Open to All? The Public Library and Social Exclusion

Volume One: Overview and Conclusions

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Abstract

Open to All? reports the findings of an 18 month research project, "Public Library Policy and Social Exclusion", based at Leeds Metropolitan University and conducted in partnership with the London Borough of Merton (Libraries), Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information Services, and John Vincent, an independent consultant. Volume 1 provides an overview of the study and its main conclusions and recommendations. It reviews the context of social exclusion and the nature of the problems facing public libraries and other public institutions. The record of the public library in tackling disadvantage is critically assessed and the weaknesses of a predominantly "voluntary" approach to exclusion based on access are highlighted. The findings of a survey of contemporary public library services and of eight case studies of public library authorities are then reported. These suggest that although public libraries are currently modernising their services, this modernisation is unlikely to refocus the public library on excluded communities and social groups. The project concludes that to do this, and to become more than superficially "open to all", the public library will need to transform itself into a far more proactive, educative and interventionist public institution, with a concern for social justice at its core. The suggested elements of this transformation are detailed in a penultimate chapter, which highlights good practice, and in specific project recommendations which conclude the study.

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Preface and Acknowledgements

Open to All? is the report of the research project "Public Library Policy and Social Exclusion". The project has been funded by the Library and Information Commission and , subsequently, Resource, the Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries, as part of its *Value and Impact of Libraries* programme. It has been based at the School of Information Management, Leeds Metropolitan University and conducted in partnership with the London Borough of Merton (Libraries), Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information Services, and John Vincent, an independent consultant. The research was conducted between October 1998 and April 2000.

Because of the wide-ranging scope of the research, comprising working papers, case studies in the field and a survey, its findings are published in three volumes. This volume (Vol. 1) comprises an overview of the key issues and findings of the study and the final project conclusions and recommendations. Other volumes are organised as follows:

- Volume 2: *Survey, Case Studies and Methods* contains the detailed empirical findings of the research.
- Volume 3: *Working Papers* gathers together the working papers produced during the course of the project.

These volumes are obtainable from: British Thesis Service, British Library Document Supply Centre, Boston Spa, Wetherby, West Yorkshire LS23 7BQ, UK.

services which address social exclusion. Many other colleagues and contacts, too numerous to mention singly, have, of course, also contributed their ideas to the project by commenting on drafts of working papers and contributing to conferences, workshops and seminars. We thank them all for their time, ideas and commitment.

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Foreword from Dr Mo. Mowlam MP, Minister for the Cabinet Office and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

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I am very pleased to introduce this research on which the Public Library and Social Exclusion project team have been engaged over the last year. I should like to commend the Library and Information Commission / Resource for their timely commissioning of this piece of work. Social exclusion must be tackled with all the tools available to us and one of the most powerful of these is knowledge.

Thanks to this work, we now have real understanding of the way libraries work, how they relate to communities in which they are situated, how they will be affected by technological developments, how they are run, and who uses, and does not use them. In order for us to challenge exclusion we need to know what the key issues that public libraries need to address are. Now we have this knowledge libraries will be better placed to harness their potential to combat exclusion.

To have knowledge is the passport to inclusion. Libraries have the same role to fill today as they had when the public library service was founded 150 years ago: to bridge the gap between the information rich and the information poor. Not to have books, newspapers, recorded material or the information possibilities of the internet means not to share equally in the opportunities society offers. As this research shows us, if libraries are to make a difference on the ground, they must first of all identify the needs of everyone in their communities, particularly those at risk of exclusion, though unemployment, disability, age or language barriers.

There are many examples of libraries already reaching out to those at risk of exclusion and isolation. The Department of Culture, Media and Sport has embraced this good practice in guidance, which will enable libraries to develop a strategic approach. Public library policy has a leading role to play in the revolution in information and education , which will do so much to expand opportunity and combat exclusion.

I commend this research to those who have responsibilities for libraries, to those who work in them and to those who use them.

Mo Mowlam MP
14th August 2000

Executive Summary

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Open to All? is a study of the public library and its capacity to tackle social exclusion. It assesses the ways in which public libraries currently address exclusion, and it explores how public libraries might focus their services more effectively in the future on excluded social groups and communities. It aims to suggest how public libraries might contribute towards developing a more inclusive society in the UK.

The study is the product of an 18 month research project based at Leeds Metropolitan University and conducted in partnership with the London Borough of Merton (Libraries), Sheffield Libraries and Information Services and John Vincent, an independent consultant. The research was conducted between October 1998 and April 2000, with financial support from, successively, the British Library Research and Innovation Centre, the Library and Information Commission, and Resource. It forms part of the "Value and Impact of Libraries" Research Programme" developed by these organisations.

The Research Process

The research was organised to include the following elements:
- working papers which explored the issues around social exclusion itself, and public library responses to it;
- a survey of all UK public library authorities, which assessed the nature and extent of current UK public library activity and initiatives relevant to social exclusion;
- detailed case studies of eight UK public library authorities and their social exclusion strategies and initiatives;
- the development of a Social Exclusion Action Planning Network which has organised workshops, conferences and other events facilitating dissemination and feedback;
- conclusions and recommendations which suggest how public library exclusion strategies might be strengthened both through practical innovations at local level and new policy developments.

Study Findings

Social Exclusion

Volume 1, Part 2 of *Open to All* reviews the context of social exclusion and the scale of

the problems which the public library, and other public services, face. It points to:

- the importance of *exclusion* as a concept because of its focus on the excluded and their needs
- the multivarious nature of exclusion and its roots in the material inequalities of capitalist society, as well as discrimination linked to race, gender and disability
- the global dimensions of exclusion, and its manifestations in the global "information society"
- the accelerating problems of exclusion in the United Kingdom, and the widening gap between rich and poor
- the contrast between weak, voluntary approaches to exclusion by public services, and stronger, more interventionist approaches

Reassessing the Record of the Public Library

In Volume 1 Part 3 we review the record of public library provision for "disadvantaged" or "excluded" individuals, social groups and social classes. The 150 year history of the public library reveals that UK libraries have adopted only weak, voluntary and "take it or leave it" approaches to social inclusion. The core rationale of the public library movement continues to be based on the idea of developing universal access to a service which essentially reflects mainstream middle class, white and English values. Attempts to break out of this mould, such as the "community librarianship" of the 1970s and 1980s, have been incorporated back into this mainstream. Attempts to target services towards excluded people remain patchy, uneven and are often time-limited.

Some key consequences of this approach to service provision have been:

- a continuing underutilisation of public libraries by working class people and other excluded social groups
- a lack of knowledge in the public library world about the needs and views of excluded "non users"
- the development in many public libraries of organisational, cultural, and environmental barriers which effectively exclude many disadvantaged people

A small minority of authorities and librarians have in the past adopted strategies and initiatives which have taken the needs of excluded people as their starting point. We conclude, however, that these are exceptions and that public libraries can be said to have been inclusive institutions in a limited sense only.

Public Libraries Today: Survey Findings

In spite of this, there is now a clear imperative for the public library, like other public services, to seriously address social exclusion. The project survey, reported in Part 4 of Volume 1, examined the extent to which this policy impetus was being reflected in activity in public library authorities (PLAs).

Overall, survey findings suggest that there are wide differentials between UK public library authorities in terms of activity relevant to social inclusion:

- the survey estimates that only one-sixth of PLAs approximate to a comprehensive model of good practice for social inclusion. Most PLAs (60%), although having developed some initiatives, have no comprehensive strategy and uneven and intermittent activity. A final group of one-quarter of PLAs are those with little apparent strategy and service development.
- targeting of disadvantaged neighbourhoods and social groups is used comprehensively by only approximately one-third of PLAs. Recent service developments in libraries, such as the development of ICT networks and literacy initiatives, tend to be targeted at socially excluded people in only a small minority of cases;
- most PLAs report fairly high levels of community involvement by their staff but this tends to be at a general level, rather than focussed on disadvantage or exclusion
- most PLAs have no consistent resource focus on exclusion, and this is sometimes very marginal indeed. A minority of PLAs are very active in developing partnership projects but this is not a dominant factor in most PLA social exclusion strategies;
- many of the UK's most marginal and excluded people are not considered to be a priority in PLA strategy, service delivery and staffing. This applies especially to a number of social groups who commonly face stigma and discrimination: e.g. Refugees; Homeless People; Travellers.

Case Study Findings

Case study findings are reported in detail in Volume 2, and are summarised in Part 4 of Volume 1. Although the project case studies illustrated some innovative initiatives and service developments, overall they suggest that such activity is patchy and uneven. Case studies also highlighted barriers and problems which hinder PLA attempts to tackle exclusion. Some of these are a result of external factors, like lack of money and equipment, but others are linked to the internal procedures, cultures and traditions of library services themselves.

The studies highlight:
- some successes in addressing social exclusion, most frequently linked to targeted initiatives employing community development, partnerships, and other proactive ways of working;
- problems in developing an overall, PLA wide, policy framework with exclusion issues "mainstreamed" only exceptionally;
- a reluctance to adopt resourcing models that consistently prioritise excluded communities or social groups;
- limits on the ability of library staff to work with excluded people because of lack of skills and training and sometimes negative attitudes;
- a tendency to suggest that any "community" activity automatically addresses exclusion and a tendency to consult with communities and excluded groups only sporadically;
- a preoccupation with libraries as a "passive" service which prioritises "access"

rather than with proactive and interventionist ways of working;

- an ongoing concern with the ICT led "modernisation" of the library service which is only exceptionally linked to exclusion issues.

Transforming Public Libraries for Social Inclusion

Volume 1, Part 5 of Open to All?, suggests that much more than modernisation is needed. We argue that if public libraries are to seriously address social exclusion, they need to become much more proactive, interventionist and educative institutions, with a concern for social justice at their core. Specially, on the basis of the fieldwork studies, we point to the following strategies for such a transformation:

- the mainstreaming of provision for socially excluded groups and communities and the establishment of standards of service and their monitoring;
- the adoption of resourcing strategies which prioritise the needs of excluded people and communities;
- a recasting of the role of library staff to encompass a more socially responsive and educative approach;
- staffing policies and practices which address exclusion, discrimination and prejudice;
- targeting of excluded social groups and communities;
- the development of community-based approaches to library provision, which incorporate consultation with and partnership with local communities;
- ICT and networking developments which actively focus on the needs of excluded people;
- a recasting of the image and identity of the public library to link it more closely with the cultures of excluded communities and social groups.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Open to All ? concludes with a series of general recommendations and suggestions designed to initiate and support change: these are detailed in Section 7 of this volume. In addition, authors of some of the project working papers have developed specific recommendations focussing upon particular categories of excluded people and social groups. These are reproduced in the working papers in Volume 3 and Appendix A of this volume.

Our recommendations have implications for a wide range of stakeholders in the public library community:

- *Public Library Authorities* themselves are obviously the most important of these. They are urged to adopt long term strategies for tackling social exclusion involving reviews of resourcing, staffing; community development; ICT; materials provision; partnership and joint provision and monitoring. They are urged to mainstream social exclusion throughout all their activities.
- Those parts of *central government* concerned with the public library and social

exclusion (such as DCMS, Re:source, DFEE, SEU) are urged to assist PLAs by developing a co-ordinated policy framework. In particular, we recommend national service standards for public library activities relevant to social exclusion, and arrangements for monitoring library authority performance.

- *Professional organisations*, especially the Library Association, are urged to improve access to the profession for socially excluded people and to establish committees and mechanisms which represent the interests of disadvantaged groups.
- *Research institutions and research funding bodies* are urged to fund detailed research into library related needs of excluded groups and to undertake detailed statistical monitoring of the use of libraries by categories of excluded people.
- *Training organisations*, especially Schools of Information and Library Studies, are urged to ensure that their courses and programmes are relevant to public library work for social inclusion.

Open to All?

Public libraries are, at present, only superficially open to all. They provide mainly passive "access" to materials and resources and they have service priorities and resourcing strategies which work in favour of existing library users rather than excluded or disadvantaged communities or groups. An ICT led "modernisation" of the library service is doing little to change this pattern: our research concludes that this will simply replicate existing inequities of use in an "information age".

The core conclusion of the study is therefore that public libraries have the potential to play a key role in tackling social exclusion, but in order to make a real difference they will need to undergo rapid transformation and change.

1.   Introduction

1.1   *Open to All?* examines an important national institution - the public library - and its capacity to tackle exclusion in modern society. It aims to suggest how public libraries might contribute towards developing a more "inclusive" society in the UK. It assesses what public libraries are doing now and, perhaps more importantly, it explores how public libraries might focus their services more effectively in the future on excluded social groups and communities. Its conclusions - consisting of a series of recommendations at both policy and operational levels - are thus of significance both for the public library and for the wider debate about public services and their impact on social exclusion. We hope they will be widely read and discussed.

1.2   There is a common perception that the public library has a long history of provision for "disadvantaged" or "excluded" individuals, social groups and social classes. The philanthropy of the Victorian Public Library, and its concern for the "labouring classes" is part of the heritage of the institution, and by the mid-20th century public libraries claimed to provide free access to books and information "for all". By the 1980s, "community" librarians had additionally developed a range of services focusing on "disadvantaged" client groups such as outreach, housebound services and "special services" for groups such as racial and ethnic minorities. Assessing these developments, and the values they embody, the Library and Information Commission concluded that libraries were *the essence of inclusion* (Library and Information Commission, 2000).

1.3   However, there is a sense in which these concerns have always been marginal and superficial for the public library. Over 20 years ago, the Department of Education and Science report *The Libraries' Choice* concluded that "disadvantaged sections of the community often fail to receive their share of the library's resources" (Department of Education and Science, 1978, p.45). As we shall see, working class and disadvantaged readers have always under-utilised public libraries, and other sectors of society like Black people [1] have experienced "exclusion by the public library" (Roach and Morrison, 1998). In part, such problems are the result of a failure to establish a coherent policy framework for library services to excluded groups and communities. Moreover, as recent field research by Harris (1998, p.15) concluded, "people's perception of their library's social role is based on established, traditional services" such as the loan of middlebrow fiction. The relevance of such services to many excluded people is, of course, open to question.

1.4   Public libraries therefore do not, simplistically, address exclusion. This observation is, perhaps doubly significant in a claimed *information* (or more latterly *network*) society where many commentators point to the dangers of a digital dark age for excluded individuals, groups, and communities. Supporters of public libraries, like the protagonists of *New Library: the People's Network,* argue that "public libraries hold

the key to ensuring that we don't end up with a divided information society" (Library and Information Commission, 1997). However, others, such as the authors of the recent Policy Action Team 15 report *Closing the Digital Divide,* conclude that addressing *informational* exclusion is a much wider and more complex process involving many individuals, agencies and services (Policy Action Team 15, 2000). Our own starting point begins with an acceptance that the relationship between the public library and the socially excluded is historically a problematic one; we progress by asking how the public library can best *change* to address social exclusion in an emerging informational, or knowledge based, society.

1.5   Our findings are based on the research project *Public Library Policy and Social Exclusion*, based at Leeds Metropolitan University and conducted in partnership with the London Borough of Merton (Libraries), Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information and John Vincent, an independent consultant. The research was conducted between October 1998 and April 2000, with financial support from, successively, the British Library Research and Innovation Centre, the Library and Information Commission, and Re:source.

1.6   The overall aim of the research was to "investigate the potential value and impact of the public library in overcoming specific aspects of contemporary social exclusion". As Section 2 of this volume will show, our approach to social exclusion was wide ranging, but specifically we were concerned to identify those forms of exclusion which fall within the sphere of action of the public library. The project attempted to assess how effectively differing models and strategies of public library service addressed problems of social exclusion. It sought both to identify the positive impact of the public library on excluded groups and communities and to identify the problems and barriers experienced by public library authorities in developing relevant strategies and services.

1.7   Specific elements of the project included:
- 16 working papers which explored the historical and international context of social exclusion itself, and of public library responses to it;
- a survey of all UK public library authorities, which assessed the nature and extent of current UK public library activity and initiatives relating to social exclusion;
- detailed case studies of eight UK public library authorities and their social exclusion strategies and initiatives;
- recommendations and guidelines which suggest how public library exclusion strategies might be enhanced and strengthened through both innovation in practice and new models of local provision.

1.8   Methodological aspects of these activities are discussed in more detail in Volume II, Chapter 1 of *Open to All?*. In total, the research process has generated a great quantity of written material, both empirical and theoretical, and to facilitate access we have organised this material into three Volumes as follows:

- *Volume 1: Overview and Conclusions* (this volume) is intended to be a summary of the research, of accessible length for the practitioner and general reader. It contains summaries of key issues and findings and overall conclusions and recommendations,

organised into six chapters.

- *Volume II: Survey, Case Studies and Methods* contains the detailed empirical findings of the research. Each of the eight case studies is reported in full, and the survey of UK public library authorities is analysed in detail. An introductory chapter also reviews the methodological issues involved in the research.

- *Volume III: Working Papers* gathers together the sixteen working papers produced during the course of the project. These working papers provide a comprehensive review of the literature of the public library and social exclusion and most also develop and advance particular perspectives and arguments. Abstracts of papers and specific recommendations related to them are included as Appendix A in this Volume.

Note

1. The term *Black* is used in this report in its political sense to include all people from Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean and all those who consider themselves Black. It includes those born in Britain but whose parents or grandparents came from Africa, Asia or the Caribbean. It is meant to highlight aspects that unite people on the basis of their common history of oppression. The term *ethnic minority* is used less today because of its association with marginality (see Working Paper 13*, Struggle against racial exclusion in public libraries; A fight for the rights of the people*, Durrani, 2000).

2. Social Exclusion and the Public Policy Debate

2.1 The nature of social exclusion

2.1.1   The term social exclusion, which was first used by French sociologists in the 1970s, has been adopted by both the European Union and by New Labour, who established a Social Exclusion Unit in the Cabinet Office in 1997. Today it is quite common to find the terms "social exclusion", "social inclusion" and, to a lesser extent, "social cohesion", used almost interchangeably. However, according to Miller (1999), there are key differences of emphasis:

- *Social exclusion* focuses on the socially excluded - who they are, where they live, what their needs are;
- *Social inclusion* is concerned, in addition, with the effects of exclusion on those already included in society, and with the real or perceived consequences which arise from not tackling social exclusion;
- *Social cohesion* looks, more broadly, at whole communities and is concerned with the development of "social capital".

Miller argues that these three concepts can be placed in a continuum which moves from the tackling the exclusion of specific groups (social exclusion), through to reducing the spill over effects and cost to the majority (inclusion), and then on to developing a cohesive civil society (cohesion).

The fundamental approach adopted by each public library authority (PLA) - exclusion, inclusion or cohesion - is thus important. This will shape their policies, strategies, action plans and service delivery.

2.1.2   Another factor affecting exclusion / inclusion / cohesion strategies will be the degree to which they are influenced by related or existing policies such as equal opportunities and anti-poverty programmes.

There is a significant overlap between poverty and social exclusion. Most people living below the poverty line are also socially excluded. However, as Miller (1999) observes, there are some people living below the poverty line who are not socially excluded; conversely, there are some socially excluded people living above the poverty line excluded through processes such as deviance or discrimination. In this sense, anti-poverty and social exclusion strategies are not the same.

Similarly, equal opportunities and social exclusion strategies overlap, but they are not synonymous. Many library authorities argue that, by offering equality of opportunity, they are giving socially excluded people the chance to take up services if they wish.

However, this approach fails to recognise the core causes and results of social exclusion, as well as the barriers to take-up that public libraries create and it results in a non-targeted approach to service provision. In addition, many local authority and public library equal opportunity policies omit any reference to social class and yet class is one of the most significant determinants of public library use and non-use.

2.1.3   Identifying those who are socially excluded, and those at risk of social exclusion, is a vital starting point. Many PLAs identify only the most obvious groups. Black people, for example, are often high on equal opportunity agendas, while lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgendered (LGBT) people [1] are lower down the hierarchy, or omitted completely. Majority or very large social categories, including children and women, can also be socially excluded, but are often overlooked in exclusion strategies. Groups such as refugees and homeless people, often at high risk of exclusion, can equally be not considered. An over-emphasis on group approaches can also ignore the needs of excluded individuals. Even when services and resources have been focused on groups such as the Black community, this has not always made public libraries significantly more diverse in their usage base.

Some local authorities - encouraged by central government and external funding - have taken a geographical approach to social exclusion by targeting "problem areas". Although many socially excluded people live in these areas, others do not: many poor and excluded people live, for example in apparently affluent rural areas. Mapping of social exclusion thus has to be more sophisticated and comprehensive.

2.1.4   There are thus a wide range of definitions and conceptualisations of exclusion which can be utilised by public library authorities. Some are not yet using the term. Some are using relatively narrow definitions, such as that provided by the DCMS in *Libraries for All* (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 1999a, p.8). Others are using broader definitions, based on the approaches adopted by, for example, the European Union, which consider the inability of individuals to engage with economic, social and political life (Duffy, 1995). Few have conceptualisations which point to the causes of exclusion, such as racism, capitalism and patriarchy, or the structural solutions required to overcome exclusion, such as redistribution of wealth and resources (Byrne, 1999).

As Levitas (1998) argues, inequality and discrimination are age old problems which have been repackaged in a new language through the discourse of inclusion / exclusion. However, there is a danger that in using terms such as social exclusion we avoid discussion of inequality in capitalist society and the kind of fundamental social, economic and political transformations which are needed to tackle the problem. Also, new forms of exclusion are emerging and becoming sharpened within the context of the "information" society. Our own working paper 15 (Dutch and Muddiman, 2000) argues that the digital divide between the information haves and have-nots is widening. This is of concern to the Government because it has implications for both the economy and for social stability. Public libraries have been identified as a means of helping to narrow this divide, but technology will not change this situation if it is offered within the context of a traditional, non-inclusive public library service.

2.2   The global dimension

2.2.1   As many commentators have argued, capitalism began a new phase with the collapse of the USSR and the Eastern bloc in the 1970s and 1980s and used the networking logic of the Information Age to facilitate its global growth. Castells (1998, p.1) sees this as "technological revolution, centred around information which has transformed the way we live". Capital, no longer having to contend with opposition from socialism, was now free to roam the world wherever profits were to be made. Globalisation thus refers to world-wide economic deregulation and the universal reach of the Anglo-American free market.

The social and economic consequences of this global search for profit inevitably result in the marginalisation and exclusion of millions of people around the world from the products of their labour. While this aggressive phase of capitalism results in increasing economic growth in some countries and regions, its own logic ensures that millions of people and large parts of the world remain excluded from growth. Many areas have thus experienced a decline in gross national product as capital moves out of less profitable countries and regions.

Kundnani (1998) sees the economic paradigms of the industrial age in the process of being replaced by new paradigms of the globalised, information age. This makes possible new forms of economic organisation in both manufacturing and in media industries, which have undergone substantial changes in the last twenty years. The huge growth in the spread of digital telecommunications over the last ten years has accelerated this process, leading us to the brink of a new era of capitalist development.

2.2.2   Such globalisation creates its own contradictions: in an age of the Internet, 80 per cent of the world's population have never made a phone call; in the age of democracy, the world's richest three men have assets that exceed the combined GDP of the 48 poorest nations (Elliot, 1999). The "Information Revolution" has actually *made things worse*. The "Information Society" is not just neutral or "up for grabs", but actually bound up with the forces that perpetuate exclusion and intensify it (Dutch and Muddiman, 2000). Thus the tremendous possibilities for improvements for a better life for all are reduced to the reality of marginalisation and exclusion for the majority.

On the one hand, levels and capacity of production are increasing at a tremendous pace with an immense capacity to satisfy material needs of all people. There is greater scope to communicate on a global level in an increasingly efficient way. New creative and cultural activities are possible at a scale not even thought of 20 years ago. Increased productivity has the potential to transform the lifestyles of people by providing the material needs of all and increasing leisure time.

