



department for
**culture, media
and sport**

Capturing the Impact of Libraries

Final Report

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BOP
CONSULTING

improving
the quality
of life for all

DCMS aims is to improve the quality of life for all through cultural and sporting activities, support the pursuit of excellence, and champion the tourism, creative and leisure industries.

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1 Executive Summary

In November 2008, DCMS commissioned BOP Consulting to undertake a short study that identifies existing data and synthesises research on capturing the impact of library services. The work supports DCMS' library Service Modernisation Review. The overall aim is to provide evidence of the type of data and research that is effective at capturing the impact of libraries on their local communities and, crucially, securing the support and engagement of key stakeholders.

Libraries' policy stakeholders are essentially interested in how:

- the intrinsic benefits delivered through libraries (e.g. enjoyment, participation, learning); can
- contribute to extrinsic benefits or 'social goods' (e.g. improved well being, greater civic participation)

- There are essentially two mechanisms by which this happens:
 - the wider effects of learning – both formal and informal
 - social capital formation – establishing networks and relationships, and/or facilitating links to resources

- Why look to libraries to provide these social goods? The literature suggests two main reasons:
 - the centrality of literacy and learning to libraries' mission – which has been significantly enhanced over the last decade
 - libraries as trusted institutions – users and non-users identify public libraries as inclusive, non-market, non-threatening, non-judgemental spaces. They can engage 'hard to reach groups' with their own services, and provide access to these groups for other public services

Conclusions

The literature review shows that public libraries in England are now involved in the delivery of a wide ranging menu of services, activities and resources.

This very diversity of provision also, arguably, presents difficulties in demonstrating and communicating the impact of public libraries. In many of the 'new' areas of libraries activities – for instance, early years support, adult basic skills provision, health support, information and guidance – libraries are not, and will never be, the lead delivery agency. This means that the interactions that people have with libraries in these areas will generally be less intensive and, correspondingly, have a more mild impact, than other service providers for these activities (e.g. schools, health centres).

It is therefore important that evidence regarding libraries impact should not claim one-to-one causative relationships, but should concentrate instead on showing how libraries can 'make a contribution towards'/have 'a bearing on', a range of socio-economic priorities.

The strengths of the evidence base that are important to communicate to stakeholders have been distilled into a logic chain. At the centre of the model is how public libraries contribute to the development of 'intermediate' or short term outcomes, that are known (through research evidence) to contribute to longer term outcomes, such as economic growth, longer life expectancy and enhanced local democracy and legitimacy. The principle of a logic model, that treats some indicators as short term outcomes or 'proxies' for longer term outcomes, is now widely used across national and local government.

The evidence base is relatively strong with regard to long term outcomes. This is due to the centrality of literacy and learning to the current public library offer, and the level of research resources devoted to investigating the wider socio-economic effects of these skills and capacities internationally from outside the libraries sector (e.g. education research, health and economics).

In terms of short term or intermediate outcomes, libraries contribution is strongest with regard to cognitive and non-cognitive skills development, health and well being and social capital formation. The ability to evidence this contribution does, however, vary according to different sub-groups of the population. Early priorities for 'quick wins' in demonstrating libraries' impact to government stakeholders lie in the broad learning agenda and for children and young people, particularly early years activities.

The main challenge for evidencing libraries impact is that, despite the relatively modest nature of what stakeholders are looking for libraries to demonstrate (that their activities make a measurable contribution to a range of intermediate outcomes, and that their services can reach particular target groups), the current evidence base still remains insufficient in a number of ways. Many of the weaknesses in the evidence base are generic, and have been identified in previous similar literature reviews, namely a:

- predominance of one-off evaluations of time-limited programmes and pilot schemes over research on core services.
- lack of baselines against which to measure change.
- lack of in-depth qualitative research that analyses the specific nature of the interactions that take place in libraries

The policy areas in which libraries' impact is weak are business support and economic development more generally, with the important exception of adult basic skills, and environmental sustainability, where the sector is nowhere at present.

Recommendations

Across all areas public libraries need to improve the comprehensiveness and consistency of basic management information on services and users, to aid:

- performance management and improvement

- demonstrate libraries contribution to short term policy goals (e.g. ECM outcomes), principally at local level, as well as to
- establish the base data for more complex impact analyses such as cost effectiveness/SROI approaches

Without having credible baselines it is not possible to tell a compelling story about the 'new' public library, and how the library service can contribute to a wide range of stakeholders' agendas.

Children and young people, learning

Baselines of activity are particularly urgent with regard to learning activities, and for children and young people. Children have been the focus of much recent investment and activity in the sector and take-up from the public has been strong, in the context of falling usage for other elements of library services and resources.

Stronger communities

Although central and local government have accepted that participation in libraries on its own counts towards the development of more cohesive communities, there is very little comprehensive data on the degree to which people, particularly young people, are involved in the co-design and delivery of library services. This has become a strong agenda right across government, is key to understanding more about what the public expects of a modern library service and, in relation to young people, is a major sector commitment.

Well being and health

This is an agenda that libraries should be able to demonstrate a significant contribution towards, as it is a very close fit with the particular qualities of libraries as institutions and the activities and resources that they provide. However, at present, the evidence is too piecemeal and insufficiently articulated in the emerging language of the field. Relatedly, libraries need to understand more about the effectiveness of their, now widespread, health support and information activities in helping users to 'co-produce' their own health.

General characteristics of baseline data

Baselines of activity need to be national. Although library services are organised locally, policy in all the areas in which libraries have a contribution to make is set nationally to be delivered locally according to (generally) statutory guidance. This means that being identified first as a national partner is key to playing a subsequent role locally.

Wherever possible, baselines should strive to include demographic information. In many cases, a major element of the contribution that libraries appear to make is that they can more easily engage groups that other service providers find hard to reach.

However, this sets up a potential contradiction: in seeking to provide more comprehensive and detailed data on hard to reach users and participants, libraries would risk undermining the main reason that attracts them in the first place (i.e. that few questions are asked or required to participate). This therefore requires careful consideration for how exactly enhancements to baseline data should be collected.

A library Census day?

One way that libraries could consider to improve their baseline data - without requiring it to be captured every time people interact with the service - would be through undertaking a Census of Library Users. This would most likely be a biennial census and would be a relatively light touch way, from the public's perspective, of significantly improving on what already exists. Of course, a Census would not be cheap. There again, at approximately £1bn per annum, neither is the public library service in England – and yet there appears to be chronically few resources devoted to researching and evaluating its impact.

2 Introduction

In November 2008, DCMS commissioned BOP Consulting to undertake a short study that identifies existing data and synthesises research on capturing the impact of library services. The work supports DCMS' library Service Modernisation Review. The desk research will specifically support Workstream 3, Capturing Impact, which is being led by MLA aided by a Reference Group of practitioners and policymakers.

The overall aim is to provide evidence of the type of data and research that is effective at capturing the impact of libraries on their local communities and, crucially, securing the support and engagement of key stakeholders. The specific research questions to be addressed in the study are:

- Strategic direction: how should DCMS and the sector measure the impact of public libraries locally and nationally now and going forward?
- Identifying gaps: what is missing from extant data and research in the quest to demonstrate impact on communities?
- Methodological issues: how do DCMS and MLA develop evidence that will have credibility and traction with a range of key stakeholders?
- Communicating impact: identifying any good practice in the sector in communicating its impact to stakeholders

The main findings were presented and discussed with the Reference Group on 15th December 2008. The following report provides an account of the main findings.

3 The current library offer

As a major element of the research brief is to identify gaps in data and evidence, it is worth starting with a brief account of the ‘top level’ data that is readily and widely available on current and recent trends in the use of public libraries’ services, resources and activities. This is presented below in Figure 1

Figure 1. Major recent trends in the use of public library services and resources, 2001/2 to 2006/7

Product and Services	Trend	Usage data
Visits	↑	337m in 2006/7 from 318m in 2001/2
Book Lending	↓	315m in 2006/7 from 376m in 2001/2
AV media lending	↓	32m in 2006/7 from 40m in 2001/2
Enquiries satisfied	↓	51m in 2006/7 from 58m in 2001/2
Reading groups	↑	c.95,000 participants in c. 9,500 groups, up from c. 4,000 groups in England & Wales in 2004 ¹
Early years parent & toddler sessions	(↑)	No usage data; 92% of libraries offer weekday activities for 0-3 yr-olds and 94% offer the same for 3-5 yr-olds ²
People’s network usage	(↑)	no usage data; the network has a capacity of 60m hours use every year ³
Library websites visits	↑	64m in 2006/7
Study spaces/homework clubs	?	No data
Adult & family learning sessions	?	No data

Source: LAMPOST (2008), except where noted

As has been widely reported over recent years, the statistics show declines in key areas of public libraries’ traditional core services and resources, principally book issues⁴ and lending of audio-visual material (music CDs, DVDs, audio books, etc.), but also in the number of enquiries answered. This is in contrast to the number of visits to public libraries, which has

¹ The Reading Agency (2008) *Reading Groups in Libraries Mapping Survey Findings – England and Wales*

² MLA (2006) *A Survey of Library Services to Schools and Children 2005-6*.

³ The People’s Network [Online] URL: <http://www.peoplesnetwork.gov.uk/about.html> (Accessed 21.12.08).

⁴ Children’s book issues is the one area in which there has been only a minor decline: 90.5m in 06/07 from 90.9m in 01/02 (LAMPOST, 2008)

increased over the last five years. But evidencing exactly what is driving this increase in usage is difficult given current data.

The rollout of the Lottery funded People's Network is often assumed to be one of the key factors that has driven visits to libraries, but there is no comprehensive data on usage of the Network. Recent survey data does exist for reading groups, which shows significant increases in activity and participation. But for other areas that have now become part of libraries core offer, such as activities for parent and carers with toddlers and pre-school children, there is evidence of activity but as yet, no evidence on usage.⁵ Even evidence of activity becomes sparse for areas such as study support and adult and family learning – all activities in which public libraries are regularly engaged. Finally, the evidence that does exist on, for instance, reading groups and early years activities, is not data that is routinely captured through management information systems to support improvement and planning. Rather, it has been generated through one-off, bespoke survey exercises that may or not be repeated and that are contingent on research funds being made available. These are serious gaps in basic data that have knock-on effects in terms of being able to calculate the impact of the sector's activities.

Implications

- Public libraries cannot tell a strong enough story at national level about what has made them more popular over the last 5 years
- They can mainly evidence declines in what has traditionally been seen as their 'core' offer
- This lack of basic service information severely hampers the sector's ability to demonstrate its impact to key stakeholders (despite there being some genuine issues re sensitivity in what and how data is collected – see below)

⁵ However, this situation should improve through the forthcoming evaluation of the national Book Ahead programme (see the Early Years section below).

4 Mapping stakeholders' interest

This analysis covers both government stakeholders and the public.

4.1 Stakeholders in government

As agreed with DCMS, the mapping of stakeholder interests needs to align with existing work in this area, in particular the recently published 'Outcomes Framework for Museums, Libraries and Archives' published by MLA earlier this year⁶, but without simply restating this or seeking to revise it. The Outcomes Framework concentrates on how libraries and the rest of the museums, libraries and archives sector can demonstrate its value in relation to the 138 National Indicators for Local Authorities and Local Authority Partnerships that was finalised by the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) in February 2008. As a national review, it therefore seems appropriate to undertake the stakeholder analysis by reviewing how The Treasury's seeks to measure the success of domestic policy.

As with last year's Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act, the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) has led to a greater emphasis on outcomes in the new performance management arrangements going forward for 2008-11. For this period, The Treasury has established 30 new outcome-focused Public Service Agreements (PSAs). Most of these are cross-departmental, such as PSA 21: Build more cohesive, active and empowered communities, which is co-owned by CLG and DCMS. Each PSA is underpinned by a Delivery Agreement and will be measured by a small number of national performance indicators. Each central government department also has a set of Departmental Strategic Objectives (DSOs) that are designed to provide more detail on how the departments' contribute directly to their shared PSAs.

Figure 2 below summarises the PSAs and DSOs that are likely to be most relevant to public libraries, given their current profile of services, activities and resources. This does not mean that these are the PSAs for which the data and evidence is strongest. This is discussed below in section 0. The analysis is based on HM Treasury's 2007 Pre-Budget Report and Comprehensive Spending Review, which effectively positions HM Treasury as the 'meta-stakeholder' across all departments.

Local government has not been included in the analysis due to concentration on central government and the previous work on this area undertaken by MLA, though obviously it remains a key stakeholder, particularly the Heads of Children's and Adult Services. The RDAs have also been omitted as, at national level, they fall under BERR and their priorities and outcome measures are shared. But it should be noted that on a region-by-region basis, there is some variation in terms of priorities and measures, due to differing regional

⁶ MLA (2008) *Outcomes Framework for Museums, Libraries and Archives*

economic priorities.

