Envisioning the library of the future Phase 3: online survey

Research by Dialogue by Design

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ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

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Background

In 2011 Arts Council England became the national development agency for the library sector, with responsibility for championing libraries and supporting the development of the sector. In September 2011 they published *Culture, knowledge and understanding*, a framework for decision making in the arenas of museums and libraries during the current spending period (2011-15).

In order to support the development of a longer term vision for libraries, the Arts Council embarked on Envisioning the library of the future, a series of research projects commissioned to inform policy development that is rooted in an understanding of what a 21st century library could and should look like, and how it delivers value to its stakeholders.

Public library services are currently grappling with a period of transition, working to adapt to economic, technological and social change. Debate about the role and function of public libraries has tended to focus on short term issues of funding and management. This research is designed to inform a more strategic approach to the future potential of public library services and the value they offer, encourage fresh thinking and promote positive change.

Envisioning the library of the future

This report presents the results of an online survey, open to the general public from 25 September to 21 October 2012. The survey was part of the third phase of a programme of research and debate from the Arts Council about the public library of the future. The first phase of desk research and a second phase of engagement with library sector stakeholders were completed in the summer of 2012. The third phase of the programme comprised a series of four public workshops held in September 2012, two focus groups held with young people in November 2012, and the online survey presented in this report. The third phase explored public views of the purpose and value of public libraries.

Deliberative dialogue workshops

Throughout September 2012 Dialogue by Design, in collaboration with public participation experts Involve, ran four public deliberative dialogue workshops across England. Deliberative dialogue is a distinctive form of engagement in which participants are provided with information on the topic under discussion and have sufficient time to discuss and reflect on this topic in depth. The process is designed to take participants beyond their immediate views of a complex subject.

Dialogue by Design and Involve produced a report summarising the outcomes of these workshops around a series of themes identifying the major values participants identified in discussion of public libraries.

The findings of the workshops report informed and contributed to preparing for the analysis of public responses to the online survey. The online survey forms the final element of this programme of research. While there are substantial similarities between the findings of the workshop report and many of the themes and ideas expressed in this summary report of the online survey, the analysis team employed a rigorous methodology to ensure that its analytical framework and the resulting report are faithful to the public's responses as expressed solely through the online survey. This methodology is explored further Appendix A.

The online survey

The online survey opened on 25 September and closed on 21 October 2012. Participants had to register to use an online survey website in order to submit their views through a series of question pages. The website was hosted by Dialogue by Design at: *librariesofthefuture.dialoguebydesign.net*

The question pages of the survey website asked respondents five open questions about their use of public libraries, as well as their views on their value, purpose and ideal qualities. These open-ended

questions enabled free expression of opinions and ideas, which were captured in their full complexity by Dialogue by Design's analytical methods.

The questions asked on the website were:

Q1. In what ways do you/your family use public library services?

Q2. If you/your family do not use public library services, what are the reasons?

Q3. Why do you value public library services?

Q4. What do you think should be the main purposes of public library services?

Q5. Please describe what a visit to your ideal library would feel like, what you would hear and what you would see.

There were 1,431 responses to the online survey website, and a further two were received by post or email. The demographic information of respondents to the online survey is summarised in the tables below:

Table 1-1 Last occasion of use of a public library indicated by survey respondents

Library usage	Number of respondents
Within the last week	928
Within the last month, over a week ago	351
Within the last year, over a month ago	126
Longer ago	27
None	1
Total	**1433**

Table 1-2 Library usage of survey respondents

Age group	Number of respondents
18-24	30
25-34	140
35-44	230
45-54	364
56-65	410
65+	259
Total	**1433**

As this table shows, a clear majority of the survey's respondents were over 45 years of age and were very likely to have used a public library within the last month. Only one respondent had never used a library and 27 had not used a library within the last year.

Respondents to the survey elected to take part in this open public engagement exercise. As is the case with any self-selecting sample we are not able to make claims about the extent to which the views we report here reflect those of the English population or those of library users in general.

Executive summary

Libraries are a valued resource

Libraries are valued for their atmosphere, the resources they offer and their role in the local community and wider society. They are valued because they enable individuals to broaden their knowledge by providing access to a wide range of reliable reading material or by organising and hosting interesting talks. The value of libraries for personal use is backed up by the fact that negative comments about the library service often relate to how public library resources are not suited to a particular individual's needs, for example an insufficient range of reading material on offer, or a long waiting list for the most popular fiction.

Libraries play a vital role in society

When asked to pinpoint the main purpose of libraries, respondents tended to look at the value of libraries to wider society. By enabling everyone to better themselves through reading, education, and the development of skills, libraries are a hallmark of a civilised and democratic society which respondents are proud to have as a public service.

Library users at Chelmsley Wood Library, Solihull. Photo: Michael Cameron Photography

Children and young people benefit from libraries

Children and young people are seen as prime beneficiaries of library services. Respondents recall fond and formative memories of using libraries as children themselves and believe that libraries, through books, activities and the space they provide, can make children happier, more connected to their families, and instil in them a love of reading and learning that will help them as they grow up.

Design, space and buildings matter to people

When asked to describe their ideal library, respondents invariably commented on the space inside a library. Ideal spaces are described as warm and welcoming with a hum of background noise, or light, airy and spacious with the sound of children's story time and the smell of coffee in the air. In discussing library space, respondents refer often to the varied requirements of different community members and suggest zoning library space as a way of accommodating everyone's needs. This emphasises the importance to respondents of a library that is there for everyone in the community.

What role for libraries in the future?

Access to the internet and computers is one of the most valued library services, second only to access to books. The availability of computers, the internet, and IT training within libraries is seen as promoting digital inclusion by providing access to these services for people who cannot afford them or lack the skills to use them. Respondents see libraries' provision of these services as one way in which they function as a 'social leveller' by enabling everyone, especially the most disadvantaged, to benefit from new technologies.

Libraries' contribution to community cohesion is a common theme throughout the responses. A good library space is seen as a focal point for the community, bringing together many different people. Seeing local artwork and local history displayed within the library is felt to build community values, connections and pride. Some respondents want libraries to engage more with local users about what the service should provide so that the whole community feels they have ownership of the library building. Respondents feel that the best library staff are just another member of the community – they know your name when you come through the door, they can recommend a book that your children might like, and they tailor the library collection in a way that is relevant to the community it serves.

Chapter 1:
The library as a valued resource

Introduction

The library is valued as a place to find what you are looking for and as somewhere to discover something new. Respondents said they enjoy the experience of browsing with as much or as little guidance as they need. The information provided within libraries was described as trustworthy, unbiased and presented in a way that fits the needs of the community it serves. This was seen as due to knowledgeable and dedicated staff.

Libraries as a starting point

In response to question four of the online survey, which asked about the main purpose of public libraries, respondents described the main purpose of the library as being to store, archive and provide information, as well as to provide materials on all subjects for entertainment, reference, culture and education. A few respondents felt that libraries should focus more strongly on providing access to the written word and literature:

 '…texts are so central to the relationship of individual to society that it merits its own infrastructure. Books may be being displaced and augmented by new media, but the residual value of written language is huge and here to stay. So main purpose is access to texts – in short, reading.'

Respondents said they visit the public library for one-off use of specific resources. These are resources that cannot be found or accessed elsewhere, such as out-of-print books, resources that respondents feel are not worth buying such as 'Dummies Guides' for new software, or costly resources such as music scores for school orchestras and local choirs. This immediacy of information, having it 'at your fingertips', was valued by many respondents. The library also acts as a portal to other resources, including those in other libraries or online subscriptions to academic journals. This gives respondents faith that their local library will be able to provide an answer to whatever question they have. If the information is not available within the library walls, online resources can usually provide them with what they require, with library staff available to guide them.

Discovery and exploration

Libraries make exploration and discovery possible by giving users the freedom to read what they choose. Respondents described the enjoyment of browsing without having previously decided what author or subject to pick. Several related how they had discovered something by happy accident whilst looking for something else. Libraries enable people to experiment with new authors and books because there is no cost attached, and respondents say this enables them to take more risks with their reading than they would otherwise, sometimes following recommendations from a trusted staff member.

Some respondents said browsing is a more pleasant experience in a library because, unlike bookshops, they feel no pressure to purchase anything and can peruse the shelves without discomfort or distraction. A few respondents felt it was easier to browse in a library than online, particularly for those who lack confidence in their reading abilities:

'Just having an online list of e-books you can borrow does not give you the ability to browse and become familiar with authors in the way you can in a library. This is particularly important for those with less confidence and perhaps less well read, who may need to look at the write up on the back of a book, the size of the text and the difficulty of the writing style before feeling confident enough to borrow the book.'

However, an oft-cited reason for not using public library services was insufficient range of content. One respondent complained about the small poetry section in their library, and others described recent visits to libraries for particular books which were not available. This frustration seemed to occur most often in relation to recently published books that have either not yet made it to the library or are all on loan and have a long waiting list to borrow them.

The value of a convenient, navigable service

Respondents appreciate a library service that is as easy to use as possible. Some respondents emphasised the importance of libraries being centrally located and accessible, with convenient opening hours, which tends to mean being open in the evenings and at weekends. The library network, connecting local libraries with larger urban centres, was mentioned as making borrowing and returning books more convenient for people who live and work in different areas. A few commented on the value of specific library services to more remote communities, including inter-library loans when smaller libraries have limited stock, and mobile libraries in areas with no library building:

'We are avid readers living in an isolated rural area. We do not often go into towns to browse the bookshops, and so the library serves our needs.'

Ideal libraries described by respondents often included clear signage, well-ordered collections, and user-friendly catalogues, with clearly visible explanations on the walls to help them use different systems in the library. Respondents felt these aspects make the library easier to use because it allows users to be self-sufficient, and others felt this signage makes using library services less intimidating to new users. Many respondents valued the guidance they receive from helpful, expert members of staff, who can make it easier and quicker to find what they're looking for than when they search online. Others find the self-service machines and library catalogues save time, with online systems making renewing, searching and reserving books much easier. Services such as email reminders telling you when your books require renewal are also valued, helping users to return books on time and avoid fines.

For some respondents, however, the library service is not convenient enough to be a viable option over alternative means of obtaining books and films, such as Amazon and LoveFilm, which can be accessed from anywhere thanks to mobile internet access. Others find the process of becoming a library member too arduous, or recall the rush to return books at the last minute as a reason why borrowing books is more hassle than it is worth. One lapsed user said the 'chaotic' shelving system in their local library has put them off using the service.

The library resource: shared, trustworthy, and up to date?

Several respondents referred to the benefits of having a shared resource rather than owning everything themselves. While some simply said that they have run out of shelf space at home to buy any more books others argued that it makes sense from an environmental perspective to treat books, and other library materials such as CDs and DVDs, as a shared resource:

'They [libraries] are efficient users of books, in that many people can read the same book before it goes to be recycled in some way. I can also borrow DVDs and the benefits are the same. Reduce land fill and waste.'

On the whole, respondents valued the information provided in their public library. They saw it as reliable and unbiased, particularly when compared to information provided in the media and on the internet, and described it as genuine, verifiable, authoritative and evaluated. One respondent thought the information in a library is more trustworthy because it is overseen by experienced library staff who are aware of the local clientele, and others trust the library to filter information so that it is safe for themselves and their children to view.

Respondents had different views on the importance of having up-to-date library resources. Some non- or lapsed-users cited the depleted range of books as their reason for staying away from the library, with specific mention given to the lack of newly published books. And some respondents felt that recent popular fiction is exactly the type of resource that a library should stock due to its short 'shelf-life':

'Many books are very transient and not high literature and would not stand rereading many times. The library is excellent for this kind of relaxing reading'

However, others thought the absence of up-to-date books was not a problem, believing that a good library does not necessarily mean having the most popular books at the time because these are of limited permanent value.