However, it is also a fact that such possibilities are available to only a minority of countries, societies and individuals. As the world is dramatically divided in ever sharper class divisions, the majority of working people are excluded from all the wealth and

possibilities of increased production of wealth. Exploitation reinforces social oppression on the basis of race, gender, sexuality, disability and so on.

2.2.3   This contradiction inevitably gives rise to the resistance from those who have lost control over their lives. Thus "resistance confronts domination, empowerment reacts against powerlessness, and alternative projects challenge the logic embedded in the new global order, increasingly sensed as disorder by people around the planet" (Castells, 1998, p.69). The struggle of people to be included in the distribution of products which sustain life is global. In every country marginalised and excluded people are struggling to be included in the economic, political and social life of their countries. There is also increasing co-operation between people of different countries as they work together on joint campaigns as their struggles and causes of their exclusion are also linked.

Resistance on a global level to forces that create social, political and economic exclusion is intensifying. The combatants are peasants, workers, intellectuals, academics, and many others. The important qualitative difference in their resistance is that they are united, articulate, organised and are able to use the latest technologies in support of their resistance. Their target is no longer just the local tyrants, dictators and financiers. They have targeted the world-wide network of transnationals, official bodies, unfair treaties and speculators who use the neutral image of UN to hide their real motive of mega-profits. Liberation movements everywhere have had to create new information services to serve their own needs (Castells, 1998).

The lesson from this is that the struggle for social inclusion is in essence the struggle for *economic, political and social* inclusion. The struggle against exclusion being waged in Britain is connected through the global "net" with the struggles of excluded people all over the world. This places the information world at the centre of globalisation.

Libraries can thus play a crucial role in the new information world, both as holders of information and as the only access that many people have to the technologies which can give access to the vast information resources held on the world wide web. Libraries therefore have tremendous potential to become agents of liberation by providing access to relevant information and technologies. If, however, they refuse to change and hold on to their traditional role of serving primarily the middle classes, they then become agents of exclusion.

2.3   Social exclusion in the United Kingdom

2.3.1   The devastating picture of the United Kingdom as a country where the gulf between rich and poor has grown wider for over twenty years is now generally accepted. As yet, this poverty gap shows little sign of reduction and issues of class, race, gender, health and geography compound the many forms of exclusion that result. Measurements of social exclusion are becoming increasingly sophisticated, and research is multiplying - see, for example our own bibliographies to Working Papers 1 and 10 (Muddiman, 1999a; Dutch, 1999). These statistics and studies map out the factors that lead to

exclusion in the UK in the 21st century [2].

2.3 2   Poverty matters. Lack of money is the most obvious cause of exclusion and links to all other factors. In the year 2000, half of average income does not constitute a very high standard of living but 14 million people live in households (after housing costs are deducted) where income is below this level. This is nearly 20% of the population (compared to 8% in 1979) and includes over 2 million children. Poverty has increased, not only in the number of people experiencing it, but in its severity. The real incomes of the poorest 10% of the population actually declined by 17% between 1979 and 1995.

2.3.3   Social class matters. If you are in Social Class IV or V you are much more likely to be out of work. You are much less likely to have qualifications and, even in work, less likely to receive training. You are more likely to die prematurely. As a child in classes IV and V you are far more likely to be bought up by a lone parent struggling on benefit, to be on free school meals and to die in an accident. You are also most likely to leave school without any qualifications. If you are a young woman in Class V you are much more likely to be pregnant in your teens. If you are a pensioner you are more likely to have to rely on the state pension and means tested benefits.

2.3.4   Where you live matters. This is a complex and contentious issue, but the statistical evidence clearly illustrates that the highest concentration of socially excluded people lie within certain regions of the country and then, within these regions, in particular neighbourhoods. This is especially true of the urban areas of the UK and the trend of concentration of deprivation into clusters continues. However, there is also increasing evidence of more diffused social exclusion in rural areas. Interestingly, the absence of easy access to many of the infrastructure features of society (public transport; shops; financial institutions) is common to both rural and neighbourhood exclusion. The lack of a home or static accommodation marks the homeless and travellers out for automatic exclusion.

2.3.5   Who you are matters. Discrimination and prejudice are issues that effect many different groups and people in UK society. Being Black or disabled or LGBT or a woman, for instance, will often cross cut with social class or residence to accentuate factors of social exclusion. The vast majority of the lowest wage earners are women. Disabled people are least able to obtain employment. Two thirds of all Bangladeshi and Pakistani households are in the bottom 20% of the income distribution. If you are from certain ethnic minority groups you are even more likely to be excluded from school and to be unemployed and even less likely to receive on-the-job training. Furthermore, discrimination and prejudice will mean that even in employment few people with such backgrounds will reach positions of power and influence.

2.4   United Kingdom policy responses to social exclusion

2.4.1   How a response is developed to the factors underlying social exclusion is largely shaped by the type of society in which people wish to live. The consensus approach to poverty between 1945 and 1979 was to develop strategies for income redistribution.

Such strategies involved progressive income tax schemes, reduction of pay differentials and other public expenditure supported measures. After 1979, the free market "neo-liberalism" of the various Conservative Governments broke with this approach fundamentally by refuting any belief that inequality was bad for society.

2.4.2   Since 1997, New Labour has set itself the task of maintaining many of the economic features of neo-liberalism whilst, at the same time, acknowledging that poverty and social exclusion are inequities that need tackling. The goal for the Government is not an equal society, but one that provides equal opportunities to access the wealth of society. This goal is accompanied by a consistent moral stance that a socially cohesive and inclusive society is good for both the individual and the social whole (Levitas, 1998).

An examination of the characteristics of the government's inclusion policies makes clear that they contain an element of compulsion or what Miller (1999) labels "required inclusion". New Labour is attempting to create a "one nation" society and it believes that social exclusion is bad for all of this society. In its attitude and in some of its policies it reflects the intolerance of much of the 'included society' with the believed outcomes of the actions of the excluded (drugs, crime, anti-social behaviour, teenage pregnancies, idleness). Some policies developed exude zero tolerance on these issues. They reflect the stick part of a "carrot and stick" approach to ensure inclusion. Carrots, in contrast, include the minimum wage, tax credits for the low paid and a raft of special funding initiatives targeted at communities and social groups. Throughout these policies there is a linkage between the rights and responsibilities within a civic society. The March 2000 Budget contains many examples of this linkage (HM Treasury, 2000).

2.4.3   Dominant within these strategies is the promotion of work and the work ethic as a device to achieve inclusiveness. In line with the general 'carrot and stick' approach, the measures to get more people into work contain a mixture of incentives and threats. A minimum wage has been introduced that will have doubled some people's wages and the Working Families Tax Credit attempts to tackle the difficult poverty trap between work pay and benefits pay. However, accompanying these policies are regular attacks on benefits fraudsters and constant tightening of social allowance measures for the jobless. Benefit provision in Britain is amongst the lowest in the European Union and the Government view is that any work is more acceptable, and therefore should be accepted, than life on benefit.

Accompanying these "welfare to work" strategies are a myriad of measures aiming to change cultures where work is perceived to be no longer valued, or to support those who wish to work but are prevented from doing so by various social and economic barriers (lack of training, lack of child care facilities etc.). From Education Action Zones to Sure Start schemes and from Health Action Zones to Healthy Living Centres: - the Government had over a 100 major initiatives such as these in operation by the end of 1999. Simply put, the aim is to attack the symptoms of social exclusion by a multitude of actions aimed at empowering communities and at giving everyone an equal opportunity to access education, training and the infrastructures of society. Timescales are dictated by a realisation of how long such changes will take but also, paradoxically, by funding

limitations.

2.4.4   Expenditure is rigorously controlled. New Labour is clear about the neo-liberal economic framework within which it operates. Thus, while conscious of the scale of the problem on neighbourhood estates, its response is limited to provision by competitive bidding for funds. Over one thousand estates were identified as in need of action. 17 pilots were funded in year one (1999). The wish to operate within a market economy agenda also dictates the size of state pensions and the size of the minimum wage.

2.4.5   In terms of delivery mechanisms the Government is entirely open about who should provide the schemes and initiatives. It is as interested in the private sector or the local community taking the lead as in traditional public sector (and specifically local authority) involvement. Indeed, there is an irony in the Government's distrust of local government given that many local authorities developed anti-poverty strategies during the hostility of the Conservative years. Now, the ability of local government to lead or even experiment with social inclusion strategies is increasingly reduced by the centralising tendencies of New Labour. Modernising Government, Performance Indicators and Best Value are all mechanisms dictating direction from the centre. Conversely, the Government's regional government policies are resulting in potentially different approaches in Scotland through large scale local partnerships (Scottish Office, 1999) and in Northern Ireland which has "an agenda for targeting social need" (Northern Ireland Office ,1999) [3].

2.5   Models of inclusion and responses by the State

2.5.1   According to Miller (1999), social exclusion can be considered in relation to the different dominant norms of society and roles of the state, of which institutions like the public library form a part. These norms can vary from social homogeneity to social diversity, while the state's approach can range from interventionist to minimalist.

A state which has social diversity as its dominant norm and plays a minimalist role, will, Miller argues, take an approach to social exclusion based on *exclusive diversity*. Features of this approach were present under Conservative Governments, between 1979 and 1997 which, as we have seen, favoured a laissez faire, individualist approach to social regulation.

New Labour, in contrast, prefers the *voluntary inclusion* model. This is a combination of a desire for social homogeneity and minimalist role for the state. Fundamental to this view is the idea of a united community, which everyone should try and join. Those who want to join, but cannot, will be helped, with the assistance of institutions like the public library. This model is linked to the provision of "universal services", like public libraries, which are "voluntary" in their take up.

However, some New Labour policies also exhibit tendencies towards *required inclusion*, where those who do not want to join are seen as a threat and may be punished. This combines the goal of social homogeneity with state intervention: equal

opportunity plus an element of compulsion - "join in, or else". As we have seen in the previous section, this is evident with regard to issues such as welfare benefits and youth crime.

The final combination identified by Miller - social diversity plus state intervention - is *inclusive diversity*. In this model social exclusion is tackled by the state targeting resources to fulfil individual or community needs. Diversity is positively fostered and everyone is encouraged to be involved in social, political and economic life.

2.5.2   These four models are "ideal types", as Miller describes them, and therefore in the real world they often co-exist and interweave. There are overlaps between them and the situation may change over time. For example, there has been an overlap between and a shift towards voluntary inclusion / required inclusion policies under New Labour, and as we shall see, this is reflected in public library strategies for tackling social exclusion.

The models are useful, however, especially because they help us to distinguish between strong and weak approaches to tackling social exclusion. Other writers such as Levitas (1998) have also drawn this distinction, contrasting approaches which focus on individual action and self improvement with *redistributive* approaches in which the state actively engineers a more equal and inclusive society through a transfer of power and resources. This distinction is, we think, an important one for the public library. Our own working paper 6 (Pateman, 1999a) suggests, for example, that an international perspective indicates that public libraries which use required inclusion / inclusive diversity approaches are most successful in tackling social exclusion. It recommends that UK public libraries should study these approaches and use them as the basis for their social exclusion policies and strategies.

Notes

1. The term LGBT is used to cover lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people.

2. The figures used in this section utilise the following sources: Convery (1997), Howarth *et al* (1998), Oppenheim (1998); Social Exclusion Unit (2000a), United Nations Children's Fund (2000), Walker (1997) .

3. Discussions of social exclusion policy in Scotland and Northern Ireland respectively are included in the Caledonia and Central Education and Library Board case studies of this project. See Volume II, Chapters 9 and 10.

3. The Public Library and Social Exclusion: a Retrospective Audit

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3.1 A brief history of the public library and the "disadvantaged"

3.1.1 Public libraries were established partly as agents of social change - to educate the deserving poor - and partly as organs of social control - to manage the reading habits of the masses. This contradiction of purpose has never been resolved (Black, 2000). Certainly, it is true that, in the UK, many early public libraries were conceived and supported by Victorian philanthropists and progressives. Dickens, speaking at the opening of Manchester Public Library in 1852, for example claimed that the library would provide a "source of pleasure and improvement in the cottages, the garrets and the ghettoes of the poorest of our people". Moreover, as they developed in the late 19th century, it is clear that many public libraries opened up a world of books and opportunity for some in the "labouring classes". Urban libraries, in particular, were popular among manual workers: one estimate (by Bryan Luckham) of the use of municipal libraries in the 1880s suggests that 63% of users came from this group.

However, in many respects this "inclusive" heritage of the Victorian public library is a superficial one. For one thing, most Victorian libraries and their committees focused on the "deserving" poor and drew the line at criminals, vagrants and those condemned to the poorhouse. Rules enforcing "clean hands and faces" were often rigorously imposed to satisfy fears about the transmission of disease and contagion through books [1]; in many early lending libraries undesirables were excluded because they needed a ratepayer guarantee to join. Moreover, as public libraries developed towards the turn of the century, middle class librarians began to devise a broad range of services which appealed increasingly to middle class readers. These included local history collections, reference, business and information collections and above all, fiction. Our own Working Paper 2, *The Historical Legacy,* argues that by the early 20th century, this diversification resulted in a public library which appealed, essentially, to a broad coalition of skilled, literate workers and their families, liberal professionals, and lower middle classes in trades and commerce (Muddiman, 1999b). By any contemporary yardstick, these groups were neither disadvantaged nor socially excluded.

3.1.2 Gradually, as the 20th century progressed, the myth of the "working class" public library began to be discarded and replaced with the idea of access for all. Public libraries, from the 1930s onwards, began to redefine their purpose in *universal* terms and Lionel McColvin, for example, argued that a "library provided by all must be for all". They then embarked upon an institutionally-led approach to social inclusion, investing in a "library grid" which covered the nation with branch libraries and brought services to such places as prisons, hospitals, lighthouses and homes of the sick and

handicapped. Some librarians pursued this strategy very vigorously indeed in the post-1945 period and attempted to transform libraries into adult education and cultural centres for the "training of the good citizen" (Board of Education, Public Libraries Committee, 1927). In this they reflected the ambitions of other national institutions, such as the BBC, which aimed at the creation of an educated mass democracy and an inclusive, civilised, public sphere.

By and large, however, a proactive approach to inclusion was the exception rather than the rule. Instead, in the 1950s and 1960s, public libraries adopted a relatively weak and passive approach to inclusiveness, based on the voluntary use of a minimal range of services. Librarians concentrated on overcoming physical and geographical barriers that impeded access to library services, and on making book lending services as widely available as possible. Inclusion was thus defined, as Alistair Black suggests, as *equality of access* rather than *equality of outcome* (Black, 2000, p.9). There were as a result few attempts at targeting disadvantaged social classes, communities and groups and little development of compensatory services that met their needs.

By the late 1960s, therefore, it could be said that public libraries were "inclusive" institutions, but in a limited sense only. They offered universal "coverage" of the UK with a relatively standard set of services and, nominally at least, offered equality of access to them. They offered, undoubtedly, an avenue of social mobility for those working class or disadvantaged people who chose to use them that way. But this "inclusive" service, according to sixties sociologist Bryan Luckham, still "purveyed a middle class culture" and hence had alarmingly low levels of membership among unskilled workers and their families. Its liberal virtues of access and openness inevitably favoured middle class users (Luckham, 1971, p.126). Doing little to directly address disadvantage, the public library continued , unwittingly or not, to exclude the poor and the dispossessed.

3.1.3   What is clear is that, despite their origins as working class institutions, public libraries were never heavily used by the majority of working class people. They were taken over, in effect, by the middle class, and are now, it can be argued, characterised by a form of "institutionalised classism". As we shall see in Section 3.4, public libraries are used to a disproportionate extent by the middle class (in terms of their percentage of the total population), while working class use is relatively low. In this sense public libraries are not socially inclusive.

3.2   Library attempts to address exclusion through services to "disadvantaged" groups

3.2.1   Despite this, public libraries have traditionally - and still are - targeting particular "disadvantaged" groups and not others. Working papers summarised in Appendix A of this volume point to a long history of providing services to elderly and housebound people and to children and young people (Vincent, 1999; Linley, 2000a). In the case of the latter, this has become more focused on specific needs to meet the requirements of funding regimes such as Bookstart and Sure Start, although even these initiatives are not

being specifically targeted by many library authorities towards excluded people or communities.

3.2.2   Other socially excluded groups such as Black people and disabled people have been the focus of attention for some considerable time, but our working papers reveal patchy and uneven development of provision (Linley, 2000b, Durrani, 2000). For example, with regard to serving racially excluded people, there have been attempts to establish local, regional and national projects, and, whilst some of these (such as CILLA - the Co-operative of Indic Language Library Authorities) continue to flourish, others have been short-lived. Very recently, a number of public libraries have made efforts to implement the recommendations of the research by Roach and Morrison (1998), and it is to be hoped that these initiatives will stand the test of time. The reasons for the short-lived nature of this work are examined below.

Other working papers reveal that there are some socially excluded groups that receive extremely poor levels of service. For example, lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgendered people have been targeted by some public library services in the past, and a very small handful are still providing good levels of service.   Overall, however, provision has been extremely patchy. Whilst, in the 1970s and early 1980s, many library authorities took the initiative to develop services to women and to trade unions, these services too are now rare.

Finally, our survey results suggest that there are some marginalised social groups who receive virtually no services at all, particularly those who cannot provide a stable address for library records, such as homeless people and travellers (see Section 4.2).

3.3   Community librarianship and its successes and limitations

3.3.1   Linked to the development of some of these specialised services, the 1970s and 80s saw the emergence of a new way of working - community librarianship [CL] which attempted to redress the mainstream and middle class bias of the service. For a period in the 1970s and 1980s, it did appear as though CL was making an impact on "traditional" public library services. For example, a number of library authorities pioneered different forms of CL, including outreach, and made significant contacts with previously excluded sections of the community (Vincent, 1986).

However, with hindsight, these developments were very piecemeal and limited . Although there were CL developments in library authorities in London and other metropolitan areas (such as Manchester, Sheffield and Birmingham), many public library services passed through this period - indeed exist today - without having been touched by these developments.

In many cases, CL developments burgeoned under sympathetic heads of service, proactive staff and a climate where resources were plentiful. Nevertheless very few of these CL developments were service-wide (rare examples were Lambeth, Manchester and Brent), and, during the later 1980s and the 1990s, they virtually disappeared. Why

was this?

3.3.2 There are number of reasons, related to some extent to the nature of each individual service: so, for example, change of political direction / management emphasis, the movement of committed staff, and the widespread cuts of this period all had a dramatic effect on the ability of a library service to develop CL approaches. However, perhaps more importantly, there were also a number of fundamental issues which CL itself never resolved - and which, in the end, hastened its fall from popularity as a method of meeting community needs.

3.3.3 Some very real attempts were made by some public libraries to reach out into their communities and to begin to serve previously unmet needs. However, at the same time, through a lack of prioritising and staff attitudes to this kind of work, many of these strong links were never followed through and sustained. When outreach had been developed in public libraries in the United States it had frequently been set up as an additional service, and, as such, was easily targeted for budget cuts. To try to avoid this happening, many public libraries in the UK made CL activities an integral part of the mainstream service (with the notorious exception of those authorities which relied on Section 11 funding to provide their outreach activities). However, as mainstream budgets became pinched, so resources devoted to CL were reduced, and the priority given to CL and outreach diminished.

3.3.4 Whilst some public library staff took to CL enthusiastically, many did not, and active opposition grew - CL was seen as "threatening mainstream librarianship" [2]. In addition, many library staff did not seem able to move beyond their traditional view of their role - and the role of the public library - so, for example, they found it increasingly difficult to deal with the inevitable dialogues and debates about service delivery, materials provided and so on. Rather than finding the issues around tailoring a service to meet the needs of, for example, single homeless men or a Bengali-speaking group, to be invigorating, the reaction was frequently one of ignorance and a reassertion of 'professional values'.

The tension between continuing to serve vocal 'traditional' library users and trying to establish services for 'new' communities was never resolved. As the consumer-led approach grew in strength in the 1980s and 1990s, so additional weight was given to those most articulate about their perceptions of what a public library should be, and services became ever more customer focused and demand led (Black and Muddiman, 1997, Ch.5). Senior managers and elected members bowed to this pressure and reasserted 'traditional', library-based services which were often now encouraged to adopt a consumerist gloss.

In addition, attempts to change the core stock of public libraries to reflect the real needs and aspirations of local communities was damaged severely by the "political correctness" debacle, with, just as there had been in relation to the GLC and "loony left" authorities, accusations that libraries were full of books about "disabled Black lesbians" [3], assertions which fuelled the argument that CL was destroying the 'traditional library' (Vincent, 2000).

3.3.5   Perhaps the key reason why, in the end, rather than creating a revolutionised, new public library service, CL withered and virtually disappeared, was that many public library authorities really did not want to alter their core services, and saw CL as something that was carried out on the periphery by a few radical librarians and their ardent supporters. Many of the problems facing the public library today stem from this lack of change and inability to grasp the nettle of prioritising service delivery; an opportunity to change radically the face of public libraries, and to make real links with socially excluded communities was lost in the 1970s and 1980s. We need to make sure that this does not happen again.

3.4   Use of the public library by the working class and disadvantaged people

3.4.1   Libraries have always been relatively (in terms of their proportion of the total population) underused by working class people and by various disadvantaged groups. There are some historical reasons for this. Library historians have identified a strong strand of social control behind the establishment of Victorian public libraries (Corrigan and Gillespie, 1978). This strand was evident in speeches made around the first Public Library Bill. A combination of this strand, and the appropriation of public libraries by middle class people in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, led to a relative reduction in their use by the masses. Local studies libraries, for example, are often cited as custodians of the people's identity, but the question is "whose identity": many local studies collections, as they developed in the later nineteenth century, became, it can be argued, a mirror of the lives and interests of the local middle class (Smith, 2000). Baggs (2000) in a study of public libraries in the South Wales valleys from 1887-1939, reveals that working class mining communities resisted the imposition of public libraries by municipal authorities. Describing Carnegie funding as "blood money" the miners preferred to control and manage their own reading rooms and Mechanics Institutes. Attempts to reach out beyond middle class users are rare in public libraries before the pioneering efforts of community librarians in the inner cities in the 1970s and 1980s.

3.4.2   Such historical evidence of middle class bias is reflected in levels of use by working class and disadvantaged users that are still disproportionately low. Despite claims that the "middle class myth of libraries is dead" (House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee, 2000, p.xiv) contemporary figures still point to low levels of use by working class people and disadvantaged groups. Our own working papers 3 and 9 (Pateman, 1999b, Muddiman, 1999c) reveal a range of surveys and studies that have reported low levels of use. Comedia (1993, p.9), for example, reviewed a range of surveys and estimated that only 33% of the population were active library users. Aslib's figures for the use levels of libraries by people in lower socio-economic categories show "frequent" use by only 25%-26% of people in social class categories C2; D and E compared with 40% for classes AB and 30% for C1 (Aslib, 1995). Such tendencies are confirmed by the important *Breadline Britain* surveys reported by Bramley (1996) which look at the use of and attitudes to a range of public services by poor and disadvantaged people. These surveys identify social class as the most important single

determinant of public library use, respondents in Bramley's highest social class grouping being 1.4 times as likely to use libraries compared with those in the lowest.

What this suggests, of course, is that the library service as currently configured comprises a service model that effectively shuns perhaps a majority of working class and other disadvantaged people. Our own survey figures, reported in Section 4.1, support this conclusion.