The table does show that libraries potentially make a contribution to a broad range of government stakeholders and PSA targets: nine government departments, and nine out of 30 PSAs. What is perhaps surprising is that DCMS is only in sole charge of one PSA

Figure 2. Summary of central government departments' main priorities and outcome measures, according The Treasury Comprehensive Spending Review, 2008-2011

Stakeholder	Key Policies/ Strategies	Main Strategic Objectives	Key Outcome Measures
HM Treasury	2007 Spending Review Service Transformation Agreement	<p>Manages investment in public services through Public Service Agreements with other Govt Departments. These are build on 30 priority outcome targets, grouped into four areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Sustainable Growth and Prosperity -Fairness and Opportunity for All -Stronger Communities and Better Quality of Life -A More Secure, Fair and Environmentally Sustainable World <p>Treasury itself leads on PSA 9 Halve the number of children in poverty by 2010-2011, on the way to eradicating child poverty by 2020</p>	<p>-Range of (mostly hard) social and economic outcome measures</p> <p>-Number of children in low-income households and material deprivation</p>
Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS)	Creative Britain (2008) Winning: A Tourism Strategy for 2012 and Beyond (2007) Engaging with the Voluntary and Community Sector (2006)	<p>PSA 22: Deliver a successful Olympic Games and Paralympic Games with a sustainable legacy and get more children and young people taking part in high quality PE and sport</p> <p>(DCMS also shares PSA 21 Cohesive communities, with CLG)</p> <p>DSOs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -encourage more widespread enjoyment of culture, media and sport -support talent and excellence in culture, media and sport -realise the economic benefits of the Department's sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Children and young people's participation in sport -Number of people taking part in the programmes associated with the games -Number of people participating in cultural activity

Stakeholder	Key Policies/ Strategies	Main Strategic Objectives	Key Outcome Measures
Department for Children, Schools and families	<p>The Children's Plan (2007)</p> <p>Every Child Matters, Aiming High, Extended Schools, 14-19 Reforms, Care Matters</p> <p>(forthcoming 2009) Delivery Framework for Families</p>	<p>PSA 10: Raise the educational achievement of all children and young people</p> <p>PSA11: narrow the gap in educational achievement between children from low income and disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers</p> <p>PSA14: Increase number of children and young people on the path to success</p> <p>DSOs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Ensure young people are participating and achieving their potential up to 18 and beyond -Secure health and well-being 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -No children attaining levels at key stages of National Curriculum -Proportion of children from low income households proceeding o he -No. of young people participating in positive activities -No. of NEETS engaged -Decreases in drugs, convictions teenage pregnancies etc
Department for Innovation Universities and Skills (DIUS)	<p>World Class Skills: Implementing the Leitch Review of Skills in England</p> <p>Adult Informal Learning – Shaping the Way Ahead (consultation)</p>	<p>PSA2: improve the skills of the population on the way to ensuring a world-class skills base by 2020</p> <p>DSOs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Accelerate the commercial exploitation of creativity and knowledge, through innovation and research, to create wealth, grow the economy, build successful businesses and improve quality of life -Improve skills of the population throughout their working lives to create a workforce capable of sustaining economic competitiveness and enable individuals to thrive in the global economy -Build social and community cohesion through improving social justice, civic participation and economic opportunity by raising aspirations and broadening participation, progression and achievement in learning and skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Proportion of working age population. achieving functional literacy and numeracy skills -Proportion of working age popn. achieving level 2 and level 3 -Proportion of working age popn. taking up apprenticeship framework -Proportion of working age population achieving level 4 and above -HE participation rate

Stakeholder	Key Policies/ Strategies	Main Strategic Objectives	Key Outcome Measures
Department of Health	Our NHS Our Future	PSA 18: Promote better health and well being for all <i>Key themes:</i> -Adult social care -Independent living	-Mortality rate -Gap in mortality rate in disadvantaged areas -Smoking prevalence
Department for Work and Pensions	Health, Work and Well-being – Caring for our Future: A strategy for the Health and Well-being of working age people (2005) – shared with DH	PSA 8: Maximise employment opportunity for all	-Overall employment rate -Narrow gap between employment rates in following disadvantaged groups: lone parents, ethnic minorities, people aged 50 or over, those with no qualifications, those living in the most deprived local authority areas
Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG)	Strong and Prosperous Communities 2006 Sub-national Review of Economic Development Local Area Agreements	PSA 21: Build more cohesive, empowered and active communities DSOs -Support local govt that empowers individuals and communities and delivers high quality services efficiently -Build prosperous communities by improving economic performance of cities, sub-regions and local areas, promoting regeneration and tackling deprivation -Develop communities that are cohesive, active and resilient to extremists	-Percentage of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area -Percentage of people who participate in culture and sport -Percentage of people who participate in meaningful interactions -Percentage of people who influence decisions in their local area -Percentage of people who they belong in their neighbourhood -Thriving third sector

Stakeholder	Key Policies/ Strategies	Main Strategic Objectives	Key Outcome Measures
Home Office	Respect Action Plan	PSA 23: Make communities safer	-Percent of people perceiving antisocial behaviour as a problem
Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR)	<p>Our Commitment to Business</p> <p>NEW: Action for Business: Helping Businesses through the Recession</p>	<p>PSA 1: Raise the productivity of the UK economy</p> <p>PSA 7: Improve the economic performance of all English regions and reduce the gap in economic growth rates between regions</p> <p>-Promote the creation and growth of business and a strong enterprise economy across all regions</p> <p>-Deliver free and fair markets, with greater competition, for businesses, consumers and employees</p>	<p>-Labour productivity: output per hour worked</p> <p>-Regional Gross Value added per head</p> <p>-Regional GDP per head</p> <p>-Rates of regional employment</p>

linked to the Olympics, though it does co-own PSA 21 (Cohesive communities) with CLG.

Although the PSAs themselves are outcome-based, it is important to note that many of the key outcome measures that the Treasury has set to measure these are not outcomes. In these instances, they are effectively 'proxy' indicators that Treasury has deemed adequate to stand in for outcomes. These generally take two forms:

- what might be called 'intermediate outcomes', generally attitudinal survey-based indicators, often for policy areas that are hard to assess (e.g. questions on community cohesion)
- output indicators that are deemed to be an indirect indicator of outcomes (e.g. number of NEETS engaged, number of children and young people participating in sport)

Finally, it is important to note many of the outcome measures focus not just on absolute outcomes, but relative outcomes. That is, a concern with social justice pervades the outcomes such that government priorities are not simply about driving increases in average or absolute levels (of educational attainment, economic development, health, and so on), but in reducing the disparities in outcomes for groups and regions suffering from a variety of forms of social and economic disadvantage. This is significant for libraries as catering for groups in society that are in some way disadvantaged, is a key thread running through the current vision for public libraries, Framework for the Future.

4.2 The public

Against the backdrop of the changing usage patterns and service offerings of public libraries, it is useful to briefly consider the public as stakeholders in the library service.

Perhaps the most important structural changes that have taken place over the last thirty years concern demography, household composition, disposable income and labour market participation.

- **demographics:** an ageing population, but also one that has become much more diverse in terms of ethnicity, faith and nationality
- **household** composition: a continued rise in people living alone (12% of households), cohabiting couples, and children growing up in single parent households (24%)
- **disposable income:** long term increases – household net wealth has more than doubled in the UK in real terms between 1987 and 2006⁷ – though with rising income inequality since 1979

⁷ All Statistics in this paragraph from ONS (2008) *Social Trends* 38

- **labour market participation:** continued increases, driven primarily by more women working.

In addition to the reverse regarding income inequality, some other apparently long term trends have started to roll back. In particular, after a consistent decline for almost all of the twentieth century, the last two decades have seen average working hours gradually start to rise in the UK; they are currently the highest in Europe.

The combination of increasing inequality, longer working hours, greater labour market participation and more atomised social structures, is often suggested as contributory factors for why the public's sense of well-being or 'happiness' has not advanced in-line with their material prosperity. Indeed, the latest indications are that this has changed little since 1971.⁸ For these reasons, academic and policy interest in well-being and happiness has spread, from early interest in psychology and health, to economics and the Cabinet Office⁹, the latter driven particularly by increasing concerns over the economic costs of depression, stress and other forms of poor mental health.

4.2.1 Trends in cultural consumption and use

In terms of how people spend their leisure time, the amount of time that people spend engaged in culture and leisure activities has risen substantially over the last thirty years. In fact, in the UK and most other developed or emerging countries, engaging with audio-visual media (watching TV/videos/DVD, listening to radio and music) is the activity that takes up the largest share of people's time outside of sleeping and working. In the UK, this means that, on average, people aged 16 and over spent 157 minutes per day consuming audio-visual media in 2005, and a further 24 minutes per day reading.¹⁰

The use of audio-visual media – most of it consumed at home or on the move – is now very intensive even among young children. Research commissioned by Ofcom, the communications regulator, estimates that the average child aged 5-7 watches roughly 14 hours of television per week, listens to the radio for more than 6 hours per week, and uses the internet for nearly 5 hours per week (see Figure 3 below). Levels of engagement with these media largely increase the older the age profile.¹¹

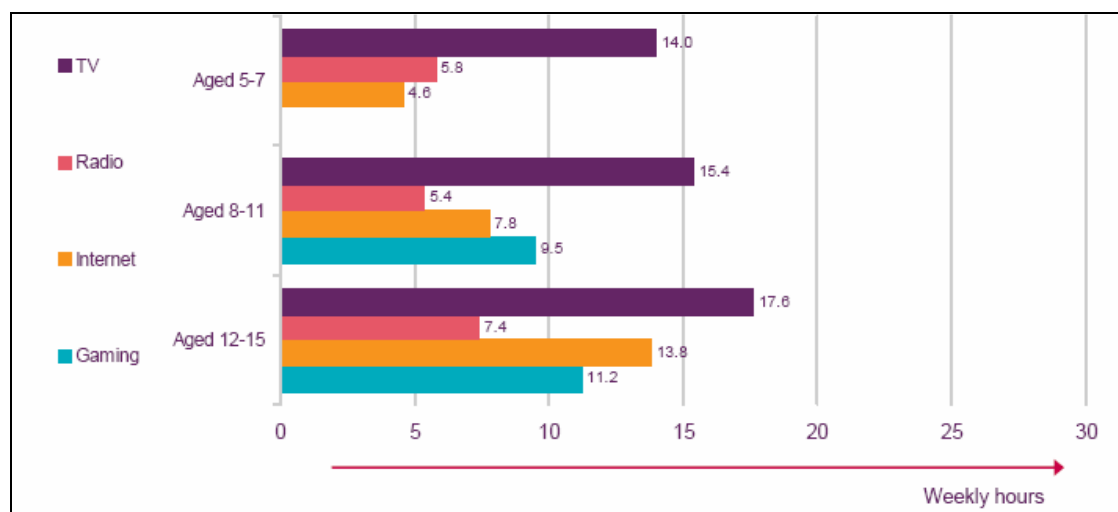
⁸ ONS (2007) *Social Trends 38*

⁹ C.f. the widely quoted book by economist Richard Layard (2006) or the summary of research presented to the Cabinet Office (Oswald, 2007).

¹⁰ Time use data from ONS (2006) *The Time Use Survey 2005*.

¹¹ It should be noted that these figures do not include listening to recorded music beyond that consumed via the radio or the internet, or the amount of time that children and young people spend reading.

Figure 3. Weekly media consumption among users, age 5 to 15, 2008



Source: Ofcom (2008)

This dramatic increase in the use and uptake of audio-visual media products has not been accompanied by similarly dramatic rises in cultural experiences as physical visits. The proportion of adults that attend a cultural event or venue only at least once a year is still under 25% for all but four individual cultural activities: historic environment, cinema, libraries, and museums/galleries. With just over half of the adult population attending at least once a year, libraries is the third most regularly attended cultural activity, after the historic environment and cinema.¹²

In addition to changes in time use, there has been a corresponding explosion in the amount of money that the public spends on 'paid-for' culture, part of a wider trend towards much greater expenditure on leisure and recreation that additionally covers items such as foreign holidays, gyms, gardening and gambling.

According to the latest ONS 2007 Expenditure and Food Survey, spending on recreation and culture accounts for the second highest category of household expenditure at £57.40 a week, just behind transport at £61.70 a week, but slightly ahead of items such as housing, fuel and power (£51.80) and food and drink (£48.10), and well ahead of expenditure on items such as clothing and footwear (£22).

It is important to note that the category of 'recreation and culture' is a broad category. As Figure 4 below illustrates, cultural activities are not the single biggest item of expenditure within this larger group, which is spending on package holidays, and this is more than twice the amount spent on any other recreation and culture item.

¹² Figures from DCMS (2007) *Taking Part*, apart from cinema statistic which is taken from UK Film Council (2007) *UKFC Statistical Yearbook*

Figure 4. Weekly household expenditure on recreation and culture, 2007

Culture and recreation category	Amount (£)
Package holidays	13.40
Newspapers, magazines, books and stationery	6.50
TV, video, satellite rental, cable subscriptions, TV licenses and Internet	5.70
TV, video and computers	5.40
Sports admissions, subscriptions, leisure class fees and equipment hire	5.20
Pets and pet food	3.20
Gambling payments	3.00
Horticultural goods, garden equipment and plants etc.	2.70
Other major durables for recreation and culture	2.20
Cinema, theatre and museums etc.	2.00
Games, toys and hobbies	2.00
Audio equipment and accessories, CD players	1.50
Computer software and games	1.40
Miscellaneous entertainments	1.00
Equipment for sport, camping and open-air recreation	1.10
Photographic, cine and optical equipment	0.70
Development of film, deposit for film development, passport	0.40
Total	57.40

Source: ONS Expenditure and Food Survey (2007)

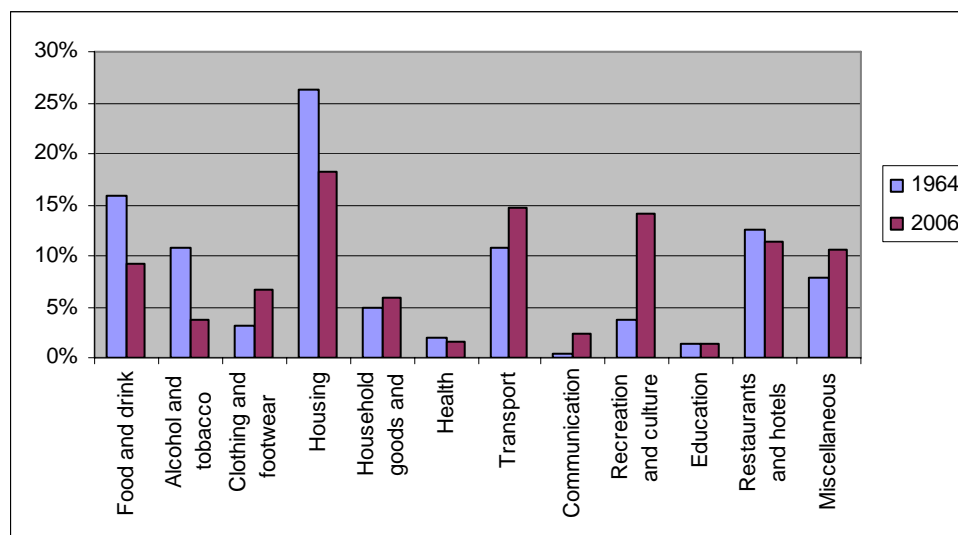
However, 'newspapers, books and stationery' accounts for the second largest item of household expenditure on recreation and culture (£6.50), of which £1.50 is accounted for by spending on books, which equates to approximately £80 per household over the year.

Looking at long run time series data shows that expenditure on recreation and culture now accounts for a far greater proportion of total household expenditure than it did in the 1960s. This holds true even when the effect of price changes are controlled for by using derived 'chained volume measures'. Figure 5 below presents an analysis of the proportion of total household expenditure accounted for by each major category of expenditure in 1964 (when the time series began) and 2006. It shows that the proportion of expenditure on recreation and culture rose for 4% in 1964 to 14% in 2006. As this analysis uses chained volume measures, this increase in expenditure has not been driven by the same volume of goods and services simply becoming more expensive. Rather, it demonstrates a huge increase in the volume of goods and services purchased within this category.

This is arguably not surprising when cross referenced to the items that are included within recreation and culture. As Figure 4 shows above, many of these items were simply not available in 1964/were only in their infancy, such as private gyms, satellite TV and internet subscriptions, computers, computer games and other private consumer electronics, and particularly, foreign package holidays (which accounted for 93% of household expenditure on package holidays in 2007). However, the historical chained volume measure analysis also reveals that expenditure on more 'traditional' items, such as books, and attendances at

cultural and sporting events, also increased throughout this period. In fact, the only culture and leisure items for which expenditure levels decreased using the chained volume analysis are for newspapers and the repair of audio-visual equipment.

