



# Annex B

## Literature review: the impact of libraries on employment



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This document summarises the literature relevant to how libraries might support employment and employability. Table 1 below lists the evidence with a summary of the individual papers then provided in the sections that follow.

**Table 1: List of relevant literature**

Title	Author(s)	Year	URL	Country
Evidence review of the economic contribution of libraries	BOP Consulting for Arts Council England	2014	<a href="#">Link</a>	UK
Evaluation of the Libraries: Opportunities for Everyone innovation fund	Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS)	2018	<a href="#">Link</a>	UK
Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021 (consultation draft)	DCMS	2016	<a href="#">Link</a>	UK
The health and wellbeing benefits of public libraries	Simetrica for Arts Council England	2015	<a href="#">Link</a>	UK
Rural library services in England: exploring recent changes and possible futures	Locality and OPM	2014	<a href="#">Link</a>	UK
Evidencing Libraries: Audience Reach Research findings and analysis	The Audience Agency for Arts Council England	2017	<a href="#">Link</a>	UK
Making the Most of WiFi	Shared Intelligence for Arts Council England	2016	<a href="#">Link</a>	UK
Democratising Entrepreneurship	Economic Research Services, for Arts Council England	2019	<a href="#">Link</a>	UK
Between digital inclusion and social equality: The role of public libraries in Newcastle upon Tyne	Ruiu and Ragneda	2016	<a href="#">Link</a>	UK
Library Digital Inclusion Fund Action Research Project Evaluation	Good Things Foundation	2016	<a href="#">Link</a>	UK
Libraries at the Crossroads	Pew Research Centre	2015	<a href="#">Link</a>	US
Social return on investment analysis Hutt City Libraries	Hutt City Council	2012	<a href="#">Link</a>	New Zealand

### ***Evidence review of the economic contribution of libraries, BOP Consulting for Arts Council England (2014)***

This study focuses on the impact of libraries in the UK and cites literature from many different countries.

The authors identify three different hypotheses across the literature as to how public libraries contribute to the economy:

- As economic actors who employ workers who spend money in the local economy, although this is not easy to do in the context of libraries.
- As institutions that facilitate the creation of economic value in the local area. The literature in this area consists mostly of qualitative analyses and case studies.

- As organisations that deliver a wide range of services, most of which are valued by both users and non-users. Contingent valuation is widely used in this part of the literature.

The authors identify three structural weaknesses that are characteristic of studies that use economic valuation techniques to measure the value of public libraries:

- They focus on an overall figure for impact, value, or return on investment and pay little attention to how the constituent library services, resources and buildings generate value.
- They rarely produce the kind of evidence that facilitates decision making and therefore it can seem remote from the reality of service planning and budget setting. Perhaps relatedly, findings can be hard to communicate to non-economist audiences.
- Studies only capture short-term economic value.

As a result, in the second part of the report, the authors take a more holistic approach to assessing the economic contribution of libraries.

The study considers libraries' educational and social impact within five key areas including adult skills and employability.

### Adult skills

- The 2010 Museums and Library Archives survey found higher library use among Black minority ethnic people and younger people relative to the whole population.
- They find little evidence on the impact of libraries on adults' skills. However, they do cite a study from 2004 that found that, from a survey of 1,000 individuals, those learning in libraries were more confident (88%), encouraged to get more qualifications (76%) and put in a stronger position to get a job (51%).

### Employment

- The authors find little evidence of the impacts of libraries on employment other than through case studies. For example, a 2012 project in Derby used theatre skills to help build self-esteem and confidence. Of the 33 jobseekers who attended, 40% gained either temporary or permanent employment after the programme.
- Outside of the UK, a US study found that libraries are particularly valued by unemployed individuals, with 47% of jobseekers saying interaction with library services was important to them.
- Another US study found that, among library internet users, the three most common reasons for visiting a library were for educational purposes, employment purposes and health purposes.