3.4.3 Few in-depth studies have been carried out into the use of public libraries by disadvantaged groups. One exception to this was the recent research into public libraries, ethnic diversity and citizenship (Roach and Morrison, 1998). This study found that the institutional barriers common in public libraries are magnified for Black communities by the additional issues of race and ethnicity. One of their case studies highlighted cultural distance and institutional racism as real problems and major barriers to library use. The exclusion of Black people within society at large has probably impacted on their use of the library (which is seen as another institution which is excluding them), and, at the same time, Black people do not identify with the library because the library does not share the community's identity.

3.4.4   Public libraries, as institutions of the capitalist state, are thus configured, like many other agencies, in favour of the middle class, who consume public goods to a disproportionate extent [4] . During 2000, the 150th anniversary of public libraries is being celebrated. These institutions were ostensibly established to meet the needs of the deserving poor and yet, 150 years later, they are disproportionately used by the middle class.

3.5   Perceptions of the public library by non-users

3.5.1 Very little research has been carried out into the non-use of public libraries. The focus tends to be on library users, which acts to reinforce the status quo. Such research as there is involving non-users indicates that they associate libraries primarily with traditional functions. Non-users cannot see, without prompting, the wider role of libraries, or how libraries can be relevant to their lives (Harris, 1998). It is significant that when working class people do visit libraries, they tend to use the book lending service mainly, while middle class users access a wider range of library services.

National research such as that conducted by Aslib (1995) has revealed that non-users predominantly view public library users as mainly middle class and that they see the library as having an unchanging image. Non-users are unsure about the quality of services offered, about the value of using the Council Tax to pay for such services, and about how up-to-date the library and its systems are. Cultural barriers associated with libraries are particularly powerful for groups such as teenagers, ethnic minorities and working class people.

3.5.2   Local research, for example in York and in the London Borough of Merton (Marketing and Communications Group, 1996; MVA, 1998), has found that non-users

particularly associate such barriers with problems with library staff. Non-users describe staff as being unwelcoming, unsympathetic and dismissive. Some working class non-users highlight the still-powerful association of the library with books and silence, and reading as a source of alienation. Non-users find the registration process a hindrance - having to remember to bring along some form of identification is a deterrent to the impromptu use of the library service.

Non-users tend to be either not interested in books or do not feel that libraries are part of their leisure activities. In some cases the very word "library" is a deterrent to non-users and a symbol of a traditional, middle class alien culture. They associate the library with the serious reader and studying. Non-users say there is little that is inviting about libraries, and illustrate this by stating that libraries are not a place where friends would meet and socialise. Some non-users feel that, if there are ways of giving libraries a warmer appealing atmosphere, then they might be considered more acceptable by more people. Non-users associate libraries with the traditional functions of book lending and reference for leisure and education. Non-users do not connect libraries with social roles (Marketing and Communications Group, 1996, MVA, 1998).

For many non-users, a library is regarded as a place to borrow books, hire videos and a place for students to learn. However, libraries are regarded as a facility they do not wish to see vanish from the area. There is general support from non-users for longer opening hours, particularly for late evenings and Sunday opening. Non-users want more parking facilities and for libraries to be sited in residential as well as retail areas.

Non-users often regard library buildings and systems as off-putting. Many non-users suggest that staff should be more approachable towards people. Mobile libraries are thought of as the domain of elderly and disabled people. Few non-users could think of any possible non-traditional uses for mobile libraries, such as ICT provision.

For many adult non-users, their main point of contact with the library is via their children. In general, non-users have a good opinion of children's libraries, but feel that these should be made more accessible and modern (mainly via ICT) and that closer links with schools should be developed.

Fines are seen as a definite deterrent to use and a number of non-users suggest that fines for old people and students should be reduced. Non-users observe that certain members of society are excluded, for example those who are blind, have learning disabilities or are dyslexic. Non-users from ethnic minorities note that some of the ethnic collections are inappropriate to their needs or are not conveniently sited. One suggestion is that more books written by Black authors in English should be made available. Another suggestion is the provision of Black interest magazines for young people to read (Roach and Morrison, 1997).

3.5.3   Even after prompting, most non-users fail to conceptualise alternative social functions for the public library. In general, libraries are not linked in people's minds with community regeneration or social inclusion. This has led some researchers to suggest that libraries need to develop a sense of community ownership, management and

accountability (Harris, 1998). This will require an increased willingness to explore the needs and perceptions of non-users and to develop from these new community- based service models.

3.6   The exclusive public library

3.6.1   As noted above, many of the initiatives to try to provide public library services to socially excluded people have, if they started at all, been short-lived. Why is this? One major factor has to be the attitude and "philosophy" of library workers themselves who are keenest to serve people who are just like themselves (Vincent,1999b). Added to this, most public library initiatives have lacked any real community involvement and empowerment and were solutions "parachuted in". Many public libraries' services were, at best, temporary and, at worst, tokenistic, and, rather than assisting in tackling social exclusion, these initiatives actually have reinforced feelings of marginalisation. The well-worn myth of libraries' "neutrality" has also militated against the public library taking positive action and developing anti-racist/sexist and other equalities policies. As a result, as we have seen, public libraries have become marginal and of decreasing importance to many socially excluded people and non-users.

3.6.2   Whilst some public libraries have made efforts to tackle social exclusion, many still confront users and potential users with barriers. Non-users talk of distance and alienation, and these perceptions are exacerbated when the person is already socially excluded. There is a strong view that public libraries reflect middle-class culture and uphold "traditional" values, that the rules and regulations, fines and other charges all conspire to turn off potential users - for some, even the word "library" itself is a powerful symbol of a traditional middle-class and alien culture. The language and terms used by libraries can also be seen as off-putting, with the move from "readers" or "users" to "customers" (again reflecting this "business" approach).

Another major barrier has been the "universal" philosophy adopted by many public libraries and turned into policies and procedures. There are as a result real problems in providing targeted and focused services for socially excluded people from libraries which continue to hold on to principles of universal access and mainly passive methods of service delivery - historically, it is clear that this problem has never been resolved.

3.6.3   The major barriers which public libraries erect have been identified in *Libraries for All* (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 1999a). These can be grouped as:
- Institutional barriers (including opening hours; staff attitudes and behaviour; rules and regulations; charging policies; stock selection policies which do not relate to the needs of the local community);
- Personal and social barriers (including lack of basic skills; low income and poverty; direct and indirect discrimination; lack of permanent address);
- Perceptions and awareness (the perception that "libraries are not for us");
- Environmental barriers (including physical access to and inside library buildings; rural isolation and poor transport links).

Urgent efforts now need to be made to dismantle these barriers and, to transform the public library structures which cause and maintain them.

3.6.4   Underpinning such barriers are a series of myths about the public library which abound - and continue to grow. Reinforced by opinion polls and other consultations, many public libraries have created the view that they *are* reaching a good cross-section of the whole population.

This "retrospective audit" has shown just how false these myths are – and how dangerous, for they continue to perpetuate the stereotypes about public libraries and their users, and continue to create the smokescreen that all is well, that public libraries simply need some more money, and then all will be fine.

In fact, for many people, especially those who are socially excluded, public libraries are not welcoming places, but instead reinforce barriers of race, gender, class and other forms of inequality. Research over the last 20 years at least has shown that it is a myth that public libraries serve "everybody": in fact, there is clear evidence that public libraries serve a disproportionately high number of middle-class people, whilst working-class people use libraries very irregularly, if at all; children from wealthy homes use libraries and borrow library books far more frequently than do their poorer peers.

Our review of the record of the public library has shown that far from being "open to all" and "serving everybody", in fact public libraries have often abandoned their role in provision of services for working class and "disadvantaged" communities. They have created a clear hierarchy of service - and, even within that, there is little evidence of real targeting of services. It is also a myth that public libraries are "good" at working with socially excluded people: as this review shows, in fact they are often failing excluded people, and many public libraries are barely meeting their needs at all.

The public library also still calls itself "free" [5] , although, of course, it is now anything but. It is true that book borrowing has remained without charge (unless the books are kept overdue), but the way has been opened for other "non-core" services such as audio-visual to become charged-for. Many public libraries, in embracing the materialism and "business approach" of the 1980s and early 1990s, have turned their back on the idea of the "community" library and have adopted retail models of operation and the populist image of the supermarket or shop. Such a commercial image, in our view, has little relevance to the needs of the socially excluded.

Notes

1. Incredibly, such matters still seem to be an issue for some PLAs. See the debate over South Lanarkshire (Kennedy, 2000).

2. Taken from an interview quoted by Black and Muddiman (1997 p.62).

3. A comment made to one of the research team undertaking fieldwork.

4. A parallel example would be universities: recent figures have revealed that Britain's top five universities attract 48% of their intake from private schools, even though these schools educate only 7% of the population (Freedland, 2000).

5. A welcome development has been the introduction of free (at the point of use) ICT services in many libraries: the DCMS, in *Libraries for All* recommends that access to ICT should be "affordable (or preferably free)" (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 1999a, p.17). However, this is by no means compulsory or universal, and there is the danger that another myth is in the making here – ICT is *not* going to be the salvation of the public library on its own.

4. The Contemporary Public Library and Social Exclusion

4.1 Introduction

As Part 3 of this study has observed, public library attempts to address disadvantage and exclusion, always sporadic and uncertain, were probably at a low ebb by the early 1990s. Affected by public expenditure cuts and a market led local government policy agenda, public libraries largely abandoned attempts to link community librarianship with egalitarian social aims (Black and Muddiman, 1997, Ch.5). However, with the revival of New Labour in the 1990s, and its election in 1997, the public library policy environment began to change. A new policy agenda, which sought to link the public library to the new Government's goal of a "socially inclusive" society, emerged. This chapter assesses the impact of these new social inclusion policies on the contemporary public library through an analysis of the survey and case study findings of the *Public Library Policy and Social Exclusion* research. It concludes with a review of current public library policy activity in the social inclusion sphere, and an assessment of the potential that such activity offers for positive change.

4.2 Public Library Policy and Social Exclusion: Survey Findings

4.2.1   The core aim of the *Public Library Policy and Social Exclusion* survey of public library authorities (PLAs) was to assess the *extent* to which they were adopting policies and practices which focused on social exclusion. The survey was conducted in September and October of 1999 and was sent to all public library authorities in the United Kingdom - 208 now in total. It consisted of a postal questionnaire which was completed by the Head of Library Services or a Senior Library Service Officer with responsibility for exclusion issues. It incorporated specific sections on Policy and Strategy; Structure and Staffing; Service Development; Resources, Book Stock and Materials; Community Links and Outreach; Partnerships and Special Initiatives and Finance and Monitoring. The full findings of the survey are reported in Volume II, Chapter 2 of *Open to All?*.

4.2.2   Overall, 129 out of 208 library authorities responded to the survey, a response rate of 62%. Response rates varied according to authority type as detailed in Figure 1. It is perhaps tempting to infer that the PLAs who did not reply are less interested in, or active in, addressing social exclusion. However, it is difficult from these figures to conclude this with confidence: the low response rate from English Metropolitan Authorities is perplexing given that many such areas clearly exhibit severe and multiple manifestations of exclusion. Moreover, as we shall see, we received many responses from PLAs who were quite candid about their *lack* of activity in this area. There thus seems to be no special reason to believe that our respondents are not representative of

public library activity across the UK as a whole in the social exclusion field.

80%	(4/5)	Northern Ireland Education and Library Boards
77%	(26/34)	English Counties
73%	(24/33)	London Boroughs
61%	(28/46)	English Unitaries
55%	(12/22)	Wales
53%	(19/36)	English Metropolitan Districts
50%	(16/32)	Scotland

Figure 1: Response rates by authority type n= 129 **[1]**

4.2.3   Some findings of the survey suggest that national policy activity is beginning to affect local library authorities. Only 59% of eligible authorities told us that they included social exclusion issues in last year's Annual DCMS Library Plans, but 97% propose to do so this year. Moreover, 61% of respondent authorities now say they are utilising the Best Value framework to address social exclusion as part of service planning.

More specifically, as Fig. 2 suggests, 35% of PLAs have now adopted inclusion or exclusion policies or guidelines, in the majority of cases where their local authority has already done so. In related policy areas, 29% of PLAs utilise community development or regeneration strategies, 44% utilise racial equality strategies and a higher figure (61%) utilise equal opportunities policies.
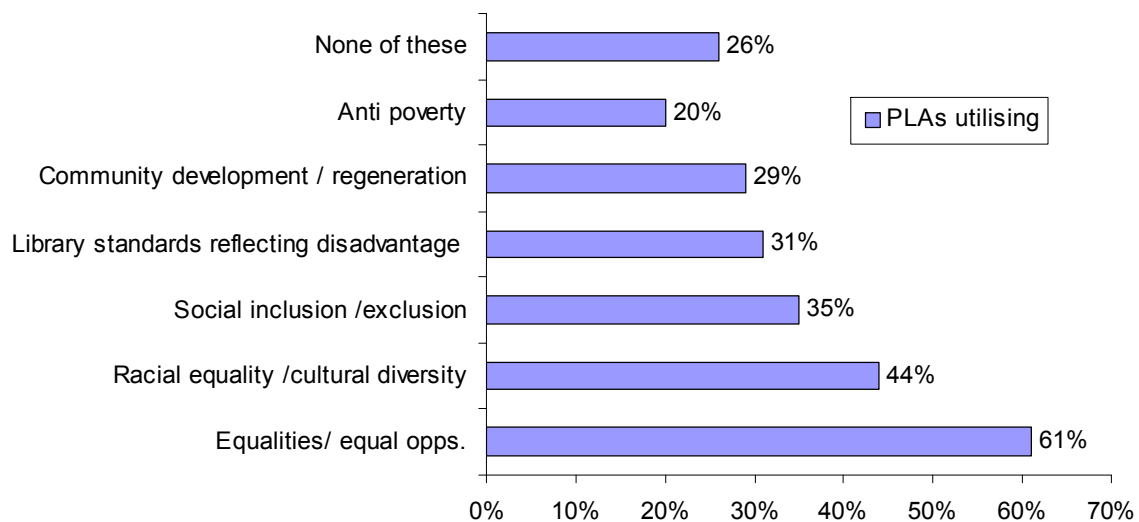
Figure 2: Public library policy and strategy

4.2.4   However, there are clear limits in the extent to which these policies are reflected in strategies which direct resources towards socially excluded communities and groups.

As Fig.3 shows, only 16% of PLAs say they have any mechanism for estimating the proportion of their budget committed to socially excluded groups and communities, and less than a quarter use devices such as weighted materials funding for deprived communities or a needs, rather than demand led, approach to resourcing. Around half

take account of social inclusion through "special" measures such as applications for grant aid, and developing special services.

Targeting of disadvantaged neighbourhoods is used comprehensively by only a minority (30%) of PLAs, a group who also make heavy use of community profiling and similar mechanisms as a basis for service planning as a strategy. Around half of local authorities target on an ad hoc basis, 20% not at all. It is more common for library authorities to target client groups than communities - around 80% target children, housebound people and disabled people through mainstreamed services such as children's services and domiciliary services. Other client groups are less well considered (see Section 4.2.10 below).

Overall, it is thus clear that the public library resource focus on social exclusion is often patchy and, at worst, very marginal indeed.
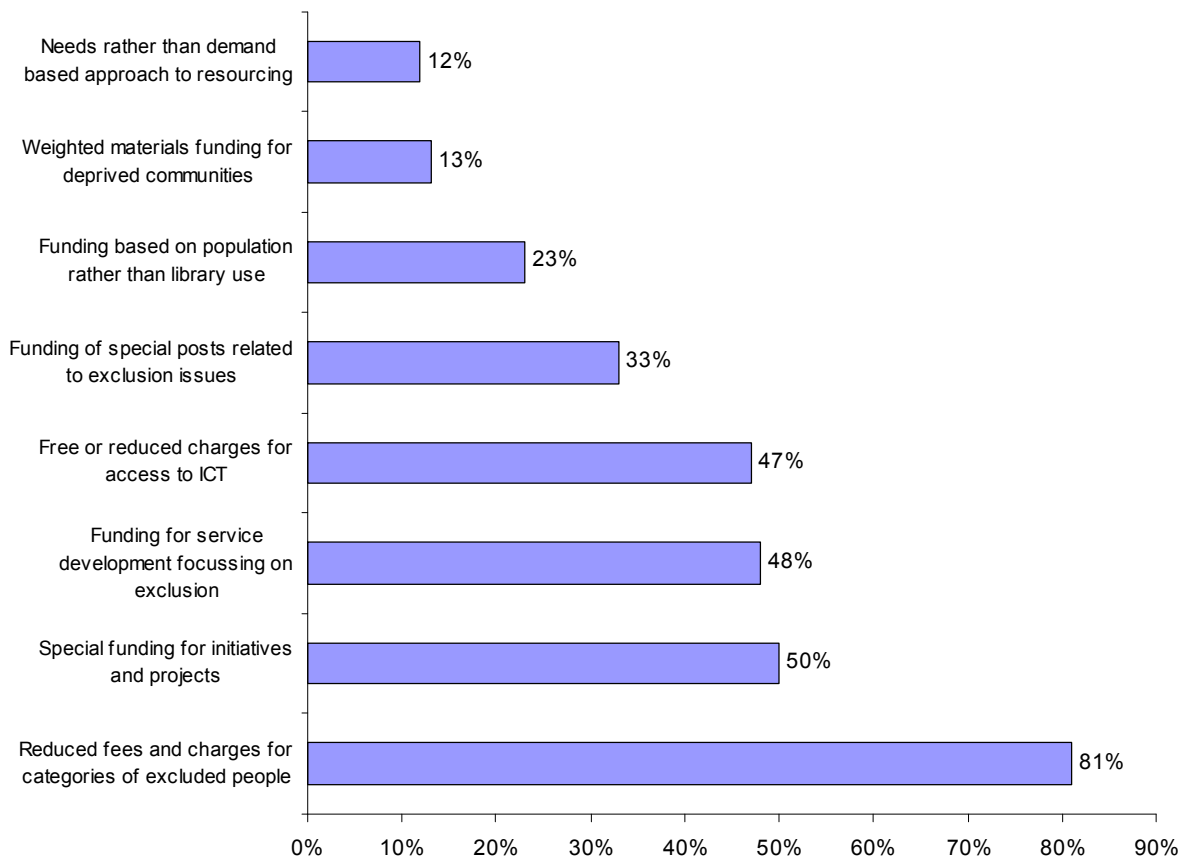
Figure 3: Resource Strategies and Social Exclusion

4.2.5   In terms of staffing, many local authorities claim that exclusion issues are the responsibility of all, or a majority of, their staff - although in the survey we have no way of demonstrating the extent to which such rhetoric reflects reality. Nevertheless, around 70% of PLAs do designate one or more posts to address exclusion issues, although in many cases these are longstanding special services posts such as housebound readers' librarian, or community librarians. Encouragingly, 39% of authorities do have a general training programme that incorporates training for social inclusion, but 16% of

authorities still offer no training in this area at all. 66% of PLAs also utilise equal opportunities policies which encourage recruitment of members of disadvantaged communities or groups onto their staff, although only 34% report that they actively seek to recruit people with specific skills and qualities which assist work with excluded groups or communities.

4.2.6 Recent service developments in libraries have especially focused on the development of services to children and the integration of ICT / Internet access into public libraries. Large numbers of local authorities have evidence of widespread service development in these areas (for example, Internet access 49% of PLAs; Bookstart 66%), but the survey suggests that only small numbers of authorities (15% at best for Bookstart) are targeting these initiatives specifically at socially excluded groups and communities. Other initiatives, such as homework clubs, family literacy centres and ICT skills training appear to be predominantly available only as special initiatives and these are not always targeted at socially excluded neighbourhoods or groups. Figure 4 summarises this position with regard to ICT developments.
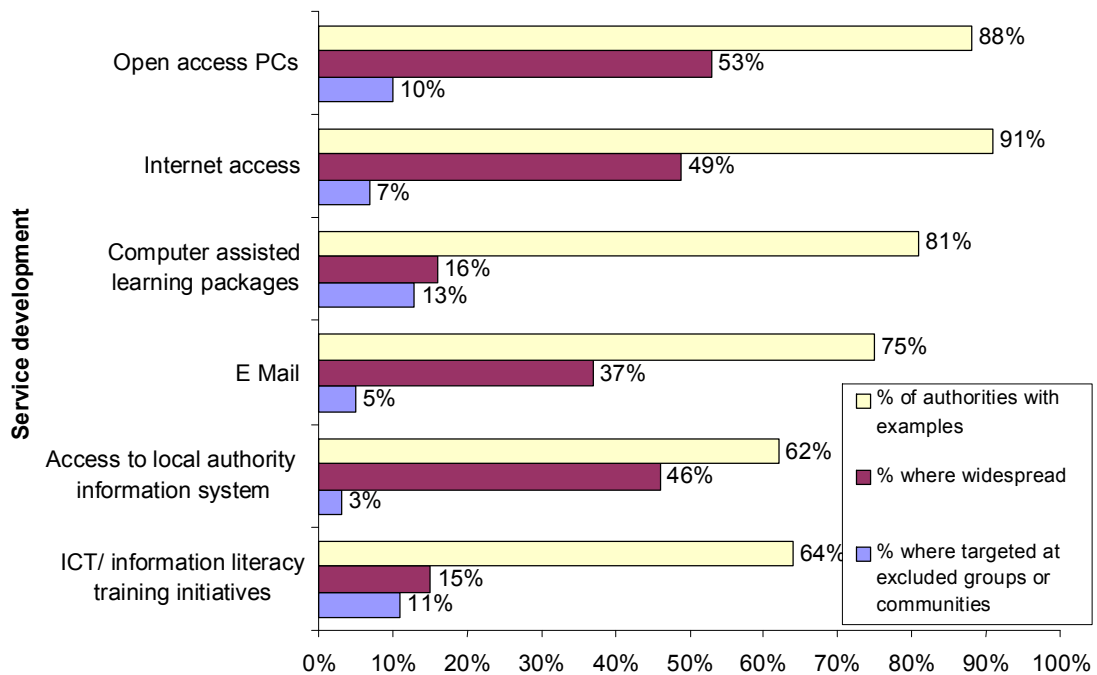
Figure 4: Public Library ICT developments

4.2.7 Only a minority of PLAs have developed materials selection policies which focus on excluded groups or communities. 36% had no guidelines for any excluded social groups at all, and only 13% had developed guidelines for particular areas or neighbourhoods. Guidelines were most common for racial and ethnic minorities (in 36% of authorities) and Children and Young People (in 57%). However, quite a large majority of authorities said they assessed local reading and information needs through devices such as discussion with community groups (48%); feedback from outreach work (60%) and surveys (44%).

4.2.8   These latter activities were reflected in fairly high levels of general community involvement reported by library authorities. This included programmed visits to non-library user groups; contact with community groups; representation on voluntary sector and community groups; provision of local information services and library accommodation made available for community groups. As Figure 5 shows, all of these activities were common in over 50% of respondent authorities.