Library staff

'It starts with a 'hello' from a member of the library staff that I know.'

In describing their ideal library experiences, respondents referred often to friendly and welcoming library staff. One respondent felt that library staff set a good example for her children and showed them that people can be friendly and helpful. Respondents expressed appreciation for staff members who value all people coming through the door and are non-judgemental when dealing with requests from users. A few respondents felt that library staff members' passion and enthusiasm about reading can affect library users:

'…a library with a trained librarian gives its community access to a knowledge manager with expertise to guide and enthuse and also a commitment to their community which is beyond price.'

Respondents felt that good library staff are those determined to find the information that users need. They are visible and accessible and can recognise when people require assistance and when people want to be left alone. One respondent contrasted library staff to the 'unengaged staff' in bookshops. Some respondents argued that the expertise and guidance provided by professional library staff is a key resource that volunteers cannot provide. The subject of volunteers is covered in more detail in chapter five.

Conclusion

Libraries provide access to a diverse range of knowledge and information in a straightforward, trustworthy manner and respondents place great value on this. They know that guidance is available from expert staff when they cannot find what they are looking for. Respondents find this useful for research and reference purposes as it enables them to find information that is unavailable elsewhere.

Not all respondents felt that libraries provide the services and resources they are seeking: some described returning from library trips empty-handed due to unavailability of what they required. For some of these, the risk of wasting a journey to the library only to be disappointed was too high and hence their library use had declined or lapsed completely. This highlights the point that libraries cannot – and never have been able to – provide immediately for every individual requirement. It could be argued that they should not seek to do this either, but instead focus on meeting the needs of those groups who are likely to need these services most.

Chapter 2: Libraries in society

Introduction

Respondents saw public libraries as a unique public service that provides everyone in society with an opportunity to access information and books, including people who may be more vulnerable or could not otherwise afford these resources. Libraries promote reading and literacy, and support formal and informal learning and the acquisition of knowledge. Respondents believed that libraries foster community cohesion and increase equality within society. For these reasons, many respondents felt that public libraries are one hallmark of a civilised, democratic society.

Supporting learning and literacy

Many respondents thought one of the main purposes of public library services is to encourage and support learning, reading and literacy. A few respondents were concerned about literacy levels and argued that libraries have a role to play in improving the nation's standard of literacy, either through the provision of books and other information, or via more direct methods such as adult literacy classes. Others focused on the importance of reading and literacy to improve social outcomes and the individual's ability to participate fully in society:

'The economic prosperity of the country depends upon having a literate, numerate workforce and public libraries are one of the most cost effective mechanisms for supporting this.'

'If we could only get books by buying them people would stick to what they know, their outlook and horizons would narrow, experience would be all the poorer, and so would people's contributions back to society because they would have less to give.'

Some respondents spoke more generally about the value of the library in supporting and promoting learning and the acquisition of knowledge, with a few giving examples of ways that libraries do this through the provision of books and DVDs, a place for private study, or group education and events, and access to online educational resources.

A social leveller

Respondents saw libraries as a social leveller, making society more equal than it would be if there were no libraries. They play this role in a number of ways: they enable those who cannot afford to pay for formal education to catch up through self-learning in the library; and they also provide services and support to people who lack access to computers or the skills to use them. As described in more detail below, some respondents valued the fact that libraries benefit particular groups within society such as older people, people on low incomes, and people with disabilities.

Those people who are struggling financially were most frequently cited as gaining particular benefit from library services. Some respondents claimed that their needs are particularly important at a time of cuts to other public services:

'Like healthcare and schools, access to books is too important to be restricted to those who can afford to pay for it. Only through public libraries can people on low incomes have access to books.'

Many respondents said that libraries are important to older people. This is partly because those living on pensions may fall within the 'low income' bracket mentioned above. In addition, older members of the community may be isolated and living on their own and libraries are seen as a friendly, safe place where they can interact with others without the pressure to buy anything:

'As I get older, the library…is also a community resource for stable encounters and safe conversation without commercial or social pressures.'

The broad point made by respondents in relation to the role of libraries as a social leveller is that they provide access to knowledge and services to people who, for a number of reasons, would find it difficult or even impossible to access them through other channels. Many of the specific groups mentioned are likely to coincide; for example, unemployed people as well as older people, as mentioned above, may well be on a limited income. The services that libraries provide to help people with job-seeking, training opportunities, job clubs and access to free newspapers were all identified as important to this group. People with a visual impairment might value access to large print books and again, disabled people are, as a group, more likely than able-bodied people to be on lower incomes or unemployed. Those with limited literacy or for whom English is not a first language might also be able to access resources in their library that they cannot find or afford elsewhere.

Enabling digital inclusion

Libraries were described as playing a critical role in 'combating the digital divide' in a society which relies so heavily on the internet to access information and public services. Respondents felt libraries offer an essential service to people who do not have access to a computer or the internet at home, and others also appreciate the assistance and training available to those with limited IT skills:

'For those without access to internet services they provide a free opportunity to do so with assistance at hand when needed. This is particularly important for the 'digitally disadvantaged' as more and more government services move onto the web.'

A craft session at Deptford Lounge Library, London. Photo: Michael Cameron Photography

One respondent thought that having information accessible in a range of digital formats might encourage users to stray from what is familiar to them, perhaps with the help of library staff. The library is seen as encouraging and making it easier for people without the confidence to enrol on computer courses to teach themselves via other methods:

'The library email told me they're running coding classes and a friendly young member of staff tells me they need five more students but they do have Teach Yourself Coding books and a list of free online courses that might help.'

Building a sense of community

'Libraries belong to the whole community – as someone said – they are the community glue and they make communities stronger.'

Having a local library in a community was felt by some respondents to foster community cohesion. One respondent suggested that with public libraries, the community feels ownership of a service that is provided together, to share together, where the books and space belong to everyone. Some referred to the local library as a place for the community to feel proud of and one that is vital to a community's sense of identity.

Other respondents focused more on how the resources and services within a library build a sense of community. Two examples given frequently are displays of information about local history that are not available on the internet and exhibitions of work by local artists. Events within the library space bring together people of different ages and backgrounds and help forge relationships between individuals and different community groups. Some suggested that the shared resource develops a sense of responsibility within the community. One respondent felt that libraries encourage participation in civic events.

A hallmark of a civilised society

'Education of the masses is an integral part of a civilized society.'

Many respondents saw public libraries as an important marker of civilisation because of what they say about our society: that it values knowledge and culture; that it seeks to promote learning and an enquiring mind; and that it values equality. Libraries provide knowledge for free, so access to these rich resources are not dependent on a person's financial situation. Respondents felt public libraries show that this country believes everyone has the right to better themselves, and that reading and learning are essential to this. A few said nothing of their own personal experience of library use and referred instead to the value of living in a country with public libraries:

'It is important to us to live in a country that values such places'

Conclusion

Many respondents felt that the most important purpose of a library is to remove barriers to the acquisition of knowledge. They do this principally by providing services at no cost. Free access to information and a wide range of cultural and popular resources, including books, music and films, provision of information in a range of accessible formats and support, training and development opportunities contribute to people's ability to develop the skills they need to further themselves in their lives. Respondents view the benefits that libraries provide as social rather than individual (for others or themselves): library services are seen as improving society as a whole. This sits within the context of a fundamental belief that a democratic society should give everyone the opportunity to better themselves through education, reading and interaction within a library space. In its role as a social leveller, the public library helps to close the gap between the haves and the have-nots and to bring communities together.

Respondents see libraries as standing for something that is intrinsic to a developed democratic nation. The public library is seen as something like a statement of commitments and values: the library stands for democratisation, for equality, and as a marker of a country that values learning and education.

Chapter 3: Children and libraries

Introduction

Children's experience of the public library strongly influenced respondents' perceptions of the service and its value. They described a range of benefits provided to children by public libraries. Libraries encourage familiarity with and love of reading and learning; the development of literacy and support at school; the growth of personal skills and qualities; engaging and entertaining play and family time. Throughout their reflections, respondents' views were strongly flavoured by their own memories of childhood and their hopes for what the next generation might experience.

Introducing a love of books

Libraries are valued greatly for introducing children to reading and literature and encouraging a love of books. Many respondents made comments about children's use of libraries in their responses to the question 'why do you value public library services?' Public libraries are depicted by respondents as places where children form reading habits and discover new worlds through books and these skills and interests continue through childhood and into adult life.

Two strands emerged in relation to how libraries introduce children to reading. One is the opportunity for discovery and exploration, which many respondents described in accounts of weekly visits to the library during which children choose books to take home. This valued part of childhood experience owes a lot to the range of books available to young visitors. Many respondents note that this far exceeds the choice children could enjoy at home, whether for reasons of cost or space. Many of the ideal libraries described by respondents are a space in which children are welcome. They include areas dedicated to giving children independent space and free-rein to explore their imaginations – a possibility also often linked to comments on the safety of the library space. This is reviewed in more detail in Chapter 4.

The other value derived from children visiting and becoming familiar with libraries relates to children's development. Many respondents associated their early exposure to books in free and stimulating library spaces with the development of personal skills and qualities such as confidence or curiosity, and with children continuing to read and learn at school:

'I feel it has fostered a real love and interest in reading for them – both avid bookworms! This in turn has helped them enormously with their studies at school – making them happy and confident children.'

In addition to children's books, respondents valued activities for children and play areas.

Literacy, learning and schools

Libraries are seen as playing a vital role in helping children to achieve and develop literacy and many respondents see them as an essential complement to the resources available in schools. A few mentioned their particular value to primary schools with only limited book collections. However, many more respondents discussed both school and public library resources together, or positioned them as supporting or supplementing each other. For some respondents, the fact that public libraries provide resources and information for discovery outside of school is integral to their ability to engage young people and extend the opportunities available to them:

'Each person, whatever their circumstances, should have access to a wide variety of books. School doesn't work for everyone, so being able to go to a library in a leisure time encourages them to read and learn.'

Libraries are also seen as providing a calm environment for study: some respondents noted that not all children will have this at home. As well as providing this quiet space and a wide range of resources, some respondents felt that libraries are of value because they can help children to develop study skills – in particular, how to seek and use information. These points are often linked to comments about how libraries enhance the educational life chances of disadvantaged people in particular:

'They also encourage access to learning outside school for young people, whether or not their own parents are motivated to provide a sufficiently stimulating intellectual environment in the home.'

Some respondents referred to the value of partnerships between schools and libraries. Several of the ideal libraries featured classes from local schools working with library staff on trips to the library or decorative displays of work by children from local schools. In response to being asked 'Please describe what a visit to your ideal library would feel like, what you would hear and what you would see?' some respondents called for links between libraries and local schools as well as between libraries and other community institutions. (Partnerships are discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.)

A small number of respondents suggested that libraries merely duplicate the service provided by school libraries.

Development through childhood

Respondents link childhood exposure to libraries to children's personal development. Children's capacity for empathy and solidarity (related in particular reading fiction), their respect for others and their property, and the development of listening skills were all said to be enhanced by libraries. The most frequently mentioned developmental value relates to social and communication skills. This was sometimes linked with reading fiction, but more often to interaction with library staff and with others using the library:

'The conversations our grandchildren have with the librarians are always meaningful, and their questions and answers are always well reasoned and thought out. Compare this to their usual classroom or playground conversations to whit 'Yeah well but look, but I, well yeah but no but ...'

These social and communication skills are cultivated by dedicated activities and events for children. Story time and rhyme time events for children are hugely popular and often associated with social interaction and communication: many respondents see these activities as one of the main purposes of libraries. Some respondents suggested too that the standards of literacy and social interaction that libraries help to maintain may be under threat in wider society.

