Due for Renewal

A Report on the Library Service

AUDIT COMMISSION
The Audit Commission

... promotes proper stewardship of public finances and helps those responsible for public services to achieve economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
Due for Renewal

1 The Library Service in the 1990s

2 Rising Concerns

3 Further Challenges

4 Back to Basics

5 The Underlying Framework

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Preface

On paper, the library service is one of local government’s minor activities: total expenditure represents only just over 1 per cent of overall council spending. But it is one of the most popular services. Rooted in Victorian principles of self-improvement, the library service was established in order to raise educational standards throughout society. Over the years its core functions of book lending and the supply of reference information have broadened to include a wide range of activities with different social purposes. But its founding purpose – the need to raise educational standards – is as important now as it was in the middle of the nineteenth century.

Although the needs which motivated the creation of the library service persist, the service is under greater pressure now than at any previous time. Tighter resourcing for the whole of local government places particular pressure on relatively minor services. Other agencies are, potentially, in competition with libraries, and there has been an explosion of information and communications technology throughout society. These pressures raise questions about the role of a service which, at first glance, has changed little in the last 150 years.

For these reasons, a study of the library service is now timely. This report (and a companion management handbook to be published early in 1998) sets out the Audit Commission’s findings and recommendations. It is based on the results of fieldwork conducted in 22 authorities, a national questionnaire, analysis of secondary data sources and telephone interviews in 99 authorities. The Audit Commission team comprised James Kennedy and Denise Davies, with assistance from Lloyd Davis and Josie Dixon. The work was overseen initially by Steve Evans and then by Greg Birdseye, with contributions from John Sumision, BDO Stoy Hayward management consultants and Capital Planning Information Ltd. The team was supported by an advisory group of library professionals (see Appendix). The Audit Commission is grateful for the contributions of all these individuals and organisations, but responsibility for the report is the Audit Commission’s alone.

Local audit work will follow this report, starting early in 1998. This will give authorities the opportunity to consider the implications of this study for their local service and take forward the dissemination and further development of good library management.
The Library Service in the 1990s

Libraries are one of the most popular local government services. Over half the population are library members, drawn from all social classes and all age groups. People borrow heavily from libraries - there were 460 million issues of books for loan in 1995/96. Even those who do not use libraries share users' esteem for the service.

Total library expenditure, at £670 million a year, makes up less than 1 per cent of the expenditure on local authority services.

The national framework for the library service gives substantial discretion to local authorities. They have extended the range of services, in addition to book lending and access to reference material.
Public libraries were established in the middle of the nineteenth century (under the Public Libraries Act 1850) to support private study and self-improvement among the working classes. The principle then established (but not explicitly stated) was broadly that:

- Education by reading is good for people and society.
- Many people cannot afford to buy all the books and other written material that they would like to read. So, local authorities should buy materials with public funds and make them available for free public use.
- A large proportion of the books should be available for people to take away on free loan.
- Some adults and children who need to study do not have access to suitable places to study. So local authorities should use public funds to make available public buildings (libraries) for people to study in.

This fundamental purpose remains virtually unchanged and the loan of books and the provision of reference materials remain central to the purposes of the public library service. Sound and video recordings and electronic sources of information are now also regarded as within its scope.

The current statute (Public Libraries Act 1964) provides a loosely regulated framework within which libraries work. It requires local authorities to provide a ‘comprehensive’ service but does not specify what this means. On the only occasion when a local authority’s compliance with the Act was seriously challenged, it was not established conclusively whether the authority had complied with the law.\(^1\) In fulfilment of this broad remit, the library service has built up a wide range of services in addition to book lending and access to reference materials in library buildings (Box A, overleaf).

Their wide range of services means that libraries find themselves tackling needs in a number of separate areas:

- recreation and culture (for example, by lending books for people to read for pleasure);
- learning (for example, by making study materials available for reference and loan);
- social welfare (for example, by taking materials to housebound people, or offering a safe and warm place where people can relax); and
- economic development (for example, by providing business information or by helping individuals with training and jobseeking).

---

1. In 1991 there was a dispute between the Minister for the Arts and Derbyshire County Council following reductions in library expenditure by the Council (Ref. 1).
Box A

Services offered in public libraries

Source: Audit Commission fieldwork
These functions are undertaken through an extensive national network of library service points. In 1995/96 the public library network in England and Wales consisted of nearly 4,000 library buildings open for ten hours per week or more, as well as over 550 mobile libraries. Additionally, over 18,000 elderly persons’ homes and other institutions received a visiting service (Ref. 2), and most authorities also provide a service to housebound people.

In comparison with other discretionary cultural and leisure services, libraries attract large numbers of users (Exhibit 1). In England and Wales, 24 million adults are public library members and 12 million people use a public library at least once a fortnight (Ref. 3). This level of usage is achieved with relatively modest resourcing (£13 per head of population) (Ref. 2). And the library service draws users from all social classes (Exhibit 2) and all age groups (Exhibit 3, overleaf).

Compared with £293 per head for schools and £139 per head for social services (Refs. 4, 5).

Exhibit 1
Usage of local authority cultural and leisure services

Libraries are a well-used service.

Source: CIPFA statistics and Audit Commission local authority performance indicators

Exhibit 2
Library usage and social class

Libraries are used by members of all social classes.

Note: A and B correspond to professional, managerial and technical occupations; C1 to skilled non-manual; C2 to skilled manual; D and E correspond to partly skilled and unskilled occupations.

Source: ASLIB, Review of the Public Library Service in England and Wales, for the Department of National Heritage, 1995

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4. These functions are undertaken through an extensive national network of library service points. In 1995/96 the public library network in England and Wales consisted of nearly 4,000 library buildings open for ten hours per week or more, as well as over 550 mobile libraries. Additionally, over 18,000 elderly persons’ homes and other institutions received a visiting service (Ref. 2), and most authorities also provide a service to housebound people.

5. In comparison with other discretionary cultural and leisure services, libraries attract large numbers of users (Exhibit 1). In England and Wales, 24 million adults are public library members and 12 million people use a public library at least once a fortnight (Ref. 3). This level of usage is achieved with relatively modest resourcing (£13 per head of population) (Ref. 2). And the library service draws users from all social classes (Exhibit 2) and all age groups (Exhibit 3, overleaf).
Exhibit 3
Library usage and age
Libraries are used by all age groups.

Frequent users
Occasional users
Non-users

Source: ASLIB, Review of the Public Library Service in England and Wales, for the Department of National Heritage, 1995

Exhibit 4
Loans of books from public libraries in the UK and abroad
The number of loans in the UK compares well with the figure abroad.

Note: There are charges for book loans in some of the countries in the chart. The statistics relate to various years in the mid-1990s.

Source: LISU Annual Library Statistics, Loughborough University, 1996

6. The level of issues is high: there were around 460 million book issues from English and Welsh libraries in 1995/96, around nine issues per head of population (Ref. 6), which compares well with the level of issues in public libraries abroad (Exhibit 4).
7. As well as being well used, libraries are also well liked (Exhibit 5). And non-users generally share users’ esteem for libraries. The main reasons that non-users give for not using libraries are personal, such as lack of time, lack of interest and their ability to buy the materials that they need. Few cite factors under the control of the library service, such as library location, opening hours or the inadequacy of the service. To the extent that satisfaction surveys indicate public views, these results suggest that the public is generally content with library services.

8. However, although the library service is well regarded and well liked, there are signs that it is in gradual decline and may not be strongly placed to take up the challenges that are now facing it. Chapter 2 outlines causes of concern to do with the running of established services: declining usage, reduced access and increasing staff costs. Chapter 3 concentrates on external developments: the need to establish effective partnerships with other agencies and to respond to the explosive development of information and communications technology. Chapters 4 and 5 set out the Audit Commission’s recommendations for management responses to these challenges. Finally, Chapter 6 considers how these steps can help libraries to shape their future.

Exhibit 5
Impressions of the library service
People have a favourable opinion of the service.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Views about the library service</th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
<th>neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Librarians are generally friendly and helpful</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source of reliable facts and figures</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well worth spending time in a public library</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well organised</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An approach in tune with the 1990s</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quick and capable responses to requests</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not well located</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libraries often provide wrong information</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services are of poor quality</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A place mainly for younger people</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old-fashioned procedures</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: For each comment, the median degree of agreement or disagreement is quoted.

Source: Postal and face-to-face surveys of a representative sample of 2,100 users and non-users in England and Wales carried out in 1995 by the Association for Information Management (ASLIB) for the former Department of National Heritage. There were 1,490 respondents to these questions.
The number of books issued for loan shows a steady decline over the last ten years. Over the same period, one-third of libraries that were open for 45 or more hours a week have reduced their hours to below this level. The recorded number of enquiries that library staff handle has gone up.

Over the last ten years, expenditure on libraries has not fallen; it has been driven up by rising staff costs. At the same time, libraries’ book-buying power has decreased – expenditure on books and other materials has risen more slowly than book prices. There are grounds for concern that fewer and older books in circulation may have contributed to the decline in the number of loan issues.
High usage, accessibility throughout society and popularity are impressive achievements but, despite these successes, libraries need to respond to the problems that they are currently experiencing with their traditional services. These are evident most clearly in three areas:

- declining usage;
- reduced access; and
- increasing costs.

