclusions

Findings show that NCC library users engage with cultural activities held in the library, visiting it more frequently than other cultural venues. Respondents also stated the importance to provide a variety of events, valuing positively attending library events, and although they do not consider cultural events as the main reason they visit the Public Library, the majority of respondents agreed that it is important that the public library promotes cultural activities.

Levels of engagement vary depending on the activity. NCCL Cultural Programme is embedded in a strategic level, having a designated team, with the three strategic libraries having a community knowledge input. Interviewees emphasized the importance of promotion in order to reach audiences but also staff awareness. Benefits and best practices in cultural programming have been identified, as well as the importance of partnerships. Finally, it has been identified that being merged within the AC is raising the profile of the library as a cultural hub, with NCCL engaging considerably with the arts, compared with other libraries.
5. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings from the questionnaire and interviews together with the literature. Each subsection relates to one of the objectives of the research, stated in the Introduction.

5.2 Objective 1: NCCL and community engagement

Enhancing community engagement was mentioned by interviewees as one of the main benefits identified, being assessed by an increment of the number of visitors, book issues and footfall when possible, in accordance with the literature (Robertson, 2005). These findings are also consistent with the examples that Smallwood (2014) gathered in engaging with a variety of arts forms. Comparing it with the questionnaire results, it seems that library users engage actively with cultural and arts events programmed at NCCL, as 68% of the respondents were recurrent attendants, most of them (79%) having attended between 1 and 3 different activities. Although attendants engage mainly with performing events (50%), all arts forms are well attended. Surprisingly, performing events were not among the ones that participants considered more important but they felt neutral about it, being slightly considered more important, literary, visual, creative arts and other events related to local history.

Interestingly, a considerable amount of participants (39%) feel that their use of the public library had increased as a result of attending library cultural events. Controversially, when asked whether they believed it was one of the main reasons why they visited the public library, about 41% disagreed. Nonetheless the results are consistent with Eyman (2014) where 20% of customers viewed arts exhibitions as one of the main reasons they visited the library, being a 19% in the present research. Although not being a major reason, the results are significant enough to state that cultural activities are becoming an important role of the public library (Smallwood, 2014).
Related to community engagement, previous research highlights the benefits of arts and cultural programs in social development and community empowerment (Matarasso, 1998; Kay, 2000 & Scott, 2011) aligning with the public library educational mission (Robertson, 2005; Scott, 2011), which is supported by the findings of this research. Respondents were extremely positive about the events they had attended, with more than a 70% considering it excellent. Similarly, participants were extremely positive when asked to what extent they had felt entertained. Not to a great extent but also considered positively, meeting new people and developing a new skill or learnt something was also mentioned. Partnership also plays a key role allowing a richer and meaningful engagement (McCarthy and Jinnet, 2001; Holt & Holt, 2010). Interviewees identified how partnering brings allows a different kinds of engagement with the arts and the community. Benefits of partnership in enhancing engagement are going to be discussed in more detailed in Section 5.7.

Librarians also pointed out the importance of knowing the library’s community in order to be aware of potential opportunities to engage and develop the program, being essential to match the programme with the local community wants and needs. In accordance, McCarthy and Jinnet (2001) emphasized two main steps in order to enhance engagement with the arts; to link activities to the organizations core values and goals, to gain knowledge about the community in order to develop appropriate strategies to build engagement. Senior management of NCCL identified the key role that the library managers of the three strategic libraries have in providing the community background, valuing positively their understanding of the community synergies and demographics, allowing to develop programs according to community interests (Grieco, 2014).

Nonetheless, interviewees pointed the difficulty to engage with some audiences, especially with young adults and male adults. Questionnaire demographics reflect also these findings, as the majority of respondents were female. Boaden (2005) emphasized that in order to be effective and engage with a broad section of the community, events should reflect local interests and cultural aspirations.
5.3 Objective 2: Attracting new audiences

The idea that developing a cultural programme widens the potential audience of the Public Library is constantly mentioned along the literature (Monroe, 1981; Brandehoff, 1997; Boaden, 2005; Eyman, 2014). Accordingly, all librarians interviewed mentioned attracting new audiences as one of the main benefits of holding a wide range of activities within the library. In order to assess whether Nottinghamshire libraries were reaching new audiences, the questionnaire asked to participants if they had a library card and their frequency of use of the public library. Interestingly, the majority of respondents (95%) had a library card, and were frequently users of the library. From the questionnaire results it would be precipitated to affirm that cultural activities are reaching new audiences which seems it differs from the literature and interviews findings. Nonetheless these findings could be a result of the kind of events investigated, with two of them getting quite a regular audience. In addition, the questionnaire did not ask for how long they had been library users, and therefore there is the possibility that they had join the library recently.