Many respondents described their ideal library as a place that caters for young people and teenagers. Some respondents described the changing significance of the library as children grow up and seek more independence and need more resources for study. Some respondents made the point that public libraries provide a particularly valuable public space for young people who are too old to be escorted by their parents, but are perhaps too young to have their own private spaces outside the home or sufficient resources to buy entertainment and learning resources for themselves. Some respondents noted that books and libraries themselves are today less important to technologically-equipped young people than they would have been in the past. Respondents often provided the caveat that these young users still need a separate space, though this special value

of library space is often mentioned alongside the need for libraries to serve all ages:

'I think building up a new generation of readers is essential, so good children's libraries with excellent stock of fiction and non-fiction. There also needs to be somewhere for them to go when they're growing out of childhood but aren't quite adults.'

Holiday and family time

Respondents mentioned special events hosted by libraries during school holidays. A number of users praise summer reading schemes for occupying children constructively through the holidays and for extending their education and improving their literacy in enjoyable ways. A range of year-round events and activities for children are also highly valued – none more so than story or rhyme times. Respondents see these activities as a chance for interaction with other parents and children, and for their children to benefit from listening to and concentrating on a story. Imaginative events and activities for children, sometimes (though not always) related to reading and writing, are also widely appreciated:

'Our town library (Taunton, Somerset) recently had a camouflage tent full of books which kids (and parents) could climb into and curl up and read in – absolutely brilliant for capturing kids imagination and something a bit different!'

Families value libraries as a resource they use together. Many respondents reported using the library with other family members, and cited their particular value according to particular interests and circumstances. Grandparents describe taking their grandchildren to the library, where a variety of distractions occupy children of different ages. For parents too, the chance to take young children somewhere safe and full of entertainment provides valuable relief from time spent at home. Libraries are also seen as important for parents, particularly in early years of parenthood, when they can visit the library for special events that cater to their

child's age group, and enjoy them together. A handful of respondents refer to families that do not live together and describe the importance of high-quality activities at the library to parents with limited access to their children and to parents more generally. Libraries provide a social and inviting space away from the home which has benefits for sometimes harassed parents as well as for their children:

'A parent once said to me that it was the library that kept her sane when she had her children. The work libraries do with young people should not be overlooked.'

Childhood memories

Childhood memories are scattered throughout respondents' reflections on public libraries, suggesting their role is of particular value at this time of life. Respondents' memories of positive and enabling experiences of libraries in childhood often introduced their reflections on the value of libraries for children in general. Respondents referred to the lifelong habits they formed thanks to childhood trips to the library. Some described the supporting role they have played at points later in their lives, such as when job-seeking or in higher education.

Whatever their other preferences, many respondents' ideal libraries are specially welcoming and accommodating of children or families. A number of respondents described children's chatter or laughter among the sounds they would most like to hear, despite otherwise highly valuing the tranquillity of the library:

'I would usually only hear quiet conversation, as it is important that users can concentrate, but I would be delighted if I could hear 'story time' from the children's section.'

Other respondents mentioned bright and appealing colours and decoration for the benefit of children. However, they stressed often that such child-friendly features may not be suitable throughout the library space.

While the benefits of libraries for children are normally recounted with an adult's eye on development and outcomes, attention is also given to the appeal of library visits to children. For a few, a central and valued aspect of the library service is the treat that a trip to the library represents to their children. For others, libraries need not focus exclusively on reading and literacy, for instance, but also be about enabling play – play that is free, shared with others, or which enhances children's comfort with books and the library environment.

Conclusion

Respondents value libraries that are welcoming to children. Libraries foster a lifelong love of books from a young age and develop children's skills and character. They are a place for children to spend time with their families. In discussing the value of public libraries to children and young people, many respondents recall their own experiences of trips to the library with their parents when they were younger. Respondents talk of these earlier experiences as important contributors to the skills and interests they have developed over their lives,

and give credit to libraries for providing them with these valuable opportunities as a child. The value that libraries have for children and young people – and for their busy parents – is expressed clearly by many respondents, some of whom describe particular services or events in their own local library that are aimed at children.

As libraries develop in the future, they will need to find new ways of providing the experience of discovery and exploration that nurture, enthuse and educate young people from their very first visit. For example, has exposure to interactive technologies designed for babies impacted on toddlers' responses to books? How are wider debates about the impact of technology on libraries played out within the context of services for children? The digital world may make the shared physical community space of the library only more important. The value of continuity and shared experience provided by public libraries can only be maintained by continuing to promote and develop the library experience for new generations of children.

A young family enjoy the facilities at Hamworthy Library, Poole. Photo: Michael Cameron Photography

Chapter 4:
The library space

Introduction

The public library space is described frequently in responses, both as the subject of direct comments, and indirectly through many of the priorities and values people identified in the library service. In this chapter we look at these comments and descriptions in relation to the function the library space performs for its community and its individual users, the sights, sounds and smells that characterise a valuable public library space, and how design affects these qualities.

A community space

As noted earlier, a large number of respondents see the public library as a space at the centre of a community, or as the hub of a local area:

'To provide a focal point for the community and its needs.'

Some described this focal point role in fairly general terms, referring to the library as a shared public space. They often stressed this in their descriptions of ideal libraries, sometimes imagining evidence of a range of community uses, such as posters for community events, local interest leaflets, and other users representing a real cross-section of the area. Otherwise, they pictured the library as a place where the public can connect with political representatives, local council services or the Citizens Advice service. Respondents also focused on the practical aspects of this role of the library space, for example by describing the availability of rooms for hire for community purposes.

A few respondents compared libraries to other community institutions: for some, they are secular successors to parish churches, or a preferable alternative to pubs. When describing why they value public libraries many respondents argued that they are neutral or non-judgmental places where,

for example, those in need of benefits advice can seek for information without stigma. The neutrality was often linked to interaction with staff, or the responses of other library users, while several respondents imagined ideal libraries offering privacy to their users. All this contributes to a generally non-judgmental and non-intimidating atmosphere that was frequently cited by respondents:

'In a world where religion – and hence religious buildings – are in decline libraries could become the new focal point of local society if they are allowed to remain open in sufficient numbers and offer the whole community an appropriate range of resources. The focus should be more 'serving the community' rather than just, say, a place of knowledge and education.'

'Because they are free, they are neutral spaces and no one asks you who you are or why you are there. They help you. They are central to communities and help ordinary people with knowledge and keep people sane.'

A safe, social place

Many respondents described libraries as social spaces, calling them a 'place to meet'. They paint pictures of groups of people working together or socialising, referring in particular to young people and older people. The public library is seen as a safe space – sometimes even as a refuge – free from the pressures of everyday life.

A small number of respondents see the non-commercial aspect of the public library as something of great value. For these respondents,

the library as an open and unlimited public space (where spending time is not chargeable or contingent on a purchase) gives the space a rare social value and adds to the feeling of warmth, welcome and friendliness:

'It is rare to get public spaces where the exchange of cash is not essential and it is very freeing – you can enjoy being in a library and not feel under pressure to leave. The lack of advertising or commercial purpose is also very important – creating almost a safe space to escape from it all.'

However, the popularity of cafés overshadows these requests for a completely non-commercial space. Cafés are a very popular feature of many existing or ideal libraries that are described, contributing to their social function.

Sights, sounds and smells

Respondents liked their libraries to be bright, light, spacious or colourful, and sometimes just well decorated. Some imagined a space that makes good use of the original features of the library building. Specific objects mentioned include comfortable armchairs and plenty of computers. Other respondents suggested displays of posters and interesting information, and often specified that these should be up-to-date, should change frequently, or should represent connections and activity in the local area:

'It would be stimulating with displays of artwork, publications and local events and activities.'

A few respondents pointed out that the brightness of displays in the children's section may not be appropriate for the rest of the library, or noted things that they would prefer not to see, such as people eating. A few were less enthused by displays within the library, and stress mainly a wish to see plenty of books, uncomplicated by merchandising. The sight of people either immersed in their reading or interacting with staff and other visitors featured strongly among the imagined sights of the ideal library.

Ideal library smells are a matter of relative consensus among the several respondents who mentioned them, with agreement that clean, not musty, smells and the scent of books are important. A few hope for the smell of coffee and cakes:

'In places it's a bit fusty and leathery, but mostly it smells of ink.'

'I walked in to a combination of the smells of new books and new paint – absolutely what I envisage heaven to smell like.'

Sound and noise levels are very important for some respondents. The quietness of the library is one of the most highly-valued qualities of library spaces as they are currently used, and was described by some as a particular and special quality of libraries, contributing to their offer of refuge, especially from modern or city life:

'as libraries offer more facilities, often the noise level increases, which is a shame. 'Modernisation' is not always an improvement. As a child, what I loved about libraries was the wonderfully soft silence that enveloped you when you entered – it seemed to say 'Here be marvels, all just for you' and it was always a safe and warm place to be. Perhaps that's why Libraries have always been a wonderful part of my life. They were a 'special' place, unlike any other.'

A number of respondents felt that the provision of a quiet space, which is also calm and relaxing, is one of the main purposes of public libraries.

However, complete silence is not a priority for the majority of respondents. In describing their ideal libraries, many included different degrees and varieties of sound that would be a welcome part of the experience. In many cases the noise levels preferred were contrasted with the remembered severe silence of libraries in the past. Where some noise or sound is said to be desirable, it was often termed as a 'buzz', or the low-level 'hum' of discussion and the noise of activity and enjoyment. Some respondents who value quiet identified

particular noises that should be contained, such as the noise of typing, or of loud conversations. A large number of respondents suggested separate spaces where louder talk or noisy activities could take place. A small number positively encouraged sound-filled libraries as evidence of enjoyment and meaningful interaction, again often contrasting with past experience: these respondents are usually most enthusiastic about allowing children to make noise:

'Although silence is desirable the sound of young people is essential for a thriving alive community and hence must be tolerated in a living library system.'

Division of space

The intangible attributes of libraries described above do not always complement one another. Many respondents value the quiet, calm space for study or reflection that libraries might offer, while others prefer lively, vibrant or busy places. Some respondents cited several of these functions together:

'It would be relatively quiet except in the children's area where it would still be quiet but perhaps not so quiet! It would feel peaceful yet busy, comfortable yet active.'

A large number of respondents described a library divided into different areas, often with simultaneous activities taking place in different spaces. Lively but separate children's areas were described nearby quiet reading spaces, while a coffee shop is not too far away. As well as calling for zoning of the library space, a number of respondents mentioned the need for good and clear signage, to help navigation through this potentially intimidating range of spaces and resources:

'The entrance area would be busy and bustling, but there would be quiet areas to study.'

Architecture and design

The architecture or design of the library building gathered a lot of comment. Many respondents felt that the public library should be an interesting (or even beautiful) building in which to spend time. Some respondents preferred historic buildings, while others mentioned positive experiences in new buildings, refurbished libraries and modern designs. The building itself is sometimes associated with the library's status in the community; an aesthetically interesting or pleasing building, whether old or new, speaks about the value of the public library. A number of people also discussed the location of the library, with a spot on the high street or near busy shopping areas proving more popular than out-of-town locations.

Inside, libraries should be spacious and airy, not stuffy or over-heated, especially in summer: many respondents commented on the importance of a warm space for particular groups of visitors such as homeless people, students, or older people:

'The building would smell clean. The heating system would provide background warmth when it was cold but the building would not feel overheated and airless. Natural light would be a feature with protection from the sun where it was necessary.'

'I would like to visit an interesting an inspiring building, which is unique to my community.'

Many respondents' design preferences related to accessibility. For example, some people find it difficult to bend easily – so shelving books close to the ground can make them inaccessible. Many respondents made specific mention of accessible toilets and the provision of baby changing facilities at their ideal libraries. Adequate parking provision can also contribute to accessibility.

