MARKETING AND INCOME GENERATION IN SCOTTISH PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES

PhD THESIS

Volume 1

SUSAN MARJORIE COPELAND

2001

THE UNIVERSITY OF STRATHCLYDE

DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION SCIENCE

Acknowledgements

The author is particularly grateful to her supervisor, Sheila Webber, for the advice and encouragement provided throughout the period of planning and writing this thesis. She is also grateful to Professor Arthur Midwinter for assistance during the early stages of the research.

Financial assistance from the Carnegie Trust, allocated by The Robert Gordon University (the author's employer), covered the expenses involved in undertaking the case study visits and was most appreciated.

Thanks are also due to the Library Association for nominating the author to attend the 1997 Anglo-Scandinavian Public Libraries Conference, and to the Norwegian Directorate for Public Libraries for covering the cost of the conference fees and accommodation.

ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the interaction between marketing practice and strategy and resource allocation in Scottish public library services. It focuses, in particular, on the period immediately prior to local government reorganisation in 1996. The historical framework within which public libraries have developed is described. So, too, is the political environment within which the libraries operate.

A review of the literature indicates that, although there are examples of good practice with regard to libraries undertaking market research to ascertain the needs of their users, and potential users, many authorities could make improvements in this area. Similarly, the literature suggests that more could be achieved in other ways to ensure that libraries are more efficient, effective and responsive to user needs, and that some of the more systematic and aggressive approaches to fund-raising that are evident in the U.S.A. could be employed to advantage in Scotland. The results of a survey that was undertaken in 1996 support the view that Scottish public libraries could make better use of marketing techniques with a view to targeting the funds they have available and generating additional income.

Existing, published, research has drawn attention to the significance of population size with regard to the efficiency of Scottish public libraries. Statistics published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) indicate the relevance of the size of local authorities in terms of the amount of income and expenditure per person. This thesis shows that population size is also a significant factor with regard to the use of marketing techniques and the range of ways in which library services generate income.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research aims.

This thesis investigates the interaction between marketing practice and strategy and resource allocation in Scottish public library services. It focuses, in particular, on the period immediately prior to local government reorganisation in 1996, providing both a record of events at this time and data which should be useful, for purposes of comparison, for future research.

Libraries need to achieve their purposes efficiently and cost effectively through coherent strategies, appropriate organisational structures, and good resource management. They are currently facing difficulties in maintaining and improving the services they provide since the rapid development of new, but costly, information technology (I.T.) is coinciding with public spending constraints. Pressure is being put upon libraries to retain their traditional role as lenders of books and promoters of reading while also making available a much broader range of material. There is also potential conflict between devoting staff time to services such as the provision of business information, which can generate income, and services, such as those to the housebound, which are costly in financial terms but beneficial in social terms. Within this environment, the problem that must be addressed by library managers is how to determine which services should be offered, to whom these services should be available, and at what level they should be provided. Managers must also consider how to fund those services for which there is a demand but for which there is insufficient finance available from traditional (i.e. public taxation) sources.

The identification of which services to offer depends very much upon the 'mission' or purpose of the library service. This is an issue that has been much debated in the past and a copious amount of literature on the subject has become available since the publication of Totterdell's work in 1978 [1]. However, this thesis is not intended to further the long-running philosophical debate about the extent to which it is acceptable to abandon the original ideals of the public library service and its well-respected heritage. Instead, it acknowledges that the needs of library users change over time, and that library mission statements must change accordingly. The latter are often wide-ranging, yet without a clearly defined statement of purpose and measurable objectives it is difficult for the public and, particularly, the funders of the service to decide whether libraries are providing the community with as effective a service as is possible with the available resources.

The historical approach towards improving library services has concentrated on the introduction of legislation relating to funding levels and the identification of national standards to which all libraries should aspire [2]. Over the past decade, however, the view has emerged that this is no longer the most appropriate way forward. Although it is still useful to have nationally agreed minimum levels of provision in key service areas, there is recognition that services may vary very much from one local authority area to another depending upon the needs and priorities of the users. It is now considered necessary to have local targets which allow an assessment to be made with regard to whether local needs are being met [3]. The identification of user needs, the formulation of a mission statement, aims and objectives, and the allocation of resources in line with established priorities, are key aspects of a good marketing programme. As this thesis shows, however, Scottish public libraries are not making best use of marketing techniques to enhance their services.

Marketing is often associated with the private sector, and it is widely accepted that public services have different objectives from private enterprise. For example, the public sector may attach considerable importance to the concept of equity or equality of service provision, and the decision to provide a service may be based on an assessment of social need rather than on a judgement about potential profit. Nevertheless, the literature on marketing for non-profit organisations (which is discussed in chapter two) indicates that many of the management techniques used by the private sector can be adopted or adapted to benefit the public sector.

The adoption of good marketing practices and strategies should assist managers in their endeavours to ensure that they make best use of the funding they have available and that the services they provide are those that meet user needs. Good marketing should result in the provision of the right combination of services to meet the changing demands of the market. The services should be well publicised and available in appropriate places at appropriate times. To achieve this, there has to be a commitment to the concept of focusing on customer needs, an appreciation of market segmentation, and good communication to ensure that not only do the service providers know the requirements of the users, but that the users are aware of the aims of the providers and the standard of service that they should expect. The circumstances in which Scottish public libraries were operating in the mid 1990s were such that many benefits could be achieved through the adoption of such practices. However, the literature indicates that the extent to which marketing strategies were employed at this time was variable and often inadequate.

In view of the above, a survey was undertaken in 1996 in order to find out whether the activities and attitudes of public library service managers reflected the impression conveyed in the literature. The survey considered the following issues in depth:

- the use of specific marketing techniques
- market research and the ways in which library managers ascertain the needs of users
- clarification of library purpose and assessment of service provision through the existence of library mission statements, objectives and performance measures
- the ways in which library managers decide upon the allocation of resources
- the ways in which library managers cope with restricted budgets at a time when an ever increasing range of services could be offered

To improve efficiency and effectiveness, a clear sense of purpose is required as well as a flexible approach towards service delivery. Money may have to be spent on upgrading or extending existing services, or on introducing new services and, to fund the latter activities, little needed services may have to be eliminated. Library managers need to consider the way in which library services are provided, and the way in which the required level of service can be made available at the lowest possible cost. However, this thesis demonstrates that, in 1996, few Scottish library services had undertaken enough marketing to be able to fully exploit potential efficiency gains and to maximise effectiveness.

Given the likelihood of ongoing financial constraints, library managers need to consider not only the issue of efficiency gains, but also potential means of generating income (for example, through the introduction of fees, the sale of merchandise, the acquisition of grants and sponsorship, or joint ventures with the private sector). Good marketing should ensure that the range of services made available for a fee is appropriate, that the categories of user expected to pay for services are clearly defined, and that the level of charges is suitable to maximise profit without losing custom. The 1996 survey investigated the extent to which libraries at this time were generating income through these means. It concludes that, although the range and level of participation in such activities was increasing, it was still far less than it could be.

This thesis investigates the extent to which the above issues vary according to the size of the local authority. An analysis of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) statistics for 1995 and 1996 reveals a variation between the authorities according to population size in terms of levels of income [4]. Moreover, research undertaken by Midwinter and McVicar suggests that there are diseconomies of scale associated with the smaller authorities [5]. In view of these findings, the results of the 1996 survey were analysed according to population size in order to identify whether there was any difference with respect to the extent to which the authorities engaged in marketing activities.

1.2 Context.

Various reports that have been published over the past ten years indicate that, in the U.K. in general, there is a high level of public support for, and use of, libraries. For example, the *Review of the public library service in England and Wales* by the Association of Special Libraries and Information Bureaux (ASLIB) comments on the high proportion of the population that uses public libraries [6]. The ASLIB report adds that, "Public libraries have a generally favourable image among library users, who believe they are well-organized, a good source of information, easy to reach, and pleasant to use" [7].

The creation of sophisticated information technology and improved communication systems affords the public library service one of its most significant opportunities this century to provide local communities with improved access to information. Central government recognises the potential role it could play in future society, and several reports published in the late 1990s illustrate this. For example, *Reading the future: a review of public libraries in England* "highlights the continuing relevance and significance of public libraries, but emphasises that they will need to adapt to new ways of delivering the service" [8]. *Due for renewal: a report on the library service*, which was published by the Audit Commission in

1997, draws attention to falling book issues in libraries in England and Wales, but envisages a potential new role for the library service as a result of the information revolution [9]. *New Library: The People's Network*, a report commissioned by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and published by the Library and Information Commission in 1997, calls for a radical rejuvenation of the public library system and puts forward the vision of the public library service as the backbone of the information society [10]. Similarly, the Government's consultation paper, *Connecting the learning society. National grid for learning*, refers to the potential role of libraries in connection with the provision of widespread access to the 'Information Superhighway' [11]. However, I.T. provision is only one of a variety of competing demands upon libraries. Other needs also have to be met, and resources cannot be spread too thinly if they are to be effective. Library managers must have a clear understanding of the needs and priorities of the local community if they are to allocate resources in the most effective manner.

Despite increasing demands upon the budget, the overall cost of providing library services is small in comparison with that required to support many other public services. It is therefore possible that library managers could exploit the popularity of the service to persuade politicians to provide better funding. The media can be a powerful ally in this respect, drawing attention to the potentially detrimental effects of budget reductions and highlighting the significance of the role libraries play in society. (A good example of the latter being the reference to the Mitchell Library in an article in *The Herald* in 1998 about the lobbying campaign carried out by councillors who wished to have the temporary Scottish Parliament located in Glasgow) [12]. Traditionally, public services such as health and education have been the focus of attention when there is discussion about restrictions on public spending. However, in recent years, libraries have been referred to frequently in the press in connection with service cut-backs, branch closures, and the sale of valuable items of stock. For example, *The Scotsman* newspaper featured a major article in August 1996 about Glasgow council's

plan to reduce opening hours to help save £3 million [13]. The threat of closure of the School Library Service in Dumfries and Galloway was reported on the front page of the Scottish edition of *The Times Educational Supplement* and on the BBC 1 television programme *Reporting Scotland* in January 1997 [14]. In October 1997 *The Scotsman* highlighted criticism surrounding Stirling council's decision to sell a rare mediaeval book for nearly £26,000 and, in March 1998, it included a lengthy article about the sale of a number of rare books from Edinburgh's public library service [15].

The frequency of such references in the media indicates that there is significant public interest in libraries. Whether the public criticise library managers for making misguided decisions in selling off stock etc., or actively defend them in supporting the service against financial cut-backs, may depend upon the extent to which the mission of the library is appreciated and the extent to which library managers appear to be genuinely concerned about the interests of the local community. It may also depend upon the extent to which the public is involved in the decisions made by the library. As Walsh comments, in an article about people's participation in local government, "If they do not feel that services belong to them they are not likely to be willing to defend them" [16].

1.3 Methodology.

1.3.1 Literature review.

In order to establish details of the context within which public libraries were operating in the mid 1990s, a literature review was undertaken initially to gain an insight into the extent to which they employed marketing techniques routinely as part of their management system. The review includes an examination of developments in a wide range of U.K. authorities and, with respect to income generation in particular, it draws on examples from the U.S.A.

(where fund-raising activities are more commonplace and more successful in terms of the amount of finance raised). The review reveals little evidence of the employment of complete, planned, marketing strategies in the U.K., but it does highlight examples of individual instances of good marketing practice. As a result of the literature review a number of key themes were identified as being worthy of further investigation: market research; mission statements, objectives and performance standards; factors influencing resource allocation; efficiency improvements; and income generation.

1.3.2 Initial case study visits.

In order to compare the evidence from the literature with library managers' personal experience of service and operational developments, and to gain an understanding of current activity and attitudes, visits were made to five library authorities. (Two Carnegie Trust Travel Grants were awarded by The Robert Gordon University, the author's employer at the time, to cover the costs involved). As discussed in sections 7.2 and 9.2, a visit was made to Kent County Council Department of Arts and Libraries, in July 1994, and meetings were held with a number of staff, including the Head of Operations, the Head of Information, the Head of Client Services, and the Customer Services Manager. Kent was selected because it was known to employ various marketing techniques. For example, by the mid 1990s its Department of Arts and Libraries had a well-developed quality assurance programme, and by 1994 it had established service objectives and 'quality standards' and was pursuing an active policy with regard to income generation [17]. The discussions in Kent confirmed the range of activities to which reference should be made in a questionnaire relating to marketing library services. The visits also allowed specific questions to be tested and appropriate terminology to be identified.

In order to ascertain whether libraries north of the border had adopted marketing principles to the same extent, or with as much enthusiasm, as Kent, visits to a cross-section of Scottish library authorities were arranged the following year. During August and September 1995 visits were made to four authorities (one region, one rural district, one urban district, and one city). Interviews were held with the Principal Librarian at Highland Regional Council Regional Library Service; the Assistant Director (Leisure and Libraries) at Moray District Council; the Principal Librarian at Renfrew District Libraries; and the Head of Information Services at Edinburgh City Libraries. A meeting was also held with the Director of the Scottish Library Association to discuss general trends associated with resource allocation issues and income generation in Scottish libraries.

None of the Scottish authorities visited appear to have adopted as many marketing techniques as Kent. They also displayed a less aggressive approach towards income generation, and a considerable degree of concern about the potential affect on local businesses if they established lower priced services in competition. The view put forward by one of the interviewees was that Scottish public library services are developing coherently within Scotland, but differently from England. The embargo on local authority competitive tendering until 1997, and the significance of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) standards, were cited as examples of issues affecting the development of Scottish services [18]. The suggestion was made that many authorities are heavily influenced by what other authorities are doing, but that the costs involved in I.T. developments might lead to a greater divide between the 'haves' and the 'have nots'. The discussions during the visits revealed some common trends between authorities, however there were some differences of opinion between the individuals interviewed and in some respects there was significant variation between the authorities. The visits proved useful in assisting with the identification of the key areas requiring further investigation.

1.3.3 Questionnaire.

In the light of the information gained from the visits, and from an examination of other surveys on related matters, a questionnaire was compiled (appendix I). As a method of data collection, a questionnaire was considered the most efficient way of obtaining the required information in the time available. In a comparison between 'interview schedules' and 'mail questionnaires', Oppenheim lists a number of potential disadvantages of the latter [19]. However, few of these applied to the current research since the questionnaires were sent mainly to named individuals and the questions were designed to be easily understood by members of the library profession. The main area of concern (i.e. response rates) proved not to be a problem either. The relevance of the topic, plus the inclusion of a covering letter, ensured a very high response rate (97.5%). The numerous issues associated with sampling, as described by Moser and Kalton, also posed no problem for this survey since all of 41 of the library services were sent a questionnaire [20].

The questionnaire that was sent out in February 1996 was designed in three sections and deals with aspects of effectiveness and responsiveness, efficiency, and income generation. In the first section, questions are asked about the methods employed to obtain information about the needs and preferences of users of library services, and about resource allocation issues. The effect of changing customer demands is considered ie. the extent to which new services are introduced, and existing services reduced or terminated, to reflect changing priorities. Questions are asked about mission statements, objectives, and performance measures, in order to obtain information about the management of the library service, and questions are asked about the existence of a complaints procedure and evidence of public support for the service.

The second section of the questionnaire examines efficiency in public libraries. Questions are asked about changes in working practices resulting from financial pressures: whether any changes have been introduced in order to reduce operational costs, and how staffing has been affected. Questions are also asked about the extent to which services are contracted out, whether the libraries have any joint service arrangements with other local authorities, and whether performance indicator information from other library services is utilised for comparative purposes. These questions are asked with a view to establishing whether financial constraints are leading to changes in library services and, if so, what form these changes are taking: whether they are leading to efficiency gains or cuts in services. The questions cover management techniques, staffing issues, financial considerations, and service provision.

The third section of the questionnaire concentrates on income generation: incentives, constraints, the provision of services on an agency basis, policies on charges, direct sales, grants, sponsorship, and joint ventures with the private sector. It also asks for information about the extent to which members of staff have received training in marketing and financial techniques in order to prepare them for working in a more financially-oriented environment. In order to produce results which would allow the responses to the questionnaire to be compared with those from an earlier period, part of the questionnaire was based on that used in the 1988 research by Brenda White Associates which led to the publication of the report entitled *Income generation and related matters in Scottish Libraries* [21].

The questionnaire was sent to all forty-one of the Scottish public library services in February 1996 in order to obtain a comprehensive view of their approach towards marketing library services at this time, i.e. immediately prior to the reorganisation of local government in April. It was recognised that the recipients of the questionnaire would have considerable pressures on their time in the two months prior to the reorganisation. All of the library

services were to be surveyed and some had already contributed to the project through discussions during the visits. Therefore a pilot survey with the target population was not undertaken. Instead, a draft of the questionnaire was piloted with a number of colleagues who have experience of library research, and minor amendments made where appropriate. The tactics proved successful. Even though the questionnaire was sent out at a time when library managers were engaged in the demanding task of reorganising their services to operate within the new local authority structure, forty (97.5%) services replied. This very high response rate provided enough detail to make it worthwhile analysing the replies according to the size of the authority in order to detect trends. Thirty-one of those who replied asked to be sent a summary of the results, indicating a significant level of interest in this subject within the profession.

Of the forty questionnaires that were returned, most were completed by senior members of staff. Twenty-seven (62.5%) were completed by the Head of the Library Service or Chief Officer, i.e. 'Principal Officer' or 'Director' (5), 'Chief Librarian' (6), 'District Librarian' (8), 'Head of Libraries and Museums' (1), 'Library Services Manager'/'Libraries Manager' (5), or 'Head of Library Service(s)' (2). One questionnaire was completed by the 'Principal Librarian', four other respondents indicated that they held posts on P.O. grades, and one reply came from a librarian holding a post on grade A.P. V. The grade of staff completing the remaining forms is unknown: the returns reveal only the names or job titles of the individuals involved.

The results of the survey are analysed according to local authority size, i.e. according to the size of the population served by the library service (those serving a population of 50,000 or less; those with a population of 50,001 to 100,000; those with a population of 100,001 to 200,000; and those serving over 200,000 people). Consideration of the size of the library authorities is particularly significant given the reorganisation of local government in April

1996. This led not only to a reduction in the overall number of library authorities (from 41 to 32) but also to a reduction in the number of small authorities. As shown in Table I, in chapter three, the number of library authorities serving a population of under 50,000 fell from 7 (17%) to 4 (12.5%), and those with a population under 100,000 fell from 22 (53.5%) to 12 (37.5%).

The results of the analysis of the questionnaire responses in terms of population size are compared to the findings of Midwinter and McVicar who, in the early 1990s, examined the correlation between the size of a library authority and its functional efficiency [22]. Having analysed CIPFA data on opening hours, stock, staffing levels, expenditure levels, and usage levels, Midwinter and McVicar conclude that, although size is not the only factor determining the scope and range of services provided, there is "some confirmation of diseconomies of scale in small library authorities, which incur greater per capita expenditure than larger authorities" [23]. The current thesis finds that the size of the library service is also of significance when considering trends associated with marketing practices and resource allocation issues.

1.3.4 Follow-up questionnaire and case study.

The results of the analysis of the 1996 questionnaire, and comparisons with other surveys, reveal a number of trends. In order to establish whether these trends continued after the reorganisation of local government, two case studies were undertaken in 1999. One involved a library service that covers the same geographical area as the one that was responsible for activities in this location prior to April 1996. The other involved a library service in an authority that encompasses part of three former districts.

A senior library manager in each authority was given another copy of the 1996 questionnaire and asked to answer the same questions as before, but this time to reflect the situation between 1996 and 1999 (a period which saw the reorganisation of local government, the election of a new Government, the publication of several key reports, and a vote in favour of creating a new Scottish Parliament). A visit to one of the authorities, and a two hour discussion with a senior member of library staff, provided a further insight into recent developments. The information gained proved useful in supporting a number of the findings of the main research. Future research, investigating developments since the reorganisation of local government, should find the results of this study of value for purposes of comparison.

1.4 Structure.

The thesis is divided into ten chapters. Following the introductory section, chapter two gives consideration to what is meant by the term 'marketing' and addresses the question of how marketing techniques can be applied to non-profit organisations. Chapter three then provides a description of the historical development of the public library service in Scotland, within the United Kingdom framework, showing how the service has evolved over the years and why no specific mission or set of objectives has been agreed universally. Chapter three also includes a description of the context within which libraries currently operate: it considers the structure, administration and funding of the public library service in Scotland.

Chapter four discusses the role of public libraries in the 1990s, and includes a study of the range of services they provide. The way in which libraries respond to the challenge of information technology may be seen as indicative of their approach towards meeting any new demands, in terms of both attitude and capability. Consequently, this chapter includes

an investigation of the extent to which libraries in 1996 were making available, or were planning to make available, I.T. services such as access to the Internet.

Chapter five continues the theme of ensuring effectiveness, but links this with the need to provide services efficiently. It considers the constraints under which libraries are operating and the major political issues that have affected the public sector over the past decade: the government's aim of reducing public expenditure, increased competition, and demands for accountability and 'value for money'. This chapter includes an examination of public library standards, performance indicators, and the ways in which libraries have changed their working practices to reduce operational costs.

Chapter six considers the ways in which public libraries to date have employed market research techniques and user need studies to gain the information they need to make informed decisions. It includes examples of good practice and describes the conditions necessary for success. Chapter seven examines the responses to the part of the 1996 survey that relates to library effectiveness and responsiveness to the needs and preferences of the public, and the part that relates to efficiency. It assesses the extent to which Scottish public libraries, at this time, employed marketing techniques to assess user needs, and it considers how this affected decision-making relating to resource allocation and service provision. It considers whether efficiency gains were achieved through changing working practices, and it looks at the extent to which library service managers had plans in place to adapt to new demands. Finally, it incorporates the case studies from 1999 which illustrate the extent to which circumstances changed in two local authorities in the three year period after local government reorganisation.

Chapter eight examines the issues associated with charging for public library services. It considers the main constraints and incentives facing library managers with respect to income

generation, and investigates the level of financial and marketing training which staff have received. It includes a study of the range of activities designed to generate income in which public libraries have been involved: providing fee-based services, sales, obtaining grants, acquiring sponsorship, and partnership arrangements with the private sector. Chapter nine then includes an analysis of the responses to the part of the 1996 survey that relates to income generation. It compares these results with those of the 1988 survey by Brenda White Associates, and developments over time are further illustrated when these findings are compared to the results of a survey that was undertaken by Fraser in 1997/98 and to the 1999 case studies [24].

Finally, the thesis draws together the aspects of efficiency, effectiveness, responsiveness and income generation. In chapter ten, conclusions are drawn with regard to the extent to which, in 1996, Scottish public library services employed marketing techniques and strategies to improve the relevance and standard of the services they provided, and to influence the way in which they allocated resources. Where subsequent surveys and case studies indicate that changes have occurred since the reorganisation of local government, these are commented upon. Encouraging trends are highlighted, areas of weakness are identified, and recommendations for future action are made.

CHAPTER TWO

MARKETING

2.1 Marketing : a definition.

This chapter considers what is involved in marketing products and services, particularly in relation to the work of non-profit organisations. Specific issues relating to market research and the marketing of public library services are discussed in detail in chapter six.

One of the difficulties in understanding how marketing can be of benefit to libraries lies in the fact that there is no single accepted definition of the term. In an article published in 1998, Kearsey and Varey quote a number of key authors who have written on this subject and they point out that over a hundred definitions exist [1].

The term is commonly used in the context of selling: advertising, influencing people, and promoting goods, services and ideas. However, as Kotler argues, it is a fallacy to view marketing as a primarily promotional activity [2]. Indeed, Muir makes a clear distinction between marketing and selling:

> ...*marketing* is creating a desire for the product or service; *Selling* is satisfying that desire. To better understand marketing, think of it in terms of creating an awareness, a need, or a requirement for a service or product [3].

Other writers, such as Wood, emphasise that marketing is based upon the identification and analysis of the current and potential needs of individuals (rather than a reaction to apparent needs or the creation of a desire for a product or service) [4].

Griffith describes the marketing concept as being based on the principle of exchange [5]. Similarly, Dibb et al. maintain that marketing involves customers providing something of value (for example, payment or patronage) in exchange for a product or service that meets their needs in terms of quality, reliability, availability and price: success depending upon satisfying customers so that they purchase more products or use the service again [6]. They write:

> Marketing consists of individual and organisational activities that facilitate and expedite satisfying exchange relationships in a dynamic environment through the creation, distribution, promotion and pricing of goods, services and ideas.

Kinnell and MacDougall encapsulate the breadth of the term in the following statement:

> By 'marketing' we mean the whole range of functions that bring the organization closer to meeting the needs of its customers, the public, and ensuring the necessary resourcing to achieve its goals [7].

2.1.1 Marketing : core elements.

Dibb et al. acknowledge that there are many different definitions of marketing, but they identify a number of core elements:

- identifying and maximising marketing opportunities
- targeting the "right" customers
- facilitating exchange relationships
- satisfying customers
- utilising resources / assets effectively
- staying ahead in dynamic environments
- endeavouring to beat or pre-empt competitors
- increasing market share
- enhancing profitability [8]

In an article published nearly thirty years earlier than Dibb's work, but still relevant today, Kotler and Levy identify nine concepts as crucial in guiding the marketing effort of a business organisation:

- generic product definition - a broad definition of the business and the products involved
- target groups definition - the need, due to limited resources, for an organisation to limit its product offering to certain clearly defined groups within the broad market
- differentiated marketing - the need to differentiate product offerings and communications in order to maximise effectiveness when serving more than one target group
- customer behaviour analysis - the need for formal research and analysis of customer needs and behaviour
- differential advantages - the need to consider what elements of the organisation's resources or reputation could be exploited to demonstrate special value to different target groups.
- multiple marketing tools - the need to involve a variety of methods to sell products eg. product improvements, advertising, and sales promotions
- integrated marketing planning - the need for overall coordination to ensure that these multiple marketing tools do not work at cross purposes
- continuous marketing feedback - the need to gather information regularly about changes in performance, the environment, and customers' views, in order to ensure that services develop in a satisfactory direction
- the marketing audit - the need to undertake periodic audits of an organisation's objectives and resources, and to review its target groups, etc., in the light of changing needs and trends, in order to ensure that the business remains viable [9].

The first of these, a broad definition of the business and products involved, is the most important. It often incorporates a 'mission statement': a concise description of the purpose of

the organisation. Leisner emphasises that this statement should reflect the needs and wants of the community being served and that the allocation of resources should be in keeping with the mission [10]. Similarly, Yorke describes a market-oriented organisation as one which is constantly attempting to match its resources to the needs of the market in order to achieve its corporate objectives [11]. Kotler describes how marketing creates variety as organisations clarify their mission, their market coverage, and the distinct combination of services they intend to offer [12].

Cronin refers to the 'marketing cycle' which involves strategic and tactical planning: the former requiring the formulation of a mission statement and the setting of goals and objectives, and the latter comprising market research and the process of translating the service philosophy into concrete responses [13]. Webber indicates that the formulation of a mission is the first, and key part of, the marketing cycle [14].

2.1.2 Market research.

When clarifying its mission, an organisation has to establish the nature of the business in which it is involved, its customer base, the market segments upon which it will focus, the needs to be satisfied, its main competitors, and the advantages which its services can offer to the target market. Much of the information upon which these decisions should be based can be obtained from market research.

Yorke makes a distinction between market research and marketing research, identifying the former as part of the latter [15]. He describes marketing research as the investigation of the whole marketing process. This includes research into the techniques and effectiveness of

market research as well as issues such as advertising and promotional work. Market research, on the other hand, is described as the "quantifiable analysis of a market in terms of its size and trends and of its structure". It takes account of market segments and issues such as the effect of competition.

Cronin writes that :

> Market research is the systematic analysis of consumer characterisitics, behaviours, lifestyles, needs, wants, demands and preferences. Armed with reliable data on how its actual and potential clients think and behave, a company is better placed to: (1) improve its customer-orientation and targetting; (2) reassess its product range and distribution channels; (3) refine its pricing strategies; (4) identify new product development opportunities; (5) provide customised or highly niched products; and (6) attack its competitors' market share [16].

He adds that market research does not answer the questions such as 'What business are we in?', 'Which markets should we attack?', or 'How should we prioritize our services?', but it should provide data "upon which to make intelligent and informed decisions about corporate strategy or service philosophy" [17]. Market research should be undertaken at regular intervals, and marketing strategies should be modified over time to take account of customer feedback and requirements for change.

Information about the preferences and priorities of users and potential users of services can be obtained by a variety of means. For example, questionnaires can be issued and surveys undertaken, focus group meetings can be held, people can be observed using the service, internal and external statistical data can be analysed, and trials involving the provision of new services can be carried out. These elements of market research are discussed in detail in chapter six (which considers the techniques used by public library services to assess user needs).

2.1.3 The marketing plan.

Market research furnishes data upon which a marketing plan can be built. Muir (18), Griffith (19) and Titman (20) each describe the key components of a marketing plan, focusing variously on analysis, the mission, objectives, planning, implementation and evaluation.

Muir [18]	Griffith [19]	Titman [20]
	• analysis - determining the needs of the target group and assessing how these needs can be met	• market assessment • market segmentation • product / service ranges • the marketing Mix sectors
• a mission statement • measurable and attainable objectives	• setting objectives	• aims, objectives and priorities
• general strategies for reaching each objective • a plan of action for carrying out each objective, including cost and who is going to do the work	• planning - identifying what will be done by whom	• annual plan • budgets • resources and the action plan
	• implementation of the marketing plan	• action
	• evaluation - identifying successes and failures and acquiring information for future marketing efforts	• monitoring, controls and reviews

Dibb et al. summarise marketing planning as, "a systematic process of assessing opportunities and resources, determining marketing objectives, developing a marketing strategy and developing plans for implementation and control" [21]. They add that, during this planning stage, decisions should be made regarding how, and by whom, marketing activities will be performed.

Rowley describes how the ability of an organisation to take advantage of a new marketing opportunity is constrained by various factors, such as regulatory controls (e.g. Government controls which ensure that certain services are 'free' to the public), economic controls (e.g. the cost of providing the product or service), technological limitations, and societal forces (e.g. the educational level or the wealth of the potential customers) [22]. The marketing plan should take account of the fact that the environment in which the organisation is operating is constantly changing. It should include information relating to increases or reductions in spending, the introduction of new services, service developments, publicity and the transfer of resources to different areas. When creating the plan, decisions should be based upon quantitative data about likely levels of demand, an understanding of the cost implications, and the effect on existing products.

2.1.4 The marketing mix.

An important element of the marketing plan is the 'marketing mix' (the set of variables which can be manipulated to satisfy different marketing strategies). Indeed, Walsh describes this as the core of the marketing approach [23]. He discusses the components of the marketing mix in terms of McCarthy's 'four P's' i.e. product, price, promotion and place [24]. In recent years, authors such as Titman have referred to the marketing mix as comprising a greater number of elements: plan, product, pricing, promotion, place and people [25].

In terms of the product, consideration needs to be given to the range and quality to be provided and a distinction has to be made between core products and those that are additional. Consideration also needs to be given to the life cycle of the product: the need to invest money at the introductory stage, to modify products to meet new requirements, and to eliminate

products that have reached the end of their usefulness in terms of meeting the needs of the target customers.

Pricing products and services is a highly complex task (and is discussed in more detail in chapter eight of this thesis). In the private sector, prices may be set at a level based on that used by competitors, or at the highest level the producers believe the market will bear. In the public sector, however, prices may reflect social or political requirements rather than economic considerations. Olaisen describes five of the various pricing models that exist, thereby illustrating the range of choices available:

- optimal pricing (where the maximum profit level is intended)
- pricing according to value (which may result in profit or loss)
- full cost recovery
- marginal cost pricing (where subsidies are needed)
- the free distribution of services (requiring full subsidies) [26].

Promotion is perhaps the most familiar element of the marketing mix. It involves not just advertising and selling, but also branding, image and public relations. Together, these activities are designed to communicate information to those outwith the organisation and to encourage greater use of the product or service.

'Place' refers to distribution channels: accessibility in terms of both geographical location and the times at which the service is available. People, both service users and service providers, are also included in the marketing mix since the quality of a service is dependent upon the way in which individuals deal with customers. The marketing strategy may be either to try to sell products to a greater number of people or to sell more of the product to existing customers.

The variables which comprise the marketing mix should be selected in a way that ensures that the products or services needed by customers are provided in the right place, at the right time, and at an acceptable price.

2.2 Marketing : the nonprofit sector.

2.2.1 The development of marketing.

The early stages in the historical development of marketing are characterised by an emphasis upon what organisations want to offer, and an appreciation of the need for efficient production and good sales promotion i.e. attempts to persuade the consumer to fit the product. Kotler and Andreasen identify a number of approaches to marketing in this category:

- a product orientation which holds that "success will come to those organizations that bring to market goods and services they are convinced will be good for the public"
- a production orientation which holds that "success will come to those organizations that have the lowest costs and most efficient production and distribution systems"
- a sales orientation which holds that "success will come to those organizations that best persuade customers to accept their offerings rather than competitors' or rather than no offering at all" [27].

The concept of marketing, in its broad sense, was only adopted by the world of business and commerce after the Second World War. As Norman illustrates, it is from the 1950s that business management literature starts to make significant references to the requirement to take customers' needs into account when designing and manufacturing products [28].

Kotler and Andreasen describe this customer-focused approach to marketing as one which holds that, "success will come to that organization that best determines the perceptions, needs, and wants of target markets and satisfies them through the design, communication, pricing, and delivery of appropriate and competitively viable offerings" [29]. Kinnell and MacDougall point out that:

> A strategic approach to marketing, which places the customer at the heart of everything the service does, enables managers to relate quality of service design and delivery to the needs of the client and the objectives of the organization [30].

Initially the concept of marketing was limited to the business sector: to organisations that produced and sold items for profit. In an article published in 1969, Kotler and Levy comment that marketing involves locating and encouraging potential purchasers of the company's products: developing and modifying products, and reassessing prices and distribution arrangements, in order to meeet the changing needs of the customers. They say that, regardless of whether marketing is viewed in the traditional sense of the promotion and sale of products or in the modern sense of fulfilling the needs of the customer, it is nearly always considered to be a business activity [31]. However, Kotler and Levy then go on to assess the relevance of marketing to nonbusiness organisations. They consider the need to expand the idea of a 'product' so that it includes not just tangible items which are available for purchase, but also services, people, organisations and ideas.

Walsh, in an article published in 1989, describes how since the late 1970s there has been growing interest in the idea of applying marketing concepts to non-profit and government organisations [32]. Indeed, the early 1970s, saw the production of a number of articles in support of the idea. For example, the 1973 edition of the *Harvard Business Review* includes a

paper by Shapiro which looks at marketing for nonprofit enterprises from the point of view of the manager's three main marketing tasks (resource attraction, resource allocation, and persuasion) [33].

Walsh examines the concept of marketing in local government, concluding that, although the large scale bureaucracies of the past served to deliver uniform public services on a wide scale and in an efficient manner, this emphasis on quantity and standardisation was at the expense of variety, flexibility and responsiveness: all of which are becoming increasingly important in today's society [34]. Walsh argues that just as private sector companies have had to diversify to meet the more sophisticated demands of their customers, so too do public services now have to respond to the increasingly varied needs and concerns of their users and potential users. Smith (in a paper presented in 1987) discusses the value of applying marketing techniques to libraries, concluding that they form an important part of the process of securing resources, achieving public recognition, and getting facilities used [35].

