Working Paper 11

Public Libraries, Disability and Social Exclusion

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Abstract

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 (May 2000).

1. Introduction

> "Of all the disadvantaged groups in society, the disabled are the most socially excluded" (Howard, 1999a).

This paper considers ways in which disabled people are excluded in society and then reviews public library provision. It begins by discussing the concepts of disability and impairment, making the case for using a social model of disability, as advocated by many within the disability movement. The paper then considers some of the barriers, including prejudice and discrimination, that act to exclude disabled people. Current legislation and Government policy are then considered, including the impact of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and New Labour statements on welfare policy. Public Library provision is then reviewed in the light of a social model of disability, considering issues of access and inclusion, rather than directly considering the information needs of sub-groups of disabled people. In doing this, the paper argues for a civil rights approach in providing services.

2. Disability and impairment

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 defines a disabled person as someone with:-

> "…a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day to day activities."

> (in DARAS, 1999)

The question of what are ‘normal’ activities is, of course, problematic, but this definition does suggest a distinction between individual impairment or difference and its social effects. Disabled people can include those with a wide range of impairments. As well as mobility difficulties and sensory impairments, this can include, for example, people with mental health problems, learning difficulties and severe facial disfigurements (Disability Rights Taskforce, 1999).

Disability activists have, since the 1970s, developed a social model of disability in which disability is “the product of social organisation, rather than personal limitation” (Oliver, 1996, p.1).[1] In other words, it is the barriers created by a society “geared by and for able-bodied people” which create disability for those with physical or sensory impairments (Finkelstein[2], 1993, p.2). Using a social model, disabled people can be defined in terms of the presence of an impairment, the experience of externally imposed restrictions and self-identification as a disabled person (Oliver, 1996). For example, it is not the inability to walk that disables a person, but the steps into a building (Morris, 1991). The social model of disability has been widely accepted by the disability movement. For example, the British Council of Organisations of Disabled People (BCDOP), the umbrella organisation for groups run and controlled by disabled people, characterises disability in these terms (Oliver and Barnes, 1998). Some disabled commentators have expressed partial criticisms of the social model of disability:-

> “While environmental barriers and social attitudes are a crucial part of our experience of disability…to suggest that this is all there is to it is to deny personal experience of physical or intellectual restrictions, of illness, of fear of dying.”
> (Morris, 1991, p.10)

> “[V]arious social problems that I encounter as a visually impaired person, which impinge upon my life far more than indecipherable notices or the lack of bleeper crossings, are more difficult to regard as entirely socially produced or amenable to social action. Such problems include my inability to recognise people … and not being able to read non-verbal clues or emit them correctly.”
> (French, 1993a, p.17).

This is an ongoing debate amongst disabled writers and academics, but even those who have criticisms of the model accepts its importance. The “basic tenets” of the social model are still accepted by French (1993, p. 17). Morris comments that the social model is “a crucial part of our demand for our needs to be treated as a civil rights issue” (1991, p.10).

An outcome of the social model is a characterisation of disability as “the things that impose restrictions on disabled people”, such as inaccessible buildings and “excluding work

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[1] The term disabled people is used as “‘people with disabilities’ … implies that disability is the property of the individual and not of society” (Oliver and Barnes, 1998, p.18)

[2] In his discussion of disability, Finkelstein (1993) does not refer to learning disabilities, but other disabled commentators argue for the commonality of experiences of those with physical and sensory impairments and those with learning disabilities (e.g. Morris, 1991). The issue “commonality” is discussed later in this section.

arrangements" (Oliver, 1996, p.33). Furthermore, "the consequences of this failure do not simply and randomly fall on individuals but systematically upon disabled people in a group who experience this failure as a discrimination *institutionalised* throughout society" (Oliver, 1996, p.33, my italics). The question of institutionalised discrimination is referred to again in a public libraries context.

The social model can also lead to an argument of the commonality of disabled people's experiences, whatever the individual impairment or difference (i.e. physical and sensory impairments or learning difficulties). So, "[t]he non-disabled world is much concerned with causes of disability while the disability movement focuses on the effects and thus on our *common* experiences of prejudice and discrimination" (Morris, 1991, p. 12, my emphasis). Other disabled commentators have, however, argued for the need to reflect individual "needs and rights" (French, 1993a, p. 23).

Issues of commonality are also discussed in relation to disabled women and, in particular, black disabled people, who are under-represented in the disability movement (a debate reviewed by Priestley, 1999, pp. 66-69). Priestley (1999, p. 69) concludes that "the success of the movement has been in locating levels of analysis, and forms of organisation, which can accommodate such difference within a common experience of disability." This standpoint is used in the discussion of library services in the latter part of this paper - that is, it attempts to use a broad social model of disability to look at library policy, but also uses examples based on the social barriers faced by people with particular impairments. In accepting Priestley's conclusion about the commonality of disability, I am not arguing that disabled people are a homogenous group. However, it seems equally inappropriate to entirely define people with different impairments *solely* in terms of that impairment. Moreover, the diversity of human difference is such that it is impossible to neatly pigeonhole, say, all people with hearing impairments as having common 'needs', irrespective of such important factors as the degree of hearing loss or whether it is pre-lingual. For these reasons, the subsequent discussion of library services does not take the route of discussing the particular needs of, say, people with mobility impairments, then hearing impairments and so on.

If the social model of disability is accepted, counting of the number of disabled people is a problematic question: "that is [counting and classification systems] have tried to count the numbers of disabled people rather than the effect of disabling environments" (Oliver and Barnes, 1998). Nonetheless, some kind of baseline is needed to gauge the extent of exclusion of disabled people. The most widely accepted estimate of the number of disabled people in the UK, appears to be 6.2 million adults (14% of all adults) and 360,000 children, 3% of the total number[3] (derived from Office of Population Censuses and Surveys data and cited in Oliver and Barnes, 1998; Oppenheim and Harker, 1996; Leonard Cheshire, 1998).

A further factor to consider when looking at services to disabled people is the relationship between impairments and ageing. The likelihood of disability increases after the age of 50, and sharply over the age of 70. Women are more likely to be disabled, even after taking account of the higher proportion of elderly women. (Bagilhole, 1997). The charity Help the

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[3] A more recent report gives an estimate (based on Department for Education and Employment Information) of 8.5 million people coming within the DDA definition of disability (Disability Rights Taskforce, 1999).