Although the number of book issues is high, it is falling in all types of authority; there has been an overall drop of 19 per cent in the last 10 years (Exhibit 6).

Apart from the number of book issues, there are few established indicators of the level of library activity. For example, the number of library visits per head of population has not been recorded for a sufficient period of time (records began five years ago) for any clear trends to be identified. But there are two indicators that show increases in activity. Loans of materials other than books, such as videotapes and music CDs, have risen by over 100 per cent in 10 years (Ref. 6) bringing in £12 million of gross revenue in hire charges in 1995/96 (Ref. 2). However, the current level of audio-visual and non-book issues (just over 30 million in 1995/96) still fails to compensate for the decline of 108 million book issues (Ref. 6) – and is vulnerable to developments in technology, which are likely to allow users a substantially increased choice of television channels, including film channels, in the next few years.

Exhibit 6
Loans of books 1985/86 to 1995/96

Although the number of loans is high, the general trend is downwards.

Source: LISU Annual Library Statistics, Loughborough University, 1997
12. The other indicator that shows a rise in activity is the number of enquiries made to libraries. From 1985/86 to 1995/96 the number of enquiries rose by over 70 per cent (Ref. 2). The significance of this rise is hard to assess, because enquiries vary in their complexity and the demands placed on staff. Clearly ‘Do you have the latest Catherine Cookson?’ is of a different nature from ‘Information, please, on Wyndham Hill supermarket development.’ A detailed study (Ref. 7) of enquiries to public libraries reported that over half concern ‘elementary and routine matters’ and ‘make no call on the bibliographical expertise of the staff’, or are about authors or titles. Fewer than half of enquiries are fact-finding or more open-ended. The study suggests that, on average, an enquiry takes about two minutes of a member of staff’s time, which implies that enquiries consume a little over 4 per cent of total library staff effort.

13. The main traditional library service, issues of books for loan, is suffering declining demand and countervailing rises do not make significant demands on library resources.

Reduced access

14. The number of public libraries that are open for ten hours or more per week has remained remarkably constant over the last decade. However, the average number of hours per week that these library service points are open to the public has declined: between 1985/86 and 1995/96 there was an overall reduction of almost 6 per cent (Ref. 6). This reduction is particularly marked in libraries with the longest opening hours, predominantly the main libraries and large branches, where one-third of libraries that were previously open for 45 hours or more a week have reduced their hours to below this level (Exhibit 7). The fall has been most marked in London and metropolitan areas.

15. Between 1985/86 and 1995/96 – although the number of mobile libraries has remained fairly constant – there was a fall of almost 40 per cent in the total number of libraries open for ten hours or less per week. Over the same period there was an increase of 25 per cent in the number of institutions served (for example, residential homes for the elderly) (Ref. 6). However, the increase in the number of institutions served benefits only a small proportion of the population.

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1 Although the number of enquiries gives some indication of the workload associated with reference services it does not indicate usage, since many reference users discover what they need without assistance.
Despite reductions in some of the key indicators of activity, the library service’s resources have not been declining. Total expenditure in 1995/96 was £670 million, partially offset by income of £55 million. Total expenditure has risen by 10 per cent in real terms in the last ten years (Ref. 6).

More than half of gross expenditure is on the 23,000 employees (Exhibit 8, overleaf), of whom 6,000 are in professional posts (Refs. 2, 6). In real terms, expenditure on employees has risen by 10 per cent overall in the ten years to 1995/96, although there has been a small decline in London. The rise in expenditure on staff is due not to a rise in staff numbers (which have fallen by 10 per cent), or to a change in the numbers of professional staff working in the service (which has fallen by 17 per cent), but to a rise in the unit employment costs of staff. In real terms, the average cost (including on-costs) of a library employee has risen by 22 per cent, from £12,900 in 1985/86 to £15,800 in 1995/96 (Ref. 6). And there is no evidence of a general increase in employee responsibilities to explain the rise in staff costs per employee. Library services are not unusual in having experienced a rise in pay and other employment costs. What is worrying for the library service is that when it is caught between a budget ceiling and rising staff costs, the result is a squeeze on the books and materials budget where there is short-term flexibility (this budget currently accounts for about 18 per cent of libraries’ expenditure) (Ref. 2).

Exhibit 7
Library access

The reduction in opening hours is particularly marked in libraries with the longest opening hours, where one-third of libraries that were previously open for 45 hours or more a week have reduced their hours to below this level.

Source: LISU Annual Library Statistics, Loughborough University, 1997
Although, in real terms, there has been a rise of 102 per cent in expenditure on audio-visual materials between 1985/86 and 1995/96, expenditure on bookstock has fallen by 10 per cent. Taken together, there has been an overall fall of 5 per cent, in real terms, in expenditure on books and other materials (Ref. 6).

These three problems: declining usage, reduced access and increasing costs, are likely to be related. There is evidence to link reduced expenditure on books with reductions in issue figures. The National Book Committee, which includes representatives of the main bodies involved in book supply and publishing, looked at differences in expenditure on books between those authorities where book issues had fallen by one-third or more between 1984/85 and 1994/95, and those where book issues had either increased or fallen by no more than 10 per cent. The study found that authorities with greater reductions in their issue figures tended to be those which had most reduced expenditure on the book stock (Ref. 9). Although far-reaching cuts in the book fund will probably have an effect on the public’s desire to borrow books, the picture is clearly more complicated than this, since many factors are likely to contribute to falling issue figures. For example, the same report drew attention to the probable contribution of reduced opening hours, and suggests that poor stock management and ineffective strategic planning can also contribute to falling issues.

In the context of tighter resourcing in local government, library authorities must focus their attention on their basic management processes to address the decline in efficiency and effectiveness of traditional services. But there are also wider challenges. Libraries must forge partnerships with other, potentially competing, agencies, and respond to developments in information and communications technology. These wider challenges are discussed in the next chapter.
Further Challenges

Technological developments offer opportunities for greater efficiency in traditional functions such as issuing books and looking up information in the library catalogue. They also offer enhancements to the library service, such as electronic access to vast information sources - not only from libraries, but also from village halls, post offices, kiosks in the street and other places outside traditional library buildings.

Although there is a wide range of individual initiatives using information and communications technology in libraries, its use is still generally limited. And the loan of books and the provision of paper-based reference materials are still by far the major activities.

Libraries need to respond actively to technological developments. If they do not, they may be left behind as users demand enhanced services, and will also miss opportunities to become more efficient.
In addition to problems associated with traditional services, further challenges face the public library service of the 1990s. The most important are:

- the need to establish effective partnerships with other agencies; and
- the need to respond to developments in information and communications technology (ICT).

Many library services cover purposes that are shared with other agencies. Within local government there are departments other than libraries working in all the areas that libraries tackle (Exhibit 9). And outside local government, an increasing number of organisations pursue aims and provide services in areas where libraries are active - for example, further education colleges and universities, Training and Enterprise Councils, voluntary organisations, community groups, learned societies and commercial organisations.

Libraries have the potential to offer much to other agencies as partners because of their widespread presence throughout the community and because of the high regard in which they are held by the general public. Many agencies would welcome the opportunity to exploit libraries' capacity to reach more people.

Exhibit 9
Local authority departments serving the same areas of need as libraries

Several departments work in the same areas as libraries.
However, co-operation between the library service and other departments and agencies is poorly developed. For example, despite significant overlap of aims and objectives, the library service is mentioned in the policy statements of other local authority departments in only 12 per cent of authorities (Ref. 10). And formal partnerships, in which partners make a financial contribution to library activities in their area of concern, are common with the education service (and, outside the local authority, with the Prison Service) but rare in other service areas. Even where partnership exists, written service level agreements – setting out what service is to be provided and on what terms – are not common.

Although the library service has always worked in a range of policy areas, the pressure on library budgets and the increased emphasis on partnerships and joint working mean that library services must improve the quality of existing partnerships and establish partnerships where they do not exist. Without this development there is a danger of duplication of provision and inefficient use of public money; and of failing to provide a comprehensive service to the user whose needs do not fit neatly into departmental boundaries. To progress, library services must ensure that their costing and service planning processes demonstrate the contribution that they make to aims shared with other agencies, and that these processes assist the library service in establishing and enhancing partnership arrangements.

Such partnerships can be of benefit to all involved. West Sussex Library Service, for example, has established formal partnership arrangements with three other local authority departments (Case Study 1).

### Case Study 1
**Partnerships between West Sussex Library Service and other parts of the authority**

**The partnerships**

A corporate economic development group, chaired by the County Planning Officer, has provided funding for a full-time information officer for the library’s business information service. The library funding bid was based on extensive market research which suggested that there was local demand for a high-quality business information service based on CD-Rom and on-line information sources over and above the existing free service. The Library Service has to monitor and report regularly against targets set by the economic development group.

The Chief Executive’s Office provides funding for one full-time information officer and for two full-time equivalent assistant information officers who work in corporate information ‘help-points’ in West Sussex libraries as part of a network of ten similar one-stop shops managed in partnership between county, district and town councils.