On the other hand, it is acceptable to state that users visit more frequently their public library than other cultural venues. Respondents highlighted that by taking place in the library, cultural events are more accessible, which is in accordance with librarians perceptions on holding cultural activities in a library setting, mentioning that it is likely to be “people’s first encounter with culture”. Therefore it is a positive opportunity for audiences to stay local. It is also worth mentioning that from the literature review no significant study has been identified which compares peoples’ use of cultural venues and cultural activities in libraries.

5.3.1 Importance of promotion

In attracting and increasing audiences, the importance of promotion is highlighted. Interviewees expressed concern in reaching out the community outside the traditional library’s user base, and therefore new methods of communication with the community are being developed. Robertson (2005) emphasized the need to have a structured Marketing and Public Relations plan. NCCL work with the Marketing council team for general promotion through Websites, mailing list and the design of the printed program, but it is each of the libraries that lead the publicity on the ground. Understanding and determine the best community methods for each audience (Robertson, 2005) is recommended as a best practice, and the local
knowledge that the three strategic libraries have of their community is essential to get to unreached audiences.

Even though the three strategic libraries are developing different structured promotion plans to get out to the community, the questionnaire results show that a significant amount of respondents heard about the event when visiting the library. These findings can be related to the reason why most of the participants had a library card and were frequent users of the library. On the other hand, these results prove that the “Creating the Buzz” workshop has been extremely positive.

5.4 Objectives 3: The cultural role of the Public Library

Questionnaire results show users perceptions of the Public Library as a cultural centre, with the majority of the respondents (87 %) agreeing in the major role as a cultural institution that the Public Library plays in their community. Supporting this statement, more than half of attendants of the events considered that public libraries had an obligation to promote the arts, not focusing exclusively in reading and book events but providing a wide range of activities. Even though literary arts are still considered one of the most important activities offer; creative, visual and performing activities, as well as local events are extremely valued by the public, all of them sharing a comparable level of importance. The literature reviewed, especially the cases gathered by Smallwood (2014), share a similar users vision engaging with a wide diversity of activities.

Emphasized also through the literature review are the benefits that having a wide range of cultural events have for the audiences. Similar benefits have been identified through the questionnaire and interview results such as encouraging different kind of engagement, increasing creativity, self-expression and participation (Kay, 2000; McCarthy & Jinnet, 2001; Jermyn, 2001; Smallowood, 2014), having varied forms of feeling entertained, enriching the quality of people’s lives (Jermyn, 2001; Boaden, 2005), enhance community involvement and communication, encouraging people to meet and interact during the events (Matarasso, 1998; Scott, 2011; Moddy & Phinney, 2012).

All interviewees agreed on the key role that cultural programming is playing nowadays in the public library service. Being merged under the AC, demonstrates the importance that the arts play as a fundamental function of the library and seems a natural progression considering the progressive discussion that the cultural role of the Public Library has had over the past decades. The idea that it is not a new function is consistently expressed by
interviewees, considering that at the beginning libraries where focused more on the reading development side.

In encouraging libraries in their cultural and creative role as well as advocating for partnerships (AC, 2013), the AC has set the Grants for the arts Libraries fund, investing in projects of artistic quality developed by public libraries working together with cultural organizations and that have a public benefit for the community. The AC strategy can be related to the mission of The Institute of Museum and Library Service in the USA, where collaboration between museums and libraries had been more prevalent (Gibson et al., 2007). Museums and libraries share common goals of public education and community development (Gibson et al., 2007) and the IFLA (Yarrow et al. 2008) remarked that they would be natural partners for collaboration, particularly at the local municipal level.