A few respondents mentioned the need for refurbishment or modernisation of libraries, often referring to particular libraries and their shortcomings, particularly in respect of the attributes identified in this chapter; indeed some of the positive memories of library visits featured

stories of renovation or refurbishment, though a few were sceptical of the impact this might have on content and service:

'Nice modern interior – well managed and cared for. Libraries have got a bad reputation as there hasn't been the investment. No business would 'go forward' without a bit of a refurb and a lick of paint from time to time. First impressions count – libraries need to feel like a nice place to be.'

Conclusion

The way in which respondents view library space is bound up with their own personal experiences and their individual requirements and interests. The different values that they perceive libraries to have often translate into different areas and facilities within the library building and even into specific sounds and smells. These diverse and sometimes contradictory preferences create a challenge for libraries to provide a space and resources that can meet these diverse needs. Responses show that where they succeed in this, public library spaces are already greatly valued by wide and diverse range of users.

Respondents want their libraries to be free, welcoming and comfortable places in which to explore or spend leisure time, and as a community space in which to seek information or support they need or just a sociable atmosphere. The ability of the library space to meet these needs seems closely connected in respondents' minds to the free-at-the-point-of-use provision of resources and staff. The future library space has to find a form in which it can serve many functions at once for different visitors, who may come seeking variously the feeling of belonging comfortably to a local community, a sociable but safe experience, or a quiet and private haven.

The context within which libraries offer their services and hence embody the values that respondents identify has changed and will continue to change. The distinction between public and private services is dissolving and a commercial and consumerist lens refracts our attitudes towards many of the services funded by the public purse. However, the values seen as intrinsic to libraries are also seen as such because they are funded publicly: the contract we have with our libraries is social rather than commercial. There is a tension here, and this lies behind some of the discussion about whether or not libraries should provide services such as a café. For some, a café in a library – and perhaps particularly one representing a large chain – is the first step on the slippery slope to introducing commercial elements into the public library and should be resisted. For others, a warm and inviting café is a welcome addition to the services offered by a library and to the revenue that a library needs to provide those services. In addition to reconciling different noise levels, atmospheres and service types, libraries will need to think carefully about whether to offer a space to private businesses such as coffee shops. Some respondents suggested this would set an unwelcome precedent while others support the provision of affordable refreshments to help attract and keep people as regular library users.

The mix of preferences will be difficult to reconcile. The library space should offer these diverse services without pressure or prescription, without conveying a sense that particular interests, uses, or visitors are judged more fitting than others. This poses perhaps the greatest challenge to the architects and designers of the library of the future, who will need to find ways to accommodate noisiness and quiet, the smells of bookshelves and of bakeries, and airiness as well as seclusion. They can at least afford to be ambitious in their task, since respondents widely agree in perceiving the library building as a local landmark, or even, in some way, unique to their community, whether in reflecting its history or as a beacon for the future.

Chapter 5: Is the value of libraries changing?

Introduction

In identifying what they value about public libraries, many respondents made reference to the way libraries have changed over time, whether they have adapted to changes in society and how they should continue to do this.

Are libraries still relevant?

In explaining why they value public libraries, many people cited the continuity or 'timelessness' of the library as an institution. Most often this referred to the continuity it has provided within the individual's life, with many respondents mentioning that they have used libraries since they were a child and recounted positive memories from the past. Commenting on why they value public libraries, one respondent simply said:

'They have always been a part of my life and a source of great pleasure.'

While many respondents recognised their past importance, a few questioned the continued relevance or need for libraries. For example, in response to the question of why they value public library services, one respondent answered:

'Difficult. I understand the importance of lending libraries from their inception when few people could afford to buy books and books were the main, if not only, source of knowledge. This is not true today'

While only a very small number of responses go as far as to say that libraries are no longer needed or relevant at all, many noted that their importance has diminished in a particular function, such as providing reference materials or books. Many respondents also expressed concern at what they feel is the deterioration of the service provision which means they or others use their local library less frequently. They often cited either a limited range of stock, the loss of professional or experienced library staff or shorter opening hours as indicators of a deteriorating service. Technological change was one of the main factors cited as making libraries less relevant, and these arguments are discussed in greater detail below.

Retain core focus…

Opinions differed about whether the role of a library should change. This issue emerged particularly in responses to the question 'What do you think should be the main purposes of public library services?'

Many respondents were adamant that libraries should not lose sight of their core focus or values, which was invariably described as access to books and the provision of the written word. However, this core service seems to function as a carrier for – or perhaps a familiar indicator of – a wider set of values, many of which we have discussed already: commitment to social equality, to public goods in contrast to private goods, to children's imaginative and educational development and to community cohesion.

Continuing to provide the core service did not, for most respondents, preclude the need for libraries to embrace other services (though a small number were firmly opposed to this). They wanted public libraries not to lose sight of this core purpose. As one respondent put it:

'I believe access to information/books is what a library should always be first and foremost. Should that not be enough, other things can be added but I'd be wary to see the library try to turn into a million different things for a million different people. You can't please everyone at all times. Stick with what you know and you will succeed.'

In fact, when asked to describe their ideal library experience, many respondents stated that their current library already offers this. Occasionally this point was made with the caveat that a single improvement would improve the service offered. Generally this referred to increased funding, whether for a larger collection of books and other resources, improvements to the library building or extended opening hours.

Some felt that libraries should restrict themselves to a narrower role based on traditional services – particularly lending books and providing access to reference material. Reasons given for this differed: that there is insufficient funding available for libraries to take on additional services; that money should not be diverted from providing books and reference resources; that community services are provided by other agencies; or just that these are not appropriate for libraries. One respondent specifically referred to the name of the library:

'No messing about with the name of the service either please. I have no idea what an Ideas Store is – or a Community Centre!'

As in the example above, dismissal of a wider role for libraries sometimes seems to reflect a fear of alienation or exclusion by those who currently use the service. These views are not concentrated among respondents of a particular age group. Further, a majority of both those respondents who

argued that libraries should retain their core focus or values, and of those who said they must update or modernise their offering, said they had used a library within the week before submitting their response. This concern about modernisation among even regular library users could reflect a fear that a broader range of services might be embraced at the expense of those which are currently valued.

…or expand and diversify?

On the other hand, some respondents believed libraries should expand the services they offer, for instance by improving the quantity or range of resources available within the library, or expanding the physical space to enable libraries to better fulfil their role as an 'information hub'. Often this referred to libraries providing more activities or events such as adult education classes:

'To stay alive a library has to diversify and adapt to the needs of its community, without losing its core values. Certainly it should still provide books for those that want them but it should be much more than this. IT, careers advice, learning centres, multi-cultural events, children's areas, author visits, student study areas etc.'

Some respondents advocated closer partnerships with schools and councils in order to widen the range of services for the community. Some felt that libraries should become a 'one-stop shop' for local information services. One respondent suggested they could be used as a place for holding surgeries with planning committee members.

Amongst the specific suggestions for additional services that will help libraries to remain relevant (or better meet the needs of their community), the most popular is an area within the library to listen to music. Other suggestions include a dedicated area for writers, more community events outside of library hours, a crèche, an out of hours 'drop box' for returning books, and circulating stock between county branches to ensure wider access to new items.

Libraries in a technological age

The extent to which technological change has affected (or should affect) public libraries was an important issue raised in consultation responses.

Many felt that technological developments, such as the internet and e-books, have undermined the purpose of libraries. These developments – together with the low cost of books – are often cited as a reason for not using libraries. Others point to the continued popularity of library services despite technological advances, or argue that for particular purposes – reference books or children's books for example – libraries remain invaluable. One respondent noted that libraries are likely to be valued more in some communities than in others:

'I would accept that technological developments are changing the needs of many communities, but where access to the internet is limited or non-existent, they are like the school and pub, vital to rural life.'

Many respondents included up-to-date technology in their ideal libraries. They argued that libraries must embrace new information formats in order to be able to continue their role in providing access to information to as many people as possible. Some felt that such technology, though necessary, should be minimised or at least balanced against the need to retain physical resources or human assistance:

'Seeing people queuing up to take out piles of books, perfect, that's what libraries are about but more than that, they need to be there in the future with a changing role of being able to offer more digital books and digital services.'

Others were more forceful in their insistence that technological developments do not remove the need for libraries to provide physical books. They argued that while other formats may be increasingly accessible and popular, books will not be replaced and still need to be at the centre of library services. Some pointed out that information in digital formats may be less accessible to some groups such as older people, and that the experience of reading children's storybooks is very different in a digital format – and by implication not as good as a printed format.

Others took a slightly broader view of the library's purpose, emphasising that the format is secondary to the overall aim of making information, literature or even 'the written word' accessible to all. As in the following example, the implication was that the need for libraries to provide books has not changed but should be interpreted more widely:

'The core of any public library service should be based around books (whether printed/ebooks/spoken word) and the collection, preservation and dissemination of the written word. Libraries are repositories of knowledge and learning. Ergo, words – in whatever medium they happen to be collected – should be the central focus.'

Funding and ownership

Respondents emphasised the importance of continued funding to ensure this service can be well resourced, financed and maintained:

'It shouldn't look as if it is run on a shoe string.'

Many expressed their concern about the impact of cuts on the future provision of library services, often in relation to a particular local branch perceived to be threatened in this way. Others went further to argue that the context of local authority spending cuts make the services offered in public libraries even more essential:

'As other community services are depleted the library becomes even more valuable.'

In addition to the need to secure funding, there were also a number of comments relating to the ownership of libraries. These generally stated the importance of library services remaining publicly owned and run by councils, although one respondent suggested that specific services could be given to private companies in order to save resources. Public ownership of libraries was seen as crucial to maintaining their role as a neutral and independent source of information that is accessible to all.

Partnerships

A specific suggestion made by many respondents was that libraries should work more closely with other organisations in the public and third sector, in order to provide a wider range of services for the community. These include partnerships with schools to promote education and literacy, and sharing premises with the local Citizens Advice service or Tourist Information Centre. These comments were often made in the context of concern about cuts to library funding. Some suggested that integrating, or working more closely, with other organisations is a way to secure public services in a context of cuts to local authority budgets:

'I think all of these things should be the main purposes of library services. It may mean that they have to link up with other agencies, such as schools and colleges, but in these times of austerity sharing resources makes a lot of sense.'

Volunteering

Another specific concern related to funding was that of trained and qualified library staff. Several respondents specified that the staff should be trained and paid, rather than volunteers. This is a feature of some of the ideal libraries, with respondents lamenting the loss of professional library staff and their replacement with volunteers:

'No volunteers in my perfect library!'

However, many recognised that volunteers can play a supporting role to lead library staff, and respondents suggested some areas of the library service where volunteer help would be valued, for example with running of evening events, tending the library garden, and running the library café.

Conclusion

Respondents are in broad agreement that libraries should continue to be an information centre or 'hub' and a place providing access to the written word, and that the way libraries have evolved over past few years has encouraged more people into the library building and enabled more people to access knowledge. Nevertheless there are some different views about how libraries should evolve in the future. In particular, respondents have a range of different views on the presence and role of technology and the extent to which library services should diversify.

Respondents lament the lack of funding for libraries in recent times but very few see this as the death knell for public libraries. On the contrary, most think that libraries are more relevant now than ever before for enabling individuals, communities and the whole of society to improve themselves, thanks to free access to knowledge and information.

Providing free access to books and other written information and hence supporting the development of reading and learning remains the top priority for most respondents and it seems that this 'core value' of libraries has not changed since their earliest days. What has changed is the variety of ways that knowledge is now available – particularly through the internet – and some respondents fear the indirect effect of this change may be that 'equality of access' to knowledge is harder to achieve.

There are respondents who said that the role of the library as an information provider has become less significant with the growth of the internet.