Figure 5. Proportion of household expenditure accounted for by major categories of spending, 1964 and 2006



Source: ONS Consumer Trends (2007)

Implications

- Culture and media products are pervasive and technologically mediated; people with the ability to pay for commercially available cultural products increasingly do so
- As culture and recreation is now so embedded within the market, the public are likely to expect publicly-provided culture and leisure services to offer similar levels of quality and customisation

4.2.2 The increasing importance of learning

With an industrial structure dominated by services, and business practices subject to more rapid change, underpinned by advances in technology and globalisation, the need for people to continually top-up their skills and/or re-skill is increasing (DIUS, 2006). This has a particular impact for older people looking to become more acquainted with digital technologies. But beyond these, by now relatively well known, labour market pressures there is also a growing need for more informal personal development and life skills. This relates to both young and old. With life expectancy increasing and one third of all elderly people living on their own, older people have a greater need to acquire what some experts have called 'self management abilities' in order to maintain mental and physical well being (see Health section below).

For younger people personal, social and emotional skills have become more important in the workplace over the last 30 years (Margo *et al*, 2006). This reflects the move to a service

economy, but also changes to the labour market structure in the UK away from 'a job for life' and from collectivised pay negotiations (with the demise of union membership). This means that individuals themselves have to exert more agency in forging their own careers, which requires a range of sophisticated 'soft' skills. These transformations have been mirrored in the sphere of relationships, as marriage and the role of family in choosing life partners has declined, again increasing the demands on individuals to make more of their own choices and decisions. While the middle classes have typically always cultivated the kinds of personal, social and emotional skills that equip individuals to deal effectively with these pressures, these skills are increasingly expected of everyone (Margo *et al*, 2006).

4.2.3 The changing nature of, and affiliations to, community

More diverse demographics, coupled with more complex patterns of household structure, the increasing globalisation of media and ICTs and the individualism of consumer culture, means that the nature of identities and individuals' relationships to their local geographic communities have become similarly more fragmented and complex. This is evident in the debates about what constitutes 'Britishness', as well as fears in some quarters that the UK is heading for increasing segregation along ethnic and faith lines, indirectly ushered in by apparently benign policies on multi-culturalism.

In many large urban areas with highly diverse and often transient populations, identification and engagement with the local community can be low, often confounded by a more general disenchantment with formal politics. Younger people in particular are voting less and turning more to single issue politics and more direct and immediate forms of political expression such as petition, demonstrating and direct action.

5 Overall rationale for capturing libraries impact

In advance of the more detailed literature review that follows, it is worth establishing what dimensions of libraries activities policymakers are interested in. Essentially, as previous literature reviews in the domains of libraries, archives and museums demonstrate (BOP 2007, 2005), the potential benefits lie in how:

- the intrinsic benefits delivered through libraries (e.g. enjoyment, participation, learning); can
- contribute to extrinsic benefits or 'social goods' (e.g. improved well being, greater civic participation)

There are essentially two mechanisms by which this happens:

- the wider effects of learning – both formal and informal
- social capital formation – establishing networks and relationships, and/or facilitating links to resources

The next question to be answered is why look to libraries to provide these social goods? The literature suggests two main reasons:

- the centrality of literacy and learning to libraries' mission – which has been significantly enhanced over the last decade
- libraries as trusted institutions – users and non-users identify public libraries as inclusive, non-market, non-threatening, non-judgemental spaces. This gives them a certain USP among public services: they have 'high customer capital' that other public services often lack. This can help them to engage 'hard to reach groups' (i.e. those experiencing various forms of social and economic disadvantage), for both their own services and resources, but also to provide access to other public services.¹³

The next sections of the report review the literature against the key government policy agendas outlined by MLA in the Outcomes Framework for Museums, Libraries and Archives.

¹³ This evidence is summarised in the 2006 Local Futures report, which attempts to position libraries as a the key pillar of the 'community-based' knowledge economy (Hepworth and Clayton, 2006).

6 Children and young people

6.1 Policy context

The policy environment related to children and young people in England has recently undergone the biggest change in a generation. At the heart of this is the **Every Child Matters** (ECM) framework. Launched in 2003, ECM focuses on five key outcomes for children and young people: Be Healthy; Stay Safe; Enjoy and Achieve; Make a Positive Contribution; and Achieve Economic Well Being. ECM is not a strategy in the conventional sense. Rather, it is an outcome-based planning and evaluation framework for 5-19 year-olds, to be used by a range of delivery partners to ensure co-ordination and integration of their service planning processes. As such, it is now used across government to monitor and evaluate policy and interventions for children and young people.

'Youth Matters' was launched alongside ECM as a distinct set of policy proposals for young people; namely to provide 'something to do, somewhere to go, someone to talk to'. Although some of the key Youth Matters proposals were not taken forward, the essential thrust is carried through in the new **Aiming High for Young People: A Ten Year Strategy for positive activities: Implementation Plan** (DCSF, 2008). The strategy Aiming High was published in July 2007 and sets out the Government's long-term vision for improved services and opportunities for young people.

The focus of the strategy is to increase young people's participation in constructive leisure-time activities and in the process of the design and delivery of public services for young people. Increasing the proportion of young people participating in positive activities is seen as critical to increasing the number of young people 'on the path to success', which from April 2008, is being measured through the new Youth PSA (PSA 14). Progress against this PSA will be determined by indicators measuring:

- increases in participation in both learning and positive leisure-time activities
- as well as the reduction in negative outcomes such as substance misuse, teenage pregnancy and entry to the criminal justice system

Implementation of Aiming High includes:

- the **roll-out of extended schools** providing out of school activities for young people and from September 2008 increasingly subsidising access for disadvantaged young people
- the delivery of more **volunteering opportunities for young people**, led by v and local v-involved teams
- **a commitment to offer all children and young people access to a wide range of cultural opportunities** in and out of school. This will be led by a new Youth Culture Trust which will bring together the main cultural sector non-departmental public bodies (e.g. Arts Council England, MLA and the UK Film Council); and

- the **implementation of 14-19 reforms**, so that by 2015 all young people have access to a wide ranging curriculum offer and stay on in education or training to 18 and beyond

Implementation of the commitments in Aiming High is supported by an investment of £679 million. This includes £124 million of new revenue funding, £60 million of new capital funding and the continuation of existing baselines to the value of £495 million. Part of this funding is supporting a **national youth volunteering programme, involved**, that was launched in June 2007 by Office of the Third Sector strategic partner v. At present, v, is investing £75 million over three years in organisations and projects that develop and deliver innovative volunteering opportunities, which are accessible and engaging to 16-25 year olds.

At the other end of the age spectrum (for 0-5 year-olds), DCSF's **Early Years Foundation Stage** is a similar framework to ECM but with more emphasis on guidance and advice rather than assessment. The framework has four core Themes and Principles that support care and learning: A unique child, Positive Relationships, Enabling environments, Learning and development.

A recent emphasis within government thinking on policy for reading and language development, particularly for early years, is the importance of speaking. This was highlighted in the recent **Review of the Teaching of Early Reading** (Rose, 2006), as well as taking centre stage in this year's **Bercow Review** of services for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). The government has accepted the Bercow report's key recommendations and is investing an extra £12m to tackle the issues, in addition to the £40m Every Child a Talker programme. This sits alongside the Every Child a Reader programme that has been running nationally since 2007 and funds highly-skilled Reading Recovery teachers in inner-city schools, to provide intensive help to children most in need.

6.2 Enjoy & achieve: reading and literacy

There is strong research evidence that reading and literacy are key to academic success and strongly correlated with a wide range of positive socio-economic outcomes (Clark and Dugdale, 2008). As well as its intrinsic importance, a number of research studies have established **positive links between enjoyment, learning and academic success**, e.g. the OECD Reading for Change research (Twist *et al*, 2003), Centre for Education and Research at Warwick University (2004).

The support and development of literacy and reading form the core of the public library offer, and visiting libraries and **library activities are generally viewed as enjoyable** recreational activities by children and young people themselves, and by intermediaries such as teachers or parents (Product Perceptions, 2006). This is important as both children's reading attainment and their enjoyment of reading in England has declined between 2001 and 2006 (Mullis *et al*).

Much of the international literature on libraries' role in improving enjoyment and attainment in reading **focuses on school libraries**. For instance, a study of Ontario

Library Association that looked at assessment data of 26,643 grade 3 students from 707 schools and 27,565 grade 6 students from 668 schools found that

- the existence of a teacher-librarian in the school improved reading enjoyment for both grades 3 and 6 students
- the presence of trained library staff is associated with higher achievement in reading for grade 6 students (Queens University, 2006)

Similarly US research in 19 states demonstrates the importance of school libraries to students' education. Whether student achievement is measured by standardized reading achievement tests or by global assessments of learning, the research shows that a well-stocked library staffed by a certified library media specialist has a positive impact on student achievement, regardless of the socio-economic or educational levels of the community (Danbury, 2008).

In addition to these North American examples, **there is some evidence from the UK of the impact of libraries on reading attainment and 'Personal, Social and Emotional Skills' (PSE), particularly in the context of disadvantaged children and young people.**

For instance, most looked after children achieve well below their potential in education (DCSF, 2006, DCSF, 2007). An evaluation of the Paul Hamlyn Foundation-funded Right to Read programme (Griffiths *et al*, 2006) – set-up to get looked after children and their carers excited about books and to ensure that libraries were reaching out to them and providing them with tailored support – found that in all the projects:

- positive attitudes had been developed towards books, reading and libraries across all projects
- children's social skills, confidence and self esteem had been increased through their involvement in the projects, and the children also improved their communication and literacy skills
- young people viewed themselves with confidence as readers

The evaluation was based on activities undertaken between 2001-2005, in 22 of the 45 funded projects. In addition to the findings across the sample of projects evaluated, individual projects recorded improvements in educational attainment. For instance, one project working with under-five year-olds showed an overall percentage increase of achievement in the PSE early learning goals in the period of 2001-05; from 51% in the original set to 72% in 2005. The results were particularly encouraging in relation to increased confidence, self esteem and an ability to form positive relationships with both adults and peers. Another project which worked with the older age group commented that GCSE grades improved over the life of the project, from 48 looked after children with 1 or more GCSEs at grades A-G in 2001 to 80 with the same in 2003 (Griffiths *et al*, 2006). The programme was included in the Green Paper on Looked After Children (DCSF, 2006) as a good practice model to be disseminated.

Some of the Every Child a Reader projects involve partnerships with local libraries. The evaluation of the pilot phase of the programme – a three year (2005-08) £10m initiative to provide intensive help to children who, after one year of schooling, are struggling to learn to read and to write – also demonstrates positive impacts. This was mainly through rapid gains in reading age (well over four times the normal rate of progress). But this has also had a wider effect in helping to narrow the gender gap and social class attainment gap in the schools involved, as many of the children receiving the reading support were boys

(60%) or eligible for free school meals (just under half), with 8% from particularly vulnerable groups: looked after children, children from Traveller communities, asylum seekers or refugees (Every Child a Reader, 2008).

6.3 Enjoy & achieve: early years

There is a consensus in the research on the importance of learning in combating social exclusion: the importance of early intervention (Evangelou and Sylva, 2003, Melhuish, 2004). Strong research evidence shows that **pre-school language and literacy experiences are accurate predictors of later educational attainment**. For instance, in the UK, the ongoing 'Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project' undertaken by the Institute for Education has demonstrated the importance of early years nursery education. The project is a national longitudinal study of the effects of pre-school education on 3,000 children between the ages of 3 and 7 years. Pre-school nursery activities have an effect on all-round development and carry through into Key Stage 1, including 'disadvantaged children [that] benefit significantly from good quality pre-school experiences' (Sylva *et al*, 2004).

Part of libraries core offer now lies in the delivery of free, pre-school language and literacy activities for toddlers and parents and carers. However, the research evidence on the impact of these activities is to-date rather more limited than the universality and importance of these activities might suggest. **There is most research on Bookstart**, the national book-giving scheme, in which libraries are the key delivery partner alongside health visitors. **The evidence regarding the effectiveness of Bookstart is equivocal.**

An early evaluation by Wade and Moore (2000) of a small random sample of 43 pupils showed improved performance of Bookstart pupils versus a control group at Key Stage 1, on both teacher assessment measures and pupil test results. The distinction was found in English skills, but also in maths and to a lesser extent science, leading the researchers to hypothesise that it is the attention and concentration that the child learns through reading that is the key learning skill. But a 2005 evaluation of Bookstart by Collins *et al* (2005), that compared 54 Bookstart children with a control group found 'no consistent pattern' of achievement between Bookstart and non-Bookstart children (Collins *et al*, 2005:29). A more recent Bookstart evaluation in Wales in 2008, focusing on 84 parents' experience of the scheme (interviewed at the beginning and end of a three month period), reported a small positive impact, with 40% of parents increasing their frequency of reading after using the Bookstart packs (Bookstart, 2008).

Evaluation of a similar book giving and reader support programme for toddlers and parents, Boots Books for Babies (BBfB) scheme also found a variety of positive impacts. The BBfB scheme ran for five years from 1998, having delivered 42,791 bags of books and literacy related materials to babies in the City of Nottingham and County of Nottinghamshire. The evaluation of 119 children (Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, 2004) showed that the programme:

- contributed to children developing a love of books at an early stage

- that sharing books with babies is beneficial to development in motor actions and social skills and to development in speech and language; and
- was correlated with raised literacy levels across the county for children and adults

It should be noted that **all of the Bookstart studies are relatively small for a large national programme.** Although the small scale studies show some definite impacts, **the lack of more comprehensive research makes it hard to draw strong conclusions on the overall impact of Bookstart** either way. This constitutes a significant weakness in the evidence base. In this, **Bookstart is symptomatic of a wider lack of data and evidence on libraries' early years work.** Library-based pre-school language and literacy activities for toddlers and parents and carers (e.g. Rhymetime, Storytime) is where arguably libraries are playing a more direct role in delivery terms than in Bookstart, but there is even less research undertaken on these activities than for Bookstart. To-date, the only research that exists is a small case study for the development of MLA's Generic Social Outcomes that focused on Rhymetime activities in the Isle of Wight library service (BOP, 2006). The intention of the case study was to pilot a research process (i.e. to measure social outcomes in a quantitative way), not to demonstrate robust impact data. Nonetheless, the results are suggestive of the value that parents and carers place on the activities and would benefit from a much wider investigation.