Therefore, being part of an institution as the AC was positively viewed by Nottinghamshire librarians, considering favorably their support in raising the profile of the library as a cultural centre thanks to the funding opportunities provided and facilitating networking with arts organizations. Nonetheless this relationship has the potential to go further, and librarians expressed ways of support that would help them in fulfilling their cultural role.

Interviews highlighted that cultural activities are becoming central on the provision of public libraries, and that are an innovative way to contribute in the delivery of the other service priorities, not only the artistic and cultural side but also as a center of information provision and access, relating to its educational mission (Scott, 2011) and as a community centre (Matarasso, 1998). The position of trust enjoyed by libraries, being more accessible, welcoming, an unintimidating environment by users, and its knowledge of the community are seen as advantageous reasons for partners and the Arts Council to collaborate with the library in delivering arts activities as well as it is emphasized by librarians as a means of advocacy among partners and the community. These findings are consistent with the literature which emphasized that bringing the arts into the library can contribute in breaking down social, widening access to the arts to people who hardly engage with other cultural institution, because of location, cost or other barriers (Monroe, 1980; Matarasso, 1998; Arts Council, 2014; Smallwood, 2014). On the other hand, it seems that the regard manifested by some librarians of the involvement of the arts as a core function more than a decade ago (Hicks et al. 2000) it is not present among the staff of NCCL, but the contrary, is becoming fundamental and embedded in the Nottinghamshire County Library’s management and staff.
structure, being widely promoted and strategically developed. Partners also highlighted the changing vision of libraries.

Finally, questionnaire respondents consider that cultural events in the library are more accessible for them. In this sense librarians interviewed believe that the library has the potential of becoming the local cultural hub of the community, allowing people to stay local in the enjoyment of culture. These finding correlate with the literature, where it is also emphasised that in small towns where there are not many cultural venues, the public library can fulfil this role, stepping in the cultural needs of the community (Monroe 1981; Boaden, 2005; Grieco, 2014).

5.5 Objective 4: Institutionalization of cultural programming.

In considering the level of institutionalization of Nottinghamshire Strategic Cultural Programme, Monroe’s study (1981) has been taken as a starting point, as she stated two indicators which reveal the level of institutionalization:

- Moving from a dependence of grand funds to a regular budget for cultural programming and resources
- Staff restructure to accommodate new functions involved in cultural programming.

In this sense, NCCL have a regular budget which sets out an amount of money destined to strategic cultural events. Nonetheless, looking for innovative funding opportunities it is considered essential in order to fund more quality events, seeking sharing funding with partners, grants, or sponsorship. On the other hand, NCCL have been going under staff restructure in order to embed cultural planning into their structure. At the beginning, Cultural Programming and Marketing were part of the same team, with recently the Marketing team being taken apart, allowing to focus exclusively about developing and promoting the cultural program. At the same time, new roles had raised as the post of the Library Events Officer, responsible of thinking culturally and creatively, looking into new ways of cultural engagement, equivalent on the role of Programming Librarian in the USA (ALA, No date). In addition, cultural programming was considered during the physical development of the three strategic libraries buildings with the creation of a flexible area or designated exhibition spaces. The benefits of having these new spaces are emphasized by librarians and it is noted in the literature by Boaden (2005) contributing to enhance the library’s role as cultural venues.
Having a superstructure designed to plan strategically the cultural programme is recommended by the literature and having a specific team, also shows commitment by the service in developing quality and regular programs of events (Boaden, 2005), becoming integrated in the library’s mission (Robertson, 2005). For NCCL, the Cultural Programme, has become a key measure for success in par with book issues or footfall.

Librarians viewed positively having regular meetings involving the strategic Reading and Programmes team, library managers, and other staff involved in developing and delivering activities where they could discuss ahead and jointly the events for the following programme. These meetings are valued as an opportunity for each of the libraries to feed on possible events considering their knowledge of each of the communities, correlating with the literature (Robertson, 2005; Smallwood, 2014) on the importance of having a structured planning process. Nonetheless, although this emphasis, it is worth pointing that from the literature review there are no examples of a strategic cultural program that had been running for a considerable period of time. Therefore most of the literature recommendations refer to unique or short period of events (Brandehoff, 1997; Robertson, 2005; McDonough, 2013; Smallwood, 2014), with the majority of the literature focusing on benefits of cultural programming more than the actual process of it (Coalter, 2001).