### ***Evaluation of the Libraries: Opportunities for Everyone innovation fund, DCMS (2018)***

The Libraries: Opportunities for Everyone innovation fund supports projects that would:

- provide library users with opportunities to remove or reduce disadvantage
- enable library services to develop innovative practice that meets the needs of people and places experiencing disadvantage

Managed by Arts Council England, the £3.9 million fund awarded grants of between £50,000 and £250,000 to 30 projects in March 2017.

The evaluation mainly involved qualitative research to understand the impact of the fund, splitting the projects into five thematic clusters. One cluster was focused on projects that aimed to improve people's digital literacy, while another focused on sessions and courses which involved 3D printing, coding, animation and robotics. All the clusters could in theory improve individuals' skills and employability.

For each cluster they considered impacts on a range of outcomes collected through interviews and surveys.

Many of the projects showed signs of success. For example:

- In Manchester and Bolton libraries, 96% and 98% respectively felt that their digital skills improved from taking part in digital workshops.
- In Norwich, 70% of attendees at a reading group reported that their reading had improved significantly.
- In Middlesbrough, 50% of participants who took part in workshops promoting arts and culture reported that they felt they had gained valuable skills that would help them gain employment.

### ***Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021 (consultation draft), DCMS (2016)***

This consultation by the Libraries Taskforce set out the vision for how DCMS believed libraries should operate over 2016-21.

DCMS sees the purpose of the public library network as contributing to the delivery of seven areas:

- reading and literacy
- digital literacy
- health and wellbeing
- economic growth
- culture and creativity
- communities
- learning

For each purpose they state their ambition and how they will measure it. For instance, in the case of economic growth, their ambition is to:

- expand the Business and IP Centre Network from eight to 20
- provide start-ups with support
- integrate libraries into local economic development partnerships
- set up a range of skills development programmes available through libraries

The indicators put forward to measure how far these ambitions have been achieved were:

- the number of job clubs in libraries
- the number of libraries with enterprise hubs
- increasing rates of new business starts in a library environment
- the number of people volunteering in libraries and using libraries as places for skills development

### ***The health and wellbeing benefits of public libraries, Arts Council England (2015)***

This study explores the impact of libraries in two ways:

- 1 The value of engagement in library services in terms of the impact on people's quality of life. This is measured through contingent valuation, in which respondents are asked how much additional council tax they are willing to pay for library services, as a way to infer the monetary value they place on library services.
- 2 The value to society of the health benefits of library services. This was estimated using the Taking Part Survey datasets, to identify the association between library service usage and general health improvements.

The study found that average willingness to pay among current library users is £19.51 per year, while for non-library users it is £10.31. Aggregated to the whole population, the combined annual willingness to pay is £723.4 million.

Using regression analysis to identify the association between health and wellbeing, they find a positive relationship after controlling for a wide range of other health factors. The implication is that library usage is associated with higher life satisfaction, higher happiness and higher sense of purpose in life.

### ***Rural library services in England: exploring recent changes and possible futures, Locality (2014)***

This study for Arts Council England explores the experience of rural library services and their prospects for the future.

The research involved an evidence review, scoping interviews and workshops.

The engagement with stakeholders found several common themes among rural library services:

- Users of rural library services reflect the areas' older and less diverse populations.
- Increasing community involvement in the operation of library services over the previous three to four years.
- Community activity has been forged from the threat of library closures.
- Increasing community activity has led rural library services to expand their functions.

In their engagement with stakeholders they also consider the future role for rural library services. They find that:

- it would be more prudent to co-design library services with other services to secure economies of scope, rather than looking to economies of scale
- community involvement should be encouraged and enable them to improve and shape services
- digital technologies will be increasingly important in rural libraries given the older demographics
- rural libraries will be important in providing a range of other local authority services

### ***Evidencing Libraries Audience Reach: Research findings and analysis, Arts Council England (2017)***

The aims of this study were to explore the diversity of library audiences nationally and through primary research, describe the use of audience data and research the development of library services.

