

# BRANCHING OUT

Future Directions



Comhshaol, Oidhreacht agus Rialtas Áitiúil  
Environment, Heritage and Local Government



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BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH  
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LE CEANNACH DÍREACH ÓN  
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DUBLIN  
PUBLISHED BY THE STATIONERY OFFICE  
TO BE PURCHASED DIRECTLY FROM THE  
GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS SALE OFFICE  
SUN ALLIANCE HOUSE, MOLESWORTH STREET, DUBLIN 2,  
OR BY MAIL ORDER FROM  
GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS, POSTAL TRADE SECTION,  
UNIT 20 LAKESIDE RETAIL PARK, CLAREMORRIS, CO. MAYO  
(TEL: 01-6476834/37 OR 1890 213434; FAX: 01-6476843 OR 094 9378964)  
OR THROUGH ANY BOOKSELLER.

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ISBN 978-1-4064-2132-3



Printed on recycled paper  
containing a minimum of 75%  
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Comhshaol, Oidhreacht agus Rialtas Áitiúil  
Environment, Heritage and Local Government

We are delighted to launch **Branching Out – Future Directions**, a policy document which will drive the development of the public library service in Ireland over the next five years.

This document builds on the major policy document - **Branching Out** which was published in November, 1998.

Much has changed in Ireland in the interim period and it is now timely to look at what remains to be done to place the public library service on a sound footing for the future. The document looks at progress made and identifies the challenges facing the public library service, and through a series of priorities and recommendations, sets out directions for future action.

The public library service is socially inclusive. Individual public libraries play a very important community role as centres of knowledge, information and culture. They have the added advantage of being open to everyone, whatever their age, education or nationality. They are a magnificent resource for the promotion of community development, for social integration and, increasingly, a focal point for people of all ethnic backgrounds.

The 45 grant-aided libraries and 7 headquarters opened since 1998 have hugely enhanced customer experience, both in terms of the buildings themselves and in terms of service provision.

The public library service is a good example of quality customer service in the local government sector. The quality and vitality of the service throughout the 32 library authorities was endorsed in the recent report of the Service Indicators in Local Authorities. The findings of the report show an increase in the use of the library service and a welcome recovery in the number of registered members over the three year period. We would like to thank the dedicated library staff for their contribution and assure library authorities of our continued support in further improving the quality and level of service.

As a result of the progress being made in public library service, quality of life is being improved and new opportunities for education, life-long learning, leisure and personal development have been opened through enhanced multi media and ICT services.

Over the next five years this document promises a greater role for the library service in promoting integration of the 'new Irish', a greater role for library buildings as cultural centres,

continued development of new libraries, particularly as part of a new emphasis on sustainable integrated developments, and a new emphasis on protecting and enhancing the stock of architecturally important library buildings, which enhance the cities and towns of Ireland. This document sets out the vision to achieve those aims.

Our thanks go to all those who helped in the development of this policy document.



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John Gormley, T.D.  
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# Vision Statement

## Key Statement

Irish public libraries enable people and communities by providing access to a world of ideas, information, imagination and culture. People are using libraries and their services in new and exciting ways, supported by skilled and committed staff.

through the provision of resources for culture, learning, social and community development and leisure.

## Ideas

A thriving culture, economy and democracy require the free flow of information and ideas. The public library service provides access to ideas by building on its traditional core skills in promoting reading, fostering intellectual development, enabling independent and lifelong learning. The public library service preserves and promotes the cultural heritage of our communities in order to explain the past, illuminate the present and inform the future.

## Information

The public library service enables people to make sense of the vast array of information and knowledge that is available through a wide variety of media. It provides access through existing and new technologies to information from national, local, commercial and community sources, thus enabling everyone to learn new skills and make informed choices throughout their lifetime.

## People

The public library service provides a community focus and support. Libraries are, at any one time, meeting places, learning resources, and comfortable and relaxing public spaces. Libraries are highly accessible and respect the diversity and individuality of all people. Library staff welcome individuals and communities and support their needs





# Recommendations for Action 2008 - 2012

## 1. Infrastructure

- 1.1** The Steering Group recommends the development of a further multi-annual building programme, with a built-in time frame for proceeding to tender. This will allow the continuation of work commenced under **Branching Out** but having regard to changing demographic trends in the intervening period and the need to ensure timely draw down of allocated funds. The rate of grant aid will be determined on an individual basis in the light of potential funding from other sources.
- 1.2** In tandem with the recommendation on the building programme, the Steering Group recommends the revision of Departmental procedures for the submission by library authorities of proposals for funding under the Public Library Capital Programme.
- 1.3** In order to ensure that the full range of services are available to all library users (including those with disabilities), the Steering Group recommends an audit of existing libraries and the provision of grant-aid to underpin necessary works.
- 1.4** The Steering Group recommends that the existing capital programme be extended to include the provision of grant aid for furniture, fittings, ICT and stock in new library buildings being provided by library

authorities, without Exchequer funding.

- 1.5** The Steering Group recommends that ICT initiatives developed during Branching Out be further built on, thus enabling and enhancing the quality of access to a rich diversity of information now available on the Internet.
- 1.6** In order to ensure continued improvement in the range and quality of stock as a component of library infrastructure, the Steering Group recommends continued progress towards a per capita book fund target of €3.77 and that this target be linked to the Consumer Price Index.

## 2. Quality of Service

- 2.1** In order to ensure that the library service attracts its potential audience, the Steering Group recommends that the value of existing measurement of usage be assessed and, in tandem, that an appropriate methodology of more widespread measurement of usage be developed.
- 2.2** In order to ensure the provision of equitable access to library services, the Steering Group recommends that library authorities
- review the suitability of opening hours of each branch in the light



of the results of the PLUS surveys;

- develop innovative solutions to extending opening hours and maximising the availability of the professional expertise of library staff for users; and
- pilot and mainstream, as appropriate, innovative service delivery methods.

**2.3** In line with the life cycle approach identified in *Towards 2016*, the Steering Group recommends that the role of the public library service in lifelong learning be expanded and that library authorities seek to have that role recognised by education providers and other agencies.

**2.4** In order to ensure that library staff can fulfil their potential, the Steering Group recommends that they be enabled through quality facilities, technological enhancements and training programmes to develop their managerial and information skills.

**2.5** The Steering Group recommends the development by library authorities of a collections development policy.

### 3. School Library Service

**3.1** The Steering Group recommends that the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government continues to develop co-operative opportunities with the Department of Education and Science with a view to maximising the value that public libraries can provide to support education at primary, secondary and continuing adult learning levels.