5.6 Objective 5: Partnerships

Both the literature reviewed and interviews highlighted the importance of collaboration with the arts and other cultural organizations being beneficial for both institutions (Holt & Holt, 2010). Librarians seek for expertise whilst partners look for the accessibility of the library as a community venue, and both emphasized the importance to be a winning combination for both institutions, being consistent with the findings on the literature review (Eyman, 2014; Goldman, et al. 2014)

The reports identified in the literature review showed how during the last two decades an increasing interest has been put on the benefits of partnerships not only with community institutions but also with arts organizations (Coleman, 1985; Heeks, 1989; Matarasso, 1998, Hicks et al. 2000). From the librarians and partners interviewed, some benefits for both institutions have been identified which correlate with the ones mentioned in the literature:

- Bringing expertise in programming quality events (Crowther & Trott, 2004; Eyman, 2014)
• Enhance the variety of activities and resources (Crowther & Trott, 2004)

• Increase visibility of both institutions (Goldman et al., 2014)

• Discover innovative and sharing sources of funding (Burmagen & Hylen, 2014; Goldman et al., 2014).

On the other hand, other benefits not specifically identified in the literature were also stated such as:

• Opportunities for networking.

• Developing new audiences.

• Building further skills and staff development, increasing teamwork.

Partners also emphasized in the interviews the impact that partnering with the library has in their own volunteers and artists, increasing their artistic growth, developing their confidence in displaying or playing in the library, having an impact on their health and self-esteem.

McCarthy and Jinnet (2001) and Yarrow, et al. (2008) defined similar steps and best practices on the process of partnering, some of them identified in the interviews. In the case of NCCL, partnerships are usually initiated by the Reading and Programmes Team, although an increment of organizations approaching the library has been noted which leads to conclude that library’s advocacy for partnerships is being successful. In partnering, both institutions look for a common ground between them. Sharing a similar vision or complementary mission is emphasized by McCarthy and Jinnet (2001). Initial meetings are carried in order to establish the terms of the partnership, where possibilities and responsibilities are explored so misunderstandings are minimized, correlating with the recommendations mentioned by Robertson (2005) and Crowther and Trott (2004). Highlighted by all interviewees is to ensure and open communication that fosters openness and transparency, in order to create a positive working relationship (Robertson, 2005).

Finally the literature emphasized the role of partnership evaluation to assess the success of the collaboration. All the studies analyzed (McCarthy & Jinnet, 2001; Robertson, 2005; Crowther & Trott, 2004; Yarrow et al. 2008) pointed that evaluation allows to assess whether the partnership has work for both parts and if the goals set had been achieved. Although Nottinghamshire senior management is aware of the benefits of having a formal evaluation, at
the moment, it is managed in an ad hoc basis more informal, mainly consisting of gathering feedback from attendants of the events and reflecting on each of the partnerships rather having regular meetings afterwards. Being time consuming has been mentioned as the main challenge on not carrying this kind of evaluation.

5.7 Conclusion

The discussion highlights the contribution of this research; the cultural role of the Public Library has long been studied but has focused mainly in investigating benefits and best practices. Therefore, the literature is limited in scope regarding audiences’ perceptions and engagement with cultural activities as well as in attracting new audiences. The research brings a new vision on cultural programming, being more embedded and institutionalized within NCC library service, moving from the one and off activities gathered in the literature. Perceptions and outcomes of library services recently being included under the AC are also examined as well as the value of partnering with arts and community organizations.
6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusions that can be drawn from the results of this research, discussing how the research aims and objectives have been met. The contribution in the topic is identified and recommendations regarding cultural programming to improve NCCL practice and further research are identified.

6.2 Contribution to the topic

As emphasised in the literature review, research regarding cultural activities in public libraries is scare. Much of the previous literature focuses mainly in providing successful examples of ad hoc events that had taken place in a library setting, identifying benefits and best practices. Nonetheless, no scholarly research has been encountered in relation to a strategic cultural programme similar to the one developed by NCCL. Furthermore, whilst the existing body of literature mentions repeatedly the benefits that cultural events have for its audiences, no systematic study has been done in investigating public perceptions and opinions regarding the role of the public library as a cultural centre for its community. Therefore this study makes a significant contribution to the topic, providing a comprehensive overview on the cultural role of the NCCL, becoming a starting point for further research. On the other hand, benefits and best practices identified in the literature review correlate to the findings of this research. The study has also highlighted the importance of partnership work in providing a varied and quality cultural programing, being consistent with the existing literature, as well as contributed in investigating the significance for public library services n being under the umbrella of the Arts Council.