This situation should, however, be significantly improved with the forthcoming 'Book Ahead' evaluation. Commissioned by MLA, this is an evaluation of the Book Ahead national scheme that aims to deepen the partnership between Early Years settings and public library services in England, with a specific focus on 3-5 year-olds. The work is ongoing, but will ultimately provide comprehensive data on the volume of early years activities by libraries, and build baselines for usage and short term outcomes of activities.

6.4 Enjoy & achieve: extended schools

The Full Service Extended Schools (FSES) initiative was launched by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in 2003 with the aim to support the development in every local authority area of one or more schools which provide a comprehensive range of services, including access to health services, adult learning and community activities as well as study support and 8am to 6pm childcare. **Evaluation** of the initiative by Cummings *et al* (2007) after year 3 in the 148 schools involved **showed that the FSES approach was impacting positively on pupils' attainment in case study schools.**

These impacts were clearest in the case of pupils facing difficulties. There were also a number of other areas in which the FSES approach was having an impact on outcomes for pupils, including engagement with learning, family stability and enhanced life chances and again, these impacts were concentrated in pupils facing difficulties. The disproportionate effect of intervention on pupils facing disadvantage, echoes previous research by the Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion at the LSE that concluded that schools in disadvantaged areas need to make more use of external resources (such as libraries), to attempt to bridge the gap in achievement related to the home environment (Lupton, 2004).

Reading Clubs can be part of the Extended Schools Service. For instance, The Chatterbooks programme, started in 2002 by The Reading Agency in collaboration with

Orange, is the first ever nationally co-ordinated reading group project for children. It has involved over 7,500 children in over 400 Chatterbooks reading groups, run in 145 different library services. Evaluation of Chatterbooks by The Reading Agency (2006) reports a range of positive impacts against the ECM agenda, with particular reference to reading enjoyment and greater involvement in the decision-making process for libraries.

The Summer Reading Challenge (SRC) is also relevant here. SRC is the biggest reading promotion in libraries, run by 95% of UK libraries and involving 660,000 children in 2006. **Evaluation of the impact of the Summer Reading Challenge** (Product Perceptions, 2006), based on a survey sample of 821 children before the summer and 704 after the summer (86% of the starting cohort), **found a range of positive impacts** including that:

- taking part was rated very enjoyable (83% reported that they had enjoyed it 'a lot')
- it particularly improved the reading ability of children who define themselves as 'not good' readers before starting the SRC (83% of this group reported improvements)
- some children had enhanced their confidence and self-esteem through doing the Challenge and receiving the medal
- 48,000 children joined the library because of the Challenge

6.5 Make a positive contribution

Libraries have traditionally had more difficulties engaging with adolescents and youths than younger children. Framework for the Future sought to address this by establishing dedicated proposals for creating universally available and distinctive library services under the banner of 'Fulfilling their Potential'; a national development programme for young people and libraries. In 2006, this was followed by the creation of the National Youth Libraries Board

Informed by the direction of government policy as embodied in Aiming High, and based on extensive consultation with young people and best practice in many library services, a **new libraries 'offer' to young people was announced in January 2008**. It defines what young people should be entitled to from their local library. This offer is aspirational at present and comprises three aspects:

1. Empowerment by:

- Participation in shaping the future of library services
- Volunteering opportunities with younger or older library users
- A place to develop citizenship skills and community engagement

2. Access to:

- Free, safe and welcoming spaces in the local community

- Formal and informal learning support for educational attainment

3. Quality through:

- Inspiring books and reading materials supported by positive activities
- Information on education, training and careers opportunities

Despite these national service-wide aspirations, **there is no comprehensive data or evidence available to benchmark how all libraries will progress towards realising these goals.**

The 2005 Russell Commission on Youth Action and Engagement identified untapped potential for young people to volunteer across the public sector more generally, including libraries. Although the Commission explicitly cited a case study in the library sector, this was drawn from the US. The City of San Diego has volunteer programmes across twelve of their departments and services, ranging from libraries and parks to the police and attorney's office. In their libraries service, structured volunteer opportunities are provided in the daily running of the libraries and in the context of specific programmes, for instance, assisting with book stock, IT, homework help, and children's activities (City of San Diego, 2008).

There are now a number of examples of good practice in libraries in England, in terms of volunteering opportunities and routes for community engagement for young people. **But the research that does exist on these opportunities is – as is typical in the sector –restricted to evaluations of individual pilot programmes** and activities.

In a report for the National Youth Agency, Linley (2007) highlights examples of best practice in this area through the winners of the CILIP 'Libraries Change Lives' Awards that show young people getting involved through:

- helping to choose stock (e.g. books, CDs, DVDs, games)
- making suggestions for future development/programmes in libraries
- helping with the delivery of programmes (e.g. courses for mums-to-be, Story Times, etc.)

Another example is the Partners for Change project, funded by The Paul Hamlyn Foundation, a pilot project that fed into the development of the national Fulfilling their Potential programme. Partners for Change involved three library authorities in South-West England (Gloucestershire, Swindon, Dorset) between October 2005 and March 2007. It aimed to develop new ways for library services to engage with socially excluded young people and young people at risk. Outcomes/achievements of the programme include :

- over 230 young people were involved in making decisions across the 3 library services
- some participants gained formal accreditation through NVQs and the Getting Connected course for their voluntary contribution to the library

- young people in Cheltenham secured £10,000 from their local Youth Capital Fund for enhancements and new furniture for the music library in Cheltenham
- young people felt more ownership and involvement with their local library services, and felt more comfortable and confident about working with library staff
- a range of library spaces and services were enhanced and improved through the active involvement of young people¹⁴

Similarly encouraging findings emerged from the evaluation of other pilots for Fulfilling their Potential (FtP). The evaluation of the first 12 months of implementing the FtP Improvement Framework in 21 library authorities in the North West, for instance, showed a range of activities that the 951 young people were engaged with; changes in perceptions among some of them regarding the attractiveness and opportunities offered by libraries; and the impact on the libraries themselves, particularly in terms of increasing use by young people (Their Reading Futures, 2007; 2007b).

These individual studies indicate the possibilities for libraries to involve young people in the ‘co-design’ of services for them. This, of course, is not just an aspiration of the new libraries offer to young people, but is a central plank of DCSF’s Aiming High strategy for youth, and the organisation tasked with taking forward the recommendations of the Russell Commission, v.

However, there is no currently way of knowing how representative this good practice is, and this was a key thrust of the Russell Commission, i.e. that the involvement of young people with public services has to be ‘systematically mainstreamed’. Some evidence – though again only piecemeal – indicates that libraries may still have a long way to go. Research in the North East in 2005 showed that only 8% of all volunteers in libraries were aged 24 or younger – as compared to 12% in museums (Howlett *et al*, 2005:18), and so far there are very few projects in libraries on the vInspired database (v, 2008).

6.6 Be healthy

Most of the evidence base related to children and young people’s health and libraries is ‘epiphenomenal’; that is, it is derived from – or at least strongly correlated with – learning, literacy and language development. For instance, data collected in Scotland shows a **relationship between long-standing physical health issues and literacy level**, that includes long-standing illness and obesity (Parsons & Bynner, 2008). There is also a **correlation between mental health, all round well being, and literacy levels** (Dugdale & Clark, 2008). However, this research evidence focuses on adult health (see below in section 7), but as early intervention is important to health outcomes in later

¹⁴ All data on Partners for Change from (Their Reading Futures, 2008)

life, it is worth noting with regard to the ECM agenda.

A key area where libraries might be able to evidence an impact is in pre-school early years activities. However, to-date, most of the emphasis of the evaluations and research that does exist in this area, has (understandably) focused on reading, language and literacy development. But these kinds of activities are also understood to have benefits for emotional development and well being for toddlers. For instance, the evaluation of the Boots Books for Babies programme found that the programme contributed to emotional well-being through the development of quiet times and routines leading to emotional security (Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, 2004). These benefits are included within DCSF's Early Years Foundation Stage.

7 Health and well being

A baseline of activity regarding health and well being activities is not known with any consistency, but data from a survey of 89 libraries is suggestive (Healthlink, 2008):

- 70% of libraries offered specific information on health treatment and conditions
- c.25% offer exercise classes and lead walking groups

The range of health activities in libraries is wide, ranging from 'bibliotherapy' to specialised collections, health promotion activities and partnerships with health organisations, and dedicated areas and staff for health information (Lacey-Bryant, 2007).

In addition to the impacts related to:

- the provision of health information
- partnering in specific health support programmes

there are also:

- health and well being effects of literacy, learning and participation.

Health and well being, then, increasingly seems to be a part of the core public library offer. A physical manifestation of this is seen in increasing co-location of library services with healthcare (often in combination with Children's Centres). Current examples of co-location include Lewisham and South Lanarkshire. Clearly cost savings is one factor driving co-location, though it is also likely that greater partnership working is another goal. Even back in 2003, South Cambridgeshire, for instance, had both joint facilities and a community health development officer working across library and health services (Reading Agency, 2003).

7.1 Policy context

Over the last decade, **policy on health** in advanced economies at national and international levels **has begun to move** away from focusing on simply physical health and the absence of illness, **towards a more holistic conception of health as a 'complete state of physical, mental and social well being'** (WHO, 2004). This shift is not simply theoretical; it has also been driven by increasing understanding of the costs and benefits of prevention over cure (Wanless, 2002; 2004).

With health thus defined, it becomes a much more complex, multi-factoral phenomenon **that requires a corresponding diversity of approaches in health practices, and in the**

partnerships that the medical establishment needs to enter into, including with the cultural sector (DH, 1999, 2006). In addition to changes in the supply-side of healthcare, affecting this shift also requires the public to take more responsibility for their own health and well being, to both better guard against the onset of physical and mental ill health, and collaborate with healthcare practitioners and others to develop treatments for conditions when they occur (DCSF, 2007c). In this sense, **the public is increasingly required to ‘co-produce’ their own health and well being.**

A key part of being able to do this is health literacy: ‘the cognitive and social skills that determine the motivation and ability of individuals to gain access to understand and use information in ways that promote and maintain good health’. This follows on from strong medical research evidence in the US and UK that shows that individuals with low levels of health literacy have less health knowledge, worse self-management of chronic disease, lower use of preventive services, and worse all round health (e.g. Williams *et al*, 1995; von Wagner *et al*, 2007; Baker *et al*, 2007). The Department of Health (DH) is currently developing a strategic framework for health literacy, following on from the 2003 launch of ‘Skilled for Health’, a joint DfES/DH sub-project of Skills for Life.

7.2 Health information

The provision of health information is related to, but not identical with, the government’s interest in health literacy, in which the emphasis is more firmly on improving core literacy skills to help people understand public health messages and specific directions for taking medicines and drugs etc.

Book stock on consumer health information has for many decades been a key feature of the public library offer. For instance, The Laser Foundation Libraries Impact Project pilots found that 48% of respondents surveyed had accessed health information from libraries, which represented a slight overall increase in the use of health books. 97% of those using these resources said it was useful or very useful, and 35% said it had a positive impact on health and well-being (Laser Foundation, 2005). But the wider context of consumer health information has changed dramatically in recent years, driven principally by the internet.

Consumer health information is increasingly accessed online. US research shows that the factors driving this include both ‘supply-side’ issues – more widespread internet access and large increases in the amount and quality of information available – but also greater demand from consumers – increased awareness of health issues and the need to better understand specific conditions and general well being (Gillaspy, 2005).

But there is some evidence that **the downsides** to this much expanded universe of consumer health information **are that consumers lack confidence about their ability to navigate this wealth of information and select quality health information. They rely instead on pre-selection of information by authoritative sources or intermediaries, which includes libraries**, as well as support groups, and health professionals, and often distrust the internet (Marshall and Williams 2006). This is in line with more general consumer perceptions of libraries overall, in which public libraries are seen as one of the most trusted of sources of information, along with museums and archives (Usherwood *et al*, 2005).

For a number of years, many public libraries in the US have worked with the national health library and local community organisations to develop online resources for specific local health issues, though there is less information on the effectiveness/impact of these activities (Ruffin *et al*, 2005). **In the UK too, general information provision is transforming into a more pro-active and partnership-based role.** For instance, libraries are a delivery partner for the pilot initiative of Patient Link, providing information to support the process of choosing a hospital. So far, satisfaction with the service is high and it has proved capable of reaching excluded groups such as older people and the homeless. Take-up is low, however, and the evaluation suggests that GPs are not promoting the service sufficiently (Health Link, 2008). The initial project feasibility study (Health Link, 2005) suggests that libraries are best placed for this work as they have local infrastructure, neutrality, are seen as approachable spaces by marginalized groups (particularly the homeless), have IT facilities and can interpret internet technology to those unfamiliar with it.

Further evidence of libraries' evolving role in this area is provided by Suffolk Libraries, who are the lead delivery partner for the whole county for the Department of Health's 'Information Prescriptions' initiative for people with long term conditions. Suffolk is currently the only library service involved in Information Prescriptions and the DH is endorsing the success of the pilot and seeking further library partners.

7.3 Health support programmes

Despite some indications (Healthlink, 2008) that public libraries are taking a more active role in providing physical health activities (e.g. exercise classes and leading walking groups), there is as yet no evidence of its impact. **Most of the evidence related to the health support programmes offered by libraries focuses on 'bibliotherapy':** There are two main kinds of bibliotherapy programmes:

- Books on Prescription (BoP) – in which patients are in various ways (e.g. 'GP prescribed', 'supported self help') directed towards self-help literature that is either already available in libraries or purchased specifically for the project
- Creative bibliotherapy: reading group discussion of fiction literature in libraries with the aim of therapeutic outcomes.

An audit of bibliotherapy schemes carried out in 2006 estimated that there were 80 schemes in England, involving half of all libraries authorities (Hicks, 2006). While The Reader, a charitable organisation based at the University of Liverpool is receiving much attention for its model of creative bibliotherapy (Morrison, 2008), the NHS currently favours the BoP approach. The 2006 audit report confirms that the self-help BoP model is the most common bibliotherapy model across libraries. BoP schemes are typically organised on a local basis with a library authority working with a PCT, or across a number of PCTs to deliver activity to a localised community. The Hicks report also notes 'previous indications of the level of books on prescription activity have been much lower suggesting a recent

upsurge in activity’.