**3.2** The Steering Group recommends that the Department of Education and Science maintain, and increase where feasible the current level of grant aid for the provision of the school library service to library authorities.

### 4. Libraries as Centres of Culture

**4.1** The Steering Group recommends that library authorities continue to develop their potential and online potential as providers of community cultural spaces; as resources for cultural expression; as a collective memory; as agents of cultural inclusion; and as spaces for a truly intercultural Ireland through the development and implementation of cultural programmes and events.

**4.2** Linked with the recommendations at 4.1 and 4.2 in relation to stock, but in terms of resources for cultural development, the Steering Group recommends that the range and comprehensiveness of library collections be developed and enhanced and that library authorities increase investment in this resource.

## 5. Library Co-operation

- 5.1** The Steering Group recommends greater co-operation within local authorities on education and broader cultural areas in order to ensure an even level of service delivery across authorities.
- 5.2** The Steering Group recommends the completion by library authorities of their strategies on co-operation thereby enabling the incorporation of the individual strategies into the national strategy set out in *Joining Forces* (2002).
- 5.3** The Steering Group recommends the continued co-operation on North/South matters through COLICO and, at European level, the co-ordination of digitisation through The Euro-Focus on The Cultural Heritage, participation in the Member States Expert Group and other national and European initiatives.

emphasis on dissemination and implementation of research findings.

- 6.3** In the context of a rapidly changing society, the Steering Group recommends that public libraries position themselves as community focal points and gateways for and to local authority, central government and cultural services.

## 6. Marketing and Research

- 6.1** The Steering Group recommends that a marketing strategy be developed to examine what would convince potential users of the relevance and usefulness of the public library service in their lives.
- 6.2** The Steering Group recommends the continuation of the Public Library Research Programme (at a level to be agreed) and with stronger





one

**Introduction**

1



## 1.1 Background

### **Branching Out: A New Public Library**

**Service** (1998) reviewed public library policy in Ireland, and put forward a series of recommendations supporting a vision designed to meet the needs of Irish people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The report was produced by a project team, established by the Minister for the Environment and Local Government, which consulted widely on how the local authority library service could meet its full potential. The public library service was seen as having the potential to make a major contribution to two overall Government objectives

- To ensure that Ireland moved rapidly to embrace the opportunities of the Information Society so as to support economic and social progress as well as a more participative democracy; and
- To establish an inclusive society in which all citizens could participate fully in the social and economic life of the country.

The vision for the programme foresaw four primary roles for the service:

1. Providing open democratic access to the world of information.
2. Supporting lifelong learning at local level.
3. Continuing to provide access to the sum of human thought and imagination.
4. As a community based support to literacy training and reading, particularly for young people.

**Branching Out** envisaged a service built on the premise that public library services would be judged not on what they are but on what they do.

Nine key issues, raised by nearly 90 key organizations and 800 users consulted during the preparation of the report, were identified as requiring particular attention:

- Delivering a better service in a changing Ireland.
- Providing adequate infrastructure.
- Reaching all communities.
- Developing the range and quality of stock.
- Increasing local and national marketing of library services.
- Expanding and deepening co-operation with other library organizations and with a wider range of potential partners.
- The need to improve the schools library services.
- Fostering the role of the public library as a centre of culture.
- A co-ordinated research programme underpinning developments.

The **Branching Out** recommendations were endorsed by Government, and, following publication of the report, the Minister established a Steering Group in 1999, representative of the major stakeholders and chaired by an Assistant Secretary in the Department, to oversee its implementation. A conference for the key stakeholders was held in November, 2002 – midway through the programme - to review progress and consider what more needed to be done.



## 1.2 Branching Out – Future Directions: The Process

A full review of **Branching Out** was undertaken in 2006/2007 by a Steering Group, which in the course of its work

- reviewed the 61 individual recommendations in **Branching Out** in association with the Mid Term Review Document 2002;
- identified the achievements attained over the period against each recommendation;
- identified the gaps in implementation and issues which had arisen during the period;
- analysed both achievements, gaps and new issues;
- developed terms of reference for **Branching Out – Future Directions**;
- produced a vision statement for the Irish Public Library Service in 2012;
- drafted a range of working documents.

Based on the findings of that review and recognising that the basic analysis of **Branching Out** remains valid, **Branching Out - Future Directions** has been developed by the Department in close consultation with the Steering Group.

### **Branching Out – Future Directions**

recognises the need to continue to build on the progress already made by local authorities and their library staff in modernising and

expanding public library facilities and services. It sets out a redefined vision for the public library service. Against the background of significant population growth; growing cultural diversity; remaining infrastructural, ICT and service challenges; it identifies key issues requiring attention in the coming years, actions to address those issues and ensure a 21st century public library system, and a set of targets to help ensure that the desired outcomes are achieved.

The background is a teal color. In the upper right, there is a dark teal rectangle containing the word 'two' in white. Below this, a large, stylized, white calligraphic script is overlaid on a faint image of a library interior with bookshelves and people. In the bottom right corner, a large white number '2' is displayed.

two

**A Profile of the Public Library Service  
– 1998 to 2007  
Milestones & Achievements**

2



Since the publication of **Branching Out** and the commencement of the programme which that report established, the location and design of public library buildings and the services being offered have changed in unprecedented ways. These changes reflect, at least in part, the significant challenges faced by the public library service, as population and demographics change more rapidly than ever before and as ICT reconfigures the very nature of physical space, communications and movement in both towns and cities.

The public library service is responding to these changes but recognises too that, although buildings themselves may change in their external appearance and in their internal design, there is a core library service and culture which has proven to be highly resilient through many decades. This is likely to continue to be so.

The library as a special place in the life of the community, a window onto the world of the imagination and of widened intellectual horizons, the library as “A Space for All” is not likely to diminish.

**Branching Out** affirmed the potential of the public library service to deliver better access to information, information technology and lifelong learning, new avenues of social inclusion and enhanced delivery of government services using ICT infrastructure in the library.

It is now over nine years since **Branching Out** was published and the development programme initiated on foot of that report makes it relatively easy to measure progress.

This progress has been substantial in the main areas of the service, due to the efforts of central and local government, managers and librarians.