2.2.2 Perceived problems in the nonprofit sector.

Shapiro draws attention to some of the differences between profit and nonprofit organisations [36]. He argues that marketing is easier for commercial companies, which have only one primary constituency to which they sell and from which they receive payment. It could be argued that public companies also have a second constituency: the shareholders whose short-term interests may differ from the long-term interests of the company and the customers. However, the typical nonprofit organisation has even more distinct constituencies: the ones to which it provides goods and / or services, and the ones from which it receives funding. Shapiro adds that, although this situation gives the nonprofit organisation flexibility (in the

sense that the approach it uses towards its clients need not be the same as the one it uses towards donors), it also makes the marketing task more complex since there are potentially two parties with very different priorities and expectations to satisfy.

A nonprofit organisation serving more than one constituency needs to have a clear mission and clear objectives. Where increased use of a service does not necessarily result in increased profit, or the provision of extra funding, organisations have to be able to identify clearly the benefits they are seeking to achieve. This is particularly important where there may be conflict if a development improves the service for some people but disadvantages others. A campaign to encourage more use of a service may result in a level of demand which cannot be met from existing resources and, consequently, it may lead to a reduction in the standard of the service: such a situation is acceptable if the aim of the organisation is to provide a basic service to as many people as possible, but it is not acceptable if the aim is to improve the quality of the service. Where there is no income from the services provided, there is a need to balance customers' wishes for additional resources with the funding body's concerns about additional expenditure.

Public services are financed mainly from taxes, and the budget allocation need not correspond directly to either the work that is being undertaken or the performance that is achieved. The level of funding may reflect the importance attributed to the service in contrast to the obligations and objectives of other services which receive their budget from the same source.

A nonprofit organisation may decide that some of its finances have to be raised directly from the users of the service. However, as Leisner points out, political considerations and matters of public policy may limit the kind of developments in which nonprofit organisations can

engage [37]. For example, an organisation may identify a gap in the market that it can fill. and it may calculate that sufficient income could be gained from fees to cover costs, but if the concept of charging for the type of service involved is deemed unsuitable by those in authority (e.g. the elected members in a local authority) little progress can be made.

Charging fees may generate income, but may also deter potential users. The latter may include those who would benefit significantly from the service, and those who rely on a 'free' service because they are unable to afford an alternative. Taking action which deters such people would cause the organisation a problem if one of its aims is to encourage use by this market segment.

Some nonprofit organisations face the additional problem that, even if money is generated from fees, this does not necessarily lead to an increase in their overall budget (since the parent body may reduce its annual allocation by the equivalent amount). Marks points out that, "Perhaps the most elementary difficulty in applying a marketing model in a budget based organisation is the lack of a direct link between usage and revenue" [38]. He draws attention to the fact that budget based institutions, unlike commercial enterprises, cannot necessarily use the profit they make to increase services and staffing levels in subsequent years.

If fees are introduced, decisions have to be made regarding which services are priced and at what level charges are to be made. With regard to local council services, the level of fees may vary from one authority to another across the country, and fees may be introduced for a variety of purposes other than to maximise profit. They may be introduced as a political gesture, or they could be intended to reduce demand. The level of fees may be subject to

constraints e.g. publicly funded organisations may be deterred from providing subsidised services at costs which would undercut local private sector competitors.

It is not always possible for nonprofit organisations to select the market segments they would like to target. They may be required to serve particular sections of society. Kearsey and Varey discuss the fact that public sector organisations, in contrast to private businesses, often need to focus their attention upon those who are uninterested in, or even hostile towards, the service [39]. Yorke comments that nonprofit organisations may have to target a broad customer base rather than selecting a particular market segment upon which to concentrate [40]. This is particularly true if the marketing strategy is based upon principles of equity rather than upon meeting expressed demand. As a consequence of their efforts to avoid excluding potential groups of users, public agencies often produce mission statements that are of a very general nature. However, as Leisner comments, these 'safe' statements provide little direction and are unlikely to be either measurable or achievable [41]. As is discussed in chapter four of this thesis, the mission statement should demonstrate clearly the purpose of the organisation.

Drucker commented in 1977 that many public service institutions are efficient, but that the basic problem is lack of effectiveness: they "tend not to do the right things" [42]. Drucker argues that nonprofit organisations find it difficult to abandon particular aspects of their work, and that, unlike businesses, which are reliant upon results, budget-based organisations are not forced to abandon unproductive services. He says, "The temptation is great, therefore, to respond to lack of results by redoubling efforts. The temptation is great to double the budget, precisely *because* there is no performance" [43]. Drucker adds that such organisations are misdirected by the way they are paid into defining 'performance' and 'results' as what will maintain or increase their budgets.

Walsh summarises the main arguments for and against marketing as an appropriate concept in terms of the management of local authorities [44]. He points out that the market may be seen as an inappropriate mechanism for achieving collective provision, that public services should be provided on a basis of need, that local government resources are limited so marketing could raise demand and expectations to a level which cannot be met, and that statute limits the freedom that local authorites have to decide the amount and range of goods and services they provide.

On the other hand, he indicates that there are advantages to be gained from the employment of market principles and mechanisms in the public sector: notably in terms of the gathering of information upon which the efficient production and effective distribution of goods can be based. For example, he draws attention to the argument that the middle-classes have gained more from the welfare state than those who are relatively disadvantaged (because they have the ability to manipulate the system better) and he suggests that good marketing should help to alleviate such a problem (since techniques can be employed to identify where needs are greatest and where resources should be targeted).

Walsh explains how local authorities can make use of marketing information to analyse the range and level of the services they provide [45]. They may, for example, decide to provide extensive services where there is high need and few, or no, other providers; they may also provide some services, or play a networking role, where there is low need but few alternative sources of provision. However, they may choose not to offer services which other agencies already supply and for which there is low need. Where there is a high degree of need, but a

number of providers exist, the local authority may decide to target their service to particular sections of society, or not to provide the service at all.

2.3 Marketing : services.

Titman identifies the main differences involved in marketing services, as opposed to goods, including the fact that the former are bought on good faith since they cannot be sampled before the purchase [46]. Kinnell and MacDougall include the following amongst the distinguishing features: the fact that services are intangible, they are usually used at the time that they are produced, they cannot be stored for future use, and they are difficult to standardise [47]. Kearsey and Varey point out that with regard to services, where no physical product is exchanged, the decision about whether to make a repeat purchase may be based upon reputation or recollection of satisfaction with previous services [48].

Unlike businesses (which can use profit, expansion, or sales growth compared to competitors, as an indicator of success), nonprofit service providers must try to measure and assess client satisfaction: a difficult task in a service environment where customers' expectations may vary. As Payne points out, customers differ with regard to both their requirements and the value they place upon the features and benefits of particular services [49]. The extent to which customers are satisfied with the service they receive depends upon a number of factors, notably their level of expectation, as well as the actual standard of service provided.

Despite the differences in marketing products and services, there are many common characteristics and factors. Drucker's list of six requirements for service institutions to achieve success illustrates this point [50]. Firstly, he considers, they need to decide their

mission, function and purpose. Secondly, they need to derive clear objectives and goals, and to focus on performance and results. They need to ensure efficiency, by controlling costs, but mainly they need to ensure that their service is effective. Thirdly, they need to determine priorities: targets on which to concentrate, with specified standards and deadlines, and with someone accountable for results. The performance measure (e.g. of customer satisfaction) needs to be defined, and there must be a feed-back mechanism to ensure that the effects of the service developments are apparent. There should be an audit of the objectives and results in order to identify which of the former have proved unattainable, or no longer serve a useful purpose. Finally, action should be taken to remedy unsatisfactory results or to stop the provision of services which are unproductive or obsolete.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE IN SCOTLAND

3.1 The public library service in Scotland : an introduction.

This chapter reviews the origins and development of the public library service, and provides details of relevant legislation and funding arrangements, thereby revealing why a certain degree of confusion has arisen over the years regarding the purpose and objectives of the service. A review of the main developments reveals certain trends in the evolution of the service. It also reveals some inconsistencies.

The role of the library has altered over the years according to differing degrees of emphasis upon education and leisure. The range and level of services have developed correspondingly, and the user base has altered as new services have been introduced. The local authority departments responsible for the delivery of library services have varied over time, as has the amount of money made available to them to provide services. The reorganisation of local government in 1996 was one of the most significant political issues to affect public libraries in recent years, and the establishment of the Scottish Parliament may well result in further alterations to the structure and resourcing of the service in the future. In view of these circumstances, and in order to allow public library marketing developments to be considered within their historical and political context, the following pages describe in detail the structure, administration and funding of the public library service.

3.2 The development of the public library service.

The development of the public library service in Britain is generally considered to date from the mid nineteenth century. Prior to that there were libraries open to the public: however these were mainly either institutional in character or commercially based. The former were associated with the religious orders, universities and, later, the Mechanic's Institutes and literary societies: consequently they were not easily accessible to the vast majority of the public. The latter were private subscription libraries which levied charges.

Aitken compares the publicly supported library service with the subscription libraries, drawing attention to a significant difference between them:

> As the subscription library derives its income from its voluntary subscribers, their desires are a first consideration in its purpose and policy. The public library is established for the community, and all pay their share of its expense whether or not they use its service, or indeed even if they are unaware of its existence; in this way library committee and librarian are responsible to the community as a whole and should resist the influence of "pressure groups" [1].

Public libraries, as described by Aitken, have been in existence for less than a hundred and fifty years. As Kelly states:

> It was the nineteenth century, with its new emphasis on the provision of libraries for the working classes, and its new attitude to the powers and responsibilities of government, that first turned men's minds in the direction of a library service assisted from public funds [2].

The Public Libraries Act of 1850 was the first piece of legislation aimed at establishing local authority libraries financed from the rates and offering 'free' services to users [3]. The Act empowered those towns in England and Wales with a population over 10,000, and agreement from two-thirds of the ratepayers, to levy up to a half penny in the pound rate in order to

provide a library building, with light and fuel, and to employ a librarian. The Public Libraries Act of 1850 was extended to the Scottish burghs in 1853 [4]. The limit of a half penny in the pound was raised to one penny in Scotland the following year [5].

The Acts of the 1850s were significant in that they recognised the need for a free and universal public library service, and during the next decade additional legislation encouraged further developments. For example, the Public Libraries Act (Scotland) 1867, and its amendment of 1871, allowed councils to borrow for capital expenditure and authorised the levying of fines for the late return and non-return of borrowed items [6].

The Public Libraries Consolidation (Scotland) Act of 1887 states that:

> All libraries, museums, or art galleries established under this Act, or to which this Act applies, shall be open to the public free of charge, and no charge shall be made for the use of books or magazines issued for home reading [7].

None of these Acts *required* local authorities to provide public libraries. There was no statutory responsibility to provide a service and not all councils did so. Kelly considers that the arguments against provision tended to be based on the fact that the prosperous, and therefore more heavily-rated, members of the community would be paying for a service aimed at the poorer sections:

> To the philanthropist and the social reformer the fact that the libraries appealed chiefly to the lower orders was their principal merit; but we can have no doubt that this same fact accounts for the fierce opposition to them in many places. This was not merely factious or obscurantist: it was the normal rate-payers' reaction to a proposal which involved, it seemed, taxing the rich for the benefit of the poor [8].

Allred also comments on the users of the service:

> ... it is always the working-classes who are mentioned when developments of services are considered. It is rare to find a mention of any other class of people in proposals for services during the nineteenth century. The public library quite definitely knew its customers [9].

The above Acts, along with the benefactions of the late nineteenth century philanthropists such as Andrew Carnegie and John Passmore Edwards, were instrumental in encouraging the establishment of libraries in many towns [10]. Midwinter and McVicar comment on the purpose of these Acts, arguing that public library development should be seen in the context of a number of nineteenth century social reforms i.e. as part of a historical trend [11]. They emphasize that libraries were seen as part of the *education* process which was deemed necessary in order to "produce a workforce with the capacity to learn new industrial skills".

There is no doubt that the advance of the Industrial Revolution and the subsequent demand for a more literate workforce played a dominant role in the development of the public library service. The latter was seen increasingly as a social investment and the early years of the twentieth century witnessed a significant growth in the number of public libraries [12]. The *Education (Scotland) Act 1918* contributed to this trend since it allowed education authorities to develop library services in rural areas [13].

The services provided by the rural county libraries reflected their association with the education authorities. In contrast, however, in the town libraries, which were under the burgh authorities, there was a shift away from the predominantly educational emphasis to a multi-purpose role which included recreational and social provision. Indeed, there is an argument that libraries were also intended, from their inception, to provide recreational facilities. King, for example, agrees with the view that the mid nineteenth century libraries were intended primarily for the use of the working classes, but she emphasises that a major part of their role

was to provide leisure activities i.e. activities that were less harmful than the potential alternatives open to the growing population in the newly developing cities [14].

By 1920 the statutory rate limit of one penny in the pound was considered to have a hampering effect on the development of many library services and it was raised to 3d [15]. By 1955 this too was considered restrictive and the rate limitation was abolished under the terms of the *Public Libraries (Scotland) Act, 1955* [16].

From the 1920s to the 1950s a number of significant library surveys were undertaken and the corresponding reports indicate how library services developed throughout this period [17]. The Mitchell report, published in 1924, considered aspects of library finance and investigated, amongst other issues, the arguments for coordinating borough and county library schemes [18]. The Kenyon report of 1927 (which was limited in its terms of reference to England and Wales) also examined issues associated with library coordination, including the grouping of libraries in a region around a specified centre [19].

The Library Association's *Survey of Libraries*, carried out in 1936 and 1937, was followed, in 1942, by the McColvin report which examined the condition of the public library system in Great Britain with a view to recommending re-organisation suited to the post-war period [20]. The McColvin report was critical of the limited financial resources available to libraries and, amongst a number of suggestions, it recommended the restructuring of local authority library services into larger units in order to improve efficiency [21]. The Scottish Library Association council considered that McColvin's proposals were unworkable in relation to Scotland and, as a result, another survey (of library services in the north of Scotland) was undertaken by C.S. Minto in 1948. The Minto report made a number of recommendations associated with the

reorganisation and coordination of library services, drawing attention to the fact that in areas of low density population it is difficult to achieve uniformity of service [22].

The *Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964* imposed a specific duty on library authorities in England and Wales "to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof" and, for the first time, a Minister was charged with superintending and promoting the library service and was given powers to enable him to do so [23]. Nowadays responsibility for ensuring that the local authorities in England and Wales meet their statutory obligations rests with the Minister of State at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

In Scotland, in contrast, there is little central government involvement in the provision of public library services. Legislation is still based upon the *Public Libraries Consolidation (Scotland) Act* of 1887 (and subsequent amendments), the *Public Libraries (Scotland) Act* of 1955, and the *Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973* (which states that a local authority "shall have a duty to secure the provision of adequate library facilities for all persons resident in their area") [24]. 'Adequate' facilities are not defined in the Acts, and no guidance on this matter has been forthcoming from Government departments. The *Ex Libris* report stated in 1986:

> While the Secretary of State for Scotland has a general power to ensure that local authorities are meeting their statutory obligations, there is no specific government responsibility, comparable to that in England and Wales, to ensure that the "adequate library facilities" required by law are actually provided [25].

3.3 Public library service structure and administration in the 1990s.

3.3.1 The effect of local government reorganisation upon the public library service.

One of the most significant political developments to affect public library services in recent years was the reorganisation of local government in April 1996: plans for reform having been announced by the Secretary of State for Scotland five years earlier [26]. The proposed changes, which signalled the first significant alteration in the system of local government in Scotland since 1975, included the replacement of the predominantly two-tier structure of regions and districts with single tier authorities. Two consultation papers were published, the first in June 1991 and the second in October 1992 [27]. These were followed, in July 1993, by a White Paper suggesting a new structure of 28 local authorities and acknowledging that in some instances authorities might act jointly to ensure the provision of specialist services [28]. In the course of subsequent debate, the Bill was slightly amended. The resulting *Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994* identifies 32 new local government areas: a significant change from the 9 regions (53 districts) and 3 island authorities in existence at the time [29].

Over the years, public library services in Scotland have varied greatly in scale both geographically and in terms of the size of population they serve. The 1975 reorganisation of local government created forty-one library authorities where previously there had been eighty. (These forty-one library services are listed in appendix II). Between May 1975 and March 1996 the island areas (Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles) and three of the regions (the Borders, Dumfries and Galloway, and Highland) were responsible for the provision of library services. In the remaining areas this duty was assigned to the districts (although within Grampian a joint 'North East of Scotland Library Service' was established). By the beginning of 1996, the population size of these local authorities varied from the island councils of

Orkney (19,900), Shetland (23,100) and the Western Isles (29,000), to the cities of Glasgow (674,800) and Edinburgh (447,600). Geographically the local authorities ranged from Clydebank (3,545 hectares) to Highland (2,539,122 hectares) [30].

The new single tier structure of local government created by the *Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994* resulted in the establishment of thirty-two local authorities in April 1996. Each of these authorities, which are listed in appendix III, has its own library service. Some areas, such as the three island authorities, the city of Aberdeen, and Highland, were subject to little change in terms of their geographical boundaries. However, in thirteen of the thirty-two new authorities the events of 1996 had a very significant impact upon the organisation of library services. For example, Bearsden, which had been part of the district of Bearsden and Milngavie (with a population of just under 42,000 in 1995-96) became part of East Dunbartonshire (which has a population of approximately 111,000) [31]. Furthermore, although Glasgow and Edinburgh city libraries remain by far the largest authorities with regard to population size, the creation of Fife, North Lanarkshire and South Lanarkshire produced three more authorities with a population of over 300,000.

As shown in Table 1, the reorganisation brought about a reduction in the number of library authorities with a population under 50,000, from seven (17%) to four (12.5%). There was also a reduction in the number of authorities with a population between 50,000 and 100,000, from fifteen (36.5%) to eight (25%). The number of authorities with a population between 100,000 and 200,000 changed from thirteen (32%) to twelve (37.5%) and the number of authorities with a population in excess of 200,000 rose from six (14.5%) to eight (25%) [32].

Table 1

Scottish local authority library services: population size before and since April 1996.		
Library Service Area Population	Before April 1996	Since April 1996
≤ 50,000	7 (17%)	4 (12.5%)
50,001 - 100,000	15 (36.5%)	8 (25%)
100,001 - 200,000	13 (32%)	12 (37.5%)
> 200,000	6 (14.5%)	8 (25%)
Total	**41 (100%)**	**32 (100%)**

Sources:
Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. *Public Library Statistics 1995-96 Actuals*. London: CIPFA, 1997.
Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. *Public Library Statistics 1996 -97 Actuals*. London: CIPFA, 1998.

The LOGOPLUS project, which took place between January 1997 and September 1998, investigated the impact on public libraries of the re-organisation of Local Government in England [33]. The research concluded that a number of political, financial and personnel factors contributed to the success of those authorities which achieved a seamless transition of services to library users and staff: managers and councillors with commitment and vision, a clear definition of mission and goals, an adequate transitional budget, multi-skilled staff, and supportive users [34]. The project also considered the impact of the change in size of authorities. The reorganisation in England created many smaller authorities and the report identifies some advantages of this, notably in terms of improved communication and flexibility. However, the report also highlights the disadvantages, in particular with respect to the loss of the economies of scale that allow Library Services to develop information and communication technologies and to negotiate substantial discounts from suppliers [35].

3.3.2 The place of library departments within local authority structures.

Within the structure of the Scottish local authorities there is no uniformity in the placing of libraries. This perhaps reflects the fact that their role is not clearly defined at national level and the fact that, as Snape points out, they have never had a consistent position [36]. Prior to

the reorganisation of the mid 1970s, library services were linked to a variety of departments (including education, museums, and arts), and some were departments in their own right. Following the 1975 reorganisation some became part of new directorates, but no significant pattern emerged with regard to their place within the council structure.

The 1996 reorganisation of local government also failed to produce any uniformity with regard to the position of library services within local authorities. For example, libraries in Angus became part of the Cultural Services department, in Dundee they formed part of the Neighbourhood Resources and Development Department (alongside youth work, adult learning, and neighbourhood regeneration), and in East Ayrshire libraries they were designated part of the Community Services Department (which is responsible for a wide range of services such as leisure and recreation, arts and culture, museums, environmental health, waste disposal, consumer and trading standards, licensing and burial grounds). Prior to 1996, libraries were a prominent district council function. However, in many cases, the reorganisation left libraries without direct representation at committee level. The creation of fewer, larger departments, left many chief librarians without direct access to councillors. Typical of this type of arrangement is Stirling Libraries, where the Libraries Manager reports to a 'Head of Service, Libraries, Heritage and Culture' (who, in turn, reports to a 'Director, Community Services'), and Aberdeen City Library Service, where the Principal Officer (Library and Information Services) reports to the Assistant Director who is responsible for library and cultural services (who, in turn, reports to the Director of Arts and Recreation).

Many local authorities have undergone further internal reorganisations since 1996 and, as the number of service divisions is reduced, libraries are increasingly becoming subsumed within larger, corporate, departments, i.e. they are becoming part of broader, multi-disciplinary,

directorates. For example, in 1999 Aberdeen City Council announced plans to streamline its committee structure, cutting the existing number of committees by two-thirds [37]. This proposal involved placing the Arts and Recreation department, of which libraries are a part, alongside services such as education, social work, housing, community development and economic development, within the remit of a 'City Community Services Committee'. Following discussion, the actual changes, which took effect in the Autumn, involved a reduction in the number of committees from 14 to 7 and established a separate 'Education and Leisure Committee' and a 'Community Services Committee'. Interestingly, one local newspaper that reported on the developments, and listed the main responsibilities of each committee, did not specify the location of the libraries department within the new structure [38]. As part of a large division, especially one that includes politically sensitive areas such as education or social work, a library service may seem of limited importance. The emergence of large corporate structures places libraries in a potentially vulnerable position.

3.4 Public library service funding.

3.4.1 The allocation of public funds.

The extent to which library authorities are able to provide resources and services to meet the standards they are aiming to achieve is dependent upon a number of factors, not least of which is the level of funding they have at their disposal. Public libraries at present receive their funding predominantly from three major sources: from grants, from local taxes, and from charging for services. Midwinter and McVicar explain the planning procedure that was involved in the allocation of public funds to support library services in Scotland prior to the establishment of the Scottish Parliament [39]. This involved three stages: firstly, at national level expenditure was calculated as part of the Scottish Office assessment in the Public

Expenditure Survey; secondly, the finance allocated to the Scottish Office was redistributed to local authorities in the form of the Revenue Support Grant; and, finally, the amount allocated to libraries was considered as part of the process of local authority budget allocation.

With regard to the Public Expenditure Survey, the Government's annual review of expenditure plans, Midwinter and McVicar state that:

> The distribution of public finance is allocated acccording to a political assessment of social need. This is determined by the principal British social policy orthodoxy that public services, including libraries, should be uniformly available across the country. It has been argued that this partly accounts for Scotland's consistently favourable allocation of funding, in excess of its population size [40].

They continue:

> Public expenditure on libraries is calculated within the Scottish Office block in the PES. Where Scottish programmes have comparable counterparts in the rest of the UK, expenditure provision is calculated on a formula basis, with reference to cost increases or decreases from the previous year.
> The system of allocation is not piecemeal and arbitrary, but calculated according to a defined formula. The share of the national budget allocated to the Scottish Office has been calculated in a number of different ways but there is no evidence to suggest that libraries have benefited or lost by the nature of the particular system used [41].

The second stage of budget allocation was the distribution of money to local authorities by means of the Revenue Support Grant; a process which involved negotiations between Scottish Office officials and representatives of COSLA. Prior to 1981 the means of calculating the amount of money allocated to each authority was based on a formula which took into account population size and included weightings based on demographic factors such as the number of children and elderly people in the area. Since 1981 the allocation has been based more on need, taking into account the amount of money authorities with similar characteristics would need to provide a similar level of service. Although the budget is calculated in this way, the

grants are not earmarked for specific purposes and therefore, after the budget has been allocated, each authority may decide how much to spend on particular services according to the needs and priorities in their local area.

The amount of money that local government is allowed to spend is restricted, and determined by central government, since each authority is effectively constrained by its capping limit (as indicated in the *Local Government and Planning (Scotland) Act 1982*) [42]. Within that limit the authority has to balance competing requirements, and services such as libraries may receive very different budgets depending upon the political persuasion of the local council, the views of the elected members, and the position of the library service within the local authority structure. The budgetary process involves officers calculating how much money they will need to spend over the forthcoming year, taking into account the expansion or contraction of their service and the effects of inflation. These calculations are discussed with the relevant councillors, then submitted to the finance committee (and ultimately put before the full council). Once allocated a budget, the department normally has to spend the money within the financial year, since it is not usually possible to carry money forward into the next year.

Midwinter and McVicar, in a report published in 1992, argue that, "Rate-capping has had a minimal effect upon public library authorities", and that libraries have benefited from the incremental nature of the system [43]. Furthermore, they demonstrate that between 1980 and 1990 library spending increased in cash terms every year. They state that, with the exception of the two years 1980/81 and 1983/84, "the increase enjoyed by the library service was greater than that for district services as a whole", and they conclude that the public library service did consistently better than many of the other services that were provided by local authorities [44].

Capital expenditure is also subject to the consent of the Secretary of State. For district services, this type of expenditure is divided into three blocks: the library bids being part of the 'general services' block. The Secretary of State is responsible for giving each authority approval to spend a certain amount on each block of services. In contrast to revenue expenditure, capital expenditure on libraries over the period 1980 to 1990 is described by Midwinter and McVicar as being far more piecemeal and lacking in any incremental basis [45]. Such financial support is required on an irregular basis and it is easier to cut capital projects than revenue expenditure, but Midwinter and McVicar point out that libraries appear to have been more successful at securing capital expenditure in the second half of the 1980s than in the first half.

At a time when the political emphasis in the United Kingdom is upon encouraging local decision making, the vote on 11th September 1997 in favour of establishing a Scottish Parliament with tax varying powers could have significant implications for local authorities, including library services. For example, the current funding model could change in future to incorporate processes that are employed elsewhere, such as the use of referenda for approving capital projects and operating levies as in the U.S.A. (as discussed in chapter eight) [46]. Whatever system develops, it seems likely that the current move towards encouraging local decision-making and greater participation in local government will make it more important than ever that library managers are in touch with the needs and preferences of the people within the community they serve.

3.4.2 Charging for services.

With regard to user fees, there has been political pressure on public libraries in recent years to generate income in order to become more economically self-sufficient. As Midwinter and McVicar summarise:

> Throughout the 1980s, the issue of financing public services has been central to the political debate. Traditional attitudes towards free-at-point-of-access provision have been challenged by the Thatcher government, and public library authorities have been urged to increase the scope of their charging policies [47].

The 1988 Green Paper on library finance, *Financing our Public Library Service: Four Subjects for Debate*, which was intended to be applicable only in England and Wales, led to much debate on the subject throughout the U.K. [48]. The paper suggested that libraries could determine a 'basic' level of service, which could be provided free, and supplementary services which could be made available at a cost. The paper considered not just the scope for expanding charging policies, but also the scope for contracting out services, and the feasibility of projects funded jointly by library authorities and the private sector. The explanatory note to the Green Paper states:

> Government wishes to maintain a free basic library service at taxpayers' expense. At the same time, it wants to make it easier for library authorities to increase their income by joint ventures with the private sector, and by charging for specialised services [49].

The paper emphasises the Government's commitment to a free basic library service, but it invited discussion on a range of issues associated with how library authorities could raise their gross annual income by introducing charges for more services, how they could expand the

range of their services with the help of private sector funding, and how they could increase the 'value for money' of their services through greater use of competitive tendering.

The debate following the publication of the paper focused on both fears that such a policy could lead to the introduction of fees for all services in future and the practical difficulties of defining a 'basic' service (particularly in the light of local variations in need). The latter issue cannot be divorced from the whole question of public library purpose since it is only by knowing the central aims and objectives of the service that one can distinguish between what is a core service and what is optional. In addition, the Green Paper led to a debate about the difficulties associated with assessing the value of a service: since this may be determined in terms of the level of use, the level of need, or the amount of money that people are prepared to pay for it.

The Green Paper was intended to encourage librarians to review their objectives, the strategies to be used to meet them, and the way in which these objectives could be financed. The paper was intended to promote discussion about how society's increasing information needs could be met in future. Although the introduction of charges remains a controversial topic within the profession, libraries have, in recent years, increased the scope of their charging policies and many librarians have demonstrated an acceptance of the fact that, regardless of ideological views, income generation has become a necessity.

The Conservative Government, under both Thatcher and Major, laid considerable emphasis upon charges for certain local authority services and by the mid 1990s fees provided a significant income. Within leisure services departments, for example, charges were levied as (at least) part payment towards the cost of providing certain sports facilities and cultural

events etc. Midwinter states that, "At the heart of the debate about charging is an economic belief that paying for services will reduce demands for those activities which people are unwilling to pay a price for, and so more accord with individual preferences" [50]. Such a school of thought takes no account of the fact that some members of the public are simply unable to afford to pay fees.

Midwinter and McVicar consider the extent to which individual library authorities in Scotland developed charging policies throughout the 1980s, and they demonstrate that during this time there was a significant increase in the amount of income generated [51]. They also conclude that throughout the 1980s there was an increase in the proportion raised through charging. They state, "In the financial year 1980/81 only 2.6% of total expenditure was raised through income generation. By 1988/89 this had more than doubled to 5.7 %".

Midwinter and McVicar argue that studies show that, "faced with declining grant and political resistance to tax increases, authorities will resort to increased charges as a means of maintaining services" although, from one council to another, "Political disposition to charging will vary" [52]. Their analysis shows that throughout the 1980s both an increasing amount and an increasing proportion of revenue was generated by the library services themselves, and they conclude that, "Professional objections have not been enough to resist pressures for income generation" [53]. They argue that these trends are a result of fiscal pressures. They also identify two key objectives of charging policy: to compensate for reduced grants and to meet increasing needs.

Midwinter and McVicar's analysis is based on the findings of a survey commissioned by the Library and Information Services Committee (Scotland) in 1988 [54]. They examine the

incentives and constraints which affected library policies on charging at this time. The main incentives were to enhance the profile of the library within the authority, to expand service provision, and to raise revenue whereas the main constraints were considered to be lack of staff time, professional attitude and authority policy [55]. (Interestingly, the results of the 1988 survey (which are discussed in detail in chapter nine) are different to those obtained eight years later when similar questions were asked as part of the 1996 survey upon which this thesis is based).

Over the years, local authorities have been allowed some discretionary powers to determine their own criteria for charging and, as a result of the lack of relevant legislation or clear directives from Central Government, and the problems of defining which services must be provied free of charge, a wide variation of charging policies has emerged in the U.K. To date libraries have predominantly restricted their charging to fines, sales, photocopying, and admission to events, etc., i.e. services for which a fixed price can be decided. As the range of services for which fees are charged increases, more difficulties arise. The question of how much to charge for providing information is a difficult one, and one which has been the subject of much debate in recent years.

The 1983 report by the Local Authorities Management Services and Computer Committee (LAMSAC) lists thirty different ways in which public libraries attempted to raise income in the early 1980s [56]. In recent years numerous authors, to whom reference is made in chapter eight, have discussed the range of services for which a charge is now made, or could be made. The plethora of courses and conferences on the theme of library fund-raising and income generation indicates the high level of current interest in the subject. Innovation is encouraged, as is the spread of good practice.

A report by the British Library Research and Development Department in 1986 highlights the range of sources of external funds available to libraries at that time, and the opportunity to obtain grant funding has continued into the 1990s [57]. In recent years, 'Challenge Funding' has been made available, and some libraries have benefited from Lottery funding. There is a clear indication that Government policy since the early 1980s has favoured attempts to supplement the basic library budget (which is provided from public funds) with additional income from other sources. The results of the 1996 survey (described in chapter nine) indicate that a significant number of libraries have obtained grants and sponsorship and now charge for certain services.

3.4.3 Levels of expenditure and income.

In an article published in 1993, Midwinter and McVicar analyse statistical evidence on the range, cost, and use of U.K. public libraries (concentrating on 1985/6 and 1990/1) in order to establish whether there is a relationship between the size of an authority (in terms of the population served) and its functional efficiency [58]. (As they point out in a 1994 British Library report, although in the early years of the public library service there was an interest in establishing the minimum size of population which could be best served by a library department, this was in order to ensure an adequate local tax base, not because of any notions of service effectiveness [59]).

The results of the investigation indicate that, although size is not the only factor determining the range and level of services provided, there is "some confirmation of diseconomies of scale in small library authorities", i.e. they "incur greater expenditure per 1,000 population than larger authorities and require more facilities to provide the service" [60]. In view of these

findings, it is interesting to compare the CIPFA data on expenditure and income of Scottish public libraries in the years immediately before and after the 1996 reorganisation: a reorganisation which resulted in a significant change in the size of the authorities.

In 1995-96, the public library service in Scotland was making services available to a resident population of over five million. Revenue expenditure per 1,000 people throughout the country as a whole amounted to £17,233: higher than the expenditure in Wales, Northern Ireland, and the English counties and metropolitan districts, but lower than the London boroughs [61]. The revenue spending per 1,000 people in England and Wales overall amounted to only £12,794 [62].

In 1995-96, in Scotland, revenue expenditure per 1,000 population varied from £12,007 in Kilmarnock and Loudon to £29,812 in Shetland [63]. As shown in Table 2, there was a wide variation in levels of expenditure, even within groups of authorities serving roughly similar sizes of population. The authorities serving populations under 50,000 spent a relatively high amount (between £15,641 and £29,812 per 1,000 people) compared to the others. The minimum amount spent in the authorities with larger populations was approximately the same (between £12,000 and £13,000 in each of the three size bands). However, the upper amount was successively less in each size band i.e. it was £25,010 in authorities serving populations of 50,001 - 100,000; £21,424 in authorities with populations of 100,001 - 200,000; and £20,814 in authorities with a population over 200,000.

Table 2

A comparison of Scottish local authority library services - expenditure 1995/96 : 1996/97				
Library Service Area Population	No. of Authorities in 1995/96	Range of revenue expenditure per 1,000 population in 1995/96	No. of Authorities in 1996/97	Range of revenue expenditure per 1,000 population in 1996/97
≤ 50,000	7	£15,641 - £29,812	4	£16,343 - £32,478
50,001-100,000	15	£12,007 - £25,010	8	£13,416 - £23,431
100,001-200,000	13	£12,881 - £21,424	12	£12,471 - £21,456
> 200,000	6	£12,652 - £20,814	8	£12,552 - £21,020
Total / Range	**41**	**£12, 007 - £29,812**	**32**	**£12,471 - £32,478**

Expenditure figures taken from:

Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. *Public Library Statistics 1995-96 Actuals*. London: CIPFA, 1997.

Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. *Public Library Statistics 1996 -97 Actuals*. London: CIPFA, 1998.

In 1996-97 levels of expenditure again varied widely, from £12,471 to £32,478 per 1,000 population [64]. (The figures in Table 2 are not adjusted to take account of inflation; they are included in order to show the range of expenditure rather than for purposes of year on year comparison). Although the number of authorities in each size band was different following the reorganisation of local government, the pattern of expenditure was very similar to before. Authorities serving a population under 50,000 showed the highest range, from £16,343 to £32,478. Those serving a larger population (i.e. over 50,000) showed ranges beginning at a figure around £13,000 and reaching an upper amount of £23,431. The latter was the maximum spent per 1,000 people in authorities with a population of 50,001 - 100,000. As in the period prior to April 1996, the upper amount spent was less in the authorities with a population of 100,001 - 200,000 (£21,456), and even lower in the authorities serving a population over 200,000 (£21,020).

Total revenue income per 1,000 population (i.e. income from overdue charges, reservation fees, lettings, the hire of audio-visual material, photocopying and specific grants, etc.) in 1995-96 amounted to £752 in Scotland, compared to a figure of £1066 for England and Wales [65]. The figures indicate that, in general, income generation was less in Scotland than in many other parts of the United Kingdom. However, a more detailed analysis indicates that the pattern varies very much from one local authority to another within Scotland. For example, revenue income per 1,000 population varied from £244 in Argyll and Bute to £2277 in Stirling [66].