Despite the, by now, relatively widespread participation of libraries in bibliotherapy schemes, **there is still little robust research on the impact of these programmes on participants themselves in the UK.** A 2008 study (Chamberlain *et al*, 2008), which consists of a summary of 57 reports and evaluations of ongoing and completed projects that use bibliotherapy and Information Prescription, and a primary survey of 21 library authorities, is typical in this regard. The review of existing literature concludes that there is a, ‘wealth of evidence supporting the delivery of bibliotherapy for a host of mental health disorders’ – without discussing the evidence of impact in any detail at all. The survey found that only two of the library services had done any in-depth evaluation of their bibliotherapy schemes, with the bulk content to monitor outputs (number of ‘prescriptions’ and book issues), and assess process outcomes (e.g. partnerships developed). The two library services that had undertaken more in-depth evaluation reported that library and health practitioners saw the main outcomes of the schemes to lie in:

- improved patient self-management
- improved patient-doctor collaboration
- cost efficiency of provision

In mitigation, as each bibliotherapy scheme is organised locally, the individual schemes are likely to be small-scale and too modestly resourced to be amenable to statistical and cost comparative methods, as with many arts and health initiatives (White and Angus, 2003).

There is, however, some international evidence on the direct outcomes of bibliotherapy for participants. A Dutch study (Frieswijk *et al*, 2005) looked at the use of bibliotherapy as an intervention for helping ‘moderately frail’ older people to improve their Self Management Ability (SMA). SMA ‘are the abilities people need for managing resources in such a way that sustainable positive well-being is reached’. There are six main components of SMA, including having a positive frame of mind, being self efficacious, taking initiative, investing in resources for long-term health benefits, and so on. The concept of SMA is one form of how people can be described as ‘co-producers’ of their own health. The effectiveness of the bibliotherapy was examined by comparing the SMA and subjective well-being of 97 older people participating in the bibliotherapy to those of a similar-sized control group.

Frieswijk *et al* reported that the **bibliotherapy resulted in a significant increase in SMA compared to the control group** and for SMA, this effect still existed six months after the intervention. The increase in SMA among older people who received the bibliotherapy also prevented a decline in overall well-being, but only in the short-term. However, the bibliotherapy in the study was a correspondence course specially designed by health professionals and **no libraries were involved in the programme. This study then begs the question as to what specific added value libraries bring to the bibliotherapy model,** given that it can be provided in other ways?

7.4 Health effects of literacy, learning and participation

As noted in sections 6.6 and 7.1 above, **there is now a wealth of research that demonstrates strong correlations between literacy levels and a variety of physical and mental health and well being outcomes** (e.g. Williams *et al*, 1995; von Wagner *et al*, 2007; Baker *et al*, 2007; Parsons & Bynner, 2008; Dugdale & Clark, 2008). These links also extend to adult learning and mental well being, through the promotion of non-cognitive skills such as self-confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy (Sabates and Hammond, 2008) and indirectly through economic benefits gained from higher skills levels and from the strengthening of social support networks (Field, 2008).

This means that, provided libraries can robustly evidence the impact of their services and resources in terms of literacy and learning outcomes, it is reasonable to posit that this will generate additional health and well being benefits.

In addition to these 'epiphenomenal' health and well being outcomes, a range of international medical studies suggest that the act of participating in leisure activities itself has direct health and well being outcomes, particularly for older people:

- a US study (Verghese *et al*, 2003) demonstrates that participation in leisure activities, including reading, is associated with a lower risk of dementia
- Finnish (Hyypä *et al*, 2005) and Swedish studies (Lenartsson and Silverstein, 2001) found that participation in leisure activities was associated with greater life expectancy, particularly for men
- a UK study (Singh-Manoux *et al*, 2003) found that participation in cognitively complex or social leisure activities has an association with adult cognition in the middle aged

It is important to state that libraries specifically do not feature centrally in this literature, though there is some limited research in the UK that shows that library users themselves report mild therapeutic benefits of participation in libraries, for instance in helping to alleviate boredom and depression (Hayes and Morris, 2005).

Despite the evidence related to the direct well being benefits of participating in leisure activities, and the complementary evidence related to perceptions of libraries as inclusive, welcoming and enjoyable places, **library authorities in the UK do not seem to be at the forefront of emerging policy related to well being and happiness.** For instance, libraries are not visible in the I&DeA/Young Foundation Local Wellbeing Project that was launched in September 2008 to explore how local government, in collaboration with national agencies and local communities, can contribute to a growth in happiness and well being.¹⁵

¹⁵ The Local Wellbeing Project at <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=8617217> (accessed 06.01.2009)

8 Stronger and safer communities

8.1 Policy context

The Stronger and Safer Communities agenda covers a broad range of policy issues which in earlier terms of the Labour administration were encompassed by a range of different terms such as social exclusion, neighbourhood renewal, community cohesion, civil renewal and crime prevention. In essence, the drive behind these policy agendas was three-fold, to:

- reduce various kinds of social and economic disadvantage at local and neighbourhood level
- improve community relations, both between particular groups (e.g. ethnic and faith communities) and more generally, in terms of lower rates of anti-social behaviour and crime
- encourage greater participation in local decision-making and other areas of civic life

Bringing these previous separate policy strands together under a single heading makes sense given the large overlaps in reality across the different terms (BOP, 2005). This consolidation and simplification is evident in the reduction of top level central government targets to just two PSAs (PSA 21: Build more cohesive, empowered and active communities and PSA 23: Make communities safer).

The key recent policy in this area is Strong and Prosperous Communities – The Local Government White Paper (CLG, 2007), subsequently enacted through Statutory Guidance issued in July 2008. Rather than being a radical overhaul of local and central government shared priorities, Strong and Prosperous Communities concentrates instead on changing the ‘machinery’ of local government. It formalises and deepens the partnership model of local governance that has evolved in England since 2002, and provides a greater degree of local autonomy in some respects, albeit within the framework of the recent National Indicator set. Local Strategic Partnerships and Local Area Agreements are further strengthened as the main mechanisms by which local authorities work with both statutory partners (that now include the main cultural NDPBs such as MLA), and non-statutory partners to tackle shared local priorities. The area of greatest innovation is arguably the much stronger guidance regarding the active involvement of citizens, through for example, setting up citizens panels, participatory budgeting, or transferring under-used buildings to community groups. Citizen involvement at local level is also being driven through the Local Government Public Involvement in Health Bill that came into effect in 2007.

Libraries’ impacts fall into two main areas in terms of addressing the issues represented by the Stronger and Safer Communities agenda:

- the wider civic benefits of learning
- social capital formation

Both of these dimensions are to the fore in the new Big Lottery Community Libraries fund,

which is investing £80m in the extension of library services towards greater inclusion and community use. Services and resources encompassed under the programme includes space for community groups to use, the provision of adult learning facilities, and increased community partnerships (Taylor and Park, 2008).

8.2 The wider civic benefits of learning

As with health and well being, **research evidence suggests that there are some epiphenomenal or secondary community outcomes that arise from improvements in literacy and other types of learning**, Dugdale and Clark (2008) summarise the evidence related to literacy skills and their effect on community engagement and cohesion, and political participation:

- Individuals with poor basic skills are much more likely to report being ‘not at all’ interested in politics (42% for men with poor basic skills and 17% for men with good basic skills and 50% and 21% respectively for women)
- Men and women with the poorest literacy or numeracy skills were the least likely to have voted in the 1987 and 1997 general elections.
- Data for Scotland shows that 45% of men and 47% of women with poor literacy levels did not trust people in their area, compared with 24% and 18% for men and women with high literacy.
- Individuals with higher literacy levels are around four times as likely to be a member of an organisation than those with poor literacy.

What this evidence suggests is that the social behaviours that policymakers wish to see in individuals (e.g. more active citizens, increased tolerance or understanding of others) **are often linked to their learning outcomes**, though this is not always the case. For instance, the correlation and links between literacy and offending are as yet inconclusive (Dugdale and Clark, 2008b).

More directly, libraries can play a role in individual ‘empowerment’ via the provision of relevant legal and social information, otherwise inaccessible to many citizens (Coalter, 2001). **This combination of empowerment, learning, and access to resources is key to the rationale for the People’s Network and the ICT skills support wrapped around it.** MLA explicitly view the People’s Network as tackling ‘digital’ social exclusion, by working with groups that lack confidence with computers – and also more basic social exclusion – i.e. those that cannot afford internet access at home.

The 2004 Tavistock Institute evaluation of the People’s Network looked at 16 case studies of library services. The evaluation **suggested that new users were being attracted to libraries, particularly among young men, older people and socially excluded groups.** The report also found that the People’s Network has delivered a number of ‘institutional’ outcomes for the library service more generally; namely that it had:

- created credibility and goodwill for the library service – among citizens, other agencies, councillors and departments within the local authority.
- changed the perceptions that many people have of the library service, helping the library to reposition itself in the local community.
- made libraries more attractive as a partner to both other external stakeholders and within local authorities

The Tavistock evaluation reported that the vast majority of usage was (unsurprisingly) for internet browsing or email. **But, reflecting a wider gap in the research base, there was no evaluation of the impact of usage on users** - whether in terms of learning outcomes, personal development, providing access and links to resources, and so on.

8.3 Building social capital

Once again, as with health and well being, **there is evidence that there are additional extrinsic benefits that accrue simply from participation in cultural activities**, separate from any learning impacts that may arise. In this case, **the literature suggests that the main reason that cultural participation is beneficial and something to be encouraged is that it builds social capital** (BOP, 2005). In particular, **there are correlations between participation in culture and participation more generally, particularly in the kinds of activities that policymakers are keen to encourage**: political participation, volunteering and community involvement. This applies to both participation in culture generally (Jeanotte, 2003) and reading specifically (National Endowment for the Arts, 2007). Other researchers suggest that participation in cultural activities has more influence than other kinds of participatory activities when it comes to developing other elements of social capital, such as trust and tolerance (Stole and Rochon, 1998).

The research on the positive 'externalities' of participation in cultural activities regarding social capital formation has led to central government accepting that improving participation rates – both users and volunteers in the case of libraries - is now taken as a 'proxy' indicator for improving community cohesion and tackling social inclusion (c.f. NI 6 Volunteering and NI 9 Use of libraries). **But, there remain criticisms of:**

- the assumption that participation equates with some form of community outcome (e.g. Newman and Maclean, 2004); or that
- culture has anything unique to offer in this regard above and beyond other forms of community participation (Ruiz, 2004)

Unfortunately there is little evidence against which to measure these criticisms in relation to libraries specifically. A 2006 study for The American Urban Libraries Council studied social networks around several branches of the Chicago Public Library and concluded that libraries do build 'bridging' social capital. But in the UK, there is very little research that looks specifically at libraries' role in supporting the development of social capital:

Blake *et al's* 2007 report looks at libraries' role in helping to capacity build the community and

voluntary sectors. The findings indicate that the greatest support public libraries offer to voluntary groups is their physical presence in the community, and the space that they can provide for hire. In general, however, voluntary groups did not use libraries much as a source of information – preferring instead to draw on their own resources – though the sample size of the survey in the study was small (28 organisations responded).

Part of the Isle of Wight case study for the development of MLA's GSOs looked at the impact of early years activities on the social networks of parents and carers (BOP, 2006). The findings were encouraging in terms of the development of bonding and bridging social capital, though the sample size was again very small (c.40 respondents).

8.4 Safer communities

With regard to libraries' potential impact on crime prevention and anti-social behaviour, there is very little evidence of activity, let alone evidence of impact. The best available indication of activity is provided in the Local Futures report on public libraries and the knowledge economy (Hepworth and Clayton, 2006). Their survey of 28 library services in England found that 79% of library services ran some form of crime prevention activity, though this was defined very broadly and varied from libraries operating as hate crimes reporting centres, to crime prevention talks run by the police, or simply through the delivery of 'intergenerational activities'.

It should be noted that the participation of children and young people in libraries is, however, counted by central and local government as a 'positive activity' (c.f. NI 110). This has a bearing on the Safer Communities agenda as positive activities are explicitly deemed to be those that encourage positive social behaviours through developmental activities, or at least help to prevent young people from engaging in negative social behaviours by providing diversionary activities.

9 Local economy

Those new to the libraries domain may feel that it is surprising to even be considering the impact that libraries have on their local economies. While it is true that libraries have far less of a role to play in economic development in comparison to the other social policy areas, the literature suggests that there are three main ways in which libraries may potentially have an impact on their local economies:

- Economic returns to learning and skills development programmes run by libraries
- Economic returns to business advice and support provided by libraries
- Economic impact of the libraries themselves – through the income, expenditure and employment that they generate

9.1 Policy context

Of all the policy areas covered in the present report, **economic development is arguably the one in which local authorities have least control and responsibility**. Business support, adult (non HE) skills and regeneration, up until 2008, have been the responsibility of national agencies – Business Link, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and English Partnerships respectively. Similarly, business regulation and taxation is handled centrally through BERR. For the majority of the New Labour administration, the government's overwhelming preference for the most appropriate geographical level at which economic development should be delivered has been the regional level, principally through the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and the Regional Assemblies.

However, the balance has gradually been tilting towards a greater role for local authorities in economic development. This was first in evidence through the creation of 'city regions' around the Core Cities in England in 2006. **This shift was strengthened considerably with the publication in 2007 of the Consultation Paper The Review of Sub-national Economic Development and Regeneration in England** and the subsequent 2008 response from BERR and CLG to implement many of the recommendations (CLG and BERR, 2008). The proposals include the scrapping of Regional Assemblies, to be replaced by streamlined and strategic local authority leaders' groups. Each local authority will also have a statutory duty to assess the economic potential of its area, to inform both the regional strategy and local level plans and decisions about priorities. A key feature of the proposals is for groups of local authorities to work together on joint economic development and regeneration priorities through the Multi Area Agreement (MAAs) process.

At the same time, RDAs role will become more strategic, requiring more budgets to be devolved locally. They will also lose some additional functions and budgets to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), a new housing and regeneration agency for England that was established in late 2008. The HCA joins up the delivery of housing and regeneration in one agency, bringing together the functions of English Partnerships, the investment functions of the Housing Corporation, the Academy for Sustainable Communities, and key housing and regeneration programmes previously delivered by Communities and Local Government, including the Thames Gateway, Housing Market Renewal, and Decent Homes. It is intended that this integrated approach will enable the HCA to hold a 'single conversation' with local authorities and other partners on the specific housing and regeneration needs of their individual areas.

9.2 Adult (basic) skills

Once again, **any economic impacts of providing adult skills or careers support are ‘downstream’ impacts, that is, they will only accrue if the skills or careers help and support ultimately translate into a positive labour market outcome** (e.g. a move from unemployment or disability into work; or for those with work, any wage premium that a new job may command). **As such, these impacts are hard to capture** both for logistical reasons – gaining employment will usually occur some time after taking a short course in a library and therefore tracking participants is difficult and expensive – and theoretical ones: the longer away the outcome occurs from the intervention, the harder it is to attribute that the intervention had a strong bearing on the realisation of the outcome. ‘Intermediate’ outcomes, such as indications of progression to further study or training, therefore assume importance as early indicators of the potential labour market outcomes.