Whereas some felt that the best way to respond to this would be to improve digital inclusion through an increased internet presence in libraries and more opportunities for computer training, there is an alternative path that libraries could take. Given the difficulty for libraries to compete with the internet in terms of providing comprehensive, wide-ranging information, and the large number of respondents who value the social, community-focused aspect of a public library, one possibility might be for the core focus of libraries to move away from information provision to become an institution with a more social focus. Respondents said they feel that libraries act effectively as a community hub, fostering cohesion and building community values, and for many this is an important and realistic role for public libraries to fill in the future.

The comments within this theme suggest a trade off between perpetuating those values and services which library users currently identify as important, while at the same time responding to cultural and technological change. Integrating the library with other local services and embracing a new role as a 'community hub' may be necessary in some areas to ensure they remain viable and relevant. However, many are concerned that this aim should not be pursued at the expense of the library's traditional role in education and information provision. Similarly, the need to provide more information in electronic forms preferred by an increasing number of users should be considered alongside the social consideration that many potential users will continue to face challenges in accessing these new forms.

Appendices

Appendix A – Methodology

Online survey process

The online survey opened on 25 September and closed on 21 October 2012. Participants had to register to use an online survey website in order to submit their views through a series of question pages. The website was hosted by Dialogue by Design at: *librariesofthefuture.dialoguebydesign.net*

During the period of the online survey, information was made available to members of the public via relevant pages on Arts Council England's website: *www.artscouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/supporting-libraries/libraries-consultation*. The online survey was also publicised through social media, including the use of the hashtag #ACElibraries.

The registration pages of the survey website gathered basic information about users, ensuring that they could be identified as unique participants. It also required users to disclose their age group (to inform some demographic analysis of responses), as well as to indicate how recently they used a public library. An overview of this data is given in Appendix B.

Once registered, participants were able to revisit and edit their submission at any point during the survey period, using Dialogue by Design's specialist online interface. Any amendments were automatically incorporated and notified to the analysis team. The question pages of the survey website asked respondents five open questions about their use of public libraries, as well as their views on their value, purpose and ideal qualities. These open-ended questions enabled the free expression of opinions and ideas, to be captured in their full complexity by Dialogue by Design's analytical methods.

The questions asked on the website were:

Q1. In what ways do you/your family use public library services?

Q2. If you/your family do not use public library services, what are the reasons?

Q3. Why do you value public library services?

Q4. What do you think should be the main purposes of public library services?

Q5. Please describe what a visit to your ideal library would feel like, what you would hear and what you would see.

Representations received

There were 1,431 respondents to the online survey website, and a further two were received by post or by email.

No organised or campaign responses using a template for answers were identified. Table 2-1 below identifies the number of representations received through the different response mechanisms. Table 2-2 indicates the number of responses received to each question.

Table A-1 Responses received between 25 September and 21 October 2012

Response type	Count
Online responses	1,431
Responses received by post or email	2
Total	**1,433**

Table A-2 Responses received to each question

Question number	Count
Q1	1,432
Q2	376
Q3	1,309
Q4	1,273
Q5	1,230

Online representations were imported directly into Dialogue by Design's analysis tool.

The response received by post was a handwritten response to each of the survey questions from a participant identifying a registration previously completed through the survey website. In accordance with the respondent's instructions, the answers were typed into the database by the project team, answering each question alongside those responses received through the website.

One response was received as a word processed document by email to Arts Council England, and was forwarded to the Dialogue by Design project team. It gathered the views of multiple anonymous users of a particular library. In order to meet the character limit requirements of the processing system, the response was entered into the database in the guise of seven 'artificial' online participants and analysed in these batches. All response totals in this report have been amended to take account of this method of processing, which has consequently had no significant effect on the analysis or consideration of responses.

No survey responses were received through Dialogue by Design's email address, facilitators@dialoguebydesign.com. Enquiries received by Dialogue by Design by phone or email were dealt with by the project team or, where appropriate, forwarded to Arts Council England.

Each response was analysed and the issues raised were captured, logged and coded as described below.

Analysis and reporting methodology

This section sets out how the responses received were analysed to ensure every point, issue and suggestion was identified and captured and to enable the findings to be accurately reported.

Data capturing and coding

For reporting purposes, all representations were analysed against each question asked on the survey website.

Working in communication with Arts Council England, our analysts prepared an initial list of anticipated themes. In total eight themes were identified, which were then split further into codes which helped the team of analysts to understand the broader context and to identify all significant information included in the responses. Codes were allocated to each theme and as the analysts reviewed the representations any point, issue or suggestion was identified, recorded and coded.

During analysis, the analysis framework was reviewed daily and updated several times to ensure significant emerging issues were captured. A full list of the themes is given in table A-3, below.

Of the eight total themes, five dealt with the substantial views on values, purposes and other qualities of public libraries expressed by respondents. These five themes each form one of the analytical chapters of this report. The remaining three themes were used by analysts to identify discussion of particular services, location-specific issues, and references to the structure or context of the survey.

The use of the two-tier coding framework (themes and codes) assisted the efficient analysis of the representations and assisted further in-depth interrogation of the findings and data reporting.

Table A-3 Glossary of themes

Theme	Acronym	Short description
Contents	CO	Comments about the resources available in the library, their value and their organisation.
Society	CO	Comments about the societal context of the public library.
Children	C	Comments about children and young people's relationship with libraries.
Space	SP	Comments about the physical space of libraries.
Change	CH	Comments about the way libraries or their context have changed, or about their future.
Services	SE	Comments identifying particular library services.
Location	L	Comments identifying particular libraries or locations.
Other	O	Comments about the structure or context of the online survey

Quality assurance

A number of quality assurance procedures were adopted. These included:

- regular team updates by the Dialogue by Design analysts to discuss emerging themes and to ensure that their approach to specific issues was accurate and consistent

- Dialogue by Design's quality assurance system which involves randomly selecting coded representations and checking them for consistency and accuracy

- the quality assurance process adopted identified a very small number of random misinterpretations of single points or concerns but did not identify any inconsistent trends or inaccuracies. In addition there was no evidence that any significant concern or issue was not captured

Analysis and reporting

During the analysis, it became clear that respondents raised the same issues against more than one question on the questionnaire. To avoid repetition and to ensure that each issue is fully reported, the report has been structured according to the major emerging themes and the relevant issues raised across responses to all questions have been addressed together.

Throughout the narrative there are rough indications of how many respondents hold certain views through the use of words like 'many' and 'a few'. These notions are indicative only and do not express clearly defined ranges of numbers or percentages. This usefully illustrates which preferences and concerns have been expressed by many respondents and which by few. However, it is important to note that an online survey like this differs from a representative survey and that numbers should be treated with great caution, as they only apply to those who chose to respond. Therefore, the numbers are not necessarily a reflection of the views of the local or wider population and it is important that they are not treated as such.

For the same reason, it is possible that an issue mentioned by only a few respondents is covered in the narrative, particularly when such an issue adds a consideration that is different from other views.

Appendix B – About the respondents

Participants in the online survey were required to indicate their age range and when they last used a public library. Charts summarising their responses are shown below. These charts use only the data submitted by those registered users of the survey website who eventually submitted a response.

Figure B-1 Age group of survey respondents
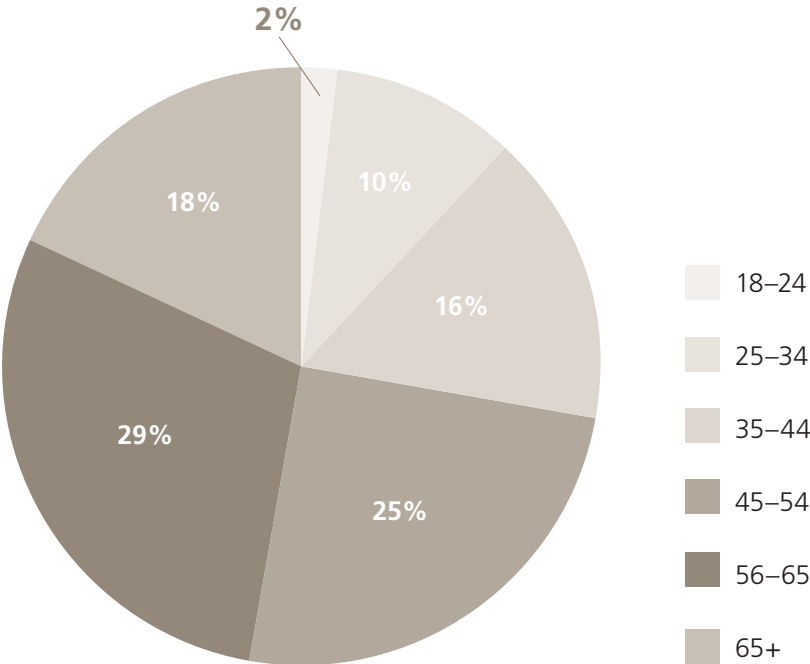
A large majority of respondents to the survey were over the age of 45, while the largest single age group were those aged 56 to 65. The respondents to the survey do not reflect the age profile of the adult population in England.

Figure B-2 Last occasion of use of a public library indicated by survey respondents

When was the last time, if ever, you used a public library or one of its services?

- Within the last week
- Within the last month, over a week ago
- Within the last year, over a month ago
- Longer ago
- None
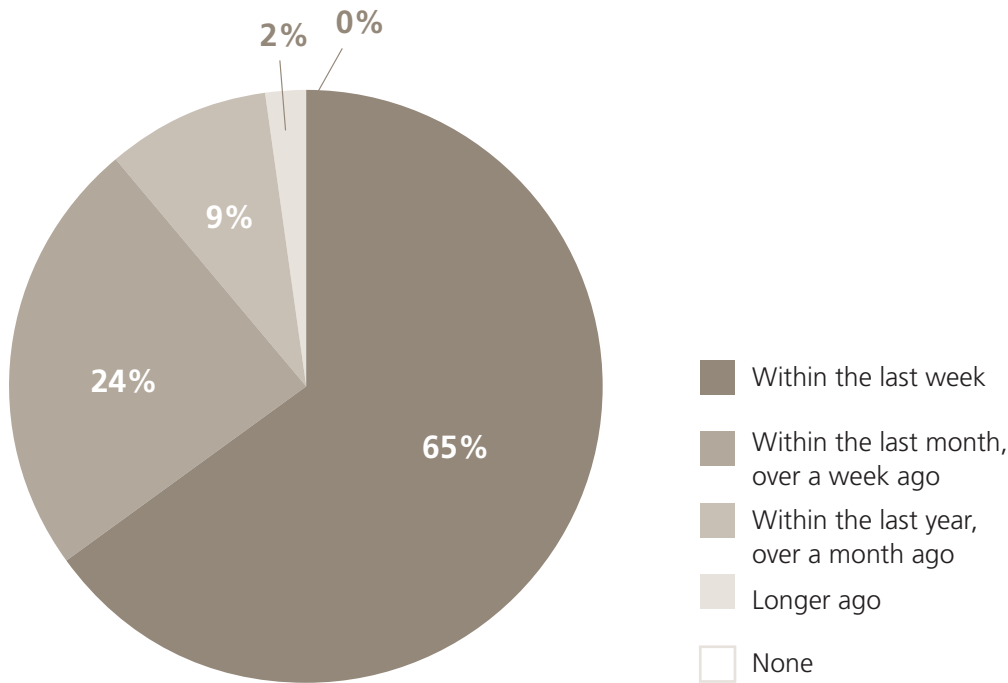
A comfortable majority of respondents said that they had used a public library within the last week, while none reported no usage at all, and only 2 per cent had last used one more than a year ago. This heavy representation of recent library users perhaps represents the extensive promotion of the online survey through existing communication channels connected to library users, as well as the additional support and encouragement for participation given by library staff. The respondents to this consultation do not reflect the known level of library use amongst the adult population of England.