Aged has estimated that there are more than one million severely disabled, and about two million moderately disabled older people in the UK, but they are assumed, by service providers, to have lower aspirations than younger disabled people (Inman, 1999). The question of whether assumptions of this kind are made by public library services is considered below.

3. The exclusion of disabled people

There has been a "consistent cultural bias against people with impairments throughout recorded history." However, it was following the social and economic changes of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries - with their emphasis on economic performance, medical science and individualism - that this discrimination became even more extreme. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, state policy was exclusionary in a very specific sense, seeing "the systematic removal of disabled people from the mainstream of economic and social life" through institutional incarceration and segregated education (Oliver and Barnes, 1998, p.35). The shift to community-based services started in the 1960s, but these were delivered within a "professionally dominated, needs-led model", which is still "essentially exclusionary" in its provision of segregated and targeted services. Although these views are expressed primarily in the context of education and personal care provision, a more general view (which may be applicable to other services including libraries) is that this model has also created "a language of paternalism which can only enhance discriminatory practices". The move towards what are claimed to be more inclusive practice has not, however, resulted in the inclusion of disabled people (Oliver and Barnes, 1998, p.49).

Statistics based on the OPCS data (referred to above) make clear the extent of the disabled people's continuing social and economic exclusion. They are, for example, up to three times more likely to be unemployed "reflecting the evidence of extensive discrimination in the labour market" (Oppenheim and Harker, 1996, p. 58). Also based on the OPCS data, 78% of disabled adults "are dependent on social security benefits as their main source of income" (Oliver and Barnes, 1998, p.44). As one disabled writer says, it is clear that "on nearly every indicator of participation in mainstream life disabled people come out extremely badly; for example on employment statistics, income levels, suitable housing and access to public transport, buildings, information … and leisure facilities" (Finkelstein, 1993, p.11).

Most of these indicators are not considered in any further detail. Instead, the focus of the rest of this section is on disabled people's struggle for civil rights and on the prejudice and discrimination they still face (arguably a more insidious form of exclusion than direct physical barriers). At the same time, the extent of some of the physical barriers facing disabled people should not be understated. For example, it has been estimated that whereas there are about four and a quarter million mobility impaired people in the UK, there are only around 80,000 accessible homes (Oliver and Barnes, 1998).

3.1 Civil rights and equal opportunities

Bagilhole (1997) discusses four eras of equal opportunities in the UK. The "moral" era of the 1940s and 50s reflected society's guilt in seeing servicemen being disabled in the Second

World War (Oliver, in Bagilhole, 1997), and resulted in the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act (1944) which set down a quota system for the employment of disabled workers in larger firms. The "legislative" era of the 1960s and 70s saw the introduction of the Race and Sex Discrimination Acts. The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 (amended in 1976) allowed for equal access for disabled people to new public buildings, educational establishments and workplaces. During the market-led "political" era of the 1980s, campaigns by disability organisations were ignored by central government. In the 1990s "economic, public relations and professional era", there was seen to be a good "business case" for promoting equal opportunities, because of the value of having a diverse workforce, which more closely reflected the general population,[4] and in not wasting individual abilities.[5] This era also saw the introduction of the Disability Discrimination Act, following campaigning, including direct action, from disability groups (Bagilhole, 1997). The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 can be seen as the outcome of pressure from the disability rights movement, comparable to women's and Black people's achievement of anti-discriminatory legislation in the 1970s.

The DDA creates basic rights for disabled people not to be discriminated against in the provision of goods, facilities and services; in employment and the provision of premises. Whereas Part III of the Act relates to goods and services, Part II covers employment practices. The provisions of the DDA relating to goods and services have been introduced in stages, with most provisions being introduced in October 1999. The duty for providers to take "reasonable steps" to alter buildings to give physical access will not come into force until 2004 (DARAS, 1999). A note of the main provisions of the Part III of the Act is attached as an appendix.

The DDA has, however, been criticised by disability activists[6]. Amongst these criticisms are that it allows for "justifiable discriminations" if an employer or service argues that "adjustments" to normal practice are not "reasonable" (Priestley, 1999, p. 207). Priestley also comments that there is no effective agency to enforce disability rights, referring to the solely advisory and monitoring role of the National Disability Council. The Disability Rights Commission has, however, recently been set up. It has the legal powers to give "real teeth" to the DDA and would be "up and running" by April 2000 (Levitt, 1999, p. 3). The DDA has also removed the quota system for the employment of disabled people (Bagilhole, 1997).

Nonetheless, the DDA is an important advance and, of course, an achievement for the disability movement (Priestley, 1999). It is too early to make an accurate assessment of the impact of the DDA. The Department for Education and Employment has published a study of cases brought under the Act in the first 19 months that it has been in force. Most cases were industrial tribunals brought under Part II of the Act, with only nine cases having

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[4] The sense that equal opportunities policies can be a means of reducing social and economic costs can also be detected since 1997 in New Labour policies (see Dutch, 1999).

[5] Something that is, again, reflected in new Labour policy. For example, in a recent statement on anti-discrimination policy, a Government minister commented "[o]ne thing I find painful to see is people with talent and ability not being used. It is such a waste" (Cabinet Office, 1999).

[6] The Disability Rights Taskforce on Civil Rights for Disabled People reported in December 1999 and also makes recommendations about widening the scope of the DDA, but it was too late to incorporate them in this paper (Disability Rights Taskforce, 1999).

covered goods, services and premises (Meager et al, 1999). At a more general level, the DDA is significant for service providers, like libraries, as:-

> "…the duty to make a reasonable adjustment is owed to disabled people at large, not simply to each individual user. This means more than responding to each individual requesting a service, but identifying patterns and trends in the environment within which the service is provided. Service providers have to think about their accessibility generally, and to think ahead about what adjustments may be required, rather than waiting for individuals to complain."
> (Howard, 1999b)

The next section briefly considers how the position of disabled people has been affected by the election of the Labour Government in 1997.