6.3 Meeting the Aims and Objectives

The research has successfully achieved its aim of investigating the role of Nottinghamshire County Council Libraries in engaging audiences with arts and culture in exploring its community building opportunities, partnership with other institutions and organizations within the community, and its relationship with the Arts Council, focusing on the three strategic
libraries where the Cultural Programme is developed. Findings of this research show that cultural programming is becoming a key role of Public Libraries.

**OBJECTIVE 1. NCCL and community engagement**

The study has shown that NCCL users engage actively with cultural activities within the three strategic libraries examined. Although, attendants engaged primarily with performing arts, they consider that the library should provide a wide range of cultural activities. Attending library cultural events has contributed in increasing peoples’ use of their public library, although it is not considered as the main reason why they visit the library. The findings clearly show that cultural activities are enhancing community engagement, being a place where people interact, enjoy and learn, contributing to social development and community empowerment. Some difficulties in engaging with specific audiences have been detected, and a need to develop further ways of attracting them has been identified.

**OBJECTIVE 2. Attracting new audiences.**

Developing a cultural programme is recognized by the scholarly literature and librarians as a mean to widen the audience of the Public Library. In this sense, findings from the questionnaire impede to affirm this statement; at least on the events where the questionnaire was carried, the service is not reaching new audiences, as the majority of respondents had a library card and used the library frequently. Nonetheless cultural activities are a valuable activity for libraries to engage with as they are more accessible for the public. The findings emphasized the importance of promotion and understanding the library’s community in order to engage with unreached audiences.

**OBJECTIVE 3. The cultural role of the Public Library.**

The public library is increasingly seen as a cultural centre within local communities. Not only the literature highlighted the increasing role that the library has in promoting the arts and culture but also Nottinghamshire library users are seeing their public library as a focal cultural venue. As highlighted in the literature, findings from data collection and analyses have identified the benefits that having a wide range of cultural events have for the library and its audiences, becoming a way of measure

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success and contributing in the delivery of the other service priorities. Merging library services under the Arts Council umbrella, is raising the profile of public libraries as cultural venues, supporting and encouraging them in fulfilling this role, at the same time is increasingly considered as a partner institution for arts organizations.

**OBJECTIVE 4. Institutionalization of cultural programming**

Cultural programming is becoming fundamental and embedded in NCCL management and staff structure, being widely promoted and strategically developed; having a regular budget for cultural programming. NCCL has a designated team made of three members, being their main role to set the strategic direction, create and develop the cultural programme. Regular quarterly meetings take place with the representatives of the three strategic libraries where they contribute with their community knowledge. Having a designated or flexible space to carry events it is emphasized by the findings of the research as it contributes in seeing the library as a cultural venue. In this sense, cultural programming was considered during the physical development of the three strategic libraries buildings of NCCL. Along with the literature, findings identified best practices in developing cultural events in the public library. Nonetheless, the literature is scare in providing examples of Public Library services having strategic regular cultural activities, and in this sense NCCL Strategic Cultural Programme stands out as an example of an institutionalized cultural programme.

**OBJECTIVE 5. Partnerships**

The research highlighted the importance of collaboration with community, arts and other cultural organizations being beneficial for both institutions. Benefits range from the library and partners themselves to the audiences and performers of the events. Best practices have been identified from librarians and partners experiences, comparing them with the recommendations mentioned in the literature in order to overcome challenges.

**OBJECTIVE 6. Best practices and recommendations.**

The study has identified best practices and recommendations in analyzing data collected from the interviews and comparing it with the literature reviewed. Based on the findings of the research, the recommendations are forwarded in section 6.4.
6.4 Recommendations

6.4.1 Recommendations for NCCL

- In order to reach new audiences outside the library user base, it is recommended that NCCL determines the best communication channels for each audience (Robertson, 2005) and develops appropriate strategies to build engagement considering the target group characteristics (McCarthy and Jinnet, 2001). The literature also points out the importance to consult regularly the community in order to identify attitudes, interests and synergies (Boaden, 2005).