The School Library Service is headed by a member of staff from the Education Department but who is based within the Library Service headquarters. A further six full-time equivalent outposted operational staff work with management support from the Library Service but their salaries are funded by the Education Department.

*cont./*
**Case Study 1 (cont.)**

Outside the local authority, in areas where other agencies have the lead responsibility, partnership is essential in the interests of both effectiveness and efficiency. If partnership cannot be achieved in a particular area of service, the continued involvement of the library service should be open to question. Because libraries are a ‘free good’ to other departments and agencies, it is not surprising that their involvement is currently welcomed. It is only if they become a paid-for service, with mutually agreed service level agreements in place, that their true value to such partners will become evident.

In addition to the need for effective partnerships with other agencies, the explosive development of information and communications technology (ICT) presents a profound challenge for the public library service. The Government and the European Union (Ref. 11) both recognise ICT as being of vital importance to the lives of individual citizens and national economies as we approach the next millennium. Public libraries cannot ignore these developments if they are to remain relevant to the people that they serve. ICT can be used in public libraries in two main ways:

- to support administrative functions, such as traditional stock circulation management; and
- to enhance the quality and effectiveness of services to the public.

---

**Benefits**

West Sussex Library Service views the arrangements with other parts of the authority as useful for ensuring closer co-operation with them and in focusing effort on corporate objectives. The funding stream for each of these services is clear and explicit and the core activities are protected from being squeezed by general budgetary pressure. The achievements of these services are monitored at corporate level and the library service is able to demonstrate the worth of its specific contribution towards meeting wider corporate objectives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service within the libraries</th>
<th>Partner department</th>
<th>Library staff paid by partner department</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School library service</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>six full-time equivalents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate information to the public</td>
<td>Chief executive’s</td>
<td>one full-time information officer and two full-time equivalent assistant information officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business information</td>
<td>Economic development</td>
<td>one full-time officer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

27. Outside the local authority, in areas where other agencies have the lead responsibility, partnership is essential in the interests of both effectiveness and efficiency. If partnership cannot be achieved in a particular area of service, the continued involvement of the library service should be open to question. Because libraries are a ‘free good’ to other departments and agencies, it is not surprising that their involvement is currently welcomed. It is only if they become a paid-for service, with mutually agreed service level agreements in place, that their true value to such partners will become evident.

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- to support administrative functions, such as traditional stock circulation management; and
- to enhance the quality and effectiveness of services to the public.

---

1 For example, in its confirmation of the remit of the Libraries and Information Commission working party on ICT.
Support for administrative functions

29. Developments in ICT have already transformed the way in which everyday transactions such as payments for services, telephone billing, cash withdrawal from financial institutions, and travel and entertainment bookings are carried out; they have also provided new ways for organisations to reduce costs and improve standards of service. There are a number of relevant applications of administrative ICT, particularly those designed to support libraries in their core task of managing stock circulation (including issues of books and other stock, and returns and movements of stock within the library service). These include:

- automated circulation systems;
- interactive public access to the catalogue; and
- self-service issue terminals.

Automated circulation systems

30. Stock circulation is a fundamental aspect of library service provision which involves keeping track of the stock and carrying out associated functions such as issuing overdue loan letters. Some form of computerised circulation system has been in operation for almost a quarter of a century, but technological developments mean that systems are increasingly efficient, functional and easy to use. Automated circulation systems save considerable staff time compared with manual systems and provide a faster, more reliable and more comprehensive service to the user.

31. The number of authorities using such systems has increased (from 62 per cent in 1983 to 94 per cent in 1997) but only just over 60 per cent of these authorities have automated circulation systems in more than half of their libraries (Ref. 12). The circulation of books between library authorities (inter-library loans) is also increasingly automated. As well as speeding up the delivery of requested items, some systems give librarians direct access to catalogue information for other authorities.

Interactive public access to the catalogue

32. Automated circulation systems increasingly have the potential to allow library users to request or renew books themselves via public access terminals. This can reduce the demands on staff time, assist in staff planning, reduce queues and provide a more efficient service for users. Nearly 100 library services in England and Wales provide on-line public access to their catalogue (Ref. 12), but only nine of these provide an interactive facility for users to request and renew their own books (Ref. 10). Some authorities are not able to provide an interactive facility because of the lack of, or limitations to, their computer systems; others have been reluctant to install this facility because of fears that users may not feel confident enough to use it effectively. However, experience in Essex has shown considerable public enthusiasm for self-reservation (Case Study 2, overleaf).
Case Study 2  
Self-reservation system in Essex

**Background**

Essex County Library Service experienced long queues at busy times in library branches; people reserving books were a significant contributory factor.

**Development**

The Library Service introduced an on-line self-reservation facility when it upgraded its automated circulation system in 1992. The facility was provided through existing on-line public access terminals, so that the only additional costs were those of training staff and providing a minimal level of staff assistance to help users. To encourage the use of automated reservations, a slightly lower charge was introduced for reservations made using the facility than for those made via counter staff.

**Benefits**

Pressure on counter staff at busy times has decreased and the overall number of requests has risen significantly (from 177,000 in 1989/90 to over 500,000 in 1996/97) (Exhibit 10). This improvement has been achieved without increasing the number of operational staff. Essex Library Service estimates that additional staffing to achieve the same improvement in service without introducing the self-reservation facility would have cost around £100,000.

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**Exhibit 10**

**Essex libraries request statistics (1989/90 to 1996/97)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of requests via staff access terminals</th>
<th>Number of requests via public access terminals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1989/90</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990/91</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991/92</td>
<td>200</td>
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<tr>
<td>1992/93</td>
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<tr>
<td>1994/95</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995/96</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996/97</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Essex County Council
Self-service issue terminals

Self-service issue terminals have been widely introduced in the United States, Scandinavia and Germany where they are used to process up to 80 per cent of issues. They have many of the same benefits as interactive public access to the catalogue: reducing queues at busy times, assisting staff planning and providing a more efficient service to the user. Experience in the UK and abroad has shown that they can reduce costs significantly in a medium- to large-sized library (Case Study 3).

Although only two authorities currently use self-service issue terminals, the Audit Commission’s survey showed that over 40 per cent of authorities are interested in the concept (Ref. 10).

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Case Study 3
Self-service issue in the West Lothian Library Service

**Background**
There were long queues and pressure on counter staff during busy periods in West Lothian’s main library in Bathgate. A reduced staffing budget meant that it was not possible to employ extra part-time or sessional staff to meet this need. And a self-service issue system was considered to give greater flexibility.

**Development**
The authority introduced a self-service issue terminal in the main library in October 1996. Currently such systems cost between £15,000 and £20,000, including installation costs. Additional costs at Bathgate included inserting an electronic security tag in each book (about £15,000 worth of staff time); the cost of security detection panels (about £3,600); publicity costs (about £200); a small amount of staff time taken up in training (the training itself was included in the installation costs); furniture and consumables; and the cost of a member of staff to assist and encourage users during the first few weeks. The system has been reliable and requires minimal maintenance.

**Outcome**
West Lothian Library Service estimates that 30 per cent of staff time was previously spent on library issues. The self-service issue terminal currently deals with around 35 per cent of all issues with the result that, in total, around 16 staff hours a week – or about 50 per cent of a full-time post – is now available for other library activities. The system will thus pay for itself in less than two years.
Enhanced service provision

Developments in ICT have had a significant impact on the range of material available for information, education, culture and entertainment and on the way in which this material is disseminated. However, private access to ICT-based services is currently very limited: for example, only 5 per cent of households throughout England and Wales have access to the Internet via personal computers. New interactive television services have the potential to bring ICT-based services into more people’s homes: British Telecom estimates that up to 15 million households could have access to some form of interactive television service – cable, satellite or terrestrial – by the year 2010. However, even those people with private access to appropriate ICT equipment will be restricted in the range of subscribed or paid-for services by what they can afford. This suggests a potential role for public libraries in providing general access to ICT-based services and in supporting the public in its use of ICT. In particular, ICT can be used to provide:

- enhanced reference services;
- enhanced support for independent study;
- enhanced provision to specific client groups; and
- ICT-based library services in non-library locations.

All of these potential enhancements to service provision draw on librarians’ established skills in information management, including acquiring, cataloguing and retrieving information.

Enhanced reference services

Developments in computer networks have the potential to extend greatly traditional information and reference services and to ensure that even the smallest branch library has access to an extensive and expanding range of information. The World Wide Web gives access to a vast network of constantly updated information to anyone with the appropriate equipment. The number of ‘pages’ on the Web has grown from 130,000 in 1993 to around 30 million currently (Ref. 14), with a rapidly increasing range of community, public and commercial information accessible through this medium. In addition, there are over 5,000 commercial on-line services available worldwide to anyone who chooses to subscribe (Ref. 15). Even without using links to the Web, CD-Roms can provide information over a network – for example, serving all branches of an authority’s library service. CD-Rom technology makes it possible for a huge volume of information to be stored on a small disk and an increasing number of CD-Rom titles are published annually; over 6,000 titles in 1994 (Ref. 16).
Despite this potential, the provision of ICT-based information and reference services in public libraries is limited. Most provision is concentrated in the largest libraries and, even then, there is only limited direct public access.