- **“Better service”** can be reported in terms of opening hours with a 25% increase in opening hours since 1998;
- **“Better building infrastructure”** can be measured by the total number of new libraries opened since 1998 – 45 branches plus 7 headquarters to end 2007;
- **“Better ICT infrastructure”** with the provision of 1449 public access Internet PCs, the provision of optical scanning facilities for library users with visual impairment, colour printers to allow printing of OSI maps;
- **“Better book collections”** with library authorities estimated spending of 132% more on stock in 2007 than they did in 1998; and
- **“Better electronic services”** with the development of online public access catalogues by library authorities, the Changing Libraries programme delivering the [www.askaboutireland.ie](http://www.askaboutireland.ie) showcase of local studies material, The Ask About Ireland Irish Times Digital Archive, Griffith’s Valuation and Historic Maps.

This information in the following pages provides a good barometer for measuring the standard of the public library service at the end of the programme. It also gives a good

# Branching Out Libraries

Ardkeen	Cootehill
Ashbourne	Dungloe
Athlone	Leixlip
Ballaghaderreen	Loughrea
Ballina	Lucan
Ballinamore	Macroon
Ballybane	Malahide
Baltinglass	Mallow
Birr	Manorhamilton
Bishopstown	Milford
Blanchardstown	Mountrath
Blessington	Oranmore
Buncloody	Pearse Street
Buncrana	Scariff
Bundoran	Sixmilebridge
Cabra	Templemore
Carndonagh	Thurles
Carraroe	Tory Top Road
Cashel	Tubbercurry
Castlebar HQ & Branch	Tullow
Castlecomer	Watch House Cross
Castlepollard	Waterford City
Cavan	Westside

**Buncrana**



**Cavan**



**Tubbercurry**



**Blanchardstown**



**Carraroe**



**Pearse Street**



**Thurles**



**Cabra**





indication of the positive return on the investment in the service by both central and local government.

It is important that the momentum begun in 1998 be maintained and increased where possible. It is equally important that future developments, both in terms of buildings and services, reflect the changes in service provision and the needs and wishes of the customer. The public library service needs to be open, flexible and innovative and library authorities have shown through the research projects and through the many ICT projects supported by the Information Society Fund that they have these skills. Given the overall costs involved and the limited funds available there is a need constantly to seek to improve the way libraries are built; to consider innovation in financing, through, for example, the use of public private partnerships; and the development of opportunities for delivery of many local authority services within a shared space.

The benefits of information technology can be clearly seen in the projects supported by the Information Society Fund. Information Technology enhances the service to the customer and can free up library staff time to provide wider services. The library is no longer exclusively dedicated to the book but is an information store where all the forms of media - new and old - are presented. In an age where information can be accessed almost anywhere, it is the simultaneous availability of all media and more importantly the curatorship of their contents that will make the 21st century library vital. Creative use of modern technology will allow an increasing number of library staff to concentrate more fully on their role as

information advisers in the public areas of the library.

Looking at the development of the public library service in terms of the library user, anecdotal evidence would suggest that the decrease in library membership from 824,985 in 1998 to 778,421 in 2005 (latest figures available) does not accurately reflect the change in the way libraries are used, nor does it provide an accurate profile of the public library user in the Ireland of 2007. The number of visits to libraries in 2007 by the public was 14.3 million, an increase of 17.3% over the 2002 figure of 12.2 million, as outlined in the Public Library User Survey (PLUS) 2002 and 2007.

The following paragraphs, along with Appendix 1, take a more detailed look at the milestones and achievements in the public library service since 1998. They illustrate the level of innovation involved in the implementation of **Branching Out** which broad overall statistics or key indicators of public library service delivery, cannot easily capture.

## 2.1 Infrastructure

### 2.1.1 Background

**Branching Out** proposed a revised capital investment programme in library services. In terms of library infrastructure the programme was to address three key areas:



### Snap Shot: Public Library Building Awards

The level of excellence achieved by library authorities in the development of their library infrastructure has been recognised by UK and Ireland Public Library Building Awards, organised by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) and An Chomhairle Leabharlanna. These biennial awards, which were launched in 1995, recognise the highest level of new and refurbished library development across the UK and Ireland and are recognised as benchmarks for modern public library facilities and indicators of professional library development. Irish local authority libraries have featured prominently across a range of categories including

- Winner of the Judges' Award for Accessibility, the Mary Finch Award and highly commended in the Architect Meets Practicality Award with The Johnston Central Library and Farnham Centre, Cavan County Council and highly commended in the Partnership Award with The Source Library and Arts Centre, Thurles, County Tipperary Joint Libraries Committee in 2007.
- Winner and highly commended respectively in the Heart of the Community category in 2005 with Waterford City Council's Lady Lane Library and Sligo County Council's Tubbercurry Civic Offices and Library.
- Winners in the Best Small Library Conversion in 2001 and 2003 respectively with Buncrana (conversion

and extension of a former Presbyterian Church), Donegal County Council and Ardkeen (best library conversion and extension within an existing shopping centre), Waterford City Council

- Winner in the Small New Library in 2003 with Cootehill, Cavan County Council
- Highly commended in 2003 for New Libraries in Blanchardstown, Fingal County Council and Milford, Donegal County Council.

Other Irish libraries have also achieved success over that period with Macroom Library, Cork County Council, short listed in 2000, Ashbourne, Meath County Council long listed in 2005 and Bishopstown Library and Tory Top Road Library, Cork City Council in 2007.

- Library infrastructure provision
- ICT provision
- Improvements in the range and quality of stock.

While the project team, at the time, was not in a position to place a definitive cost on the investment required to provide the optimum level of infrastructure, it estimated the overall capital cost of the programme to be £93.5 million (€118.72) over 8 years, comprised of £75 million (€95.23) for library buildings and £18.5 million (€23.49) for ICT.

### 2.1.2 Library infrastructure provision

Over the period 1999 to 2007, Exchequer grants provided by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government for the provision of new library buildings (50% to a maximum of 75% grant aid), mobile libraries and delivery vans (100% grant aid) and for various ICT projects (fixed grant in some cases and 75% to 100% in others) amounted to some €91.918 million.

Table 1 shows annual actual Exchequer capital investment over the period and the estimated corresponding local authority expenditure.

The total level of capital investment is in keeping with that recommended in **Branching Out**. On foot of this investment

(and local authority contributions), a total of 45 new libraries (plus 7 headquarters) were opened by the end of 2007.

In the early years of **Branching Out**, the tendency was to provide stand-alone library buildings. In recent years the provision of library services has often been integrated with other services provided by the local authority. Library services have also joined up with other cultural services, where appropriate.