Table 3

A comparison of Scottish local authority library services - income 1995/96 : 1996/97				
Library Service Area Population	No. of Authorities in 1995/96	Range of revenue income per 1,000 population in 1995/96	No. of Authorities in 1996/97	Range of revenue income per 1,000 population in 1996/97
≤ 50,000	4	£251 - £2,006	4	£402 - £2,028
50,001-100,000	8	£244 - £2,277	8	£280 - £2,927
100,001-200,000	12	£304 - £1,452	12	£122 - £1,112
> 200,000	8	£347 - £787	8	£567 - £847
Total / Range	**32**	**£244 - £2,277**	**32**	**£122 - £2,927**

Income figures taken from:

Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. *Public Library Statistics 1995-96 Actuals*. London: CIPFA, 1997.

Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. *Public Library Statistics 1996 -97 Actuals*. London: CIPFA, 1998.

As shown in Table 3, the range of income was less in 1995-96 than in 1996-97. In the former, the range per 1,000 people was from £244 to £2,277; in the latter it was from £122 to £2,927. (As in the previous table, the figures have not been adjusted to take account of inflation). In 1995-96 the minimum amount of income raised was higher in the larger population size bands

i.e. it was approximately £250 in the authorities serving under 50,000 people and between 50,000 and 100,000 people, but £304 in those serving between 100,000 and 200,000 people and £347 in those serving over 200,000 people. In 1996-97 there was no similar pattern, although the authorities with the largest population still had the highest minimum income (of £567 per 1,000 people).

In 1995-96, the maximum income generated by authorities with a population under 50,000, and those with 50,001 - 100,000 people, was over £2,000. In authorities with a population of 100,001 - 200,000, the maximum was over £1,000, but in authorities with a population over 200,000 the maximum was under £1,000. In 1996-97 the maximum amount of income per 1,000 people increased slightly, compared with the previous year, in three of the population bands. The figure for the authorities with a population of 100,001 - 200,000 proved the exception by declining (from £1,452 to £1,112). The overall pattern remained the same, with both of the smallest population bands showing a maximum income of over £2,000, the 100,001 - 200,000 population band registering a maximum of over £1,000, and the largest authorities still generating less than £1,000 revenue income per 1,000 people.

The results of this analysis by population size show that there is a significant degree of similarity in the pattern of expenditure and income generation before and after the reorganisation of local government in 1996, with the small authorities spending a higher amount (and generating a higher amount) per person. A high level of expenditure and a low level of income generation does not in itself indicate a problem; it might reflect a local authority policy. In the current political climate it is considered more important for local authority departments to achieve the goals they have set themselves (to meet user needs) than to achieve financial savings, or an increase in income, as an end in itself. However, serious

concerns arise if a department spends a high amount of money but fails to meet its goals. In the concluding chapter of this thesis, a comparison is made between the library services which spend a high amount of money and generate a low amount of income per person and those which fail to employ basic marketing techniques, in order to discover whether there is any correlation. High level expenditure to meet acknowledged needs is commendable; high level expenditure in the absence of market research or assessment of priorities is unacceptable.

CHAPTER FOUR

EFFECTIVE PUBLIC LIBRARIES : THEIR MISSION AND OBJECTIVES

4.1 Effective public libraries : an introduction.

Determining effectiveness is a complex task for non-profit organisations such as libraries. Effectiveness may be measured in terms of organisational health (general use and the attitude of the public towards the service), it may be measured in terms of the achievement of specific goals, or it may be reflected in the capacity of the organisation to respond to changing demands. It may involve quantitative indicators, such as the percentage of people within a community who are active library users, or it may be based on qualitative information, for example expressions of satisfaction with the service. No single measure of effectiveness is likely to suffice. This chapter discusses the effectiveness of public libraries in terms of the extent to which they have defined their 'mission' and formulated service objectives. It also examines their current role in society. (Chapter five examines effectiveness, along with efficiency, in relation to standards and performance measures. Then chapter six considers how to ensure that libraries are responsive to user needs i.e. the market research techniques that can be applied to obtain information about user requirements and to measure user satisfaction with the services provided).

Craig draws attention to the fact that with regard to effectiveness, it is necessary to ask "effective in relation to what?" [1]. He points out that effectiveness presumes the existence of an underlying strategy and that unlike efficiency, which may be assessed by the providers of a service, effectiveness must be judged by the consumer. Brown warns of the problems

associated with assuming that the existing service is good and therefore continuing to develop it, thereby providing a 'service-led' rather than a 'client-led' service [2]. Organisations should provide services which allow them to establish and retain a steady customer base. However, as Falsey emphasises, to be successful, organisations must constantly adapt to meet customers' needs [3]. They should maintain a balance between expenditure on efforts to attract new users and expenditure on resources to ensure that the needs of existing users are met.

In 1993 The Library Association published *A Charter for Public Libraries* which provides public library managers with a model upon which they may base their own local users' charters [4]. By the following year the *Library Association Record* was able to report that, "More than half of the library authorities in the UK have a 'User's Charter' or are planning to introduce one" [5]. The model charter does not include quantitative details, but it describes the services and facilities that a good public library should provide [6]. Clayton describes the variation in the content of the charters in existence in 1992, before the publication of the Library Association's guidelines, and he comments, "This could represent a healthy diversity in library provision or indicate a confusion as to the purpose of public libraries" [7].

Hicks discusses the creation of a Library User's Charter in Berkshire, and lists a number of considerations which should be taken into account when constructing a Charter [8]. His list includes the identification of "standards of performance which will be acceptable to customers and achievable by the library service", the procedures and systems required to ensure that the standards are achieved, and communication with the customer. At the top of his list, however, are issues relating to the library's mission and the needs of the customers: identification of the nature of the service provided (i.e. what is done, for whom, under what circumstances, and whether there are any restrictions on the service to be provided),

identification of the customers' expectations, identification of the extent to which the expectations of the library staff match the vision of the customers, and identification of the way in which services which satisfy the customers' wishes can be provided within the available resources [9].

4.2 Mission Statements.

As McClure et al. point out, once the key roles of a library have been identified and prioritised, a mission statement should be created [10]. This should state briefly and directly the purpose of the library, and should reflect the particular needs of the community the library serves. Childers and Van House describe the developments and sentiments that took form in the U.S.A. in the 1960s and 1970s, i.e:

> ... that libraries are local institutions; that public libraries do not subscribe to a universal mission; and that, therefore, each library should be judged by local criteria that address the local library mission [11].

Dubberly comments that too often in libraries day to day objectives are completed but, amid the rush to order books and pay bills, it is not clear whether the organisation is really accomplishing what it should i.e. making progress towards achieving its goals and fulfilling its mission [12]. He points out the advantages of having a 'mission statement' or statement of purpose which explains why the library exists in the community: i.e. a broad philosophical statement supported by goals (which indicate the way in which the library is to achieve its mission) and objectives (which state what is to be done and by when). Dubberly says:

> Because the environment is always changing, your mission statement must be dynamic. It, too, must change in response to the community and the needs of the users. An organization in a rapidly changing environment could find itself obsolete unless it periodically reviews and changes its mission statement [13].

As Falsey points out, a mission statement may serve a number of purposes. It may indicate the direction in which the organisation intends to develop, it may define the market which the organisation hopes to serve, and it may identify the priorities held by the organisation's management [14].

A number of key international policy statements relating to the mission of the public library service are relevant to developments in Scotland. The *National Mission Statement* produced by IFLA, in 1977, gives a concise description of the role the public library as a major community facility, "whose purpose is to enable and encourage individuals or groups of individuals to gain unbiased access to books, information, knowledge and works of creative imagination..." [15]. This mission statement emphasises that local needs should be given particular attention, although it also specifies that provision should be made to allow access to wider resources.

The European Union's statement on library policy, which was produced in 1991, emphasises the role of libraries as the 'bridge' between the producers and publishers of information and the people who want to use it [16]. It draws attention to the advantageous use of information technology to improve international co-operation and to support industry.

The 1994 *UNESCO Public Library Manifesto* highlights the role of the public library with regard to the support of lifelong education and the cultural development of the individual [17]. It stresses that, "Collections and services should be developed on the basis of good quality related to local need and should include all types of appropriate media". It also states that the public library should support local businesses and economic development with a view to increasing the prosperity of the community. In terms of organisation and management, the

UNESCO manifesto states that, "Public library services should be based on clear policies which define the objectives of the library and set its priorities".

Although these three statements differ in terms of emphasis, it is significant that they concentrate on literacy, education, information and cultural development, rather than the provision of recreational material. They encourage the provision of quality collections, the provision of services free of charge, and the creation of networks to share resources. They place an emphasis upon meeting local needs.

The U.K. national Mission Statement for the public library service states:

> The public library is a major community facility whose purpose is to enable and encourage individuals or groups of individuals to gain unbiased access to books, information, knowledge and works of creative imagination which will:
>
> - encourage their active participation in cultural, democratic and economic activities;
> - enable them to participate in educational development through formal or informal programmes;
> - assist them to make positive use of leisure time;
> - promote reading and literacy as basic skills necessary for active involvement in these activities;
> - encourage the use of information and an awareness of its value;
>
> The local and community nature of the service requires special emphasis to be placed on the needs and aspirations of the local community and on the provision of services for particular groups within it, while also providing access to wider resources through regional and national networks [18].

This is a useful general statement, however, as Dubberly points out, since communities vary from one locality to another, each library authority is likely to have to write its own mission statement, or at least adapt existing statements to reflect local priorities [19]. Defining the library's mission gives both library staff and users a better understanding of the library's purpose. It allows staff to develop strategies and allocate resources effectively. The process of

defining the mission in itself provides a useful focus for discussion about library purpose. The creation of a mission statement should lead to increased effectiveness and increased accountability since the purpose of the service is more apparent.

The mission statement of a public library should reflect the mission and goals of the local authority of which it is a part. Wood states that the mission should address the key influences on the organisation, which are listed as: history (an indication of the founding principles of the organisation, with a brief explanation for any significant subsequent changes in terms of purpose), constituencies (the needs and preferences of important stakeholders in the organisation), the external environment (with reference to factors likely to be of influence such as economic or population trends), and resources (human, physical, and financial) [20].

In a document published in 1995, Bedfordshire Libraries Department states its mission:

> Public libraries in Bedfordshire are a vital community facility, the purpose of which is to provide access to books, information, knowledge, and works of creative imagination, for the whole community without discrimination [21].

Many of the mission statements, or statements of purpose, that have been produced by libraries have roughly similar content, but each has its own areas of emphasis. For example, Moray District Libraries had the following statement in 1996:

> The Libraries Service is committed to improving the quality of life for all those who live in, work in or visit Moray District, through the provision of a wide range of materials and services that meet educational, cultural, leisure and information needs [22].

The Western Isles Library Service Mission Statement in 1996 was:

> To provide for everyone in the Western Isles a library service which caters for the educational, cultural, information and leisure needs of individuals, groups, industrial and commercial concerns and other agencies requiring assistance and information. This is to be achieved by making available a balanced and appropriate selected range of books and audio-visual material [23].

4.3 Objectives.

Wood comments that, "If the mission can be described as the ultimate *destination* of an organization, then goals are *directions* in general terms for getting there" [24]. She defines objectives: "Objectives are plans that state how attainment of a goal is to be measured and judged. They specify a directly observable, quantified result to be achieved by a certain time". She distinguishes between the intent of goals (to reach a certain performance level or maintain a certain position) and the function of goals (for example, in terms of defining the type and level of service, the management of resources, and administration of the service).

In 1981 the Public Libraries Research Group published a range of sample policy statements relating to the main service areas, including adult reference, adult lending, children's services, commercial and technical, community information, and services to schools, hospitals, those who are housebound and people in custody [25]. Each statement is followed by a list of objectives. This model provides a good starting point for libraries which are attempting to define their own objectives, but it allows for little local variation.

In contrast, the manual relating to the specification of objectives for public libraries which was published by the Office of Arts and Libraries in 1991 focuses on the process by which libraries can develop objectives which meet their specific needs [26]. It emphasises the need for each library to select objectives relevant to its own key areas of activity, i.e. areas which it

considers a priority. It draws attention to the need to consider how to assess progress, how to incorporate customer judgements into the monitoring process, how to decide which performance indicators to use, and how to identify a set of benchmark standards with which achievements can be compared.

Cumnock and Doon Valley District Library Service provides a good example of how objectives can be defined and publicised clearly. Its booklet, *Setting objectives for the District Library Service,* contains a 'Statement of District Library Purpose' and a list of fourteen 'Key activities and service aims' grouped under six broad headings [27]. Each of the key activities is then described in more detail, with policy objectives (identifying what is to be done), operational objectives (identifying how the activities are to be achieved), and targets.

4.4 The role of the public library service in the 1990s.

4.4.1 The purpose of public libraries.

Despite the emergence of examples of good practice, with regard to the publication of mission statements and objectives, a survey of the literature indicates that in the early 1990s there was still ongoing debate, within the U.K., with regard to the role of the public library. This is exemplified in the variation in the replies received from librarians in response to an invitation by the *Public Library Journal* to submit a brief statement which encapsulates public library purpose [28]. The responses make reference to topics ranging from the promotion of knowledge to the encouragement of leisure interests, from the provision of up to date information to local businesses to the preservation of local history material, and from the support of literacy schemes to the provision of accommodation for community activities.

Since the publication of these statements, in 1993, a number of major reports and reviews relating to United Kingdom public library services have been published: *Borrowed time ? The future of public libraries in the UK* by Comedia in 1993, the *Review of the public library service in England and Wales for the Department of National Heritage* by ASLIB in 1995, *The Apt Review: a review of library and information co-operation in the UK and the Republic of Ireland for the Library and Information Co-operation Council (LINC)* in 1995, *Reading the future: a review of public libraries in England* by the Department of National Heritage in 1997, *Due for renewal: a report on the library service* by the Audit Commission in 1997, *New library: the people's network* by the Library and Information Commission in 1997, and *Building the new library network* (also by the Library and Information Commission) in 1998 [29]. These reports cover a wide range of issues relating to the role of public libraries, in particular the decline in their traditional activities and the role they can play in providing access to information and communications technology.

In a paper delivered at a Capital Planning seminar in 1993, Worpole (a consultant associated with the Comedia report) describes the potential opportunities for libraries associated with the main changes in society: an ageing population, the need for individuals to retrain to meet new employment demands, and the notion of lifelong learning [30]. He comments on the need for librarians to undertake better marketing to take advantage of these opportunities, adding that, at the time of the review, "The public library is by far the most popular and widely used cultural institution in contemporary society; yet it was perceived to be in crisis".

The Comedia report states that U.K. public libraries provide, "an information network or 'national grid' linked at local, regional and national levels" but that without strategic planning this national asset could atrophy or disappear [31]. The report goes on to suggest that while

some library services seem to be capable of adapting to surviving within a new environment by developing a new rationale, management and funding system, others do not. The study concludes that public libraries, at the time of the research, were making an impact in five key areas : education, social policy, information, cultural enrichment, and economic development.

In a review of the Comedia report, Conway states:

> Comedia on the one hand suggests the library service needs to be 'focused', as regards its purpose, and therefore concentrate on certain types of provision, based on local circumstances. But equally the report champions an all-embracing role, consistent with the perceived potential of the public library as a major force in public life [32].

This expectation that public libraries can continue to provide both a broad general service and a service tailored to meeting specific local needs, is one of the major problems facing them at present. A number of reports have tried to address this concern. For example, the 1995 *Review of the public library service in England and Wales for the Department of National Heritage* was intended to assess the scope and value of the services provided at the time, to identify the changing and emerging needs of the public, and to identify the 'core' or 'essential' services which public libraries should provide. It considers how libraries should be funded in future, how they should meet the challenge of information technology, and how access to libraries could be improved. It also examines the relationships and partnerships between libraries and related services, concluding that, "To cope with the extraordinary changes in their environment, public libraries will need new capabilities, additional resources, and new partnerships [33]".

The ASLIB review considers the services libraries can offer to people with disabilities, older people, and people from different cultural backgrounds. It takes into account the views of

frequent, occasional and non-users of public libraries, as well as library staff, and it confirms the wide influence the public library service has on people's lives:

> Historically, public libraries have helped local people to cope with crisis and change. They still do; when a disaster strikes, a common reaction is to search for information, and many resort to their public libraries for that purpose. Libraries enable people faced with change in their lives to inform themselves about local, national, European and world affairs, to acquire knowledge, and to refurbish their skills. Trade, job-seeking, relocation of families, and home working can all benefit from the type of help that public libraries already offer or could provide.
> Many other opportunities will arise, as the information revolution gains momentum and new demands appear [34].

The ASLIB review identifies four main purposes of the public library, and thirteen core functions [35]. The main purposes are given as: meeting the demands of future generations, being a community asset, providing facilities and services of direct benefit to people who live, work or study in the area, and providing services which have a 'contingency value' i.e. services that meet the needs of occasional users. The core functions are listed as: continuing or 'perpetual' benefits (i.e. the idea of the library being a central attraction in the local area, and the provision of study areas, popular reading material, new media, and services intended to enlighten children); sporadic or occasional benefits (i.e. reference services, access to knowledge and culture, local studies, information on issues of key importance, local community information and business information); and social benefits (i.e. the provision of a safe, familiar, relaxing place for people to visit, and the provision of a stimulating environment for people to attend events and exhibitions).

The *2020 Vision* document, which was published by the Library and Information Commission in the 1990s, considers the value of library and information services and identifies the potential impact libraries could have on future education and economic and social policy [36]. *A Library Manifesto*, produced by the Library Association in 1997, highlights thirteen key

points which it considers libraries now need to address: these include funding issues and legislation on matters such as the deposit of new media with national libraries [37].

The above publications emphasise the value of the public library service, and demonstrate its potential future role, but none provide details of a way forward for the libraries that are having to redefine their purpose at a time when the funding that is available is inadequate to meet the new demands. A possible solution to this problem, however, is for libraries to move away from the mass marketing that they have traditionally practised and, instead, to consider a differentiated approach. As Baker points out, each library should decide its role: for example, whether it aims to be a full scale research centre, a community information centre, or simply a provider of popular fiction [38]. Baker suggests that a library may decide to have a primary and a secondary role but, whether it has a single purpose or a dual level approach, its mission statement should indicate its intention clearly. Baker emphasises that once a library has selected its role, or roles, it should ensure that resources are deployed in a way that reflects this level of commitment: attempts should be made to satisfy all requests that fall within the library's stated primary role, and most requests that fall within its secondary role, but it must be understood (by staff and users alike) that requests that do not meet either of these criteria may be declined.

Baker's recommendations are based partly on the work of McClure et al. in the U.S.A. in the 1980s [39]. The latter discuss the planning process involved in selecting a role for public libraries, and the options that are available to libraries that are trying to establish the categories of service provision upon which they will focus their efforts. They identify eight potential roles for a library:

- a 'community activities centre' - providing facilities for a wide range of social, cultural, and recreational activities.
- a 'community information centre' - holding stock and information relevant to the local community, and referring enquiries to other agencies when necessary.
- a 'formal education support centre' - providing resources, including inter-library loans, to meet the needs of students of all ages who are registered on educational courses.
- an 'independent learning centre' - providing resources and services to support the needs of individuals who wish to learn more about topics ranging from job-related issues, to hobbies and cultural interests.
- a 'popular materials library' - stocking multiple copies of items which are up-to-date, in high demand, and of interest to a large number of people.
- a 'pre-schoolers' Door to Learning' - encouraging young children to develop an interest in reading, and providing information for adults working with pre-school children.
- a 'reference library' - providing timely, accurate, information in subject areas relevant to the needs of the local community.
- a 'research centre' - providing resources and services that enable individuals to undertake in-depth research in selected subject disciplines [40].

Authors in the U.S.A. are not alone in advocating a differentiated approach to public library service provision. Some other countries have adopted this type of structure. For example, Chang and Hsieh describe the way in which public libraries in Taiwan are classified according to three categories [41]. The largest are provincial / municipal libraries which have relatively substantial quantities of stock, a range of facilities, and significant numbers of staff. Next in size are the county / city libraries which provide reading services and various information and recreation services. Finally, there are town / village libraries which offer more limited services.

There is little evidence of libraries within the U.K. being formally classified according to their role and the services they provide. However, there are examples of local arrangements for particular services that follow this pattern. For instance, in an article published in 1990, Payne describes the hierarchical arrangement of the Reference and Information Service in Lancashire [42]. The aim of this service is to guarantee access to specific types of information at designated libraries and, in order to achieve this, the libraries throughout the county are divided into six categories (five of which have a designated level of reference and information provision). The designated libraries range from 'level 5', which have a minimum range of stock intended to answer quick reference and homework enquiries only, through to 'level 1' which provide specialist services on behalf of the whole county. The clear guidelines in force in Lancashire allow library staff to explain to users what level of service they can expect, and where they can go for additional information. This arrangement is likely to lead to a greater degree of customer satisfaction as users' expectations should be more in line with the services available.

It is possible that future developments in Scotland may follow this differentiated pattern, with the creation of a tiered system incorporating a limited number of major regional centres (with a wide range of stock and specialist staff), a greater number of medium sized libraries (holding a significant amount of stock relevant to the needs of the target market segment they aim to serve), and numerous small local branch libraries (which contain only basic level stock but provide an access point to the resources of the whole public library network). For such a system to be successful, each library would need to have a clearly defined mission so that both the library staff and the users of the service understand its role.

4.4.2 Core services.

Providing a clear definition, or list, of what materials and facilities should be considered part of a 'core' service is not easy. The *Public Libraries Consolidation (Scotland) Act 1887*, the principal Act for Scotland, defines the powers of the library committee. These include responsibilty for the purchase of:

> books, newspapers, reviews, magazines, and other periodicals, statutary, pictures, engravings, maps, specimens of art and science,... and such other articles and things as may be necessary for the establishment, increase, and use of the libraries... under their control ... [43].

Wilson lists the ways in which, since the second World War, library professionals have sought to extend the role of the service: by providing audio-visual materials; by adopting more pro-active policies and programmes centred on particular user groups; by providing agency services to schools, hospitals, prisons and local government; by providing community information, and by extending the range of service to include exhibitions and community arts [44].

The Bourdillon report of 1961 acknowledges that the scope of services is likely to increase in relation to the size and density of the population served, but it still proposes a basic range of services which libraries should make available to their users [45]. In many ways the elements it identifies still dominate the service today. It draws attention to the public library as a centre of cultural life and it highlights the service it provides to students [46]. It states that, "the material provided by a library must cover a wide range, must be well balanced and must include new books and older standard works suited to the particular needs of the area". The report acknowledges that there will be local differences which require the provision of different proportions of particular types of material. It recognises, for example, that children

have special needs and it recommends that all libraries should make provision for these needs and should encourage children to use the library. The importance of providing an adequate reference and information service is stressed. Moreover, the report states that, "all libraries should take steps to help the reader find books suited to his interests by providing essential bibliographical tools, by developing readers' advisory services, and by publishing select book-lists, bulletins, and arranging book displays".

In the late 1960s, the widespread development of services raised the public's expectations about what libraries could provide, and this in turn evoked a response from some librarians. Kelly describes this response to the changing circumstances:

> Conscious of the danger that libraries originally intended for the working classes might develop into cosy middle-class book clubs, they deliberately sought to widen their scope and make them into resource centres for the whole community. In practice this meant a number of things: it meant, for example, more emphasis on reference and information services to meet community needs; more extended provision of non-book materials such as gramophone records, tapes, pictures and microfilms; more emphasis on extra-mural services to such people as hospital patients and housebound readers; special provision for immigrant groups; special help for people unable or unaccustomed to make use of the library service; and closer links with other community activities, especially educational and cultural activities [47].

In a seminar paper published in 1991, Wilson comments on the changing role of the public library, particularly the shift in emphasis from the library as a building to the idea of it as a service with activities reaching out into the community [48]. However, he warns that while this is happening, the "core business" seems to be declining seriously. In Scotland, a 23% increase in bookstock has coincided with a 7.1% decrease in borrowing, and there are even larger decreases in borrowing in England and Wales. Wilson contends that the Scottish experience casts doubts on the opinion that cuts in opening hours and reduced bookfunds are

the cause of decline. He adds that, " Important columnists partly blame the library profession for turning away from their historic mission.

Sumsion has examined libraries in a number of countries in connection with Public Lending Right operations, and has shown that there is much in common with respect to the key services provided [49]. He argues that the similarities in core services should be "a source of comfort and of strength" and he comments that there are "important economic reasons underlying this rightness of what we offer". He states:

- Material suitable for libraries is what can be economically provided or held in a *collective fashion* rather than by individual citizens.
- The product must be *durable* in the hands of multiple users.
- The product must give the customer satisfaction in a fairly *short period of time*....
- *The customer base must be of a reasonable size*.

Sumsion makes a distinction between books that are natural to borrow from a library and those that are natural to own. For example, a dictionary or atlas might be purchased for home use whereas large print books and 'Talking Books' are suited to library lending. He concludes:

> The public library is a natural and necessary part of our life, but the economic rationale needs to be better understood. There is 'prima facie' a much stronger case to promote and develop what we have than there is to challenge or change it [50].

The range of services that libraries could provide nowadays is vast. Most libraries provide a basic reference collection and both fiction and information books for loan. Many provide local studies material, large print books, cassettes (including 'talking books'), videos and, increasingly, C.D.s. However, there are examples of other items, varying from pictures to umbrellas, being lent. The services offered also vary: from photocopying and fax facilities, to

Internet connections and the hire of rooms. Special services may be provided to particular groups such as businesses, the housebound, hospitals and prisons. A number of factors affect the choice of services provided, including consideration of financial limitations, the needs and demands of the users, and the existence of local commercial providers (e.g. video loan shops). Koster, in a seminar paper published in 1994, lists the ways in which libraries have responded to new and changing demands: in terms of the services provided (increasing the quantity of cassettes, C.D.s and videos, introducing C.D.Rom and increasing computerisation and database access) and in terms of organisation (restructuring, introducing performance monitoring and customer charters, and improving co-operation and interlending) [51].

Koster summarises the emerging trends in U.K. public libraries in terms of weaknesses and strengths. The list of weaknesses includes: declining resources, variable standards and the growing uneveness of library services, declining book issues, the tiering down of library departments and the consequent declining role of Chief Librarians. The list of strengths include increasing issues of children's stock and audio-visual material, increasing use in terms of visits, and the fact that libraries have changed to meet new demands, for example with regard to the provision of community information. Koster also argues that, in view of the diverse and changing information needs of society, libraries need to be "increasingly selective in terms of the more clearly defined needs of our local community" [52].

4.4.3 The fiction debate.

With regard to what resources libraries should make available to the public, the provision of fiction has given rise to the longest running debate. The question of whether libraries should provide fiction at all and, if so, what type and standard of fiction, has been the subject of discussion within and outwith the profession throughout the last century. Snape comments that

it was a particularly significant issue before the First World War, and that the library profession was divided in its opinions. He identifies three schools of thought in existence at that time, i.e. "those who wished to ban fiction from libraries altogether, those who felt only a restricted range of literary fiction should be stocked, and a third group who were more open-minded and felt fiction should be provided if the public wanted it" [53].

Snape points out the key areas of debate associated with this issue: the question of whether libraries should provide fiction and other recreational reading out of the public purse, the variation in book selection criteria from one locality to another, the role of local council library committees (the members of which often developed library services in accordance with their own values and interests), and the question of who should select the books, i.e. "the issue of a professional ideology in conflict with a public bureaucracy" [54].

On the one hand, it could be argued that as publicly funded institutions libraries should reflect public demand and supply whatever resources the majority of the public wishes to use; on the other hand, it could be argued that libraries have a responsibility to use public money for more serious educational and cultural material. The *Ex Libris* report published by the Adam Smith Institute in 1986 argues that it is difficult to sustain the claim that the dependence of public libraries on public funding is justified on the basis of their contribution to the country's intellectual and economic development when the bulk of the users see the library as a provider of fiction and light reading [55]. The report goes on to say that much of the fiction and other light reading provided by public libraries is "of little or no literary merit" and is supplied "to people who could afford to buy books but choose not to do so".

As the Comedia report points out, it is unfortunate that librarians, in recent years, have tended to withdraw from the debate about the value of fiction as there are important arguments in favour of including it amongst the free core services: notably, the reading of popular fiction may be seen as part of a wider usage of public libraries to achieve cultural enrichment [56]. In some cases those in favour of the provision of fiction have argued that reading for purely leisure purposes is a valid activity in its own right. In other instances it is seen to be a good way of encouraging readers to use the library in the hope that they will progress to more educational material in the course of time.

There is also an argument that the provision of fiction is partly for pragmatic reasons i.e. because it is an area of stock that generates a high level of use. Indeed, the Comedia report states that in 1990-91 the biggest single category of loans from U.K. public libraries (59%) was adult fiction [57]. In 1995-96 over 26 million adult fiction books were borrowed from public libraries in Scotland, compared to under 10 million adult non fiction [58]. Snape comments:

> The paradox of fiction provision in libraries is that popular fiction remains the most effective means of encouraging library use, and issue statistics, although widely disliked as a measurement of a library's work, have nevertheless been confirmed by the Audit Commission as a major performance indicator [59].

Interestingly, however, the original Performance Indicators set in England and Wales by the Audit Commission in 1993 differ from those in Scotland set by the Accounts Commission [60]. This variation is discussed in more detail in chapter five, but it is significant to note here that whereas the former included 'the number of items issued' as an indicator, the latter did not. In Scotland, with regard to reporting to the Accounts Commission, justification of the value or level of use of the public library service did not rely on issue figures.

4.4.4 Extension activities.

The provision and loan of information resources constitutes only part of the service offered by public libraries. For many years, libraries have also provided a variety of events, such as talks and exhibitions, in an effort to encourage greater use of their facilities. In recent times there has been a lot of publicity about events such as 'Book Weeks', author visits, and special activities for children during school holidays. However, the idea of extension activities is not new. The first edition of the *Library World* journal, published in 1898-99, shows that libraries arranged talks for members of the public as early as the turn of the century. It states:

> Most librarians are agreed as to the desirability of having courses of Lectures in connection with Public Libraries. They are generally recognised, not only as valuable aids in making known the contents of the library on particular subjects, but as tending to foster a closer relationship between the institution and its frequenters [61].

Recent reports have shown that libraries are valued not just for the provision of reading material, and for their potential role in the provision of access to electronic information, but also because they provide a focal point for the community: a place which offers services to pre-school children, the elderly, and those who have leisure time but not necessarily the finances required to participate in other recreational activities [62]. Libraries appear to be valued as one of the places where people can meet friends, feel safe, and stay for long periods of time without being under pressure to pay for the services they are using.

4.4.5 I.T. developments.

Since the 1960s, the information explosion (the growth in the amount of publications available), combined with technological developments (such as videos, C.D.ROMs, computer

databases and the Internet), has put even more pressure on libraries to clarify their role and to prioritise services. In the same way that the Industrial Revolution of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries resulted in the need for a large number of literate, educated people, and created an opportunity for libraries to play an important role in the period following, so the information technology revolution of the late twentieth century is creating an opportunity for the service to establish a new role by providing access to electronic information (and assisting in the education of the public to ensure that more people have the necessary I.T. skills to access such information).

In an article in the *Times Higher Education Supplement*, in October 1994, Mowlam (then Shadow National Heritage Secretary) is quoted as saying:

> The current advances in information technology and the development of new communications networks have enormous potential to expand access to information and provide valuable and imaginative new avenues for learning... With all the excitement and debate surrounding the development of the new information superhighways we must think about how the public can all gain access to the new services. We already have bricks and mortar, a network of contacts and experienced staff to facilitate this through our public libraries [63].

As Mowlam points out, "There are few other networks as widely dispersed or as strategically sited as the public library network, which operates simultaneously at local, regional and national levels". Several years after these comments were made, the Labour Government published *New library : the people's network* and the *National grid for learning*, re-iterating the potential role of public libraries in the proposed information technology developments of the new millenium [64]. Given the level of Government support that has been forthcoming, failure to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the I.T. revolution could leave libraries in a very weak position.

It may be argued that the greatest challenge currently facing public libraries is how to cope with the information technology revolution. Murray, debates whether there is a risk that libraries could be marginalised unless they exploit communications technology fully [65]. He draws the conclusion that although there is already much work in this area in the U.K., "there remains a danger of not being able to provide a fully effective service to all if the public library branch network continues to be diminished by budgetary constraints". As Kerr points out, the emergence of 'cybercafes' in a number of cities in the U.K. illustrates how libraries face competition from the private sector in terms of the provision of access to electronic information [66]. The existence of commercial providers of Internet access may have implications for public library policies, such as charging for services, in the same way that the existence of local video loan businesses has affected library stock policies in some authorities [67].

As Gallimore argues, U.K. public libraries must prioritise I.T. if they are to remain the main access point to information for the general public [68]. He points out that I.T. developments pose both threats and opportunities for libraries and he comments that most large organisations have developed I.T. strategies in order to ensure their survival. He goes on to highlight the main features of an ideal public library I.T. strategy, suggesting that it should be flexible, capable of adapting to change, coherent, achievable and "driven by a vision of the future".

Gallimore lists a number of external factors that need to be taken into account when formulating an I.T. strategy. Foremost of these, he says, is what library users expect and demand from their library service now. The scale of investment required to create an effective I.T. infrastructure may be prohibitive for smaller local authorities: regional or national co-

operation is likely to be the only way forward for library services in such organisations. Other major problems include ongoing costs to update computer systems, and staff training requirements. Libraries are having to consider how these problems can be surmounted because as Gallimore says:

> There are pressures from all sections of society for public libraries to increase their IT facilities and new IT-based media are appearing all the time. Multimedia and bibliographic CD-ROMs, shareware, Internet access, computer-based open learning etc. are all placing new demands upon resources.
> A new generation of computer-literate students and schoolchildren is no longer satisfied with only using print-based information [69].

The rate at which information technology in public libraries has increased in the past decade is demonstrated clearly by a comparison of the results of Batt's national surveys on this subject; the first of which was published in 1985, and the most recent of which was published in 1998 [70]. The latter provides information relating to 1997 and, unlike its predecessors which were based on a 100% response rate, it achieved a 99% return on a questionnaire that was sent to every library authority in the U.K. Unfortunately, the two missing returns are from Scottish authorities and, considered alongside the changes resulting from the reorganisation of local government in 1996, this makes a direct comparison of the statistics difficult. Nevertheless, a number of trends can be detected.

The results of the 1993 survey, which were published in 1994 (and represent the final survey in this series prior to the reorganisation), indicate a significant increase in the use of information technology in areas identified in the earlier surveys, for example in housekeeping systems. They also reveal that some authorities had still not automated even basic library activities, such as circulation control, by 1993. Batt highlights the significantly lower level of automated circulation in Scotland compared to other parts of the U.K. at this time, and the relatively slow progress since 1983 (when 12 (29%) authorities provided this service) to 1993

(when the figure had risen to 23 (56%) authorities) [71]. In comparison, in the U.K. as a whole, 137 (82%) of the 168 authorities had automated circulation control by 1993. By 1997 the situation had improved. Even without replies from two of the local authorities, the figure for Scotland had risen to 75%.