Enhanced support for independent study

Libraries have always provided facilities for independent study. Developments in ICT provide ways of extending and enhancing these facilities. Many library authorities took advantage of the Open for Learning funding scheme. Established in June 1992, the scheme’s intention was to provide workstations with relevant software, tutorials and supporting material to enable people to engage in computer-assisted independent study. By the end of the programme in 1995, around 100 library authorities had benefited from the scheme and were either providing, or were actively developing, some form of open learning facility. Against a target of 20 new learners per open learning centre per month, half of these libraries achieved an average of between 10 and 25 new learners per month. And a survey of people using these open learning facilities found that 71 per cent claim to have benefited ‘quite a bit’ or ‘a lot’ (Ref. 17). Libraries were selected by the Government as the vehicle for this programme because of their accessibility to local communities, the high public regard for library services and the high degree of public usage. A report produced by the project manager of the scheme notes, however, that:

‘The extent to which libraries have set about embedding good quality control within their service appears to vary greatly from one library to another’ (Ref. 18).

This view was supported by this study’s fieldwork that found that many libraries, which offered open learning services, had only minimal open learning facilities available to users. The varying quality of open learning facilities suggests that library services have some way to go before realising the full potential of ICT-based open learning provision.
Enhanced provision to specific client groups

40. Technological advances provide new ways to deliver services to specific client groups. Given the right equipment, blind and partially-sighted people can have full access to both text and ICT-based services. Kurtzweil reading machines can be used to translate text into sound recording, and screen readers, in conjunction with sound boxes, refreshable braille displays and braille printers, can allow blind and partially sighted people to ‘read’ information presented on screen. Manchester Central Library has a room dedicated to providing print-based and ICT-based materials for blind and partially-sighted people using these technologies. But such facilities are not widely available elsewhere in public libraries.

41. ICT-based information systems, which the public can use without the help of an intermediary, are of benefit to people who are deaf or hard of hearing, since they are able to gain access to a wealth of information without having to approach a member of the library staff with whom communication may be difficult. In Cheshire, users who are deaf or hard of hearing have also benefited from video-conferencing facilities which give access, with accompanying sign language translation or on-screen text, to people in other locations who can offer expert advice or assistance (Case Study 4).

42. ICT-based information services that can be used directly by the public without staff assistance provide anonymity for those who would otherwise be reluctant to seek information from a member of staff. Hertfordshire Library Service, in its work with Hertfordshire Youth Service, found that young people were much more likely to use library services to obtain information when they could do so without having to approach a member of the counter staff. Consequently, the library has developed information pages specifically of relevance to young people.

43. Access to the Internet, or to a similar local network (known as an Intranet), can be used to provide a forum for users with shared interests or needs to make contact with each other and share information (Ref. 19). For example, Hereford and Worcester County Library Service will assist local clubs and societies that wish to place a Web page on the library on-line information service. These pages may contain links that allow users to access other Web pages which address related issues and interests. And Manchester Library Service maintains a database of clubs and societies which can be accessed via the Internet or the local network and which will allow users to communicate via e-mail with information providers.
Case Study 4
Cheshire Face to Face

Background
The Face to Face project was established by Cheshire Library Authority, in partnership with Cheshire Deaf Society, to explore the potential of videophone technology in providing services to people who are deaf or hard of hearing people, as well as to explore more general uses of videophone technology in serving library users. The initiative grew out of an earlier project funded by the Government which provided text-based telephone links between public libraries and the information databases of the Cheshire Deaf Society.

Development
Olivetti contributed videophone equipment, which enables a computer to be adapted for use as a videophone. The software costs around £1,600 per computer terminal and requires a high-capacity telephone link to other videophones. Cheshire Library Service paid around £300 for the telephone line to be installed and on-line time is charged at twice the cost of a local phone call. Staff awareness training was provided directly by Cheshire Deaf Society.

The service
The project provides video access for people who are deaf or hard of hearing to a range of service providers who provide information and advice in sign language, with on-screen text, or even through lip-reading. For example, social workers for people who are deaf and hard of hearing are contracted from Cheshire Deaf Society by the county, and they provide an information and advice service that can be accessed from any one of nine libraries which have a videophone installed. Remote access is particularly important for those living in rural parts of the county where a journey into a main centre can be difficult. The service has more recently been extended to provide a remote service to the general public and it now includes videophone links with Age Concern, Shelter, a large housing association, Cheshire County’s Welfare Information Service and a local further education college which provides tutor support for the open learning service.

ICT-based library services in non-library locations
44. ICT-based services, delivered by computer networks, can be used simultaneously by large numbers of people, each accessing information or services from a different location. This means that ICT-based services can be delivered to locations that are outside library buildings, indeed anywhere where there is a suitable communications link. A wide range of non-library locations are already being used to provide ICT-based services including council offices, leisure buildings, health centres, post offices, railway stations, shopping centres, housing estates and even kiosks on the street. However, none of these is being used extensively and the siting of library terminals in non-library locations is still unusual (Ref. 10).
45. The capacity to provide a 'virtual' library service or 'a library without walls' has led to suggestions that libraries as public buildings may become a thing of the past. It is unlikely, however, that on-line library services could replace the library building completely, even in the long term, since facilities for study and events require a physical space. Buildings are also likely, for the foreseeable future, to remain the main access point for staff assistance and books.

46. However, the capacity to provide a range of services on-line expands the range of service delivery methods and service points and can provide an alternative method of meeting service aims. Taking ICT-based library services beyond the walls of the library building enables library authorities to extend access by providing a service from a wider range of locations and, potentially, outside library opening hours. It also allows library authorities to site service points where they can most benefit priority client groups. For example, Hereford and Worcester County Library Service has placed terminals which give access to the library catalogue and on-line information service in a number of village post offices and premises in order to provide a more comprehensive service to isolated rural communities (Case Study 5).
Background
The library on-line information service (LOIS) in Hereford and Worcester grew out of the Golden Valley Information Pilot Project which Hereford and Worcester Libraries and Arts Department initiated, developed and ran between April 1993 and March 1995. The project aimed to provide an improved service to those living in the rural Golden Valley area. The mobile library service to this area was very restricted and one-fifth of its residents had no access to a car (the nearest library is 15-20 miles away). The project was funded by the Public Library Development Incentive Scheme of the former Department of National Heritage, the Countryside Employment Programme, BLCMP Library Services Ltd, Hereford and Worcester Training and Enterprise Council and Hereford and Worcester County Council.

At the end of the pilot project in 1995, the on-line information service was extended with funding from the county. Currently terminals offering access to LOIS are available in four rural centres across the west and north of Hereford and Worcester, including a post office and a resource centre, as well as a network of branch libraries.

The service
The topics covered by the service include information on social security benefits, local clubs and societies, job vacancies, employment and training opportunities, county council services and contacts, disability and health, sport and leisure, weather, local services directory, train timetables and agricultural information. The service is available locally and also on the Internet to people outside the area. In the near future the catalogue will go on-line, with the facility for users to renew and request their own books and other items.

Costs
The initial Golden Valley Information project cost £156,000, which included the cost of development and exploratory work. Maintaining the service at its current level is estimated to cost £45,000 a year, which includes the cost of a project manager who manages the databases and oversees the continuing development of the service. Increasing the number of access points would incur few additional costs, mainly the cost of a computer, a telephone line and associated equipment, so the marginal cost of expansion is small.

Benefits
The Internet service is accessed approximately 500 times a week, and its tourist and local information pages are the most popular. The local Intranet is also well used, with up to 400 accesses a week in some of the larger libraries. The service provided in the rural villages is also popular and highly regarded. The success of the project was recognised by an award for innovation in 1997 from the Society for Public Information Networks.
Although there are many individual initiatives, the use of ICT in public libraries is still limited. Even automated systems for recording issues and returns are not yet installed in all public libraries. There is very limited use of self-service issue systems and of interactive on-line public access to the catalogue. And despite some use of ICT-based information and other services in public libraries, traditional services (the loan of books and the provision of paper-based reference materials) are still the norm and account for most library expenditure (Exhibit 11). This picture is also reflected in surveys of library use: a survey of 1,345 people by the Association for Information Management (ASLIB) in 1995, found that only 9 per cent of library users said that they had searched computer databases, whereas all said that they had borrowed books (Ref. 3).

The predominance of traditional services suggests that the potential of ICT to enhance service provision, to support library services in meeting their service objectives and to improve library efficiency is still a long way from being realised.

Exhibit 11
Gross expenditure on traditional services

Traditional services still account for most library expenditure.

Note 1: Traditional services comprise lending and reference services for adults and children in fixed and mobile service points and outreach services to institutions and the housebound. Remaining services include schools service, audio-visual, IT access, trading, business services, community information and other specialist services.

Note 2: Authority A’s costs are based on estimates since it is a new unitary authority.