3.2 Disability and New Labour

New Labour's policy statements and initiatives are reviewed in another of the project's working papers. Amongst the conclusions of the paper are that New Labour has "a clear agenda of rights gained through responsibilities" and "believes particularly in the ability of work to be a tool for inclusion" (Dutch, 1999, p.12). This, has implications for the inclusion of disabled people (and also carers) and for other groups, such as older people:-

> "Although 'Welfare to Work' will undoubtedly help many people a substantial proportion of the population remain dependent on welfare benefits, including disabled and older people."
> (Edwards in Dutch, 1999, p.9)

Referring to the Government policy on welfare reform, a report on the exclusion of disabled people comments that:-

> "More than any individual benefit change, it is the Green Paper's underlying assumptions that threaten to stigmatise disabled people and increase their marginalisation from mainstream society. The Government's welfare reform is built on duties and responsibilities. Welfare to Work has been another key phrase of this Government, and work is seen as the measure of a person's worth."
> (Leonard Cheshire, 1998, p.2)

The New Deal for Disabled People is piloting different initiatives aimed at helping disabled people back into work, but an evaluation of these is not yet available (Department of Education and Employment, 1999). At the same time the welfare reform and pensions bill (signalled by the Green Paper mentioned above) proposed £750million cuts to social security benefits (*Guardian Society Extra*, 1999). In October 1999, disability campaigner Lord Ashley led a House of Lords rebellion against the bill's plans to remove 170,000 people's right to incapacity benefit (Inman, 1999). So, the position of those disabled people who are unable to work is becoming worse than ever. Moreover, inclusion through paid work will not be an option for the large number of disabled people of retirement age (Oliver and Barnes, 1998).

Another indication of the marginalisation of disabled people is their continued exclusion from the Social Exclusion Unit's headline projects and initiatives (Leonard Cheshire, 1998). This is set to continue. Howard (1999a) says that the Social Exclusion Unit "is not intending to examine disability," even though "joined up" thinking is needed to work across the departmental divisions.

More positively, the New Labour Government's introduction of local authorities' statutory duty to provide Best Value, through reviewing services over a four or five year period, should promote improved consultation with disabled people. On the relevance of Best Value to promoting the inclusion of disabled people, it has been said that:-

> "Best Value implies fair access to services, and so has a crucial role in contributing to social inclusion; otherwise it fails the 'quality' test. The key test of the effectiveness of a modern council will be the extent to which it delivers 'local services to local people'. To do this, equalities issues should be built in from the start, which will involve devising appropriate consultation mechanisms. One example of how this can be done is the development of Disability Equality Performance Indicators across Scottish Councils by Disability Scotland and Convention of Scottish Local Authorities. Another example is the London Borough of Greenwich's Code of Practice for Public Consultation based on Equalities."
> (Howard, 1999b, p.28)

3.3 Disablism and public attitudes

Disablism has been described as "the operation of attitudinal, environmental and institutional barriers to deny disabled people full human and civil rights" (Begum, in Bagilhole, 1997).

The importance of these attitudinal barriers is demonstrated in a recent survey of the general public, conducted alongside a qualitative study of disabled people, carried out by NOP (Leonard Cheshire, 1998). This study was based on the premise that although there had been considerable research on the physical barriers faced by disabled people, there had been less investigation of the role of public attitudes, and their effect on disabled people. Amongst the findings were that:-

- The majority (55%) of the public agrees that disabled people tend to be excluded and not allowed to be useful members of society.
- However, four in ten people disagree, suggesting that there is still some way to go before disabled people's concerns are fully accepted and understood by the public as a whole.
- More than half of the general public (53%) has no regular contact with disabled people. This rises to more than sixty per cent of the under 35s.
- More than one in five people feel self-conscious and awkward in the presence of a disabled person.
- One third of people surveyed agreed that some assume a person in a wheelchair cannot be intelligent.

(Leonard Cheshire, 1998, p.22)

In the same study, focus groups of disabled people saw themselves "as excluded from many aspects of society which able-bodied people take for granted" (Leonard Cheshire, 1998, p.5). Disabled participants in the research also made a distinction between physical exclusion (which caused frustration and may take time to change) and social exclusion which arose from the attitudes of others. For these disabled people:-

> "Social exclusion is the general collusion (whether conscious or unconscious) on the part of society to deny disabled people the respect it automatically gives to able-bodied people."
> (Leonard Cheshire, 1998, p.5)

Members of these focus groups said they felt:-
- patronised
- avoided
- ignored
- abandoned
- mocked by strangers
- assumed to be stupid
- treated as an inconvenience
- regarded as unfit for public view.

(Leonard Cheshire, 1998, p.5)

These kind of perceptions of the prejudices of non-disabled people have been widely documented. The accounts of the experiences and perceptions of eight disabled women, for example, inform the work of Morris (1991). One of Morris's informants identified some of the assumptions made by non-disabled people ("them"). Amongst these assumptions are:-

- "That we feel ugly, inadequate and ashamed of our disability.
- That our lives are a burden to us, barely worth living.
- That we crave to be 'normal' and whole'.
- That we are aware of ourselves as disabled in the same way that they are about us and have the same attitude to it.
- That nothing can be gained from the experience.
- That we constantly suffer and that any suffering is nasty, unjust and to be feared and retreated from.
- That whatever we choose to do or think, any work or pursuit we undertake, is done so as 'therapy' with the sole intention of taking our mind off our condition…"
  (Morris, 1991, p.21)

Implicit in many of these attitudes is a view of disability as a 'personal tragedy' (Oliver, 1996). The British Council of Disabled People has criticised the Government's 'See the person' campaign on the basis that it reinforced this kind of view (*Guardian Society Extra*,1999). Oliver (1996) comments that:-

> "In my striving to relate my personal experiences of impairment to the social restrictions of disability, there were few disabled heroes in fiction, television or film.

> As far as writing is concerned, where impairment or disability does feature, it is usually seen as personal tragedy (Rieser and Mason, 1991). … Film and television provided, and continue to provide, a mass of supercripple and the emotionally stunted stereotypes."
> (Oliver, 1996, p.15).

Although the situation may have changed slightly, the following comments about the invisibility of disabled people still hold true:-

> "Where am I - as a disabled woman - in the general culture that surrounds me? Generally I am not there. I could watch television for years, possibly a lifetime, without seeing my experience reflected in its dramas, documentaries, news stories. I could spend a lifetime going to theatres, libraries, bookshops, reading newspapers, without finding any portrayal of a disabled woman's life which speaks to my experience."
> (Morris, 1991, p. 84)

Clearly this is an area where the policies of public libraries could make an impact. This and other areas of public library activity are discussed in the next section.