The percentage of Scottish authorities engaging in online searching in the early 1990s was also lower than the U.K. figure, although it increased from 10 (25%) in 1989 to 12 (30%) in 1993. By 1997 use of the Internet was becoming the key issue in terms of searching remote databases. In November 1995 a survey of U.K. public library authorities was carried out by the U.K. Office for Library and Information Networking (UKOLN) on behalf of the Library and Information Commission to obtain information about the availability of the latter service [72]. All of the U.K. public library authorities responded to the survey, and the picture which emerged was of a low level of Internet connection, but a high degree of enthusiasm for its use in the future. As the UKOLN report states:

> Many respondents were keen to talk about their plans for the near future. However, such plans as seemed to exist had limited ambition: typically they were to join the exploratory activity on a low scale which typifies much of current public library Internet use. There did not seem to be a shared view of how networking might contribute to systematic change, or of how the public library movement should collectively define a future service role for itself in a digital future [73].

The UKOLN survey revealed that, in late 1995, 53% of all public library authorities in the U.K. had some form of Internet connection, but only 3% of individual service points had such a connection. In Scotland only 33% of authorities and 2% of individual service points had some form of Internet connection. However, the Scottish library authorities appear to have placed greater emphasis upon the provision of public access. 17% of the U.K. public library authorities (0.7% of the service points) offered Internet access to the public; the corresponding figures for Scotland are 21% of authorities and 1.5% of individual service points [74]. All

eight U.K. library authorities serving a population over a million had Internet access whereas only 19% of those with a population under 100,000 had such access. As the report concludes, the figures reveal that the larger the authority (in terms of the size of population served) the more likely it is to have an Internet connection [75].

Batt's 1997 survey of information technology in public libraries shows that there was a significant increase between 1995 and 1997 in the percentage of U.K. authorities with Internet access, from 53% to 77% [76]. However, the developments appear to have concentrated very much on staff access and by 1997 still only 5% of individual library service points provided the public with this service. Newton et al. report on the results of a survey carried out in the Autumn of 1996 which indicates that, by then, 8 of the 25 Scottish authorities that returned questionnaires were providing users with access to the Internet [77]. Batt's 1997 survey indicates that, by that time, 14 of the 30 Scottish public library services that responded to his questionnaire were providing public access [78]. Templeton, in an unpublished M.A. dissertation, describes the results of an investigation (by means of a postal survey in July 1997) into the usage of the Internet in Scottish public libraries [79]. Her survey shows that, of the authorities that replied to this part of her questionnaire, 21 had Internet connectivity and, of those, 14 provided public access.

The above figures show that over the years a growing number of library services have made public access to the Internet available. However, of the 14 that replied to Templeton's survey that they provide public access, 11 are large authorities serving a population in excess of 100,000. Such findings add weight to concerns that the cost of providing enhanced electronic services might increase the gap between the authorities which can afford to make such provision and those which cannot. As Murray says:

> With the public library service under pressure from cutbacks there remains a risk that some authorities will not be able to invest in training, or provide widespread access to IT for its consumers. In this sense, again, there is the danger of only a percentage of the population benefiting from those libraries that exist with excellent IT facilities [80].

Certainly, the media coverage suggests that it is the larger authorities that are involved in the major initiatives in this area. For example, the South Ayrshire CyberCentre and Edinburgh City Libraries 'Capital Information' system are two of the most publicised I.T. developments in Scottish libraries in recent years [81]. These two public library services, along with Dundee, are highlighted by Newton et al. as being involved in 'promising initiatives' with regard to Internet related projects [82]. All three are large authorities serving a population in excess of 100,000.

In the U.S.A., the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (N.C.L.I.S.) published a report on a survey of Internet availability and use in a sample of public libraries in 1996 [83]. The results show that the percentage of libraries connected to the Internet rose from 20.9% in 1994 (when a previous survey was undertaken by the same organisation) to 44.6% in 1996. Interestingly, when analysed according to the size of population served, the results show a degree of similarity with the situation in the U.K. in that:

> In general, as public library population of legal service area increases, so too does the percentage of public library Internet connectivity, with 82.0% of public libraries with population of legal service areas of greater than 1 million and 31.3% of public libraries with population of legal service areas of less than 5,000 having some type of Internet connection. Indeed, nearly all public libraries with population of legal service areas of 100,000 or greater have some type of Internet connection... [84]

The results of the survey demonstrate clear disparities in levels of connectivity based on the size of the population served. They also reveal that, of those library services that do not have

Internet connectivity, the percentage with plans to rectify this situation reduces as the size of population served decreases. The report indicates that by 1997 virtually all public libraries serving a population in excess of 100,000 will have Internet connections, but that only a small percentage of those serving smaller communities will have such facilities (and of these even fewer will provide public access to the Internet) [85].

Internet access is becoming less of a luxury and more of an increasingly important requirement for the public. The November 1997 issue of the U.S. publication *Byte* includes an analysis of 'alternative points of access' to the Internet in the United States i.e. access from places other than home, school or office [86]. The article quotes statistics from CommerceNet/Nielsen Media Research which show that the number of survey respondents claiming to access the Internet through alternative points had increased from 1.5% in Spring 1996 to 4% at the time of the 1997 survey. Of these, public libraries (at 46%) were by far the most popular venue: malls and cyber cafes together only accounted for 14%.

In the U.K., the failure, in February 1997, of the bid by 'Information for All' for Millenium funding to support the creation of a national public library network (providing citizens with free access to the Internet through public libraries) was a major disappointment to the library profession [87]. In contrast, however, Project EARL (Electronic Access to Resources in Libraries) is proving very successful [88]. Project EARL is "a collaborative approach to establishing a national networked information and resource sharing service for public libraries in the UK" [89]. It was publicly launched on 1st November 1995 and its membership has grown steadily since then. Twenty-five Scottish local authority library services which were members of 'Scottish Libraries Across the Internet' (SLAINTE) joined EARL in 1997 as a result of a joint SLIC / Scottish Library Association initiative [90].

EARL carries out a number of important functions including acting as an agent for change, encouraging national collaboration, negotiating with Internet providers, providing support and advice to its 164 partner institutions, assisting public libraries to publicise their existence through Web pages, and supporting public libraries in the provision of electronic information. EARL obtained funding from the British Library Research and Innovation Centre to support various stages of the project, and some financial support was received from the Library Association in connection with collaborative work associated with the 'Information for All' bid to the Millenium Commission. However, participant libraries also have to contribute to the costs of the project and their level of involvement depends upon the resources they have available.

Local authorities are becoming increasingly active in the use of information and communication technologies. For example, Horrocks and Hambley, in an article published in 1998, point out that, "At the end of 1995, there were about 40 local authority World Wide Web sites, most of which fell below the standards of design and content associated with the majority of commercial and academic sites. Now there are over 300 local authority sites - some better than many commercial and academic ones in terms of design and features" [91]. Horrocks and Hambley go on to report that the majority of the councils they surveyed had neither a policy nor a strategy which covered the development of their web site. However, the researchers believe that, "given the extent to which fashion is currently pushing developments along", it is likely that only those councils that make a conscious decision to stay off the Internet will remain without a web site for long. In such an environment, library developments might seem almost inevitable. However, the provision of web-based information about council services is different to the provision of facilities that allow access to electronic information. The latter have significantly higher cost implications.

The 1995 review by ASLIB recommends public sector capital investment to enable progress to be made in terms of information technology:

> We recommend that there should be infrastructure investment outside existing sources of funding. The money would enable central, branch and mobile public libraries and new access points throughout England and Wales to connect to the new information superhighways, including Internet and World Wide Web, through broadband cable or the the Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN). The links should provide rapid access to multi-media and online databases, and regionally-based CD-Rom collections. The investment should include the costs of the information technology, cabling, staff training and incidental costs of setting up connections and screens in each library [92].

Two years later, in 1997, the Labour Government published a consultation paper setting out their plans for creating a 'National Grid for Learning'. In this paper, they define the grid as:

> A mosaic of inter-connecting networks and education services based on the Internet which will support teaching, learning, training and administration in schools, colleges, universities, libraries, the workplace and homes [93].

They add:

> We intend that libraries, with their vast stores of information and accessibility to the public, will be an integral part of the Grid.
> ...A vital part of the programme for implementing the Grid will be the development of teachers' and librarians' skills. We propose to support these through funding from the National Lottery [94].

A large section of the paper is devoted to the potential, and proposed, role of libraries in the plan for the 'Grid for learning'. Examples of good practice, such as EARL and SLAINTE are acknowledged, as is the fact that the level of information and communications technology is currently very variable [95]. It notes that a 1995 survey indicated that, " only 3% of the 3,800 public libraries in England and of the 700 in Scotland had public Internet access points", and it suggests that, two years later, the total is still likely to be less than 20% [96].

The Grid for Learning, however, has ambitious targets: to have connected to the Grid, by 2002, all schools, colleges, universities, libraries, and as many community centres as possible [97]. Government support for such a large scale project makes the development and enhancement of I.T. services within libraries in the near future a realistic aim.

'Tomorrow's new library', as described in the Library and Information Commission's report *New Library: the People's Network*, would employ up to date information and communication technologies to allow all citizens access to information [98]. By 1999, the Library and Information Commission was negotiating with those responsible for the lottery-funded 'New Opportunities Fund' with regard to the allocation of £50 million for the digitisation of educational material and creation of content to be made available on the network linking U.K. public libraries, and £20 million for public library staff training in I.T. skills [99]. (£200 million is to be made available to complete the network infrastucture).

Another indication of the government's commitment to information technology infrastructure projects is given in the distribution of grants in 1997/98 and 1998/99 as part of the D.C.M.S / Wolfson Public Library Challenge Fund scheme (which is discussed in more detail in chapter eight) [100]. Under this scheme, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport contributed £2 million and the Wolfson Foundation donated £1 million to enhance I.T. services and facilities in a large number of English public library authorities. Furthermore, in November 1999, the Government announced that an agreement had been reached whereby the five major telephone companies in the U.K. would cut prices for Internet access from selected public sector institutions [101]. Libraries, along with F.E. colleges and Citizens' Advice Bureaux, should benefit from the plan to introduce a payment scheme similar to that in operation in the U.S.A.

i.e. replacing the per-minute charge with a set annual fee for unlimited day-time Internet access.

Such substantial levels of funding are necessary to allow libraries to update their facilities and offer the services required by their users. In Finland, in 1994, the Ministry of Finance prepared a national information strategy which, according to Jokitalo, aims to connect all schools and public libraries to information networks: "the goal for the library system is to serve as an access point for all citizens and also to promote network literacy and life-long learning" [102]. Jokitalo describes the progress in Finland since then: in 1994, 14 of the 439 main public libraries were connected to the Internet, and 3 provided public access; in June 1996, almost 40% of Finnish public libraries used the Internet and 30% offered patrons access. Jokitalo indicates that, at the time of writing, predictions were for 75% of libraries to be connected by the end of 1997, and for 50% to be providing public access. Government funding, promotion and training via the 'House of Knowledge Project', and the development of PULSE (the Finnish Public Libraries Enterpage which lists all public libraries home pages) all helped this project to be a major success [103].

There are similarities between the Finnish model and the approach now being adopted in the U.K. However, Ormes and McClure compare levels of public library Internet connection in the U.K. with that in the U.S.A., and the results indicate that high levels of government funding are not necessarily essential to achieve success [104]. They point out that, in 1997, a higher percentage (nearly 45%) of American libraries had Internet access even though the government there did not provide a free infrastructure [105]. However, the U.S. government had encouraged private companies to develop the broadband superhighway and, as Ormes and

McClure state, "This high profile, high status emphasis by the government helped develop awareness about the need for Internet services in public libraries" [106].

Given the right opportunities, varied as these may be, libraries in some other countries have managed to achieve major progress in the provision of I.T.-based services. Such opportunities now exist in the U.K. and the next few years will show whether public library services have succeeded in taking advantage of them.

4.5 Opening hours.

The provision of appropriate services is an area of major concern with respect to the effectiveness of public libraries. So, too, is the level of use the services receive, and the ease of access to facilities (in particular in terms of opening hours). Following the publication of the results of a *Which?* survey in 1990, Land, the Assistant Director of the Association for Consumer Research, commented that, even allowing for regional and seasonal variations, there appears to be, on occasion, under-use of this important and expensive public asset [107]. (The questionnaire that included a section about public libraries had been sent to 4000 *Which?* magazine members in May 1989 [108]. It had received a response rate of 59% and the results showed that 69% of those who replied made use of the public library).

The *Which?* report reveals that 42% of the adults in the survey wanted opening hours changed, mainly to accommodate later evening or more weekend opening. This is a view echoed in the The ASLIB *Review of the public library in England and Wales* which identifies the fact that many people in employment find existing opening hours inadequate to meet their needs [109]. The latter review points out that elderly people and young people would not

necessarily find late evening opening on dark winter nights a solution to their problem and it goes on to emphasise the value of weekend opening. It comments that, where it is not currently available, Saturday opening would be useful and, while recognising that there could be opposition on religious grounds, it recommends that Sunday opening should be considered [110]. The review concludes that more convenient opening hours, rather than longer opening, is the key issue, and it recommends library authorities review their arrangements [111].

The COSLA *Standards for the public library service in Scotland 1995* recommend that library opening hours should be increased to make the service available every evening and at weekends [112]. This report also comments that, "Library services resources represent a considerable investment by the authority and increased opening hours should improve the use of the library's services, so obtaining better value for money".

Unfortunately, many library services have chosen to reduce opening hours as a means of saving money when facing budgetary problems. Clearly where enhanced payment schemes exist for evening and weekend working it is tempting to reduce opening hours at this time to make maximum savings. However, if the result is a significant reduction in the use of the library it is false economy. King, considering the reduction to weekend opening hours in libraries in the late 1980s, states:

> ...economic considerations were forcing libraries down a path whereby they were clearly ignoring public need - Saturday is often the most convenient day for people to use the library - which undermines the stated community role [113].

Proctor, describing a study by Sheffield University which took place in the late 1990s, highlights the extent of the library closures and reductions in opening hours that have occurred over the period 1986/87 to 1996/97 [114]. Concern over proposals to close or scale down

library services in England and Wales, led the Culture Secretary Chris Smith to carry out 'low profile inquiries' into ten unnamed authorities in 1999 (under the terms of the 1964 Act) [115].

There has been media coverage of discontent over branch closures, for example in Sheffield [116]. Indeed in some places, opening hour cuts have been reinstated as a result of public pressure. For example, in Kent, opening on Saturdays ('The public's favourite day') was cut in 82 branches in April 1997 in order to save money [117]. However, three months later, finance was made available to allow the library service to restore the opening hours. A report in the *Library Association Record* in September states, in relation to Kent, that:

> It may well be that a new review of library service delivery, which involves public consultation, will probably lead to changes in weekday hours.
> But popular demand means Saturday opening is now pretty well sacrosanct.

There have also been articles in the press in favour of better library opening hours. For example, in February 1997, *The Mail on Sunday* included an article entitled 'Libraries urged to open all hours' [118]. The main consideration with regard to opening hours appears to be that to offer an effective service, and one which provides good value for money, libraries have to make their services available at a time when they are most needed. A branch library in Buckinghamshire which is open on Sundays reported, in 1996, that it issued more books per hour that day than any other day of the week [119]. With awareness of such statistics it is no longer acceptable for libraries to preserve Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, opening at the expense of times which are of more use to the public.

Reducing opening hours is often seen as a relatively quick and easy way of saving money at a time of restricted finance. However, as White points out, budgetary considerations have often

influenced decision-making at the expense of due consideration of the aims and objectives of the service:

> Planning has tended to be geared to budgeted resources rather than to objectives, because public libraries are judged by their budgets rather than by their results. It is a good public library that manages to live within its stipulated budget... Instead of starting with objectives and relating budget requirements to these, public library planning has started with a budget allocation and has endeavoured to meet its objectives within that budget [120].

If the focus of library management is directed more towards the achievement of objectives, the budget allocation procedure should change to reflect service priorities. This action brings with it a greater degree of accountability. As White discusses, setting objectives is inextricably linked with performance measurement and evaluation [121]. Organisations should have a systematic procedure for monitoring performance and assessing and adjusting objectives so that they are relevant to changing circumstances.

CHAPTER FIVE

EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE PUBLIC LIBRARIES : PERFORMANCE, QUALITY AND COST SAVINGS.

5.1 Efficient public libraries: an introduction.

After identifying a library's mission and objectives, and deciding which services are to be provided, managers need to consider how to deploy the resources they have available as efficiently as possible. Midwinter and McVicar define efficiency as:

> ...the relationship between goods and services produced and resources used to produce them. An efficient operation produces the maximum output for any given set of resource inputs; or it has minimum inputs for any given quality and quantity of goods or services provided [1].

The Bourdillon Report, which was published in 1961 and deals with standards of public library service in England and Wales, states that:

> Any examination of standards of efficiency in the public library service must start with an attempt to identify and describe the key points in the service at which efficiency is specially important. The success of this attempt in turn depends on a clear appreciation of the objectives which a public library service strives or should strive to achieve in the present age [2].

Efficiency should not be equated with operating on minimal budgets, or seeking to provide the same service as neighbouring authorities with less expenditure. Libraries should aim to provide the services that are needed at the lowest possible cost. Like many other non-profit organisations, libraries may need to provide some services that are costly or used by only a small percentage of people. (Drabble, for example, questions whether services such as mobile library visits to villages, or the supply of books to old people's homes, should be made to be cost-effective or considered a 'luxury' [3]). As Braverman warns, the achievement of

efficiency in itself should not be seen as a key consideration for public libraries since, "One person's efficiency... may be another person's deprivation" [4].

Braverman emphasises the importance of equity, arguing that the question of how to provide services for the benefit of the whole society is a key issue. She comments that, one risks turning a library into a private venture if shorter opening hours or a branch closure is justified on the grouds of cost effectiveness, if there is no process of public consultation [5].

Greater efficiency, however, can be achieved through action that does not deny users access to the key services they need. For example, cost savings may be made by changing working practices, collaborating with other organisations or ceasing the provision of services that are no longer required. Achieving efficiency involves a variety of good management practices such as taking advantage of opportunities for economies of scale in procurement processes, deploying staff in the most productive manner, and monitoring results against objectives and quantified performance standards.

This chapter discusses the issues that need to be addressed if libraries are to make changes in order to redirect resources towards the services that the public need and want. It considers performance, quality, value and the ways in which cost savings may be achieved. First, in order to allow the recent developments affecting libraries to be considered in context, the political background is described.

5.2 The political context.

5.2.1 The control of public expenditure.

In 1976 the Conservative Party published *The Right Approach*, a document which states the aims of their political strategy at that time. These included the intention:

> To enable the country to live within its means, through the reduction and control of public expenditure and the rebuilding of a healthy and thriving mixed economy in which taxes can be lower... [6]

The election of a Conservative Government in 1979 allowed the party to put many of its plans and policies into practice. Midwinter, writing in 1989, considered that concern with public spending in Britain dates back to the economic crisis of 1976 [7]. However, he adds that since 1979, " ...the Government's drive to control public expenditure has been raised from a matter of economic necessity to a central tenet of ideology". Midwinter identifies three central features of the financial strategy:

- a belief in the efficiency of market provision over public provision;
- a belief in the need to control the money supply as the key to controlling inflation, and
- a deep distrust of professionalism and bureaucracy

The main characteristics of the Conservative Government's strategy since then are listed by Thomson as: privatisation, delegation, competition, enterprise, deregulation, service quality, and curtailment of trade union powers [8]. Thomson adds that these themes have been "underpinned by the three principles of *efficiency, effectiveness* and *economy* (together comprising 'value-for-money')". Throughout its successive terms of office, the Conservative Party attempted to control public expenditure, to encourage participation in local government, and to achieve greater value for money in the public sector. A major programme of privatisation was introduced, and emphasis was placed upon encouraging competition and proclaiming the benefits of market forces as a means of regulating supply and demand. These

initiatives were intended to introduce greater competition into the public sector in order to improve efficiency and thereby reduce the cost of goods and services to the public.

Midwinter draws attention to the Conservative's 'New Right' agenda of the 1980s which included greater reliance upon charges for local authority services (to reduce oversupply) and greater use of competitive tendering (to induce clearer policy specifications) [9]. Midwinter summarises the theoretical basis of New Right politics as, "a combination of three aspects of economic theory: *economic liberalism* ... *monetarism* ... and *public choice*" [10]. These involve belief in market mechanisms, control of the money supply, and the inefficiency of bureaucratic provision of services. New Right theory suggests that reducing the scope of government creates incentives and encourages enterprise.

The Conservatives aimed to increase the level of community involvement in decision-making. This is illustrated in *The Right Approach*, in which they state:

> It is in the national interest that there should be effective controls on the total of local government spending ... But within a total budget, local government should have much greater freedom over how it spends its money. Priorities should be worked out locally [11].

The election of a Labour Government in May 1997 led to increased spending on selected public services, notably health and education. However, the amount of money available to local councils has remained limited and many of the initiatives introduced by the previous government remain in place.

Much has been written about the changes that have taken place in the management of public services in recent years. For example, Stewart and Walsh consider the approaches to management in the private sector which have been applied to the public sector with varying

degrees of success [12]. Pollitt examines the effect on public services of the introduction of 'New Right' thinking (and consequent government initiatives since the late 1970s), questioning the extent to which, by the time of his writing in the early 1990s, there had been a fundamental shift in organisational culture [13]. He states, "Public officials now at least feel obliged to *talk* in terms of 'targets', 'action plans', 'cost improvements', 'income-generation opportunities' and so on, even if their affinity for such terminology is sometimes only superficial and opportunistic".

5.2.2 The Citizen's Charter.

The Citizen's Charter, which was introduced in 1991, was intended to improve the quality of public services and give more power to individual citizens [14]. As Wilson explains, it is not a single document but, "an evolving programme of measures" [15]. It lays a stress on the provision of information, the right to choice, privatisation and competition, inspection and redress. It lists 'The Principles of Public Service' as: standards, openness, information, choice, non-discrimination, accessibility, and redress [16]. Stewart and Walsh comment on the White Paper on the Citizen's Charter that, "...the emphasis is less on the public as citizens than as customers" i.e. that, "The emphasis is upon individual rights to choice and to quality, with little reference to citizens' duties. Accountability is seen as market-based" [17]. Stewart and Walsh emphasise that the relationship between the state and the citizen appears to be one of contract rather than commitment and responsibility. The public's right to services appears to be based on the fact that they have paid taxes and are due a certain level of service in return, rather than the fact that they have acquired access to services as a member of the community.

5.2.3 Competitive tendering.

In recent years, local authorities in the U.K., as in some other countries, have been subjected to various government initiatives designed to increase the role of the private sector, in particular in the area of competition and competitive tendering [18]. The introduction of competition was intended to encourage innovation, risk-taking and entrepreneurship, as organisations attempt to provide necessary services in the most cost-effective manner.

The *Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980* introduced compulsory competitive tendering for a limited number of local government services, notably building and works contracts [19]. Seven years later, in 1987, the Conservative Party commented, in its manifesto, on the need to make local authorities more accountable to the ratepayers; it also emphasised its intention to make it a requirement that local authorities put out to tender a greater range of services [20]. The *Local Government Act 1988* duly extended compulsory competitive tendering (C.C.T.) to include the collection of refuse, catering, ground maintenance, the cleaning of buildings, and vehicle repair and maintenance [21].

The argument put forward by those in favour of C.C.T. is that competition helps to bring about a reduction in waste and inefficiency, and it helps organisations to achieve value for money [22]. Competitive tendering involves authorities identifying their service requirements and establishing the standard of service they aim to provide. This requires a shift in emphasis from the needs of the supplier of the service to the needs of the users of the service. As Uttley and Hooper comment, echoing a point made by Parker, "... in preparing tender specifications, authority managers have increasingly had to measure services in terms of outputs (both quality and quantity) instead, as has historically been the case, of inputs (numbers employed or the amount of money expended" [23].

Hollis indicates that the first stage in the process of producing a service specification is to establish what the users of the service require [24]. The specification should indicate clearly the objective of the service: it should define what is needed in terms of scope (functions to be performed), quantity (outputs) and quality (level of performance) [25]. Having decided the service requirements, the local authority then puts a contract out to tender, with a view to choosing the most efficient way of providing these services.

Much has been written about the process involved, the preparation needed, and the advantages and disadvantages of putting library services out to tender. For example, Alston describes the London Borough of Bromley's approach to competitive tendering, and De Coster discusses the opportunities for libraries to cut costs through allowing competitive bidding by private firms to provide security, cataloguing, and computer-based reference services [26]. Sear comments on the results of a survey of English library authorities carried out by Kent County Council's Department of Arts and Libraries, in the early 1990s, in order to gain information about the actions that were being taken in relation to preparation for competition [27]. The latter shows that activity was ongoing in a number of areas at that time, including performance monitoring, the defining of standards and customer feedback schemes. Sear comments that some of the respondents to her questionnaire pointed out that they were undertaking such activities as good management practice rather that an as a preparation for competition. This highlights a key issue; it is often the *process* of analysing what services are provided, to whom they should be made available, and at what level they should be offered (rather than the actual contracting-out of services) that leads to efficiency gains.

As Parker concludes from a study of the effects of the 1988 Act:

> Generally, there appears to be ample evidence to support the Government's claim that competitive tendering produces appreciable cost savings. Higher

> operating efficiency comes, however, from competition rather than 'privatisation'. The Act seems to be having a galvanising effect upon in-house suppliers who are reorganising and changing their 'culture' so as to compete effectively [28].

In November 1991, the Government published *Competing for quality: buying better public services.* It asserted that, "Competition is the best guarantee of quality and value for money", and it proposed a further expansion of competition in the public sector [29]. The proposals involved extending C.C.T. to direct public services. The subsequent legislation (i.e. the *Local Government Act 1992*) gives details of the range of professional services affected [30]. These include library support services (i.e. acquisitions, cataloguing and the processing of books and other materials).

Despite the speed of progress in the introduction of competitive tendering for selected areas of local government work, the process has been subject to a degree of criticism. Roberts summarises the main issues of concern, as identified in a report by Walsh and Davis [31]. These include: increased bureaucracy, the cost of the tendering process, inadequate monitoring systems, a decline in quality in some instances, and the fact that some contracts are so rigid that they stifle innovation and stop service development. Similarly, Shaw et al. point out the problems that can arise if the client (service purchaser) has a public service orientation and is trying to satisfy customer needs, while the contractor (service provider) is concentrating on delivering the service specified in the contract [32]. Furthermore, Chandler highlights the argument, put forward by left wing critics, that private contractors are motivated more by the desire to make a profit than by the wish to provide a service to the local population: this profit potentially being made at the expense of the workforce suffering worse pay and conditions [33].

Compulsory Competitive Tendering may be the first step towards contracting out services, thereby replacing local authority employees with an outside workforce, but this need not necessarily be the consequence. Although the C.C.T. legislation of the 1980s and early 1990s denies council employees the automatic right to provide services, the establishment of 'Direct Labour Organisations' (D.L.O.s) and 'Direct Service Organisations' (D.S.O.s) within local authorities has given them an opportunity to compete for contracts [34]. Regardless of which bodies carry out the work, the process of contracting-out services does not signify an end of local authority control, responsibility or accountability. It does, however, change the role of the local authority: from that of direct provider of services, to that of an enabler or facilitator [35].

5.2.4 Contracting-out.

White, discussing contracting out library services in the U.S.A. identifies two situations where contract services could be used: where the work is so routine and mundane that existing staff are better employed doing other jobs, and where the work is so specialised and of such short duration that it is more efficient to bring in individuals who already possess the necessary specialised skills [36]. An example of the former, which already takes place, is the contracting-out of various book processing tasks. An example of the latter might be conservation work on a small number of valuable items. Other possibilities, such as outsourcing cataloguing, are more controversial but, as Clouston says, in the right circumstances contracting-out even this type of work can be very successful [37].

Much has been written about the advantages and disadvantages of contracting-out the provision of library services. For example, Lonnerblad summarises a report which was

written in 1992, about contracting-out library services in Scandinavia. The author reveals that, at this time, no private company had shown interest in the prospect of providing a library service in Denmark [38]. He adds that in Finland, where there were legal restrictions, "Up to now, no great interest has existed in privatizing library services within the limited bounds where this may have been possible. One reason is naturally a lack of company managers or actors who consider the market profitable". In Norway, libraries obtain a big discount on the price of books and, according to Lonnerblad, "An entrepreneur would thus have virtually no economic advantage over a library run by a municipality with respect to purchases of books".

Local authorities in Australia have also been subject to compulsory competitive tendering in recent years and Blacker comments, in 1995, that the competitive process is extending "beyond the purchase of goods and into the delivery of services, including library services" [39]. However, he adds that, while there are commercial suppliers of aspects of services such as cataloguing and processing, "there are, so far, no commercial deliverers of the full range of public library services".

Over the years there have been various attempts at contracting-out aspects of library services in the U.K. For example, in the 1980s, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Libraries and Arts section investigated contracting-out their video service [40]. Another experiment in market testing in the 1980s was Westminster Libraries unsuccessful attempt to contract-out its stock services [41]. In 1992, the review of acquisitions and cataloguing functions in Norfolk Library and Information Service led to the proposal that the work of the department should not be contracted-out, but also the suggestion that savings could be made by streamlining the in-house operation [42].

In England, in the early 1990s, five authorities were involved in pilot projects as part of the Department of National Heritage's investigations into the feasibilty of contracting-out complete library services, or part of them. Brent Arts and Libraries put out to tender the contract to run two of its branch libraries [43]. The other pilots are described by Beauchamp as, "the development of a detailed client/contractor specification for the library service (Kent)", "the franchising of library services (Hertfordshire), "the contracting out of cultural services in libraries (Hereford & Worcestershire)" and "the establishment of whole service trusts (Dorset)" [44]. Grimwood-Jones concludes that, "The DNH pilots, which have tested different models, have demonstrated that there is no single "right or wrong" one which is applicable across the board, and that a whole range of client structures can be envisaged which authorities can adapt to suit their local circumstances" [45].

In February 1994 the Department of National Heritage commissioned K.P.M.G. and Capital Planning Information (C.P.I.) "to undertake an investigation into the extent to which the provision of public library services could be contracted-out" [46]. The study took account of the pilot projects in which five local authorities had become involved in testing the suitability of contracting processes and the options for provision of services. However, the resulting report concludes that there was little evidence of benefits arising from this type of service provision, and that the market for alternative sources of provision was limited to only aspects of the service (particulary non-core elements). The report states that, "There is a strongly argued case for the provision of library services to remain essentially within the public sector", and that, "it would be inappropriate to apply a compulsory process of tendering the service" [47]. It acknowledges the constraints on public funding and favours innovative partnerships and collaborative arrangements as potential means of acquiring the additional resources that are necessary to sustain public library development in future.

The ASLIB *Review of the public library service in England and Wales* concludes, in 1995, that its survey results show "that people would like to see public libraries under local democratic control, not under the control of business" [48]. The report goes further saying, "There is a strong weight of opinion against any body other than local authorities running public libraries" [49]. It adds, "The evidence clearly suggests that there would be little or no support for any change in legislation to allow private companies to run library services" [50].

5.3 Performance.

5.3.1 Performance indicators.

An essential component of the contracting-out process is the specification of required levels of service. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the specification should indicate the functions to be performed and identify the required quantity and quality of the outputs. When the actual performance is measured against the specification, a judgement can be made regarding the level of success of the operation.

Abbott discusses the terminology associated with performance measurement, including the setting of standards, the collection of quantitative statistics, and the use of performance indicators to assess use or value (the latter figures usually being obtained by means of a ratio incorporating two sets of statistics) [51]. Performance standards should provide a scale against which success may be measured. Performance indicators may be used to identify the areas upon which to focus in a review of efficiency and effectiveness.

Abbott states that, " ...performance indicators are integral to the management process, informing decisions, aiding the setting of objectives and priorities, providing explanations and

evidence for courses of action, and helping to give direction and focus to the work of staff at all levels" [52]. Performance statistics should be used as a management tool rather than as an end in themselves. There has been much debate about the extent to which performance indicators convey an accurate picture of the success or failure of an organisation or local authority and as Stewart and Walsh say:

> The danger is not in setting key tasks and targets, but in the belief that performance in the public domain can be confined in those boundaries. Performance management is an aid to management, but only if it is seen as opening up possibilities, not limiting them [53].

Evans comments that:

> By developing more client-oriented services, establishing the means of accountability through defining objectives and measuring performance ever more stringently, it is felt that library managers can definitively argue the worth of public library services in the struggle to retain public funding within an increasingly market-led political setting [54].

Fox adds to this view, stating that, "demonstrating the value of information services to the community alongside the other statistics we use, helps to justify expenditure on libraries within the whole spectrum of the rate-supported services" [55]. However, the measurement of performance is not easy. Fox illustrates this by drawing attention to the fact that if an item is on loan from the library regularly, it is considered valuable if judged as a performance indicator yet its recreational, cultural, or intellectual value to the individuals who borrow it is unclear. An article in *Labour Research*, in 1995, is critical of the decline in the size of the workforce and the number of books in stock in U.K. public libraries [56]. However, the figures do not in themselves necessarily represent a decline in the standard of the service: judgement about the effect of this change is dependent upon the extent to which the decline affects the achievement of the library's objectives.

Goodall provides a historical review of performance measurement from the 1960s to the late 1980s, and highlights the need to collect data which allow comparisons between libraries and the identification of trends over time [57]. For this to happen, the collection and presentation of data has to be standardised. Yet as Goodall adds, different types of libraries have different sorts of users and "any measures developed must be appropriate to the service being provided" i.e. the scope and aims of the library must be defined before the measures are developed [58]. User needs and priorities may vary widely. For example, if people in rural areas can access library information using remote computer terminals, their concerns might be over issues such as the provision of simultaneous database use. In contrast, if library users in the cities come to value the library more as a community centre, and a place they enjoy visiting in person, then the opening hours might be of more interest to them. In assessing performance, the key factor for local authorities and library mangers is to appreciate the requirements of the local population.

Jackson and Palmer identify the most common types of performance indicators as those relating to cost, productivity, time, volume of service, quality of service, demand or take-up of service, availability of services, and outcome or impact of policy [59]. In an article published in 1993, Palmer describes the results of research which involved issuing a questionnaire relating to performance indicators to senior officers in five major departments in a sample of local authorities. The findings included the fact that, "Service departments using PIs placed most emphasis upon cost indicators (98% included this type). In contrast, only 38% attempted to measure consumers' satisfaction" [60]. Cope highlights the results of research which show that:

> "The measures most often used are those which are easiest to collect. Quantitative measures such as issues, stock, expenditure and staff can be compared to produce Productivity, Cost per Output, Turnover Rate and Cost

> per Use indicators... The measures least often used are those qualitative measures which are the hardest to collect" [61].

Midwinter discusses the categories of performance indicator used by local government (i.e. those based on statistics relating to finance, success rates, service provided, users, and response times), and questions the extent to which they provide information about the level of success of the organisation in terms of its management and operational service delivery [62]. Midwinter considers that there are many methodological problems associated with the use of performance indicators for evaluating local government, and that they are inadequate as the basis for inter-authority comparison [63].

Midwinter and McVicar highlight some of the major problems associated with the use of performance indicators [64]. These include difficulties connected with comparative inter-authority statistics, emphasis on inputs rather than outputs or outcomes, and lack of clarity regarding the measurement of performance. Stewart and Walsh are of the same opinion, stating that, "Fully satisfactory measures of performance are unlikely ever to be discovered" [65]. Performance indicators do not provide comprehensive coverage of all activities undertaken by an organisation, and they do not necesssarily reveal whether value for money is being achieved. There are problems associated with the consistency of data collection, comparisons between authorities, and the interpretation of the data.

Midwinter and McVicar emphasise that, "Performance should be judged within the context of the stated aims and objectives of the library authority". They point out that the performance of a service can be judged by comparing its results in a number of different ways, for example with other library authorities, but that many organisations establish a basic set of objectives in order to measure the extent to which the needs of a specific user community are met [66].