The high representation of library users is reasonable and appropriate given the focus of the survey on what people value about public libraries. However, question 2 ('If you/your family do not use public library services, what are the reasons?') aimed specifically to draw out the views of non-users, directly or as reported, and these perspectives have been highlighted in the report.

Mapping the age group of respondents against their library usage data gives no strong trends. The way library users' relationships with the service change through their lifetimes is explored in several areas of the report – notably in chapter 3, on children and libraries, which draws both on the memories of older users and on contemporary experiences shared with younger users. Chapter 2 on libraries in society also explores their value to people of different ages. To support this effort to draw out the different experiences of library users of different ages, the Arts Council has conducted a complementary strand of engagement as part of the Envisioning the library of the future project, working particularly with young people.

Appendix C – Coding tables

The tables below list the themes and codes applied to the text of responses to each question of the consultation and the number of times that each code was used.

Question 1

Theme	Group	Count
C - Children	C - services (including borrowing and membership)	126
	C - education/learning/schoolwork	72
	C - story times/rhyme time	70
	C - activities/events/groups	54
	C - access to wide range of books	52
	C - school holiday space/activities	48
	C - family	44
	C - encourage love of books, discovery, etc	43
	C - skills - reading/literacy	24
	C - play	11
	C - childhood memories	9
	C - children are welcome	8
	C - familiarise children with libraries	7
	C - do not use	6
	C - library trip is a treat	6
	C - skills - other/general development	5
	C - comparison with school libraries	3
	C - skills - social/communication	3
	C - schools - support/partnership	2
	C - skills - independence	1
CH - Change	CH - technology - libraries versus internet/digital	24
	CH - partnerships/shared services	17
	CH - funding – cuts	13
	CH - charges	6
	CH - deterioration of the library service	4
	CH - preserve physical books	4
	CH - libraries no longer as relevant/useful	2
	CH - books should take precedence	1
	CH - existing library is good model	1
	CH - importance of retaining physical space	1
CO - Contents	CO - purpose - for reference	225
	CO - purpose - specific type/genre of resource	166
	CO - purpose - for research	161
	CO - online/high-tech resources	77
	CO - purpose - local heritage/information	62

	CO - purpose - discovery/exploration/browsing	56
	CO - purpose - family research	51
	CO - staff - guidance/help	39
	CO - resources - cannot be found elsewhere	30
	CO - staff - volunteers	22
	CO - staff - qualification/expertise	20
	CO - range - of content	19
	CO - ease of use - catalogue/index/online database	15
	CO - purpose - entertainment	9
	CO - fitting diverse needs	5
	CO - range - of services/roles/facilities	5
	CO - resources - limit/exclude specific type/genre	5
	CO - staff - general/other	5
	CO - portal to other resources/libraries	4
	CO - resources - book recommendations	4
	CO - staff - friendly/welcoming	4
	CO - purpose - take away/borrow books/resources	3
	CO - staff - passion/enthusiasm	3
	CO - range - of formats	2
	CO - resources - out of date	2
	CO - resources - useful/relevant/up to date	2
	CO - resources - well-presented/attractive	2
	CO - store of knowledge/culture	2
	CO - condition of the books/resources	1
	CO - insufficient range - of content	1
	CO - resources - poorly presented/unresponsive	1
	CO - resources - reliable/trustworthy/unbiased	1
	CO - staff - negative comment	1
	CO - staff - other than librarians	1
	CO - staff - preferred to machines	1
	CO - staff - presence/visibility	1
	CO - written word/literature	1
L - Location	L - specific library/area	61
O - Other	O - is/knows current or ex library employee	29
	O - quotes	24
	O - no comment/not applicable	5
	O - specific user experience/memory	3
	O - comment on consultation	1
SE - Services	SE - books - physical/paper/general	1169
	SE - CDs/DVDs/games/music/films	504
	SE - access to internet/computers/Wi-Fi/technology	359
	SE - information - local services/information	249
	SE - book request/reservation	156
	SE - magazines/newspapers/journals/periodicals	151
	SE - events/talks/films/lectures	142

	SE - books - audio books	116
	SE - clubs/groups	116
	SE - printing/photocopying/fax/scanning	106
	SE - information - general	91
	SE - online library accounts/phone-in service	67
	SE - books - ebooks	58
	SE - inter-library catalogue/loan	58
	SE - exhibitions/displays	42
	SE - do not use/do not use certain services	31
	SE - mobile library service/home delivery service/home readers service	26
	SE - courses/classes/workshops/training	22
	SE - retail outlet/shops	22
	SE - language resources	15
	SE - books - large print	11
	SE - other/general	7
	SE - information - current literature trends	6
	SE - information - government services/advice	5
	SE - toilets/baby changing	3
	SE - book swap/donations	2
	SE - remote services/resources/use from home	2
	SE - access to internet/computer (at home)	1
	SE - do not appeal to my interest	1
	SE - film/music/video games room	1
	SE - headphones	1
	SE - poor quality of services	1
	SE - seating	1
SO - Society	SO - supports - reading etc for pleasure/recreation/leisure	140
	SO - supports - education/learning/knowledge	106
	SO - low cost/risk	91
	SO - basic service/last resort	50
	SO - supports - professional activity/day job	48
	SO - unique/essential public service	29
	SO - shared resource	17
	SO - inclusive - free/open to all	16
	SO - supports - computer skills/digital inclusion	16
	SO - inclusive - disabled people	15
	SO - inclusive - serve other particular group	13
	SO - supports - job hunting/employment	13
	SO - rural communities	12
	SO - education/learning	11
	SO - supports - professional development	10
	SO - supports - health/wellbeing	9
	SO - builds/part of community values	8
	SO - human contact/interaction	8

	SO - inclusive - all ages/lifelong	8
	SO - access to new books	7
	SO - comparison with university libraries	7
	SO - inclusive - older people/pensioners	7
	SO - local/accessible (including parking)	7
	SO - not local/accessible	7
	SO - supports - exchange of knowledge/ideas	7
	SO - inclusive - low income groups	5
	SO - inclusive - teenagers/young people	5
	SO - supports - reading/literacy	5
	SO - opening hours	4
	SO - valued community resource	4
	SO - cohesiveness/connection of society	3
	SO - culture	3
	SO - mark of civilised/democratic society	3
	SO - non-discriminatory	3
	SO - part of our culture/community	3
	SO - sense of belonging	3
	SO - exclude certain groups	2
	SO - fees/charges	2
	SO - prefer to buy books	2
	SO - benefits of reading	1
	SO - benefits writers/authors	1
	SO - improve society/outcomes	1
	SO - inclusive - languages	1
	SO - inclusive - tourists/visitors	1
	SO - inclusive - unemployed people	1
	SO - supports - creativity/imagination	1
SP - Space	SP - social	71
	SP - study/working space	60
	SP - quiet/peaceful	42
	SP - reading space	42
	SP - community/local hub	39
	SP - café/refreshments	23
	SP - pass time/pop in	16
	SP - relaxing/relaxed	15
	SP - for children	13
	SP - safe	13
	SP - welcoming/friendly	9
	SP - escape	6
	SP - shared/public	4
	SP - comfortable/cosy	3
	SP - rooms for hire/activities	3
	SP - calm	2
	SP - fun	2

	SP - non commercial	2
	SP - temperature	2
	SP - ambiance	1
	SP - architecture/building	1
	SP - easy to be found	1
	SP - neutral	1
	SP - noise levels - prefer quiet/silence	1
	SP - purposeful	1

Question 2

Theme	Group	Count
C - Children	C - comparison with school libraries	8
	C - childhood memories	3
	C - do not use	3
	C - do not enjoy reading	2
	C - family	2
	C - education/learning/schoolwork	1
	C - encourage love of books, discovery, etc	1
	C - prefers ebooks/kindle	1
	C - school holiday space/activities	1
	C - schools - support/partnership	1
	C - services	1
CH - Change	CH - technology - libraries vs. internet/digital	27
	CH - deterioration of the library service	11
	CH - funding - cuts	7
	CH - duplication of other services	6
	CH - change in lifestyle led to less use	5
	CH - books are getting cheaper	3
	CH - changing habits of young	2
	CH - charges	2
	CH - less help needed with choice	2
	CH - continuity/timelessness of libraries	1
	CH - current services not adequate/ideal	1
	CH - do more to increase usage	1
	CH - existing library is good model	1
	CH - libraries are old fashioned	1
	CH - may return to library use	1
CO - Content	CO - insufficient range - of content	24
	CO - resources - insufficient	12
	CO - not easy/convenient/navigable	8
	CO - staff - negative comment	8
	CO - purpose - lack of specific/type genre of resource	6
	CO - purpose - take away/borrow books/resources	6
	CO - resources - out of date	6
	CO - long waiting time	5
	CO - staff - qualification/expertise	5
	CO - purpose - for reference	4
	CO - resources - poorly presented/unresponsive	4
	CO - purpose - specific type/genre of resource	2
	CO - resources - obscure/irrelevant	2
	CO - staff - lack of staff	2
	CO - staff - preferred to machines	2
	CO - condition of the books/resources	1

	CO - insufficient range - of formats	1
	CO - online/high-tech resources	1
	CO - purpose - local heritage/information	1
	CO - range - of formats	1
	CO - staff - general/other	1
	CO - staff - guidance/help	1
	CO - staff - passion/enthusiasm	1
	CO - staff - volunteers	1
L - Location	L - specific library/area	7
	L - specific/suggestion	1
O - Other	O - no comment/not applicable	218
	O - is/knows current or ex library employee	6
	O - info about respondent	5
	O - quotes	4
	O - reference to other question	3
	O - comment on consultation	1
	O - specific user experience/memory	1
SE - Services	SE - access to internet/computer (at home)	12
	SE - books - ebooks	6
	SE - returns (fines/difficulty returning)	6
	SE - access to internet/computers/Wi-Fi/technology	5
	SE - books - physical/paper/general	5
	SE - CDs/DVDs/games/music/films	5
	SE - computers (problems/issues)	5
	SE - books - audio books	4
	SE - inter-library catalogue (issues/problems)	4
	SE - mobile library service not adequate	3
	SE - mobile library service/home delivery service/home readers service	2
	SE - poor quality of services	2
	SE - events/talks/films/lectures	1
	SE - exhibitions/displays	1
	SE - inter-library catalogue/loan	1
	SE - magazines/newspapers/journals/periodicals	1
	SE - membership	1
	SE - online library accounts/phone-in service	1
SO - Society	SO - prefer to buy/own books	39
	SO - not local/accessible	27
	SO - opening hours (problems)	27
	SO - lack of time	9
	SO - prefer to borrow from friends/family/elsewhere	9
	SO - do not read books	8
	SO - fees/charges	8
	SO - lack of accessibility due to parking issues	8
	SO - comparison with university libraries	5

	SO - prefer to download books/ebooks	5
	SO - specific need/preference not met by libraries	5
	SO - hygiene concerns	2
	SO - inclusive - low income groups	2
	SO - inclusive - older people/pensioners	2
	SO - lack of knowledge/familiarity	2
	SO - prefer to use internet/get info online	2
	SO - unique/essential public service	2
	SO - author rights issues	1
	SO - do not read ebooks	1
	SO - human contact/interaction	1
	SO - inclusive - teenagers/young people	1
	SO - local/accessible (including parking)	1
	SO - low cost/risk	1
	SO - prefer bookshops	1
	SO - prefer internet café	1
	SO - prefer TV/radio	1
	SO - promotion/advertising of library/services	1
	SO - share membership with partner	1
	SO - shared resource - no space at home	1
	SO - SMEs/professional development needs not met	1
	SO - supports - reading etc for pleasure/recreation/leisure	1
	SO - valued community resource	1
SP - Space	SP - architecture/building	4
	SP - pass time/pop in	3
	SP - run down/stuffy	3
	SP - noise levels - prefer quiet/silence	2
	SP - café/refreshments	1
	SP - reading space	1
	SP - relaxing/relaxed	1
	SP - smell	1
	SP - social	1
	SP - study/working space	1