4. Public libraries and disability

This paper does not directly review the information needs of people with different impairments and / or medical conditions (an approach taken, for example, by Velleman, 1990). This follows the above discussion of the social model of disability, although the paper does give individual examples based on an attempt to understand the effects of certain disabilities. The general approach is to focus on the social and institutional nature of disability. The increasing relevance of this approach to the information needs of disabled people is noted in the National Disability Information Project's study of disability information and advice provision:-

> "…there appears to have been a shift away from a set of priorities based on an individual model of disability - information about impairments, aids and equipment - to a new set of priorities that reflects the social model - information on benefits, rights and independent living."
> (Moore, 1995, p. 120)

Turning to library provision, public libraries have a long tradition of providing services to (some) disabled people. Liverpool's public library service is credited with being the first to provide books for blind people, in 1857. By the 1870s, a number of public libraries were providing books in embossed formats (although later in the century the National Library for the Blind became the main provider). In contrast, housebound services were a post-war development (Kelly, 1973). These two kinds of service show a concern with making material accessible, through alternative formats (in this case, Braille and Moon for visually impaired users) and delivery methods. More recently *The Libraries' Choice* (Department of Education and Science, 1978) identified many "areas of disadvantage" that libraries had failed to support sufficiently; services to "the housebound and handicapped" were amongst those developed by many authorities following this report (Kinnell, 1996, p. 181).

General statements and policies about extending access are covered in the next section. This is followed by a discussion of the information role of the public library in relation to disabled people. The next section reviews particular initiatives and projects targeted at disabled people; the debate about having specialist or integrated provision is also considered at this point. Much of the literature specifically focuses on the capacity of ICT to overcome the disabling barriers felt by many people with, in particular, sensory impairments and this is also considered here. The next section discusses the potential of libraries to combat prejudice and discrimination against disabled people, including the impact of the DDA. Finally, the impact of local and national partnerships is briefly considered.

4.1 Access and independence

In a recent review of the social impact of public libraries (Kerslake and Kinnell. 1997, p.19), libraries are compared favourably to "most organisations and institutions [which] marginalise disabled people" (for example by having restricted physical access to facilities or not offering large print publications). They cite the accessibility of libraries compared to other venues (quoting Heeks, 1989) and the Gateshead Disability Information Project[7] (Watson, 1992), which addressed difficulties in accessing information caused by the form in which it was presented. In the case of access, new public buildings have had to "have regard" to physical access for disabled people since the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act of 1970 (Department of Education and Science, 1978)[8]. Physical access is of course is more than just being able to get in a building. This is covered extensively in the literature, for example in some of the practical recommendations of the DNH Review of Public Libraries around signing, guiding, lighting, wheelchair access and shelf height (Aslib, 1995, p.194) and various guidelines produced by the Library Associations and its groups[9]. An example of good practice in this area is provided by Enfield Libraries, where a representative of the local disablement association looked at aspects like level access and manoeuvrability to inform a disabled access report and subsequent access programmes (Hill, 1998). Concerns about access, in a broad sense, are also found in the identification of "the barriers that keep people away," described in the DCMS consultation document *Libraries for All* (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 1999, pp.12-13). However, these barriers go beyond questions of physical access and encompass institutional barriers such as staff attitudes, personal and social barriers like discrimination and barriers relating to people's "perception and awareness" of libraries (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 1999, pp.12-13). Access issues are also inherent in work on alternative formats (for example for those with hearing, visual and print impairments) and are covered later in the discussion of services to people with particular impairments.

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[7] This was part of the National Disability Information Project (NDIP), see Moore (1995) and Barnes (1995). Various other strands of work by Gateshead Libraries, some originating with the NDIP, are discussed in Appendix two.

[8] In a 1980s' survey of services to older people it was noted that the Act had resulted in a "a more comfortable and accessible service" for disabled people (Dee and Bowen, 1986, p.75).

[9] For example for visually impaired people (Share the Vision and Library Association, 1996) and more general guidelines in its *Can everybody reach you?* leaflet series (Library Association, 1994).

In its overview of public library services to disabled people, the DNH review's evidence showed examples of good practice, but also, in some localities, a "failure to address the issues involved" (Aslib, 1995, p.193). The report then goes on to say:-

> "We believe that public libraries should be organised and operated, as far as possible, to enable people with disabilities to use them independently without the intervention or assistance of library staff (unless requested)."
> (Aslib, 1995, p.193)

Although not quoting any specific evidence from disabled people, the relevance of this comment can be seen in innumerable instances - for example adjusting shelf layout and height to enable full access to library materials for wheelchair users. At the same time, some disabled commentators have questioned whether 'independence' should be an overriding consideration in the provision of services. One example is provided by someone with a visual impairment, who says:-

> "I was recently studying part-time at a polytechnic, and was very satisfied with the willingness and helpfulness of the librarian. How my heart sank when she announced with pride that a special computer was to be installed to enable me, and several other partially sighted students, to find our own references. She was appalled by the lack of provision made for us in the library and was determined that we should get our rights whatever the cost. She sincerely believed that our main mission in life was to be as independent as possible.
> "The thought of this machine filled me with foreboding. If it were to be installed, chances are it would not suit me, as people's problems, even within the same disability pigeon hole, differ so much. Worse still, if I were able to use the computer, I would almost certainly take longer than the librarian … Despite the inconvenience this machine would undoubtedly cause, I would be expected to use it, for to shun such an expensive item … would seem thoroughly ungrateful!"
> (French, 1993b, p.45)

As French (1993a, p.46) says, "[we] are all dependent on each other to some degree, yet any limitations disabled people have are labelled and regarded as qualitatively different". French's comments, of course, relate to an academic library. They may not be typical of the attitude of other visually impaired users, but they may provide an insight into the widely held perception of the under-use of specialist reading equipment (e.g. Craddock, 1996, and discussed further below). They also show the importance of consultation, something that is advocated by the DNH Review and elsewhere.

The DNH Review also comments on information provision for disabled people, which is discussed in the next section.