Childers and Van House comment on the fact that numerous performance indicators have been developed in the past but, since libraries serve multiple constituencies, different groups of users might evaluate the effectiveness of the library according to different criteria [67]. In 1987, as part of their study of the definition of public library effectiveness, Childers and Van House undertook a survey of seven different public library constituent groups in the U.S.A. in order to obtain information about which aspects of a public library service are considered by these people to give an indication of effectiveness [68]. The groups comprised: local officials, community leaders, library managers, library service staff, members of library 'Friends' groups, library Trustees, and library users.

Those participating in the survey were given a list of 61 indicators and asked to rank them in order of importance. The researchers found that, " ... 66% of the indicators were valued at about the same level of importance by more than half of the constituent groups" [69]. All seven of the groups included the following six indicators amongst their top ten selections: convenient opening hours, range of materials, range of services, staff helpfulness, services suited to the community, and the quality of the materials. Interestingly, only library managers listed the 'number of user visits' amongst the top ten. Expenditure levels did not rank amongst the top ten topics selected by any group, and the volume of reference questions ranked very low. The results of the study reveal that some of the indicators of performance which have been used in the past are not actually of much importance to the public. However, despite the similarity in how the different constituent groups viewed the public library, the researchers do not advocate using the results of this study to create a standard list. Rather, they emphasise the need for organisations to communicate with the various groups which comprise their users, funders, and supporters in order to identify which indicators would be most relevant to their particular circumstances.

In the U.K., a manual of performance indicators for use in public libraries, was developed by King Research Ltd. on behalf of the Office of Arts and Libraries, and published in 1990 [70]. Amongst the twenty-one performance measures it deals with are six relating to service effectiveness: amount of use, user perception of attributes, user-expressed satisfaction, user-indicated importance, purpose of use, and consequence of use, i.e. measures which indicate how much people use the service and how satisfied they are with various aspects of it [71]. These developments are in line with what Thomson, writing in 1992, states, i.e.:

> The major change in systems and processes resulting from government policy over the past 13 years, and arguably the most important change, is the focus upon *outputs* - performance - rather than inputs. There has been, and continues to be, a shift from an exclusively product-determined service to one which takes account of cutomer need [72].

In order to assist with the identification of which aspects of local authority services the public consider important, the Audit Commission contracted with Market & Opinion Research International (MORI) to carry out research into a number of services including libraries [73]. The research relating to libraries took place between 11 December 1991 and 21 January 1992 and involved a sample of 1,792 people, both library users and non-users. With regard to the criteria by which libraries may be judged, the helpfulness of staff and the variety of books were shown to be the most important factors overall. The rating of other factors showed variation between different categories of people. For example, weekend and late night opening was weighted important by the majority of those in employment and those with children aged 9-14, yet it was judged to be of above average importance by only 45% of people overall. 42% of 18-24 year olds considered that having a record, tape or video section was of above average importance, compared to only 27% of those aged over 55.

Over the years much has been written about performance indicators but libraries have made variable progress in terms of maximising their use. Cope discusses the findings of a survey which was undertaken by the Library and Information Statistics Unit at Loughborough University (LISU) in 1989, concluding that 40 of the 73 authorities that replied had "not yet seriously approached the study of performance indicators" [74]. Only 19 of the Scottish library authorities replied to the questionnaire and, of these, only three appeared to be engaged in evaluation at that time: Motherwell District Libraries, Dumbarton District Libraries and Glasgow City Libraries.

At a C.P.I. seminar in 1995, Kinnell (Evans) discussed research into quality management and public libraries that had been undertaken the previous year by Sheffield and Loughborough Universities [75]. A questionnaire relating to various quality and performance issues had been sent to all U.K. library authorities, and an 81% response rate had been achieved. The replies revealed that public libraries were using a variety of means to measure the quality of their services: "performance indicators (88%), complaints (65%), success against predetermined targets (49%), compliments (49%), greater value for money (35%), customer satisfaction surveys (25%)" [76]. However, this data gathering did not appear to be taking place as part of formalised quality management programmes.

During the period in between the latter two pieces of research, various aspects of performance measurement had become a legal requirement. In 1991 a joint COSLA /Accounts Commission V.F.M. Liaison Group gave consideration to the way in which performance indicators could be applied, and performance measurement promoted [77]. As a consequence of the *Local Government Act 1992,* local authorities were required to monitor performance in selected areas and to publish their results [78].

The provision of performance information has been required by law since 1993/94 and, in Scotland, the results are published annually by the Accounts Commission. The identification of a small number of key indicators does not seem to have been easy and it is interesting to note that the Performance Indicators relating to libraries in England and Wales (established by the Audit Commission) differ from those in Scotland set by the Accounts Commission [79]. In England and Wales, in 1993/94, the indicators relating to public libraries were: the number of items issued, opening hours, the number of visits by members of the public, the amount spent on materials per head of population, and the net expenditure on libraries per head of population. In Scotland the indicators were: the average time to satisfy book requests, total library staff costs per item issued, total stock expenditure per 1000 population, and opening hours. Even where there appears to be an overlap (i.e. with regard to opening hours), different categories are used for measurement purposes.

The variation in the criteria used by the different countries has continued over the years, suggesting that the relative importance of specific elements of the service provided by libraries is not yet fully understood. By 1999/2000 there were still differences between the performance indicators for England and Wales and those for Scotland. The former involve measuring the number of items issued, the number of visits per head of population, opening hours, levels of user satisfaction with specified aspects of the service, and the net expenditure per head of population on libraries [80]. The latter involve measuring the average time taken to satisfy book requests, total library staff costs per item issued and per visit, expenditure per 1,000 population for specified categories of stock, additions to stock and aspects of stock turnover, the number of borrowers (as a percentage of the resident population) and the average number of issues per borrower [81]. In England and Wales, guidelines are provided about the sample

size and the methodology to be used when undertaking surveys in order to establish levels of user satisfaction. No such surveys are required in Scotland.

The figures for 1993/94 show a high degree of variation between authorities [82]. For example, the average time taken to satisfy book requests ranged from 7 days to 53 days, and library staff costs per item varied from 46 pence per item to £1.41 per item. Midwinter and McVicar undertook a statistical analysis of the performance information supplied by public library authorities, taking into account measures such as population size and density, concluding that there was "no correlation between social, geographic and political factors and variations in performance indicators" [83]. They add that their findings support their "general pessimism about the prospects for developing a national system of performance indicators, which is in any sense meaningful, without local interpretation" [84]. Pybus agrees that the details required by the Audit Commission, "are not performance indicators, they are statistical statements" [85]. He adds that they have little practical value since they cannot be used to measure effectiveness and they do not provide information on performance success or failure.

Despite the problems described above, performance measurement can provide managers with information which enables them to assess levels of achievement in selected areas, with a view to making improvements. There has been a considerable amount of research into the use of performance figures in recent years, and examples of best practice are becoming available. Two examples which form part of the European Commission's 'Telematics for libraries' programme deserve particular mention: the 'Library Performance Indicators and Library Management Models' project (undertaken by De Montfort University, the Library and Information Statistics Unit (LISU) at Loughborough University and Essex County Libraries) which developed a toolbox of performance measures and indicators with guidelines relating to

their implementtion and analysis, and the EQUINOX project (led by the Centre for Research in Library and Information Management based at Manchester Metropolitan University) which is investigating aspects of quality management and performance measurement in an electronic environment [86]. Efforts to improve efficiency and effectiveness should build on developments of this type.

5.3.2 Benchmarking.

The study of levels of performance achieved by comparable organisations is a useful exercise that allows the determination of benchmarks against which services can be measured. Garrod and Kinnell comment upon the definitions of the term 'benchmarking', describing it as a management technique that is used to improve service levels [87]. They state that its aim is, "to document and measure a key process, and then compare the resulting data with those relating to similar processes in other organizations".

For benchmarking to be effective, data must be complete and reliable, comparisons between organisations must be appropriate, and there must be acknowledgement of any exceptional circumstances which may distort the results. It is essential that the area of service selected for examination is one that is central to the mission and objectives of the organisation. By comparing the way in which a particular element of a service is operated in different organisations, it is possible to identify best practice and areas where improvements can be made. Garrod and Kinnell discuss the procedures involved in this activity, including the need to focus attention on factors that are critical to customer satisfaction, and the difficulties involved in selecting appropriate benchmarking partners [88].

Brophy and Coulling point out that internal benchmarking can also be useful [89]. Measuring an activity over a period of time allows improvements or decline to be identified. Having analysed the data obtained from a benchmarking exercise, it is important that an action plan for improvement is implemented. As with all aspects of performance measurement, the danger is that the activity is seen as an end in itself and that so much effort is expended in the work of gathering the information that little use is then made of it.

5.3.3 Public library standards.

The collection of performance statistics, and benchmarking activities, may lead to the establishment of a set of performance standards to which public library services aspire. The establishment of local standards that reflect specific local needs is particularly important. However, agreeing the level of these standards is a difficult task since different user groups have different views on what constitutes an acceptable service. When determining performance indicators, the services that are to be measured have to be identified. When determining performance standards, not only the selection of services but also the level of provision has to be agreed. In the past many library standards were based on input, such as levels of expenditure, but this provides little evidence of the relevance or perceived value of the service. If standards are predominantly based on statistics it may be easy to compare levels of output against a target figure, however such an approach takes no account of the quality of the service.

Writing in the *Australian Library Journal* in 1983, Willard and Teece comment that:

> The usefulness of standards and general statements of public library objectives in assessing library effectiveness has come under attack in recent years. Standards, because they are frequently *input* measures - such as expenditure on library materials and programmes, the ratio of professional staff to other staff and to population served ... [90].

They add that standards "have been citicized for forcing sameness on to local public libraries rather than encouraging responsiveness to differences between communities". In the U.K., in the 1986 publication *Measuring up*, the National Consumer Council also expresses doubts about placing too much emphasis upon minimum standards [91]. Its opposition is on the grounds that local authorities should have "the freedom to determine the best mix of services to meet the needs of their particular area", and the freedom to allocate the appropriate level of funding to provide those services. *The Apt Review*, which was published in 1995, comments on both the pros and cons of performance standards. It states that although performance standards may "...inhibit the development of services by offering a norm beyond which the complacent may see no need to venture", they can also "act as a spur to service improvement" by defining the base level from which developments can be planned [92].

The situation in Scotland differs from that in England and Wales with regard to library performance standards. In the former, in 1967 a working party, under the chairmanship of I.M. Robertson, investigated the need for public library standards (giving consideration to the proposals for England and Wales which were made in the Bourdillon report) [93]. The recommendations of this working party led to the publication of a set of library standards in 1969 [94]. In 1986 COSLA developed a revised set of standards for the public library service in Scotland, and in 1995 these were updated [95].

Library managers face a dilemma in terms of benefiting from the assurance of a nationally agreed set of standards while accepting that there is a growing emphasis upon local democratic choice in terms of which services a local authority should provide. As Crawshaw states:

> The value of local government is its localness and ability to determine local needs and the way in which they can be met. The challenge is not to smother

> services with prescriptive service standards but to encourage the evaluation and determination of locally determined service objectives that encourage innovation and public entrepreneurialism [96].

Given the range of services which could be provided by libraries, the existence of recognised, national, minimum standards can be helpful in ensuring that resources are made available to provide at least key services. The COSLA working group report *Standards for the public library services in Scotland 1995* considers the range of services which should be provided by public libraries (i.e. lending services, reference and information services, community information, local studies collections, services to young people, adult and continuing education resources, support for the development of the arts and support for special groups within the community), and it specifies the minimum level of stock necessary, the number of staff required, and the number of service points needed in relation to the population [97]. However, the report also stresses the requirement for local variation to meet particular needs as well as the importance of inter-library co-operation [98].

In 1995, the same year that the above report was produced, the Library Association published a *Model Statement of Standards for Public Library Services*, "with the intention of helping library authorities develop standards appropriate to their local circumstances" [99]. The statement identifies a number of key standards, and it recommends specific levels of service in some areas, but the Library Association acknowledges that these standards will have to be reviewed at regular intervals to take account of the fact that the environment in which public libraries are operating is subject to constant change. Indeed, in the year 2000, when the Department for Culture, Media and Sport issued 23 draft standards for public libraries, the *Library Association Record* included an article which commented on the intention to review the standards annually, "...to keep things moving upwards" [100].

The White Paper on the Citizen's Charter lays stress on the publication of standards i.e. clear written standards which are publicised in a way that recipients of the service can see them:

> These standards should invariably include courtesy and helpfulness from staff, accuracy in accordance with statutory entitlements, and a commitment to prompt action, which might be expressed in terms of a target response or waiting time [101].

The Accounts Commission states that:

> The Citizen's Charter initiative has as one of its fundamental principles the belief that users of public services are entitled to know the service standards which are to be met ... Only when such standards exist can service managers accurately evaluate performance and take corrective action as appropriate [102].

If levels of achievement are prescribed in the form of national standards, libraries may appear to be performing well, yet they may not be meeting local needs to a satisfactory level. If effectiveness is to be judged at local level, then individual library authorities need to know their own priorities: their mission, objectives, and performance standards. A number of local authorities have established standards for particular library services. For example, in 1995, Bedfordshire Libraries produced a substantial document called 'Library Specifications' which quantifies the standard of service they intend to provide [103]. Details are provided on a wide range of topics including opening hours, core services which are provided free, the services for which a charge may be made, access to services for people with a disability, complaints procedures, stock levels, information services and waiting times. Wiltshire library service also has a published standard for waiting times [104]. (Pybus comments that spending up to two minutes in a queue before being attended to was identified as an acceptable standard, the figure having been decided in the light of customer satisfaction rates relating to other service organisations such as supermarkets and fast food shops).

Local circumstances should dictate the standards against which local services are judged. Childers and Van House, in their description of developments in the U.S.A. in the 1960s and 1970s, could be describing thinking in the U.K. in the 1990s, i.e. that:

> ... libraries are local institutions; that public libraries do not subscribe to a universal mission; and that, therefore, each library should be judged by local criteria that address the local library mission [105].

5.4 Quality and value for money.

5.4.1 Quality.

Clark states that, "Another spur to helping introduce standards across the organisation, is the process of accreditation for B.S.5750 (or I.S.O. 9000) standards" [106]. This somewhat mechanistic approach, however, it not, on its own, enough to ensure that a quality services is provided. The level of quality of a service may depend upon a number of factors, ranging from adherence to procedures to staff attitudes and training. Brophy and Coulling review the range of ways in which quality management is employed in the library and information sector, with reference to mission statements, standards, performance measurement, benchmarking, quality awards, and charters [107].

Sanderson identifies two basic dimensions to quality: the technical dimension (i.e. "the extent to which a product or service conforms to its specification") and a more subjective dimension (i.e. "the extent to which the product or service as specified satisfies our requirements or achieves its intended purpose") [108]. Jackson and Palmer consider that customer satisfaction is the real indicator of quality [109]. They add that an indication of the level of satisfaction can be gained from a variety of sources, including surveys, complaints, and media feedback.

However, they also highlight the need for managers to be aware that results may be distorted by the actions of pressure groups.

The British Library Research and Innovation Report number 40 (*Quality management for library and information services: policy forum*) by Kerslake and Kinnell (Evans) includes a consideration of the barriers that have to be overcome when introducing quality management techniques [110]. These include the cost of implementation, the fears and suspicions of staff, changing external factors and changing user expectations. The report also recommends ways forward, focusing on the identification of good practice, targeted projects, comparative studies and developmental work.

Thomson points out that "service quality became an increasingly important feature of competitiveness in the private sector in the 1980s, leading to increasing expectations in the population as a whole with a concomitant impact upon public sector service delivery" [111]. The concept of Total Quality Management (T.Q.M.) was adopted: an approach to service delivery which, in the words of Fitzsimmons, "...works backward from the customer's perspective to achieve a continuous improvement in processes that directly benefit an organization's clients" [112]. T.Q.M. involves appropriately trained staff, with an understanding of the organisation's mission and core values, working towards achieving clearly defined objectives. Hinton discusses the mechanisms that may be used to manage quality: quality task groups and improvement teams, quality circles and quality 'champions' [113].

Swiss warns that T.Q.M. "is very much a product of statistical quality control and industrial engineering" and therefore the concept needs to be modified to meet the unique characteristics

of the public sector [114]. Nevertheless, he describes how elements of reformed T.Q.M. can be applied usefully to public services, particularly in areas such as client feedback, performance monitoring and continuous improvement. Clark discusses the pressures upon public sector organisations to increase service quality [115]. She identifies key issues such as legislation, competitive tendering, customer expectations, and constraints on spending: the latter involving consideration of the elimination of waste and a focus on value for money.

5.4.2 Value for money.

One of the difficulties that local authorities face is keeping up to date with the requirements resulting from new legislation and government initiatives. In 1996, with a general election on the horizon, Kite discusses the question, "What happens if CCT is removed from the statute book in 1997?" [116]. He writes:

> At one extreme, Labour is returned and CCT is abolished in its entirety and is not replaced by any mechanism either requiring authorities to make comparisons between themselves - or between sectors - or the market testing of services. At the other end of the range, the Tories are returned and CCT, rather than being ameliorated, is tightened so much it becomes privatisation.

In the event, neither extreme occurred. Instead, the Labour Government continued to encourage competition, but added an emphasis upon quality and the adoption of examples of best practice from other organisations (in order to achieve maximum value for money).

Midwinter and McVicar define the three essential concepts of 'Value for Money' (V.F.M.) as follows:

> *Economy*: the terms under which the authority acquires human and material resources. An economical operation acquires these resources in the appropriate quality and quantity at the lower cost;
>
> *Efficiency*: the relationship between goods and services produced and resources used to produce them. An efficient operation produces the maximum output for any given set of resource inputs; or it has minimum inputs for any given quality and quantity of goods or services provided;
>
> *Effectivenes* : how well a programme or activity is achieving its established goals or other intended effects [117].

The V.F.M. framework, which was launched by the Conservative Government in the early 1980s as part of the Financial Management Initiative, required arrangements to be set in place to ensure that the 3E's were achieved [118]. Thus appraisal, performance assessment, and procedures for monitoring and evaluating achievements emerged in management policies throughout the 1980s. Similarly, complaints procedures and means of obtaining customer feedback were introduced into many organisations.

Legislation passed in 1986 extended the remit of the Scottish Accounts Commission, the independent body responsible for overseeing public expenditure in Scotland, from the traditional financial and regulatory audits into audits which also take account of value for money i.e. whether local authorities have made proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in their use of resources [119]. The Accounts Commission states its three fundamental tasks as: "securing the external audit, carrying out national value for money studies, and following up issues of concern identified through the audit to ensure satisfactory resolution" [120]. In its published *Strategy 1996-99*, it states that:

> Public sector expenditure will continue to be constrained. More than ever, therefore, it is crucial that public sector bodies ensure that they are making the most effective use of the resources at their disposal. In recognition of this pressure, the Commission will enhance its value for money role - at both national level and in the work carried out by external auditors in the field. [121].

The main role of the Accounts Commission is to scrutinise the accounts of local authorities to ensure that they are accurate and that there is no evidence of unlawful or fraudulent practice. The Commission also assesses the achievement of the above in terms of the arrangements which are in place in relation to planning, budgeting, controlling expenditure, and the allocation of resources. Aspects of management associated with responsibility, accountability, staffing matters, objective setting and monitoring, and performance measurement are also taken into account. Arrangements designed to take advantage of economies of scale, and the cost of alternative levels of service are considered relevant. The White Paper *Competing for Quality* examines the ways in which local government can improve value for money, focusing on the role of competition [122].

In practice it is often difficult to assess value for money in local authorities because of the numerous, sometimes conflicting, objectives involved. Midwinter and McVicar state that, "Developments of performance indicators in general have been more concerned with efficiency than effectiveness ... The end result to date is unsatisfactory because data on costs are more frequent than analysis of benefits" [123]. Performance indicators may be used to draw attention to an aspect of the service which merits investigation (e.g. the higher per capita cost of the library service in one authority compared to another) but they do not necessarily prove that the service incurring higher costs is less efficient. Differences in running costs may depend upon other factors such as service levels and the population distribution within a geographical area.

5.4.3 Best Value.

The introduction of the 'Best Value' regime in 1997 focused attention simultaneously on the cost and quality of local authority services and the issue of whether the services meet the needs of the community [124]. As Liddle states, "The concept of best value presents a new approach to defining value for money and quality of service delivery in U.K. local government" [125].

The framework was developed by a Task Group comprising representatives of the Scottish Office, COSLA, and the Accounts Commission [126]. The key principles and elements of Best Value may be summarised as: accountability, transparency, continuous improvement and ownership [127]. Best Value retains some elements of the C.C.T. regime, and highlights the importance of sound governance (good strategic, operational and financial management which takes into account the requirements of the customers), performance measurement and monitoring, longer term budgeting and continuous improvement (questioning what is to be achieved, how it is to be achieved, and whether it could be done better). In comparison to C.C.T., Best Value is more flexible (more responsive to changing customer needs), more involved with fulfilling needs than delivering a product, and more concerned with the relationship between price and quality than cost alone. It is intended to make councils more responsive and accountable to local people since the latter will be made aware of the standard of service they should receive. It also requires the delivery of services to these standards by the most effective, economic and efficient means possible [128].

Many of the developments of the past decade, such as the need to measure performance, and the encouragement of public involvement in local council decision making, remain important under the new regime. An authority which is delivering Best Value should meet certain criteria: it should have a performance management framework that delivers continuous

improvement and a commitment to what have become known as 'the 4 Cs' (challenge, compare, consult and compete) [129]. The process of continuous review is, as Liddle says, "similar to applying the techniques of total quality management to local government services" [130].

The application of 'the 4Cs' involves performance measurement and benchmarking, and demonstrating the value of the library service. 'Comparisons' may be made with national or professional standards, with appropriate other authorities, between service points within a single authority, and over time. 'Consultation' with library users and potential users should lead to a greater input from the local community into the planning and decision making process. Ruse suggests that, although many libraries undertake some form of surveys and have complaints and comments procedures, they, "...need to think through the more advanced forms of focus groups and juries and make more use of them" [131].

An example of the Best Value framework in use is given by Heyes in his description of how, in 1998, the Metropolitan Borough of Sandwell conducted a strategic review of its library service based on the key principles [132]. The review included an examination of performance in selected areas, a comparison of certain elements of the service with those in other, similar, authorities, a consideration of how services could be delivered more effectively or economically, and an assessment of user satisfaction with services as revealed through comments, complaints, views expressed at user group meetings, and the results of surveys. Consultation with the users of the service was seen as a key part of the exercise.

With regard to 'competition', although the compulsory aspect of C.C.T. is replaced by Best Value, local authorities are still encouraged to consider the role that can be played by the private sector in the delivery of services (whether through the tendering process or through joint public/private partnerships) [133]. Indeed, local authorities are encouraged to 'challenge' the ways in which many of their activities are undertaken. As Fisher points out, in an article outlining the impact of the Green Paper *Improving Local Services through Best Value*, the Best Value framework should encourage library staff "...to provide vital services which are delivered in innovative and cost-effective ways" [134]. Ruse suggests two activities that could be challenged: the provision of basic services free at point of use, and the amount of time librarians spend on book selection when suppliers could undertake this task on their behalf [135].

5.5 Cost savings.

5.5.1 Resource purchasing and stock maintenance.

The selection, purchase and processing of stock are activities that merit further investigation with regard to potential cost savings. Various authors have commented upon areas in which changes could be made. For example, White discusses a study she undertook in order to identify good and bad practice relating to the tendering of book supply [136]. Writing in 1995, when the Net Book Agreement (N.B.A.) and the Library Licence prevented suppliers from competing on book prices, White points out that at that time competitiveness was based on value-added services such as book processing, the provision of approvals collections, cataloguing, and promotional campaign material. She highlights the lack of standardisation between library services, as well as the poor standard of technical competence in the

production, presentation and arrangements relating to the tender process, as an area in which improvements could be made by library staff.

Twaddle describes a survey he carried out towards the end of 1996 to gain information about the effect on library authorities of the ending of the Net Book Agreement [137]. The results show that most of the authorities that replied to the questionnaire relied on their suppliers for book processing (supplying covers, affixing date labels, adding security tags, etc.) and assistance with stock selection (notably through the supply of approvals collections). Where an authority receives a set of approvals at several sites, this is clearly a considerable expense to the supplier. The excessive servicing (such as adding mutiple ownership stamps) which suppliers are sometimes asked to provide is also costly [138]. One book supplier describes the inefficiencies in the current system:

> Servicing on the present scale represents a scandalous waste. For example, as you know, British public library authorities all have different requirements for servicing. Some want pink labels on the top left hand corner of the end-papers, some blue in the middle and so on, in extraordinary detail too tedious to tell. It is a paper and cardboard Tower of Babel. To the extent such handwork is necessary at all, it would be cheaper if it were standardised [139].

Asked whether they would be willing to dispense with any of the services currently provided by their suppliers in return for a bigger discount, approximately half of the respondents to Twaddle's survey replied that they would [140]. The services identified included approvals and multi-site deliveries, but none of the respondents indicated that they would undertake servicing in-house. One respondent is reported as commenting on the advantage of the demise of the Library Licence and the ending of a system by which authorities requiring excessive book servicing were effectively subsidised by those that did not. On the other hand, amongst

the reasons given by some authorities in support of the Licence was the fact that it created 'a level playing field' for authorities regardless of size.

Twaddle reports that one librarian, whose authority joined with others as part of a consortium after the N.B.A. and Library Licence arrangements ended, commented that, although they received a bigger discount on the books, they were now having to pay for servicing. Twaddle suggests that this is likely to become established procedure in the long term. If this is so, libraries are more likely to rationalise and reduce the amount and style of processing required.

Smith describes the replies to a questionnaire about book purchasing, which was sent to all U.K. public libraries in October 1996, which shows that 77% of the responding libraries had been able to secure a discount in excess of 10% (although 66% were paying higher servicing charges than previously) [141]. With such negotiations occuring, it might be assumed that large consortia could obtain even higher discounts than individual library services.

Pachent describes the advantages and disadvantages of consortia purchasing in an article about the Library Books Group of the Central Buying Consortium which involves representatives from a number of English local authorities [142]. She concludes that, although working as part of a consortium involves some limitations on autonomy, it provides more opportunities for reducing expenditure and is "seen politically to give best value".

In an article in *Publishing news,* Coates comments that, "Librarians buy general books at an average discount of 15-20%". He adds that they are a large purchaser (spending £103 million and purchasing about 7% of all the books sold by publishers in the U.K. the previous year) and that booksellers and publishers, "knowing the terms that are given to purchasers of that

magnitude can quickly calculate that the discount is so ludicrous that libraries could be buying half as many books again as they do" [143]. Coates also argues that larger authorities or consortia could negotiate better terms by placing substantial orders direct with the largest five or six publishers [144].

Another criticism of the library profession levelled by Coates is that so much money is spent on the process of book selection, which involves a large number of people, that there is little left to purchase books. Nettlefold also questions the lengthy book selection process and the use of approvals collections [145]. Van Riel adds to the criticisms, commenting that:

> Everybody chooses the same books, there's a lack of range and no collections development. Nobody feels able to take a risk and experiment. Too many people are involved... The process is random, depending on what happens to be published that month [146].

Van Riel goes on to describe an alternative method of book selection, which is operating in Oxfordshire, where a small team, on a fixed time limit, select titles for the whole county. Such experimentation is necessary if library services are to achieve efficiency. As Nettlefold summarises:

> Tenders and Consortia have emerged as a means of ensuring value for money from the library point of view and as a way of securing economies of scale in the acquisitions process... Consortia are therefore not just about discounts but also about streamlining acquisitions processes and stock management [147].

Beech draws attention to the fact that once stock has been purchased, it is necessary to protect the investment [148]. She comments on the value of a good stock management policy to ensure that repairs and re-binding are carried-out where necessary, and she discusses the merits of a stock exchange system. Burrows, reporting on a British Library/Home Office enquiry relating to library stock losses, in 1991, draws attention not only to the cost of theft

but also to the fact that there is little evidence of staff commitment to dealing with the problem [149]. A significant number (63%) of the libraries surveyed engaged in 'book amnesties' (allowing anonymous returns), but only 27% employed recovery officers, 21% involved staff in making visits to recover stock, and only 19% referred cases to the police. Only 36% of the libraries surveyed had security (tagging) systems and only 16% had a written security policy. As in the example above, libraries may find it difficult to argue for more resources if they are not seen to be taking action to protect the stock they already have.

Beech also warns that Councillors can visit book sales and, "...you can so easily lose your argument for improved funding if you make mistakes with the discard procedure" [150]. Barton describes the study undertaken by C.P.I. (on behalf of the British National Bibliography Research Fund) "to investigate and analyse the reasons why, and the circumstances in which, libraries dispose of printed materials, especially where this happens on a large scale" [151]. The findings show that major reasons include wanting to make collections more relevant to the communities' needs and the level of costs associated with maintaining reserve collections which may be little used. Current disposal policies are influenced to a significant extent by past acquisition and retention policies. The need to generate income, the cost of the administrative procedure involved, and the desire to give library users the opportunity to purchase withdrawn material, influence decisions relating to the means of disposal. However, with regard to the issues upon which the stock editing policy should be based, as Barton states, "The key factor is the relationship of the material to the library's objectives and as these change or modify the collection itself should follow suit".

5.5.2 Staffing issues.

Library Services spend a significant proportion of their budets on staff. The recruitment and retention of high quality staff is essential in order to provide high quality services, however this area, too, requires further investigation in order to identify where cost savings can be made. There are arguments in favour of encouraging multi-skilled staff, with generic job descriptions, to cover a wide range of duties and adapt to changing demands. Conversely, there are arguments in favour of employing specialists in areas such as children's departments. The balance between efficiency and effectiveness has to be considered by each authority in the light of its own circumstances.

Goulding discusses the effect of reducing the number of professional staff in libraries, and the consequent delegation of important operational tasks to support staff [152]. The *LISU Annual Statistics 1997* reveal that although overall staffing numbers in U.K. libraries fell (12.5%) from 5.26 per 10,000 population in 1986 to 4.60 in 1996, in Scotland the decline was considerably less marked: from 6.35 to 6.23 (down 1.9%) [153]. With regard to professional library staff, the reduction in the U.K. was from 1.44 per 10,000 population to 1.17 (down 18.8%). In Scotland it was only down 0.7%, from 1.40 in 1986 to 1.39 in 1996. Nevertheless the changing role of professional staff, involving a greater emphasis upon management, policy and planning issues, has implications for their subordinates. So, too, have the changes made to staffing structures in recent years, such as the move towards more team working. Goulding considers the concerns that have arisen over staffing structures and career development in connection with local government reorganisation [154].

No single staffing structure can be recommended as a way forward. Arrangements will vary according to local circumstances and local needs. For example, the ASLIB report *Sponsorship*

in libraries examines three models of staffing in connection with responsibility for the acquisition of sponsorship: the *ad hoc* approach based on individual library staff who show an interest in the venture, the appointment of someone on a fixed term contract with a remit to cover their own costs and generate additional income, and the appointment of an external consultant who has the appropriate marketing skills [155]. There are advantages and disadvantages associated with each method and it is necessary for library services to consider which approach is best suited to their particular situation. (In 1999 for example, the City of Westminster opted for the fixed term appointment solution. An advert in the Library Association's *Library and Information Appointments* magazine for a 'Marketing and Partnerships Officer' describes the job as being, "To organise and implement marketing and partnerships development for Westminster Libraries. To help identify and meet community needs and expectations") [156].

In the changing environment in which library staff work, training is an important issue which needs to be addressed on an ongoing basis. As Twaddle discusses, acquisitions librarians will need a greater awareness of financial matters and the skills to negotiate with suppliers [157]. If new services are introduced, staff need to be fully conversant with them in order to promote them and to maximise their use. With regard to I.T., Gallimore stresses the need to train staff adequately in order to improve efficiency and to make the most effective use of the information systems that are available [158]. He lists various ways in which management efficiency can be improved through better use of I.T. (e.g. in terms of communication and the production and retrieval of performance information). The provision of £20 million from the 'New Opportunities Fund' (a Lottery Distributor) for training public library staff in the effective use of information and communications technology (I.C.T.) should greatly improve

matters in the near future, but authorities will have to ensure that provision is made for continuing staff development in this area on an ongoing basis [159].

Staff need to be trained to undertake the tasks they are allocated and, in the current environment, key skills include those relating to marketing, finance, and information technology. Thapisa makes the point that, "We cannot intimidate employees into productivity" [160]. Appraisal schemes and training needs analysis can help to improve performance, ensure that priorities are understood, focus on objectives, ensure that good work is acknowledged, and increase motivation. However, as Harrison and Goulding point out, a number of factors can lead to appraisal schemes in public libraries failing to achieve their aims, and implementation has to be handled carefully [161].

One way in which libraries might reduce their staffing budget expenditure is through the use of volunteers. In the U.S.A., for many years, libraries have made use of volunteer labour to help with routine jobs and, in 1982, the *Library Journal* reported several examples of increased emphasis upon this source of help: a public library in Winsconsin advertising for volunteers with specific expertise, Texas State Library undertaking a statewide initiative aimed at showing libraries how to establish a volunteer programme, and the Metropolitan Library System in Oklahoma City revealing figures that show the contribution from its volunteers saved the cost of 5.13 members of staff [162].

There are, however, various problems associated with the use of volunteers. White, in an article entitled 'The double-edged sword of library volunteerism', identifies some of the key issues [163]. In particular, he draws attention to the effect on future funding if libraries are thought able to recruit volunteer labour, and the fact that volunteers may not be competent to

undertake the work that should be done. In addition to this, the politics of engaging volunteers, and therefore denying other people the opportunity of paid employment, is a complicated matter. The difficulties associated with this issue provide a reminder that the cheapest means of providing a service is not necessarily the easiest or the best.

5.5.3 Partnerships and joint ventures.

As new demands are placed upon libraries, they require new approaches to service delivery. This may take the form of co-operation between libraries or partnerships with the private sector. Co-operative arrangements between library authorities may include consortia purchasing, selective stock purchase and retention policies, inter-library loans, reciprocal borrowing rights, and joint training. Lonnerblad, writing about the situation in Finland in the early 1990s, states that:

> Library cooperation between municipalities is nothing unusual. Joint computer systems and joint mobile libraries, and buying-in head librarians' services from another municipality are examples of established forms of cooperation. Joint purchasing arrangements are also being planned [164].

Evans, in an article published in 1991, considers the results of a questionnnaire survey on environmental factors and strategies for managing change in U.K. public libraries [165]. With regard to local co-operation, she concludes that there was, "a considerable amount of co-operative activity in evidence". Amongst the examples given are: training, inter-lending, cataloguing and archive conservation. Nevertheless, Evans concludes that, "...those relationships developed between public libraries and other organizations within the framework of co-operative activities did not emerge as central issues to chief librarians in their strategic management of public library services... co-operation is simply not a priority" [166]. Hendrix

discusses some of the activities involving collaboration between libraries that were in existence in 1995 (including the LASER subject specialist scheme and the SEALS European fiction project in the West Midlands) [167]. She concludes that, although there were some notable exceptions, there were few active, innovative resource sharing schemes, and more work was needed in this area.

The Apt Review (a review of library and information co-operation in the U.K. and Republic of Ireland) concluded, in 1995, that the imminent changes in the environment in which libraries operated (including the reorganisation of local government, the increasing difficulty of resourcing library services, and I.T. developments), created a need for greater levels of co-operative activity [168]. The report therefore recommends that organisations within the library and information community should give greater priority to the development of practical co-operative arrangements. The *Review of the public library service in England and Wales*, similarly, recommends greater co-operation between local authority library services, identifying, by way of an example, the economies of cost, and the potential advantages to be gained, through cooperation in the provision of mobile libraries [169].