Service/activity	PLAs providing on a regular basis	"Ad-hoc" provision
Mobile / Housebound services	92%	
Storytelling / reading	90%	
Events for children and young people	86%	
Provision of local information	85%	
Staff visits to community events	82%	
Representation on local umbrella groups	63%	
Deposit collections	74%	
Library accommodation for community groups	58%	
Creative writing sessions	50%	
Skills training (e.g. ICT/basic skills)	43%	
Information exchange with local groups	41%	
Local Studies events	37%	(38%)
Events for older people	35%	(33%)
Arts / literature workshops	33%	(42%)
Multicultural events	27%	(32%)
Events for parents	26%	(31%)
Events for women	14%	(17%)

Figure 5: PLA approaches to working in communities

However, although this activity suggests that a variant of "community" librarianship is still widely practised at an operational level, there are question marks about its focus on social exclusion and its resource base. Only 29% of authorities told us that they participate in local community development or regeneration strategies and Figure 6 shows generally low levels of support for libraries or information services run by local groups or voluntary agencies. 48% of PLAs offer no support of any kind to such organisations.
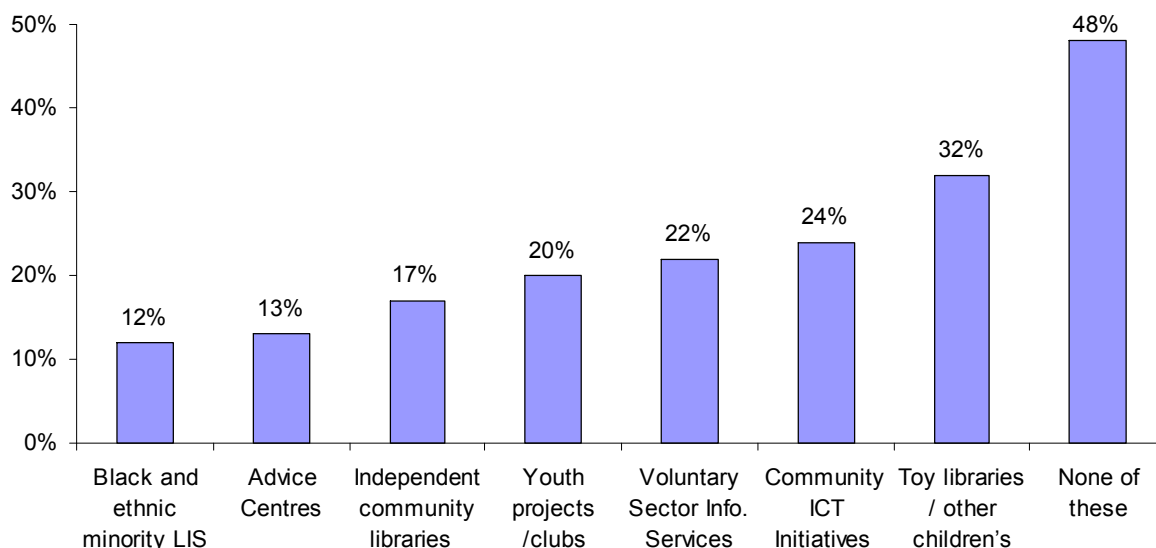
Figure 6: % of PLAs supporting independent / community projects and initiatives

In addition, although a majority of PLAs are engaged in relatively high levels of community activity, only in around one-third had this been transformed into more formal mechanisms of consultation. Examples include involvement in neighbourhood and community groups, library support groups; and community planning exercises and other initiatives linked to Best Value. A small number of PLAs (10% of our respondents) also said they regularly consulted disadvantaged and excluded social groups through local authority, voluntary sector and special PLA established panels and fora. A similar number have also developed opportunities for staff from excluded minorities (for example Black, LGBT and disabled staff) to plan or influence service development for these groups.

4.2.9   Partnership is promoted heavily by the government as a preferred way of working to tackle social exclusion. Some PLAs are clearly very active in partnership working at local level, reporting large numbers of joint initiatives with other local authority departments and the local not-for-profit sector. However, the extent to which this has been developed into projects which provide additional funding for services directed at excluded neighbourhoods or social groups is more limited. 33% of PLAs report no partnership bidding activity at all, and only in a small minority of cases (9%) have PLAs been involved in more than three successful partnership bids over the last three years. The majority of successful bids have been linked to SRB; Lottery or other national sources of funding. Overall, it thus does not seem that externally funded partnership projects have been a dominant factor in the attempts of most PLAs to tackle social exclusion since 1997.

4.2.10 The survey also provides evidence that many of the UK's most marginal / excluded people are not widely considered in library strategy, service delivery or staffing. Figure 7 suggests that a majority of PLAs have developed some level of prioritisation of children and young people, the elderly and housebound, and people with disabilities. However, the same cannot be said of marginal groups such as travellers, refugees, and homeless people who have been considered by under 20% of PLAs. Less

than 20% have also developed initiatives for other social groups facing discrimination, such as women and LGBTs. Despite many years of service development services targeted at racial and ethnic minorities are still only provided by 49% of PLAs. In the field of economic exclusion, initiatives addressing unemployment exist in 30% of authorities, but only 9 PLAs even recognise the wider concept of the "working class" in service planning, despite its long pedigree in library history. There is thus evidence in the survey that many PLAs tend to exclude some of the most excluded groups and sectors of British society from their active service planning and delivery.

Excluded Social Group	% of authorities identified as service priority	% of authorities with permanent services	% of authorities with staff specifically responsible	% of authorities with time limited projects	% with materials selection guidelines
Housebound people	82%	93%	81%	7%	33%
Children and Young people	82%	79%	78%	25%	57%
Disabled people	78%	72%	52%	11%	26%
Elderly people	61%	59%	47%	14%	20%
Racial and ethnic minorities	54%	49%	45%	12%	36%
Unemployed people	30%	23%	12%	11%	5%
Prisoners and families	29%	30%	33%	5%	16%
Lesbians, Gay Men and Bisexuals	19%	13%	12%	10%	9%
Women	17%	13%	8%	8%	3%
Refugees	16%	8%	9%	9%	2%
Travellers	12%	5%	6%	6%	2%
Working class people	6%	7%	10%	5%	1%
Homeless people	5%	4%	6%	5%	1%

Figure 7: Service development and excluded social groups

4.2.11 Of course, this is not true of all librarians or all public library services, because the survey results do provide evidence in some PLAs of pioneering and consistent practice. Figure 8 presents the scores achieved by PLAs as part of an indexing exercise [2] which attempted to estimate the totality of social inclusion activity in each PLA in the data set. Scores of 0, 1 or 2 were allocated to each PLA on a range of 12 indicators from the survey, giving a possible maximum score of 24.
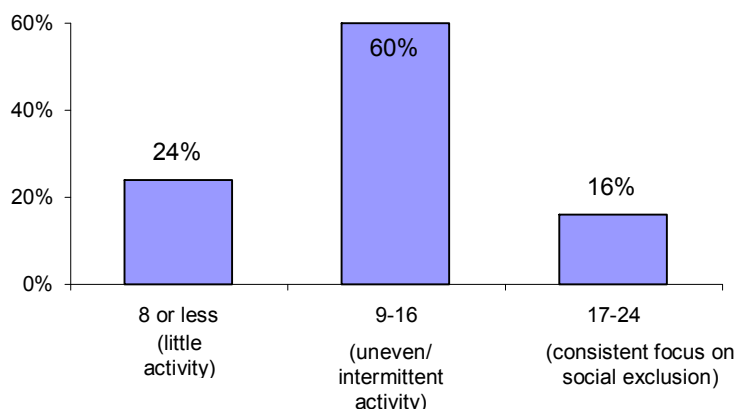
Figure 8 : PLA levels of activity relating to social exclusion: PLAs categorised into three groups according to scores out of 24 (2)

Results were as follows:

- 31 PLAs (24%) registered low scores of 8 or less: these PLAs are those, according to our scoring criteria, with little apparent social inclusion strategy and service developments which are rare or opportunistic;

- 78 (60%) registered middling scores of between 9 and 16: this much larger group, we estimate, have developed a concern with inclusion but have less than comprehensive strategies and uneven / intermittent activity;

- 20 (16%) registered high scores of between 17 and 24: these PLAs, on the basis of the information they provided in the survey, are characterised by developed policy, "best practice" and service wide operational initiatives.

4.2.12 It is interesting to compare these figures with the results of the DCMS *Appraisal of Annual Library Plans 1999* (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2000a, p.19), although this applied only to *plans* and to all 149 English authorities. DCMS rated 54 (36%) of English authorities "good" on social inclusion; 73 (49%) "satisfactory"; 19 (13%) "poor" and 3 (2%) "inadequate". These figures are obviously more optimistic than ours, a fact that is possibly explained by DCMS focus on policy only. In contrast, our analysis points to a much smaller group of authorities where exclusion is a whole service priority. Conversely, we suggest as many as 24% of UK PLAs do not really seem to be seriously attempting to grapple with inclusion issues at all.

4.2.13 As one would expect, there are regional and local authority type variations to these groupings of PLAs and Volume II, Chapter 2 provides a detailed breakdown of these. English Metropolitan Districts (26%) and London Boroughs (21%) have the highest percentages of high scoring authorities, whereas Wales and Northern Ireland have no authorities in this group. English Counties predominantly fall into the middle grouping (81%), reflecting perhaps now longstanding patterns of service provision and development in these areas. Scotland (44%), Wales (42%), and the new English Unitary

authorities (32%) have larger than average numbers of PLAs with low index scores, indicating perhaps the continuance of traditional modes of service in some of these areas, or perhaps the problems encountered by smaller and newly created library services in developing policy and strategy.

Other factors linked to levels of social inclusion activity included measured levels of deprivation (with PLAs with high levels of deprivation more likely to be active) and size of PLA as measured in staff numbers (with large PLAs less likely to be inactive in the inclusion sphere). Volume II, Chapter 2 gives a more detailed breakdown of these analyses.

4.2.14 In summary, the *Public Library Policy and Social Exclusion* survey suggests that there are wide differentials in levels of activity which address social exclusion in UK public library authorities. We estimate that only one-sixth of PLAs approximate to a comprehensive model of good practice in the field, whereas most PLAs (60%), although having developed some concern with inclusion, have less than comprehensive strategies and uneven and intermittent activity. A final group of one-quarter of PLAs are those with little apparent strategy and service development. Overall:

- there is evidence of some new policy and strategic activity in the social inclusion field in a majority of PLAs;
- however, this is often not reflected in a resource focus on exclusion, which is commonly patchy and sometimes very marginal indeed;
- targeting of disadvantaged neighbourhoods and social groups is used comprehensively by only approximately one-third of PLAs;
- between 30% and 40% of authorities consider social exclusion issues in staff recruitment and training, but, at the other extreme, one third of authorities do not actively utilise equal opportunities policies in staffing;
- recent service developments in libraries, such as the development of ICT networks and literacy initiatives, tend to be targeted at socially excluded communities and groups in only a small minority of cases;
- only a minority of PLAs have developed materials selection policies which focus on excluded groups and communities;
- most PLAs report fairly high levels of community involvement by their staff but this tends to be at a general level, rather than focused on disadvantage or exclusion. In approximately only one third of PLAs is this activity reflected in formal mechanisms of consultation with excluded communities and groups;
- some PLAs are very active in developing partnership projects which address social exclusion, but this is not a dominant factor in most PLA social exclusion strategies;
- many of the UK's most marginal and excluded people are not considered to be a priority in PLA strategy, service delivery and staffing. This applies especially to a number of social groups who commonly face stigma and discrimination.

4.3 Strengths and Weaknesses of Public Library Approaches to Social Exclusion: Project Case Studies

4.3.1 In order to illuminate the data in the project survey, detailed case studies of eight UK public library authorities were undertaken during the period July to December 1999. The case studies aimed both to highlight good practice and identify key problems in policy development, service provision, community involvement and the assessment of needs. Although not selected to be "representative" of UK PLAs, the case study authorities chosen did reflect a range of factors including country/region of the UK, size, and authority type. The following sections, which summarise the findings of each case study, set out the particular focus of each. These summaries are followed by a general discussion of some of the key themes emerging in the case studies [3].

Case Studies in Outline

4.3.2 The study in *Southshire* focused on a large county in Southern England with a mixed urban / rural population. The library service illustrated this county's longstanding commitment to equal access. Reflecting this, part of the case study examined the development of a library service for visually impaired people. The other strands of the case study considered the development of a community based ICT initiative and general equal opportunities policy and practice.

Southshire, we concluded, was an example of a library authority trying to address exclusion seriously, but without envisaging a radical restructuring of the library service. Its commitment to equal access and equal opportunity has resulted in the development and mainstreaming of innovative services to disadvantaged groups, some of which are based on successful national and local partnerships. Both the initiatives covered in the case study are examples of such achievements. However, this library service has continued to prioritise resourcing a relatively uniform and institutionalised service and this has limited its capacity to focus on exclusion at local level (see Volume II, Ch.3, Sections 3.5 and 3.6).

4.3.3 *Innerborough* is an inner London authority, with a culturally diverse population and significant levels of deprivation. The library service has developed a number of innovative services and the case study examined the Services to Racial Groups (SRG) Section, which has dedicated staffing and resources to meet the needs of Black communities. The case study focused on the needs of refugee communities.

The SRG was found to be a valued service that appeared to have a significant impact on social exclusion. Part of the reason for this was that it was well-resourced. However, the case study also identified concerns that other service priorities were not receiving a comparable level of support, and, also, that front-line staff were not always taking on serving Black and ethnic minority users because the SRG was seen as "their" service (Volume II, Ch.4, Section 4.8).

4.3.4 *Outerborough* is another significantly deprived London authority with Black

people comprising over 40% of the borough's population. The library service compares poorly with other London authorities on a number of conventional performance indicators. The case study focused on the social impact of a library with a majority of Black users. Here, it considered relationships between the library, Council and local community, including a discussion of the role of the library's Friends Group.

In general, Outerborough library service was found to be "locked up", that is, in a situation where possible developments and improvements were stalled. This was a result of a number of factors, most particularly related to budget restrictions and the consequent demoralisation of staff. The study also found that the Friends Group had a negative effect, seeing itself as a single issue body and making little attempt to embrace other sections of the local community (Volume II, Ch.5, Section 5.7).

4.3.5   *Welshborough* is a predominantly working class borough in South Wales heavily affected in the 1980s and 90s by deindustrialisation and unemployment. In response the Council has developed major economic and community development projects. Its library service has modernised in recent years, adopting some of the principles of community librarianship. The case study focused on the library service's role within the authority's wider neighbourhood and literacy strategies, at both policy and local levels, and on children's services and ICT development.

Welshborough library service had mainstreamed the principles of community librarianship and was providing services that were, at a basic level, responsive to deprived communities. It also supported authority-wide initiatives in community development and literacy work. However, as in Southshire, the basic structures of the library service were traditional, with an emphasis on high levels of bookfund. This had led to inflexibility in the development of specialised services (most especially services to ethnic minority communities), targeting of resources and in low levels of front-line staffing, which had implications for the support which could be given to excluded users, for example in taking up ICT provision (Volume II, Ch.6, Sections 6.8 and 6.9).

4.3.6   The English metropolitan district of *City* includes some of the most "excluded" localities in the UK and is undergoing major urban regeneration activity. The library service has a long history of developing community librarianship, although the focus of this has become dissipated. The case study focused on declining library use in a deprived area; the impact of a recently opened study support centre in the same library; and staff perspectives on the changing nature of community librarianship.

This case study identified a recognition that partnerships are needed to tackle social exclusion on the scale faced by most areas of City. The most important partnerships were linked to education, partly driven by the availability of funding such as SRB, with the study support centre being an example of this. It was concluded that current strategy and initiatives were driving City towards a growing emphasis on educational purpose. Here, the study support centre appeared to have a positive impact, with a proactive approach in addressing some of the most deep-seated problems of the locality, most obviously in the area of skills/educational attainment (Volume II, Ch 7, Section 7.6).

4.3.7 *Millborough* is a small English metropolitan district, which is "average" on many socio-economic indicators. The authority has had long periods with no overall political control, affecting the authority's policy environment. The library service is traditional in its organisation and provision of services, but has recently embarked on a programme of improved ICT provision. The case study had two main themes: overall policy, specifically focusing on the impact of Best Value in relation to social exclusion; and an area based study of impact of the library service in a deprived neighbourhood.

Millborough was found to be an example of a library service which performs well on demand-led indicators, but which has also seen reductions in localities that perform least well on these criteria, as seen with the library in the area study. With the exception of ICT provision, there was an overall lack of strategic direction, something which was linked to the political vacuum existing for much of the authority's history. Partnership working was piecemeal and, at a local level, the effect of this was seen in a lack of clarity about the potential for the library to contribute to area regeneration. Best Value had perversely resulted in recommended cuts in some of the authority's most excluded localities, although these decisions were subsequently overturned (Volume II, Ch. 8, Sections 8.5 and 8.6).

4.3.8 *Caledonia* is a large, mainly rural, local authority in Scotland which experiences major problems of extreme rural isolation coupled in some cases with severe economic exclusion. The Council was the lead partner in a major Scottish Office social inclusion project focusing on exclusion and young people. The library service was in a period of flux, moving from a very centralised to a decentralised service, and the case study focused on the impact of these changes; ICT policy and the development of one stop shop provision; library services to isolated communities; and community consultation.

Caledonia's Library Service was found to have a traditional approach to social inclusion, based on the provision of a high standard of basic lending services and eliminating inequalities of access, especially geographical ones. It had been successful within these terms, but this approach has led to a relatively inflexible and uniform service and, at local level, a failure to recognise the needs of disadvantaged social groups and lack of involvement in the Council's more targeted approach to exclusion. However, there were some signs in Caledonia of a more flexible approach, especially resulting from innovative approaches to community consultation and the development of flexible, joint use approaches to Council buildings (Volume II, Ch 9, Sections 9.7, 9.8).

4.3.9 *The Central Education and Library Board (CELB)* covers a predominantly rural area in Northern Ireland, with a mainly Protestant / loyalist population. The modernisation of the service found in Welshborough was also seen here. The case study focused on two open and distance learning initiatives; conventional library use on a deprived estate; and pilot Internet access. There was a wider policy level to the study, reflecting Northern Ireland Office social exclusion policy.

The library service's main focus, in terms of exclusion, had been on the provision of open and distance learning facilities. One project was especially relevant to addressing exclusion, through its provision of a supportive learning environment. There was little

other targeting of services. Consistent with other case studies (e.g. Caledonia), services remained largely uniform, with limited scope for staff to be responsive to local need. In terms of the religious dimension, the case study found general agreement that libraries were "neutral" places. However, it also raised issues about the different dynamics of the two main religious communities, and whether this meant that libraries should adjust their approaches to reflect these differences (Volume II, Ch 10, Sections 10.7 and 10.8).

Case Studies: Themes and Issues

4.3.10   Comparative analysis of these case studies revealed a number of common themes. There were, as would be expected, differing *conceptions of exclusion* operating in each PLA. However, most commonly, addressing inequalities of access and promoting equal opportunity were to the fore. This was illustrated by the emphasis on geographical access in Caledonia, and, to an extent, the other more rural authorities, Southshire and CELB (where there was an emphasis on equal access irrespective of religion). Similarly, physical access for disabled people emerged strongly in Southshire, where there was also a wider equalities culture relating to a number of social groups. This focus on providing services to specific groups was also strongly evident in Innerborough, for example in relation to ethnic minorities, disabled people and LGBTs. In contrast, a focus on excluded neighbourhoods was most evident in the urban authorities of Welshborough and City. Conceptions of social exclusion appeared less developed in Millborough, reflecting the policy vacuum found in the authority, and Outerborough.

4.3.11 In general, we found an absence of "whole authority" strategies and approaches to tackling social exclusion among the case study PLAs. Overall, it is possible to discern a typology of library service orientation towards social exclusion, as follows:-
- authorities who are pragmatists, with initiatives, but with little policy and strategy;
- authorities with policy and strategy, but where the reality does not reflect them;
- authorities with a clear strategy that is reflected across the organisation.

It would be difficult to allocate each case study authority definitively to these categories as, in reality, many were in transition between the different "types". More integrated approaches were, however, most discernible in City and Welshborough (as seen in interviews with frontline staff in both authorities) and Innerborough, where it was made clear that, despite the existence of the Services to Racial Groups Section, all staff remained responsible for serving these groups. However, with the possible exception of the direction taken by City (see 4.3.6 above), no service we studied was underpinned by a policy including poverty and exclusion as a cross-cutting or prime factor, although most had undertaken, or were undertaking, some policy and strategy development.

Finally, the policy climate interconnected with questions of *resourcing*, and specifically cuts in or restrictions on budgets. The effects of this were probably most extreme in Outerborough, but were present, to a greater or lesser extent, in all authorities (e.g. in

the decline of outreach in City; the debates about the future of specialist services in Innerborough). Positively, most authorities did not charge for ICT access (see 4.3.15 below) and other cost "barriers" did not emerge strongly.

4.3.12 *Innovation in service provision* was not widespread, but all authorities exhibited examples of good practice. These included: the Study Support Centre in City; the Service to Racial Groups in Innerborough; CELB's Townside Open Learning Centre; the Visually Impaired People's Service in Southshire; and community consultation in Caledonia. Good practice tended to be piecemeal, isolated and, in some cases, the result of interested staff or people with particular priorities (e.g. Millborough's website; Moorside Library in Caledonia). This suggests that the "baseline" of existing activity is not as high as is often assumed (a conclusion supported by the project survey).

4.3.13 Much of this good practice was linked to successful *partnerships*, for example with the local and national non-statutory sector in Southshire and education and community groups in CELB. In Welshborough, the library service played an important supporting role in neighbourhood and literacy partnerships led by the local authority. A successful contribution to neighbourhood regeneration was also found with the SRB-funded study support centre in City, but the library service was marginal to SRB activity in Innerborough and Millborough.

4.3.14 These partnerships often raised questions of *mainstreaming and sustainability*. Many of the projects and services considered were subject to short-term funding (e.g. the study support provision in City and CELB). Other services had been mainstreamed (e.g. the services for racial groups in Innerborough and visually impaired people in Southshire). More generally, there was little evidence of *redistribution of resources* in favour of excluded groups and communities, something which was confirmed by the survey findings. There was a general absence of *consistent* (as opposed to ad hoc) targeting of socially excluded people and library service universalism contrasted notably with targeted approaches by other parts of the local authority in Welshborough and Caledonia. This universalism was also inherent in the view that if good services were available to everyone, then they would "trickle down" to excluded people. This view is expressed by senior managers in at least three authorities (explicitly in the CELB case study, at 10.7.1, but implicitly also in Welshborough and Caledonia, where the emphasis was also very much on good services for all).

4.3.15 All of the authorities were, to a varying extent, developing a programme of *modernisation through ICT*. Some had received financial support from DCMS-Wolfson or grants such as SRB (e.g. City). Others were introducing ICT provision on the back of circulation system modernisation (Millborough). There was free access to ICT in several areas (e.g. Welshborough; Southshire; Millborough). Most authorities had taken on the concept that ICT would widen use and provide a service to excluded individuals. However, few had a strategy to ensure that provision was used by the socially excluded, rather than extending a new service to existing users. Exceptions here might include provision that specifically addressed questions of skills and confidence and were directed towards excluded groups (e.g. the Townside Centre in CELB; the Study Support Centre in City).

4.3.16 *Staffing*, and especially the limitations of it, emerged as a major theme in the case studies. Within this, there was a debate about the relative importance of staff numbers and the focus of staff activity. Staff numbers were an important issue almost everywhere, being particularly mentioned in Welshborough and Outerborough. Single staffing was a particular negative factor, affecting the scope for outreach and the amount of support given to users, in Caledonia, Southshire and Welshborough. Staff numbers were also an important issue in Innerborough, where cuts to the Services to Racial Groups Section were under discussion. At the same time, there was a question about how staffing resources were used. In Outerborough, an absence of targeting meant that staff were stretched and dissipated across a poor range of services.

A related issue concerned the empowerment of staff and decisions being taken at the appropriate level. In CELB, in particular, centralised services have persisted, affecting local staff's ability to be responsive to community needs.

A key theme emerging was that of *staff attitudes* to different kinds of socially excluded people. These were, in many authorities, seen both negatively and positively (e.g. at different libraries in Outerborough, Volume II, Ch 5., 5.7.7). In many cases it was suggested that some staff are more comfortable with groups who they are familiar with (see for example, Volume II, Ch.10, 10.2.2). Training, recruitment and selection strategies were all highlighted here.