Source: Audit Commission fieldwork
ICT will alter the way in which services are delivered to the public and will have implications for both efficiency and effectiveness. The exact balance of gains in terms of efficiency and effectiveness will depend on the individual circumstances and service priorities of local library services. For example, some ICT-based services may be introduced to enhance services to the public but they may also provide a more cost-effective way of meeting service aims than more traditional means. Similarly, ICT which is designed to support administrative efficiency may improve the quality of service; for example, Berkshire library authority has a self-service issue terminal in its main library in Maidenhead which deals with only 8 per cent of issues but is valued for the significant impact it has on the amount of time that borrowers queue to have books issued during busy periods. ICT may involve additional expenditure on services that enable library authorities to remain effective and relevant, but it may also provide a way of making efficiency savings.

It is outside the scope of this report to present a blueprint for the development of authorities’ ICT-based facilities. The precise benefits of ICT-based provision will depend upon local circumstances, local objectives and methods of implementation. Similarly, cost information on ICT is difficult to generalise because of the unique circumstances and requirements of individual library services and the volatility of the market for ICT. In the context of budgets that are unlikely to increase significantly in the foreseeable future, it is incumbent upon local library services to ensure that their basic management processes enable them to assess their service provision and the role that ICT may have in helping them to achieve their service priorities, now and in the future.¹

Improvements in basic management processes are needed to address problems in established services and to face the challenges presented by the need to work closely with other agencies. These are discussed further in Chapters 4 and 5. Library authorities that do not rise to these challenges run the risk of becoming increasingly inefficient, ineffective and irrelevant to the needs of those whom they serve.

¹ Further information about planning ICT strategies will be included in the forthcoming management handbook.
The pursuit of efficiency requires attention to two key bread-and-butter areas: costing and stock management.

Costing needs attention because authorities generally have limited information about the costs of the different services that they offer (for example, reference and information services) and of different activities (for example, stock selection). This lack of information impedes comparisons which might indicate inefficiency.

Stock management matters because virtually all library users make use of the stock of books, videotapes, CDs and other materials. The stock management task involves the acquisition of new stock and the management of the stock that libraries already hold. For existing stock, stock rotation is important because it can lead to significant increases in book issues. For the acquisition of new stock, authorities must take advantage of the ending of the Net Book Agreement, which controlled book prices until November 1995.
In managing library services, local authorities must achieve a difficult reconciliation. Within budgets that are unlikely to rise, they need to innovate while maintaining traditional services for which demand is likely to remain substantial for many years. There is no easy solution to these challenges, but there are a number of paths to solutions that authorities must explore if they are to manage their existing services and progress with confidence into the twenty-first century. Only by ensuring, and demonstrating, that the provision of all services – traditional and innovative – is economical and efficient, will the library service stand any chance of assembling sufficient resources to meet user expectations.

In rising to these challenges library services must improve their basic management processes so that they are better able to manage change. In particular, library authorities must improve:

- the monitoring of resource use;
- stock management; and
- the overall planning of services.

These three key aspects of service management provide the essential base for meeting the challenges that face the service (Exhibit 12).

Exhibit 12
Key management issues for libraries

These three key aspects of library service management are essential for meeting the challenges that face the service.

Source: Audit Commission
Without thorough costing information, the library service does not know where its resources are being used and so cannot decide how to reconcile competing calls on those resources, or be sure that they are being spent efficiently. Without effective stock management, the library service cannot address the problem of declining usage or be confident about the efficiency with which the major part of library expenditure is being spent. And effective service planning is the only way in which the numerous pressures and challenges facing the library service can be effectively managed.

55. This chapter examines the costing of library operations and the management of library stock. Chapter 5 sets out how these aspects of management relate to overall service planning so as to ensure a coherent, defensible allocation of scarce resources. Careful service planning will enable library authorities to adapt their services to take full advantage of the service enhancements that information and communications technology can make possible.

Costing

56. With stock lending decreasing and costs rising, questions about efficiency take on added urgency. Authorities must be able to answer questions such as:

◆ Are the resources for book lending being reduced, with expenditure being transferred to other library services?
◆ Are 'backroom' functions absorbing more staff time than they need to?
◆ Given its volume of work, is the reference library more, or less, generously staffed than other libraries?

57. In general, authorities lack the data to answer such questions. Typically, they do not keep records of the resources going into services such as book lending, or of the resources going into 'backroom' functions such as book repairs or 'frontline' functions such as helping the public.

58. The search for good value in libraries has to take account of the legitimate differences in emphasis between different library authorities as well as of their varying circumstances. If, say, the business information services of two different library authorities handle the same volume of enquiries, this does not imply that both authorities are providing an equally efficient service. At the very least, an assessment of achievement requires information on the level of resource going into the particular services that libraries offer their public. At present, libraries generally do not have this essential information on resource use, so cannot establish whether they are offering good value.
Ignorance about resource usage affects decision-taking. If a library service does not know how much it is spending on a particular public service or on a supporting activity, it can neither estimate the effects of cuts or growth in the existing service nor evaluate the potential of new, ICT-based services. So there is a danger of libraries maintaining commitments to too many services and consequently skimping on some of them, or of forgoing important opportunities by sustaining declining activities. At present, the service planning process does not have adequate information to support choices about priorities.

In the past, librarians and others have accepted the need for costing information to support management decisions and there have been at least two relevant initiatives (by the Centre for Interfirm Comparison in 1981 (Ref. 20) and by CIPFA in 1987 (Ref. 21)). However, there was no centrally co-ordinated implementation framework for these initiatives and neither has led to generally implemented costing approaches. Since that time budgetary constraint has made the need for adequate cost information even more important, both to demonstrate the cost effectiveness of current services and to identify the likely benefits that would flow from further investment. And costing has become more feasible because of the increased power and availability of computers and software.¹

¹ The Audit Commission is currently piloting an approach to costing in the library service, which will be used for the library service value-for-money audits in 1998 and which will be set out in the forthcoming management handbook.
An approach to costing

61. Library expenditure can be broken down into three dimensions:
   ◆ a breakdown which shows the costs of each service (for example, static lending);
   ◆ a breakdown which shows the cost of each of the activities which make the library service happen (for example, stock acquisition); and
   ◆ the traditional breakdown by subjective heading – that is, into the types of resource used, such as employees and premises (Exhibit 13).

Exhibit 13
The three dimensions of costing information

The total cost of the library service can, in principle, be analysed according to services (what the costs are for), activities (what is done) and subjective headings (the type of expenditure).
Between them, the three dimensions provide information that allows managers to identify how much is spent on key tasks and assess how the resources used to provide a particular service relate to what the service is trying to achieve. The third dimension allows managers to link back to the subjective heading classification used in the authority’s financial accounts. In defining categories of expenditure, a balance has to be struck between:
- recognising the practical constraints of data availability; and
- working at a sufficiently detailed level for the information to contribute to understanding.

The three dimensional approach is potentially applicable both at an inter-authority and a service point level (for example, library branches).

Staff costs typically account for half of library service expenditure. It has been argued in the past that the diversity of activities and services on which staff spend their time makes such an analysis impractical. However, a system of staff time estimation through diary-keeping on a sample basis can be employed which improves significantly on current practice without imposing an unrealistic burden of data collection on local library authorities.

For other subjective costs, a simpler approach is more appropriate. For example, premises costs are difficult to analyse by activity, because many activities take place in the same space; it is therefore more meaningful to analyse premises costs by service only. For practical reasons, the starting point for library authorities should be broad measures, such as premises costs per square metre and per visit. In future, a more sophisticated analysis by service may be possible. A similar logic may be applied to the remaining subjective costs.
Findings

65. Although the methodology is still developing, results of pilot work in five authorities can serve to illustrate how library services can be costed and, importantly, provide comparisons between different library authorities. It is possible, for example, to compare the cost per issue for the static adult lending service in different authorities, taking the comparison down to a detailed level by showing separate comparisons for each of the components of the cost of lending per issue:

- employees;
- premises; and
- other costs (Exhibit 14).

66. Some authorities spend much more on this service element than do others. The cost per issue of adult lending in the first authority is over 75 per cent higher than the corresponding cost in the fifth authority (£1.35 against £0.76). There may be good local reasons for the variation, such as policy decisions on service levels or differing types of premises, but the comparison poses a challenge to higher spending authorities to explain the variation, focusing on the separate cost components.

67. Following through the cost tree for these two authorities indicates that the disparity lies in premises costs and in staffing. Premises costs per issue are over three-and-a-half times higher in the first authority than in the fifth, which is caused by a combination of higher space costs and lower issues per square metre. The lower staff costs per issue in the fifth authority are mainly because the staff process around 50 per cent more items; the lower average pay per full-time equivalent is a less significant contributory factor.

Further developments

68. This approach is neither the beginning nor the end of the development of library costing. However, it allows library authorities to ask, and answer, a number of questions that will help them to face the challenges discussed in earlier chapters. And three key developments in the use of costing will be possible:

- comparison of costs within groups of similar authorities;
- comparisons within authorities (for example, between branches); and
- analysis of trends through time.
Exhibit 14
Comparison of costs in five library authorities: ‘cost tree’ for static lending services for adults

The five authorities are compared at every stage in the cost analysis.

Note 1: Throughout the ‘tree’ the clusters of five figures show the same statistic for each of the five authorities.

Note 2: Authority D’s costs are based on estimates since it is a new unitary authority.