4.2 Information provision

The DNH Review of public libraries states that "public libraries provide an important information resource for people with disabilities" (Aslib, 1995, p.194). Such claims are at odds with the emphasis on peer provision found in the disability literature (e.g. Oliver and Barnes, 1998; Priestley, 1999). For example, the establishment of the first Disablement Information and Advice Line (DIAL) by disability activists in Derbyshire in 1976 was the result of their recognition that:-

> "…disabled people did not have access to information to facilitate their empowerment… Because people with impairments have been excluded from the mainstream of community life they needed specialist information in addition to that needed by everyone else."
> (Oliver and Barnes, 1998, p.81)

The spread of such organisations "made a significant contribution to the empowerment of the disabled population", although DIAL UK (the national umbrella body) is no longer controlled by disabled people (Oliver and Barnes, 1998, 82). The National Disability Information Project also emphasised the importance of peer provision, finding a "greater understanding of the role that disabled people could and should play in the control and operation of disability information and advice services (Moore, 19995, p.120).

It is also relevant to view positive statements about the importance of libraries' information provision for disabled people in the light of a recent study of the information needs and information seeking behaviour of a national sample of the population in the United Kingdom (Marcella and Baxter, 1999). This suggests a less rosy view of the public library's significance to disabled people. The sample population of this study had an admitted skew towards public library users, and the survey's overall results suggested that the public library was the most popular past and intended future agency for finding information. At the same time, based on respondents' past usage of different agencies, Citizens Advice Bureaux (CABx) and other advice agencies had been more widely used for legal information (37.5% against 50%). For welfare benefits information, only 5% of respondents had gone to the public library with 75% having gone to CABx and other agencies (Marcella and Baxter, 1999, p.165). This is finding is especially important for disabled people as they are much more likely to require information about benefits (43.1% of respondents, compared to 21.6% of non-disabled people) (Marcella and Baxter, 1999, p.168).

This, then, suggests that other agencies may be more appropriate to the needs of disabled people than public libraries. This view is supported by Marcella and Baxter's finding that CABx were the most frequently cited resource for disabled people (58.5%); they were significantly less likely to use public libraries than non-disabled people (p.173). Two further points need to be noted about this survey: the response rate was very high amongst public library users (69.4%) and was very low (8.3%) amongst users of 'other' information and advice agencies (Marcella and Baxter, 1999, p.162). There was therefore (as already noted), a skew towards public library users. So, if anything, the importance of public libraries is likely to be over-stated and that of 'other' advice agencies (including the 'peer' organisations discussed in relation to disabled people) understated.

In his paper providing an international perspective on social exclusion, Shiraz Durrani comments that:-

> “Liberation movements everywhere have had to create new information services to serve their own needs. People’s struggles against exclusion will continue - with or without public library services.”
> (Durrani, 1999, p.20)

This comment also makes an appropriate conclusion to this section. Public libraries, like many other agencies, have not provided the specialist information needed by disabled people, who have responded by creating their own information services.

4.3 Specialist services: inclusion and integration

Before considering some public library initiatives and research aimed at particular groups of disabled people, it seems appropriate to briefly consider housebound services (which will be covered in more detail in the working paper on older people). Tessa Harding, Help the Aged’s head of planning and development, has accused service providers of assuming that “older people with impairments have lower aspirations than their younger counterparts” (Inman, 1999). Although this assessment was made primarily in a personal care context, one can see parallels in public librarianship, for example this response (admittedly dating from 1980) to criticisms of the use of volunteer staff in delivering housebound services:-

> “most recipients were extremely grateful[10] to have a service at all and were unaware of any shortcomings save the immediate shortage of romances!”
> (Bell, in Rawsthorne, 1990)

Turning to particular projects or evaluations of library provision, those services cited in the literature are most often associated with sensory impairments and some learning disabilities such as dyslexia (see, for example, Pottage, 1999). Here, it is possible to compare services which are integrated with ‘mainstream’ library provision (which might be seen as more ‘inclusive’) with ‘special’ services. The dominant message from disabled commentators (e.g. Oliver and Barnes, 1998; Finkelstein, 1993) is support for integrated provision, as compared to the segregation of the past.

One example of a ‘special’ service would be Manchester’s Visually Impaired People’s Unit, a specialist service in the central library, which has existed since 1983. Here, a range of services is available, for example magnification aids; speech systems; recorded speech services; training on use of specialist equipment (Gallimore, 1999). In a recent description of the service it is noted that:-

> “Visual impairment takes many forms and there is no one solution to all the needs of the visually impaired. A friendly, personalised service is essential if users are to get the most benefit from the Unit’s facilities.
> “The aim is to serve each person as an individual. The isolating nature of visual impairment affects users in many different ways. Some may just want social

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[10] This “gratitude” may, as noted by the DNH Review team in the context of housebound services, also be a reflection of concern about the withdrawal of services (Aslib, 1995, p.196).

> interaction whereas others only want access to the technology but most users benefit from both."
> (Gallimore, 1999, p.16)

This service was considered in a case study of services to visually impaired people (specifically on the use of reading aids, but in fact much wider in scope), where it was concluded that there were benefits for users in services like Manchester, which created "enabling environments where visually impaired people feel at home and that their problems are understood" (Craddock, 1996, p.135).

The basic approach of this kind of service can be contrasted with more recent developments by Islington Libraries. The Envisage system provides an integrated package of access technology in library terminals, to enable "equality of access" to library catalogues for people with visual impairments "without the need for an intermediary, in the mainstream library setting" (Hall, 1998, p.17). Particular strengths of this work included the consultation with individuals and groups of visually impaired people as an integral part of the project, and training sessions for staff, which was especially important as the "enabling equipment is sited in the mainstream library context" (p.18). Hall emphasises the importance of the service being "mainstream". The question here is whether "mainstream" equates to "inclusive" for disabled people - or are at least some people with impairments currently better served by less integrated services? This is a question which cannot be answered be answered in 'either/or' terms, but is nonetheless worthy of further investigation and research. Underpinning such debates is the general importance of consultation with disabled people when new or revised services are under consideration.