4.3.17 Linked to the general theme of the skills and competence needed by library staff, *specialism* was an especially important issue in the Innerborough case study. This case study raised the question of whether a specialist service creates "ghettos and dead-ends" for staff. However, some skills essential for addressing social exclusion clearly will require staff "specialism" e.g. language needs; cultural awareness; advanced ICT knowledge. In Welshborough and Millborough, where there were no specialist staff working with Black communities, there was a clear need for better support to these groups. In most areas, there was a need to provide better support for ICT (something which, of course, had a disproportionate impact on less skilled and confident users) and to deliver outreach.

4.3.18 The concepts of *hierarchy* and *community* also emerged in the case studies. These concepts reflect attitudes to the communities that libraries serve. In case study interviews, library managers and staff commonly responded to questions about social exclusion by discussing community activity instead. All authorities claimed high levels of community activity, in terms of outreach and community use of libraries, but this was not always linked to matters of poverty, discrimination or disadvantage.

Different case study authorities had singled out particular excluded social groups for special attention, usually on the basis of perceived need. However, most had adopted an "ad hoc" approach to such special provision, rather than a systematic consideration and prioritisation of all social groups. The survey highlights how some groups (e.g. homeless people; LGBTs) rarely figure in any prioritisation. The idea of the deserving or undeserving (or legitimately or illegitimately) excluded was confirmed in some of the

case studies. For example a senior librarian in Welshborough commented that "it's easier to get things done in Welshborough if you say old people or children, rather than homeless people, substance abusers, or whatever...".

4.3.19 Finally, the case study PLAs took different approaches to *consultation, needs assessment and performance measurement* as it related to social exclusion. For example, in Caledonia, the Council was using quite sophisticated community consultation techniques which specifically targeted excluded sectors of the community. City's Study Support Centre gave its users a genuine stake in decision-making. These examples can be contrasted with the Best Value process in Millborough and Outerborough, where the various processes did not appear to have been used to address the needs of socially excluded groups or communities. The Friends Group in Outerborough had the unfortunate effect of exacerbating the "social distance", from the library, felt by many excluded groups within the local community.

However, overall in the case studies, services were generally being led by demand, rather than models of social need. Specifically, this resulted in demand-based models of resource allocation forming the basis of financial allocations to libraries, even in areas like City where "exclusion" was very widespread. The pressures of quantitative indicators were seen in most (arguably all) case studies, and were perhaps most striking in Millborough, where Best Value exercises had resulted in the threat of library closure in the one of the most deprived areas of the borough. Such pressures were also evident in Welshborough, CELB and Outerborough.

4.3.20 In summary, the *Public Library Policy and Social Exclusion* case studies confirm the findings of the survey that there are wide variations in types and levels of activity addressing social exclusion among UK PLAs. Whilst they illustrate some imaginative and innovative initiatives and service developments, overall they suggest that activity is patchy and uneven *within PLAs* themselves, not only between them as the survey suggests. Moreover, the case studies also point to significant barriers and problems which hinder PLA attempts to tackle exclusion. Some of these are a result of external factors, like lack of money and equipment, but many more, we suggest, are linked to the internal procedures, cultures and traditions of library services themselves. We return to this issue in Section 4.4.

Overall, we conclude that the case studies point to:

- some innovation and real successes in addressing social exclusion, most frequently linked to targeted initiatives employing community development and other proactive ways of working;
- some successes in working in partnership with other local authority departments and the local not-for-profit sector in developing "joined up" approaches to exclusion;
- problems in developing an overall, PLA wide, policy framework and strategy to tackle exclusion with exclusion issues "mainstreamed" only exceptionally;
- a reluctance to adopt resourcing models that consistently prioritise excluded communities or social groups;
- limits on the ability of library managers and staff to work with excluded people

because of lack of skills and training and sometimes negative attitudes;

- a tendency to consult with communities and excluded groups only sporadically, and a tendency to suggest that any "community" activity automatically addresses exclusion;
- a ongoing concern with the "modernisation" of the library service which is only exceptionally linked to exclusion issues;
- an overall concern with the continuation of a "passive" service which prioritises "access" rather than with proactive and interventionist ways of working.

4.4   The Public Library Policy Debate

4.4.1   As we have seen, both the survey and the case study findings of the *Public Library Policy and Social Exclusion* project have identified not only uneven practice, but also a degree of uncertainty about social inclusion policy and strategy in the contemporary public library. Our case study authorities were above all *uncertain* about the kind of measures they should adopt, and because of this they fell back on traditional ways of working. This leads into the question about what kind of policy guidance PLAs need and what currently is offered them. The concluding part of this chapter thus reviews current public library policy initiatives since 1997, and assesses the extent to which they offer an adequate framework for PLAs to progress.

4.4.2   Unlike in the 1980s, where initiatives linked to disadvantage and community librarianship were predominantly determined at local level, the social exclusion policy agenda under New Labour has more obviously been driven by activity at the centre. Most obviously, as Section 2.4 has noted, this activity has been framed by a raft of policy initiatives from Ministries such as the DETR, DCMS, the DfEE and the Cabinet Office Social Exclusion Unit, and Scotland and Northern Ireland have developed parallel policies. Most recently the Social Exclusion Unit's *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal* has synthesised these initiatives and aims to "arrest the wholesale decline of deprived neighbourhoods, to reverse it, and to prevent it from recurring" (Social Exclusion Unit, 2000b, p.9). Its proposals affect libraries in a number of ways: it calls for an improvement in the quality of local public services as they affect socially excluded neighbourhoods remarking that "core public services are often poorest in poorest communities, but they need to be as good there as anywhere else" (Social Exclusion Unit, 2000b, p.11). It calls for targets for core public services in deprived neighbourhoods, and highlights other matters such as the building of community capacity and "making adult skills a priority in deprived neighbourhoods". All of these recommendations, potentially, suggest an investment in library services for the socially excluded.

4.4.3   Other central government policy initiatives that have particularly impinged on libraries include those directed at lifelong learning and ICT. The Social Exclusion Unit's Policy Action Team 15 now recommends that, by April 2002, deprived neighbourhoods should have "at least one accessible community based ICT facility" and include libraries in a range of possible locations / providers (Policy Action Team 15, 2000). The New Opportunities Fund proposals for community access to lifelong learning similarly identify

public libraries as a delivery mechanism for learning projects focused on the socially excluded, although they hesitate to designate libraries as a prime provider, stressing the partnership route (New Opportunities Fund, 1999).

In general, the response of the public library community to these policy developments has been to argue that the *modernisation* of the public library service, and in particular the creation of an electronic "people's network", represents the best, and most cost effective way of developing a socially inclusive information society. *New Library, the People's Network* (Library and Information Commission, 1997) originally advanced such a view shortly after the election of New Labour, and since that time numerous other professional reports and lobbying documents have argued in similar vein. Most recently, a report drawn up by Library and Information Commissioners - *Libraries, the Essence of Inclusion* - identified as its key message a challenge to government to "stop investing in new institutions to do what libraries already can do - focus your investment" (Library and Information Commission, 2000).

4.4.4   By and large, however, government has been cautious in accepting this advice, preferring not to put all its eggs in the public library basket. In part, this caution is clearly related to an uncertainty about the public library's capacity to deliver on social inclusion. Such uncertainties are supported by successive DCMS appraisals of English public library authority *Annual Library Plans,* which reveal lack of strategic planning and uneven and patchy activity. The 1998 appraisal concluded that "social inclusion was scored poorly … we have found many individual initiatives that are clearly directed at one or more minority groups, but what seems to be lacking is a comprehensive review of social inclusion, from a library service standpoint, and a co-ordinated response" (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 1999b, p.7). In 1999, things were a little improved: DCMS assessors this time rated the majority of English authorities "good" or "adequate" on social inclusion policy (see the figures detailed in Section 4.1.12). However, DCMS assessors commented that "once again, it is surprising that so few authorities were assessed as good in view of the request from DCMS to show how these policies were being taken into account in library planning" (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2000a, p.20).

4.4.5   Central Government policy is thus now clearly directed at steering public library authorities towards a more comprehensive and focused approach to social inclusion. In terms of policy guidance, the DCMS overview document *Libraries for All: Social Inclusion in Public Libraries* (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 1999a) marks a clear attempt by central government to persuade library authorities to *mainstream* social exclusion issues; moreover, it clearly recognises some of the shortcomings we have identified in Section 3 of this study, and identifies how libraries will need to change. All in all, it advocates some relatively major changes for the public library service, including

- the development of tailored services for minority groups and communities
- the consultation of socially excluded groups and communities in order to ascertain needs
- the development of a community resource centre role for libraries

- the development of the library as a local learning centre
- development of partnerships with other local providers and the development of more joint provision (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 1999a, pp.14-18).

4.4.6   However, *Libraries for All* stops short of recommending that specific social inclusion standards should be developed for public libraries, an omission that is reflected in the recently published *National Standards for Library Services* (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2000b). Other important bodies, though, have started to press for a more thorough regulatory regime: the House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee, in its recent report, welcomes a public library emphasis on social exclusion issues and calls for "continued improvements in this aspect of library provision" (House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee, 2000 p.xvi). It recommends that "the implemented national library standards provide more specific guidance on the promotion of social inclusion" and it asks for the "collection and publication of comprehensive statistics on library use by all socially excluded groups" (House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee, 2000). All of these recommendations, our evidence suggests, are important and should be a priority for policy implementation.

4.5   Conclusion

4.5.1   Current policy debates about the public library and social exclusion thus revolve around a number of key questions and concerns. Such questions include the following:
- Can public library services actually offer relevant and quality services to deprived communities and social groups? How, and in what ways, do they need to change?
- Will the modernisation of the public library, and specifically the development of the *people's network*, deliver social inclusion?
- Can public libraries effectively work with other service providers to address social exclusion?
- To what extent do public libraries need guidance and regulation in order to ensure that they address social exclusion? What kinds of policy framework will work?

4.5.2   The findings of the *Public Library Policy and Social Exclusion* survey and case study research, summarised in Sections 4.2.14 and 4.3.20, suggest that a response to the first three of these questions would have to be an extremely hesitant one. By and large, public libraries are revealed as extremely uncertain about social exclusion policy and strategy, and that good practice and initiatives, whilst existing, are sporadic and uneven. Case studies reveal that public library authorities experience numerous problems in addressing social exclusion, ranging from the lack of coherent policy and strategy, through the limited abilities, attitudes and skills of their staff, to difficulties in both accessing and targeting sufficient materials and resources. The survey suggests that there are some exceptions to this pattern: a minority of PLAs clearly are prioritising and mainstreaming librarianship for social inclusion. However, at the other extreme, the survey also suggests that there are perhaps a quarter of UK PLAs who have little interest in or service development in the inclusion sphere at all.

Overall, this evidence suggests that many services are currently undergoing what we describe as a "neutral" modernisation rather than a refocusing of library purpose on inclusion. A universalist model of service, with limited targeting, continues to predominate. This model is broadly based on concepts of equality of opportunity and access, as opposed to redistribution of resources, targeting and equalities of outcome (for example, in the case of ICT, access may be free, but without appropriate support, it often remains difficult for less confident users to utilise technology fully). More generally, in the summaries of individual case studies, a clear theme dominates: that many services are not proactive, and that that this inflexibility makes it difficult to respond to local need. Thus traditional and reactive models predominate. This supports the argument of *Libraries for All* that libraries need to undergo a cultural change from a "'shop front' model of provision, in which people use services for self-defined purposes" to "community oriented provision … to address all aspects of social exclusion" (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 1999a, p. 23).

Fundamentally, it is perhaps important to stress that many of these limitations seem to lie in the history and traditions of the public library, as we have presented them in Chapter 3. The principles of " access", individualism, equal opportunity, voluntarism and a passive approach to library service still dominate the discourse of most public librarians. Many PLAs seemed to us to be attempting to *modernise* their services, especially through the assimilation of ICT, on the basis of such principles, and argue that as a result they would bring about social inclusion in an "information" society. Our findings suggest, on the contrary, that this predominantly passive strategy is likely to have only a limited impact on excluded social groups and communities and that, in order to more fully address the needs of excluded people, a much more radical transformation is needed. In Chapter 5, we sketch out some of the elements of such a transformed, or "inclusive", public library service.

Notes

1. The size of our full sample is 129. Subsequent tables refer to sample size only where this differs from the full figure.

2. Full details of the indexing exercise are given in Volume II, Chapter 2.

3. For those who would like to read full reports from each case study, these are gathered in Volume II of *Open to All?* As well as reporting the full case study findings, this also discusses the various research methods used. All references in Section 4.3, unless otherwise stated, are to Volume II.

5.   Transforming Libraries for Social Inclusion

5.1   Introduction

5.1.1   In this section of *Open to All?* we set out a blueprint for what we believe would be a more socially inclusive public library service. As has been suggested already, we are convinced that many elements of the public library tradition need to be challenged if a truly inclusive service is to evolve, and if a focus on the excluded is to become more than a concern on the margins of public library service. It overall terms, we argue on the basis of the findings of Section 4 that:

- the focus on *passive* provision of books and materials needs to be replaced by a much more *active* and *educative* role for library staff;
- the emphasis of the library on individual service, inevitable to some degree, needs to be supplemented by a *community development* and *community education* role;
- the universalist idea of *access for all* needs to be given real meaning for excluded people through the development of targeting, priority resourcing and positive action programmes;
- the concept of the library needs to be broad and all embracing and not focused simply on buildings, institutions and the barriers they erect. Outreach, partnerships and joint provision all have a place in creating a new, more accessible "library" for the twenty first century.

5.1.2   In subsequent sections, we set out the components of a transformed public library service in more detail. The sources of our ideas are numerous and include a wide range of writing and comment beyond the empirical scope of the project. However, most of our ideas are not, we should stress, utopian or fanciful. Some of them derive from examples of public library services and initiatives that we have observed in the case studies and elsewhere which *have* had a significant positive impact on social inclusion and serve as examples of what can, with will and resources, be done. Others derive from the large body of literature in the library field and elsewhere that has grappled with the problems of exclusion and how to address them - many of these are highlighted in the project working papers. Some of the sections, in addition, contain discussions of the problems of transforming public libraries in these directions. Others offer specific suggestions about the mechanisms we might use to move towards this "inclusive" service: suggestions which are ultimately reflected in the project recommendations in Section 6. We begin with a discussion of the community role of the public library and move, as the chapter progresses, to issues of service development, staffing, resourcing

and standards.

5.2 The "community" role of the public library and its relevance to social exclusion

5.2.1 A large body of recent research, including that summarised by Matarasso (1998a), has contended that the capacity of the public library to address social exclusion depends on its adoption of a community development role. The DCMS report *Libraries for All*, concurs with this view, arguing that disadvantaged communities face formidable barriers to the flow of information and that libraries can play a vital part in sustaining both local information flows and access to the wider world of knowledge. Librarians, it goes on to argue, need to build relationships with community organisations and groups, act as "gatekeepers" who analyse and satisfy local needs and work to facilitate the development of local skills and literacy. Library buildings need to become a genuinely shared local space where people can go both individually and collectively to use resources and equipment, access information and receive help and support appropriate to their needs (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 1999a, pp.10-11).

5.2.2 Our research findings support the view that this vision of the public library is an appropriate one for tackling exclusion, indeed further sections of this chapter elaborate more specific ways in which it might be achieved. In particular, some of our case study findings have highlighted the effectiveness of these approaches: Dock Library (Welshborough) and at Moorside Library (Caledonia) provided typical examples of where librarians working on these principles had made a significant impact on suburban working class and marginalised inner city communities (Volume II Ch.6, Section 6.2; Ch.9 Sections 9.3). Conversely, in excluded communities where such ways of working had not evolved, or had been abandoned, library services were experiencing real problems with the usage and sustainability of library services. This was undoubtedly the case at Lochside, Caledonia and Green Hill, Millborough (Volume II, Ch.8, Section 8.3).

It is also clear from our findings that community development approaches work more effectively when they are planned in partnership with other agencies and on a "whole authority" rather than an isolated basis. In Welshborough, our case study authority that came nearest to this model, great efforts had been made to overcome the perceived departmentalism of the council and develop links and strategies in tandem with the education service, local voluntary groups and the Council's own community development project. Community development targets were also incorporated in annual service plans and operational norms of branch libraries. As a result, the library service was highly regarded among local community workers. One told us that "library staff are incredibly responsive, very proactive … they have a view of libraries as being not about lending books but about a whole role of providing a social function, a regeneration function".

5.2.3   However, there is also clear evidence that community development approaches do not provide the only mechanism through which libraries can address social exclusion. All "communities" by their nature exclude as well as include, and many of the most marginal groups in British society, such as travellers, refugees and homeless people are habitually excluded from local life. Moreover, in many excluded "communities", as David Byrne emphasises, community life has by and large collapsed, and there are few, if any local networks to tap into (Byrne, 1999, p.123). Such a situation proved largely to be the case in the inner city community in our City case study, and in our Innerborough case study in relation to a large refugee community. In such cases library services are faced with developing alternative social inclusion strategies: in City this has involved, with some success, the transformation of some libraries into learning centres focusing on skills and literacy and in Innerborough the establishment of a specialist services targeting this particular social group. The issues involved in such service developments are discussed in subsequent sections of this chapter.

5.3   Active / proactive / community librarianship and the importance of new ways of working

5.3.1   This research has highlighted the failures of both the traditional methods of working and also of the original attempts in the 1970s and early 1980s to introduce "community librarianship". Nevertheless, case studies have also demonstrated the importance of, and need for, public library services being offered outside the walls of the buildings to remove the barriers which these impose.

Of the public libraries examined in the case studies, it was clear that those which are having the greatest impact on tackling social exclusion were working both in and out of the buildings (for example at Welshborough); had developed strong links with particular local communities (e.g. Innerborough); had focused on specific aspects of social exclusion, targeting their services (e.g. Southshire); and / or had built up strong partnerships with other local agencies (e.g. City). It is also clear from the survey that the very few public libraries which have introduced aspects of the community development approach into their work are beginning to see some results from this.

5.3.2   Whether they want to or not, public libraries cannot return to the resource-hungry outreach and "community librarianship" approaches of the past, which bolt on these ways of working to a pre-existing buildings based service. What is needed instead are ways of increasing the involvement of and commitment by the public library to serving the needs of socially excluded people in the local community, and of finding new and different ways of working.

Some of the examples given above may well lead in the right direction: however, at the same time, this should not be used as an argument for saying that public libraries do not need additional resources. What is required is both redirection of resources - staffing as well as money - as well as targeted additional resources which can be focused on

tackling specific social exclusion issues. Without these prerequisites, partnerships - of whatever type - are less likely to be successful: who wants an ailing, resource-starved public library as their partner?

With the developments in the selection and training of library workers (as outlined in Section 5.10 below), and a refocusing on some form of "community development" way of working, then public libraries should be able to put in place a workforce capable of working in new and different ways, and of working successfully with socially excluded groups and individuals.

5.4 Outreach and working with local communities and interest groups [1]

5.4.1   Outreach is an essential tool to reach out to those excluded from the current library and information services. An outreach-orientated service is best understood in contrast to a static service. The difference between the two is not merely that the latter is a building-based service. The difference is also a matter of the philosophy that guides the library service. Merely having a mobile service, or a number of traditional "outreach activities" such as open days, deposit collections, in themselves do not mean that the service is an "outreach service". As Black (2000, p.10) observes, community librarianship, with its emphasis on outreach, became "de-radicalised from mid-1980s onwards, its meaning being devalued into a slogan describing little more than a combination of community information, customer care and traditional outreach and extension services".

5.4.2   A well planned outreach service brings community members into libraries, forges links with them for future activities, and takes all library services to them. A number of criteria need to be met for a service to be considered an "outreach service":

- Outreach should be an *integral* part of the Council and Library Service, not something that can be done only if and when staff and resources allow. It should thus have the active support of Members and senior Council and Library Service officers.
- Outreach should be a *planned, organised* and *resourced* aspect of Library Services. It has to have an *appropriate structure* which organises staffing and other resources.
- Outreach is an aspect of Library Service that should involve *all the staff* in the service, not merely a few enthusiastic individuals who have to work with limited resources and staff. It thus needs an appropriate staffing structure and appropriate staff development policies and practices.
- Perhaps the most important aspect of outreach is that it has to have an appropriate *cultural and professional climate* before it can be established as a legitimate service.
- Outreach work should be conducted in an environment of *partnership* and joined-up working between the PLA, other Council Departments and community organisations. In addition, greater co-operation between practitioners, teaching institutions, research bodies, and community orientated organisations such as the Community Development Foundation would benefit all stakeholders and result in

required outcomes.

- No outreach can succeed if undertaken *in isolation from the people who are being served*. Needs of the communities should be assessed constantly. Structures of contacts with the community have to be established and the service should be provided in consultation with citizens who should be actively involved in deciding the type, level and quality of service provided. They should also monitor that the outcomes of the service reflect community needs.
- Outreach is not aimed only at individual members or users. It is an aspect of service *targeted to groups which have traditionally been excluded and are not currently connected to the traditional library service.*

5.4.3   Few, if any, library authorities meet all the above criteria. Indeed, in City, the case study authority with the longest tradition of outreach activity, the District Library Manager provided a detailed account of how outreach had *declined* over the last 15 years (Volume II, Ch.7, Section 7.2). However, there was evidence that some authorities are now attempting to meet these criteria, for example, Welshborough incorporated outreach targets in the annual plans for all branch libraries. Others meet some of the criteria and need further encouragement and support, especially through the mechanism of Library Standards.

What is lacking in providing a new quality of outreach-based service is new ideas which can explore new ways of service delivery. There is similarly a lack of experimentation and innovation. More conferences, work-place discussions and pooling of successful ideas from information as well as other fields (such as health) can inject new ideas and practices, at the same time creating new optimism to make outreach acceptable as a "mainstream" activity.

5.5   Targeting of excluded communities and social groups

5.5.1   The 1964 Public Libraries Act's emphasis on comprehensive service to all has for long been interpreted by both the profession and the public as meaning the provision of an equal service across the whole of a library authority. Discussions with officers in the case studies and analysis of the data from the survey confirm that support for a universal approach to service provision is strong. Indeed, universalism is seen as a key attribute of the public library profession in a similar way to its highly valued "neutrality". While it is possible to point to client group prioritisation (e.g. children, visually impaired people, the housebound) and periods when some authorities have developed geographically targeted strategies (especially in disadvantaged urban areas in the 1980s) the overwhelming service strategy has been to attempt to offer equal access everywhere. If there has been a prioritising factor within this strategy it has usually been that of providing the highest level of service where there was greatest demand. The outcome of this has been that in many public library authorities those libraries with lowest issues have experienced the most cuts. Not surprisingly these libraries are often those serving socially excluded communities: in one instance, in our Millborough case study, precisely this situation had arisen (Volume II, Ch.8, Section 8.3).

5.5.2   This generalist, but demand led view of the service now creates a dilemma for public library authorities if they are to embrace strategies to tackle social exclusion. Even if resources were less restricted, as they have been in the past, this approach would not necessarily make much impact in reaching people suffering from exclusion. The whole concept of addressing social exclusion, we would argue, requires a needs based service. To reach them we believe that the targeting of resources is essential. This is illustrated by the work in some of the case studies where targeted projects clearly aimed at people in disadvantaged communities, such as study support provision in City and CELB, are having an impact not visible in generalist, "blanket" services elsewhere (see Volume II, Ch.7, Section 7.5; Ch.10, Section 10.5). ICT provision is a pertinent example. Is service provision to be shaped by demand with two PCs in the least busy libraries and eight or ten where demand is likely to be greatest and with the maintenance of current staffing levels? How does such a demand led strategy relate to providing a service that reaches those in greatest need of access to ICT? Would a needs based strategy lead to more PCs in the possibly less well-used places and with extra skilled staff support?