Note 3: The costs shown are specific to static lending for adults. If the staff working on this service were paid significantly more or less than other library staff in the authority, employee costs on this tree would differ from average employee costs for the whole library service.

Source: Audit Commission fieldwork
Although some national data is available, making informed judgements about library service performance over time remains difficult. Authorities should sustain the costing approach over a number of years to open up the possibility of trend analyses focused on particular services, activities and performance ratios.

High-level comparisons between authorities can be a useful starting point. However, a clear understanding of the relationship between costs and activity is also needed at the service-point level to inform choices about cost-effective service delivery planning. Both inter-authority and service-point comparisons will be used by auditors to assess the cost-effectiveness of individual library services.

Stock management

Stock management includes all the tasks associated with acquiring stock, such as negotiations with suppliers and the selection of new titles. But it extends far more widely, to include both communication with library users and “behind-the-scenes” tasks such as local cataloguing and circulation of stock between branches. It concerns the management of existing stock as well as the acquisition of new stock.

Stock management tasks consume a large proportion of the library service’s budget. In addition to the £100 million spent each year on stock purchases, the cost of other resources devoted to all stock management activities, of both new and existing stock, is about £120 million.

Stock management matters because virtually all library users use the stock. Users and non-users alike think that increasing expenditure on books is more important than extending opening hours, new library services, larger libraries or additional libraries (Ref. 3). And the purchase of new stock is the library service’s second largest expenditure heading (after employees, it accounts for about one-sixth of expenditure). The end of the Net Book Agreement (NBA), whereby libraries were constrained in negotiating book supply discounts, means that established approaches to stock acquisition have to be rethought. Although there is no blueprint for achieving economy, effectiveness and efficiency in stock management, there are a number of basic features that an effective stock management process should incorporate

The approach to service-point costing will be explored in the forthcoming management handbook.

All these issues of stock management are to be covered in the forthcoming management handbook.
The main features of an effective stock management process.

Source: Audit Commission
Arriving at a stock action plan

The identification of stock requirements in individual library service points must take account of the local authority’s objectives for its libraries, respond to user demands and incorporate librarians’ professional judgement, as well as reflect the constraints of the stock budget. To keep the process manageable, it is useful to categorise branches into bands according to the population served. A single stock profile can then be used for all branches in the same band. Hertfordshire has adopted such a system (Case Study 6).

Case Study 6
Hertfordshire County Council: stock criteria

Background

Hertfordshire’s library service has developed the concept of ‘Total Collection Management’ for its library stock, which is based on the principle that the library service’s stock should be viewed as one complete stock which is made available to users through a network of service points, rather than viewing it as a series of separate collections. This approach contrasts with the practice in many library authorities, where book selection may be delegated wholly to branch and area librarians without reference to the stock available in the rest of the authority, and where there is often no planned stock rotation between libraries.

Development of stock criteria

In order to implement a systematic county-wide approach to stock management, all libraries were classified into one of five bands according to population levels, and stock criteria were developed for each of the bands. Stock criteria set out the minimum standards that are to be provided in any particular library. These are intended to form an enduring framework for stock management across the service and are reviewed periodically. More detailed stock profiles and targets are set for each band annually to guide the purchasing and rotation of books and materials.

The stock criteria for each library band are divided into the following stock areas:

- adult lending;
- young people;
- reference and information; and
- local studies.

Within each of these areas, different types of stock are identified (for example, fiction, non-fiction, community languages, large-print, videos), with detailed information about the volume and breadth of coverage that is to be provided (including educational level). Indicative author checklists are used to guide librarians’ selections. Achievement against the stock criteria is measured by regular stock audits.

Benefits

Stock criteria mean that users and librarians can be clear about the kind of stock that should be available in each branch.
A stock profile should give an indication of what is not to be stocked, as well as what should be stocked. Leeds Libraries and Information Service stock provision policy includes such indications (Case Study 7). Many authorities seek to involve local library staff in the preparation of these statements so as to make use of their understanding of local demands, but control over key stock management decisions should be centralised so that the needs and resources of the whole authority can be co-ordinated.

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**Case Study 7**

**Extract from the stock provision policy of Leeds Libraries and Information Service**

**Background**

There are many different groups of users of business information. Their needs for information vary in both range and depth. Libraries cannot realistically meet all needs.

**Action**

The library service has defined categories of business information stock that it will and will not provide, to prevent its stock budget being dissipated over too wide a compass. The stock policy contains the following statement about the Business Information Stock:

‘...An emphasis will be placed upon:

- trade directories;
- market research;
- company information;
- market-oriented technical development (technical journals and patents); and
- intellectual property – patent and trademarks.

The following are generally out of scope:

- macro-economic data – eg, reports from the Economist Intelligence Unit;
- most EU-generated documentation;
- most technical monographs;
- theoretical technology – eg, learned society proceedings;
- postgraduate research materials (excepting patents); and
- many investment-oriented services...’

**Benefits**

The library service is able to fulfil, comprehensively, the business information needs that it sets out to meet, focusing on information of most interest to the general public.
A clear statement of the desired stock profile for each branch makes possible a stock audit to compare the stock actually present with the needs set out in the profile. The audit can identify shortages and surpluses, branch by branch, and provide a basis for a stock action plan that identifies the material needed to fill gaps.

The stock action plan sets out the actions needed to ensure that the library stock corresponds with the desired stock profile. The plan needs to cover both the management of existing stock and the acquisition of new stock, because both can be used to achieve the desired stock profile. Stock acquisition takes up the greatest part of stock management expenditure. But precisely because it is the most expensive stock management action, alternative ways of making the best use of the existing stock should be considered first.

Management of the existing stock

The stock management processes for existing stock involve a number of specific actions, all of which affect the nature of the stock that users find on the shelves of library branches and which should be used actively to maintain the desired stock profile:

- stock rotation can contribute considerably to refreshing what users encounter in a particular library branch;
- disposal of stock is essential, to prevent users receiving out-of-date information as well as to ensure that the public do not have to put up with damaged materials;
- refurbishment is appropriate when damage can be made good economically;
- the prevention of stock loss calls for more attention: a Home Office study in 1992 (Ref. 22) reported that most libraries could not provide information concerning their losses. Of those that could provide annual loss figures, the loss rate averaged over 4 per cent; and
- co-operation with other authorities in the provision of inter-library loans comes into its own when a library has to respond to a specialised need expressed by only a small number of its users, but which users elsewhere may share.
Of these actions, stock rotation warrants particular mention because it can bring about significant increases in book issues. Some authorities – including Shropshire, Bromley, Wiltshire, Gateshead, Buckinghamshire and Surrey – manage stock rotation actively, by setting targets for the percentage of the stock to be moved and monitoring achievement against those targets. Experience in these authorities suggests that stock rotation can have a positive impact on issues. For example, in Surrey in 1993, stock rotation was systematically increased in one area of the county (estimated by the authority to cost 29 pence per book per move). The result was increases in the number of loan issues across different categories of stock (Exhibit 16).

However, positive management of stock rotation is unusual. Few fieldwork authorities had records of how much stock they rotated from branch to branch. In the few that mentioned stock rotation as a prominent feature of their stock management, the stock that was being rotated were titles that the public were borrowing only rarely rather than those that were in demand at the receiving branches. So instead of being a means of maintaining a desired stock profile, stock rotation was being used to keep in circulation out-of-date titles, which might be more appropriately disposed of.

Exhibit 16
Stock rotation in Surrey: numbers of loan issues before and after rotation to a new branch

Increases in issues were achieved across a range of different types of stock following stock rotation.

Note: The authority recorded the number of loan issues of a sample of stock items prior to being rotated and in the branch to which they were moved.

Source: Surrey County Council
Acquisition of new stock

Management of the existing stock can help to meet the requirements exposed by stock audits. But stock acquisition is likely to remain the major means by which authorities improve the match of their stock to requirements. There are wide variations in the total resources that authorities employ on this activity (Exhibit 17).

Such differences between authorities primarily reflect differences in the purchase price, the cost of servicing of new stock and in the staff effort that is used to acquire it. Library authorities can take steps to reduce all of these costs. In particular, the effective ending of the Net Book Agreement and its associated licence in November 1995 has provided the opportunity for library authorities to secure more cost-effective arrangements with suppliers.

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Exhibit 17
Costs of new stock selection and acquisition

The costs of acquiring new stock, including the purchase price and the staff and other resources needed to acquire the stock, vary widely.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Average Purchase Price</th>
<th>Other Costs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>£25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>£20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>£15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>£10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>£5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Authority E’s costs are based on estimates since it is a new unitary authority.

Source: Audit Commission fieldwork

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1 In April 1997, the NBA was formally abolished.
'Librarians' effort can then be reserved for more specialised stock items where professional judgement is required...'

83. Under the Net Book Agreement:
- every published book had a retail price specified by the publisher;
- only library suppliers and retail suppliers were allowed to supply books to libraries;
- retail book suppliers were required to sell books at their retail price; and
- library suppliers were required to sell books to libraries at a price not less than 10 per cent below the retail price.