Islington's Envisage system is just one example of the use of new technologies to provide access to public library services. Other notable examples include Cheshire's investment in technologies aimed at improving access for hearing impaired people (Nixon and Parker, 1997) and South Ayrshire's work on adaptive technologies to improve access to computers by people with visual and motor impairments (McCormick and Sutherland, 1999). A major concentration of work of this kind is found at Gateshead Library and Arts Service (e.g. Walters, 1999). A brief summary of work there is attached at appendix two, as an illustration of the potential of ICT - and of how it has been integrated with other developments (such as the employment of staff with sign language skills). Gateshead's work with CD-i formed one strand of the National Disability Information Project, and here it was concluded that:-

> "The Gateshead experience showed that the technology opens up new possibilities for the communication of information but that it is not always easy to exploit these possibilities. As the technology becomes more sophisticated, so it becomes necessary to develop ways of structuring and presenting information effectively. It reinforces the fact that it is not desirable simply to translate information from one medium into another. … There is a pressing need for research and development to enable us to understand the different information design constraints and conventions of the different media."
> (Moore, 1995, p.166)

There is a growing body of material on accessible Web design for users with visual and print impairments, which addresses some of these broader design issues (e.g. Brazier and Jennings, 1999; Ormes and Parker, 1999). Moore's comments may shed some light on the oft-quoted concern about the under-use of assistive technologies. This is especially commented upon in relation to technologies aimed at people with visual or print impairments (e.g. Craddock, 1996; Jeal et al, 1996b, who ask whether the under-use traditionally associated with visual impairment, will also apply to developments like minicoms and telephone adaptations for hearing impaired people).

Another reason for low usage levels is suggested in a study of reading aids for visually impaired people, which refers to "personal problems of passivity, lack of confidence and motivation" (Craddock, 1996, p.134). This echoes the reference to "personal and social" barriers, such as low self esteem, which deter people from using libraries, mentioned in *Libraries for all* (DCMS, 1999, p.12). A further point relating to reading aids is made by a visually impaired writer, who comments that they are (although I would change this to "can be") "a mixed blessing … because other people have such faith in technology that they believe the disabled person is managing perfectly well and requires no assistance" (French, 1993b, p.46). This again may shed some light on the perceived under-use of services.

At the same time, following from the earlier arguments about civil rights, access to many communication technologies can be seen as quite basic rights. For example, Jeal et al (1996b, p.13) quote disability campaigner Tom Levitt (now an MP) as saying that "the minicom has become the touchstone of accessible services to deaf people, a symbol that the council has listened and put its money where its mouth is." They go on to say:-

> "The transformation in lifestyle which follows from a deaf person having access to a minicom parallels that of a hearing person and their lifestyle since the introduction of telephones. As many librarians [in public and academic libraries in North West England] said, even the little use that there has been has been well worth the investment."
> (Jeal et al,1996b, p.13)

In any case, since October 1999, many "investments" of this kind would be expected under the DDA's provisions on access to goods and services (see Appendix 1).

4.4 Tackling prejudice and discrimination

In comparison with the wealth of information dealing with the potential of technology to improve access for disabled people, there is little available material about the extent to which libraries address the more attitudinal aspects of discrimination (although it is, no doubt, covered in local authorities' internal policy documents like stock selection guidelines). One exception to this is Sheffield's Ad Lib project, winner of the 1999 Libraries Change Lives Award (*Library Association Record*, 1999a), "which encourages people with learning disabilities to work in a community library to carry out book restoration and repairs" (Wark, 1999, p.289). Ad Lib was seen as having a number of benefits in terms of the students' skills and confidence (especially as it is part of an accredited training programme). It can also be seen as changing the attitude of staff, who "said that at the outset they were apprehensive about *having the students in the library*, but now the students are making a real contribution to the workplace" (Wark, 1999, p.289, my emphasis). As the students worked in the public area of the library it is possible that the attitudes of the general public may have been challenged, or even changed, in the same way. Philip Wark, Chair of the Award's judging panel, commented that Ad Lib "shows a positive image of people with learning disabilities to library users and staff" (*Library Association Record*, 1999a). This seems a rare example of work that challenges fear and prejudice in an active way.[11]

More generally, libraries could have a public education role in selecting books and other materials that combat stereotypical portrayals of disabled people (like the 'personal tragedy' model discussed above). Events and display work could convey similar messages. However, in terms of what is reported in the literature, there appears to be little available material covering practice in this area.

There is evidence that training in the broad area of disability awareness is taken seriously by public library authorities. According to one survey, for example, staff in 88% of public libraries in North West England had undergone deaf awareness training (although it is not said how widespread this training was within each service) (Jeal et al, 1996a). It is also reported that those authorities that had hosted *Share the Vision* events had subsequently reviewed services and implemented changes. In 1995, the DNH Review had identified training needs in the areas of disability awareness training, equality training, assisting those with sensory impairments and "adapting buildings for people with disabilities". It also reports that disabled users "were in the main complimentary and appreciative" (Aslib, 1995, p.195). There is however some anecdotal or incidental evidence that staff attitudes can be an issue. For instance an article about library provision for people with dyslexia (described as a "hidden disability") contains the following comments:-

> "I still get some very inconsiderate remarks / actions from fellow members of staff, and managers too"
> *(Dyslexic Librarian)*
>
> "The attitude which asks the question 'What are you doing here if you have trouble reading or can't use the catalogue' seems to be endemic"
> *(London Borough).*
> (quoted in Pottage, 1999, p.8)

It can be speculated that library staff may be more comfortable dealing with people with some impairments than others. Although not only affecting disabled people, recent Governments' 'care in the community' policies have had an impact on public libraries. The Comedia researchers found that libraries "in all the case study areas had to deal with an increased number of homeless users and the mentally ill as part of their daily routine." They go to say that this is not a role for which library staff "are necessarily equipped and trained"

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[11] It may also be an indicator of a lack of initiatives of this kind, that in a review of past projects shortlisted for the Holt Jackson Community Initiative Award (now the Libraries Change Lives Award), none of these, with the partial exception of Renfrew's Life project for older people, focus on work with disabled people (Matarasso, 1998).

(Greenhalgh and Worpole, 1995, p.36). Such evidence does suggest training needs in this area.