5.5.3   This latter strategy of targeting reflects the approaches being developed by Government in its *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal* (Social Exclusion Unit, 2000b) and in the multitude of funding programmes now being provided. Public Library Authorities will need to consider that the emphasis of the Government's agenda is firmly on equality of outcomes. This will inevitably require unequal inputs with the resource base geared to need and not to demand.

The issue of targeting need rather than following demand is not new. What is new is the support of central government for services to reinvigorate themselves by becoming champions of social inclusion. This is an important point because such strategies are expected of all local authority services and targeting will also require much more openness in working with other partners to access the resources provided by government and will need to link with community development strategies (see above).

5.6   Partnership, joint provision and new ways of working

5.6.1   In discussing the challenges that face libraries in serving excluded people, *Libraries for All* considers community ownership and community partnership. It concludes that "it is vital that individuals and representatives from excluded and community groups are involved in developing, introducing and monitoring the service" (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 1999a, p.23). There is therefore a relationship between community partnership and our earlier discussions of consultation and outreach. It is still perhaps worth adding that our fieldwork found little evidence of partnerships with community groups. The Townside Centre in Northern Ireland was a rare exception, where it was felt that the involvement of the community association had increased the feeling of local "ownership" (see Vol II, Section Ch.10, 10.5). Much of the discussion in this section focuses more broadly on multi-agency partnerships to develop a particular service or initiative. Our survey found that the extent of partnership working in PLAs is limited (see Section 4.2.9). Given this, the following discussion largely draws

on the project case studies.

5.6.2 The Townside Centre was, like a number of other initiatives reported in our case studies, a partnership based around education/skills. Such developments are advocated by DCMS in *Libraries for All*, which encourages libraries to form partnerships with local learning organisations. Moves of this kind do have implications for the image and perception of libraries, in terms of association with formal education. It has already been noted that developments in City were driving the library service towards a growing emphasis on educational purpose. The Southshire case study's discussion of a local ICT partnership also questioned the appropriateness of libraries having a training role (see Volume 2, 3.4.7(ii)).

5.6.3 The establishment of City's study support centres can be seen as opportunistic (that is, prompted by the availability of SRB funding), a charge that can also be applied to many other projects described in the case studies. From the evidence of these projects, this opportunism is most problematic when there is a lack of compatibility of aims between the different partners, which might result in skewing the objectives of the library service. A greater orientation towards education was discernible in City, but this was, generally, something that was felt to be right for the service. On a smaller scale, there were tensions around the ownership of the Northwold ICT project, arising from the different goals, and culture, of the main partners (see Volume II, 3.4.7(iv)). Cultural differences were seen in a more positive light with the Townside Centre (CELB), but, here, there was more commonality of aims and objectives.

5.6.4 Sustainability of successful projects was, as already discussed (see 4.3.14), an important issue, but, against this, many of the most innovative service developments were the result of external funding (see 4.3.12-13). Some specially-funded projects had subsequently been mainstreamed (e.g. in Southshire and Innerborough) and, in other cases, there was support for doing this (e.g. in City). Moreover, the argument, voiced in both City and Innerborough, was that multi-agency partnerships were needed to tackle the levels of exclusion felt in most of their neighbourhoods. This argument would of course equally apply to other authorities with concentrated levels of deprivation. Multi-agency working was seen positively in City, but in Innerborough the library service was described as marginal to most regeneration activity (see section 4.5.5 above).

5.6.5 Just as it is argued that partnerships with community groups can make libraries more inclusive, so *Libraries for All* argues that co-location of services can broaden awareness of what is available. In Outerborough, co-location within a leisure centre was said to have resulted in increased usage, but this case study also identified the need for the library to co-ordinate its ICT provision with that of the local college. The case study concurred with the viewpoint of *Libraries for All*, in stating "[I]t is vital that public libraries seize opportunities to work with all relevant local organisations, and [they] need to become active partners, seeking out such opportunities" (Volume II, 5.7.2).

5.6.7 A more fundamental approach to joint provision was seen in Caledonia, where libraries have begun to develop joint provision with the education service and with the One Stop Shop network of service points, although the extent of this was limited. In the

case study, it was too early to consider the impact of Ford Library's joint library/one stop shop, but it was hoped that joint provision would address the library and informational needs of those who have never used libraries. This particular service point was the result of community consultation, suggesting at least some local support / demand for this kind of provision (Volume II, 9.2.2; 9.3.2).

5.6.8   Overall, project case studies did not show a high level of partnership activity, and there were even fewer examples of joint provision or any other new ways of working (apart from, tenuously, increased provision of "learning centres" and their equivalents). However, the experience of partnerships was broadly positive (although often time-consuming for library staff). The case studies therefore support the conclusion of *Libraries for All* that there is a need to form "new links and partnerships with the community" and challenge "some of the more traditional values and practices of libraries" (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 1999a, p.23).

5.7   New models of provision, and the image and identity of the public library

5.7.1   Traditional library services have often been associated with a municipal, bureaucratic and "academic" image that has resulted in real barriers to use by disadvantaged people (Muddiman, 1999c) and declining levels of use in working class communities. Malcolm Wicks, the Minister for Lifelong Learning has perceptively remarked, for example, that this image of the library effectively excludes, as a starting point, the 20% of the population who have literacy problems (House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee, p.58). In our Caledonia and Millborough case studies, we highlight libraries in deprived areas with low and declining levels of use (Volume II, Ch.8, Ch.9).

As a response to this, a number of public library authorities have developed "rebranding" programmes for their libraries in order to attract non-users deterred by traditional stereotypes. Some of the more imaginative of these exercises have been linked to a reconfiguration of local authority information services and developing joint or partnership provision (see Section 5.6). For example in our City case study, library management were keen to redesignate a number of libraries as Learning Centres where they felt the traditional library function was in decline. In the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, there are plans to develop integrated "idea stores" which incorporate local community information and advice centres, adult and further education centres and core library services, saying "Idea will be the first place that the local community will go to source information about any aspect of their lives and to learn and to acquire new skills" (London Borough of Tower Hamlets, 1999).

5.7.2   Such exercises, we believe, mark positive efforts to reflect the widening range of services that libraries can offer and to reflect the new communications environment in a network age. However, we would argue very strongly that such changes in identity need to be linked closely to local needs, and not to some general "shop-front" model. In the early 1990s, libraries were pressured very strongly to develop transactional or "retail"

models of service, with users defined as customers, staff uniforms and other forms of corporate branding (Black and Muddiman, 1997, Ch 5). These, we believe are retrogressive because they underpin the *difference* between library staff and users and the underline the *distance* between a library and its community. In one of our case studies (City) there was pressure from the local authority to adopt these aspects of service in largely inner city libraries, and these were being resisted by library management.

Instead, echoing the recommendations made in *Libraries for All,* (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 1999a, p.16), we would argue that the central idea of the inclusive public library should be that of the community resource centre, a local centre which provides access to ideas, books, networks and information. However this is branded or marketed, it needs to be presented in a way that local people, and especially those who are excluded, are at ease with, and which reflects their perceptions of the kind of community facility they want. As we note in Section 5.9, local consultation is paramount here.

5.8   Information and communication technology and networking development and excluded groups and communities

5.8.1   It is no surprise that so much attention is being paid to the potential of ICT to aid public libraries in tackling social exclusion. New Labour has made the introduction of the Information Society a key goal in its modernisation of Britain (Dutch and Muddiman, 2000), and the library profession has not been slow in extolling the role of libraries as a key provider in any information age. *New Library: the People's Network* (Library and Information Commission, 1997) has played a crucial part in convincing the Government of that potential and has successfully sold the image of thousands of information centres (i.e. the public library network) already with core skills and only waiting to be wired. The LIC similarly projected this image and emphasised the potential 'essence of inclusion' (Library and Information Commission, 2000). The Government's policy document *Our Information Age* (Central Office of Information, 1998) and its *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal* (Social Exclusion Unit, 2000b) at least partially endorsed libraries' ability to be the accessible conduit to ICT for those without other access to PCs and the Internet.

5.8.2   Certainly, evidence from our case studies and from the survey of PLAs across the country suggests that public libraries are rapidly introducing public access ICT services. NOF funding will accelerate this process until the Government target of all libraries being wired by 2002 is achieved. However, as one case study interviewee observed, "providing ICT in buildings is merely providing a facility" (Volume II, Ch.6, 6.4.2). It takes much more to provide a service and, it could be added, it takes even more to provide a service to those who are disadvantaged or excluded. Our research shows that, for ICT and networking to have a chance of being inclusive, four crucial ingredients are required.

- First, skilled outreach staff are required who can engage with communities and break

down the barriers that may stop people using, or even thinking of using, the public library for ICT access.

- Second, skilled support staff are needed to help people use ICT when they do overcome the barriers and enter the library or other building to access it.
- Third, a clear commitment is required that the service provided will be free at the point of access.
- Fourth, a commitment to sustaining successful new services is crucial. This applies not only to hardware and software upgrades but equally importantly the employment of skilled staff support.

5.8.3   Even with these prerequisites in place our case studies illustrate that it is all too easy to over-emphasise the importance of ICT as the key to libraries' support for the socially excluded. The homework centre in City, for example, is clearly making an impact in the toughest of conditions and using ICT in a wide context (i.e. including access to Hotmail and chatline facilities). However, the workers there stressed factors of staff attitude, trust-building and safe community environment as essential ingredients for any ICT based project which succesfully addresses exclusion (see Volume II, Ch.7). In this service general literacy and education are also seen as key roles of the library service and these are not, in their totality, deliverable through ICT alone.

5.8.4   The other factor that needs to be acknowledged is partnership. Libraries cannot and should not try to monopolise neighbourhood ICT provision or set themselves up as "the" place for independent learners. The most successful learning projects we viewed - in City, CELB, and Southshire - were those that worked with other providers to engage with socially excluded groups. Sometimes, this also means working in support of a service delivered elsewhere.

5.9   Consulting communities and staff

5.9.1   While there have been different forms and levels of consulting communities in libraries in the past, the requirements under Best Value – "doing the right things in the right way" - will require radical changes in this aspect of library work. Joyce et al (2000) raise the question of new requirements for local authorities:

> "As Best Value in local public services is extended and deepened, the connection between performance management and community consultation activities will be tightened…This process of tightening will inevitably encounter serious management issues in carrying out and making use of community consultation".

Thus Best Value provides an important challenge to library authorities in the very way the service is planned and delivered. Best Value, at the same time, provides the "mechanisms for delivering responsiveness to the local community" and thereby can deliver a service which is "better aligned to the needs of the public", as Joyce *et al* (2000) put it.

5.9.2   There can thus be obvious benefits in terms of service delivery to those sections of population excluded from library services. However, there was only minimal evidence in our surveys and case studies to indicate that the concept of consultation as seen in Best Value has yet been understood or applied in libraries. In Caledonia, the Cultural and Leisure Services Department (of which the library service was part) had embarked on a generally admired and well managed consultation exercise, employing external consultants from Edinburgh specialising in community consultation. These consultants had developed particular methodologies to engage excluded communities and groups (Volume II, Ch.9, Section 9.4). There was also evidence of several "Friends of Libraries" groups, but consulting them did not meet the requirements under Best Value, nor can such "Friends" be seen as representative of the excluded groups that this Project and Government policies seek to address (Volume II, Ch.5).

A further positive example of community consultation can be seen in the Quality Leaders Project for Black Library and Information Workers which seeks specifically to address the needs of Black and ethnic minority communities in terms of Best Value (Management Research Centre, University of North London, 2000). Whether this approach succeeds in practice remains to be seen.

5.9.3   There is also a lack of appropriate consultation with staff in public libraries. Our survey evidence noted examples of 11 library authorities who had set up groups where members of staff from minority groups could influence library service policies for exclusion (Volume II, Ch.2, Section 2.6). However, such activity is all too thin on the ground. In other case studies, there were clear gaps in understanding between managers and frontline staff. Where attempts are made to empower staff, these are, with a few notable exceptions, often mere "technical" consultations and not real involvement in decision making.

It is clearly the case that public libraries will need to undertake serious investigations into what Best Value means in terms of both community consultation and consultation with staff. Viewed positively, it clearly offers a mechanism through which the voices of excluded and disadvantaged communities can be heard, but our evidence suggests that, at the moment, it is not being widely applied in this context.

5.10   Addressing discrimination and prejudice in staffing and service provision

5.10.1 Our research has borne out the supposition that one of the major barriers to the take-up of public library services and to making them relevant to socially excluded communities is the staff and the attitudes of many of them to their users (see, for example the Chapters on Outerborough, Section 5.7.7, and City, Section 7.5.2, in Volume II). This stems from a number of causes, the prime of which are, firstly, the very narrow base from which librarians have traditionally been recruited, and, secondly, the perception that their users - or, perhaps, their ideal users - are people just like themselves.

5.10.2 To overcome these core problems, the transformed public library must tackle head-on the education, recruitment and training of their staff. University Schools of Information and Library Studies (SILS) need to recruit a wider range of students from "non-traditional" backgrounds and to review the courses currently on offer - both of these exercises are urgent, and need to be carried out jointly in consultation with public libraries. (In the mid-1980s, a consortium of London library authorities worked together to develop just such approaches, but, regrettably, these had very little impact on SILS.) Urgent attention also needs to be paid to the lack of courses of direct relevance to public libraries and to tackling social exclusion [2].

It may be that, if SILS are not able or willing to change their recruitment patterns or their course content, public libraries will need to review their skills and educational requirements for their staff as a whole, and specifically the librarianship qualification. Many public libraries already recruit and train librarians successfully from a range of different backgrounds, without the need for a librarianship qualification.

Public libraries also need to review their recruitment policies for all levels of staff, to ensure that unnecessary barriers are removed and that they are not applying indirect discrimination at this stage. For example, given that it seems clear that, as a profession, librarianship is guilty of institutional racism (Roach and Morrison, 1998), then every effort needs to be made to prevent discrimination taking place.

5.10.3 Having recruited successfully, public libraries also need to ensure that they have high quality training in place for all their staff. This should include thorough induction training, as well as in-depth training in all aspects of service provision, particularly focusing on tackling social exclusion. Much current training is in relation to ICT, and, whilst this is obviously extremely important, it must not be allowed to over-shadow other training needs. This training could be modelled on that being developed via the Quality Leaders Project (Management Research Centre, University of North London, 2000).

It is only by creating a different kind of workforce, one that more closely resembles the communities in which they are working, that public libraries will both be seen to be responding to local needs and also become more approachable and relevant.

This will not, however, overcome the attitude problems of some library staff. Public libraries need to ensure that thorough training has taken place, and this may well assist in changing attitudes. However, there may also be a core of staff who do not want to change, do not want the public library to change in an inclusive direction, and who will do their utmost to frustrate attempts to do so. In these cases, public libraries need to have very clear aims, policies and mechanisms in place, and management has to accept a real responsibility for dealing with this core.

5.11 Redistribution / redirection of resources

5.11.1 Traditionally, public library social exclusion activities have been funded from the

margins rather than from the centre. They have relied on any monies that are left over at the end of the budget allocation process, or from "miscellaneous" budget headings. They have also been heavily dependent on external funding from sources such as Section 11, where the Home Office supported library workers who were seeking to tackle racial exclusion. The problem with depending on "bolt on" funding - whether this is internal or external - is that the funding is not reliable and is difficult to maintain. When the going gets tough and library authorities have to make savings, they often cut those services first which are deemed to be "non-mainstream", in order to focus their resources on "core services". A classic example of this trend occurred when the Conservatives massively reduced Section 11 funding. Very few authorities absorbed the costs of the services funded by Section 11 into their mainstream budgets, with our case study authority of Innerborough being one of the exceptions here. Most took the easy route of cutting those services, and staff, which were previously Section 11 funded.

Such marginal funding continues: library authorities are increasingly reliant on external funding to bolster their shrinking mainstream budgets. This involves bidding for money which might not meet the service's objectives. External funding has to be spent in a very prescribed way and, as observers have pointed out, few community initiative type projects have survived after the funding comes to an end - typically after a three to five year period.

5.11.2 In order to effectively fund library services which tackle social exclusion, however, funds need to be both mainstream and sustainable. In practice this means redistributing the library budget towards the socially excluded. This can cause problems with staff, library users and politicians. Any efforts at redistribution should thus be based on a sound strategy for tackling social exclusion. Once this strategy has been accepted by the major stakeholders of the service, it is then possible to argue that the budget needs to be realigned in order to deliver the strategy.

Our survey findings suggest that most PLA budgets are provider-led and allocated on a historical and incremental basis. These budgets are unlikely to make sufficient provision for the socially excluded. A different allocation process is required, using a zero-based and needs-driven approach to budget building. If the library service is targeted at those who need it the most (but often use it the least), then it is likely that resources will have to be redistributed away from those who need it the least (but often use it the most).

The aim should be to redistribute existing resources to meet community need through community development initiatives, such as outreach and services to Black communities. Such a redirection strategy should not lose sight of the needs of those who already use the service. The aim is to increase overall usage of the service - not attract non-users at the expense of users, many of whom are strong supporters of the service and may be well placed to lobby for extra resources etc. Redirection should be managed sensitively, and should not lead to conflict between the old and the new "haves", but to social inclusion and cohesion.

5.12 Mainstreaming of provision for social exclusion; the establishment of standards of service; and monitoring and measuring services

5 12.1 Mainstreaming should not be confined to the budget. Government guidelines recommend that social inclusion should be mainstreamed as a policy priority within all library and information services (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 1999a, p.14). There is evidence both our own survey, and from Annual Library Plan assessments, that this is not happening to a great extent at the moment (Department of Culture, Media and Sport, 2000a). But the Annual Library Plan requirements regarding social exclusion have been strengthened, which should lead to library authorities giving greater thought to social exclusion policies and strategies.

Annual Library Plans are a good beginning, but they do not guarantee that improvements will be made in terms of service delivery. There needs to be a method of assessing library services against a national set of standards. A first step in this process has been the recently published public library standards. Early drafts of these standards included a section on social inclusion, but these have been stripped out in the final consultative version (Department of Culture, Media and Sport, 2000b). This is to be regretted as social inclusion standards need to form part of the national public library standards, and not be simply appended via guidelines or other means. The House of Commons Select Committee (House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee, 2000, p.xvi) has recommended that "national library standards provide more specific guidance on social inclusion".

The development of appropriate standards for tackling social exclusion needs to include the involvement of the socially excluded themselves. The standards must be relevant to their needs, understandable and capable of clearly measuring how libraries will make a difference to people's lives. This suggests that, like all good performance indicators, they need to be a mixture of quantitative and qualitative based measures.

5.12.2 Once the standards and performance indicators are in place, it is then necessary to set challenging targets against them, and to monitor library authorities performance in meeting those targets. There are many different ways of achieving this, including self assessment and peer review, but the most objective and rigorous approach is via external inspection. Following the Department of National Heritage *Public Library Review* (Aslib, 1995, p.25) it is suggested that an Oflib be established for public libraries, with regular inspections of library authority policy, practice and performance in tackling social exclusion. This could form part of the Best Value process. We would expect such an inspectorate to encourage creativity and innovation in the way public libraries address social exclusion, although, in line with best value targets, if authorities fail to move into the upper quartile over time, this could lead to direct intervention.

This approach may seem coercive but the question has to be asked - will library authorities ever start tackling social exclusion? Our survey findings have suggested that as many as perhaps one-quarter of PLAs show little interest in addressing exclusion issues, and many more do very little, even though social exclusion is, we know,

pervasive in even the UK's most affluent areas. For these PLAs, inclusion should be, using Miller's term, "required" (Miller, 1999). In time such measures may no longer become necessary as attitudes, behaviour, values and organisational cultures change. But this is a long term process and, in the meantime, the needs of socially excluded people cannot be left in the hands of those library authorities who hitherto have displayed little commitment to meeting these needs.

Notes

1. Sources utilised for this section include Black and Ethnic Minority Workers Group [Hackney], 1994 and Durrani (1996).

2. Although some new courses do provide models of good practice - see, for example, University of North London, Faculty of Environmental and Social Services, Environmental and Social Studies Scheme, SS160: *Information and Social Exclusion* (1999-2000).

6.   Conclusion: Open to All?

6.1   This study has suggested that there are essentially two approaches that public institutions can take to the problem of social exclusion. The weaker of these approaches (what Section 2.5 has characterised as *voluntary inclusion*) involves essentially a "take it or leave it" approach. People who are socially excluded are offered access to standard services, and "equality of opportunity" to make use of them. However, such approaches offer excluded people little say in the design and development of services, and tend to offer universal benefits to all rather than focusing or targeting resources on the disadvantaged or deprived. For these reasons, such voluntary services have tended to be utilised more heavily by middle class people, or by other social groups already included in society's mainstream.

Alternative, and much stronger approaches (what Section 2.5 has characterised *inclusive diversity* or *required inclusion*), essentially involve some element of redistribution of material or cultural capital to the excluded and disadvantaged. Public services adopting this route tend to focus not simply on "access" but on equalities of outcome as an overarching goal. Such services stress a much more interventionist approach to service provision incorporating strategies such as targeting, community development and positive action in favour of excluded and disadvantaged groups. Although many UK public services have experimented with elements of these approaches, they have by and large been less common than the voluntary route.

6.2   A key conclusion of our research is that the public library has adopted, overwhelmingly, the first and weaker of these alternatives as a strategy for addressing social exclusion. As Section 3 of this overview has shown, historically, the core rationale of the public library movement has focused around the idea of developing "access" for all to a service which essentially reflected mainstream middle class, white and English values. Attempts to break out of this mould, such as the "community librarianship" movement of the 1970s and 1980s, have, our research has suggested, effectively been incorporated back into the mainstream, and the idea of "access for all" remains as powerful a rationale as ever. Indeed, contemporary attempts to characterise public libraries as the "essence of inclusion" (Library and Information Commission, 2000) rely heavily on this idea, and current efforts to reconfigure the public library for the "information" or "network" society are effectively based on plans to create a modern equivalent of the 1930s "library grid".

6.3   Free access to ideas and information is, of course an important baseline for any democratic society. However, in our view, this core focus of the public library service has been only minimally successful in addressing social exclusion in the UK. As Section 2 has shown, socially exclusion in the UK, by any measure, has actually worsened over

the last 20 years and there is no sign that the "information" age will magically conjure its disappearance. Public libraries have always, it is true, helped provide a ladder of opportunity for some *individuals* to escape from poverty or marginalisation, but in the end they have done little to create a "social order which excludes exclusion" (Byrne, 1999, p. 78). Empirically, our evidence suggests that their impact on excluded and working class communities is consequently uneven and uncertain: their basic services often bear little relevance to the needs of such communities, resulting in low usage levels, problems such as vandalism and threats to staff, and cuts in opening hours or closure. In some cases, this has opened up the possibility of the withdrawal of the library service from excluded communities altogether.

6.4   Of course, there are exceptions to this picture - some of these are detailed in our case studies - where public library authorities have adopted energetic and proactive strategies and initiatives which attempt to take the needs of excluded people as their starting point. Some of these have resulted in libraries with a real sense of community ownership, and services which link with and build upon the cultures of the groups they serve. However, we believe, like Matarasso (1998b), that these initiatives are the exception rather than the rule. Our survey evidence estimated that in around only one-sixth of UK public library authorities was there a consistent, across-the-board, focus on inclusion / exclusion issues. In the majority (60%) of authorities inclusion strategies were uneven and sporadic, but perhaps most worryingly, among 25% of respondent authorities there was minimal evidence of concern with social exclusion as an issue at all.