- A need of clarifying tasks regarding events promotion has been identified by interviewees. It is recommended to create promotion guidelines which would contribute in a more efficient publicity of events and could increase audiences reach.

- Keep building librarians’ skills regarding cultural programming and promotion as staff awareness is recommended as it contributes in engaging with audiences (Hinton, 1990).

- Formal partnership evaluation is recommended to ensure that collaboration is working for both parts. Guidance in carrying evaluation has been mentioned through the study, being recurrently mentioned by the literature reviewed.

6.4.2. Recommendations for further research

- The research could be developed further through a larger scale study, involving an extended period of time, focusing for example on one of the quarterly strategic cultural programmes, to develop a more detailed picture of the extent on which cultural activities are changing people’s view of public libraries, allowing to investigate audiences perceptions in depth through a varied methodology (e.g. focus groups, interviews, etc.).

- Investigation through other in-depth studies from different public library services could be beneficial towards developing greater understanding of the cultural role of the public library.

- Further research into the relationship between public library services and the Arts Council would be beneficial in identifying ways of improving and strengthen the relationship.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDICES

Appendix A. Information School Ethics Committee: Certificate of Approval

Information School Research Ethics Panel

Letter of Approval

Date: 3rd June 2014

TO: Mercè Pujadas Bartes

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

Title: Bringing the Arts into the Library: An evaluation of the role of Nottinghamshire County Council Public Libraries in engaging new audiences with arts and culture.

Submitted by: Mercè Pujadas Bartes

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: 3rd June 2014

Dr Angela Lin
Research Ethics Coordinator
Appendix B. Questionnaire

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<tr>
<td><strong>1. Do you have a library card?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>☐ Yes  ☐ No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. If you answered NO, would you be interested in joining the library after this event?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Yes  ☐ No  ☐ Maybe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. How frequently do you usually visit the public library?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ More than once a week  ☐ Once a month  ☐ Less than once a year  ☐ Once a week  ☐ A few times a year  ☐ Never before today  ☐ 2 or 3 times a month  ☐ Once a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Have you attended other library cultural events?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Yes  ☐ No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. If YES, how many?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ 1-5  ☐ 6-9  ☐ More than 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6. If YES, what kind of events have you attended?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Literary Arts (e.g. Books &amp; Reading, Poetry events)  ☐ Visual Arts (e.g. Exhibitions)  ☐ Performing Arts (e.g. Theatre, Music, Film events)  ☐ Creative Arts (e.g. Writing workshops, Craft events)  ☐ Other: Talks, Lectures, Local History events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7. Please rate your experience of attending today’s event:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Excellent  ☐ Good  ☐ Adequate  ☐ Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please explain your answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8. Please state to what extent do you believe the library should provide the following events:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literary Arts (e.g. Books &amp; Reading, Poetry events)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Arts (e.g. Exhibitions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performing Arts (e.g. Theatre, Music, Film events)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Arts (e.g. Writing workshops, Craft events)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: Talks, Lectures, Local History events</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9. Are there other cultural events that you would like to see in your local library?

10. Where did you hear about this event?
- Programme
- Library Staff
- Events email
- Facebook
- Word of mouth
- Others (please state):

11. How often do you attend other cultural events outside the public library?
(e.g. visiting museums/exhibitions, going to the theatre/concerts, etc.)
- More than once a week
- Once a month
- Less than once a year
- Once a week
- A few times a year
- I don’t visit other cultural events
- 2 or 3 times a month
- Once a year

12. For each of the following statements, please indicate your level of agreement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural events are one of the main reasons why I visit the public library</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe the Public Library plays a major role as a cultural institution in my community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My use of the Public Library has increased thanks to attending library cultural events</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Libraries have an obligation to promote the Arts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Libraries should focus on their book/reading role and leave the arts to other cultural institutions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. As a result of attending the event, to what extent have you:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>To a great extent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developed a new skill or learnt something new?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyed yourself, been entertained?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met new people?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14. If you paid for any of the events you have attended, what did you think of the cost?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Too expensive</th>
<th>Cost appropriate</th>
<th>Too cheap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