Examples of these “integrated libraries” are listed below:

- **Milford, Co. Donegal.** Milford Community Library is located in the Milford Public Services Centre, a one-stop-shop facility, which also houses the County Council area services, citizens information and social welfare offices.
- **Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo.** This library is incorporated in a one-stop-shop, which also houses the Court Service, a local authority area office, the Council’s motor tax service, and offices of the HSE, Teagasc and Coillte.

**Table 1**  
**€000s**

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Total
Exch.	9,526	9,909	5,930	7,174	11,624	9,440	13,388	11,302	13,625	91,918
L.A. <sup>1</sup> est.	3,402	3,786	2,541	2,946	4,982	4,046	5,738	5,280	23,339	56,060

<sup>1</sup> Table 1: Note: a number of authorities indicated planned capital projects but were not able to supply financial data relating to them. This table gives only a partial picture of estimated expenditure on capital projects by local authorities.

### **Snap Shot: Ask About Ireland Website**

[www.askaboutireland.ie](http://www.askaboutireland.ie) is a substantial online local history resource, a portal to public library websites and local studies contacts, a source of local content supporting the schools' curricula and a gateway to nationally significant historical datasets.

[www.askaboutireland.ie](http://www.askaboutireland.ie) was developed initially in phase one of the Cultural Heritage Project as the portal website to showcase the potential for users to access the cultural history of Ireland, based on the local studies collections of public libraries, local museums and archives. Themed initially on the 'Big House and Landed Estate Life in Ireland', the website has expanded through a number of phases and now offers the user the possibility to choose from over 20 topics relating to Irish history and culture past and present and the Student Zone which provides information and activities to help primary and secondary students in support of their studies. [www.askaboutireland.ie](http://www.askaboutireland.ie) also provides access to the websites of the public libraries and information on how to contact local studies librarians.

The website can be browsed by place or by topic. Within the places section, users can locate content created and uploaded locally by the public libraries from their individual local studies collections. This content contains a huge range of interesting material and information including historic documents, maps, photographs and drawings, some of which have not previously been published. Many of the topics on the site contain feature articles composed by a national expert, which provide an overview of and

introduction to that subject. Browsing by topic also provides access to the local content from the public libraries.

[www.askaboutireland.ie](http://www.askaboutireland.ie) provides free access in public libraries and schools to the Irish Times Digital Archive, an online, fully searchable version of the complete archive of The Irish Times since the first edition in 1859, this was funded jointly by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and The Irish Times and quality-controlled by a team of local studies librarians. The complete and searchable online version of Griffith's Valuation, one of the most important 19<sup>th</sup> century genealogical sources and the associated historic maps will be launched early in 2008.



- **Athlone, Co. Westmeath** This branch library is incorporated into the new Civic Centre. The Civic Centre provides regional services for both the County Council and Athlone Town Council, and also provides one-stop-shop facilities in relation to a whole range of other State services.
- **Thurles, Co. Tipperary.** This facility, which opened in 2006, incorporates a branch library into the new Arts Centre and Library, with funding for the arts element of the project provided by the Department of Arts, Sports and Tourism under the Access Programme 2001-2004.
- Internet Training Manual / Training Sessions for staff and users.
- Library Services via Internet including reservations and renewals online.
- Optical Scanners.
- National Digitisation/Cultural Heritage including [www.askaboutireland.ie](http://www.askaboutireland.ie) and [www.borrowbooks.ie](http://www.borrowbooks.ie).
- Changing Libraries including Ask About Ireland Irish Times Digital Archive, Griffith's Valuation.
- Virtual Communities project undertaken by Fingal County Library.
- Agora enabled users to establish a "virtual community", which mirrored the physical one in which they live e.g. [www.ardkeen.ie](http://www.ardkeen.ie) (Waterford City Library) and [www.swinford.ie](http://www.swinford.ie) (Mayo County Library).
- E-learning and E-literacy services / projects by Wexford County Library.
- Lifesteps consists of guides which explain how to achieve various lifesteps using the internet e.g. learning to drive, buying a home and retirement.
- Culturenet is a gateway to information about Ireland's culture and heritage.

### 2.1.3 ICT provision

Actual Exchequer investment (including monies from the Information Society Fund) in the development of information and communications technology in the public library service in the period 1999 – 2007 is set out in the following Table 2. These figures are included in Table 1.

This funding, which varied from 75% to 100%, allowed for the provision of 1449 public access Internet PCs and the automation of library systems, which in turn enabled the development of a significant number of grant aided ICT services/projects:

- Library Management Systems, including online catalogues

**Table 2**  
**€000s**

1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Total
1,587	1,075	568	1,738	2,109	915	3,055	381	1,034	12,462

### 2.1.4 Improvements in the range and quality of stock

One of the most important results of the PLUS survey undertaken in 2002 identified the need for more and better stock. Library authorities estimated a spend of €13.6 million on stock in 2007, or €3.20 per capita, which represents an increase of 132% over 1998.

The Department provided specific grant aid to all library authorities to accelerate the improvement of library stock generally. The Department also grant aids library stock as part of the capital programme for new libraries. The target per capita book spend set originally in **Branching Out** at €3.17 (IR£2.50) was increased to €3.27 in 2003. This revised target has been met by 10 local authorities in 2007. The total number of books issued by library authorities in 1998 was 12,440,760 and this increased by 6.2% to 13,212,941 in 2005 (latest figures available). Non-book or multi-media lending has increased by 120% in the same period from 586,786 to 1,290,080.

## 2.2 Quality of Service

### 2.2.1 Background

In terms of quality of service, **Branching Out** looked at

- the need to deliver a better library service to meet changes in Irish society by developing enhanced opening hours, investing in library staff, improving equality of access to library services, improving specialised services, improving library information services, developing lifelong learning services;
- the need to develop new service delivery methods to isolated areas and areas of low population; and
- the need to improve the range and quality of stock.

### 2.2.2 Opening Hours

**Branching Out** recommended that library authorities should immediately commence work on developing a programme of enhanced opening hours with implementation to commence during 1999. Two opening hours surveys were undertaken during the programme. The first was published in 2001 as *Extending Our Welcome* and covered 1998 to 2001; the second *Changing the Schedules* was undertaken and published in 2004. The first survey indicated an increase in aggregate opening hours of 6.76% between 1998 and 2001. The second survey indicated that opening hours had increased by 20% since 1998 and 13% since 2001.