Question 3

Theme	Group	Count
C - Children	C - encourage love of books, discovery, etc	153
	C - education/learning/schoolwork	63
	C - access to wide range of books	55
	C - childhood memories	53
	C - family	52
	C - skills - reading/literacy	46
	C - story times/rhyme time	37
	C - activities/events/groups	32
	C - children are welcome	23
	C - skills - other/general development	17
	C - services	11
	C - skills - social/communication	11
	C - school holiday space/activities	10
	C - comparison with school libraries	9
	C - familiarise children with libraries	9
	C - library trip is a treat	9
	C - schools - support/partnership	6
	C - play	4
	C - skills - independence	3
	C - skills - responsibility	1
CH - Change	CH - technology - libraries vs. internet/digital	35
	CH - importance as other services decline	27
	CH - technology - preserve books	19
	CH - funding - cuts	16
	CH - technology	13
	CH - continuity/timelessness of libraries	12
	CH - evolution/adaptation of libraries	9
	CH - libraries no longer as relevant/useful	8
	CH - past importance	7
	CH - deterioration of the library service	6
	CH - charges	4
	CH - do more to increase usage	4
	CH - future potential	4
	CH - partnerships/shared services	4
	CH - preserve physical books	3
	CH - duplication of other services	2
	CH - expand services/offering	2
	CH - ownership/resources/funding	2
	CH - retain core focus/values	2
	CH - books should take precedence	1
	CH - combine old and modern	1

	CH - existing library is good model	1
	CH - expand use of space	1
	CH - remove libraries/focus on other priorities	1
	CH - technology - provide new services	1
	CH - update/modernise offering	1
CO - Contents	CO - range - of content	212
	CO - staff - guidance/help	143
	CO - purpose - discovery/exploration/browsing	130
	CO - staff - qualification/expertise	85
	CO - purpose - specific type/genre of resource	64
	CO - purpose - for research	59
	CO - purpose - local heritage/information	59
	CO - range - of services/roles/facilities	50
	CO - portal to other resources/libraries	47
	CO - purpose - for reference	42
	CO - purpose - entertainment	37
	CO - staff - friendly/welcoming	35
	CO - resources - reliable/trustworthy/unbiased	33
	CO - purpose - take away/borrow books/resources	29
	CO - store of knowledge/culture	25
	CO - range - of formats	21
	CO - resources - tailored/responsive	19
	CO - resources - cannot be found elsewhere	16
	CO - resources - useful/relevant/up to date	14
	CO - fitting diverse needs	11
	CO - ease of use - quick/hassle free/short queue	10
	CO - staff - general/other	9
	CO - staff - passion/enthusiasm	9
	CO - unprescribed/open-ended	8
	CO - online/high-tech resources	7
	CO - ease of use - catalogue/index/online database	6
	CO - ease of use - easy to borrow books	6
	CO - purpose - family research	5
	CO - resources - book recommendations	5
	CO - staff - volunteers	4
	CO - ease of use - user friendly systems/resources	3
	CO - quotes	2
	CO - condition of the books/resources	1
	CO - ease of use - well-ordered/organised/laid-out	1
L - Location	L - specific library/area	23
O - Other	O - reference to other question	13
	O - quotes	12
	O - specific user experience/memory	4

	O - is/knows current or ex library employee	3
	O - reference public sector	2
	O - comment on consultation	1
	O - info about respondent	1
SE - Services	SE - books - physical/paper/general	182
	SE - access to internet/computers/Wi-Fi/technology	172
	SE - information - general	113
	SE - CDs/DVDs/games/music/films	62
	SE - information - local services/information	62
	SE - magazines/newspapers/journals/periodicals	45
	SE - events/talks/films/lectures	38
	SE - book request/reservation	31
	SE - clubs/groups	27
	SE - books - audio books	26
	SE - inter-library catalogue/loan	24
	SE - books - ebooks	16
	SE - information - government services/advice	16
	SE - printing/photocopying/fax/scanning	16
	SE - courses/classes/workshops/training	11
	SE - mobile library service/home delivery service/home readers service	11
	SE - books - large print	10
	SE - online library accounts/phone-in service	9
	SE - exhibitions/displays	8
	SE - remote services/resources/use from home	5
	SE - language resources	3
	SE - other/general	2
	SE - retail outlet/shops	2
	SE - self-service/auto facilities	2
	SE - activities (general)	1
	SE - toilets/baby changing	1
SO - Society	SO - inclusive - free/open to all	405
	SO - low cost/risk	387
	SO - supports - education/learning/knowledge	290
	SO - unique/essential public service	128
	SO - local/accessible (including parking)	113
	SO - supports - reading etc for pleasure/recreation/leisure	106
	SO - supports - reading/literacy	92
	SO - inclusive - older people/pensioners	82
	SO - inclusive - equality/diversity of users	81
	SO - inclusive - low income groups	75
	SO - supports - computer skills/digital inclusion	70
	SO - mark of civilised/democratic society	62

	SO - inclusive - all ages/lifelong	59
	SO - inclusive - serve other particular group	55
	SO - builds/part of community values	47
45	SO - valued community resource	45
	SO - inclusive - teenagers/young people	41
	SO - supports - creativity/imagination	40
	SO - inclusive - non-discriminatory	33
	SO - shared resource - no space at home	31
	SO - shared resource - other	31
	SO - improve society/outcomes	30
	SO - part of our culture/community	29
	SO - supports - health/wellbeing	29
	SO - human contact/interaction	22
	SO - cohesiveness/connection of society	21
	SO - inclusive - unemployed people	19
	SO - shared resource - environmental benefits	19
	SO - supports - professional development	19
	SO - basic service/last resort	14
	SO - rural communities	14
	SO - benefits of reading	13
	SO - culture	11
	SO - sense of belonging	11
	SO - inclusive - disabled people	9
	SO - inclusive - tourists/visitors	9
	SO - supports - job hunting/employment	8
	SO - opening hours	6
	SO - supports - professional activity/day job	6
	SO - undervalued	5
	SO - meeting local/community needs	4
	SO - comparison with university libraries	3
	SO - inclusive - homeless people	3
	SO - inclusive - languages	3
	SO - promotion/advertising of library/services	3
	SO - benefits writers/authors	2
	SO - inclusive - travellers	2
	SO - supports - exchange of knowledge/ideas	2
	SO - fees/charges	1
	SO - legal requirement	1
	SO - oppose libraries	1
SP - Space	SP - community/local hub	227
	SP - social	91
	SP - safe	72
	SP - welcoming/friendly	59

	SP - neutral	57
	SP - quiet/peaceful	48
	SP - study/working space	43
46	SP - shared/public	31
	SP - relaxing/relaxed	28
	SP - non commercial	25
	SP - temperature	17
	SP - ambiance	16
	SP - escape	15
	SP - architecture/building	10
	SP - reading space	10
	SP - comfortable/cosy	9
	SP - fun	8
	SP - pass time/pop in	6
	SP - café/refreshments	4
	SP - familiar	2
	SP - for children	2
	SP - rooms for hire/activities	2
	SP - vibrant/lively/busy/buzzy	2
	SP - anonymous/privacy	1
	SP - cheerful	1
	SP - division of space/zoning	1
	SP - light/airy/spacious	1
	SP - noise levels - not quiet/encourage talking/chatter	1
	SP - reflection/contemplation space	1
	SP - smell	1

Question 4

Theme	Group	Count
C - Children	C - encourage love of books, discovery, etc	71
	C - skills - reading/literacy	57
	C - education/learning/schoolwork	31
	C - story times/rhyme time	27
	C - access to wide range of books	20
	C - activities/events/groups	20
	C - schools - support/partnership	18
	C - family	16
	C - school holiday space/activities	10
	C - familiarise children with libraries	9
	C - children are welcome	8
	C - services	8
	C - skills - other/general development	6
	C - skills - social/communication	6
	C - childhood memories	3
	C - quotes	3
	C - comparison with school libraries	2
	C - do not use	1
	C - play	1
	C - skills - negative comment	1
CH - Change	CH - partnerships/shared services	38
	CH - retain core focus/values	32
	CH - evolution/adaptation of libraries	28
	CH - expand services/offering	28
	CH - ownership/resources/funding	19
	CH - preserve physical books	19
	CH - technology - libraries versus internet/digital	18
	CH - technology - provide new services	16
	CH - retain current offering/services	15
	CH - books should take precedence	12
	CH - technology	12
	CH - importance as other services decline	10
	CH - importance of retaining physical space	9
	CH - restrict additional services	9
	CH - do more to increase usage	4
	CH - existing library is good model	4
	CH - expand use of space	4
	CH - charges	3
	CH - libraries no longer as relevant/useful	3
	CH - update/modernise offering	3
	CH - duplication of other services	2

	CH - funding - cuts	2
	CH - changing habits of young as threat	1
	CH - continuity/timelessness of libraries	1
	CH - dispense with physical space/online only	1
	CH - UK should lead the way	1
CO - Content	CO - range - of content	138
	CO - range - of formats	127
	CO - purpose - main/priority (Q4)	82
	CO - purpose - take away/borrow books/resources	79
	CO - staff - qualification/expertise	67
	CO - range - of services/roles/facilities	63
	CO - staff - guidance/help	60
	CO - portal to other resources/libraries	47
	CO - purpose - for entertainment	46
	CO - purpose - for reference	46
	CO - purpose - specific type/genre of resource	45
	CO - purpose - for research	35
	CO - purpose - discovery/exploration/browsing	32
	CO - store of knowledge/culture	29
	CO - fitting diverse needs	27
	CO - ease of use - catalogue/index/online database	24
	CO - written word/literature	21
	CO - purpose - local heritage/information	20
	CO - resources - useful/relevant/up to date	14
	CO - resources - reliable/trustworthy/unbiased	13
	CO - online/high-tech resources	8
	CO - resources - cannot be found elsewhere	7
	CO - quotes	6
	CO - staff - preferred to machines	6
	CO - resources - limit/exclude specific type/genre	5
	CO - resources - tailored/responsive	5
	CO - staff - passion/enthusiasm	5
	CO - ease of use - clear signage/directions/labels	3
	CO - purpose - family research	3
	CO - staff - friendly/welcoming	3
	CO - staff - volunteers	3
	CO - condition of the books/resources	2
	CO - ease of use - easy to borrow books	2
	CO - resources - book recommendations	2
	CO - staff - general/other	2
	CO - ease of use - instructions/explanations	1
	CO - ease of use - quick/hassle free/short queue	1
	CO - ease of use - well-ordered/organised/laid-out	1