Turning to the legal aspects of anti-discriminatory practice, the main provisions of Part III of the DDA, on access to goods and services, have only come into force in the last few months. Whilst welcoming the Act, Guy Daines, the Library Association's Head of Professional Practice, has also commented that "resources will be an issue and we must await case law under the Act to give some indication as what is meant by 'reasonable'" (*Library Association Record*, 1999b). On the question of resources, it has been argued that:-

> "While individual needs will vary according to circumstances and councils will need to respond accordingly, there is much that can be done to create a conducive environment to deal with individual needs. Adopting a proactive approach would be much more cost effective for local authorities than responding purely on a case by case basis'.
> (Local Government Management Board, in Howard, 1999b, p.27)

Certainly the passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) 1990 appears to have a considerable impact on US public libraries (see for example, Robinson and Dowd (1997), which assesses children's services in the light of the ADA).

There also appears to be little available evidence about the employment of disabled people in public libraries and this would seem to be an area where more research is needed. At the superficial level of looking at *Library and Information Appointments*, most public libraries appear to be addressing equal opportunities for disabled people to the extent of participation in the Employment Service's 'Positive about disabled people' scheme. In terms of the DDA, Part II refers to employers' requirements to make 'reasonable adjustments' for a disabled person. As with Part III of the Act, much will depend on what is defined as 'reasonable.' An indication of the potential significance of Part II of the DDA is that there were, in its first year, more cases than there were under the employment provisions of the Sex and Race Discrimination Acts in their first years. Amongst the issues which arose in these early cases were uncertainty about the meaning of 'reasonable' adjustment and a lack of understanding about the 'justification' defence (i.e. that discrimination can be justified) (Meagher et al, 1999). It is easy to envisage the kind of challenges that could arise for library managers attempting to apply Part II of the Act. For example, for many white collar jobs, provision of full access should mean that a wheelchair user can work as quickly and efficiently as an able-bodied person, but someone with a visual impairment, even with technological and personal assistance, would inevitably be slower in many tasks (French, 1993a). In this kind of case, would an acceptance of lower output be a 'reasonable adjustment' on the part of the employer?

Finally, it has already been noted that disabled people feel that many non-disabled individuals have discriminatory attitudes (see section 3.3). To what extent are these attitudes, detected by disabled people, held by public library staff? A related question is whether public libraries, as service providers and employers, are guilty of institutional discrimination against disabled people? In an article about the aftermath of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry report, Ayub Khan raises the issue of institutional racism in relation to public libraries, pointing, for example, to the virtual invisibility of black and ethnic minority groups in the

UK library profession (Khan, 1999). There is a need, at least, to ask similar questions in relation to disabled people.

4.5 Partnerships

The importance of "joined up" thinking is, of course, one of the main tenets of the Government's social exclusion policy (Dutch, 1999). It is easy to see the importance of "joined up" approaches to providing library services for disabled people. For example, many disabled people will not be able to use the full range of library services, however accessible the library building, if there is no accessible public transport in the area. Back in 1978, *The Libraries' Choice* made a number of recommendations about public libraries' links with statutory and voluntary organisations. *Share the Vision* is an example of a national partnership which brings together voluntary organisations and professional bodies to address fragmented and piecemeal provision (Hopkins, 1997).

If consultation is to be meaningful it needs to include consultation with groups of disabled people[12] (as opposed to just existing users of the service). Enfield Libraries have found various benefits in working with Enfield Disablement Association (EDA):-

- Exchanging expertise and information has been important "in keeping up-to-date with disability awareness issues and the practical side of disabled access".
- EDA was a partner in a successful funding bid for a new IT/media centre and refurbishments to improve access.
- Library and EDA staff have learned about each other's ways of working, creating a more positive view of the library service.
- EDA has provided training and "their identification of practical issues around library use for people with sensory impairments [means that] training supplied has been more targeted and effective."

(Hill, 1998, p.174).

No doubt there are many other local partnerships of this type. The kind of approach described by Hill seems to be a means of addressing other issues, for example investigating the perceived under-use of libraries by disabled people. Specifically in terms of the 'joined up' agenda, such partnerships should help prevent either duplication or gaps in local services.

5. Summary and discussion

Disabled people are socially excluded on any number of criteria, but are neglected in current central government policy initiatives addressing social exclusion. At the same time, the Disability Discrimination Act, whatever its limitations, does represent a vehicle to advance the civil rights of disabled people. It can be anticipated that the DDA will become, over its gradual implementation period, a benchmark for public library services.

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[12] And specifically with organisations *of* disabled people, groups run by disabled people themselves (Morris, 1991; Oliver and Barnes, 1998).

Public libraries' provision has been compared favourably to that in other sectors, with a number of examples of good practice (Kerslake and Kinnell, 1997). The primary focus, however, appears to have been on access issues (including alternative formats and communication technologies as well as physical access), paralleling the general philosophy of promoting access to ICT and many other services. Here, the argument made in *Whose problem?*, still seems relevant:-

> "…the problem may be seen as one of enabling people to use library services per se …where the object is to discover the most effective method of linking people and library materials…
> "however, the problem may also be seen as one of how the library service can help people to surmount the barriers which presently prevent the from playing a full part in society…
> "Consequently, the effectiveness of the delivery system, although very necessary, must be seen as secondary in importance to the ultimate use which people make of materials, information etc. which the library service provides."
> (Coleman, 1981, p.11)

The comments about the traditional emphasis on access are not meant to imply further work is unnecessary and the challenge presented by the DDA has already been noted. The Library and Information Commission has recently announced a major programme of work "to ensure that blind and visually impaired people benefit in a much wider way from access to library and reading services[13]". This includes several strands of work with local authorities to ensure Best Practice/Best Value, including a survey of services to see how they match up to national guidelines (Library and Information Commission, 1999). There seems to be an equally strong need to identify and disseminate good practice in other aspects of library services. One such example might be services to people with pre-lingual hearing impairments, a group whose reading needs are unlikely to be met conventional bookstock (Jeal et al, 1996a).[14]

There is evidence that disability awareness training is widely carried out in public library authorities (e.g. Jeal et al, 1996a). There is less evidence about the extent of attitudinal barriers that might prevent disabled people from using public libraries. The human aspects of service delivery are often reported to be very important in the success of services and projects used by disabled people (e.g. Craddock, 1996; Gallimore, 1999). The wider issue of institutionalised discrimination of disabled people has also been raised. The importance of institutional, personal and social, and 'perception' barriers to full library use is highlighted in *Libraries for all* (DCMS, 1999). There is clearly a genuine concern amongst library professionals with improving access to library and information services. However, there needs to be more work on identifying, and surmounting, barriers that prevent library use and on also on the relevance of library materials.