In the 2004 survey,

- lunchtime opening had increased by 46%, an additional 162 libraries were now open at lunch hour, since 1998;
- 84% of libraries offered at least one evening opening per week, up from 80% in 1998; and
- 75% of libraries offered some weekend opening, up from 64% in 1998.

In summary, there was an increase of 20% (from 7,761 to 9,344 per week) in the opening hours of branch libraries between 1998 and 2004. As would be expected from the number of new libraries opening and the emphasis on

increasing access for the public, information supplied by local authorities shows a rise in 2005 of 25% in opening hours since 1998.

### 2.2.3 Investing in Library Staff

**Branching Out** identified the need for investment in human resources, for staff development plans in library authorities, for an assessment of open learning tools and for inclusion of library staff in local authority development plans and programmes. The Standing Committee on Public Library Staff Training and Development established by An Chomhairle Leabharlanna (ACL) at the request of the **Branching Out** Steering Group has, as its brief, the identification of training needs, suitable courses and trainers. In its report on training courses organised since the establishment of the Committee, ACL has identified a wide disparity in the participation rates across authorities. ACL continues to provide specific training in relation to the many ICT projects which it manages. Many library authorities also organise their own training courses or include staff in general local authority courses.

### 2.2.4 Improving Equality of Access to Library Services

In order to promote equality of access to the public library service, **Branching Out** recommended that each library authority should develop and implement a strategy to improve access to the library for everybody. The strategy should seek to overcome physical barriers to library use, social barriers to library use and financial barriers to library use. This recommendation is now supplemented by new requirements under the Disability Act, 2005 under which local authorities must produce access strategies within a specified timeframe. In the area of access for people with a

disability, An Chomhairle Leabharlanna and four library authorities, Cavan, Dublin City, Kildare, and Mayo, worked with the Equality Authority to develop approaches to reasonable accommodation in public libraries. The results of this work were published as *Making Access Happen* in September 2004. Further training in this area was delivered to additional library authorities during 2005, following the recommendation of the Standing Committee on Public Library Staff Training and Development.

A further six library authorities engaged in a formal programme of accommodation for people with disability in 2007, bringing the total to twenty-eight (of thirty-two).

Two other projects were initiated in 2007:

- the development of guidelines for the delivery of services to people with mental health difficulties;
- research into the provision of guidelines for library signage, display and communications.

The Excellence through Accessibility Awards were developed in partnership with the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and were launched in October, 2005.

The scheme accredits public bodies that reach high standards in accessibility across key aspects of their services including buildings and facilities, publications, websites, customer services, human resources and procurement procedures. The award is administered by the National Disability Authority, an independent statutory agency under the aegis of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law



Reform. There were 4 recipients of the award in 2006, 3 of which were public libraries – Cabra Branch Library, Dublin City Library and Archive and Cavan Branch Library and HQ. There were 4 library recipients of the award in 2007, Ballina Branch Library, Leixlip Branch Library, Tubbercurry Branch Library and Waterford City Library.

In terms of financial barriers, **Branching Out** recommended that a review of charges be undertaken by each authority under specific headings. Charges for library membership and Internet use continue, in some cases, to be a major barrier undermining the spirit of the Information Society's initiative under **Branching Out** and creating inequities between authorities. There are specific examples where the introduction of Internet charges and membership charges has already resulted in an immediate reduction in usage, particularly by vulnerable social groupings.

### 2.2.5 Improving Specialised Services

Library authorities continue to use the work from the Public Library Research Programme in the development of specialised services. For example, the report *Meeting the Challenges of Cultural Diversity: a report on the role of public libraries in Ireland* published in 2007, focuses on the development of library services for Ireland's multicultural society.

The report contains recommendations in relation to welcoming users, providing targeted and appropriate services and training staff.

Optical scanning facilities have also been installed in 95 public libraries providing the visually impaired with opportunities to access the Internet. The facilities also provide

magnification and text-to-speech software and thereby improve access to a wide range of information sources available in the public library.

### 2.2.6 Improving Libraries Information Services

**Branching Out** recommended a national commitment to information access through public libraries. In October 2005, the Changing Libraries programme included funding for online information resources to be delivered through the public library service. A joint tendering process in co-operation with the National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE), was approved in 2007. The tender sought to identify information providers for a broad range of encyclopaedias, dictionaries and other reference sources to be made available in libraries and in schools. The Public Library Research Programme has funded Dublin City Libraries to examine the delivery of information services with a particular focus on eGovernment information. The research will examine how access to content and library staff skills can support users in using local and national government information and services.

### Snap Shot: Libraries and Cultural Diversity

*Meeting the Challenges of Cultural Diversity: a report on the role of public libraries in Ireland.*

The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Mr. John Gormley, T.D. launched the report *Meeting the Challenges of Cultural Diversity: a report on the role of public libraries* in Ireland in Rathmines Library in 2007.

The Public Library Research Programme was established in 2002 to implement the recommendations of **Branching Out** for a formalised research programme which would focus on the provision of new, innovative and improved library services.

The Public Library Research Programme is managed by An Chomhairle Leabharlanna and monitored by the Public Library Research Committee, which includes members from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, the Library Association of Ireland, the School of Information and Library Studies (National University of Ireland, Dublin) and An Chomhairle Leabharlanna.

This research project was selected following the second call in 2003 under the Public Library Research Programme. It investigated how Irish public libraries can develop better library services to meet the needs of a multicultural and multilingual society. Project partners were: Dublin City Council Public Libraries, Waterford City Libraries and Meath County Libraries.

Speaking at the launch of the project in Ashbourne Library in March 2005, the President, Mary McAleese, said "This insightful and very welcome initiative by the Irish public libraries working with An Chomhairle Leabharlanna explores how libraries can best respond to our multicultural and multilingual society, how they can make the stranger welcome among us and ensure we, as a civic society, are open to the processes of individual and collective cultural enrichment which a multicultural environment offers. The new services show respect for the world's great diversity and importantly encourage a tolerant healthy curiosity about that diversity."

### 2.2.7 Range and Quality of Stock (Policy)

**Branching Out** recommended that a programme of book fund increases be undertaken by each library authority and that a national target be agreed. The target proposed was that by 2002, each library authority would invest at least £2.50 (€3.17) per capita in book stock annually. In order to help library authorities achieve the necessary increase, **Branching Out** recommended the allocation of a national book grant totalling £3.6 million (€4.57) over four years from 1999 – see paragraph 2.1.4. The **Branching Out** Steering Group sought to increase the per capita figure to €3.27 in 2003, which would equate to €3.77 in 2007.