6.5   Thus, we argue that if libraries are to more convincingly respond to the needs of socially excluded people in Britain, most will need to adopt comprehensive and sometimes radical change. Section 5 of this study has sketched out what we believe to be some of the main elements of such a transformation. These include:

- the mainstreaming of provision for socially excluded groups and communities and the establishment of standards of service and their monitoring;
- the adoption of resourcing strategies which prioritise the needs of excluded people and communities;
- a recasting of the role of library staff to encompass a more socially responsive and educative approach;
- staffing policies and practices which address exclusion, discrimination and prejudice;
- targeting and positive action focusing on excluded social groups and communities;
- the development of community-based approaches to library provision, which incorporate consultation with and partnership with local communities;
- ICT and networking developments which actively focus on the needs of excluded people;
- a recasting of the image and identity of the public library to link it more closely with the cultures of excluded communities and social groups.

A growing number of other recent policy initiatives, such as the DCMS consultative paper *Libraries for All* (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 1999a), have suggested similar kinds of action, and the recent report of the House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee has recommended that public libraries

prioritise a "strategy to promote social inclusion" (House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee, 2000, p. xvi). Moreover, general policy initiatives, such as the Social Exclusion Unit's *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal* (Social Exclusion Unit, 2000b) and *Minority Ethnic Issues in Social Exclusion and Neighbourhood Renewal* (Social Exclusion Unit, 2000a) clearly point to the necessity of proactive, interventionist public services which work in a "joined up" way to tackle exclusion.

6.1.6   In the end, however, notwithstanding the importance of working together, we conclude that public libraries do need to initiate action on their own. Although we are convinced that public library has the *potential* to play a key role in tackling social exclusion, we conclude that to *make a real difference* it will need not only to modernise its technical base, but to transform its fundamental purposes, policies and priorities. Provision of "access" to a mainly passive public library service is not, we believe, a strategy that will make a real impact on the social exclusion in the contemporary UK. To make such an impact, we conclude that the public library will need to become a far more proactive and interventionist public institution, with a commitment to equality, education and social justice at its core. Only then, it seems to us, will marginalised and excluded communities be returned to the mainstream of the library world.

Only then will public libraries be truly open to all.

7. Project Recommendations

7.1 National Policy

(i)   At a national policy level, there needs to be a co-ordinated approach to the development of public library services to socially excluded people, to involve the Library Association, DCMS, Social Exclusion Unit, Re:source and other relevant agencies.

(ii)   To be effective, national policies should utilise broad definitions of social exclusion which:
- encompass social, economic and political exclusion;
- recognise the roots of exclusion in class, race and patriarchy;
- recognise the role that public services such as libraries can play in addressing inequality and discrimination, and in redistributing power and resources.

(iii)   As part of this development of policy and practice, funding needs to be provided for further research into all aspects of social exclusion.

(iv)   Government should also introduce a NOF-style fund to support innovative responses to social exclusion.

7.2 Public Library Authority Policy

(i)   At local level, public library authorities should produce and implement long-term strategies for tackling social exclusion to involve targeting priority needs; secure and sustainable funding; advocacy and innovation; monitoring and evaluation.

(ii)   Social exclusion policies should be considered alongside existing policies such as equal opportunities and anti-poverty strategies.

(iii)   Public library approaches to tackling social exclusion will require intervention, the targeting of resources, and positive action to fulfil individual needs.

(iv)   Public libraries should urgently start to target their resources towards socially excluded communities, and there needs to be further study of the ways in which public libraries should deal with service provision in areas with which all their community may not agree.

(v)   Local strategies are needed to redress the historical and current under-use of libraries by working class and other disadvantaged groups.

(vi)   Public libraries should actively endeavour to make their vision, mission, outlook, work practices and rules aligned with the majority world perspective of their diverse communities and less Euro-centric. This search for relevance should explore the dynamic role that libraries can play in the people's struggles for social justice and economic liberation.

(vii)   All public library authorities need to produce and utilise equalities policies which include all socially excluded groups. Such policies should include a clear statement challenging prejudice and discrimination, and services should not permit discrimination by users or by staff.

(viii)   Existing tools, such as Roach and Morrison, Macpherson (*Stephen Lawrence Inquiry*, 1999) CRE Guidelines (Commission for Racial Equality, 1995) and *Libraries for All* (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 1999) should be used to inform action plans and strategies for tackling social exclusion.

7.3   The Library Profession

(i)   There needs to be an urgent review of the role of Library Association Branches, Groups and Organisations in Liaison to ensure that the needs of socially excluded people are taken on board at the highest level. We would recommend a structure similar to that of the American Library Association, with Round Tables and other means of access for socially excluded people and the library workers who provide services for them. Examples would include a Black Library Workers Group.

(ii)   The Library Association should establish a Council Committee on Social Exclusion

(iii)   The Library Association should also sponsor research into the need for awards to recognise positive images in materials reflecting the lives of socially excluded people.

(iv)   The Library Association should continue to support the work of the Social Exclusion Action Planning Network, for example by indexing successful projects and regular training support.

7.4   Consultation

(i)   Public libraries need to develop methods for real and continuing consultation with socially excluded communities, groups and individuals, as well as means for implementing the relevant recommendations of this.

(ii)   Social exclusion strategies and services should be developed with the active

engagement of socially excluded people who should be involved in the planning, implementation and monitoring of services.

(iii)   PLAs should ask socially excluded people when they would like libraries to be open and offer imaginative and creative opening hour patterns which meet these needs.

7.5   Needs Assessment and Research

(i)   At local level all groups and individuals that are socially excluded or at risk of exclusion should be identified through community profiles and other methodologies such as needs analysis

(ii)   More research is needed into the perceptions of libraries by non-users and how barriers to access can be removed

(iii)   At national level, detailed and specific research into the information and library related needs of excluded groups and communities should be funded as a priority.

(iv)   Detailed statistical monitoring of levels of library use by disadvantaged and working class users needs to be undertaken

(v)   A research programme should be funded to assist PLAs in developing guidelines for the provision of minimum services for community need e.g. community language provision; adult literacy provision; LGBT provision.

7.6   Library Image and Identity

(i)   The image and identity of libraries need to be changed so that they do not appear as municipal, bureaucratic, unwelcoming and passive state institutions. This can be achieved according to local circumstances, by measures such as:
- renaming libraries (e.g. Community Resource Centres, Idea Stores)
- rebranding the traditional library name so that the new image is one of a proactive, friendly, relevant and easily accessible environment.

(ii)   Library practices and processes need to be challenged to ensure that they do not create barriers to usage. Joining procedures should not be over-bureaucratic and mechanisms should be created to overcome problems with bureaucracy for groups such as homeless people.

(iii)   The physical appearance of libraries needs to be audited to check that they are not forbidding from the outside and that the internal layout is easy to understand. Better signing, more self-help public access terminals and the removal of enquiry desks can all help overcome barriers to use experienced by some excluded people.

(iv)   The geographical location of libraries should be a prime factor in resource

allocation. Priority should be given to those libraries serving communities in greatest need. This may result in the need to consider the existing location of libraries. Relocation and colocation (with community centres, schools, pubs, shops, leisure centres and other places used by the socially excluded) can both improve the impact of libraries in tackling social exclusion.

(v)   Where appropriate, PLAs also need to work with neighbouring authorities to deliver services to socially excluded communities, such as refugees and travellers, who may be transient or who may span local authority boundaries, or where a service can be more effectively provided by the pooling of resources.

7.7   Outreach, Community Development and Partnerships

(i)   Social exclusion strategies need to encompass:
- proactive community librarianship based on outreach, advocacy and intervention
- community development through grass roots, community-based approaches
- partnerships with those in the public, voluntary and private sectors.

(ii)   Public libraries need to ensure that they are offering relevant services where they are best used by socially excluded people. Locations should not be limited to library buildings, but include "outreach" locations and services of all kinds.

(iii)   Public libraries should support community-based initiatives, groups and organisations through outreach staff, materials and other resources.

(iv)   Public libraries should develop community information services, in partnership with other providers such as Citizens Advice Bureaux, which help socially excluded people deal with their daily problems, including health, education, housing, family and legal matters

(v)   Learning centres, literacy centres and other lifelong learning activities should be developed by public libraries on a much wider scale than at present. Often, joint provision with education services, the not-for-profit sector, and local community groups will offer real advantages in terms of pooling of skills and funding and community involvement.

7.8   Information and Communication Technologies and Social Exclusion

(i)   PLAs should be required to draw up ICT plans which include a strategy outlining how the needs of socially excluded communities are to be prioritised. ICT should be used as a means to tackle social exclusion - rather than as an end in itself.

(ii)   ICT provision should be free at the point of access.

(iii)   ICT initiatives should be targeted more closely at excluded groups and communities in a proactive way. Appropriate levels of skilled staffing and support should be offered to users.

(iv)   Libraries should enthusiastically commit funding and support to neighbourhood ICT initiatives in line with the recommendations above, and those in the PAT 15 report *Closing the Digital Divide.*

7.9   Materials Provision

(i)   Public libraries need to urgently develop materials selection policies to cover the requirements of socially excluded people. Existing library stock selection policies - and the stock on the shelves - need to be critically examined to ensure that they are relevant to the community which they serve.

(ii)   Public libraries should systematically acquire underground and alternative material in all forms (including orature) which are created by, and are of interest to, those excluded from public library system.

(iii)   Public libraries need to continue to raise with materials suppliers (writers, illustrators, publishers, booksellers, library suppliers) the range of materials available for socially excluded people and gaps in that provision.

7.10   Staffing, Recruitment, Training and Education

(i)   Public libraries need to reassess their recruitment and selection policies (including reassessing the requirement for qualifications in librarianship) in order to attract more staff into the workforce from socially excluded backgrounds.

(ii)   Public libraries should urgently analyse the training needs of their staff, to ensure that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to provide the best services for socially excluded people. Training programmes to be developed for all services linking equal opportunities, anti-racism, anti-sexism, cultural and social exclusion awareness.

(iii)   Public libraries should adopt positive action programmes (for example via Quality Leader programmes) so that the library workforce incorporates socially excluded people more equitably than at present. All library authorities should aim to develop recruitment and selection statements outlining how this will be achieved.

(iv)   Public libraries should challenge staff and organisational attitudes, behaviour, values and culture through staff development and training and a competency-based approach to staff recruitment and appraisal.

(v)   Library authorities should change their staffing structures to bring them in line with their social exclusion strategies. This will require new job titles, job descriptions,

person profiles and competencies which recognise the importance of outreach and proactive ways of working. A specifically designated team, with appropriate resources, should lead on service delivery to the socially excluded.

(vi)   The DCMS should fund secondments of public library staff for learning experience and sharing of knowledge in the social exclusion sphere.

(vii)   Schools of Information and Library Studies (SILS) should review their recruitment base to ensure that people from 'non-traditional' backgrounds are brought into library work.

(viii)   SILS need to urgently reassess their course content in conjunction with public libraries. Courses should incorporate core modules which cover social exclusion issues, such as the causes of social exclusion, information poverty and equal opportunities.

7.11   Mainstreaming and Resourcing for Social Exclusion

(i)   Social exclusion should be mainstreamed across all areas of library activity and management.

(ii)   Demand-led resourcing is generally not equitable for socially excluded groups and communities. PLAs may have to redistribute or redirect resources to meet the needs of the socially excluded.

(iii)   Guidelines should be developed to help authorities move to a needs-based service. This should include information for authorities on management and organisational structures that work for communities.

(iv)   All services should introduce local service targets as part of detailed library planning and monitoring.

(v)   With funded projects, the issue of sustainability needs to be addressed at Government level. A post-project tapering formula to help authorities mainstream successful initiatives should be considered.

7.12   Standards and Monitoring of Services

(i)   National service standards should be established for public libraries activities related to social exclusion. Such standards should be both quantitative and qualitative, and should be incorporated in the DCMS standards currently being drawn up.

(ii)   Performance indicators and targets should be set to measure the success of library authorities in their attempts to tackle social exclusion. These should include a requirement to specify amounts spent on disadvantaged groups and deprived communities. All authorities should be encouraged to reach the upper quartile of best

practice.

(iii)   Annual Library Plans should also be a key tool which helps DCMS monitor library authority policy and practice regarding social exclusion.

(iv)   An Oflib, or similar mechanism, should be established to monitor the performance of public libraries in meeting national standards, including those for social exclusion. Inspections of public libraries should be made as part of the Best Value process, and DCMS should intervene in authorities which are not making efforts to tackle social exclusion. In general, however, the body should be supportive in aiding library authorities to refocus their services to prioritise needs of the socially excluded.

7.13 Specific needs of excluded communities and social groups

The particular needs of specific excluded social groups and communities are different. It is not possible, in the end, to reduce them and to try to find one universal solution for all excluded communities.

Appendix A of this volume therefore highlights specific recommendations, relating to different excluded groups, in the relevant sections of the project working papers. These are reproduced in full in Volume III of *Open to All?*; as with the Project Working Papers as a whole, it should be noted that they are the work of the particular authors and that they thus represent the recommendations of those individual members of the project team.

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Appendix A

Working Papers: Summaries and Recommendations

Working Paper 1: Theories of poverty and social exclusion (Dave Muddiman)

"Social exclusion" has increasingly taken over from terms like poverty and deprivation as a term for describing social division. The paper considers social exclusion, and the related term "social inclusion", and its implications for the public library. It reviews the development of the concept of social exclusion and assesses its strengths and weaknesses as a way of describing social division. Here, it distinguishes between narrower and broader manifestations of the social exclusion idea, with the former suggesting targeted action and the latter a wider social project. The paper then identifies aspects of exclusion in the UK, and links these to the transition from an industrial to a claimed "information" society. The final part of the paper explores implications of the social exclusion debate for the public library, concluding that a wide range of policy initiatives will be needed for libraries to have a significant impact on poverty and inequality.

Working Paper 2: Public libraries and social exclusion - the historical legacy (Dave Muddiman)

This paper reviews the history of attempts made by public libraries to develop services for the "disadvantaged" and socially excluded. It analyses in particular three models: the Victorian "working class" public library; the "welfare state" public library of the mid twentieth century and the "community" librarianship of the 1970s and 80s. Overall, it argues that the focus of public libraries on social inequality and division has been patchy and ambivalent and that action in this field has been hampered by a legacy of universal but passive service provision which has favoured the middle class. It concludes by noting, however, that the current context of rapid technological and cultural change provides an opportunity to reconfigure the service, and it urges that libraries prioritise the creation of a socially inclusive "information" society.

Working Paper 3: Public libraries and social class (John Pateman)

The paper argues that there is an intrinsic link between social exclusion and social class, that social exclusion is endemic to capitalism, and that the class system pervades every aspect of society, including library usage. After reviewing different models of social stratification, the paper identifies three main classes, the capitalist class, the middle class

and the working class. The focus is on the latter groups. It is argued that, because capitalism is the root cause of social exclusion and class, social exclusion policies, such as promoting employment, ignore the causes of poverty and inequalities. This means that 'solutions' are short-term and ineffective. It is further argued that libraries themselves are a means of social control and are therefore alien to working class life and rejected by working class people. The paper then examines the literature to support this hypothesis. The paper concludes by identifying various barriers to action being taken, and makes recommendations for plans to overcome these barriers.

Recommendations

It is recommended that public library authorities:

(a)   produce and implement long-term strategies for tackling social exclusion. These strategies will involve: targeting priority need; secure funding; advocacy and innovation; monitoring and evaluation

(b)   adopt the five I's of involvement when dealing with working class communities and the socially excluded: information (maximum public access to as much information as possible); independence (community access to independent specialist advice); initiative (community groups to develop their own agendas, pro-actively); influence (communities to influence decision making); implementation (communities to participate in implementation, monitoring and supervision)

(c)   support communities in developing their own policy analyses :

"Communities would then be better placed to play an active role in setting the agenda and pressing for the wider policy changes required, if partnerships are to meet social needs as defined from the bottom up, rather than responding to the requirements of market led agendas determined from the top down" (Mayo, 1997).

(d)   develop meaningful partnerships between libraries and working class / socially excluded communities. Partnerships should be based on common objectives, shared resources, openness about power and dedicated staff. Partnerships should focus on: process as well as social exclusion; sharing of power and policy; diversity across sectors with a commitment to social exclusion; non-tokenistic involvement of people experiencing exclusion; speaking out against social injustice, together and separately.

"Partnership that is an open, honest, targeted, outcome related process can and does make a distinctive contribution to combatting poverty and social exclusion" (Thornton, 1996).

(e)   provide adequate continuing education and training, via :
• appropriate staff training and awareness programmes
• education and training in community development for local councillors, to see it as a

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positive challenge, rather than a potential threat
- relevant training opportunities for the socially excluded

(f) recruit staff who reflect the socio-economic profile of the local community

(g) bring the process of budget allocation within the social exclusion strategy. In other words, mainstream social exclusion by putting this issue at the heart of the budget setting process.

(h) include social class in equal opportunity, anti poverty, social exclusion and other policies.

(i) review rules, procedures and charging policies to ensure that these do not create barriers to tackling social exclusion.

(j) carry out or commission research into the use and non-use of libraries by social class.
This research should include studies of societies and services that are more socially inclusive in other parts of the world.

Working Paper 4: Literacy, social exclusion and the public library (John Vincent)

The paper reviews recent research to show the impact of illiteracy on people's lives and its contribution to social exclusion. It considers the background to low basic skills attainment, referring to factors such as class and race. The relationship between literacy and political power is discussed. The paper then considers the situation in the UK, covering the extent of poor basic skills, and their relationship with social class. It describes Government and other initiatives on basic skills issues, such as the National Literacy Strategy. It is argued that lifelong learning and basic skills initiatives could, and should, have an impact on the role of public libraries. However, changes relating to both staff and stock may affect their ability to carry out this role. Children and young people's literacy is considered, and public library initiatives are detailed. The literature review carried out suggests that public libraries are paying less attention to adult literacy. IT literacy is discussed. It is concluded that, although progress has been made in some localities, more work needs to be done. Public libraries are urged to form partnerships with organisations involved in basic skills work, and recommendations for further development are made.

Recommendations

(a) ensure that public libraries make available a wide range of current and appropriate stock for basic education (including for adults with learning difficulties). To enable this to happen, public libraries need to review their sources for acquiring stock

(particularly for adult basic education) and the skills of staff in acquiring such stock, using sources such as the Basic Skills Agency Resource Centre;

(b)   provide training and staff development/awareness courses regularly, including basic skills training and the development of skills in community-based work;

(c)   develop provision of collections of material in community settings (such as basic skills projects, youth clubs, unemployment projects, ex-offenders hostels) partly in order to reach a wider audience and partly to demonstrate that public libraries are viable partners and have a role to play in delivering community-based literacy - and other basic skills - programmes;

(d)   public libraries must take advantage of any additional funding which becomes available, and need to become adept at identifying such opportunities, and applying for funding. However, it is vital that public libraries work in partnership with other agencies (both statutory education providers and voluntary sector groups);

(e)   libraries need to build on the National Year of Reading, drawing on good practice which has been developed, to ensure that initiatives are sustained;
(f)   basic skills work in public libraries (especially adult literacy work) need to be given a much higher profile. At present, there seems to be no obvious forum for discussion by library workers of the services they might develop: therefore, an action-planning conference needs to be called as a matter of urgency to take this forward;

(g)   basic skills work should be included in any new performance measures developed (for example to include resources deployed; staffing involved in this work; work with community organisations). These need to be monitored, for example via the Annual Library Plans;

(h)   public libraries need to investigate requirements of The National Literacy Strategy: framework for teaching (Department for Education and Employment, 1998);

(i)   public libraries need to grasp any opportunities which become available following the publication of the report by Sir Claus Moser.

Working Paper 5:   Lesbians, bisexuals, gay men and transgendered people (John Vincent)

The paper argues that although writings on social exclusion have largely ignored "lesbigays" (lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgendered people), they can be socially excluded. It begins by contrasting the cultural acceptance of lesbigay images with the reality of discrimination and homophobia. It then gives instances of this discrimination, such as criminal attacks, harassment and legal discrimination, including "Clause 28". The next section of the paper looks at developments in the US and Canada and emphasises progress made within the US library profession. The paper then turns to UK public library services, referring to past research, including the (presently unpublished) Burning

Issues Group survey of public library provision in London. It also comments on the general lack of research on lesbigays and public libraries. The effect of "Clause 28" is considered. The paper also suggests that libraries could learn from developments in the field of museums. It is concluded that overall provision for lesbigays is still patchy, with little attention having been paid to the needs of lesbigay communities. Recommendations for action are made.

Recommendations

(a)   further research into the library needs of lesbigays to produce a report parallel to that by Patrick Roach and Marlene Morrison (1998)

(b)   public library authorities produce and implement long-term strategies for tackling social exclusion, to involve: targeting priority needs; secure, sustainable funding; advocacy and innovation; monitoring and evaluation

(c)   the establishment of a national group as a fully-constituted part of the Library Association (parallel to the American Library Association Social Responsibility Round Table)

(d)   training, both in areas of service delivery and stock awareness (one useful approach would be to incorporate this in the programme for "Branching out"[i]), including the development of staff training to gain awareness of lesbigay needs and to combat heterosexism

(e)   the Library Association and its branches and groups should draw attention to the iniquities of "Clause 28" and continue to press at the highest levels for its repeal

(f)   research needs to be carried out into IT developments, such as virtual readers groups (as suggested at the Arts Council Conference)

(g)   following another recommendation of the Arts Council Conference, the setting up of a literary award for lesbian and gay writing, perhaps organised via the national focus group

(h)   further research into the current extent of community contact by public libraries, with recommendations for good practice

(i)   develop ways of supporting lesbigay communities in their own analyses of their requirements

(j)   develop meaningful partnerships between public libraries and lesbigay communities (e.g. based on common objectives, shared resources)

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[i] the Society of Chief Librarians-led training initiative to develop approaches for librarians in promoting books and reading

(k)   further study of the ways in which public libraries should deal with policy and service provision in areas with which their community may not agree

(l)   research into the effects of supplier selection on the available ranges of materials of relevance to lesbigays

(m)   public libraries should continue to raise with materials suppliers (publishers, booksellers, library suppliers, authors, illustrators) the range of materials available and gaps in that provision (such as large print publishing of relevant lesbigay material)

(n)   the development of materials selection policies to cover the requirements of lesbigays
(o)   research into comparisons of provision with other sectors, such as museums, the arts

(p)   the Library Association and local government organisations to press for the (re)introduction of equal opportunity policies into all local authorities, and to ensure that lesbigay issues are included

Working Paper 6:   Returning a stare; people's struggles for political and social inclusion [Social exclusion; an international perspective, Part 1] (Shiraz Durrani)

This is the first of two linked working papers analysing social exclusion at an international level (the second being by John Pateman). It reviews struggles against exclusion and poverty in different societies, emphasising the role of information, and the potential of role of libraries. Social exclusion is described in the context of global capitalism. The process of exclusion is seen as having intensified with the rise of the 'information age.' The paper then looks at resistance to this exclusion. The following examples of the role of information and communications in this resistance are described: film in Chile; video activism; the Alternative Davos; various protest and campaign movements; the Adavasis in Tamil Nadu; political communications in Kenya; the Kurdish people and the Zapatistas in Mexico. Lessons for public libraries are drawn throughout. It is concluded that if libraries are to be relevant to those who are excluded, then information workers need to purposively support people's struggles against exclusion.