Malley describes the situation with regard to joint arrangements between library services in the U.K. in late 1996, at a time of considerable change due to the reorganisation of local government [170]. He draws a number of conclusions, including the fact that "distinctions are being made between short-term and long-term joint arrangements" and "the very high cost of specialist staff and resources are key factors in developing a new and specialised service and hence are primary factors in opting for joint arrangements". Lack of resources within the public sector as a whole is one of the reasons why some library services have turned their attention to collaboration with private businesses.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, access to additional resources through joint ventures with the private sector may allow libraries the opportunity to offer a range of services that would otherwise be unavailable. The primary aim of entering into partnerships is to exploit library resources in a way that is of benefit to the users.

In 1985 a joint working party was established by the Library and Information Council (England) (LISC) and the British Library Research and Development Department in order to examine the relationship between the public sector and the private sector with regard to library and information services. The resulting report, *Joint Enterprise: the roles and relationships of the Public and Private Sectors in the Provision of Library and Information Services,* which was published in 1987, reveals that such interaction already existed to some extent, and that such activities could be of benefit to both parties [171]. Amongst the examples included in the (PUPLIS) report are: the provision of a press cuttings services to an external organisation, the operation of a bookshop on library premises, and publishing initiatives. Papers presented at a C.P.I. seminar in 1988 highlight other examples of joint ventures such as the sale of bus tickets in Motherwell District Library, the Gateshead 'Shopping and Information Service', and Suffolk Library Service's bookselling scheme and its Business and Commercial Information Service [172]. Joint ventures were further encouraged in 1988 with the publication of the Green Paper *Financing our Public Library Service: Four Subjects for Debate* [173].

A report by Oakeshott and White concludes, from a study which extended the research of the PUPLIS working party, that, although there had not been a dramatic increase in joint activities in general between 1986 and 1990, there had been a growth in the volume and variety of joint publishing projects [174]. The 'checklist of good practice' relating to joint ventures, which is

provided by Oakeshott and White, could be used as a guide for libraries engaging in any new venture [175]. It advises that libraries should clarify what they want to do and why, identify competing products and services, define objectives, plan the proposed activities, identify the staff to be involved and assign responsibilities, allocate adequate resources, work out a timetable, be realistic in assessing demand, agree the criteria against which success will be measured, and undertake appropriate promotional activities.

The research that has been undertaken into joint ventures with the private sector indicates that public libraries can gain much from the experience. New services can be introduced, existing services can be extended, resources can be exploited and made more readily available to the public, the profile of the library may be enhanced, and income may be generated. A considerable amount of planning is required in order to define areas of responsibility and standards, to agree costs and resource inputs, and to ensure that an adequate monitoring procedure is in place. Market research has to be undertaken to identify which products or services are required, and to identify potential private sector partners. The PUPLIS report, in 1987, stated that:

> While there have been definite improvements in recent years, the majority of staff are not experts in marketing or promotion, nor are resources adequate for a fully professional approach. This is particularly evident in the cases of public bodies which do their own publishing, where an amateur and uncoordinated approach can result in money wasted on abortive exercises [176].

CHAPTER SIX

EFFECTIVE AND RESPONSIVE LIBRARIES : MARKET RESEARCH AND USER NEEDS

6.1 Marketing public library services: difficulties and successes.

6.1.1 Perceived problems and current shortcomings.

To make the best use of the resources they have available, libraries must decide whose needs they are trying to satisfy, what these needs are, and how these needs are to be met i.e. they must have a successful marketing programme. Edinger points out that one of the main prerequisites for this is for every member of the organisation, from top management to front line staff, to become committed to the 'marketing concept' [1]. Achieving this level of commitment is not always easy. Indeed, over the years, there has been a degree of opposition, from within the library profession, to the adoption of marketing techniques. For example, in the 1970s Berry argued against applying marketing techniques and commercial language to libraries. In a series of articles in the (American) *Library Journal*, he gives examples of problems which he claims are the result of the adoption of marketing techniques e.g. adverts for children's storytimes resulting in the arrival of too many children for the library to cope with, and adverts about the availability of a wide range of audio-visual resources causing disappointment to the users of the branches in which the items are not in stock [2]. These examples illustrate the difficulties involved in meeting customer expectations: if too little is offered it may not sound sufficiently exciting to attract customers, but if too much is offered the library may not be able to deliver what it has promised. However, in the instances cited, it is not so much the concept of marketing at fault, but rather the potentially detrimental effects of mismanaged marketing.

Berry highlights the potentially damaging effect of publicity which shows the public library service to be providing non-essential services. In 1974 he argued that publicity which depicts libraries as a 'social frill of little importance' is detrimental in that members of the public may question why such a service should be supported by their taxes [3]. He compares libraries to other publicly funded organisations, such as the police, schools and hospitals, and concludes that, like them, libraries need to emphasise that they are essential. In 1979 he restated his belief that: "Our best hope for getting support for public libraries is to prove that they are essential to society, and worthy of public support" [4]. Again, on analysis, it appears that Berry's real concern is not about the use of marketing techniques: in this case it is about the problems that may arise if the wrong image is conveyed.

In the late 1970s, Whatley sent a questionnaire about library promotion to fifty British public library services. Of the thirty-three replies received, only one showed that the library had allocated a sum specifically for advertising. Only five others indicated that they had made provision in their budgets for money to be used for promotional work [5]. Some of the libraries may have had access to a general publicity department, or alternative means of funding such activities. Nevertheless, the survey results are interesting in that they show that, even at this time, when the profession recognised the importance of being able to depict the service as important and well used, the majority of libraries did not consider promotional activities worthy of a dedicated budget.

More recently, in 1989, a *Which?* survey of 1500 adults and 575 children resulted in a report which stated (under the subheading 'Inefficient Marketing') :

> Libraries could do more to advertise what they have to offer. 41% of people in our survey thought libraries were 'not very good' or 'not at all good' at this important part of their service [6].

Where publicity and promotional work has taken place, its effect is often not monitored adequately. Cronin, for example, draws attention to the fact that librarians have, in the past, used direct mail advertising - yet there has been little systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of the exercise [7]. Interestingly, the conclusions of his study, which was designed to show whether direct mail advertising could be used to induce non-users (in the London Borough of Brent) to visit and join the library, indicate that the cost of the direct mail shot, in relation to the impact it made, could not be justified [8]. The findings of the study reveal that with a certain category of non-user direct mail advertising proved wholly ineffectual. The author also highlights the possibility that such advertising may even have an adverse effect.

Booth argues that, to be carried out effectively, promotional activities have to be adapted to suit the particular needs of specific groups [9]. She makes the point that libraries seldom undertake the necessary preliminary work to identify which people they are targeting and that, consequently, they adopt a general approach, aimed at everybody, and succeed in influencing very few. She emphasises the need for a marketing audit, something which few libraries undertake, and she highlights the need for promotional campaigns to have identifiable, preferably quantifiable, objectives so that the success or failure of the campaign can be evaluated.

Morgan and Noble warn against reliance upon good publicity and promotion of the service as a means of ensuring future success [10]. Writing in *The Australian Library Journal*, in 1992, they argue that while competition was limited, libraries could afford to be product oriented, and the services they offered could be based on the librarian's view of what was useful, but that in a climate of reduced funding and increased competition from other information media and leisure facilities, a change of approach is required.

A survey of recent library literature, however, reveals that, in many respects, promotion is still the aspect of marketing which receives most emphasis. Indeed, although the Library Association has a special interest group with the title 'Publicity and Public Relations', there is no group claiming to concentrate on marketing in its broader sense. Kinnell and MacDougall comment that although the amount of literature on library marketing has increased significantly in recent years:

> Promotion has figured prominently - rather too much in fact, as many librarians have now come to equate 'promoting' a service with 'marketing' it... Rather less has been written about the actual take-up of marketing principles and practices in either public libraries or leisure services, other than short pieces in professional journals on one-off initiatives [11].

Booth states, "The general impression derived from the literature on the subject is that many libraries continue to promote existing services to an ill-defined audience, and even then the promotion is often half-hearted. Far greater effort needs to be devoted to designing and implementing suitable methods for finding out what people want from a library service and then acting upon the results obtained" [12]. As Vavrek points out an article investigating the conditions affecting the rural and small libraries in the United States in the 1990s, "It is surprising how long the community library has endured without those responsible paying much specific attention to their clients" [13].

Booth is critical of the two English library services which she assessed in the early 1990s [14]. She claims that neither has a formal marketing strategy, that their market research is carried out only on an occasional basis, that no real attempt has been made to target activities towards suitable groups, that budget constraints have limited the extent to which advertising can be used for promotional purposes, and that even the standard of some of the displays and exhibitions in the libraries is unlikely to convey a favourable impression to the visitor.

Booth argues that most libraries are still product-oriented whereas they should be customer-oriented. She claims that this is partly because of an attitude that libraries are a permanent fixture, that products are acquired and then promoted to the public. Similarly, she feels that librarians are not adequately customer-oriented in terms of the distribution of their services: that the emphasis is on people going to the library rather than libraries taking their services to where people would use it and benefit from it. She emphasises the need for libraries to adopt a proper marketing strategy ie. to engage in marketing activities in a controlled manner with a view to monitoring results and achieving identifiable outcomes.

Obtaining the views of library users, and potential users, should help in the determining of priorities. However, as Marks highlights, conflict can arise over the role of public library and between professionalism and marketing i.e. as the 'quality versus popularity' debate [15]. Marks gives examples of services which might be welcomed by library users but which are considered inappropriate by library professionals. For example, she says comics and commercial videos "usually command an enthusiastic following in the public libraries where they are offered, but many librarians judge them to be unsuitable for the publicly funded library". Professional judgement has its part to play providing there is informed decision making and not simply action based on assumptions and habit. The decision about what is made available should not be based upon the idea that the professional 'knows best', nor should it be based upon the views of those users who make their voices most heard. Library services need to balance the findings of their research into user needs against other commitments (for example, the purchase and provision of specific resources as part of local or national co-operative agreements). Ultimately, the service provision and stock selection criteria should be based on relevance to the library's mission and objectives.

Lucas, in an article about an initiative by Birmingham Library Services (that formed part of the city-wide 'Learning from Service Users Project' in 1990), emphasises the need to consult with customers [16]. He also points out that, "consultation does not necessarily mean accepting all of the views received - the managerial role is to decide how to incorporate these views into the development of service". Similarly, Rowley, in an article published in 1997, discusses the centrality of customers to the marketing concept, adding a note of caution in her comment that, " ... the concept of customer satisfaction needs to be tempered with concerns about the public good" [17]. She asks the question, "who represents the customer in a specific marketing context".

This theme is echoed by Barnes and Prior who emphasise that public services should consider the needs of society as a whole rather than just those individuals who use the services at present. They argue that,

> ... public services exist not just to meet the needs of individuals ... they exist to meet *public* purposes: they are in part a response to collective needs of society. This provides a justification for spending public resources on services that are not directly chosen by individual consumers, or for spending on services for minority, and perhaps unpopular, groups ... [18]

Even where decisions about the type of resources to be provided is relatively easy, difficulties may arise if widespread consultation with the users of the service leads to increased levels of expectation. The latter affects the extent to which users are satisfied with what is ultimately made available. Indeed, Hollis states that, "Customer satisfaction can be defined as the difference between quality perceived and quality expected by a customer" [19].

A report published by the Accounts Commission in 1994 states:

> Raising the level of customer satisfaction is about narrowing gaps - between what users want and what providers think they want; between realistic and unrealistic expectations on the part of users; and between what providers aim to do and what they actually do. Narrowing those gaps requires that service providers understand what users want, agree which of those wants can be met and to what standard, communicate that intention to users, and then ensure that the service consistently meets those agreed standards [20].

To narrow the gap between what is expected and what is provided, libraries need to establish the level of service they intend to offer, and they need to communicate this information to the users and potential users, preferably in the form of published standards. Library managers need to be aware of the developing range and level of demand with respect to key needs of different customer groups in order to plan ahead. They should monitor changes in the needs and wishes of library users and potential users in order to to ensure long term growth and to ensure survival against new competition for their attention.

The key point is that user studies need to be set within a framework and should not be seen as merely one-off fact gathering exercises. Studies carried out in isolation only reveal information about library use and the users views at a given point in time and, in order to evaluate the changing pattern of use and potential needs, statistical analyses and surveys need to be part of an ongoing process. To be successful, individual marketing activities should be undertaken within the context of an overall marketing strategy.

Kinnell and MacDougall describe a national survey which was undertaken by the Marketing in the Public Sector (MAPS) Group at Loughborough University in 1991-92 in order to identify ways in which marketing practices were being implemented and could be improved in library and leisure authorities in the U.K. [21]. The results show that less than half of the U.K. public library authorities that replied to the questionnaire had a person or team responsible for

marketing, only about a quarter had a separate budget for marketing, and less than a quarter had a written marketing strategy either in existence or in preparation [22]. Kinnell and MacDougall acknowledge that these figures do not take account of the fact that marketing could be embedded in other management functions, but their findings (including the fact that many chief officers considered promotion to be synonymous with marketing) suggest that at that time there was a real lack of awareness, as well as a lack of implementation, of marketing strategies.

6.1.2 Examples of good practice.

Although libraries, in general, have not yet fully exploited the range of marketing techniques available to them, there are some individual examples of good practice. Indeed, the concept of marketing libraries, in terms of publicising services has a long history. For example, in an article published in the U.S.A. over a century ago, Dana comments that:

> A collection of books gathered at public expense does not justify itself by the simple fact that it is. If it be not a live educational institution it were better never established. It is ours to justify to the world the literary warehouse. A library is good only as the librarian makes it so [23].

Dana exhorts librarians to make their presence known in their local community, to encourage teachers to see the value of the public library, and to persuade booksellers that the growth of libraries and the resulting interest in books is of benefit to them. He advocates that librarians should try to persuade the public that libraries are of value to them, reminding librarians of the need to liaise with other organisations: women's clubs, art associations, historical societies and scientific societies. He advises: "In the small town you can gain without difficulty the goodwill of the local newspaper". He adds:

> See that your library is interesting to the people of the community, the people who own it, the people who maintain it... Make your library at least as attractive as the most attractive retail store in the community [24].

There are many examples of successful library marketing programmes in the United States, and also of the tailoring of services to meet user needs. In an article in the *Library Journal* in 1974, Glazer reminds librarians that although the number of existing and potential library users equals or exceeds that of any other government funded service, including education and health, the expenditure on the services is extremely low in comparison [25]. He argues that, "A more aggessive philosophy of librarianship is needed". He suggests that, since libraries are competing with other government agencies for a share of the funding, the profession should base itself more on "the great merchandisers" than keepers of books. He adds that, to create demand for library services, a 'hard sell' approach has to be taken. Glazer states that:

> The traditionally accepted low profile of libraries held by state and local administrators needs to be elevated by vigorously promoting the library to these funding bodies.

Developments at the Public Library of Charlotte & Mecklenburg County (P.L.C.M.C.) between 1982 and 1993 provide an example of what can be achieved as a result of a successful marketing campaign. Fleming describes the library's change from a passive institution to "one of the most dynamic, innovative, and market-driven libraries in the country" [26]. She describes, "The transformation of PLCMC from a sagging, solitary entity with its priorities askew to a thriving, multi-faceted institution in perfect synergy with its community". Fleming's article also makes references to 'aggressive marketing', to high quality customer service, and to the fact that the library is mentioned frequently in the media. The development programme at P.L.C.M.C. included a ten year strategic plan, which incorporated a fund-raising campaign, and targeting services for particular market segments, such as businesses.

Fleming describes how library officials met representatives of the business community to identify their information needs. They then established an International Business Library (I.B.L.) and introduced a fee-based research service. The I.B.L. was intended to serve other libraries in the region, as well as the local business population, but a significant amount of money was provided by the private sector. Fleming reports on the success of the project, stating that, at a time of budget cuts, "PLCMC has been one of the few departments to maintain its current level of funding, with betterments approved each year" [27]. She concludes, "With increasing competition for dollars, the winners are going to be the highly visible institutions with strong reputations for serving the needs of the community".

St.Lifer, commenting on the situation in the United States, says that, "The PLCMC is not the only library to adopt guerilla marketing tactics" [28]. He goes on to describe how Maxine Bleiweis, the director of the Lucy Robbins Welles Library in Newington, Connecticut, took advantage of an opportunity to establish a mutually advantageous relationship with the town's business community. Bleiweis' project involved marketing the library service directly: organising focus group meetings and visiting fifty businesses within a six month period in order to ascertain views about the service and to promote what the library could offer. St. Lifer explains that the success of the programme led Newington administrators, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Economic Development Commission to provide the library with additional funding to continue its work in this area.

Within the U.K. there are also some examples of successful marketing campaigns. For instance, Coleman and Yorke describe how market research methods were used in the early 1970s to obtain information about the kind of services the public wanted made available at a new branch library in Burnage, Manchester, and Booth describes a successful market research

project which was carried out in Runcorn, in Cheshire, in connection with the building of a new library [29]. Booth comments that the latter project "demonstrates the success which can be achieved if a conscious effort is made to provide a service that fits the needs of those who will be using it" [30].

Hendry describes the lengthy campaign undertaken by Renfrew Libraries Service in the 1980s which targeted selected groups of people in particular geographical areas [31]. The assessment of user needs took into account factors such as the growing levels of unemployment in the area, and new services and facilities were made available accordingly. Services to senior officers and elected members of the District Council were improved at the same time and, as Hendry states, "...it soon became apparent that a number of key decision-makers had altered their perceptions of the range of the Library's Service's work and influence" [32].

Gallimore describes another good example of a library service in the U.K. employing marketing techniques in the form of market segmentation i.e. the project at the Manchester Commercial Library, one of the major public sector businesses in the country, where a survey revealed that the majority of telephone enquiries came from people outside the city of Manchester and that half of the visitors either worked or lived outside the city [33]. Consequently, the marketing effort was focused on encouraging more use of the service by individuals and organisations within Manchester, i.e. those who contribute financially to the upkeep of the Library, as well as encouraging self-help, i.e. persuading people to visit the library in person rather than making enquiries by phone. Gallimore states that:

> The main aim in marketing the services of Manchester Commercial Library is to concentrate the effort on the individuals and organizations within the City of Manchester in order to attract more of those who do not yet use the service.

> The intention is to increase the percentage of Manchester users and to squeeze out some of the non-Manchester users in the process [34].

Such an approach is understandable during a period of financial constraint. The library must ensure that the local population view it as an essential service, and it cannot necessarily justify the use of local taxes to provide a service to people from outwith the area.

An article by Botten published in 1995 describes the attempt made by West Sussex Libraries to obtain information from teenagers about what current use they make of libraries and what resources and services they would like the library to provide [35]. The results of the investigation provided the library with useful information and the publicity associated with the project led to increase in library use. In recent years there have been many examples of successful projects upon which future marketing efforts may be based. *The Library Association Record*, the Library Association's main professional journal, periodically includes items about the results of such user surveys (for example, an article in the November 1996 edition describes a pilot scheme, involving eighteen local authorities, which was aimed at developing a standard survey of children's use and non-use of public libraries [36]). Similarly, from time to time, the *Public Library Journal* contains details of successful marketing projects (such as the 'extensive consultation process' that Edinburgh City Libraries undertook with community groups in Wester Hailes prior to the opening of a new community library in 1997) [37]. The journal *Scottish Libraries* also includes articles about projects designed to obtain information about user needs (such as the user survey at Yoker Youth Library in 1994 and the work of the 'junior user group' that was established at Whitburn Library in 1998) [38]. However, what is now required, in order to build on this type of work, is for libraries to adopt a more structured approach to marketing i.e. the development of more planned programmes rather than isolated individual initiatives. These programmes should take account of user

needs from the planning stage of a new library through to publicising resources once they become available.

With regard to library publicity campaigns, an examination of recent library literature reveals that there are also some good examples of this aspect of marketing. For instance, Smith describes the work undertaken by libraries in the London Borough of Sutton and the fact that the Council members are kept aware of of successful library projects and relevant press releases [39]. Sutton has received the Library Association Robinson medal for significant advances in marketing techniques, and the Library Association T.C. Farries Publicity Award, yet Smith does not argue that the Sutton approach should necessarily be used as a model. Rather, he stresses that the prime activities of other libraries will vary and that it is the application of marketing techniques to secure resources, to attract public recognition and to secure facilities, that is important. He says, "...it is only by using and adapting such devices to one's own library environment that you will achieve the recognition needed from your masters, and gain the resources you require in order to achieve maximum service" [40]. Money should only be spent on publicising products or services if the library is sure it is providing what is needed by those at whom the campaign is targeted. The significant amount of effort currently devoted to promotional activities may be partially wasted if a proper review of user needs has not been taken in advance and if the publicity is therefore not directed at the appropriate groups of people.

6.2 Marketing public libraries : conditions for success.

For marketing to be successful, a number of conditions have to be met. There has to be:

- commitment to the concept of focusing on customer needs
- appropriate use of market research techniques
- market segmentation
- the establishment of service aims, priorities, and targets
- good planning, implementation and monitoring procedures
- a flexible approach to the allocation of resources
- clear communication to ensure that both existing users and potential users of the service are aware of what is available
- an ability, throughout the organisation, to adapt to meet changing demands on an ongoing basis

Library managers must ensure that libraries provide the right combination of services, and that they develop and package these services to appeal to the changing demands of the market. They need to consider matters such as the range and life-cycle of the products and services they provide, the way in which services are publicised and promoted, and the location of the libraries. Some services will fall out of fashion and, in order to survive, libraries will have to be prepared to adapt and develop to meet the new needs of the public.

Yorke comments that:

> An organisation is usually marketing a range of products or services ... It would be disastrous if, when something is in decline, no replacement is forthcoming. Constant thought and planning about the phased introduction of new products or services are vital if the organisation is to achieve its objectives [41].

The life-cycle of a product or service may be considered in terms of the 'Sigmoid curve'. As Handy points out, with respect to this curve, the appropriate time to take action, to ensure

constant growth, is just before the current situation reaches its peak of success yet, for most individuals and organisations, the impetus for change usually only occurs once a decline has set in [42]. To be successful, organisations have to be aware of emerging needs and they have to prepare, in advance, to meet them.

With regard to the delivery of services to meet these needs, as Kotler and Levy indicate, the distribution of products and the location of the service provider is of importance [43]. They use the issue of access to the resources of public libraries as an example, raising the question of whether a city should establish one large library with a significant collection of material, maintain several smaller branch libraries, provide mobile libraries, or distribute their services through school libraries. This is exactly the kind of decision currently facing library managers. For example, early in 1999, the London borough of Camden proposed the introduction of a three-tier system of library provision: establishing one 'superlibrary', four 'town' libraries and four 'neighbourhood' libraries [44]. The latter would be located in places such as community centres and would hold predominantly adult fiction and have very limited staffing. The proposal was controversial, not only because it involved closing some existing libraries and reducing overall opening hours, but because it threatened the relationship between libraries and the local community: with the main source of material located at a distance and the libraries providing a less intimate atmosphere, the new arrangement could be seen to discriminate against the less mobile and less confident members of society. The provision of a single, large city centre library might be the most economical way of providing a service, but the public may prefer to have easy access to a number of small branch libraries dispersed throughout the area.

A branch library may be well used by the small number of people in its catchment area, but if budgets are cut and savings have to be made, it could be targeted for closure on the grounds that it is not financially viable. Redesigning the service (for example, replacing the branch library with regular visits by a mobile library) might provide a solution. On the other hand, it might still be seen, by the users of the service, as a reflection of a decline in standards. This example illustrates the type of choice which library managers may have to make: deciding between efficiency or effectiveness. It also illustrates the importance of having clear objectives and a strategy that allows specific service developments to be considered within a broader context.

Libraries may carry out a marketing audit in order to understand more fully the relevant environmental factors i.e. who uses or could use the service, and what the present and potential future characteristics and demands of these users are likely to be. Edinger emphasises the need to acquire factual information rather than risk making erroneous assumptions, and the 1995 *Review of the public library in England and Wales* recommended that there should be, "A review by library authorities of their marketing approach, and their systematic use of market research" [45].

Wood points out that there is still an incentive for libraries to provide particular services because staff with the necessary expertise are available, rather than because there is demand from the public, although, in her own words, "Any library's resources will be better used in supplying items and services valued by its patrons than in acquiring and attempting to push down their throats what library personnel want them to have" [46]. On a similar theme, Morgan and Noble state that the first stage in the establishment of a useful library service is the identification of the needs of the local community. They write:

> Survival in the library and information services profession in the 1990s will depend on the extent to which organisations accept that they must be driven by the needs of their users rather than by what the people working within the industry perceive these needs to be. This will require a change of attitude for many people within the information industry [47].

Kinnell adds that:

> The complexity of service delivery in an intensely competitive environment provides many problems for today's library or information service manager. Understanding users' needs and relating these to the organization's objectives and capabilities is the primary task [48].

Oldman discusses elements of marketing such as buyer behaviour models, particularly consumer decision models [49]. She points out that the emphasis is upon demand, yet users will only ask for what they think the organisation can supply. It is difficult to assess the information needs of members of the public if the latter are not aware of the range of resources that could be made available to them, and, consequently, do not ask for additional services. The ASLIB *Review of the public library service in England and Wales* recognises this fact, stating that:

> ... it is often not easy - especially for people who only go there occasionally - to appreciate the range of resources and services that libraries can supply. There are sometimes deficiencies in marketing and 'merchandising' services, and in layout and signposting [50].

The latter comment highlights an important point relating to publicity. Often only new or unusual services are publicised, but it is important to promote all services in a manner appropriate to their potential users. Yorke draws attention to the need for librarians to acquire an understanding of the process of advertising and other forms of customer motivation [51]. For example, he identifies the importance of stock location and presentation, highlighting the possibility that the level of circulation of certain titles might be affected by their position within the library.

6.3 Market segmentation.

Libraries provide services to a wide range of people and each library may provide these services in a unique combination. Providing a uniform service may be financially advantageous, since economies of scale can be achieved, but this ignores the diverse range of needs within a community and the differences between communities. Conversely, it is expensive, and impractical, to tailor services to meet the needs of every individual. To achieve a balance between efficiency and effectiveness, and to make best use of the resources available, libraries need to employ a strategy based on market segmentation: providing relevant services to identifiable target groups. The market segments should consist of groups of people with homogeneous needs and wants, and the segments must be of a size that warrants the application of a separate marketing strategy.

Oldman comments that, although information people often have an appreciation that different user groups have different information needs, "they rarely pursue a conscious market segmentation policy when making management decisions" [52]. Similarly, Morgan and Noble, writing in Australia in 1992, could easily have been referring to the U.K. when they state:

> A differentiated segmentation strategy is likely to be most relevant for libraries, and yet, in general, it has not been fully exploited. Few libraries do more than identify some services likely to appeal to different customer groups, and perhaps use different communication methods to appeal to them. This is not the same, and is less effective, than a thorough market segmentation analysis followed by development of a total marketing mix for each market segment [53].

Traditionally market segmentation is based on demographic variables such as age, sex, and occupation. It could also be based on behavioural patterns or lifestyles. Rowley discusses some of the segments which might be targeted by library and information services: the general public (adults, children, special groups), professional groups, academic users, and business

users [54]. These are only some of the possibilities. Each of these segments may be further subdivided into groups with more specialised needs. For example, the distinctive needs of the under 5s, school children, and teenagers have been assessed separately for many years. As Kinnell states:

> The success story of children's services is in some ways, however, in sharp contrast to other areas of service development. Precisely because children and young people are a clearly differentiated sector of the community, their needs could be identified and resources targeted on them. The difficulty for senior managers in looking at the range of other community and individual needs for library services has been simply the diversity of the task facing them [55].

Nevertheless, it is possible to distinguish groups within the community which are likely to have distinctive needs. For example, Wadley et al. consider the particular requirements of the full-time employed, arguing that, since this group comprises over one-third of the population it is important to provide an effective service to this segment of the community. To achieve this, consideration has to be given to the availability of the service in terms of both location and time. The former may involve consideration of the siting of main branch libraries, the institution of deposit collections, mobile library visits and "the facilitation of access from the home or workplace" [56].

To provide a convenient service to this market segment, opening hours will need to include evenings and weekends. Wadley et al. suggest that the introduction of 'mini-libraries' should be considered to help to improve the service to those in full-time employment, and that postal loan schemes can provide users with additional opportunities [57].

In some instances, to better meet user and potential-user requirements, libraries need to consider adapting what they currently offer; in some cases new services need to be introduced.

However, sometimes, existing services just need to be better publicised to particular groups of people. In summary, libraries need to be what Wood calls 'Effective Marketers':

> These libraries take education, providing information, and supplying resources for recreational and leisure pursuits as their broad purpose, but they identify priority patron groups and programs within the broad mission, and they tie deployment of resources to such community-based priorities. They see not only the reactive role of responding to apparent community needs but also the active role of studying and analyzing such needs as appropriate activities for library staff [58].

As Ward points out, these libraries "understand marketing theory and employ marketing research as needed to analyze complex issues". They seek to minimise the gap between what the public need and want and what the library service provides.

6.4 Market research techniques.

6.4.1 Ascertaining user needs and levels of satisfaction.

Market research is defined by Harris as, "...simply the application of a range of social research techniques to the analysis of the needs and behaviours of users and potential users of products and services" [59]. Information about user needs may be achieved through the analysis of statistics of current use, by observation of library users, through feedback from questionnaires or surveys, and by establishing 'focus groups' to discuss issues with selected members of the community. It is also useful to consider past user behaviour patterns, and to analyse customer complaints and suggestions, since the answers people give in questionnaires do not always represent what they do in practice.

A variety of means by which users' opinions can be discovered, and levels of customer satisfaction measured, are described by Hollis: customer surveys (including postal

questionnaires, telephone surveys or face to face interviews), customer focus groups, observational research, and complaints procedures [60]. A report by the Accounts Commission also lists a variety of ways in which local authorities can obtain information about user requirements. These include undertaking user and non-user surveys, holding meetings with interest groups and user panels, using focus groups, and obtaining feedback from staff [61]. The Office of Arts and Libraries manual, *Keys to success: performance indicators for public libraries*, describes the advantages and disadvantages of four methods of survey data collection: personal interviews, telephone interviews, self-administered questionnaires and the observation of users in a library [62]. Seay et al. also discuss the value of four methods of measuring customer perceptions of service: in-depth interviews with individual patrons, focus groups, unobtrusive observation, and user surveys [63].

Different market research methods have different strengths and weaknesses and some are more appropriate to particular circumstances than others. The Accounts Commission report states that "Perhaps the method of information gathering most often used by authorities is the survey. Many take the form of either a detailed study of current usage patterns, or provide measures of user satisfaction levels with current services" [64]. Nevertheless, as the report points out, a common weakness in such surveys is that they often fail to provide information about what alternative arrangements users would prefer. In such cases it may be unclear what actions can be taken as a result of the information which has been obtained.

The Accounts Commission advocates that, in order to identify user requirements, local authorities should employ the full range of market research methods in ways which ensure that their use is productive. Its report highlights several market research techniques that may be used to ascertain such information. It states:

> For example, focus groups and user panels allow authorities to explore in detail areas of interest which are identified by users ... Comments can be used to determine how the service could be made more relevant to users' needs, and how performance could be improved. Groups may continue in existence over a period, allowing users' perceptions of the authority's performance to be monitored over time [65].

Morris and Barron review the methods that are available for consulting with users, and they describe the findings of a survey of all (183) U.K. library authorities which was carried out in the summer of 1996 in order to find out what methods they employ and how effective they are considered to be [66]. The questionnaire focused on the use of user satisfaction surveys, comments and complaints procedures, feedback from 'Friends of the library' or user groups, user consultative meetings or committees, citizen's charters, and information from staff.

Morris and Barron comment on the value of the different methods: user surveys may be used to gauge levels of satisfaction with existing services and to identify who is using the library (and for what purpose), complaints procedures can identify particular problems, and focus groups provide a useful forum for discussing potential service developments. The authors, however, also remark on the limitations of each of the techniques. For example, the effectiveness of user satisfaction surveys is limited depending on the frequency with which the surveys are undertaken, the size of the sample, and the tendency of some of the respondents to want to 'please' the library staff. Morris and Barron comment that, "any of the methods of user consultation used in isolation will fail to provide a comprehensive picture of user opinion" [67]. They add, "the consultation process must provide evidence of an integrated strategy, be run continuously, and be reviewed frequently". Their overall conclusion is that user consultation must remain a key priority since, "consultation enables library management to determine what library users really want".

In an MSc dissertation submitted to the University of Strathclyde in 1999, Callegari describes the findings of two case-studies which examine the development and execution of public consultation exercises in two inner city public libraries: Tower Hamlets and Hackney [68]. The study attempts to assess whether public consultation is undertaken in an effort to build responsive services or whether it is intended to be more a method of 'rubber-stamping' decisions. The results show some degree of similarity: in each case the process was partly politically motivated and partly the result of a reorganisation and the appointment of a new head of department, the activity resulted in an increase in the stock budget, and the consultation exercise raised the profile of the library services in relation to other departments within the council. However, Callegari concludes that both projects incorporated some legitimisation features and, in one case, the use of external bodies to conduct the market research allowed the information professionals to distance themselves from potentially unpopular decisions. This research highlights both the benefits and difficulties facing those who are planning in-depth market research, and it serves as a reminder that the data collected may be used for diverse purposes.

6.4.2 User surveys.

Hutton highlights some of the potential pitfalls that can occur when undertaking surveys [69]. These include the fact that the surveys may be designed in a way that reflects the views of providers rather than the users of the service. They may concentrate on minor issues at the expense of fundamental policy priorities, and they may ask questions out of context. They may deal with satisfaction ratings rather the way in which satisfaction levels can be improved.

Seay et al. are amongst the other authors who point out some of the negative aspects of user survey research, including problems associated with questionnaire design and attitudes

towards completing questionnaires [70]. However, Seay et al. also comment on the benefits of this technique, such as the relative ease with which the view of a large number of people can be obtained. Furthermore, Galvin, in an article which provides guidelines relating to the design and choice of content of questionnaires, comments that, "Surveys, a marketing research technique that provides a systematic way to gather and analyze useful information about customers' attitudes, interests and activities, can help library managers acquire the knowledge they need to make critical decisions" [71].

There is no doubt that much can be learned from previous experiences of surveying library users and potential users, even from some of the studies which took place some time ago. For example, Willard and Teece provide an informative description of an Australian study, in 1979, which investigated user demands and the library's response to these demands [72]. More recently, in the U.K., in an article in the *Public Library Journal*, Raybould provides an insight into the issues and practical problems involved in undertaking a survey of users and non-users of libraries in Warwickshire in 1988 [73]. He discusses the importance of giving consideration to the sample size, the need to have clear objectives, the value of undertaking a pilot project, the advantages and disadvantages of using local college students to carry out interviews with members of the public, the availability of assistance from other departments within the council (in terms of providing information relating to population profiles and helping with the data analysis), and the specific findings of the survey (including the fact that people wanted a video service, more sound recordings, and refreshments).

The publication of the results of such surveys can provide other members of the library profession with valuable information upon which to base their own investigations. Unfortunately, in the past, few reports on surveys were publicised beyond the committees in

the local authorities in which the research took place. Consequently, opportunities to learn from examples of best practice have been lost. However, the 1995 ASLIB *Review of the public library service in England and Wales* points out that in the process of obtaining information for the report:

> Various library authorities provided the results of local surveys, prepared either to help the public library review, or for their own purposes... The data from these and other local studies, which paralleled our own, could usefully enrich understanding of users' requirements [74].

Some authorities are now carrying out user surveys on a significant scale. For example, Berkshire undertook a customer survey in 1995 (as part of a nationwide initiative to introduce a 'National Standard' for public library user surveys) in order to gauge existing levels of satisfaction, and to enable a comparison to be made between the performance of Berkshire libraries and that of local authority library services [75].