	CO - staff - negative comment	1
L - Location	L - specific library/area	11
O - Other	O - all of the above	257
	O - reference to other question	26
	O - quotes	19
	O - specific user experience/memory	6
	O - comment on question/information provided	2
	O - is/knows current or ex library employee	2
	O - comment on consultation	1
	O - reference external website	1
	O - reference private sector	1
	O - reference public sector	1
SE - Services	SE - books - physical/paper/general	457
	SE - information - general	286
	SE - access to internet/computers/Wi-Fi/technology	248
	SE - information - local services/information	107
	SE - CDs/DVDs/games/music/films	70
	SE - events/talks/films/lectures	49
	SE - books - ebooks	39
	SE - clubs/groups	35
	SE - magazines/newspapers/journals/periodicals	33
	SE - information - government services/advice	22
	SE - books - audio books	21
	SE - courses/classes/workshops/training	15
	SE - exhibitions/displays	15
	SE - printing/photocopying/fax/scanning	14
	SE - inter-library catalogue/loan	11
	SE - mobile library service/home delivery service/home readers service	11
	SE - books - large print	8
	SE - activities (general)	3
	SE - language resources	3
	SE - remote services/resources/use from home	3
	SE - retail outlet/shops	3
	SE - book swap/donations	2
	SE - book request/reservation	1
	SE - maps	1
SO - Society	SO - supports - education/learning/knowledge	359
	SO - supports - reading/literacy	259
	SO - inclusive - free/open to all	243
	SO - supports - reading etc for pleasure/recreation/leisure	122
	SO - inclusive - all ages/lifelong	109
	SO - supports - computer skills/digital inclusion	88

	SO - meeting local/community needs	65
	SO - inclusive - serve other particular group	40
	SO - inclusive - equality/diversity of users	38
	SO - low cost/risk	34
	SO - builds/part of community values	33
	SO - inclusive - low income groups	31
	SO - local/accessible (including parking)	31
	SO - supports - exchange of knowledge/ideas	29
	SO - supports - creativity/imagination	26
	SO - culture	25
	SO - inclusive - non-discriminatory	25
	SO - inclusive - older people/pensioners	25
	SO - cohesiveness/connection of society	22
	SO - supports - health/wellbeing	20
	SO - improve society/outcomes	19
	SO - opening hours	15
	SO - shared resource	13
	SO - unique/essential public service	13
	SO - supports - job hunting/employment	12
	SO - valued community resource	11
	SO - benefits of reading	9
	SO - human contact/interaction	9
	SO - inclusive - disabled people	7
	SO - libraries should engage local people	7
	SO - inclusive - teenagers/young people	6
	SO - promotion/advertising of library/services	6
	SO - rural communities	6
	SO - sense of belonging	4
	SO - supports - professional development	4
	SO - fees/charges	3
	SO - inclusive - languages	3
	SO - mark of civilised/democratic society	3
	SO - comparison with university libraries	2
	SO - benefits writers/authors	1
	SO - exclude certain groups	1
	SO - inclusive - low skilled	1
	SO - inclusive - tourists/visitors	1
	SO - supports - professional activity/day job	1
SP - Space	SP - community/local hub	265
	SP - social	78
	SP - study/working space	51
	SP - quiet/peaceful	40
	SP - reading space	40

	SP - welcoming/friendly	37
	SP - safe	31
	SP - neutral	12
	SP - relaxing/relaxed	12
	SP - café/refreshments	11
	SP - shared/public	9
	SP - division of space/zoning	7
	SP - for children	7
	SP - non commercial	7
	SP - architecture/building	5
	SP - comfortable/cosy	4
	SP - fun	4
	SP - reflection/contemplation space	4
	SP - temperature	4
	SP - calm	3
	SP - noise levels - vary/depends on area	3
	SP - empowering	2
	SP - light/airy/spacious	2
	SP - rooms for hire/activities	2
	SP - vibrant/lively/busy/buzzy	2
	SP - ambiance	1
	SP - anonymous/privacy	1
	SP - creative/stimulating	1
	SP - escape	1
	SP - noise levels - prefer quiet/silence	1
	SP - pass time/pop in	1
	SP - sad to leave/want to come back	1
	SP - unsafe/threatening	1

Question 5

Theme	Group	Count
C - Children	C - story times/rhyme time	106
	C - activities/events/groups	64
	C - children are welcome	63
	C - encourage love of books, discovery, etc	60
	C - access to wide range of books	34
	C - family	33
	C - play	28
	C - skills - reading/literacy	27
	C - education/learning/schoolwork	21
	C - services	8
	C - school holiday space/activities	7
	C - schools - support/partnership	6
	C - childhood memories	4
	C - skills - social/communication	3
	C - quotes	2
	C - skills - independence	2
CH - Change	CH - existing library is good model	86
	CH - partnerships/shared services	33
	CH - books should take precedence	29
	CH - ownership/resources/funding	25
	CH - retain current offering/services	19
	CH - suggest service/improvement	17
	CH - technology - provide new services	17
	CH - technology	16
	CH - update/modernise offering	11
	CH - current services not adequate/ideal	8
	CH - different library types	7
	CH - expand use of space	7
	CH - evolution/adaptation of libraries	6
	CH - quote	6
	CH - charges	5
	CH - retain core focus/values	5
	CH - combine old and modern	4
	CH - do more to increase usage	4
	CH - expand services/offering	4
	CH - management/strategic direction	4
	CH - clarify name/offering	3
	CH - duplication of other services	3
	CH - retain diversity of libraries	3
	CH - importance of retaining physical space	2
	CH - preserve physical books	2
	CH - technology - websites/web presence	2

	CH - dispense with physical space/online only	1
	CH - importance as other services decline	1
	CH - remove libraries/focus on other priorities	1
CO - Contents	CO - range - of content	347
	CO - staff - guidance/help	314
	CO - staff - friendly/welcoming	270
	CO - staff - qualification/expertise	236
	CO - purpose - discovery/exploration/browsing	153
	CO - staff - presence/visibility	148
	CO - resources - useful/relevant/up to date	130
	CO - resources - well-presented/attractive	119
	CO - ease of use - clear signage/directions/labels	100
	CO - ease of use - well-ordered/organised/laid-out	99
	CO - purpose - specific type/genre of resource	77
	CO - resources - book recommendations	68
	CO - ease of use - catalogue/index/online database	67
	CO - purpose - for reference	66
	CO - purpose - take away/borrow books/resources	61
	CO - range - of formats	52
	CO - staff - general/other	43
	CO - ease of use - accessible shelves/resources	42
	CO - portal to other resources/libraries	41
	CO - staff - passion/enthusiasm	40
	CO - staff - preferred to machines	37
	CO - purpose - local heritage/information	33
	CO - fitting diverse needs	27
	CO - ease of use - general/other	26
	CO - ease of use - quick/hassle free/short queue	25
	CO - range - of services/roles/facilities	23
	CO - staff - volunteers	23
	CO - condition of the books/resources	17
	CO - purpose - for research	15
	CO - online/high-tech resources	11
	CO - ease of use - instructions/explanations	10
	CO - resources - tailored/responsive	10
	CO - staff - negative comment	10
	CO - ease of use - user friendly systems/resources	7
	CO - purpose - family research	7
	CO - resources - limit/exclude specific type/genre	7
	CO - resources - reliable/trustworthy/unbiased	6
	CO - ease of use - easy to borrow books	5
	CO - staff - other than librarians	5
	CO - purpose - for entertainment	3
	CO - limit displays/merchandising	2
	CO - quotes	2

	CO - resources - cannot be found elsewhere	2
	CO - unprescribed/open-ended	2
	CO - insufficient range - of content	1
L - Location	L - specific library/area	100
O - Other	O - info about respondent	8
	O - reference to other question	4
	O - comment on consultation	2
	O - no comment/not applicable	2
	O - quotes	13
	O - comment on question/information provided	10
	O - is/knows current or ex library employee	1
	O - reference external document	1
SE - Services	SE - access to internet/computers/Wi-Fi/technology	417
	SE - books - physical/paper/general	412
	SE - seating	185
	SE - magazines/newspapers/journals/periodicals	141
	SE - information - local services/information	133
	SE - exhibitions/displays	120
	SE - CDs/DVDs/games/music/films	116
	SE - events/talks/films/lectures	109
	SE - clubs/groups	79
	SE - toilets/baby changing	61
	SE - printing/photocopying/fax/scanning	42
	SE - books - ebooks	41
	SE - courses/classes/workshops/training	40
	SE - information - general	36
	SE - self-service/auto facilities	36
	SE - book request/reservation	34
	SE - service desks	31
	SE - activities (general)	30
	SE - books - audio books	26
	SE - remote services/resources/use from home	19
	SE - retail outlet/shops	17
	SE - computers (other comment)	14
	SE - books - large print	10
	SE - charging points/power sockets	10
	SE - online library accounts/phone-in service	9
	SE - headphones	8
	SE - information - government services/advice	7
	SE - mobile library service/home delivery service/home readers service	7
	SE - other/general	7
	SE - cloakroom	5
	SE - TV/news	5
	SE - book swap/donations	4

	SE - film/music/video games room	4
	SE - information - current literature trends	3
	SE - language resources	2
	SE - do not use/do not use certain services	1
SO - Society	SO - inclusive - all ages/lifelong	98
	SO - local/accessible (including parking)	88
	SO - opening hours	74
	SO - supports - education/learning/knowledge	54
	SO - inclusive - free/open to all	53
	SO - inclusive - equality/diversity of users	48
	SO - supports - computer skills/digital inclusion	38
	SO - inclusive - disabled people	31
	SO - inclusive - older people/pensioners	29
	SO - inclusive - teenagers/young people	28
	SO - meeting local/community needs	27
	SO - promotion/advertising of library/services	27
	SO - supports - exchange of knowledge/ideas	24
	SO - supports - reading/literacy	19
	SO - supports - reading etc for pleasure/recreation/leisure	17
	SO - inclusive - serve other particular group	16
	SO - builds/part of community values	14
	SO - inclusive - non-discriminatory	14
	SO - supports - creativity/imagination	13
	SO - supports - job hunting/employment	13
	SO - unique/essential public service	11
	SO - sense of belonging	10
	SO - valued community resource	10
	SO - exclude certain groups	9
	SO - libraries should engage local people	7
	SO - low cost/risk	7
	SO - rural communities	6
	SO - supports - professional activity/day job	5
	SO - supports - professional development	5
	SO - human contact/interaction	4
	SO - inclusive - languages	4
	SO - inclusive - tourists/visitors	3
	SO - mark of civilised/democratic society	3
	SO - benefits writers/authors	2
	SO - culture	2
	SO - inclusive - low income groups	2
	SO - inclusive - unemployed people	2
	SO - comparison with university libraries	1
	SO - improve society/outcomes	1
	SO - inclusive - homeless people	1
	SO - supports - health/wellbeing	1

SP - Space	SP - welcoming/friendly	321
	SP - light/airy/spacious	271
	SP - café/refreshments	251
	SP - study/working space	248
	SP - division of space/zoning	241
	SP - for children	225
	SP - reading space	205
	SP - comfortable/cosy	200
	SP - noise levels - vary/depends on area	197
	SP - noise levels - prefer quiet/silence	181
	SP - vibrant/lively/busy/buzzy	180
	SP - social	178
	SP - noise levels - quiet/not silent/some noise	167
	SP - specific sounds expected/desired	157
	SP - community/local hub	122
	SP - architecture/building	111
	SP - relaxing/relaxed	97
	SP - clean	88
	SP - calm	85
	SP - temperature	82
	SP - colours/decor	77
	SP - specific sounds not expected/desired	62
	SP - ambiance	44
	SP - creative/stimulating	34
	SP - reflection/contemplation space	33
	SP - safe	32
	SP - cheerful	27
	SP - appealing/attractive	26
	SP - rooms for hire/activities	24
	SP - purposeful	23
	SP - noise levels - not quiet/encourage talking/chatter	20
	SP - fun	18
	SP - smell	18
	SP - café/refreshments - not necessary	15
	SP - sad to leave/want to come back	10
	SP - neutral	9
	SP - outdoor space/garden	8
	SP - familiar	7
	SP - pass time/pop in	7
	SP - anonymous/privacy	6
	SP - lighting - soft	6
	SP - plants	6
	SP - shared/public	6
	SP - non commercial	5
	SP - other	4

	SP - quotes	4
	SP - escape	3
	SP - empowering	2
	SP - comfort not necessary	1
	SP - fun not necessary	1