Working Paper 7:   The state, communities and public libraries: their role in tackling social exclusion [Social exclusion; an international perspective, Part 2] (John Pateman)

This is the second of two linked papers reviewing social exclusion at an international level and follows from the critique of globalism in the first paper (written by Shiraz Durrani). The paper applies Miller's "models of communities" and "roles of the state (exclusive diversity; voluntary inclusion; required inclusion; and inclusive diversity) to

economic and political systems in different countries. It then applies different sets of performance indicators to different countries, specifically considering indicators in the areas of literacy, education and libraries. It is argued that social exclusion is best tackled using an approach based on required inclusion or inclusive diversity, rather than on the basis of exclusive diversity or voluntary inclusion. The joint conclusion of both this and the linked paper is that social exclusion cannot be separated from a country's political system. Social exclusion can therefore only be alleviated, by libraries and other agencies, in emerging economies, capitalist and majority world countries. Recommendations are made.

Recommendations

These are joint recommendations, with Working Paper 6, *Returning a stare; people's struggles for political and social inclusion (Social exclusion; an international perspective, Part 1)* by Shiraz Durrani:-

(a)   that UK public libraries consider the lessons to be learnt from workers who are struggling for social inclusion.

(b)   that UK public libraries examine the approaches to tackling social exclusion in communist / socialist countries based on inclusive diversity and required inclusion.

(c)   that UK public libraries consider some of the approaches to tackling social exclusion based on voluntary inclusion in countries such as Sweden, Denmark and Finland.

(d)   that UK public libraries develop a wide range of performance indicators for measuring their success in tackling social exclusion, and that these are reported as part of the Annual Library Plan process.

(e)   that UK public libraries adopt appropriate strategies, structures and cultures for tackling social exclusion in the light of these recommendations.

Working Paper 8: Public libraries, children and young people and social exclusion (John Vincent)

The paper begins by considering the dimensions of the social exclusion of children and young people, including poverty and its relationship with exclusion from school. It then reviews central initiatives in the area of children's literacy. The paper then considers children's use of public libraries, including access to library services and the effect of local and national initiatives on library provision. Challenges facing library services to children and young people (including school libraries) are considered. Stock selection is specifically discussed as a key means of making an impact on social exclusion. The paper then traces the transition from the outreach approach pioneered in the 1970s to a focus on building based services, followed, in turn, by an increased emphasis on education

from the change of Government in 1997. Various initiatives are detailed, but it is questioned whether there is sufficient emphasis on social exclusion. It is concluded that services to children are often marginalised, for reasons such as non-mainstream funding, and that libraries are still institutions serving primarily the privileged. Public libraries therefore need to tackle social exclusion as their main purpose, and recommendations towards this end are made.

Recommendations

Public libraries need to:
(a)   taking the recommendations from Roach and Morrison (1998):
- consult young people
- translate policy into action (e.g. by developing a detailed ethnic profile of young people using libraries to guide service delivery)
- reduce the social distance between libraries and young people
- staff public libraries to serve children and young people (e.g. by establishing staff development programmes that focus on general "ethnically sensitive" provision and on specific services for young people)

(b)   develop partnerships with other agencies, such as social services departments, education, health, and become involved in initiatives such as Education Action Zones, Early Years initiatives, Health Action Zones, "Sure Start", Single Regeneration Budget

(c)   via these initiatives, it may be possible for public libraries to recreate posts to work with children and young people

(d)   review their services and take urgent action to reach children from low-income families

(e)   review and upgrade information provision for teenagers

(f)   take the opportunities (New Opportunities Fund, for example) which are becoming available to get involved in more sophisticated ICT provision, bearing in mind the possibility that ICT itself may be exclusive

(g)   investigate the potential value of introducing equalities standards into libraries (parallel to those produced by Ofsted)

(h)   ensure that, if supplier selection is introduced, specifications are written to include the supply of non-mainstream titles as required

(i)   ensure that the widest possible range of materials is made available, related to the needs of local communities, including for example promoting the writings of black authors, investigating the supply of stock which may not be easily available (e.g. monolingual materials in languages other than English; realistic portrayals of working class children)

(j)   reassess public library provision in the light of that made by education and Museums

Working Paper 9: Images of exclusion: User and community perspectives of the public library (Dave Muddiman)

The paper examines how disadvantaged groups, communities and individuals use and perceive the public library. It reviews recent research on the use of, and attitudes towards, public libraries by working class and disadvantaged people and on perceptions of the value and impact of the public library in poor and excluded communities. It is argued that there are limits to libraries' perceived social roles, as these are associated with individual projects, rather than "mainstream" services. The paper considers conflicting claims about the relevance of the public library to excluded groups and classes, referring to evidence of non users' perceptions of the institutional culture of libraries. Specifically, it makes the case that it is an aspirant minority of working class people who particularly use and value library services. The final section of the paper argues that there is inadequate research evidence about "excluded" non-users' perceptions of library services and their information and library related needs. Research and communication strategies focusing on disadvantaged communities and client groups are examined. It is concluded that research has an important role in shifting the institutional core of the public library service and innovating newer social roles, particularly as a way of identifying the reading and information needs of disadvantaged people.

Working paper 10: Central and local government policies and social exclusion (Martin Dutch)

This paper gives an overview of the impact of social exclusion on national and local government policies since 1997. First, it analyses how government has viewed poverty issues since 1945, focusing on the post-1979 Conservative administration. The political consensus of 1945-1979 had limited achievements in terms of equality and in 1979-1997 an intentional strategy of inequality was pursued, driven by a desire to state cut state intervention and public spending. The paper then describes local government's response to national policy in the latter period, notably through anti-poverty work in urban authorities, whilst also referring to the under-use of local services by the poor. The Labour Government elected in 1997 is then discussed, with three policy strands being identified: morality; work ethic within post-monetarist neo-liberalism (rather than redistribution) and an emphasis on the multi-dimensional nature of the nature (which requires 'joined up' solutions). Overall, a centralised, directional approach is identified, with initiatives in a number of policy areas. Criticisms of New Labour's agenda are reviewed, such as its espousal of equality of opportunity, rather than equality. Here, the paper concludes with Levitas's view that the political framework within which social exclusion operates itself precludes a more equal society. Observations for public libraries are made, relating to opportunities for libraries to realign services to local needs and the impact of Government emphasis on partnership and consultation.

Working Paper 11: Public libraries, disability and social exclusion (Rebecca Linley)

This paper considers ways in which disabled people are excluded in society and then reviews public library provision. The concepts of disability and impairment are discussed, with the case being made for a social model of disability, as used by many within the UK disability movement. The paper then describes some of the barriers, including prejudice and discrimination, that exclude disabled people. Current legislation and Government policy are then considered, including the impact of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Public library policy and provision are then reviewed, through a consideration of broad themes relating to access and independence; information provision; specialism and integration; tackling discrimination; and local and national partnerships. Good practice is identified throughout the paper, but it is concluded that the main emphasis has been on providing access for disabled people, rather than the actual use they make of public libraries. A policy approach recognising the civil rights of disabled people is recommended.

Recommendations

Some basic recommendations for public library authorities, based on some of the good practice identified in this paper, would include to:-
(a)   Consult disabled people when reviewing existing services or developing new ones, and, specifically, consider disability issues as part of Best Value.
(b)   Work with disabled people to conduct access audits of library services, drawing on the provisions of Part III of the DDA.
(c)   Involve disability organisations in disability equality training.
(d)   Work with other local departments and organisations to prevent gaps or duplications in services.
(e)   Develop stock policies to reflect non-stereotypical portrayals of disabled people and to avoid offensive or inappropriate terminology.
(Some of these recommendations draw on Howard, (1999)).

At a more general level, as identified throughout the paper, there is a need for:-
(f)   Increased dissemination of good practice.
(g)   More evaluation of the impact of existing services.
(h)   Research on the barriers that might prevent disabled people using services, including those relating to perception and awareness.

Working Paper 12: Women, social exclusion and the public library (John Vincent and Rebecca Linley)

This paper gives a gender perspective on social exclusion and public libraries. It begins by giving examples of discrimination against women. Recent debates around feminism

and post-feminism are discussed. The paper then reviews evidence of women's use and non-use of public libraries, and refers to the distinct nature of their information needs, with examples of currently unmet needs being given. The experience of women as public library workers is then discussed, in terms of both their contribution to librarianship, including the idea of the library as a feminised space, and evidence of the under-representation of women at senior levels. Finally, recent work on women and ICTs is discussed and it is suggested that more use could be made of public libraries as a 'safe space,' addressing current concerns about women's access to ICTs. Overall, it is concluded that gender (and other) injustices should be related to wider global issues. A number of recommendations are made.

Recommendations

(a)   further research into the library needs of women (and particularly their information needs) to produce a report parallel to that by Patrick Roach and Marlene Morrison (1998)

(b)   public library authorities should produce and implement long-term strategies for tackling social exclusion, to involve: targeting priority needs; secure, sustainable funding; advocacy and innovation; monitoring and evaluation

(c)   investigate the potential value of introducing equalities standards into libraries (parallel to those produced by Ofsted)

(d)   ensure that, if supplier selection is introduced, specifications are written to include the supply of non-mainstream titles as required

(e)   ensure that the widest possible range of materials is made available, related to the needs of local communities, including for example promoting the writings of black authors, investigating the supply of stock which may not be easily available

(f)   develop partnerships with other agencies, such as social services departments, education, health, and become involved in initiatives such as Education Action Zones, Early Years initiatives, Health Action Zones, "Sure Start", Single Regeneration Budget

(g)   training, both in areas of service delivery and stock awareness, including the development of staff training to combat sexism

(h)   further research into the current extent of community contact by public libraries, with recommendations for good practice

(i)   develop ways of supporting socially excluded women in their own analysis of their requirements

(j)   develop meaningful partnerships between public libraries and socially excluded women's groups (e.g. based on common objectives, shared resources)

(k)   the development of materials selection policies to cover the requirements of socially excluded women

(l)   research into comparisons of provision with other sectors, such as museums, the arts

(m)   public libraries need to review urgently their introduction of ICTs to ensure that, as far as possible, they assist in overcoming the barriers that women face

(n)   the Library Association and local government organisations to press for the (re)introduction of equal opportunity policies into all local authorities, and to ensure that the needs of socially excluded women are included

(o)   where they are applicable to the needs of lesbians, bisexual women and transgendered people, to press for the implementation of the recommendations in Working Paper no. 5, *Lesbians, bisexuals, gay men and transgendered people* (Vincent, 1999)

(p)   taking the "Issues for Action" from the *Women and senior management* report (Poland, Curran and Owens, 1996):

Employment issues
- support the development of child care initiatives that enable parents to continue in their careers as librarians
- encourage more flexible working conditions such as job sharing; term time working; flexitime and other ways of working which facilitate career development alongside caring responsibilities without adversely affecting services
- pay especial attention to the conditions of employment of part-time workers whose access to training is likely to be especially under pressure
- strengthen means of dealing with sexual harassment for both sexes

Continuing Professional Development
- more flexible courses for continuing professional development such as distance learning
- encourage the development of means for improving access to training that will facilitate movement between sectors and specialisms and into management
- explore means of valuing and accrediting a wider range of career patterns and of 'transferable experience' between sectors
- encourage regular career appraisal and counselling to ensure individual career support

Networking
- foster a greater variety of means for professional networking and mentoring
- work to break down organizational isolation and marginalisation of particular LIS posts and specialisms. Support conditions for staff working in 'one person libraries', often schools, or decentralised departments where there may be difficulties in

covering absences for training and in fostering appreciation of specific LIS professional development needs

Other Issues
- provide focused support for older applicants
- determine whether, if women are having children later they are encountering more age-related biases and problems in returning from later career breaks
- diversify means for career networking" (pp xi-xii)

Working Paper 13. Struggle against racial exclusion in public libraries; A fight for the rights of the people (Shiraz Durrani)

This paper discusses racism in the UK, relating it to both social and economic exclusion, and to social class. Institutional racism is discussed, as is racism's relation to wider global factors. The history of race relations in the UK and US, including the experience of US public libraries, is discussed. Manifestations of racism in the UK are described in relation to various institutions and legal provisions. The next section of the paper considers the employment of Black workers, both nationally and in the public libraries sector, with a need for cultural change being identified. This is followed by consideration of the Black community perspective, with reference to national issues and recent public libraries research. Various proposed solutions to tackle racism are discussed. It is concluded that whilst it is only Black communities and library workers that can eliminate racism, everyone, at all levels within public library authorities, has a responsibility to tackle racism.

Recommendations: A fight for the rights of the people

(a)   Vision of a new service
A partnership of Black communities, Black library workers, senior LIS managers and other stakeholders need to prepare a vision of a library service that is "at ease" with a society where diversity "is seen as an asset, not an issue or a problem; a [service] which is open to talent from all communities and all cultures; a service which reflects the world in which we live today not the world of yesterday," as Dyke (2000) saw for the BBC.

(b)   Charter of Black Rights
The vision will not materialise into reality without legal enforcement. A Charter of Black Rights, based on basic tenets of the UN Human Rights Charter, with redress through courts of law, will remove the question of equality from the realm of desire and goodwill to a legal requirement. While the Charter will look at Black rights in all fields, the information sector will need its own chapter to address specific issues in LIS. Information is power, and control over information gives a position of power to those who control it. Regulation is necessary to ensure that the information is "equally" distributed in society based on people's needs.

Organisation should then pledge their commitment to the Charter of Black Rights.

(c)   National Race Council

A national body, possibly with a Ministry of Race Relations, is required to address race issues. This could be along the lines of the Race Council established in USA in 1998 - it is the "first free-standing White House office with a remit to educate the public about race, identify policies to increase equal opportunities, and co-ordinate work on race between the White House and federal agencies." (Brown, 2000).   New Labour has borrowed many practices from the USA. Perhaps the formation of a "Race Council" should be its next priority, and, linked to this, the role and powers of the CRE also need to be urgently reviewed as per CRE's recommendations to the Macpherson Inquiry: "more power enabling CRE to conduct formal investigations, a new power enabling the CRE to secure legally enforceable agreements to end discrimination".

(d)   DCMS Black LIS Rights Agency

There is an urgent need for a nation-wide statutory body that ensures that policies in LIS respond to needs of Black communities and that they are put into practice. Such a body should have power to ensure that libraries reflect the diversity of their communities at every level, particularly at senior, policy-making levels. The Agency should ensure that Black issues are adequately dealt with in the Library Standards.

It is proposed that such an Agency should be under the umbrella of the Department for Culture, Media, Culture and Sports (DCMS) and should have representatives from Black organisations and staff through the Black Workers Groups (see below). It should set policies and monitor progress in implementing the Charter of Black Rights within LIS as well in Government policies and the work of other Government Departments, in the Civil Service, in local authorities as well as in the private sector. It should oversee service to Black communities from public libraries, schools, academic and institutional information services. Thus it will address the current divided service and ensure a joined up strategic approach.

The Agency should have the legal authority – possibly working with a more powerful CRE – to initiate legislation to enforce its policies.

(e)   Affirmative/positive action

There is a need to examine the possibility of having an affirmative/positive policy framework which ensures that over a period of time Black representations in all fields reflect Black proportion in society. The legal basis of such action already exists in a recent ruling from the European Court of Justice in context of the situation of women:

> The European Court of Justice ruled yesterday that positive discrimination towards women in public-sector jobs does not breach law. The court said that equal treatment laws did not rule out priority for promotion of women in public-service sectors where they are under-represented.

> The judges were ruling in a German case about the right of Hesse regional authority to adopt an "advancement plan" for women. The plan specifies that at

least half the post in the authority must go to women (*Morning Star*, March 29, 2000 p. 6).

(f) Black Workers Groups

It is essential that Black workers are allowed to have workplace and national Black Workers Groups so that they can articulate their concerns and make policy recommendations. This is particularly necessary until there is an adequate Black presence in the policy-making levels of local authorities, Civil Service, academic and other fields. The local LIS Workers Groups need to be sponsored by Chief Executives and the national body needs DCMS sponsorship and patronage. Without such high level support the Black Workers Groups face the danger of manipulation by local managers who can use divisive and other tactics to render such Groups ineffective.

(g) Empowering Black communities

The Prime Minister has said, "Too much has been imposed from above, when experience shows that success depends on communities themselves having the power and taking the responsibility to make things better"(Tony Blair, PM in Foreword *Bringing Britain Together* (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998, p.7)).

The Best Value mechanism as well as Library Standards need to ensure that there is a meaningful involvement of Black communities in library service policy and practice. Halpin's recommendations need to be taken seriously and implemented:

> A number of elements are required to deliver full and inclusive representation. You have to be *part of the debate, part of policy making and part of implementation and development of policy* (Halpin, 2000, 10).

(h) Possible tools

There are a number of tools already available for improving service to Black communities. They can be effective agents for change provided there is commitment to change. Library Standards and Best Value have already been mentioned. Others include:

- *Public libraries, ethnic diversity and citizenship* (Roach and Morrison,1998);
- *A standard for racial equality for local government* (Commission for Racial Equality, 1998)
- *Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report* (1999);
- Recommendations from Public Library Policy & Social Exclusion Project;
- Annual Library Plan requirements, especially on Social Exclusion;
- *Libraries for All* (DCMS, 1999);
- *Minority Ethnic Issues in Social Exclusion and Neighbourhood Renewal; A guide to the work of the SEU and the Policy Action Teams so far* (Social Exclusion Unit, 2000a).

It is also important to work in co-operation with other authorities and employers so that there is not only an exchange of ideas and good practice, but also joint action and training to solve similar problems. The Social Exclusion Action Planning Network provides an ideal body for this.

(i)   Management responsibility

Library management must create an environment that reflects commitment to change so that Black communities and workers receive fair and "equal" service. The test of such an environment will be the library's ability to attract and retain managers who are dedicated to making diversity work. (Reese and Hawkins, 1999 p.14). As a librarian in the *Case Studies and Comments* (1999) says, taxpayers' money is wasted if authorities "retaining racist and incompetent managers".

(j)   The Library Association

In terms of professional organisation, the American Library Association is decades ahead of the British Library Association in supporting the needs of Black workers and communities. ALA uses its Office for Literacy and Outreach Services to "ensure that the ethnic caucuses of the ALA are supported in their effort to ensure that the issues and concerns of ethnic minority library professionals and ethnic minority populations are properly addressed" (Reese and Hawkins, 1999). It is time for the British Library Association to make itself relevant to the needs of British people in the 21st century. In not addressing the needs of Black communities and workers, the Association is doing a disservice to white as well as Black communities.

(k)   Responding to a multi-cultural Britain

The LIS world needs to address issues taken up by Dyke (2000) for the BBC:

- Proportion of Black people in employment
- Proportion of Black managers
- Organisational culture
- Management responsibility

In addition, an appropriate climate for improving services to Black communities will need to be created. The following issues will then be addressed in a positive climate of change:

- Appropriate staffing structure
- Relevant staff training
- Provision of adequate funding for services to Black communities
- A real commitment to improve service to Black communities, especially from Members, Directors and senior library managers
- Empowerment of Black communities and staff.

(l)   Research support and funding

It is important that research into needs of Black communities and in employment issues is carried out so as to provide appropriate solutions within the Best Value framework. The Library and Information Commission-funded Quality Leaders Project for Black LIS Workers enabled Merton Library and Heritage Services and the Association of London Chief Librarians (ALCL) to commission the Management Research Centre of the University of North London to carry out a feasibility study for the Project. The next stages of the Project will thus have a greater chance of success and sustainability. It is important that Re: source (as MLAC has now been re-named) continues to support such

initiatives. Similarly DCMS and Home Office funding for research and implementation of such projects will prove essential for there to be any meaningful change in library and information services to Black communities.

(m)   A matter of rights

In the final analysis, elimination of racism is a matter of human rights. It is a question of removing the differential of power that divides Black communities and workers from white communities and workers. John hits the correct tone when he says:

> … by identifying wrongs we will give more opportunity to focus on rights. The business at the end of the day is about the protection, the safeguarding and the advancement of rights. Rights that are routinely denied because of racism. Rights that are routinely denied because of the historically received wisdom that people have about themselves and the way they fear to question where their own power and authority actually comes from. If we are concerned about rights, then we have a responsibility to interrogate our practices and to challenge our structures and to do so without fear of being victimised because we're exercising those rights. (John, 1999).

The struggle against racial exclusion should be waged in every workplace, every policy forum, every community meeting, every library shelf. It is a struggle not only for those excluded, but also for those who benefit, knowingly or unknowingly, from the exclusion of some people, some communities, some countries. Just as slavery is unacceptable to us today, so should racism and all the exploitation and social oppression that goes under its name. The challenge to eliminate racism is for each one of us.

Working Paper 14: Political correctness (John Vincent)

This paper begins by discussing the history of debates around "political correctness" in public libraries, notably in relation to the social relevance of children's stock in the 1960s and 1970s. Developments up to the 1980s are described, followed by a discussion of the reaction to these, which was often negative. The current decline in concern with matters such as racism and sexism, in relation to library stock, is then discussed. It is concluded that stock selection principles should be restated in the context of accountability to the local community, and further recommendations are made.

Recommendations

(a)   investigate the potential value of introducing equalities standards into libraries (similar, for example, to the guidelines produced by Ofsted (1999) for inspecting equalities work)

(b)   the development of materials selection policies to cover all forms of discrimination and social exclusion

(c)   ensure that the widest possible range of materials is made available, related to the needs of local communities, including for example promoting the writings of black authors, investigating the supply of stock which may not be easily available

(d)   training, both in areas of service delivery and stock awareness, including the development of staff training to combat all forms of discrimination and social exclusion

(e)   the Library Association and local government organisations to press for the (re)introduction of equalities policies into all local authorities, and to ensure that, as part of developing a positive action programme, a materials selection policy is included within this

(f)   the Library Association to reassess the Code of Professional Conduct in the light of the contradictions outlined above

(g)   the Library Association and other bodies to combat the erroneous information given about "political correctness"

(h)   consideration to be given to the introduction of an award, similar to the "Other Award", in recognition of materials which present positive images.[ii]

Working Paper 15: Information and communication technologies, social exclusion and the public library (Martin Dutch and Dave Muddiman)

This paper seeks to locate public library efforts to address social exclusion within the wider debate about the transition to an "information" society and UK public policy responses to this. It notes, first of all, that utopian perspectives on information societies have little basis in reality and serve only to obscure a widening "digital divide". It is suggested that UK government policy, whilst to some degree recognising this problem, has focused on labour market led responses to it, based on training for ITskills and literacy. This, it is argued, neglects the need to create access to and control of infrastructure and resources by excluded people themselves. The public library clearly represents one possible mechanism through which such "informational" inclusion might be achieved, but we argue that thus far public libraries, in comparison with initiatives such as community networks, have not been particularly successful in linking ICT developments to a focus on exclusion. In the end, therefore, we suggest that public Library ICT policy will need to shift from a focus on the creation of a universal "people's network" to a prioritisation of access to ICT by excluded people and communities. Libraries will thus need to develop proactive ways of encouraging excluded communities and groups to utilise ICTs, and working in partnership with agencies with similar aims, and with local people themselves, will be an especially important part of this process.

[ii] a similar recommendation in relation to materials for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgendered people arose from the Arts Council Conference *Reading for Life,* in 1998 and was noted in Vincent (1999).

Working Paper 16: Public libraries, older people and social exclusion (Rebecca Linley)

This paper considers ways in which older people can be excluded in UK society and then reviews public library provision. It begins by considering the position of older people in the light of current social and economic policy, and also individuals' experience, and others' perceptions, of ageing. It then briefly reviews studies of the information needs of older people. UK public library policy and provision are then considered. Drawing on research on the social impact of public libraries, it is argued that public libraries represent a broadly positive, and valued, resource for older people. At the same time, the diversity of individuals grouped together as 'older people' is emphasised and it is suggested that this needs to be reflected in the delivery of library services. Much existing good practice is identified as being based on local partnerships and consultation, and the paper argues for the increased usage of these.