In recent years, more articles about user surveys have been published in the main U.K. library journals. For example, the May / June 1997 edition of *Scottish Libraries* includes details of a general user survey undertaken by Falkirk Council Libraries [76]. The survey led to the implementation of changes and, in line with current marketing thinking, this survey was not an isolated piece of research. As the article concludes, "Further surveys will now be done to target particular user groups..."

McClure describes a survey used in the library of the National Museums of Scotland (N.M.S.), concluding that the exercise proved beneficial in several ways:

> In a time of increasing pressure on resources it has given the NMS Library some quantitative measures of the value of its services to users, and these have been very useful in establishing service priorities. Implementation of the action plan which followed the survey will allow the library to function in a way which makes it more responsive to the needs of its users [77].

This survey provides an insight into the priorities of users and their level of awareness of existing services. In addition to wanting additional services (such as the production of a contact list for library staff), and more information about some existing services (such as online searching), the users gave responses which prompted questions to be asked about the need to continue certain services. McClure notes that a bi-monthly Library Accessions list was valued much less than library staff had thought and was consequently discontinued [78]. The findings of this N.M.S. survey support the view of the Accounts Commission that:

> ... improvements can be made within exisiting resources, either by changing the way something is done to make it more user-focused, or by stripping out activities which add no value and re-investing those resources in productive activity [79].

The *Model Statement of Standards for Public Library Services* published by the Library Association in 1995 includes a section on marketing which proposes that, "Each library authority will develop an effective marketing strategy designed for users and non-users" and that:

> The marketing strategy will include a rolling programme for consultation with local people. Each authority will decide in the light of its own circumstances the best means of doing this [80].

It goes on to propose that user surveys should take place at regular intervals and that each library should provide a facility, such as a suggestions box, which enables the public to comment on the service [81]. Much valuable information can be obtained when repeat surveys are undertaken and the results analysed to reveal developments and changes over time. For example, MORI carried out a survey, in March 1991, on behalf of the National Consumer Council in order to obtain information about the British public's views on local council services [82]. A comparison of the results for England and Wales with those of a similar

survey which was undertaken in 1986 show that library services there satisfied fewer people in 1991 than they had done five years earlier (i.e. the percentage of questionnaire respondents claiming to be satisfied with library services fell from 78% in 1986 to 67% in 1991) [83]. The National Consumer Council report on the 1991 survey points out that the reactions of the public in Scotland towards local council services are consistently more favourable than those south of the border but, overall, the research findings suggest that there is no room for complacency [84].

An article by Fuegi and Gordon in the *Public Library Journal* in 1995 reports on the work of the Committee for Public Library Statistics (C.P.L.S.) and the Institute of Public Finance (I.P.F.) to develop a standard for the measurement of user satisfaction with public libraries [85]. The 'tools' developed include a manual which offers guidance on undertaking a survey campaign, and software to assist with the preparation of survey data for analysis. A considerable amount of software associated with the design and interpretation of user surveys is now available and, as a result, the analysis of responses by selected market segments has become relatively easy in recent years.

6.4.3 Focus groups.

Focus groups provide a useful forum for identifying gaps in the market and for gaining feedback on ideas for new products and services. Hollis defines focus groups as, "groups of approximately 6-12 people who are brought together with a trained facilitator in order to discuss a product or service", and Galvin describes focus group research as "a method of gathering qualitative information about peoples perceptions, opinions, attitudes, and needs" [86]. Cronin writes:

> The use of focus groups and sensitivity panels to furnish suggestions for new products, product refinement, image development, or novel packaging and distribution mechanisms can provide the manufacturer with unexpected insights and concrete product development opportunities. Proactive market research of this kind complements the more traditional survey-based approach to consumer analysis and can be applied in a wide variety of contexts [87].

Galvin comments that the philosophy behind focus groups is that group dynamics work to produce different ideas, and a wider range of ideas, than would be obtained through carrying out individual interviews [88]. There are some problems associated with the use of focus groups; one of the major ones being the difficulty of recruiting a cross section of library users. Often it is the most assertive and vociferous members of the public who are prepared to attend such meetings, and their views are not necessarily representative of the majority. It may be particularly difficult to ensure that the group comprises enough individuals who are representative of occasional users or non-users, and some people may not find it easy to articulate their requirements.

Nevertheless, focus groups can provide a very useful forum for discussion. The advantages of using such groups to obtain feedback include the fact that participants can express their opinions in their own words, comments from one participant may stimulate additional ideas from others, issues can be clarified and expanded upon in the course of the discussion, and the cost is relatively low. As Morgan comments, focus groups not only produce information about *what* participants think, but they are extremely useful as a means of exploring *why* participants think as they do [89]. Indeed, some local authorities already encourage this activity in order to obtain customer feedback. For instance, in Aberdeen, in December 1997, the local newspaper (the *Press and Journal*) included an advert entitled "The Council Budget - We need *your* views". It states:

> As you may know, Aberdeen City Council will have to make difficult decisions when setting the 1998/99 budget. As part of our commitment to increase community involvement we are asking residents in Aberdeen to come forward and take part in special Focus Groups which will discuss important issues which will influence the budget. For example: Should services be changed or reduced? Should services charges / Council Tax be increased? Should there be a balance of service reductions and increased charges? [90]

Despite the benefits, and some examples of best practice, the use of focus groups is not high amongst public library services. Morris and Barron, in their article about a survey of U.K. public libraries in 1996, reveal that only about a quarter of library authorities claim to have had any experience of using this market research technique [91]. However, most of the latter made favourable comments about the system.

As Young emphasises, focus groups have to be implemented correctly in order to be most effective [92]. Important factors include the use of an impartial, preferably external, moderator. Moreover, the information gained should be used as only part of the research process; the 'raw data' should not be used as the basis for final decision making. In Young's words:

> Because of the nonscientific sampling and the inability to quantify results, you need to use the information carefully. Focus groups should be followed up with statistically sound quantitative research.

6.4.4 Analysis of statistics.

All public library authorities submit data for inclusion in the annual 'Public Library Statistics' return published by The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). This information covers a wide range of aspects relating to finance, staff, stock and services. Further statistics are recorded by public libraries in order to comply with the Accounts Commission requirements relating to performance indicators (as discussed in section 5.3 of this thesis). The publication of these details allows public library services the opportunity to make comparisons between their own circumstances and the performance of other, similar, authorities. It also allows provides them with details from which they can establish benchmarks.

The Library and Information Statistics Unit (LISU) at Loughborough University produces annual library statistics based on the CIPFA figures [93]. The LISU trend analysis allows comparisons to be made over a number of years and highlights key issues, such as declining book issues [94]. With such a wealth of statistical information available, it might be assumed that all libraries would undertake a close analysis of their budgets and services and that their resource allocation decisions would be influenced to some extent by their findings. However, as is shown in the next chapter, this appears not to be the case.

With increasing advances in information technology, librarians need to make more use of the valuable statistics that can be obtained from their management information systems e.g. the details available from their automated systems about the subjects and titles that are borrowed most frequently. More sophisticated information might be obtained through the use of a geographical information systems (G.I.S.). Such a system, in which a map of a local authority area can be broken into sections to show demographic data, could be used to identify

areas where library services need to be tailored to meet special needs such as for the unemployed, retired people, or children. The system could also be used to compare the success of one library against another, to plan mobile library routes, or when planning a major reorganisation of a library service. Hawkins undertook a literature search to establish the current use of geographical information systems in England, but concluded, in an article published in 1994, that, "The lack of suitable documents shows a distinct lack of GIS usage in public libraries or a complete silence by GIS project managers" [95]. He then carried out a survey, in the form of a questionnaire, and selected interviews, in order to try to assess the use of a geographical information system as a decision support tool in public libraries. He concludes that in many places, libraries may be dependent upon their local authority purchasing a G.I.S. for use by a number of departments, but that if library managers consider such a system would be of benefit to them, they should be trying to persuade the purse holders to make the service available. As Hawkins says:

> Decision-support technologies in public libraries for management decisions are very much in their infancy. Previously there were no means of showing how information and recreational services are being used and by what type of people they are being used. Now, with the impact of the GIS, this is possible [96].

6.4.5 Suggestions, comments and complaints procedures.

Morris and Barron highlight the need for organisations to have a complaints procedure in place, and the importance of encouraging dissatisfied users of the service to take advantage of the opportunity to record their concerns. They point out that an effective system can prevent negative publicity and that a positive response to a complaint may even result in an increase in levels of user satisfaction. In their survey of U.K. public library services in 1996, Morris and

Barron discovered that 90% of authorities reported that they "made comments / complaints / suggestions forms or books available for their users" [97]. Most of the remaining authorities claimed to have other means of communicating concerns to the management (e.g. by word of mouth, letters, or feedback from counter staff) and some had plans in place for the implementation of more formal suggestions schemes etc. in future. Morris and Barron describe the range of ways in which the suggestions, comments and complaints schemes operate, concluding that overall this method of consultation was seen as being positive. In connection with their survey they comment, "Over a quarter of the respondents (26 per cent) found this method of consultation 'extremely effective' and a further 64 per cent found it 'quite effective' "[98].

Milner draws attention to the comments of the Citizen's Charter Complaints Task Force, including the fact that complaints should be viewed as positive feedback to organisations [99]. Milner also emphasises the need to have a mechanism in place to record the complaints made verbally to members of library staff by those unwilling to commit their views to writing. However, she warns that managers need to avoid being unduly influenced by a small minority of customers, and that the complaints should be considered alongside feedback obtained through the systematic gathering and analysis of customer comments.

CHAPTER SEVEN

EFFECTIVE, EFFICIENT AND RESPONSIVE PUBLIC LIBRARIES : SURVEY RESULTS

7.1 The background to the survey.

Earlier chapters in this thesis discuss the need for local authorities to provide efficient and effective library services, and examine the marketing techniques that can assist with this process. Descriptions of selected activities in the U.K. and the U.S.A. illustrate that examples of best practice exist. However, with regard to the situation in Scotland in the period immediately prior to local government reorganisation, there was no evidence to show the extent to which library services throughout the country as a whole employed marketing principles or incorporated a truly user-focused approach to service delivery.

To obtain the latter information, a survey of all 41 Scottish library services was undertaken in 1996. The methodology involved in this exercise is described in the introduction to this thesis and the questionnaire responses are analysed in this chapter. The information gathered represents a near complete overview of activities since 40 (97.5%) of the 41 library services replied to the questionnaire. Amongst the other findings of the survey, which are discussed below, the results indicate that there is a connection between the size of authorities (in terms of the population served) and the extent to which they employ marketing techniques. The reorganisation of local government in 1996 resulted in a reduction in the number of authorities serving a population of less than 50,000 and an increase in the number of authorities serving over 200,000 people. Therefore, in addition to providing a record of the situation in 1996, the results of the survey should prove useful in future years for purposes of comparison.

7.2 Fact-finding visits in 1994 and 1995.

With travel grants awarded by The Robert Gordon University, and funded by The Carnegie Trust, visits were made to selected library services in 1994 and 1995. In 1994 a visit was made to Kent to obtain information about the range of marketing techniques employed by the libraries there, and the following year visits were made to the library service in Highland Region, Moray and Renfrew District Libraries and Edinburgh City Libraries.

Kent County Council Arts and Libraries Department sets a good example with regard to the procedures it has adopted in order to ensure that it provides an effective service. It has carried out extensive market research and established a quality assurance framework. It has also produced a charter which sets out the standards of service the department aims to provide, made available a range of leaflets which publicise the services, and been awarded a Chartermark 'for commitment to excellence in public service' [1].

Providing comment cards for library users, and employing a proactive approach to obtaining customer feedback (eg. by having a stand in a shopping centre in Chatham during National Library Week in November 1993), has led to numerous suggestions from the public for improvements to the service. The Department's 1992/93 Annual Report states:

> The concept of Closeness to the Customer has formed the cornerstone of the Department's thinking...
> Many initiatives over the past three years have concentrated on this. One of the most important was the massive market research exercise carried out last year. The findings of this survey have been built into the Department's planning cycles and into individual managers' performance-related pay targets. So, for the first time, there is a direct link between customers' needs and the specific objectives of local libraries, museums and other services.
> New services which relate to the market research findings and which directly contributed to the success of the Charter Mark bid include: video and CD hire; fax and colour photocopying facilities; major improvements making libraries more accessible to disabled people ... [2].

The report also emphasises the department's concerns with regard to quality assurance, confirming the importance it attaches to re-evaluating activities, standardising best practice, and prioritising according to customer needs [3]. It aims "to provide service improvements and benefits to customers within existing resources".

In the course of its publicity campaigns, Kent County Council Arts and Libraries Department has made use of a wide variety of advertising media, ranging from commercial radio to 'Adshell' bus shelters [4]. The Department has also obtained significant local press coverage of events. For example, in May 1994, for the third time in four years, it won one of the T.C. Farries Awards for its public relations programme (which was entitled 'Wherever you look, look first in your library'). The campaign was countywide and designed to be accessible to non-library users. It was effective - resulting in an increase in the number of registered borrowers and an increase in the use of key materials.

In terms of efficiency, Kent County Council's Department of Arts and Libraries has made use of the statistics it gathers in order to monitor changes and improvements. Its publicity information includes numerous references to alterations to the organisation and delivery of services and to increases in the level of use. The department was restructured in 1990, around the time that performance-related pay was introduced for senior staff, and in 1993 Kent was one of the five authorities selected to pilot the Department of National Heritage scheme to contract out public library services [5].

The information that was obtained from the four Scottish public library authorities that were visited in 1995 indicates that there was less marketing activity taking place within these authorities than in Kent. In general the emphasis was on publicity and promotional work

rather than on market research. At the time of the visits, one authority had undertaken a survey of user / non-user needs, one had commissioned an external body to carry out such a survey on its behalf, and one was debating the procedure to be used. Two interviewees mentioned that their authorities were considering introducing suggestion boxes or comment cards, one already had comment / complaint forms, and one had complaint / suggestion forms (with an associated standard set for the time within which a response must be given). One authority had held focus group meetings and, although little new had been suggested, the events had proved useful from a public relations point of view.

With regard to mission statements, objectives and standards, a mixed picture emerged. There was variation in the terminology used, with authorities making reference to a 'service pledge', a 'charter', and a 'statement of purpose' as well as to the above terms. One authority was moving towards the introduction of formal objectives, and had standards in place already (eg. a stock policy which states the quantity of material which should be provided per head of population, and targets relating to the speed of placing orders and dealing with requests). Another authority had detailed performance indicators with associated statements regarding the aim, measure, and method of measurement.

In terms of monitoring and assessing levels of use, one interviewee pointed out the difficulties involved in obtaining accurate issue figures from libraries which do not have an automated circulation system. The availability of good I.T. facilities was considered relevant to both library management functions and user needs.

There was evidence of the emergence of flatter staffing structures: one authority stated that staffing cuts had affected predominantly professional posts, although non-professional posts

had been involved to some extent. Another authority indicated that there was movement towards breaking down the barriers between professional and non-professional jobs. Reference was made to forthcoming 'efficiency gains', and one authority commented that opening hours had been reduced at some libraries (which had been operating above COSLA standards) in order to make savings. There appeared to be few examples of joint arrangements with other authorities, although in one case shared approvals collections was cited as a useful and efficient development. Overall, although there is evidence that some of the library services used some marketing techniques to determine priorities and identify where changes could be made, none appeared to have a comprehensive marketing strategy.

7.3. The 1996 questionnaire: the content of section A.

The questionnaire that was distributed in February/March 1996 (Appendix I) was designed to take into account the issues that were identified during the above visits as being worthy of further exploration. The first section was intended to provide information relating to the effectiveness of library services in terms of their responsiveness to customer preferences.

Question 1 concerns the ways in which library services try to obtain information about user needs and preferences. It asks respondents to indicate the extent to which they engage in a selected range of marketing activities i.e. user surveys or questionnaires, user interviews, focus groups, suggestions boxes, and analysis of usage statistics. The results are shown in tables 4 to 10. Question 2 asks respondents to identify, from a list, the 2 methods that best describe how they decide to allocate resources between services or branches. When the replies to the latter question, which are shown in Table 11, are considered alongside the responses to

question 1, the results provide an insight into the extent to which library services actually base their budget decisions upon the findings of their market research.

The following questions were designed to obtain additional information about the extent to which library services make decisions that reflect both the level of use of the services and the views of the users. The questions were intended to elicit information which indicates whether libraries have a flexible enough approach to service provision and whether they are currently adapting to changing demands e.g. by introducing new services and ceasing those that are no longer required. Questions about mission statements, objectives and performance indicators are included in order to reveal whether the library services have a clear idea of what they are trying to achieve and a means of expressing this to their users.

Question 8 addresses the issue of how the public can express their concerns and complaints about the library service, and question 9 investigates the extent to which libraries can demonstrate that there is public support for their service. Question 10 takes the idea of public support further and asks whether, in the view of the recipient of the questionnaire, there is any likelihood of the local community being prepared to pay an increased tax in order to fund a major library development.

Finally, Questions 11 and 12 ask for details about Internet access. This is to obtain information about the extent to which library services have taken advantage of this major new information source, and the extent to which those without access have a strategy in place to ensure that they can provide it in future.

7.4 Responses to Section A of the questionnaire.

7.4.1 Methods employed to ascertain users' opinions.

7.4.1.1 Surveys and questionnaires.

Table 4 shows the number of authorities that undertook user surveys or used questionnaires to obtain feedback from the public. It also shows the frequency with which they employed these marketing techniques.

Table 4

Use of surveys or questionnaires to obtain information about user needs and preferences						
Library Service Area Population	At least annually	Less than annually	Considering	Not at all	Nil response	% response
≤ 50,000	2 (29%)	4 (57%)	0 (0%)	1 (14%)	0	100%
50,001-100,000	4 (29%)	5 (36%)	3 (21%)	2 (14%)	0	100%
100,001-200,000	4 (31%)	5 (38%)	3 (23%)	1 (8%)	0	100%
> 200,000	2 (33%)	3 (50%)	1 (17%)	0 (0%)	0	100%
Total	**12 (30%)**	**17(42.5%)**	**7 (17.5%)**	**4 (10%)**	**0**	**100%**

The results show that surveys or questionnaires were used to a significant extent as a means of obtaining information about users' needs and preferences. 29 (72.5%) of the library services made use of this marketing technique and it was being considered by a further 7 (17.5%). All but one of the local authorities with a population over 200,000 replied that they undertook surveys or used questionnaires to some extent, and the remaining one was considering doing so. However, good marketing practice requires surveys to be carried out regularly so that a comparison of the results may be made over a period of time in order to identify developing trends. In this respect the results are not so good since only 30% of the authorities used surveys or questionnaires at least annually.

A very similar percentage (29% - 33%) of library services in each population band responded that they use either questionnaires or surveys at least annually. The percentage increases from 29% of the authorities with a population under 50,000 and those with a population between 50,000 and 100,000, to 31% for the 100,001 - 200,000 band, and 33% for the larger authorities. None of the population bands contained more than 2 Library Services which replied that they are neither using nor considering using this technique.

7.4.1.2 Interviews.

Table 5 shows the extent to which public library services interview users in order to obtain information about their needs and preferences.

Table 5

Use of interviews to obtain information about user needs and preferences						
Library Service Area Population	At least annually	Less than annually	Considering	Not at all	Nil response	% response
≤ 50,000	1 (14%)	2 (29%)	0 (0%)	3 (43%)	1 (14%)	86%
50,001-100,000	0 (0%)	3 (21.5%)	3 (21.5%)	8 (57%)	0 (0%)	100%
100,001-200,000	1 (8%)	5 (38%)	3 (23%)	4 (31%)	0 (0%)	100%
> 200,000	2 (33%)	1 (17%)	0 (0%)	3 (50%)	0 (0%)	100%
Total	**4 (10%)**	**11(27.5%)**	**6 (15%)**	**18(45%)**	**1(2.5%)**	**87.5%**

Fewer authorities used interviews than surveys or questionnaires to obtain information about their users needs and preferences. Only 15 (37.5%) undertook interviews and, of these, only 4 (10%) did so at least annually. Another 6 (15%) were thinking about employing this marketing technique, but a significant 18 (45%) were not even considering undertaking such work. As is the case with regard to surveys, the group of large authorities shows the highest

percentage of use. 33% of the latter category (i.e. those with a population over 200,000) carried out user interviews at least annually. Comparable figures for the other authorities are: 14% of the authorities with a population under 50,000, none of the library authorities with a population of 50,001 - 100,000, and 8% of those with a population of 100,001 - 200,000. If the results for those using interviews less than annually are included, the percentage is still highest for the largest authorities i.e. 43% of those with a population under 50,000, 21.5% of those with a population of 50,001 - 100,000, 46% of those with a population of 100,001 - 200,000, and 50% of those with a population over 200,000.

7.4.1.3 Focus groups.

Table 6 shows the extent to which public library services made use of focus groups to obtain information about user needs and preferences.

Table 6

Use of focus groups to obtain information about user needs and preferences						
Library Service Area Population	At least annually	Less than annually	Considering	Not at all	Nil response	% response
≤ 50,000	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (29%)	3 (42%)	2 (29%)	71%
50,001-100,000	1 (7%)	0 (0%)	5 (36%)	7 (50%)	1 (7%)	93%
100,001-200,000	2 (15%)	2 (15%)	2 (15%)	7 (54%)	0 (0%)	100%
> 200,000	3 (50%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (50%)	0 (0%)	100%
Total	**6 (15%)**	**2 (5%)**	**9(22.5%)**	**20(50%)**	**3 (7.5%)**	**92.5%**

In contrast to the 72.5% of authorities that used surveys or questionnaires, and the 37.5% that undertook user interviews, only 20% organised focus groups. A further 22.5% were considering their use, but 50% were not even contemplating their introduction. A clear pattern emerges when the results are analysed according to population size. None of the authorities

serving a population under 50,000 engaged in this marketing technique, 7% of those with a population between 50,000 and 100,000 did, as did 30% of those with a population between 100,000 and 200,000, and 50% of those with a population over 200,000. If only those that employed this technique at least annually are considered, the pattern is even more pronounced i.e. rising from 0% of the authorities with a population under 50,000, to 7% of the authorities serving a population of between 50,000 and 100,000, 15% of the authorities serving between 100,000 and 200,000 people, and 50% of the authorities serving a population over 200,000.

7.4.1.4 Suggestions boxes.

Table 7 shows the exent to which library services used suggestions boxes to obtain information about user needs and preferences.

Table 7

Use of suggestions boxes to obtain information about user needs and preferences						
Library Service Area Population	At least annually	Less than annually	Considering	Not at all	Nil response	% response
≤ 50,000	1 (14%)	0 (0%)	3 (43%)	2 (29%)	1 (14%)	86%
50,001-100,000	8 (57%)	0 (0%)	3 (21.5%)	3(21.5%)	0 (0%)	100%
100,001-200,000	5(38.5%)	0 (0%)	3 (23%)	5 (38.5%)	0 (0%)	100%
> 200,000	1 (17%)	0 (0%)	1 (17%)	3 (50%)	1 (17%)	83%
Total	**15(37.5%)**	**0 (0%)**	**10 (25%)**	**13(32.5%)**	**2 (5%)**	**95%**

In contrast to the situation with regard to the marketing techniques considered previously, there is no clear pattern, according to authority size, associated with the use of suggestions boxes. Given the relative ease with which suggestions boxes can be made available, it might be expected that the vast majority of authorities would have operated such a scheme.

However, according to the questionnaire returns, only 37.5% did so, and only a further 25% were considering introducing such a scheme. Given the responses in section 7.4.5, which show that a high percentage of library services had a formal complaints procedure, it may be that authorities were more concerned with adressing users' problems than obtaining their views in a broader sense.

7.4.1.5 Analysis of usage statistics.

Table 8 shows the extent to which library services analysed usage statistics to obtain information about user needs and preferences.

Table 8

Analysis of usage statistics to obtain information about user needs and preferences						
Library Service Area Population	At least annually	Less than annually	Considering	Not at all	Nil response	% response
≤ 50,000	6 (86%)	1 (14%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	100%
50,001-100,000	12 (86%)	1 (7%)	1 (7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	100%
100,001-200,000	13 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	100%
> 200,000	6 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	100%
Total	**37(92.5%)**	**2 (5%)**	**1 (2.5%)**	**0 (0%)**	**0 (0%)**	**100%**

As a marketing technique, an analysis of statistics of existing levels of use is limited in its value in that the results do not assist with decision making relating to potential services. Nevertheless, figures of actual use are important in that they highlight those of the existing services that are particularly heavily used or little used.

All local authority library services record the statistics that are required for submission to CIPFA. They also measure performance in the key areas identified by the Accounts Commission. In addition some keep statistics in other, selected, areas for their own use. It might therefore be expected that all of the authorities would analyse the figures they obtain in order to gain a better understanding of user needs. All of the library services in authorities with a population over 100,000 replied that they did make use of this information on at least an annual basis, however overall only 37 (92.5%) authorities claimed to make regular use of this information. 2 (5%) did so less than annually, and 1 (2.5%) was only considering doing so.

7.4.1.6 A comparison of the methods used.

The extent to which the above methods were used by library services is summarised in table 9.

Table 9

Summary of use of selected marketing techniques.					
Library Service Area Population	Surveys/ questionnaires	Interviews	Focus groups	Suggestions box	Usage statistics
≤ 50,000	6 (86 %)	3 (43%)	0 (0%)	1 (14%)	7 (100%)
50,001-100,000	9 (65%)	3 (21.5%)	1 (7%)	8 (57%)	13 (93%)
100,001-200,000	9 (69%)	6 (46%)	4 (30%)	5 (38.5%)	13 (100%)
> 200,000	5 (83%)	3 (50%)	3 (50%)	1 (17%)	6 (100%)
Total	**29 (72.5%)**	**15 (37.5%)**	**8 (20%)**	**15 (37.5%)**	**39 (97.5%)**

None of these standard marketing techniques was used by all of the authorities. Less than three-quarters of the library services either undertook surveys or used questionnaires, little over a third carried out interviews, a similarly small number provided suggestions boxes, and only a fifth held focus group meetings as a means of gaining a better understanding of the needs of users.

Table 10 shows the extent to which the above methods were used by library services on at least an annual basis.

Table 10

Use, at least annually, of selected marketing techniques.					
Library Service Area Population	Surveys/ questionnaires	Interviews	Focus groups	Suggestions box	Usage statistics
≤ 50,000	2 (29%)	1 (14%)	0 (0%)	1 (14%)	6 (86%)
50,001-100,000	4 (29%)	0 (0%)	1 (7%)	8 (57%)	12 (86%)
100,001-200,000	4 (31%)	1 (8%)	2 (15%)	5 (38.5%)	13 (100%)
> 200,000	2 (33%)	2 (33%)	3 (50%)	1 (17%)	6 (100%)
Total	**12 (30%)**	**4 (10%)**	**6 (15%)**	**15 (37.5%)**	**37 (92.5%)**

The number of library services that employed these techniques on a proper marketing basis (i.e. with some degree of follow up) is very low. The basic management practice of regularly analysing statistics was not undertaken by all of the services; suggestions boxes were available in only 37.5% of the authorities; surveys or questionnaires were used on at least an annual basis by only 30% of the respondents; focus group meetings were held by only 6 (15%) of the authorities and interviews were carried out by only 4 (10%).

Only one of the authorities replied that it used all 5 of the feedback methods listed in the questionnaire at least annually. Curiously, however, in response to the next question, which relates to the main factors influencing the allocation of resources, this library service identified its 2 main factors as historical arrangements and statistics of use (even though customer feedback was a choice). This highlights the fact that some authorities which carry out activities aimed at obtaining details of customer needs and wishes are not actually using the information they have gained to adjust their service provision accordingly. This suggests an

inefficient use of resources not just in the allocation of the budget in a way that does not reflect user demand, but also in the expenditure on staff time to undertake market research in the first place if the results are not acted upon.

7.4.2 The basis of resource allocation decisions.

Question 2 asked respondents to identify, from a list, the 2 responses that best describe how they decide to allocate resources between services or branches. All 40 respondents completed this section of the questionnaire, but the replies from two authorities were invalid and have therefore been omitted from the analysis; one respondent (from a library service serving a population of less than 50,000) ticked three categories, and one (from an authority with a population between 100,000 and 200,000) ticked four categories. Consequently, the percentage response is shown as 86% for the former population band, and 92% for the latter. The responses are shown in table 11.

Table 11

Basis of resource allocation decisions : 2 main factors						
Library Service Area Population	Historical	Formula	Customer Feedback	Staff Knowledge	Statistics of Use	% response
≤ 50,000	2 (29%)	1 (14%)	3 (43%)	2 (29%)	4 (57%)	86%
50,001-100,000	4 (29%)	5 (36%)	2 (14%)	8 (57%)	9 (64%)	100%
100,001-200,000	3 (23%)	4 (31%)	2 (15%)	5 (38%)	10 (77%)	92 %
> 200,000	1 (17%)	1 (17%)	0 (0%)	4 (66%)	6 (100%)	100%
Total	**10 (25%)**	**11 (27.5%)**	**7 (17.5%)**	**19 (47.5%)**	**29(72.5%)**	**95%**

A large percentage of authorities (72.5%) identified statistics of use as one of the two main factors upon which they based resource allocation decisions. This is a relatively safe approach as, in most cases, high use in the past is likely to be indicative of continued use in future. However, it is difficult to quantify the use of some services, such as reference material, and, since the figures relate only to existing services, this approach takes no account of the need to invest in new services to meet changing demands. A high proportion of library services (47.5%) made use of staff knowledge. This may provide a reliable indication of user needs but, equally, it may not. In a significant number of cases there appears to be little emphasis on the views of users, whether expressed directly or via staff. 10 authorities cited 'historical arrangements' as one of the main factors influencing their decisions, and 11 indicated that 'formula funding' played a major role in the distribution of resources.

Despite significant efforts by some libraries to obtain customer feedback, as demonstrated above, only 7 (17.5%) authorities considered this to be one of the two main factors affecting how they allocated their resources. (The response of one of these is subject to doubt since its reply to the previous question indicates that it did not engage in any of the standard marketing methods of obtaining information on user needs). 5 of the 7 authorities that ticked 'customer feedback' cited statistics of use as the other main factor. The remaining 2 combined customer feedback with staff knowledge. This combination indicates that in a small number of library services an attempt is being made to take account of both the use of existing services and the views of users.

When considered according to authority size, there is a noticeable mismatch between the library services that engaged in marketing techniques to obtain customer feedback and those that based their resource allocation on such information. Of the library services serving a

population over 200,000 (i.e. those which demonstrated the highest level of use of customer surveys, interviews and focus groups) none considered customer feedback to be one of the two factors most affecting their resource allocation decisions. All of them considered statistics of use to be one of the two main factors. 66% considered staff knowledge to be the other key factor, 17% based decisions on historical factors as well as statistics of use, and 17% used a formula allocation. It is interesting that the smallest authorities have the highest percentage selecting 'customer feedback' considering that they used few market research techniques compared to the larger authorities. It may be that the smaller library services are aware of customer needs through more informal means and, even though they do not have documentary or statistical evidence, they have the flexibility to act upon such information.

Recipients of the questionnaire were given the opportunity to identify any other means that they used in preference to the examples stated. No other means were mentioned, although three respondents took advantage of this section to clarify their replies. One that had identified staff knowledge as a key factor, mentioned that this included staff initiatives, and one commented that after considering statistics of use a bidding process took place which involved staff identifying what they would spend the funds on. The third respondent confirmed that his reply, as requested, identified the two main factors that were taken into account, but he added that, "All five are used in reality (in combination)".

From a marketing perspective, it is disappointing that so few library services allowed customer feedback to be a major influence in their resource allocation decisions. In terms of efficiency and effectiveness it is a matter of concern that many of the authorities that carried out market research, in order to obtain details about customer needs, did not then use this information as a key factor in their decision-making.

7.4.3 Service developments and reductions.

7.4.3.1 The introduction of new services.

Questions 3 and 4 relate to the effect of customer demand on the provision of services. Question 3 asks: "Have you introduced any new services recently as a result of customer demand / known customer need ?" The replies are shown in table 12.

Table 12

Introduction of new services				
Library Service Area Population	Yes	No	Nil Response	% response
≤ 50,000	4 (57%)	3 (43%)	0 (0%)	100%
50,001-100,000	12 (86%)	2 (14%)	0 (0%)	100%
100,001-200,000	12 (92%)	1 (8%)	0 (0%)	100%
> 200,000	5 (83%)	1 (17%)	0 (0%)	100%
Total	**33 (82.5%)**	**7 (17.5%)**	**0 (0%)**	**100%**

The lack of a definition of 'recently' caused one respondent to reply that none had been introduced in the past year. However, the large majority of respondents confirmed that their library services had introduced new services: 33 (82.5%) replied that they had, and only 7 (17.5%) replied that they had not. Analysed by population size, the larger authorities show more evidence of introducing new services. 86% of the library services serving a population of between 50,000 and 100,000 have introduced new services, as have 92% of those serving populations of between 100,000 and 200,000, and 82.5% of those with over 200,000 people. In contrast, only 57% of the authorities with a population under 50,000 have provided new services as a result of customer demand or need.

Appendix IV lists the examples given by the respondents. These include: extended opening hours, provision of Open Learning materials, audio-visual material, videos, C.D.s, Fax

services, photocopying facilities, information services to businesses, and access to computers. The picture that emerges is that some libraries have been able to respond to, at least some, demands for new services. A wide range of answers were given in response to the question: "How did you become aware of the need for these services?" The comments (which are shown in appendix IV) indicate that both a proactive and a reactive approach has been taken.

7.4.3.2 The cessation of services.

Question 4 asks: "Have you stopped providing any services recently because of a lack of customer demand?" The results are not as significant as those relating to the previous question but, nevertheless, as shown in table 13, 14 (35%) authorities replied YES, 24 (60%) replied NO, and 2 (5%) gave no response.

Table 13

Cessation of services				
Library Service Area Population	Yes	No	Nil Response	% response
≤ 50,000	1 (14%)	5 (72%)	1 (14%)	86%
50,001-100,000	6 (43%)	7 (50%)	1 (7%)	93%
100,001-200,000	5 (38%)	8 (62%)	0 (0%)	100%
> 200,000	2 (33%)	4 (67%)	0 (0%)	100%
Total	**14 (35%)**	**24 (60%)**	**2 (5%)**	**95%**

A significant number of authorities, 14 (35%), stopped providing certain services due to lack of demand. The examples given by respondents relate predominantly to records (vinyl L.P.s and singles), but include some other resources (e.g. computer games and selected magazines), and specific services (e.g. a book discussion group and a local government information service targetted at elected members and senior officers). All of the authorities that replied that they stopped some services due to lack of customer demand are amongst the 33 that had introduced

new services. This indicates that some authorities are adapting their services and directing their resources towards areas of greater need. The smaller authorities show less sign of making these changes. Of the authorities serving a population under 50,000, only 1 (14%) replied that it had ceased services as a result of a lack of customer demand. This contrasts with figures of between 33% and 43% for the library services in the larger population bands.

7.4.4 Authorities with a mission statement, objectives and performance standards.

7.4.4.1 Library Services that have a mission statement.

Questions 5 to 7 ask whether library services have a mission statement, specific objectives for the library service, and performance standards/indicators tailored to meet the specific needs of their service. Table 14 shows the number of library services that had a mission statement.