84. With the abolition of the NBA, library staff have a much more complicated range of choices when buying books than previously, but also new opportunities to secure cost-effectiveness in book purchasing. Public libraries buy the majority of their books from specialist library suppliers. Suppliers in this sector offer services that other book buyers do not need, such as binding, labelling, catalogue information, delivery and approvals collections. Library suppliers can reduce prices if they are spared the cost of carrying out some or all of these supply-related services. So librarians have to weigh up the importance of these services, and their impact on purchase price, to decide whether alternative internal or external arrangements would be preferable.

85. For example, the supply of books on approval is expensive for the supplier and makes significant demands on staff time and may not be justified for the majority of stock. Alternative methods of book selection for the majority of stock may be more cost-effective. Book selection for the 'core' of library requirements may be provided more cost-effectively by suppliers rather than being carried out in-house. Librarians' effort can then be reserved for more specialised stock items where professional judgement is required to determine whether they meet the authority's quality requirements or whether they are too specialised. Cambridgeshire Library Service conducted an experiment in 1994 in which librarians and the staff of library suppliers both chose titles against the same stock profile. The study found that there was a close match between their choices.

86. Electronic data interchange (EDI) may be used to reduce costs by simplifying the administration of orders, deliveries and payments. And libraries may also be able to reduce their costs by committing themselves more firmly than currently when indicating prospective levels of business to suppliers.
The benefits

The benefits of improved stock management include both financial savings and service improvements. Estimates of achievable savings can be derived from calculating the impact of stock management improvements (Table 1). Increased discounts, reduced stock loss and greater use of external cataloguing and other supply-based services may give rise to financial benefits. These benefits will be partly offset by the increased costs of stock rotation, binding and cleaning, but there would still be net savings.

Applying these estimates to the circumstances of a sample of typical authorities yields savings estimates of between 2.5 and 5 per cent of total library expenditure. Recognising that some of these improvements are already under way, a conservative extrapolation of savings achievable through improving stock management is 2 per cent of expenditure, or about £14 million a year. While modest, such funds could provide essential start-up funding for the development of new technological initiatives.

Improvements in the monitoring of resources and the management of stock are essential steps in improving efficiency and effectiveness and, specifically, would help to address the problems facing libraries in the delivery of their traditional services and in meeting new challenges. But the library service will reap the full benefit of these improvements only if it can adapt itself to changes in the outside world. To do this, it must overhaul its general service planning processes, which are discussed in Chapter 5.

Table 1
Estimates of the financial impact of stock management improvements

<table>
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<th>Area of stock management</th>
<th>Assumed change</th>
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<td><strong>SAVINGS</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplier discount</td>
<td>Price discount increased from an average of 18% to 25% as a result of reduced use of approvals, introduction of EDI and consortium buying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stock loss</td>
<td>Reduced from 4% to 2% a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-house cataloguing</td>
<td>In-house cataloguing to fall from 30% of titles to 15% of titles; in-house cataloguing costs £2 a title; 3 copies of each title are bought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ADDITIONAL EXPENDITURE</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Binding and cleaning</td>
<td>Expenditure to rise by 15% to support more intensive use of stock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stock rotation</td>
<td>Expenditure to rise by 1p per head of population</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Estimates derived by a team of library consultants following fieldwork for the Audit Commission
Recommendations

Monitoring of resource use and stock management

1. Library authorities should make fuller use of new technology to enhance the efficiency of traditional library services such as book issue, access to the library catalogue and the provision of reference information.

2. Library authorities should establish and maintain processes for costing library services and operations, to identify where efficiency needs to be improved, and to support priority-setting.

3. Libraries should develop integrated stock policies and procedures covering the identification of the desired stock profile, stock audit, stock planning, stock circulation and stock acquisition.

4. Libraries should update their commercial relationships with suppliers of library books to respond to the changes in the book-purchasing environment since the abolition of the Net Book Agreement.
Changes in user demands and new choices in service delivery raise fundamental questions for the library service. Since local authorities have wide discretion over their library services, there can be no national blueprint for the service. These fundamental questions can, therefore, be tackled only through rigorous service planning. At present, service planning in the library service is not well developed. All aspects of decision-making must be linked, taking the views of users and non-users into account.
The national context

90. The library service faces a number of major challenges:
   ◆ the decline in its traditional services: in particular, declining usage, reducing access and rising costs; and
   ◆ the need to work with other agencies and to respond to developments in information and communications technology.

91. These challenges raise questions about the future role in society of libraries which they cannot address in isolation. Central government has recognised this and the library service has been the subject of a number of reviews in recent years (Refs. 3, 23–26). In February 1997, the previous government issued its own review (Reading the Future, Ref. 27), which recognised that the development of services based on information and communications technology required a national framework. The chairman of the Library and Information Commission (LIC) was asked to lead a group to advise on the way forward.

92. Reading the Future also announced that each authority in England should publish an annual library plan. The new minister with responsibility for libraries has confirmed the requirement. Trial versions of the plans were submitted by July 1997 and were evaluated over the summer. The plan is to set out the ‘kind of library service the authority will provide. It will cover policies, services, targets and standards and explain how they will be achieved. It will also review the previous year’s achievements against targets.’

93. The national framework highlights the key decisions to be made, but emphasises that these decisions are for the authority to take. So library authorities continue to enjoy considerable discretion over setting their objectives and deciding on the way in which they meet them. However, this discretion can lead to efficient and effective service provision only if decisions are addressed systematically and coherently through the service planning process.

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91. The Government established the Library and Information Commission (LIC) in 1995 to provide a national focus for library and information issues in England and it works closely with similar bodies in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. These are the Library and Information Services Council (Wales), the Library and Information Services Council (Northern Ireland) and the Scottish Library and Information Council. The LIC’s terms of reference include giving advice to all parts of the government on library matters, and specifically mention the avoidance of unnecessary duplication between information services of different types.
For a long time there has been little change in the underlying nature of the library service, both in its key services and the means of their delivery. Changes in user demands and new choices in service delivery raise fundamental questions for the library service. In responding to these new demands authorities are likely to need to re-orient their library services substantially, unless they are content with the continued decline of traditional services, reduced inefficiency and decreasing relevance in the services that they provide. Over time there may be shifts of resources, possibly including the discontinuation of existing services as well as the development of new services or service delivery points, and new mechanisms for delivering services. To make a success of change on the required scale, authorities need planning processes that integrate all aspects of service provision and enable strategic decisions to be taken. Service planning needs more attention at all levels of the library service. It is not just another time pressure, but the means of keeping all the other pressures under control.

Service planning also provides a mechanism for integrating the service’s work with that of other parts of the local authority and outside agencies, by making explicit the implications of partnership for the library service: setting out how partners’ requirements are to be met, and how their contributions to the library are to be put to use.

The basic principles of service planning are well known (Exhibit 18) and there are specific publications on service planning in public libraries (notably Ref. 28). So advocacy of service planning in libraries runs the risk of sounding platitudinous. However, the particular circumstances of libraries make the need for rigorous service planning especially important and the effective application of its principles in the library service is, currently, far from complete.

Some authorities lack any sort of planning process and one-quarter of authorities responding to an Audit Commission questionnaire in January 1997 reported that they have no statement of policy aims specific to the library service. In most plans there are some good features; for example, there is a strong and increasing orientation towards library users, supported by systematic research. But there is also evidence of internal weaknesses within the planning process (Box B). Authorities need to overcome weaknesses in service planning so that they can respond to the challenges facing them. They need support from central government, particularly in the reform of procedures for controlling capital expenditure.1 Badly prepared plans can be counter-productive; well-prepared plans can position authorities to face the future with more confidence.

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1 The Audit Commission has recently set out its recommendations on this topic (Ref. 29).
### Box B

**Current library service planning compared with good practice**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expected features of rigorous service planning</th>
<th>Current practice in library service planning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>◆ explicit links between the library’s planning and the authority’s corporate processes and policies</td>
<td>◆ not all library authorities make these links</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◆ specific aims that the authority wishes to see its library service pursue</td>
<td>◆ patchy levels of involvement of the wider authority in determining library aims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◆ priorities among those aims to inform choice of services and activities</td>
<td>◆ no mention of possible services and activities in which the library service is not going to be involved (ie, priorities are not expressed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◆ gathering of user and non-user views about library services, and the planned application of those views in objective-setting, in strategic planning and in operational decisions</td>
<td>◆ an increasing minority of authorities gathering user views and collating them through CIPFA’s PLUS survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◆ statements of how far the authority judges that the library service can realistically achieve each aim in the light of budgetary and organisational constraints</td>
<td>◆ occasional work on non-users’ views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◆ specific achievements expected of each part of the library organisation</td>
<td>◆ confusion between the library service’s aspirations and the specific actions that it has decided upon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◆ statements to the public of what it can expect in terms of stock range and availability of other services</td>
<td>◆ statements that do not discuss what the library service is to do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◆ aims and specific targets set, both for continuing work and for innovations</td>
<td>◆ increasing adoption of library ‘charters’, often supported by the Library Association Model Statement of Standards for Public Library Services (1995)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◆ success criteria for each target to be achieved</td>
<td>◆ a focus on new developments to the exclusion of continuing operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◆ coherence among the different constituent parts of the planning process</td>
<td>◆ success criteria not always specified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◆ clarity, so that all library staff can see what they are called upon to do and why the planning process is relevant to them</td>
<td>◆ operational targets that have no apparent connection with the rest of the planning process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◆ monitoring of achievement built into the regular routine of the planning process</td>
<td>◆ planning documents in some authorities are confusing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◆ some monitoring is systematic, but some is not well integrated with the rest of the planning process</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Audit Commission review of planning documents in eight authorities, followed up by telephone interviews of the senior librarians responsible for service planning in a further eight authorities.*
In order to make the planning of services more rigorous, library authorities must ensure that all aspects of decision-making are linked and that decisions are based on the stated priorities of the library service, which in turn are informed by the aims of the authority as a whole and by the views of users and non-users. Library authorities should ensure that a clear set of expectations for all parts of the service is specified and that there is a process for monitoring achievement (Exhibit 19). With a sound service planning framework in place, an authority has a firm basis on which to take operational decisions. A firm planning basis is particularly valuable for controversial decisions, such as those on opening hours and on the closure and opening of branches, and for decisions on services that do not appear to lie in the mainstream, such as opening cafés or hiring out toys. Effective service planning does not require adherence to any specific model as long as the process is coherent and enables authorities to make, and effectively implement, informed strategic decisions. Shropshire’s service planning documentation, for example, shows clear expectations for all parts of the service, success criteria and a monitoring structure (Case Study 8).