In terms of innovative service delivery, many library authorities now avail of foreign language book purchase and rental services which ensure an adequate range of books in any given language. Recent employment records indicate that one in every ten people working in Ireland today is a foreign national;

Dublin City Libraries, in their records of non-members, applying for reference tickets have indicated that in 2005, 106 different nationalities used the Central Library in the ILAC.

In developing their collections, library authorities aim to encompass as wide a range of material as is possible. However, the value of the collection lies not just in the individual books and other media but in the collected and related corpus of knowledge that the collections and the expertise of the library staff present.

### 2.2.8 Developing Lifelong Learning Services

**Branching Out** recommended the co-ordination of a public library response to the issues raised in the Green Paper concerning lifelong learning. The response generally supported the proposals contained therein but noted the following:

- the National Adult Learning Council proposal did not provide for representation from the public library service;
- it emphasised the central role of the public library service in the provision of adult learning and the need to have the sector represented on the NALC;
- it recommended that An Chomhairle Leabharlanna provide this representation;
- it supported the proposal that the Local Adult Learning Boards feed into the work of the County/City Development Boards.

An Chomhairle Leabharlanna have also expressed interest to the Department of Education and Science in being involved in the National Adult Learning Council and have submitted their views to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment on "Taskforce on Lifelong Learning", published in October 2003.

Providing support in a lifelong learning context is a complex issue for library services which impacts on the nature of library buildings, opening hours, staff structure and numbers, stock and related services.

### 2.2.9 New Service Delivery Methods

**Branching Out** recommended that innovative service delivery methods be researched and that a small allocation of funding be made available by the Department to pilot some innovative solutions to delivering library services to isolated communities.

Taobh Tíre - a better library service for isolated rural and urban areas - is a pilot research project undertaken by Donegal County Library and funded under the Public Library Research Programme, which has investigated innovative library service delivery methods to isolated rural and urban communities. Taobh Tíre has the potential to realise the ambition of a wider engagement in isolated areas and might also provide a solution to the delivery of services in large conurbations, thus removing geographical barriers to the library service through the use of technology.

### **Snap Shot: Taobh Tíre Project wins the Taoiseach's Public Service Excellence Award and the Pride of Place Award**

The Donegal County Council library research project, Taobh Tíre was a winner of The Taoiseach's Public Service Excellence Award in 2008. The Taoiseach's Public Service Excellence Awards are organised as part of the Public Service's Quality Customer Service (QCS) Initiative. The central aim of the QCS Initiative, which is part of the overall Public Service Modernisation Programme, is to provide a consistently high level of service to customers of the public service.

The project was also awarded a special category award at the Co-operation Ireland's Pride of Place Awards in Tullow, County Carlow in 2006. The Pride of Place Awards is an all-island competition directed towards recognising improvements by local communities in creating civic pride in their area. The competition focus is on people coming together to shape, change and enjoy all that is good about their area.

The Taobh Tíre project has investigated and implemented new and innovative methods of delivering library services to isolated rural and urban communities across Donegal. Taobh Tíre delivers library services through a network of service points supported by the branch library network. A service point consists of a small collection of books, provided by Donegal County Library (a taster collection) and a range of additional library services such as reference and business information, inter-library loan, etc. A service point also has one or more PCs connected to the Internet, thus providing access to the online catalogue of the County Library's main holdings, various online information resources and the wider Internet. A service point is staffed by staff trained by County Library personnel, and is open for a significant number of hours (typically 20-60 hours) per week.

Taobh Tíre has established ten new library service points in rural Donegal, including two on offshore islands. New service points are established in partnership with the local community, most commonly in the form of community development associations and co-operatives. The project team works in partnership with local stakeholders – Community Development Projects, Family Resource Centres, commercial companies, a rural transport initiative and others. While Donegal is the location for the pilot, the results will be applicable to isolated communities throughout Ireland.

In their comments, the Adjudicators "deemed this a very interesting and exciting countywide initiative bringing library services to isolated communities. The social and cultural implications are far reaching especially if it can be shown to be sustainable in the long term. This excellent partnership between the local authority and a very positive and supportive rural community has the potential to be a model for other areas of rural isolation. The entry was the deserved winner of the Special Award for Community Service Outreach."

An interim report was published in 2005 and the final report is due in spring 2008.

Recommendations from the research will be included in the final report on the project.

Cultural Heritage project - has looked at best practice in delivering online access to cultural content. Phase 1 of this project, begun in 2002, resulted in the development of individual public library content sites, the [www.askaboutireland.ie](http://www.askaboutireland.ie) website and the report *Our Cultural Heritage: A Strategy for Action for Public Libraries*. Phase 2 began in 2003 and the resulting report, *Our Cultural Heritage: building the gateway* and the new [www.askaboutireland.ie](http://www.askaboutireland.ie) website were

launched in December 2004. The project continues to develop additional services in consultation with public library managers and provides regional familiarisation workshops for library staff to enable them to support library users in accessing electronic content.

In co-operation with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) the NCTE and the Primary Curriculum Support Programme (PCSP), An Chomhairle Leabharlanna and the library authorities have further developed the "Student Zone" on the [www.askaboutireland.ie](http://www.askaboutireland.ie) website to provide online support for the history, geography and science elements of the Social, Environmental and Scientific Education Section (SESE) of the primary school curriculum. While some of the information is tailored to meet the needs of specific age-groups, much more is about local places in Ireland and will appeal to a wider audience, for example, library users with an interest in local studies or non-nationals interested in learning about the area.

The Changing Libraries programme announced in 2005 is bringing together a number of new and recently developed online resources, to provide the public with free and uncomplicated access to a comprehensive collection of information not available elsewhere and will facilitate and promote this access via the Internet in public libraries. Access to a range of unique historic content is now available free in public libraries through the Ask About Ireland Irish Times Digital Archive and the Ordnance Survey Ireland Historic Map Viewer.

The Lifesteps and Agora projects have developed from research into innovative

services delivered online. The Lifesteps project provided concrete step-by-step guides to using the Internet, based on the most frequent queries in public libraries and written by public library staff. Lifesteps guides include life events such as buying a house online, retirement and reference enquiries. The guides were launched in October, 2005. Copies of the guides were provided free in all public libraries and a series of events were held in public libraries to encourage Internet use by the public. The guides are updated and can also be downloaded from the Internet at [www.lifesteps.ie](http://www.lifesteps.ie).