Table 14

Mission Statements				
Library Service Area Population	Yes	No	Nil Response	% response
≤ 50,000	2 (29%)	5 (71%)	0 (0%)	100%
50,001-100,000	5 (36%)	8 (57%)	1 (7%)	93%
100,001-200,000	8 (61%)	4 (31%)	1 (8%)	92%
> 200,000	4 (67%)	2 (33%)	0 (0%)	100%
Total	**19 (47.5%)**	**19 (47.5%)**	**2 (5%)**	**95%**

Almost half (47.5%) of the library services had a mission statement but an equal number did not. 2 (5%) failed to reply to this question. The number giving a positive response increases in relation to the size of the authority, those serving the larger-sized populations having the highest percentage. Only 29% of the library services in authorities with a population under 50,000 had a mission statement, compared to 36% in those with a population between 50,000

and 100,000, 61% in those with a population between 100,000 and 200,000, and 67% in those with a population over 200,000. If the authorities are compared in terms of those with a population under 100,000 and those with a population above that figure, the difference appears even more pronounced i.e 33% of the former and 63% of the latter.

7.4.4.2 Library Services that have objectives.

Table 15 shows the number of library services that have specific objectives.

Table 15

Objectives				
Library Service Area Population	Yes	No	Nil Response	% response
≤ 50,000	4 (57%)	3 (43%)	0 (0%)	100%
50,001-100,000	7 (50%)	5 (36%)	2 (14%)	86%
100,001-200,000	9 (69%)	3 (23%)	1 (8%)	92%
> 200,000	4 (67%)	2 (33%)	0 (0%)	100%
Total	**24 (60%)**	**13 (32.5%)**	**3 (7.5%)**	**92.5%**

More library services had objectives than a mission statement i.e. 24 (60%) compared to 19 (47.5%). At first sight there is no obvious pattern to the results of an analysis according to population size of the authorities which have objectives; the smallest percentage of authorities being in the population band 50,001 - 100,000. However, when the results are considered in terms of authorities with a population under 100,000 and those with a population above that figure, there is a significant difference. Only 11 (52%) authorities with a population under 100,000 had objectives compared to 13 (68%) of the authorities with a population above 100,000.

7.4.4.3 Library Services that have performance standards / indicators.

Table 16 shows the number of library services that had performance standards or indicators tailored to meet their specific needs. The question about performance standards / indicators 'tailored to meet the specific needs of your library service' appears to have caused some difficulty for one respondent who replied that their performance indicators were "imposed from on high without consultation". Nevertheless, there was a 97.5% response to this question and the results show a noticeable similarity to those relating to mission statements and objectives.

Table 16

Performance Standards / Indicators				
Library Service Area Population	Yes	No	Nil Response	% response
≤ 50,000	1 (14%)	6 (86%)	0 (0%)	100%
50,001-100,000	6 (43%)	8 (57%)	0 (0%)	100%
100,001-200,000	7 (54%)	5 (38%)	1 (8%)	92%
> 200,000	4 (67%)	2 (33%)	0 (0%)	100%
Total	**18 (45%)**	**21 (52.5%)**	**1 (2.5%)**	**97.5%**

The results show that the percentage of authorities with performance standards or indicators tailored to their needs increases in line with the size of the authority: from 14% in the authorities serving a population under 50,000, to 43% in those serving a population between 50,000 and 100,000, 54% in those with between 100,000 and 200,000 people, and 67% in the authorities with over 200,000 people. 7 (33%) authorities with a population under 100,000 had performance standards or indicators compared to 11 (58%) of the authorities with a population over 100,000.

Only 13 (32.5%) of the authorities replied that they had a mission statement, objectives and performance measures. 12 (31%) had none of these indicators of purpose. One library service did not reply to all three questions, and the rest had only one or two of these three management tools. The picture that emerges is that the majority of library services clarified their purpose, aims and intended levels of service to only a limited degree, although the larger authorities performed better than the smaller ones in this respect.

7.4.5 Library Services with a complaints procedure.

Question 8 addresses the issue of how the public can express their concerns and complaints about library services. In response to the question about whether the library has a formal complaints procedure, 29 (72.5%) authorities replied YES, 9 (22.5%) replied NO, and 2 (5%) gave no response. The results, which are shown in table 17, reveal that the library services in the smallest population band were the worst at making this facility available.

Table 17

Formal complaints procedure				
Library Service Area Population	Yes	No	Nil Response	% response
≤ 50,000	3 (43%)	4 (57%)	0 (0%)	100%
50,001-100,000	11 (79%)	3 (21%)	0 (0%)	100%
100,001-200,000	11 (85%)	0 (0%)	2 (15)	85%
> 200,000	4 (67%)	2 (33%)	0 (0%)	100%
Total	**29 (72.5%)**	**9 (22.5%)**	**2 (5%)**	**95%**

Only 43% of the authorities serving a population under 50,000 had a complaints procedure in place. In contrast, 79% of the library services serving a population of between 50,000 and

100,000 had such a procedure, as did 85% of those serving a population of between 100,000 and 200,000, and 67% of those serving over 200,000 people.

7.4.6 Evidence of public support.

In terms of providing evidence of public support for their library services, the responses to question 9 show that a surprisingly small number of authorities replied that they could do so. The results are shown in table 18.

Table 18

Evidence of public support				
Library Service Area Population	Yes	No	Nil Response	% response
≤ 50,000	4 (57%)	3 (43%)	0 (0%)	100%
50,001-100,000	5 (36%)	9 (64%)	0 (0%)	100%
100,001-200,000	1 (7.5%)	11 (85%)	1 (7.5)	92%
> 200,000	6 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	100%
Total	**16 (40%)**	**23 (57.5%)**	**1 (2.5%)**	**97.5%**

The question that was asked was: "Do you have any evidence of support from the public for your library service (eg. Opinion poll results, 'Friends of the Library' groups, media coverage of opposition to branch closures)?" 16 (40%) authorities replied YES, 23 (57.5%) replied NO, and 1 gave no response. Several examples were suggested in the questionnaire, and the diversity of examples supplied by some of the authorities indicates that this question has (correctly) been interpreted as covering a wide range of possibilities. Consequently, the number of NO replies seems remarkably high. At a time of financial pressures, when local authority services have to justify their existence, a more positive response to this question might have been expected.

When analysed by population size, some clear variations are revealed. All of the library services in the largest population band had evidence of public support, and some enclosed details of survey results and newspaper articles as evidence of public opinion. The efforts that were taken to enclose this information along with the completed questionnaire might in themselves be an indication of the high level of importance these authorities attach to this issue. In the smaller population bands, the results were significantly lower. 57% of the authorities serving a population of under 50,000 had evidence, as did 36% of the authorities serving a population of between 50,000 and 100,000, and only 7.5% of those providing services to between 100,000 and 200,000 people.

7.4.7 Likelihood of additional local tax funding.

Table 19 shows the response to question 10, "Do you think your local community would be prepared to pay an increased local tax in order to fund a major library development?"

Table 19

Likelihood of additional local tax funding				
Library Service Area Population	Yes	No	Nil Response	% response
≤ 50,000	3 (43%)	1 (14%)	3 (43%)	57%
50,001-100,000	4 (29%)	3 (21%)	7 (50%)	50%
100,001-200,000	3 (23%)	6 (46%)	4 (31%)	69%
> 200,000	0 (0%)	4 (67%)	2 (33%)	67%
Total	**10 (25%)**	**14 (35%)**	**16 (40%)**	**60%**

This question was intended to obtain the personal opinions of those replying to the questionnaire. It was assumed that the respondents would have no evidence of the users' opinions on this matter. It was hoped that the responses would reveal whether such a proposal was considered a completely alien concept or whether it might merit further investigation.

Although 16 (40%) of the respondents did not reply to this question, a significant number (25%) commented that they did think their local community would be prepared to pay such a tax.

7.4.8 I.T. availability and strategies.

7.4.8.1 Provision of Internet access.

Table 20 shows the level of Internet access in Scottish public libraries in February / March 1996.

Table 20

Provision of Internet access				
Library Service Area Population	Staff Use	E-Mail	Public Use	Own WWW Page
≤ 50,000	2 (29%)	2 (29%)	1 (14%)	1 (14%)
50,001-100,000	4 (29%)	1 (7%)	1 (7%)	0 (0%)
100,001-200,000	8 (62%)	3 (23%)	2 (15%)	3 (23%)
> 200,000	5 (83%)	5 (83%)	1 (17%)	2 (33%)
Total	**19 (47.5%)**	**11 (27.5%)**	**5 (12.5%)**	**6 (15%)**

At this time only 19 (47.5%) library services had Internet access for staff use. Only 11 (27.5%) had the use of e-mail, 5 (12.5%) provided public access to the Internet, and 6 (15%) had their own web pages. 8 (62%) of the authorities with a population of between 100,000 and 200,000, and 5 (83%) of the authorities with a population over 200,000 had staff access. In contrast, only 29% of the authorities with a population under 50,000, and a similar percentage of the authorities serving between 50,000 and 100,000 people, had such a facility. Few authorities with a population under 200,000 provided access to e-mail facilities yet 5 (83%) of the 6 largest authorities did. The provision of public access to the Internet was low

in all authorities, but highest (17%) in the largest services. Similarly the existence of library web pages, while not being common (with only 6 (15%) authorities engaging in this activity) was significantly more in existence amongst the larger authorities. At this time, there was a clear divide between the larger and smaller authorities with regard to Internet access.

7.4.8.2 Strategy for introducing Internet access.

Table 21 shows the number of authorities, in February / March, that had a strategy for introducing Internet access.

Table 21

Strategy for introducing Internet access					
Library Service Area Population	Yes	No	Not applicable	Nil response	% response
≤ 50,000	2 (29%)	4 (57%)	1 (14%)	0 (0%)	100%
50,001-100,000	2 (14%)	12 (86%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	100%
100,001-200,000	1 (8%)	9 (69%)	2 (15%)	1 (8%)	92%
> 200,000	1 (17%)	4 (66%)	1 (17%)	0 (0%)	100%
Total	**6 (15%)**	**29 (72.5%)**	**4 (10%)**	**1 (2.5%)**	**97.5%**

10% of the authorities indicated that this question was not applicable since they already provided Internet access. However, others that provided limited access replied to this question in relation to future expansion plans. Only 6 (15%) of the respondents replied that they did have a strategy in place to introduce such services. 29 (72.5%) stated that they did not have a strategy, although many of these said that discussions were in progress to try to develop one.

7.5 The 1996 questionnaire: the content of Section B.

This section of the questionnaire considers aspects of efficiency: the effect of financial constraints and the extent to which library services have made changes to their working practices in order to reduce operational costs. Questions are asked about the materials budget and the relationship between it and the introduction or cessation of services. Questions are also asked about procedures, changes in the range of duties undertaken by staff, joint ventures with other library services, and the extent to which use is made of Performance Indicator information from other authorities for comparative purposes. The results illustrate how libraries have developed in recent years, and they highlight where changes to the internal organisation of the service have been made in order to meet either new demands or financial pressures.

7.6 Responses to Section B of the questionnaire.

7.6.1 Budgetary changes.

The first question in section B of the questionnaire asks for information about the variation in the library materials budget over the previous five years. (The replies are shown in Table 22). The reply from the authority with a population under 50,000 that gave a 'nil' response included a comment that the budget was at a 'standstill'. Another respondent indicated that although they had received a budget increase above the level of inflation, the amount of money they got was still only 50% of the COSLA standard. Only 21 (52.5%) of the authorities reported that their materials budget had kept up with, or exceeded, inflation. The results confirm that there is a need for libraries to continue considering ways of cutting costs, through improved efficiency, and a need for them to continue considering alternative ways of generating income.

Table 22

Materials budget over the past 5 years						
Library Service Area Population	Increased above Inflation	Increased in line with Inflation	Increased less than Inflation	Decreased	Nil Response	% response
≤ 50,000	2 (28.6%)	0 (0 %)	2 (28.6%)	2 (28.6%)	1(14.2%)	85.8 %
50,001-100,000	3 (21.4%)	5 (35%)	3 (21.4%)	3 (21.4%)	0 (0%)	100 %
100,001-200,000	4 (31%)	4 (31%)	2 (15%)	3 (23%)	0 (0%)	100 %
>200,000	1 (17%)	2 (33%)	0 (0 %)	2 (33%)	1 (17%)	83 %
Total	**10 (25%)**	**11(27.5%)**	**7 (17.5%)**	**10 (25%)**	**2 (5%)**	**95 %**

7.6.2 Cessation of services.

The second question in this section of the questionnaire asks whether any services had ceased over the past five years as a direct result of a reduction in the materials budget. One respondent indicated that the bookfund was to be cut substantially the following year, and one replied that specialist material was now obtained on inter-library loan rather than purchased. However, the results, which are shown in table 23, indicate that only one authority had actually stopped a service because of budget reductions.

Table 23

Cessation of services as a result of materials budget reductions			
Library Service Area Population	Yes	No	% Response
≤ 50,000	0 (0%)	7 (100%)	100%
50,001-100,000	0 (0%)	14 (100%)	100%
100,001-200,000	0 (0%)	13 (100%)	100%
>200,000	1 (17%)	5 (83%)	100%
Total	**1 (2.5%)**	**39 (97.5%)**	**100%**

As shown later in this chapter (in section 7.5.5), there are indications that, at the time the research was undertaken, some libraries were finding ways of providing the same services at lower cost. However, in many cases services were reduced rather than stopped; the budget reductions being absorbed across a number of services so that the impact was spread. This approach is acceptable if a calculated decision has been taken that all existing services are essential and need to be maintained in some form. It is not acceptable if the library is unclear about its mission and objectives and the cuts have been allocated this way in order to avoid making difficult decisions.

7.6.3 New services.

The questionnaire also asked whether any new services had been introduced as a result of an increase in the materials budget. The results are shown in table 24.

Table 24

Introduction of new services as a result of an increase in the materials budget				
Library Service Area Population	Yes	No	No response	% Response
≤ 50,000	3 (43%)	3 (43%)	1 (14%)	86%
50,001-100,000	5 (36%)	9 (64%)	0 (0%)	100%
100,001-200,000	2 (15.4%)	9 (69.2%)	2 (15.4%)	84.6%
>200,000	4 (67%)	0 (0%)	2 (33%)	67%
Total	**14 (35%)**	**21 (52.5%)**	**5 (12.5%)**	**87.5%**

Despite a general climate of financial constraint, a significant number (35%) of authorities had introduced new services as a result of an increase in the materials budget. In some cases the funding had been provided by external sources and earmarked for specific projects (e.g. 'Open Learning' collections). In other cases, such as with the introduction of some video

collections, the services were expected to be self-financing after the initial establishment costs had been contributed. The most frequently cited new services were video and C.D. loans, but the examples given ranged from a toy library to improved services to the housebound. Significantly, new services had been introduced by 67% of the library services serving a population of over 200,000.

7.6.4 Working practices.

In response to the question about whether working practices had been changed in order to try to reduce operational costs, less than half of the library services (47.5%) replied that this was the case. As shown in table 25, the highest proportion of authorities (67%) which had made such changes were those serving a population in excess of 200,000. Examples of the changes made by the latter authorities include: buying on approval direct from publishers, buying titles on offer at local bookshops, and limiting the number of staff involved in the book selection process. Only 38% of the authorities with a population between 100,000 and 200,000, had changed working practices to reduce costs, but the examples given by those that had include: increased computerisation, replacing small branch libraries with mobile library visits, changing suppliers, reducing the amount of clerical work undertaken, less frequent showroom buys, and having an increasing amount of book servicing undertaken by suppliers. 50% of the authorities serving a population of between 50,000 and 100,000 had made changes to their working practices. These included introducing an automated system, contracting out book processing, reducing bureaucacy, and reducing the number of staff using 'on approval' collections. The examples given by the 43% of library services serving a population of under 50,000 include purchasing more remaindered stock and purchasing a higher percentage of stock in paperback format.

Table 25

Change in working practices to reduce operational costs			
Library Service Area Population	Yes	No	% Response
≤ 50,000	3 (43%)	4 (57%)	100%
50,001-100,000	7 (50%)	7 (50%)	100%
100,001-200,000	5 (38%)	8 (62%)	100%
>200,000	4 (67%)	2 (33%)	100%
Total	**19 (47.5%)**	**21 (52.5%)**	**100%**

The responses show that some library services had made organisational changes to the book selection process in line with those identified by publishers (and discussed in chapter 5) as a means of reducing costs. Some of the other examples also illustrate a real attempt to reduce costs. Overall, however, it is surprising that so many authorities (52.5%) reported that they had not implemented changes to their working practices with a view to improving efficiency.

7.6.5 Staffing issues.

7.6.5.1 Staffing levels and the effect on services.

Table 26 shows the responses to the first of three questions relating to staffing issues. It shows the extent to which libraries had cut services (over the five years immediately preceding the survey) as a direct result of staffing reductions.

Table 26

Cuts in service as a direct result of staffing reductions			
Library Service Area Population	Yes	No	% Response
≤ 50,000	1 (14%)	6 (86%)	100%
50,001-100,000	1 (7 %)	13 (93%)	100%
100,001-200,000	0 (0%)	13 (100%)	100%
>200,000	2 (33%)	4 (67%)	100%
Total	**4 (10%)**	**36 (90%)**	**100%**

As was the case with budget reductions (discusses in section 7.5.3), few services appear to have ceased totally as a result of reductions to staffing levels. Only 4 (10%) of the library services reported that such cuts had been made in the previous five years. The examples given by these authorities include reduced opening hours and the ending of relief staffing arrangements, the latter resulting in the closure of some single-staffed branches when the Library Assistant is on annual leave. Although the vast majority of authorities replied that they had not actually cut services, the comments made by respondents provide evidence that reductions had been made and that there was uncertainty regarding the future provision of some services. For example, reference was made to mobile libraries becoming "one-man operated", departments amalgamating, and the "thinning-out" of middle management. One respondent commented that future plans included closing a library and withdrawing a mobile vehicle. The responses show that attempts have been made to continue the provision of the same range of services but that, once staffing has been reduced to a minimum, the level of service cannot be maintained when the system is put under pressure (for example during periods of staff absences).

7.6.5.2 Changes to staff duties.

Although few services ceased because of staffing reductions between 1991 and 1996, the responses to the questionnaire show that a high percentage of library services required their professional staff to undertake a broader range of duties by the end of this period. Encouraging a flexible approach to the distribution of the workload, and employing multi-skilled professionals, is one way of ensuring that a variety of services can be provided even if fewer staff are available.

Table 27

Professional staff undertaking a broader range of duties			
Library Service Area Population	Yes	No / No difference	% Response
≤ 50,000	4 (57%)	3 (43%)	100%
50,001-100,000	13 (93%)	1 (7%)	100%
100,001-200,000	13 (100%)	0 (0%)	100%
>200,000	5 (83%)	1 (17%)	100%
Total	**35 (87.5%)**	**5 (12.5%)**	**100%**

As illustrated in the above table, 35 (87.5%) of the library services involved their professional staff in a broader range of duties by 1996. There is a marked difference between the authorities serving a population of less than 50,000 (of which only 57% had experienced this change in their working practices) and those serving larger numbers of people. 31 of the 33 library services in authorities with a population in excess of 50,000 had undergone such developments. In addition, one of the remaining two in the latter category commented that, due to reduced opening hours and reduced staff levels in some locations, staff felt that they were now working more directly with the public. The responses show that a significant degree of organisational change had taken place in order to accommodate changing circumstances. The smaller authorities may have had less opportunity to make changes to suit new demands, than the larger authorities, if the staff were already undertaking a broad range of duties.

7.6.5.3 The employment of professionally qualified staff in L.A. / S.L.A. posts.

The next question asked whether the library service employed professionally qualified staff in support jobs. The term 'support jobs' was intended to mean posts such as Library Assistants and Senior Library Assistants. It was selected as it is a title used by some libraries which wish to avoid using the negative description 'non-professional staff'. Unfortunately, however, two respondents pointed out that they were uncertain about what was meant by this question, and that their 'yes' replies were based on the assumption that the term meant staff in central

support jobs such as cataloguing or local history. Other respondents could also have misinterpreted the question, and the relatively low response rate suggests that a number of recipients chose not to answer it as its meaning was unclear. Consequently, the replies, which are shown in table 28, must be treated with caution.

Table 28

Professional staff employed in support jobs				
Library Service Area Population	Yes	No	No response	% response
≤ 50,000	3 (43%)	4 (57%)	0 (0%)	100%
50,001-100,000	10 (71.5%)	3 (21.5%)	1 (7%)	92.9%
100,001-200,000	6 (46%)	5 (38.5%)	2 (15.5%)	84.5%
>200,000	6 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	100%
Total	**25 (62.5%)**	**12 (30%)**	**3 (7.5%)**	**92.5%**

It was hoped that the information gained from this question would provide an insight into the extent to which libraries were continuing to provide a high quality service through the employment of qualified staff while saving on their staffing costs by recruiting these people into the lower paid posts. Unfortunately, since the results must be considered potentially unreliable, it has not been possible to pursue this line of investigation.

7.6.6 Contracting out services.

The questionnaire included a question about contracting out services in order to obtain information about the range of services that were involved. The majority of the replies concentrated on behind-the-scenes activities such as cleaning and book processing, but amongst the small number of more unusual responses were computer maintenance, services to the housebound, and security services. Although the replies included comments such as "All

support services currently under review" and "There is a vast range of work contracted out", there was little evidence of much activity beyond the statutory requirements and the work of the stock suppliers.

7.6.7 Joint service arrangements.

As discussed in chapter 5, joint arrangements with other library services can be a means of achieving costs savings. However, the replies to a question on this subject, which are shown in table 29, indicate that only a very small number of library services (12.5%) were engaged in such activities at the time that the research was undertaken. Of the 5 involved, 3 were authorities serving a population of over 200,000. When considered as a percentage, there is clear variation according to local authority size: none of the authorities serving a population of under 50,000 or between 100,000 and 200,000 had such arrangements in place, and only 2 (14%) of those serving between 50,000 and 100,000 were involved in such practices. Yet, 50% of the largest library services engaged in such activities. The examples given included the joint sponsoring of a Writer-in Residence scheme, sharing an ethnic languages approvals collection, and the co-operative microfilming of local newspapers.

Table 29

Joint arrangements with other local authority library services				
Library Service Area Population	Yes	No	No response	% response
≤ 50,000	0 (0%)	7 (100%)	0 (0%)	100%
50,001-100,000	2 (14%)	12 (86%)	0 (0%)	100%
100,001-200,000	0 (0%)	12 (92%)	1 (8%)	92%
>200,000	3 (50%)	3 (50%)	0 (0%)	100%
Total	**5 (12.5%)**	**34 (85%)**	**1 (2.5%)**	**97.5%**

7.6.8 Comparison of performance indicator information.

An obvious way for library services to gain ideas about how they might improve their services or reduce their costs is to consider examples of best practice from elsewhere. An indication of which authorities might provide such examples can be obtained from an examination of their performance indicator information. As discussed in chapter 5, there may be reasons why a particular authority finds it more or less costly to provide the same level of service, but performance information can reveal those operations that appear to be particularly efficient or effective and, consequently, merit further investigation. With this in mind, the final question in this section of the questionnaire is, "Do you make use of Performance Indicator information from other authorities in order to assess the efficiency of any of your own operations?". The results are shown in table 30.

Table 30

Use made of performance indicator information from other authorities			
Library Service Area Population	Yes	No	% Response
≤ 50,000	2 (29%)	5 (71%)	100%
50,001-100,000	4 (29%)	10 (71%)	100%
100,001-200,000	9 (69%)	4 (31%)	100%
>200,000	4 (67%)	2 (33%)	100%
Total	**19 (47.5%)**	**21 (52.5%)**	**100%**

Only 47.5% of the library services replied that they did make use of such comparative information. There was a clear distinction between the authorities serving a population of less than 100,000 and those serving over 100,000 people. Only 29% of the library services in each of the two smaller population bands replied that they used this information, whereas 69% of those serving between 100,000 and 200,000 people, and 67% of those serving over 200,000 people, did.

Many respondents gave examples of the indicators that were of particular interest to them. Some stated that they made a simple comparison initially in order to see how they were doing relative to other similar authorities; others identified particular areas of interest to them. The most frequently cited example was the length of time to satisfy requests. Given the high level of political interest in performance measures, it is surprising that so few library services undertook even a basic comparison of the results.

7.7 The 1999 case studies.

7.7.1 The background.

Given the degree of change faced by libraries between 1996 and 1999, consideration was given to investigating the extent to which their marketing activities developed in this period. As a result, two authorities were selected as case studies. (Of these, one covers the area previously served by three local authorities, and one covers the same geographical area as the pre-1996 authority). The 1996 questionnaire was completed again by both of the selected library services, this time reflecting the situation in 1999 and the developments since the first survey. A visit was also made to one of the authorities to discuss the results in more detail.

7.7.2 Effectiveness and responsiveness.

7.7.2.1 Case study 1.

The questionnaire return from the library service that was formed in 1996 (replacing three former district council library services) shows positive responses to only some of the questions relating to the use of marketing techniques. For purposes of comparison, the responses to section A of the questionnaire are shown in table 31 alongside those from the three former

authorities. The pre-reorganisation library services are shown as A, B, and C; the right hand column shows the responses given in 1999.

Table 31

Measures of effectiveness/ responsiveness	Library Service A : 1996 response	Library Service B : 1996 response	Library Service C : 1996 response	New Library Service: 1999 response
Use of user surveys /questionnaires	Less than annually	Less than annually	Less than annually	At least annually
Use of user interviews	Not at all	Less than annually	Less than annually	–
Use of focus groups	Not at all	Not at all	Not at all	Considering
Use of suggestions boxes	At least annually	At least annually	At least annually	Customer comments cards used
Analysis of usage statistics	At least annually	At least annually	At least annually	At least annually
Basis of resource allocation (2 main factors)	Historical arrangements. Staff knowledge.	Customer feedback. Staff knowledge.	Historical arrangements. Staff knowledge.	Formula funding. Staff knowledge.
Intro. of new services	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cessation of services	Yes	No	No	No
Mission statement	No	Yes	Yes (statement for dept.)	No
Specific objectives	Yes	Yes	Yes	Part of dept.objectives
Performance standards / indicators	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Complaints procedure	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Evidence of support	Anecdotal only	No	No	Yes
Prepared to pay increased local tax	No	Yes	No	No
Internet : staff use	No	Yes	No	Yes
Internet : public use	No	No	No	Yes
Internet : strategy	Yes	In progress	No	Yes

The responses show that, as before, statistics are considered at least annually. Suggestions boxes or comments cards continue to be used and, as in the previous authorities, the library service has a complaints procedure. User surveys or questionnaires are undertaken at least

annually where before all three authorities used them less frequently. The use of focus groups, previously not thought of, is now under consideration, and 'Citizens Panels' are in existence. No response was given to the question about user interviews, but an 'opinionmeter' is used to gauge users' satisfaction with reference and information services. The responses to the 1999 questionnaire indicate a slight improvement in the use of these marketing techniques in 1999 compared to 1996.

One of the two main factors upon which the allocation of resources depends is shown to be the same in 1999 as in 1996 i.e. 'staff knowledge'. The other factor cited in 1999 is 'formula funding'. This is not conducive to supporting change and, although no less likely to reflect customer needs than decisions based on 'historical arrangements' (as used by two of the authorities in 1996), it is significant that the importance of customer feedback (which was recognised by one library service in 1996) appears to be less in 1999.

No services ceased between 1996 and 1999 as a result of a lack of customer demand, but a number of new services were made available by 1999, e.g. the introduction of colour laser printers and self-service confectionery machines. The customer comment card scheme was given as the means by which awareness of demand for these services was raised. There has been a significant improvement in terms of access to the Internet, with both staff and public access available and a three-year capital programme in place to introduce Internet access at all libraries. Previously, only one of the three authorities provided staff access and none provided public access.

The importance of having evidence of public support for the library service, appears to be recognised now since the respondent replied that it is available (whereas, previously, two

authorities replied that they had no evidence, and one that it had only 'anecdotal' evidence). However, the recipient of the 1999 questionnaire thought that the local community would not be prepared to pay an increased local tax to support a major library development, even though one of the respondents to the previous questionnaire thought that they might.

Although one authority had a mission statement in 1996, and another included the library in the department's statement, the new authority does not have one. Its objectives are only included as part of those of the department of which it forms a part although the previous library services had specific objectives. It does, however, have specific performance indicators in addition to the statutory indicators. These include a direct measure of effectiveness i.e. 'the percentage of users consulted satisfied with the library service'.

Overall, there appears to be little sign of improvement in terms of the library service having a better marketing strategy. For the libraries that were previously part of smaller district services, the major gain is in the provision of Internet access, but the procedures for ensuring that other future developments reflect customer needs are not as good as they should be. Some marketing techniques are used more than previously, but not to their full extent and not as part of an organised programme of marketing activities.

7.7.2.2 Case study 2.

The second follow-up questionnaire was sent to a library service which covers the same geographical area in 1996 as did that which formed part of the pre-1996 local authority. The responses from the pre- and post reorganisation Library Services are shown in table 32.

Table 32

Measures of effectiveness	Previous Library Service: 1996 response	New Library Service: 1999 response
Use of user surveys /questionnaires	Less than annually	At least annually
Use of user interviews	Not at all	Less than annually
Use of focus groups	At least annually	Less than annually
Use of suggestions boxes	Not at all	At least annually
Analysis of usage statistics	At least annually	At least annually
Basis of resource allocation (2 main factors)	Staff knowledge. Statistics of use.	Staff knowledge. Statistics of use.
Intro. of new services	Not in past year	Yes
Cessation of services	No	Yes
Mission statement	No	Yes (Library included in new council statement)
Specific objectives	Yes	Yes
Performance standards / indicators	Yes	Yes
Complaints procedure	Yes	Yes
Evidence of support	Yes	Yes
Prepared to pay increased local tax	No	Percentage might
Internet : staff use	Yes	Yes
Internet : public use	No	Yes
Internet : strategy	No	Yes

The results show some similarities with those of case study 1. There is some improvement with regard to the use of market research techniques, with surveys or questionnaires being undertaken more frequently. User interviews now take place occasionally, where previously they did not, and suggestions boxes have been introduced. Focus groups have met less frequently, although there are plans to revive this activity. The basis of resource allocations remains the same: staff knowledge and statistics of use. However, services have changed to meet demands, with some ceasing and some new ones being introduced.

With three exceptions, the remainder of the responses are similar to those received in 1996. A mission statement now exists in the sense that the library service is included in the new council statement, and the respondent considers that a percentage of the local community might now be prepared to pay an increased local tax in order to fund a library development. The final

change relates to Internet access. Where previously only staff had access, now public access is also provided, and there is a strategy for future developments.

With regard to the adoption of a proper marketing strategy, these results suggest that the lack of progress should not be blamed on the merger of previously separate library services. There is little difference between the two authorities in terms of the extent of their developments. Although there is evidence of greater marketing activity in some areas, notably the growing use of market research techniques to obtain feedback from users, a considerable amount of work is still needed before this library service can consider itself to be truly responsive to customer needs.

7.7.3 Efficiency.

7.7.3.1 Case study 1.

The responses to Section B of the 1999 questionnaire show only a small amount of change compared to the previous survey. The details are shown in table 33.

The responses show that the budgetary situation continued to decline. No services were stopped completely as a result of financial pressure or staffing cuts. However, no new services were introduced in the three year period following reorganisation. Working practices were changed in order to improve efficiency, and staff were expected to undertake a yet broader range of duties. Examples of changes to working practices include the introduction of new contracts for the supply of books (involving better discounts and the delivery of the stock direct to branch libraries). The new library service had not become involved in any joint ventures with other local authorities, but it was using performance indicator information for

comparative purposes. The latter was considered in terms of 'family benchmarking' i.e. comparing efficiency in a variety of operations with the levels achieved by other (named) authorities of similar size.

Table 33

Measures of efficiency /responsiveness	Library Service A: 1996 response	Library Service B: 1996 response	Library Service C: 1996 response	New Library Service:1999 response
Materials budget	Increased in line with inflation	Above inflation	Decreased (standstill)	Decreased
Services ceased because of budget	No	No	No	No
New services	Yes - outside grants received	Yes	No	No
Changed working practices	Yes	No	No	Yes
Services cut because of staff reductions	No	No	No	No
Range of duties of prof. staff broader	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Joint services	No	No	No	No
Comparison of P.I. information	Yes	No	No	Yes

7.7.3.2 Case study 2.

Table 34 shows the responses from the library service that was not affected by local government reorganisation in terms of the geographical area it serves. This case study shows more marked changes between the situation before 1996 and the events since reorganisation. The library service had suffered a decrease in the budget each year, resulting in reductions to the mobile library service, and a reduction in staffing which led to a reduction in opening hours.

Table 34

Measures of efficiency	Previous Library Service: 1996 response	New Library Service: 1999 response
Materials budget	Increased in line with inflation	Reductions each year 1996-1999
Services ceased because of budget	No	Yes
New services	Yes	Not applicable
Changed working practices	No	Yes
Services cut because of staff reductions	No	Yes
Range of duties of professional staff	Yes	Yes
Joint services	Yes	Yes
Comparison of P.I. information	Yes	Yes

A number of working practices had been changed in order to try to reduce costs. For example, fewer people were involved in the book selection process, there were fewer book-buying visits to suppliers, and there had been a change to the shift working system to make savings on staffing costs. The joint arrangements with other library services regarding shared ethnic languages approvals collections and the co-operative microfilmimg of local newspapers continued. So too did the practice of comparing performance indicator information with that from other authorities (particulary with regard to the time taken to satisfy requests, total library staff costs per item issued, and total stock expenditure per 1000 population). By 1999 the library service was looking at undertaking a benchmarking exercise involving other authorities of comparable size.

7.8 Trends and developments.

The analysis of the 1996 questionnaire responses reveals several clear trends. Firstly, the use of marketing techniques is shown to be limited. Although a significant number of library services undertake surveys and make use of questionnaires to obtain user feedback, less than half employ other market research methods such as interviews, focus groups or suggestions

boxes. Of the authorities that do carry out such investigations, few do so on a regular basis i.e. at least annually.

Another trend that appears when the questionnaire results are analysed is the distinction between the activities of the library services serving small populations and those serving over 100,000 people. Most of the library services that replied that they employed the above market research techniques were those serving populations of over 200,000. Few of those serving less than 100,000 people engaged in such activities. Similarly, although less than half of the services had a mission statement or performance standards (and only 60% had objectives), the majority of those that did were serving over 100,000 people. Almost three-quarters of the library services had a complaints procedure in place, but few of these were authorities serving under 50,000 people.

A matter of some concern is the fact that even where library services did undertake significant market research to obtain the views of the users and potential users, and where they employed marketing techniques, the resource allocation decisions were not based predominantly of the findings of this research. Some authorities had managed to introduce new services despite declining budgets, but this was often only where specific external grants (for example, for Open Learning collections) were made available. Where cuts were made, they often took the form of reducing a range of services (such as opening hours and relief staffing arrangements) rather than completely stopping services. Efforts had been made to change working practices to reduce costs (for example, in terms of the number of people involved in the book selection process), but there were few examples of joint arrangements with other authorities. Staff were expected to undertake a broader range of duties than previously - another sign of library

services attempting to maintain the range of services they provide even in the face of financial pressures.

The responses to the 1999 questionnaire reveal that some additional market research was being undertaken by then. However, there was still no significant level of improvement in terms of the employment of a clear marketing strategy. There is evidence of increased pressures upon library services in terms of the budget and in terms of the demands upon staff. There was interest in the use of benchmarks to compare the performance of authorities of similar size and, between 1996 and 1999, efforts continued to try to streamline working practices. Despite these efforts to improve efficiency, and international research at this time in the area of decision support software (such as the DECIMAL project), the library services were still finding their budget inadequate to support the range and level of services that they would like to provide [6]. A possible solution to this problem is for libraries to generate more income directly, through charges, sales, or the receipt of grant funding.