Exhibit 19
A model for the service planning process

The model shows key components and the links between them.

Source: Audit Commission
Background
Shropshire is a small county with a mix of new town and rural areas. It will lose the major population centre of Telford New Town on 1 April 1998, as a result of local government reorganisation. The Shropshire Library Service forms part of the Leisure Services Group within the Community and Economic Services Department. Shropshire Leisure Services currently holds both Investors in People (IIP) and Citizen’s Charter accreditation.

Development of service plans
The first service plans for the Leisure Services Group were introduced in 1989. These were strategic documents aimed primarily at ensuring accountability to elected members. In 1992/93 the plans were substantially revised, so that they could be used as working documents for managers throughout the year, as well as meeting the needs of elected members. For the purpose of planning, each service within the Group was analysed into distinct management areas; for example, lending services, children’s services and bibliographical services.

The first stage in the planning process involves the managers who are responsible for each area. They consider the challenges and changes for the coming year, as well as ongoing service needs. The outcome of these discussions is a draft plan for each of the management areas, based on a standard format:
- purpose;
- medium-term objectives;
- point-by-point review of previous year’s targets against success criteria; and
- targets and clear success criteria for the coming year.

Senior managers discuss the draft plans in an open forum. At this point they identify any omissions, consider feasibility and decide priorities.

Once the targets have been finalised for the coming year, senior managers consider the training needed to achieve these, taking into account the training goals achieved in the previous year. The final planning document includes a section reviewing achievement against the previous year’s training goals, as well as the training needs and assessment criteria for the coming year. The clear link between service planning and training was introduced to meet the IIP assessment criteria, which stress that training should form an integral part of service-delivery management.

Future plans
The service planning process is to be extended from 1998/99 to include a longer term strategic framework document for the Leisure Services Group, which will set the context for the annual implementation plans.
Effective service planning is vital as a way of balancing pressures and priorities and ensuring effectiveness and efficiency. But evidence suggests that few authorities currently have service planning processes that are capable of fully supporting the library service in adapting to the challenges facing it. Unless improvements are made, libraries will be ill-equipped to face the future.

Good practice features
The service planning process applied in the Shropshire Library Service includes:
- involvement of all managers in planning and setting targets;
- a formal process at senior level to appraise feasibility and set priorities;
- separate sections in the plan for the management of different front-line and support services;
- subsections in each section of the plan restating the specific targets from the previous year and showing progress against each of them;
- training targets in each section, related to the service targets;
- success criteria for each target for the current year to inform subsequent review of the plan; and
- measurable success criteria wherever possible, incorporating target dates or numerical performance targets or both.
Recommendations

Service planning

1 Libraries need to adapt the services that they provide and the way that they deliver them, to respond to the many challenges that they face.

2 Authorities must make their plans more rigorous and coherent to ensure that changes are successful, and to preserve the best of current practice.
6 Into the Future

The library service must meet the challenge of the next century by taking advantage of information and communications technology while, at the same time, maintaining its core services - book lending and reference. Effective costing systems and improved stock management, in a coherent service planning framework, are the way to success.

The library service as a whole is ‘due for renewal’ if it is to face the future with confidence.
Libraries have enjoyed over a century of certainty, providing books for an appreciative public, but they now face a period of change. Book lending is gradually becoming less efficient, public access is reducing, and staff costs have risen disproportionately. There is also a pressing need to establish partnerships with other agencies working in similar policy areas in order to reduce duplication and to improve efficiency and effectiveness. In addition to addressing the gradual decline in traditional services, library services must also respond to the far-reaching changes in information and communications technology. These are transforming the way that information is stored and disseminated and the way that a wide range of services can be delivered to the user.

To face this future with confidence, library services need to adopt a more thorough and dynamic approach to their basic management processes. In the context of budgets that are unlikely to increase significantly, effective costing, stock management and service planning are vital. These processes will allow library services to address the challenge of developments in ICT by identifying existing inefficiencies and reassessing service priorities so that resources may be redirected to support new services. A further way of bridging the funding gap presented by developments in ICT is through charging. Some charge is already made by libraries for many ICT-based services but currently the law forbids libraries from charging for the loan of books. There are well-rehearsed arguments for and against charging and it is an issue that remains controversial.

Effective costing, stock management and service planning will also enable library services to address the decline in traditional reference and book-lending services. Library services cannot expect to attract additional resources or the confidence of potential partners if they are unable to demonstrate how they are allocating their current resources or what they are achieving as a result. There is considerable scope for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of these core services; through administrative ICT, partnerships with other agencies, improved stock management, better monitoring of resource use, and more rigorous service planning and prioritisation (Table 2, overleaf).

What is clear is that the library service is ‘due for renewal’ if it is to be fit for the twenty-first century.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems</th>
<th>Causes</th>
<th>Solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decline in loan issues</td>
<td>Declining acquisitions; reduced opening hours; and poor stock management and service planning</td>
<td>More rigorous and coherent plans to provide a firmer basis for corporate working. Plans to cover, for example, the scope to attract new borrowers and, where borrowing cannot be revived, the transfer of resources to other services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wide range of different services provided by libraries, many of them hard pressed and skimped, especially innovatory services</td>
<td>Lack of vision for the library service (nationally, and at local authority level); generally poor planning processes</td>
<td>Processes for costing library services and operations to identify where efficiency needs to be improved and a better basis for decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patchy co-operation between libraries and potential partners (other local authority departments and external agencies)</td>
<td>Conservatism about service delivery and, in particular, a reluctance (professional and political) to close any existing provision</td>
<td>An overall plan to bring together the separate elements of stock management: identification of desired stock profile, stock audit, stock planning, stock rotation and stock acquisition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor knowledge of whether libraries are efficient or not</td>
<td>Incomplete knowledge of costs of the different components of libraries’ activity</td>
<td>Updated commercial relationships with suppliers of library books to respond to the abolition of the Net Book Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some inefficient stock management practices</td>
<td>Poor understanding of the alternatives to these practices</td>
<td>More use of new technology to enhance the efficiency of traditional library services such as book issue, access to library catalogues and provision of reference information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some library administrative functions are not as efficient as they could be</td>
<td>Professional attachment to certain traditional librarian activities (book selection, bibliographical services)</td>
<td>Adaptation of library services and their delivery to allow the accessible provision of some of these materials to all users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing competition for libraries from sources of electronic information, entertainment, education and cultural materials superior to those currently available in libraries</td>
<td>Stock acquisition practice not yet fully adapted to commercial environment following the abolition of the Net Book Agreement</td>
<td>Relevant technological developments are not being fully taken up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technological developments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix: The Study Advisory Group

Carol Barnes – Head of Library Services, Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council

Keith Crawshaw – Director of Leisure, Sheffield City Council

Geoffrey Hare – County Librarian, Essex County Council

Tricia Little – Head of Development and Support Services, London Borough of Barnet Libraries

Helen Osborn – Borough Librarian, Newport County Borough Council

Ian Winkworth – Director of Information Services, University of Northumbria at Newcastle

Members of the advisory group were nominated by local authority associations and by the Library Association, but acted in a personal capacity.
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Public libraries are a long-standing and popular local authority service with 24 million adult members in England and Wales drawn from all social classes and all age groups.

However, libraries face a decline in their traditional activity of lending books, as well as a fall in opening hours and rising employment costs. Libraries also need to address an overlap in aims and objectives between themselves and other agencies by establishing and improving partnership arrangements. And they need to respond to the challenges presented by the explosive development of information and communications technology.

Drawing on good practice, the report includes a range of recommendations that focus on:

◆ partnership arrangements;
◆ use of information and communications technology;
◆ service costing;
◆ stock management; and
◆ service planning.

Essential reading for all those involved in managing and providing library services, this report will help libraries to meet current and future challenges.