### Snap Shot: Lifesteps

**Lifesteps** offers a series of printed and online guides designed to introduce a wide audience to the relevance of the Internet in meeting their information needs. These practical and informative guides, covering 23 specific 'real life' topics – from Buying a Home to Learning to Drive, from Starting your Own Business to Retirement – all include easy to read instructions that take the user, step by step, through a wide range of online resources highlighting and explaining a large amount of the information that is available online. Each guide has been prepared by a library staff member with expertise in his or her chosen subject area and in response to regular queries from the public.

By using specific examples the guides explain, in jargon-free language, how to use the numerous websites referred to.



Using the Internet for...

## Sports



www.lifesteps.ie

The Agora project enables members of the public, voluntary bodies, schools and other end-users to establish an online presence and to interact with one another online, in a 'virtual community' which mirrors the physical one in which they live. It provides software, hardware, training and support to enable this to occur, using the traditionally open, inclusive and supportive environment of the public library. The Agora service was piloted in Ardkeen Library in Waterford and in Swinford Library in County Mayo.

BorrowBooks.ie the public library service developed an online request and supply service across all the online public library catalogues. The service was launched in 2006 and 14,300 requests were made through the service in 2007.

### Snap Shot: Student Zone

The Student Zone on [www.askaboutireland.ie](http://www.askaboutireland.ie) provides online content based on the local studies collections of the public libraries to support the school's curricula. It has concentrated largely on the development of primary school content for the new curricula in History, Geography and Science and across all age groups within primary schools to date. Development of secondary school content is also planned.

Each section of content has been created in consultation with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, the National Centre for Technology in Education, the Primary Curriculum Support Programme and an approved Education Consultant. A Steering Group has been in place since 2005 and consists of representatives of the Department of the Environment, Heritage



and Local Government, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, the Primary Curriculum Support Programme, the National Centre for Technology in Education, the Library Association of Ireland and An Chomhairle Leabharlanna. The original primary curriculum content has been prepared by teams of primary school teachers and local studies librarians. Each class group has its own section for each subject. All content units are accompanied by teachers' notes to provide teachers with guidelines for making the best use of the content and for expanding on the topic.

Ensuring educational integrity has necessitated a stringent process of creation, review, feedback, revision and review before elements are approved for upload. The application of this rigour to the development process has resulted in the inclusion of the website in the Primary Curriculum Support Programme in-service teacher training and in the embedding of website elements into the Department of Education and Science's education portal [www.scoilnet.ie](http://www.scoilnet.ie).

The content is designed to be as interactive as possible, to encourage the students to think, to develop their own research skills and to learn about their local place today and over time. Drawing on the resources of the Local Studies Departments of the public libraries, there are many original photographs, maps, drawings, pictures and audio from all parts of the country, together with a wide range of educational games. Searching the website media bank also provides direct access to over 12,000 digitised items; a selection which increases daily.



## 2.3 School Library Service

### 2.3.1 Background

**Branching Out** contained three specific recommendations in relation to improving the schools library service – the first was that the per capita increases for general bookfunds implemented by library authorities should be matched by increases in the per capita bookfund grant for primary school libraries made by the Department of Education and Science; the second related to the provision of a specific bookfund grant in respect of post-primary schools where a school library is in operation; and the third to the facilitation of dialogue between library authorities, An Chomhairle Leabharlanna, the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government and the Department of Education and Science to consider how best schools libraries might develop and touching on the development of post primary school library services.

Developments in this area include

- the establishment of a Schools Libraries Working Group in 2000 to facilitate the dialogue recommended in **Branching Out** and the submission by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government of the report and recommendations of that working group to the Minister for Education and Science in November, 2002;
- an increase in funding by the Department of Education and Science to library authorities between 2004 and 2005, and again between 2005 and 2006 (see table 3 below); and
- An Chomhairle Leabharlanna has worked in partnership with the national educational authorities in developing local studies content to support the primary school curriculum. ACL was invited to advise on the prioritisation of measures under a planned Government investment of €252 million in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in schools.
- See also 2.2.9 New Service Delivery Methods in relation to the Student Zone on [www.askaboutireland.ie](http://www.askaboutireland.ie).

**Table 3**

Academic Year	€ per pupil	No. of primary school pupils	Total grant allocated	% +/- on previous year grant
1998/1999	2.73	451,637	1,234,691	0.4
1999/2000	2.90	444,027	1,283,709	4.0
2000/2001	3.00	439,340	1,316,518	2.6
2001/2002	3.40	441,099	1,499,737	13.9
2002/2003	3.40	441,065	1,499,620	No change
2003/2004	3.40	445,444	1,514,510	1.0
2004/2005	4.52	448,243	2,026,058	33.8
2005/2006	4.52	458,114	2,070,675	2.2
2006/2007	4.52	470,944	2,128,667	2.8

- the publication by the Department of Education and Science of an Action Plan for Educational Inclusion (DEIS) which states that further co-operation on educational inclusion issues between the library system and the education sector will be actively pursued in partnership the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, the Library Association of Ireland and the Library Council.

## 2.4 Libraries as Centres of Culture

### 2.4.1 Background

**Branching Out** recognised the need to develop the public library as a centre of culture and recommended

- the establishment of a national strategy on delivering the arts in a way that is more accessible to the wider community,

- developing a broader knowledge among library staff of available cultural resources,
- the initiation of a national programme on the digitisation of library collections of high cultural value; and
- that the Arts Council, in formulating and in implementing its next Arts Plan, should take account of the positive role that libraries can play in developing the full spectrum of the arts in Ireland. This was considered particularly important for communities that do not have access to any other arts infrastructure.

Library authorities have significantly expanded and diversified opportunities for more equitable access to cultural programmes for all age groups; in many cases the local library is the only cultural venue within a community. In co-operation with the Arts Council, and on foot of the *Arts and the Magic of the Word* report, An Chomhairle Leabharlanna:

- funded four pilot projects examining the promotion of reading and the arts in public libraries;
- co-operated with the Abbey Theatre and Library Authorities in 2004 to deliver a programme of events as part of the Abbey's centenary celebrations; and
- developed [www.culturenet.ie](http://www.culturenet.ie) on behalf of The Euro Focus on The Cultural Heritage with the aim of providing a single access point on the Internet for cultural agencies.