15. Which age group do you belong to?

- 18-25
- 26-40
- 41-50
- 51-60
- + 50
- Prefer not to say

16. Are you male or female?

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

17. What is the highest level of qualification you have received?

- GCSE
- A Level
- Undergraduate degree
- Postgraduate degree
- N/A
Appendix C. Questionnaire Participants Consent Form

| The University of Sheffield. Information School | Bringing the Arts into the Library: An evaluation of the role of Nottinghamshire County Council Public Libraries in engaging new audiences with arts and culture. |

Researchers
Mercè Pujadas Bartés mpujadasbartes1@sheffield.ac.uk
Briony Birdi (Supervisor) b.birdi@sheffield.ac.uk

Purpose of the research
The purpose of this research is to investigate which the role of public libraries in engaging audiences with arts and culture is, exploring its community building opportunities and partnership with other institutions and organizations within the community from the case study of Nottinghamshire County Libraries. The research will focus specifically on three public library services of Nottinghamshire County Council: Worksop, West Bridgford and Mansfield as well as having a broader picture of the cultural strategic program of the County and which is the role of the Arts Council in promoting arts in libraries.

Who will be participating?
I am inviting adults over 18 who have attended an event organized by Worksop, West Bridgford or Mansfield Library.

What will you be asked to do?
I will ask you to complete a brief questionnaire. This will include questions regarding demographics (education, age, gender, occupation) as well as semi-open questions regarding your experience and opinion on attending the event.

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?
Responses to the questionnaire will be collected in a Word Document. I will not collect any personal or identifiable information about you.

What will we do with the data?
I will be analyzing the data for inclusion in my masters’ dissertation. After that point, the data will be destroyed.

Will my participation be confidential?
No personal or identifiable information will be collected and therefore all results are anonymous at the point of creation.
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.

I understand that I may decline to answer any particular question or questions, or to do any of the activities. If I stop participating at all time, all of my data will be purged.

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 D. Example of interview guide

The purpose of this research is to investigate the role of public libraries in engaging audiences with arts and culture, exploring its community building opportunities and partnership with other institutions and organizations within the community from the case study of Nottinghamshire County Libraries. The research will focus specifically on three public library services of Nottinghamshire County Council: Worksop, West Bridgford and Mansfield as well as having a broader picture of the cultural strategic program of the County and which is the role of the Arts Council in promoting arts in libraries.

This interview will cover in more detail these ideas. I will ask you a series of questions regarding your experience on planning, organizing and conducting cultural and events programming and which opinion you have on the role that public libraries have in engaging new audiences with arts and culture.

In my research I refer to cultural programming to any events that take place in the library space which its aim is to attract public in engaging with activities such Literary Arts (Book & Reading, poetry events), Visual Arts (exhibitions), Performing Arts (theatre, films, music events), Creative Arts (writing workshops, craft events), or other events such Local History, talks, etc.

There are three main topics that are going to be covered: institutionalization of cultural programming, role of librarians in cultural programming, views on partnering. Please elaborate on anything you feel is necessary to give as full answers as you can. Any questions please ask at any time.

I will make a few notes but will let the recorder capture everything.

TURN RECORDER ON

Topic 1 - Institutionalization of cultural programming:

1. Could you explain to me what your role in terms of cultural events programming?
   
   o What does this role entail?
   
   o Which elements are you responsible for?

2. How do cultural events fit within the day to day responsibilities of your position as Team Manager)?
   
   o What proportion of your working week would you say is spent on cultural programming compared to other work?

3. How much experience do you have in cultural events programming?

4. How do you plan what events to hold?
o Could you briefly talk me through the typical process for a cultural event?

o How do you decide the program? How long in advance?

o Which is the relation between the Library Events officer, Principal Librarian and Team Manager?

o Which is your relation with Library Managers in terms of planning and delivering cultural programming?

5. How are the events promoted?

6. How are the events funded?

   o Is there a regular funding source for the three libraries?

   o Are there any differences between funding events between these three libraries and all other Nottinghamshire County Libraries?

Topic 2 – Role of librarians in cultural programing:

7. In your opinion, to what extent do librarians have a role as arts administrators?

8. In your view what type of events do you think libraries should prioritize and which should be less strongly promoted?

9. Would you like cultural programming to be extended to all Nottinghamshire County Libraries?

   o Do you think it is realistic that cultural programming could extend to all Nottinghamshire County Libraries?

   o To what extent have you considered the future of cultural programming across Nottinghamshire as a whole?