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[13] Reports on some of the strands of this programme of work have been published, at the same time as this report was being completed (see the LIC website, www.lic.gov.uk, for details).

[14] A recent development for this group is seen in Bury Libraries' Hearing Impaired Unit, which gives local people videophone access to a national network of British Sign Language interpreters (*Library Association record*, 2000).

Consultation is vitally important in relation to both practical physical access issues and wider policy questions. The Best Value framework provides a means of including disabled people in service planning (Howard, 1999a, 1999b). This perhaps represents a way forward, most especially in overcoming professional assumptions about disabled people's 'needs' and the paternalism which can be detected in the provision of some services (for example, to housebound people).

In the paper's consideration of information provision, it has been argued that the significance of public library provision has been overstated (citing evidence from Marcella and Baxter 1999). Here, there needs to be a recognition that disabled people have been creating their own information services to meet their own self-defined needs (Priestley, 1999; Oliver and Barnes, 1998). I would argue for an enhanced role for public libraries in supporting independent information services and resource centres. Skills exchange schemes might also have benefits; local groups of disabled people could provide awareness training and library staff could provide training or advice on information skills / management. This example is also suggestive of the importance of local and national partnerships (especially with organisations controlled by disabled people) in delivering services.

It is also important that disability culture is recognised as one of the many strands running through contemporary multi-cultural society (Vesey, in Morris, 1991). There appears, however, to be comparatively little evidence about the degree to which public libraries support disability culture. Similarly, there appears to be little readily accessible material discussing how stock selection policies can tackle negative / stereotypical portrayals of disabled people. One example is provided by stock selection guidelines developed by Lambeth in the 1980s:-

> "People with disabilities should be portrayed as fully-rounded characters with individual personalities, not as one-dimensional stereotypes limited by physical or intellectual factors … Books should show society's barriers which prevent people with disabilities from leading full lives… We should be aware of language that de-humanises, objectifies or stereotypes people with disabilities… Know which terms are regarded as unacceptable by the disability rights movements, as well as what is currently acceptable in the community…"
> (Lambeth Library Service, revised edition, 1991)

These guidelines also emphasise the importance of language, something that I have tried to reflect in this paper (for example in the earlier discussion of disability and impairment).

The focus in this paper has been on services *for* disabled people. Public libraries should also have a public education role in challenging the prejudice and discrimination faced by disabled people.

Finally, some commentators have argued that people with certain impairments have been especially badly served, for example hearing impaired people, when compared to visually impaired people (*Library Association Record*, 1999a). Although this debate has not been covered directly, it is possible to make a broader argument that those with 'hidden' impairments like dyslexia fare especially badly (see Pottage, 1999) and this is certainly an area that needs further investigation, for example around staff attitudes. More generally, though, this seems quite a divisive debate. The relevant point is that most disabled people are disadvantaged in their use of library services. Underpinning this point is the need to see library (and other) service provision to/for disabled people as a civil rights issue. Public libraries need to embrace this civil rights agenda to ensure that, in the words of Hopkins (1997, p.58), services to disabled people "become regarded as core services, not optional extras."

6. Recommendations

Some basic recommendations for public library authorities, based on some of the good practice identified in this paper, would include to:-

- Consult disabled people when reviewing existing services or developing new ones, and, specifically, consider disability issues as part of Best Value.
- Work with disabled people to conduct access audits of library services, drawing on the provisions of Part III of the DDA.
- Involve disability organisations in disability equality training.
- Work with other local departments and organisations to prevent gaps or duplications in services.
- 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, (1999b)).

At a more general level, as identified throughout the paper, there is a need for:-

- Increased dissemination of good practice.
- More evaluation of the impact of existing services.
- Research on the barriers that might prevent disabled people using services, including those relating to perception and awareness.

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Appendix One: Part III of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995

In force from December 1996	• Making it unlawful to treat a disabled person less favourably for a reason related to that person's disability (unless it can be justified).
In force from October 1999	• Service providers will have to take reasonable steps to change any policies, procedures or practices which make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to make use of a service. • Service providers will have to take reasonable steps to provide auxiliary aids or services (for example, the provision of information on audio tape or of a sign language interpreter) which will enable disabled people to make use of a service. • Where physical features make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to use a service, service providers will have to take reasonable steps to provide the service by a reasonable alternative method.
In force from 2004	• Service providers may have to take reasonable steps to remove, alter or provide reasonable means of avoiding, physical features that make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to use a service. Service providers will have to provide auxiliary aids which have a permanent effect on the fabric of the premises (e.g. installing a permanent induction loop).

From: *Disability Discrimination Act 1995 Part III: A reference pack for advisers* (DARAS, 1999).

Appendix Two: ICT services, Gateshead Libraries

This appendix uses work by Gateshead Libraries and Arts Service as an example of "a range of services to enhance access to information" (Walters, 1999), including the use of ICT in this area. There are four main strands to these services.

1. *CD-i projects*, including the development of information provision transcribed into British Sign Language. As the CD-i format has "not become established in the domestic setting", future work will transfer the experience of producing CD-i titles to other formats like CD-ROM.

2. Use of the Council's *cable television* channel (available in 12% of Tyneside homes) to disseminate information services. This service is used by a large number of library non-users and has been "broadly welcomed" by an independent panel of disabled people.

3. *Access to Reading and Information Services (AIRS)*, which uses specialist software to help provide a transcription service. The service has developed, over a number of years, to become a national service providing "a comprehensive transcription service offering Braille, large print, audio-tape and digital formats to organisations and individuals. Transcription options have been extended to include transfer of information to sign language videos "at affordable cost." With this particular service, community consultation was "vital" in deciding the style and quality of the service. This service is "ideal for the transcription of minutes of a meeting, promotional leaflets, or any information requested from a public information service."

4. *Service enhancements for deaf people* were funded through the DCMS / Wolfson Public Libraries Challenge Fund. The key features of the service have been "the employment of an information assistant with sign language skills, the use of video telephony for sign language communication, and increased access to information recorded on video in sign language form." It is concluded that this service has resulted in the full range of reference information to deaf users. The take-up and impact of this service is not discussed.

(Walters, 1999, p15-16)