Nevertheless, the literature on the generic economic returns to various kinds of learning, such as literacy, numeracy, formal schooling or skills development, is strong. For instance, Dugdale and Clark (2008) summarise findings from analysis of the British Cohort Study by Bynner and Parsons (2006) that shows that – among other positive outcomes – **a person with improved literacy becomes:**

- **less likely to be on state benefits** – men who improve their literacy rates see their likelihood of being on state benefits reduced from 19% to 6%.
- more likely to own their own home – a modest rise in literacy level sees the likelihood of a man owning their own house rise from 40% to 78%.

The Bynner and Parsons **research further demonstrates the correlation between literacy (and numeracy) skills and employability and wages.** Men and women with poor literacy had the lowest levels of employment at the age of 30. 70% of men with poor literacy and/or numeracy were in manual jobs, compared with 50% of those who were competent in both (Bynner and Parsons, 2006).

A review of international literature analysing conducted for the Welsh Assembly Government by the University of Wales (Sloane *et al*, 2003) concluded that **there is a positive relationship between improvements in formal educational attainment and economic growth.** Again, the international studies reviewed tend to find that the earlier an intervention takes place in a child’s life, the greater the likelihood of it having a positive impact on subsequent educational attainment. The report also found that the rate of return to education varies widely across countries, but **it is particularly strong in the UK, which is the OECD country with the highest rates of return, at all levels of qualifications** and for both private rates of return (i.e. taking into account the costs incurred by the individual) and social rates of return (taking into account the costs incurred by the state). The majority of studies also found that the rate of return is higher for women than for men.

An Australian study (Gleeson, 2005), based on statistical analysis of two longitudinal data sources on education (The Survey of Australian Youth, 1975 cohort), and training (the US National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979), looks particularly at economic returns of both education and training, for those with low basic skills (in this case low numeracy). The project finds that **individuals with low numeracy skills are disadvantaged members of the workforce** in terms of skill levels, are least likely to be given opportunities for further training,

and generally undertake lower levels of training. However **when they are able to participate in further training programmes, they receive positive and significant benefits, such as higher wages.**

There is evidence that some library services are significantly involved in the provision of adult learning opportunities, particularly related to literacy and basic skills. **However, as with many other library services, there are no consistent or comprehensive national data sources that enable a baseline of activity to be established.** The closest to this is a mapping project commissioned by the National Literacy Trust (Barzey, 2003), to gauge the capacity of the wider museums, libraries and archives sector to contribute to the government's basic skills agenda. The main findings across three domains were that:

- two-thirds of all the institutions entered into partnerships to help them do this, with libraries leading the way
- 80% were doing outreach work, though many fewer with hard-to-reach groups, where libraries lead the way again
- only a third of institutions had staff that were formally trained to support basic skills work – what support there was tended to be informal, and led by libraries.

While this is encouraging, it should be noted that the findings relate to approximately 56 library services.¹⁶ Further data on libraries role in adult skills provision comes instead from evaluations of specific programmes and projects, or from one-off research studies. For instance, evaluations of:

- Vital Link – a partnership with the Skills for Life network, designed for adult students with low literacy levels – described as 'emergent readers' – who were encouraged to increase skills via reading enjoyment. The evaluation (Morris Hargreaves McIntyre 2005) used MLA's GLOs framework and an interview and focus group methodology. It reported that three quarters of participants reported improvements in their literacy skills, and about a fifth reported an improvement in their perceptions of their own employability. However, the sample was not large enough for the findings to be generalised, and there is no further evidence of outcomes (e.g. progression to further training opportunities) beyond self reporting.
- The Six Book Challenge – the evaluation of a recent partnership between local libraries and Costa Coffee for adult literacy learners found that both participants and their tutors felt there were strong literacy gains, increases in self confidence, and that libraries were an important source of resources and support to basic skills learners and their tutors (Grylls, 2008)

Research on adult learning opportunities across the wider museums, libraries and archives sector in London was commissioned by ALM London (Brockhurst and Dodds, 2004). The research found that libraries are successful at widening adult participation in learning and strengthening progression. More detailed results based on 200 questionnaire returns from participants indicated that:

¹⁶ The questionnaire was sent to 140 public library services and there was an overall response rate of 40%. So, assuming the response rate was constant across the three domains, this means that approximately 56 libraries were involved in the research.

- Getting a job (or a better job) was the most frequent (46%) motivation for enrolling on such courses. Gaining a qualification or new skills (especially in ICT) was seen as important for this.
- There were a range of other motives for going on library courses – older users were looking to gain confidence with ICT, others (especially women) wanted to help their children learn, and so on.
- 76% felt that the course had encouraged them a ‘great deal’ or a ‘fair amount’ towards gaining qualifications
- 79% of participants rated libraries as a suitable venue for learning (the second most commonly rated venue after colleges).

Though these findings are encouraging, once again, it needs to be noted that they are cross domain and therefore the sample size for libraries is smaller than 200 and, as the authors themselves note, issues of self-selection in the questionnaire returns may have influenced the results.

But these encouraging findings are echoed in the small survey undertaken by Local Futures of 28 library services (Hepworth and Clayton, 2006). Almost all libraries surveyed supported core elements of learning and skills support in four areas:

- basic skills
- young people
- ICT
- family learning

However, much of this is informal and not monitored, with the libraries striving for an accessible, ‘no questions asked’ approach. **While this may be key to libraries’ ability to provide a platform for the delivery of entry level basic skills, often for marginalised groups, it does make evidencing the impact of this provision difficult.** Local Futures did undertake a small survey of 88 participants in informal ICT learning. Again, the results are most promising in terms of progression to accredited training courses (48%), becoming more interested and confident in working (77%), and using the internet to apply for a job or pursue ideas for starting a business (36%).

Interestingly, the particular characteristic of the library service environment that seems key to their role in supporting adult basic skills development, has also been identified as important to the delivery of the new adult careers service. The Leitch Review of Skills in 2006 and the follow up Implementation Plan in 2007 recommended that the development of a new Adult Advancement and Careers Service (AACCS) was essential to support a future adult workforce that will be expected to continually re-skill throughout their working lives. Leitch identified libraries as a key strategic and operational partner in the delivery of this new service, due to their ‘non-threatening’ local infrastructure. MLA has been invited by the AACCS team at DIUS to contribute to the design of this new integrated service.

9.3 Business support and guidance

Libraries provide what could be classed as both generic and specific business support services and resources. The generic offer lies in book stock, IT access, online resources and referrals and signposting (Hepworth and Clayton, 2006). **This is common, to varying degrees, across all public libraries.**

More specialist and tailored support related to, for instance, Intellectual Property and market research services, **is available at a much smaller number of larger/specialist/regional ‘hub’ libraries**, such as Birmingham Central Library, or City Business Library in London (BOP, 2006c), with the IP Centre at the British Library being the apex of this small, select group of institutions.

But there is **again no consistent and comprehensive data on the scale and scope of the uptake of business support activities, let alone the impact of these services and resources.** The most detailed research that exists on libraries' business support services is the 'Libraries are Good for Business' (LAGFB) programme of research and advocacy, implemented by MLA Yorkshire between 2004-6, to accompany libraries' commitment to be a partner in the regional Better Deal for Business (BD4B) framework.

The research (Clayton, 2006) identified some strong perceptions of the value of libraries in providing services to businesses, but also a number of significant challenges, in particular:

- a lack of awareness of services
- lack of co-ordination in the offer across localities leading to wide variations in the level and quality of services
- difficulties in co-ordination with other agencies – particular in working with Business Link

Part of the difficulties that the report identified was that **the kinds of support that libraries can typically offer to businesses are much more diffuse, low level and less directed to achieving specific goals than other business support providers. This means that stakeholders have difficulty in perceiving what libraries have to offer as actually being ‘business support’.** Indeed, reflecting on the experiencing of the Yorkshire libraries' participation as a pilot region in the Local Futures research, the report urges that libraries should adopt the Local Futures concept of contributing to the 'community-driven knowledge economy' rather than business support, while accepting that this is a much harder proposition to communicate to other agencies (Clayton, 2006).

A more recent 'enquiry' into the related area of knowledge transfer (Sparknow, 2008) identified an abiding gulf in knowledge between what businesses think about the usefulness of libraries (i.e. often not thought to be relevant) and what sector practitioners think (much more positive, unsurprisingly).

What is clear is that, from a government perspective, **libraries will always be a small player in the provision of business support, even in terms of signposting.** The role of Business Link as the single, approved gateway to business support services has been significantly strengthened since the Yorkshire work through BERR's ongoing Business Support Simplification Process (BSSP). This applies particularly to Business Link's role as *the* provider of initial diagnostic, brokerage, and signposting functions. Therefore any more developed role that libraries would wish to play regarding business support, would have to be as a referrer to Business Link, or in a handful of cases (e.g. British Library), there may

possibly be a role as an approved supplier for delivering one of the designated Business Link 'products'.

9.4 Economic impact

This section does not deal with research that attempts to place a financial figure on the 'value' of library services as this is discussed below in section 11. Rather, it principally considers the merits of measuring the direct, indirect and induced economic impacts of public libraries.

There are very few studies that consider these kinds of economic impacts. While this is in part related to a general lack of data that allows the calculation of indirect and induced impacts to be undertaken, **there are also more fundamental problems with the suitability of this kind of analysis for libraries.** Firstly, economic effects of employment and expenditure in the libraries domain cannot simply be equated with those generated in the private sector. This is because they rely on public invest/subvention to be maintained, and so **the costs of this investment need to be subtracted from their benefits in order to determine the social rate of return** on this investment. If this were measured, then it is highly likely that **the sector would fail in comparison to other sectors if the opportunity costs were taken into account** (Jura Consultants, 2008) – i.e. many other sectors would generate a much greater economic return given comparable levels of public investment. In large part, this is because the 'multiplier' for public libraries is likely to be relatively low given that, unlike major museums or galleries, public libraries do not attract significant numbers of tourists (Jura Consultants, 2008).

The one other area of economic impact that can be considered, is the economic impact of the more diffuse 'neighbourhood/'regeneration' effects that might be generated by public libraries. This is often considered in the building of new libraries, such as those in Norwich (the Forum), Peckham, Durham (Clayport library) and the new Swindon Central Library. There is, however, little detailed economic impact evidence that allows for an assessment of how small or large these effects are. In part, this is because funders are not looking for these kinds of impacts, but are instead looking to capture more simple measures such as visitor numbers, PR column inches, or changes to footfall (BOP Consulting, 2008). Financial estimates of these kinds of neighbourhood effects could, course, be generated through a variety of approaches (e.g. hedonic pricing), but these studies would be relatively expensive; particularly so for investigating an issue that is not at the heart of why the public sector invests so much money in public libraries.

10 Environmental sustainability

Environmental sustainability is still an emerging agenda across all of government, and particularly so with regard to libraries. The following sections therefore differ somewhat from the rest of the report. Rather than focusing mainly on a retrospective review of literature on past and current performance re environmental sustainability (as this does not exist), the report concentrates instead on outlining the possible areas in which libraries may have an impact going forward.

10.1 Policy context

The UK Government's strong commitment to environmental sustainability has not yet yielded any substantial national policy specific to libraries. Nor does it appear to have, so far, encouraged local authorities to develop specific or detailed local strategies for their library services. At present there is:

- No mention of environmental sustainability within the DCMS PSA targets
- Virtually no national policy specific to the libraries sector. Environmental sustainability is not mentioned in *Framework for the Future* and is very briefly covered in *A Passion for Excellence*, the twin foundations of the Libraries Service Modernisation Review.^{17,18} Libraries are also not covered in the DCMS *Sustainable Development Action Plan 2008-2011*¹⁹
- No dedicated forum for sharing best practice on environmental sustainability among library managers currently exists – although it is possible that library managers are among the 400 (approx) members of the IDeA's online Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change community of practice. CILIP similarly does not appear to host a relevant online community
- Very little regional and local government environmental sustainability policy specific to libraries or covering libraries in any detail

As might be expected, the lack of policy is matched by a lack of data collection and there is therefore no hard evidence at present that libraries contribute to environmental sustainability.

However, more positively for the future:

- Five of the 198 Local Government National Indicators potentially offer a rationale for measuring and improving the environmental sustainability of libraries, although three of these require new datasets and have no baselines established²⁰
- The drive for library 'efficiency' is well established and can draw on indicators collected annually by the Chartered institute of Public Finance and Accountability (CIPFA)

¹⁷ DCMS (2003) *Framework for the Future*

¹⁸ IDeA (2008) *A Passion for Excellence: an Improvement Strategy for Culture and Sport*

¹⁹ DCMS (2008) *DCMS Sustainable Development Action Plan 2008-2011*

²⁰ DCLG (2008) *National Indicators for Local Authorities and Local Authority Partnerships: Handbook of Definitions*

- The British Library's environmental policy appears to be relatively thorough and may offer a model for local authority library services²¹
- Prominent new public library buildings have been recognised as exemplars for their incorporation of environmentally sustainable design features
- From 1st October 2008, library buildings over 1,000m² were required to assess and display their energy efficiency, providing another potential indicator
- Libraries have a huge potential role to play in increasing public awareness of environmental sustainability.

10.2 Libraries and environmental sustainability

For the purposes of this review – and in the absence of any existing framework used across the sector – the relationship between libraries and environmental sustainability might be conceptualised in terms of three themes:

- Sustainable operations – in effect, how sustainable is 'the library model' of service provision, examining the entire supply chain of both physical products (e.g. from book manufacture to building operation to user access and return) and online resources?
- Sustainable buildings – in effect, how sustainable is the existing stock of 4,500 library buildings, and how sustainable are new library buildings?
- Public awareness – in effect, how do libraries increase environmental awareness among the public, and enable the public to live more sustainably?

Each theme is explored in turn below.

10.3 Sustainable operations

There does not appear to be a major review of libraries' environmental sustainability or to be a recognised methodology for calculating the footprint of library operations in the UK. Consequently it is not possible to make a firm judgement on the relative sustainability of 'the library model' – for example, by comparing library book borrowing to book buying, or library-based internet access to home access. The advent of e-books - that can be downloaded from the internet to personal reading devices - potentially adds an intriguing new dimension to this comparison.

IDeA suggest improved efficiency within local government services is one way for libraries to contribute to environment sustainability.²² The drive for efficiency within library services is well established, with various policies and initiatives at national, regional and local levels. These initiatives typically measure efficiency as outputs (for example book issues or usage) related to investment (for example cost of service per head of population). The Chartered

²¹ British Library (2005) *Environmental Policy For Sustainable Development*

²² IDeA (2008) *A Passion for Excellence: an Improvement Strategy for Culture and Sport*

Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's comprehensive annual survey is a recognised means to track these measures. It should be remembered, however, that cost savings alone do not necessarily imply more environmentally sustainable practices.