10. What benefits have you identified since cultural events were introduced to the three library services?

11. What are the main problems you have encountered whilst working in cultural programming?

   o Time

   o Financial Cost

   o Lack of resources

   o Lack of skills and training

   o Publicity/promotion/attracting public

   o What other libraries feel that these 3 were prioritized/treated favourably?
12. To what extent were you able to overcome these problems and how?

13. Do you think librarians need special skills/training in cultural programming?
   - And if so, what training is available?
   - What are the important skills for cultural programming?

14. Is cultural programming a new part of the librarian’s role or do you think it has already existed?
   - Since developing cultural events have any new specific position in programming has arisen?

Topic 3 – Partnering

15. What is your opinion of Library Services partnering with other institutions?

16. How do you choose which organizations to deliver cultural events?

17. Could you tell me an example of a partnership you regard as successful and why?
   - (What are the benefits/What the library has gained through partnering?)

18. Could you give me an example of a partnership experience that did not go well?
   - What do you believe needed to be improved?

19. Is there any form of partnership evaluation (not events evaluation)? If yes, what do you do? If not do you think it would be valuable to have, and why?

Topic 4 – Arts Council

20. What is your relation with the Arts Council in terms of cultural programming?

21. How is the Arts Council involved cultural events you deliver?

22. Have you identified any benefits?

23. Is there any particular support you would particularly like to have from AC?

Conclusion:

24. In your opinion, is cultural programming work a valuable activity for libraries to engage in?

25. In your experience, is there anything you would do differently or something you strongly in order to provide the best possible programmes in of events?

26. Is there anything else you think is important to mention about your work in cultural programming?
This is the end of the interview. Thank you very much for taking part of my research

Appendix E. Interview Participants Consent Form

| The University of Sheffield. Information School | Bringing the Arts into the Library: An evaluation of the role of Nottinghamshire County Council Public Libraries in engaging new audiences with arts and culture. |

Researchers
Mercè Pujadas Bartés mpujadasbartes1@sheffield.ac.uk
Briony Birdi (Supervisor) b.birdi@sheffield.ac.uk

Purpose of the research
The purpose of this research is to investigate which the role of public libraries in engaging audiences with arts and culture is, exploring its community building opportunities and partnership with other institutions and organizations within the community from the case study of Nottinghamshire County Libraries. The research will focus specifically on three public library services of Nottinghamshire County Council: Worksop, West Bridgford and Mansfield as well as having a broader picture of the cultural strategic program of the County and which is the role of the Arts Council in promoting arts in libraries

Who will be participating?
I am inviting strategic library managers who manage Worksop, Mansfield and West Bridgford Libraries, senior management members of cultural and events programming in Nottinghamshire County Council and a representative of the Arts Council in sharing their views in cultural programming in public libraries in a semi-structured interviews.

What will you be asked to do?
I will ask you a series of questions regarding your experience on planning, organizing and conducting cultural and events programming and which opinion you have on the role that public libraries have in engaging new audiences with arts and culture.

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?
I am audio recording the interviews responses for further analysis.

What will we do with the data?
The data will be stored on my computer and I will transcribe the questions into text form for analysis. After my dissertation is completed, I will be purging all of the data. The audio will only be used for transcription.

Will my participation be confidential?
The data will be anonymized by anonymizing the names of the interviewees into categories that will refer to participants’ position in the research (Librarian, Senior
Librarian, Arts Council) and in any case there are more than one in each category they will be identified as A, B, C in the written dissertation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What will happen to the results of the research project?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The results of this study will be included in my master’s dissertation which will be publicly available.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

I understand that I may decline to answer any particular question or questions, or to do any of the activities. If I stop participating at all time, all of my data will be purged.

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Name (Please print)</th>
<th>Participant Signature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher Name (Please print)</th>
<th>Researcher Signature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.
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Name: MERCE PUJADAS BARTES
Department: INFORMATION SCHOOL
Signed: MERCE PUJADAS BARTES
Date: 30/08/2014

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Name
Department
Signed
Date