The research was conducted in three phases:

- literature review of existing data
- e-survey sent out to service providers
- one-to-one telephone interviews with service managers to explore the findings

Their key findings were that:

- Libraries reach a significant cross-section of England's population: in 2015/16 one-third of the population in England had used a library.
- Library users are extremely diverse compared with those of cultural activities. Libraries reach a much broader range of age groups and social backgrounds, with Black and minority ethnic communities using libraries more relative to the population as a whole.
- There are plenty of lapsed users who have previously attended libraries regularly but have since stopped.
- Libraries underutilise data and are poor at sharing data with other libraries.

The study recommended that there should be greater data collection on library users and their outcomes, which can be used to help shape service development and target those who may benefit from libraries.

### ***Making the Most of WiFi: National learning and case studies, Arts Council England (2016)***

This study explored the impact of Wi-Fi in public libraries, through an analysis of five case studies that revealed greater social impact beyond simply providing a free Wi-Fi connection.

The authors find that generally among library users and staff, the Wi-Fi in the library had enabled people to improve their digital skills.

The authors also highlight how the target demographic for Wi-Fi services includes other groups beyond older people, such as visually impaired people, children and younger adults.

### ***Democratising Entrepreneurship: Libraries as engines of economic growth, British Library and Arts Council England (2019)***

This study carried out qualitative research into the economic impact of Business & IP Centres which help entrepreneurs to set up businesses.

The evaluation found that the Business & IP Centre Network supported the creation of 12,288 businesses and 7,843 additional full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs.

As a result, this contributes £78 million in additional gross value added (GVA), implying a return on investment of £6.95 for every £1 spent.

The findings were based on 1,855 responses to an e-survey conducted by Economic Research Services.

### ***Between digital inclusion and social equality: the role of public libraries in Newcastle upon Tyne, Ruiu and Ragneda (2016)***

This study assessed the role of the public library service in reducing digital inequalities in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Newcastle upon Tyne.

The research was conducted through interviews with library staff members and observations of library services.

The authors find a key role for libraries in improving digital skills for people in deprived areas of Newcastle, which were being met through group training courses and on-to-one support.

Libraries in deprived areas were also found to be providing support for younger people to find jobs, which some staff and volunteers stated was the most effective service they were providing.

### ***Library Digital Inclusion Fund Action Research Project Evaluation, Good Things Foundation (2016)***

The fund in question aimed to help libraries engage with hard-to-reach library users who were socially and digitally excluded.

The fund was spent in libraries through providing IT equipment and setting up sessions to develop users' digital skills.

The authors estimate that the cost of delivering digital inclusion activities through the project to be approximately £40 per person.

The researchers tracked the development of users' digital skills through an existing learning platform developed by the Tinder Foundation.

All of the learners interviewed reported increased confidence in using a computer and going online, which in some instances allowed them to apply these skills practically to their lives, enabling them to become digitally engaged and benefit from improved social and economic outcomes.

### ***Libraries at a Crossroads, Pew Research Centre (2015)***

This study surveyed American opinions on libraries and considered the impacts of libraries on marginalised communities.

The authors find that there is generally strong support from the public for libraries to provide services to improve job prospects, increase skills and support entrepreneurs.

- 78% said libraries should teach people how to use digital tools such as computers and smartphones
- 48% said libraries help people with job searches either “somewhat” or “a lot”

The authors also find that certain groups were more likely to value libraries as an entity to help people find jobs:

- 58% of Hispanics, 55% of African Americans and 52% of people on low incomes agreed with the statement

### ***Social return on investment analysis, Hutt City Council (2012)***

This study estimated the economic value of libraries in Hutt City in New Zealand.

The authors use contingent valuation techniques to assign a monetary value to libraries, but also asked a range of questions to a sample of Hutt City residents, to more deeply understand the impact libraries had on them.

The contingent valuation methodology estimated that for every dollar spent on the libraries, \$1.44 is provided in economic benefit to the community.

More interestingly in relation to employability, they asked a sample of residents whether the library helped them obtain a job, with around 20% responding that the library was of some benefit, whether major or minor in contribution. Over 75% of respondents said it was important to them in job/career planning, and almost 40% of library users said it made them more productive in their job.