The Sustainability Standard, developed by Forum for the Future and launched in 2008, aims to ascertain the extent to which local authorities have integrated sustainability into their overall operations, including corporate management structures, processes, practices and outcomes. It has some relevance to library services.

Five of the new 198 Local Government National Indicators also potentially offer a rationale for measuring and improving the environmental sustainability of libraries, although three of these require new datasets and have no baselines established.

- Local indicator 175 Access to services and facilities by public transport, walking and cycling
- Local Indicator 179 Value for money – total net value of ongoing cash-releasing value for money gains
- Local Indicator 185 CO₂ reduction from local authority operations
- Local Indicator 186 Per capita reduction in CO₂ emissions in the LA area
- Local Indicator 188 Planning to Adapt to Climate Change

Finally, the British Library's Environmental Policy for Sustainable Development appears to be relatively thorough and may offer a model for developing public library policies. The British Library policy covers:

- Measurement and environmental impact reduction of many aspects of operations ranging from energy consumption to ventilation systems to staff transport
- Procurement of goods and services
- Management of the estate
- Communication and coordination with other organisations

10.4 Sustainable buildings

As prominent public sector buildings, libraries are encouraged to 'think green' via a variety of awards and design guidance. At least two major new library buildings have been acclaimed for their incorporation of sustainable design features:

- Jubilee Library, Brighton has been designed and built with an array of energy efficiency features including maximal usage of natural light, solar warmth and sea breezes; high thermal mass to store heat or coolness; automatic light adjustment in response to ambient light conditions; and rainwater collection to flush lavatories. Among other design awards, that includes the Prime Minister's Better Public Building award, the library was named Building of the Year by the Observer Ethical Awards and was runner-up for the RIBA Sustainability Award.
- In 2007, the design for the new Swindon Central Library won the national BREEAM award, organised by the Building Research Establishment, for the best bespoke building.

The library has achieved a BREEAM Excellent rating, scoring 72.5%. (Interestingly, libraries fell outside the standard BREEAM rating system and a new bespoke assessment had to be developed.)

As other building based services can testify – for example social housing – adapting existing stock is probably a greater challenge than designing exemplar new buildings.

From October 2008, public buildings with a total useful floor area over 1,000m² were required to assess and display their energy efficiency ratings. Display Energy Certificates (DECs) show the actual energy usage of a building, the Operational Rating, and show the public the energy efficiency of the building. The rating is based on the energy consumption of the building as recorded by gas, electricity and other meters. The DEC is accompanied by an Advisory Report that lists cost effective measures to improve the energy rating of the building.²³ At present, only the largest public libraries are eligible for DECs but the rating system could potentially be extended for other libraries.

10.5 Public awareness

Libraries clearly have a major role to play in increasing public awareness of environmental sustainability by providing access to printed and electronic information, venues for meetings and training sessions, and exhibition spaces.

There have no doubt been some effective projects based in libraries and working with communities. However, there are at present no national websites or forums to debate such projects or to disseminate good practice. One opportunity is the sustainable development 'reference library' that DCMS pledged to develop on its website in 2008, that will contain case studies and reports on good practice.²⁴

²³ See www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/theenvironment/energyperformance

²⁴ DCMS (2008) *DCMS Sustainable Development Action Plan 2008-2011*

11 Measuring value

This last section of the literature review briefly considers approaches that attempt to capture other aspects of the 'value' of public libraries that have not been considered to-date. As MLA commissioned a comprehensive review of methodologies for assessing value and economic impact in 2007 (Jura Consultants, 2008), the main intention here is to pull out any implications that may exist for applying these approaches to public libraries specifically - as opposed to the wider museums, libraries and archives sector (which was the focus of the Jura study).

A focus on the overall 'value' of public libraries allows for a consideration of some of the more diffuse, institutional and societal benefits that may exist. Specifically, all of the previous literature reviewed is concerned with a variety of impacts that may arise for users of public library services. However, there are a range of 'non-use values' that consumers and citizens may attach to services, resources and institutions (e.g. option value, existence value, or bequest value) and research indicates that these non-use values are substantial for public libraries. For instance, Aabo (2004) notes that 'empirical data from a [national] study of public libraries in Norway indicate that approximately 40% of total value is motivated by direct use value, 20% by option value, and 40% by non-use value'. Other studies that use broadly the same contingent valuation methods also find similarly high values placed on a range of non-use values (e.g. Pung *et al*, 2004; Jura Consultants, 2005). These studies often ask people to place theoretical 'prices' on the value that they attach to libraries (e.g. 'willingness to pay'), and compare – almost always favourably – with the actual cost of provision.

However, in addition to the significant resources that are required to undertake contingent valuation studies, **a more fundamental weakness of these approaches is that they have little to say about why, in particular, people value libraries** (Jura Consultants, 2005). This raises potential challenges in communicating the value of the sector to government stakeholders, as the priorities and outcomes for these stakeholders are, in contrast, very specifically defined and measured, as shown above in section 3.

The other major approach to assessing value that the Jura report considers in some depth is **Return on Investment/Social Return on Investment (SROI) methods**. The authors conclude that such approaches, particularly SROI, are potentially very relevant as they can provide a full account of an organisation or sector's impact, across the 'triple bottom line' of potential economic, social and environmental benefits. **It is worth noting that some of the challenges that Jura identify in applying these methodology to the wider museums, libraries and archives sector, do not apply specifically in relation to public libraries.** So, while finding financial proxies for the value for being able to access a totally unique collection (which characterises many major galleries and museums) is very difficult, public libraries do not typically have unique collections. Correspondingly, this means that finding financial proxies to use in the econometric calculations is easier as market values for many of the resources that libraries provide for free or little cost are readily available (e.g. the cost of DVD rental, the price of internet access at home or in a café, book prices, and so on). **The main obstacle to undertaking SROI studies thus becomes the lack of basic data management information regarding service inputs and outputs** which, as the Jura reports notes, is often missing in the museums, libraries and archives sector.

12 Conclusions

The literature review shows that **public libraries in England are now involved in the delivery of a wide ranging menu of services, activities and resources**. While some government and VCS stakeholders will be aware of many of these activities, it is likely that the general public's 'common sense' understanding of the breadth of experiences and support now available from libraries is far less developed. This obviously has implications for how the sector communicates the new library offer to the public.

But **this very diversity of provision also, arguably, presents difficulties in demonstrating and communicating the impact of public libraries**. In large part, this arises because in **many of the 'new' areas of libraries activities** – for instance, early years support, adult basic skills provision, health support, information and guidance – **libraries are not, and will never be, the lead delivery agency**. This means that, **when broken down into individual strands of activity, the interactions that people have with libraries in these areas will generally be less intensive** than with other public institutions, such as schools, colleges, the health and social care sector, and so on. **Correspondingly, the impacts that can be expected to arise from these interactions may often be relatively mild**, particularly in comparison to the impacts that can be achieved by other institutions. To confound this problem, government policies, targets and monitoring and evaluation frameworks designed to support these activities (e.g. ECM) have traditionally been driven almost exclusively by lead bodies – though there is evidence that this situation is changing to match the greater degree of partnership work on the ground.²⁵ There is a sense, then, that public libraries have to demonstrate their impact, but not on their own terms.

This is changing as the strategic and delivery environment across government increasingly recognises the role of subsidiary partners in tackling complex social and economic challenges. But in order to capitalise on these changes, **the libraries sector still needs to better understand how the range of its operations has a variety of impacts, and what the priorities should be in terms of evidencing these**.

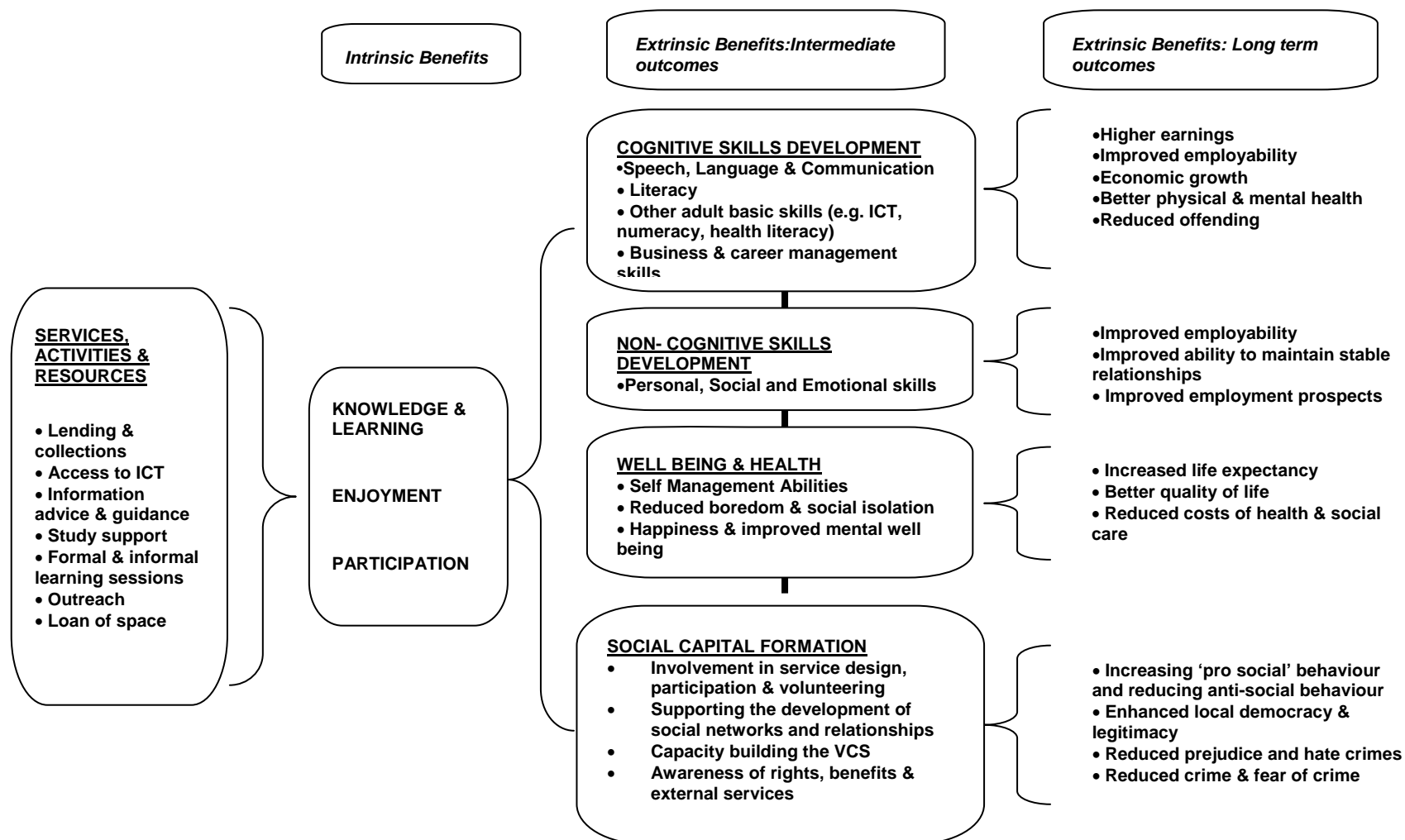
One way of beginning this process systematically is to construct a 'logic model' or logic 'chain' that links the activities and outputs of the sector, to the range of most likely impacts that the sector could evidence (based on the literature review).

12.1 A logic model for capturing the impact of libraries

Figure 6 below provides a first initial attempt at creating a logic model for capturing the impact of public libraries. The left-hand column of the model summarises the typical modern public library offer, while accepting that there will still be some variations in the precise product, service and resource mix across England's 4,500 public libraries.

²⁵ Cross-departmental PSAs being perhaps the most powerful expression of this.

Figure 6 An initial logic model for capturing the impact of public libraries in England



Source: BOP (2009)

The next column considers **the potential intrinsic impacts or benefits that relate directly to the use and consumption of the library offer**. These reside principally in **the value of learning and the acquisition of knowledge; enjoyment and participation** – in and of themselves. Although libraries' stakeholders across government are less interested in these types of benefits, the literature shows that where libraries do make an impact in delivering a range of extrinsic benefits, **these are founded in the particular intrinsic qualities of the library experience (e.g. informal, self-directed, non-threatening, inclusive, etc.)**. **This is what distinguishes libraries from many alternative service providers** such as formal education institutions, bookshops, Business Link, and so on.

The third and fourth columns outline the main extrinsic benefits that libraries may contribute towards. They are split between the short term or 'intermediate' outcomes that indicate progress towards longer term outcomes socio-economic outcomes. The **intermediate outcomes** can be classified in four main groups:

- **Cognitive skills development.** In terms of cognitive skills development, libraries have a particular contribution to make in early years by providing activities that support the development of literacy and speech, language and communication skills. Libraries support for developing literacy extends into later life, across all age ranges, alongside activities that contribute to the development of other adult basic skills, such as numeracy, ICT skills and health literacy. Finally, it is arguably more appropriate to frame libraries 'business support' activities as contributing to the development of business /entrepreneurship skills in individuals. This may be extended into contributing to career management and progression skills, if the new Adult Advancement and Careers Service (AACS) does outline a new role for libraries in this area.
- **Non cognitive skills development.** The informality and often self directed or group nature of the range of learning activities that takes place in libraries enables libraries to also make a contribution towards 'non-cognitive' skills development. These skills are often referred to as Personal, Social and Emotional skills, though they include capacities and attributes, such as resilience, self reliance and dependability, as well as more well known 'soft skills' such as self confidence, communication and team working skills.
- **Well being and health.** Libraries increasing involvement in health support and information programmes, as well as their intrinsic role as enjoyable leisure and cultural activities, means that they can make a contribution towards well being and health outcomes. This is particularly true in relation to those needing to develop self management abilities for dealing with long term conditions (including mental health issues) and the elderly. There is an opportunity to better communicate this contribution to government stakeholders, particularly in relation to the emerging 'happiness'/well being agenda.
- **Social capital formation.** Of the four areas, the evidence is arguably weakest for the specific contribution that libraries make to social capital formation (as opposed to the more general contribution that cultural activities *per se* make). But the public's high level of trust in libraries, and their continued valuing of them even when not used, indicates that they do make a strong contribution to creating stronger and more cohesive communities. There are also major opportunities for libraries to increase the involvement of users, particularly young people, in the design and delivery of library services.

In turn, **these intermediate outcomes are related to a range of longer term socio-economic outcomes**, such as increased life expectancy, higher earnings, reduced cost of health and social care, and so on. The evidence base related to libraries' impacts on these longer term outcomes hinges on the ability of libraries' activities to contribute towards these intermediate outcomes. The logic chain therefore works as follows: libraries activities contribute significantly towards → the development and improvement of literacy → many studies demonstrate statistical correlations between literacy levels and → higher earnings, better physical and mental health, etc.

12.2 Data and evidence requirements to populate the logic model

It is theoretically possible to gather a wealth of data and information to test and revise the underlying principles for each element of the logic model. The smaller sub-set of data and information that actually does get collected needs to be informed by an understanding of the kinds of evidence and indicators that the library sector's key stakeholders require (see section 4 above).

What is striking about the indicators that the government uses to measure the new 'outcome-based' strategic policy priorities, such as the new PSAs, is how many of the indicators actually remain stubbornly output-based (e.g. 'No. of young people participating in positive activities'), and how many others are intermediate outcomes that stand-in for longer term outcomes ('% of people perceiving anti-social behaviour as a problem', 'HE participation rate'). There are often pragmatic justifications for this approach, typically related to (i) the cost of data capture and research, and/or (ii) the timescale in which change is to be measured (e.g. any effects of early years interventions will take the best part of a generation to be assessed in terms of long term outcomes, but policymakers require much earlier feedback). There are also theoretical justifications for this mixed approach to monitoring and evaluation, for instance that the evidence base is so strong for the benefits of a particular activity (e.g. formal education) that it is sufficient to simply use output numbers, or that it is recognised that the uptake of services among particular groups needs to be improved, so the demographics of the user profile become a measure of success in their own right.

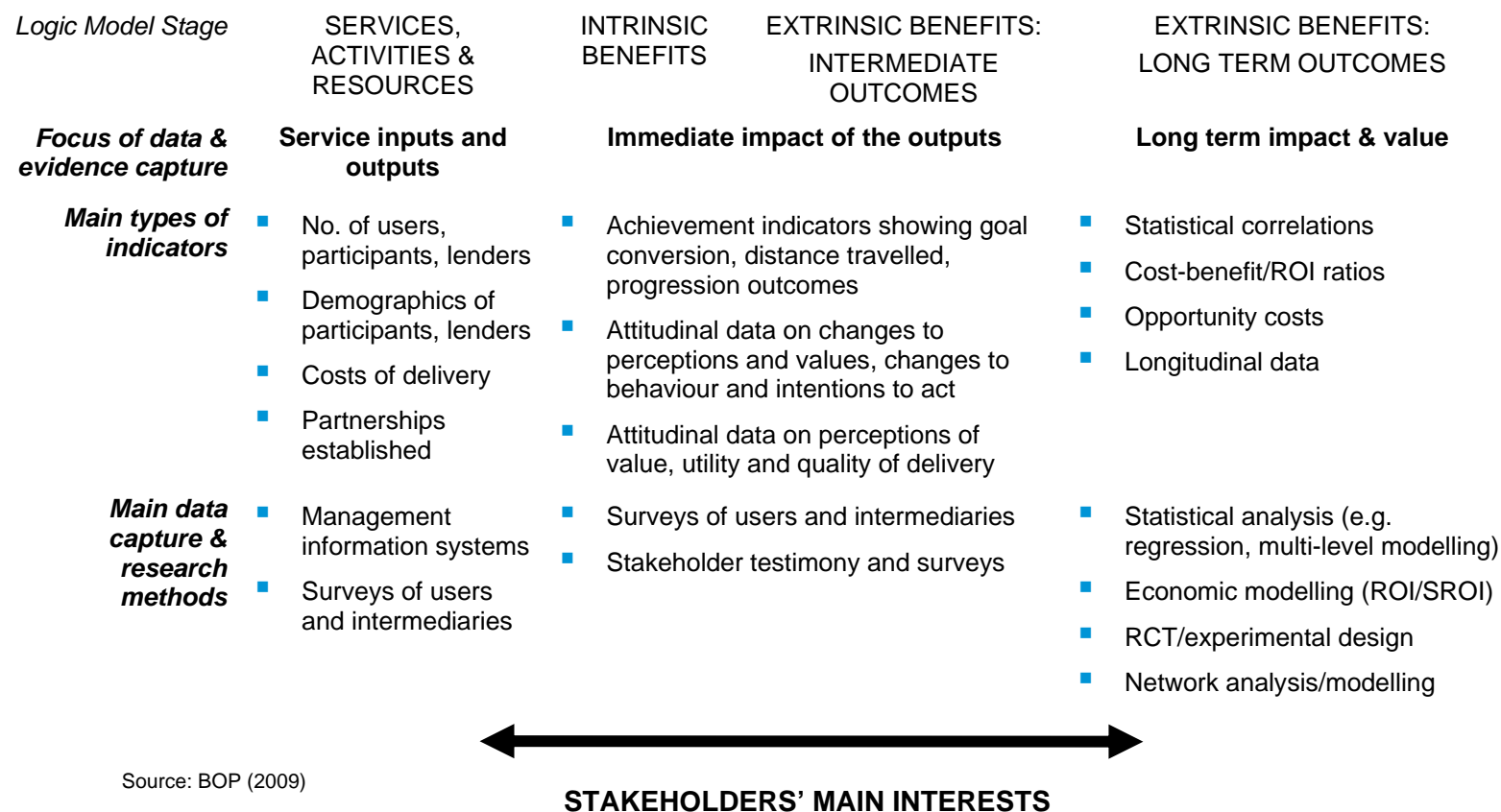
Figure 7 below takes onboard these considerations and suggests what a data framework for the libraries logic model would look like at the very top level.

- Data on **inputs and outputs** of the main Services, Activities and Resources of the sector needs to form the foundations of any evidence base for public libraries. However, as has been noted throughout the literature review, even this most basic level of service information is often not readily available for many of the 'new' areas of public libraries' activities.
- The next level is data and information on the **immediate impact of the outputs, related to both intrinsic and extrinsic benefits**. Since the turn of the decade, MLA and other partners in the sector have placed increasing emphasis on (i) collecting more of this kind of data and (ii) improving the standardisation of the main terms and concepts used. In particular, the GLOs have helped the sector to develop a shared approach to planning and evaluating immediate learning outcomes. Though more recent and therefore less well embedded across libraries, MLA's GSOs offer the same potential for bringing a greater coherence to evidence on libraries social impact, articulated within a language that is common to the sector's main stakeholders. At the same time, the sector could also make better use of other methods for assessing the same outcomes in other sectors, for

instance greater use of medical questionnaires in assessing well being and some social skills such as self confidence. Although qualitative research and data has a place in assessing these outcomes, most stakeholders preferences tend towards a quantification of qualitative outcomes in some form, usually through surveys of users or intermediaries.

- Lastly, data and research is also required on the **long term socio-economic outcomes** that public libraries can contribute towards, **as well as the overall value of the sector as compared to its costs, and to other types of intervention**. This requires a greater diversity of methods and approaches. Statistical analyses of longitudinal secondary data sources, Random Control Tests and other experimental design research methods, economic modelling such as ROI/SROI, as well as other social scientific techniques such as network modelling could all be usefully (and more widely) applied to the libraries sector. However, these kinds of more sophisticated analysis are more difficult to undertake. In large part, this arises through resource and time constraints. But it is also related, once again, to the fact that many of these approaches apply particular statistical techniques and modelling processes to secondary data on more basic indicators, such as the number and demographics of participants, and this is often not comprehensive or consistent for libraries.

Figure 7. Basic data framework for the logic chain for capturing the impacts of public libraries in England



Source: BOP (2009)

12.3 Current gaps, strengths and weaknesses

The main positive conclusions to be drawn from the analysis of government stakeholders are that they are looking for evidence that will demonstrate that libraries:

- can make a contribution towards/have a bearing on, a range of (mostly) intermediate outcomes, and
- that their services reach a number of particular target groups.

A key conclusion to be drawn from the literature review is that **the evidence base is actually relatively strong with regard to long term outcomes. This is due to the centrality of literacy and learning** to the current public library offer. Fortuitously for libraries, vast amounts of resources are devoted to researching the wider socio-economic effects of these skills and capacities internationally, and from a number of different perspectives outside of libraries (e.g. education research, health and economics). In this regard, libraries differ from other elements of the cultural sector, such as the arts or museums, where it is harder to make the case for some of these long term outcomes.

The main challenge for evidencing libraries impact is that, despite the relatively modest nature of what stakeholders would be looking for libraries to demonstrate (that their activities make a measurable contribution to a range of intermediate outcomes, and that their services can reach particular target groups), **the current evidence base still remains insufficient** in a number of ways.

Many of the weaknesses in the evidence base are generic, and have been identified in previous similar literature reviews of the museums, libraries and archives and wider cultural sectors, including BOP's previous work for MLA (BOP, 2005; 2006a). In brief, the most important and recurring include:

- A **predominance of one-off evaluations** of time-limited programmes and pilot schemes over research on core services. This means data is often not sufficiently robust due to small sample sizes and/or that wider conclusions cannot be drawn from the research due to the limited rollout of particular projects.
- A **lack of baselines** against which to measure change. Though the ongoing Book Ahead evaluation should help to improve baselines for early years activities, other core library activities such as adult learning, involvement of citizens (particularly young people) in the design and delivery of library services, numbers of bibliotherapy participants, purpose and demographics of users of The People's Network, etc. are still incomplete.
- A **lack of in-depth qualitative research** that analyses the specific nature of the interactions that take place in libraries, through more in-depth ethnographic studies. This would help, for instance, **to better understand the degree of participation that is required to produce demonstrable effects**. This is particularly lacking with regard to how participation translates into social capital and wider community outcomes. It would also **improve the understanding of how libraries may contribute to non-cognitive skills development**.

The policy areas in which libraries impact is weak are business support and economic development more generally, with the important exception of adult basic skills, and environmental sustainability, where the sector is nowhere at present.

The strengths of the evidence base that are important to communicate to stakeholders have been distilled into the logic chain, that is, libraries’ contribution to cognitive and non-cognitive skills development, health and well being and social capital formation. **But it is also important to note that these strengths vary according to different sub-groups of the population.** Figure 8 below attempts a very basic summary of these differences in terms of whether the evidence base is:

- **Promising:** encouraging findings from a number of different studies that in the main corroborate the contribution that libraries can make in these areas for these sub-groups; main weaknesses lie in the comprehensiveness of the data re lack of baselines/statistical significance re sample sizes
- **Emerging:** some evidence from a number of studies that libraries make a contribution but the studies are less robust – for instance, less use of control groups, more likely to rely on findings derived from library practitioners rather than participants, fewer longitudinal studies, and so on
- **Limited:** some evidence of impact but only from a handful of studies and/or less consistency across study findings

Figure 8. Summary of strengths and weaknesses of the evidence base, against population sub-groups

	Early years /families	School age children & young people	Working age adults	Older people
Cognitive skills development	PROMISING	PROMISING	PROMISING	EMERGING
Non-cognitive skills development	PROMISING	PROMISING	EMERGING	LIMITED
Well-being & health	EMERGING	LIMITED	EMERGING	EMERGING
Social capital formation	LIMITED	LIMITED	EMERGING	LIMITED

Source: BOP (2009)

What Figure 7 shows is that **early priorities for ‘quick wins’ in demonstrating libraries’ impact to government stakeholders lie in the broad learning agenda and for children and young people, particularly early years activities.**

13 Recommendations

Across all areas libraries need to improve the comprehensiveness and consistency of basic management information on services and users, to aid:

- performance management and improvement
- demonstrate libraries contribution to short term policy goals (e.g. ECM outcomes), principally at local level, as well as to
- establish the base data for more complex impact analyses such as cost effectiveness/SROI approaches

Without having credible baselines it is not possible to tell a compelling story about the 'new' public library, and how the library service can contribute to a wide range of stakeholders' agendas.

Children and young people, learning

Baselines of activity are particularly urgent with regard to learning activities, and for children and young people. Children have been the focus of much recent investment and activity in the sector and take-up from the public has been strong, in the context of falling usage for other elements of library services and resources.

In terms of adult learning, over the last decade there has been increasing government investment in informal learning and libraries have a key role to play here. However, again, the lack of baselines may be hindering libraries from gaining the full recognition and resources they deserve. Similarly, the lack of comprehensive data on the use and impact of The People's Network, and the skills development programmes wrapped around it, places a significant constraint on the sector's ability to demonstrate the value of one of its major investments.

Stronger communities

Although central and local government have accepted that participation in libraries on its own counts towards the development of more cohesive communities, there is very little comprehensive data on the degree to which people, particularly young people, are involved in the co-design and delivery of library services. This has become a strong agenda right across government, is key to understanding more about what the public expects of a modern library service and, in relation to young people, is a major sector commitment.

Well being and health

Another emerging policy agenda across government is well being/happiness. This is an agenda that libraries should be able to demonstrate a significant contribution towards, as it is a very close fit with the particular qualities of libraries as institutions (e.g. inclusive and trusted) and the activities that they support (e.g. enjoyable, informal learning and leisure). Further, as it is still an emerging area, there is the possibility to become influential in shaping how this agenda plays out in the future. However, at present, the evidence is too piecemeal and insufficiently articulated in the emerging language of the field. Relatedly, libraries need to understand more about the effectiveness of their, now widespread, health support and information activities in helping users to 'co-produce' their own health.

General characteristics of baseline data

Baselines of activity need to be national. Although library services are organised locally, policy in all the areas in which libraries have a contribution to make is set nationally to be delivered locally according to (generally) statutory guidance. This means that being identified first as a national partner is key to playing a subsequent role locally.

Wherever possible, baselines should strive to include demographic information. In many cases, a major element of the contribution that libraries appear to make is that they can more easily engage groups that other service providers find hard to reach. However, this sets up a potential contradiction: in seeking to provide more comprehensive and detailed data on hard to reach users and participants, libraries would risk undermining the main reason that attracts them in the first place (i.e. that few questions are asked or required to participate). This therefore requires careful consideration for how exactly enhancements to baseline data should be collected.

A library Census day?

One possible way that libraries could consider to improve their baseline data - without requiring it to be captured every time people interact with the service - would be through undertaking a Census of Library Users. This would most likely be a biennial census and would be a relatively light touch way, from the public's perspective, of significantly improving on what already exists. It has advantages over a sampled survey as it would provide actual data for each individual library, rather than estimates for a local authority library service. In turn, this is important as the Census would have to (in part) stand in for data that in other sectors would be captured through management information systems. But also, involving all public libraries and all library staff simultaneously in the same exercise, would allow MLA and their partners to use the Census as a 'hook' on which to hang workforce development activities on the importance of, and methods for, capturing data and evidence.

Of course, a Census would not be cheap. There again, at approximately £1bn per annum, neither is the public library service in England – and yet there appears to be chronically few resources devoted to researching and evaluating its impact.

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