In terms of developing a broader knowledge of available cultural resources among library staff, An Chomhairle Leabharlanna prepared a directory of local studies collections which was made available on the Internet and through the Cultural Heritage marketing plan in 2005, involved all library authority staff in familiarisation sessions on [www.askaboutireland.ie](http://www.askaboutireland.ie).

While the original recommendation in relation to the initiation of a national programme on the digitisation of library collections of high cultural value was directed to the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands, the website [www.askaboutireland.ie](http://www.askaboutireland.ie), and *Our Cultural Heritage: A Strategy for Action for Public Libraries report (2003)* which documents it, along with *Our Cultural Heritage: Building the Gateway report (2004)* have addressed this area.

Access to the library service and its role in promoting cultural inclusion has also been examined by the National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) in the context of its *Report on the Arts, Cultural Inclusion and Social Cohesion (2007)*. The NESF report acknowledges the significant progress made in implementing the recommendations in **Branching Out** to improve access and promote cultural inclusion in the library service. Overall the report concludes that strategic direction for the library service is well coordinated and that the library service structure would be a good model for development of other services.

The report calls for better co-ordination of the arts and cultural sector, management and certainty of funding for cultural inclusion development, support for children, targeted

services to the marginalized and improved data collection. The Government has agreed that the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism would appoint a strategy committee with an independent chair to consider the NESF's recommendations as outlined in the report.

## 2.5 Library Co-operation

### 2.5.1 Background

Fundamental to the **Branching Out** recommendations on improving co-operation between libraries and with other organisations is the belief that the library exists, not for its own purposes, but as a service to its users.

**Branching Out** recognised the advantages of library authorities co-operating with others. It also recognised that a more pro-active approach needed to be taken in order to ensure that co-operation is as effective and as comprehensive as possible, not least in maximising the use of library resources.

Recommendations on co-operation were that

- the Committee on Library Co-operation in Ireland (COLICO) examine inter-library lending with a view to putting in place measures that will facilitate greater participation in the scheme by Irish library authorities;
- library authorities develop a library co-operation strategy;
- a national focus be placed on co-operation;
- a local strategy for developing co-operation with other educational services be incorporated into the library co-operation strategy with the

support and assistance of An Chomhairle Leabharlanna and in association with the Department of Education and Science;

- the remit, composition and services of EuroFocus on Libraries be expanded to embrace all levels and sectors of international library co-operation;
- librarians work actively with teachers in implementing the module on Information Studies for Transition Year;

A considerable amount of progress has been made in this area with three of the recommendations fully implemented namely

- production by COLICO of a report on inter-lending in 2002, published by An Chomhairle Leabharlanna as *Delivering More: inter-lending and document supply through Irish libraries*;
- development of the service [www.borrowbooks.ie](http://www.borrowbooks.ie) as part of the Cultural Heritage Project, providing single-search access to all local authority online catalogues and that of the National Library of Ireland;
- to reflect the convergence of archives, museums and Libraries in the digital age the Eurofocus on libraries is now the Eurofocus on the Cultural Heritage. The body developed Ireland's cultural portal, [www.culturenet.ie](http://www.culturenet.ie) and liaises with the European Commission on relevant issues.

While a national strategy on co-operation was set out in *Joining Forces* (2002), work on the development of individual library authority strategies to be incorporated into a national strategy is ongoing, as is the recommendation on the development of co-operation with other educational services.

### **Snap Shot: Borrowbooks**

[www.borrowbooks.ie](http://www.borrowbooks.ie) is an online library loans service which, for the first time, provides for a single search across all of the online public library catalogues and an online request facility in one website for the convenience of the general public. With the BorrowBooks service, library members can now search for an item of their choice across all of the online catalogues of the public library authorities simultaneously. Once the item is located, the user can request the delivery of the item, via their local library service to their local branch. BorrowBooks allows members of the public, wherever they are in Ireland, to find the material they are searching for in one place. Using BorrowBooks, a user in Wexford could discover the item they are looking for in Donegal's collection and have it delivered to their local library in Wexford.



Chapter 2 profiles the public library service at the beginning and end of the programme established under **Branching Out**; it identifies the milestones and achievements of that period. In the light of those profiles, milestones and achievements and to ensure the realisation of the Vision Statement for the public library service in 2012, Chapter 3 looks at the challenges facing the public library service, over the next five years, in terms of demographic trends identified in the 2006 Census, the economy and social inclusion. It will also look at gaps in the implementation of the recommendations of **Branching Out**, gaps in the services that have arisen between 1998 and 2007 and those areas in need of further development.





three

The Challenge

3





Chapters 1 and 2 set out the background to **Branching Out**, profiled the public library service at the beginning and end of the programme established under **Branching Out**, and outlined the significant progress made in that period. This chapter looks at the challenges facing the public library service over the next number of years as it sets out to realise the Vision Statement.

### 3.1 Demographic Trends

The total for the population enumerated on Census night 23 April 2006 was 4,234,925 persons, compared with 3,917,203 in April 2002 and 3,626,087 in April 1996, representing an increase of 317,722 persons or 8.1% between 2002 and 2006 and an increase of 16.8% over the 10 year period. The annual average rate in the four-year period 2002-2006 was 2% which is the highest on record.

All provinces experienced population growth between 2002 and 2006 – the rate of increase ranging from 6.5 per cent for Munster to 8.9 per cent for Leinster. All counties in Leinster increased their populations in the same period with the fastest growing counties being Fingal (+22.1%), Meath (+21.4%) and Kildare (+13.5%). The population of all counties in Leinster apart from Dublin city (+2%), Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown (+1%) and Dublin South (+3.4%) grew by more than the national average of 8.1%. The midland region also exceeded the national average rate of 8.1% - the counties involved (Laois, Longford, Offaly and Westmeath) forming part of the wider Dublin commuter belt.

Cork city and Limerick city were the only two of the thirty-four administrative counties to experience population decline between 2002

and 2006 – 3.2% and 2.7% respectively. Cork county was the fastest growing county in Munster (+11.4%), followed by Waterford county (9.2%) and Limerick county (+8.3%). Developments in the suburban areas adjacent to the cities of Cork, Waterford and Limerick were major contributors to this growth.

Of the Connacht counties, Leitrim had the highest population growth rate in the recent intercensal period. This followed on from the modest increase of 3% between 1996 and 2002. Galway county experienced an 11% increase while the rapid growth in the population of Galway city in the previous two intercensal periods moderated to 9.3% between 2002 and 2006. Cavan had the highest growth rate in Ulster – the main stimulus coming from the south of the county which is within commuting distance of Dublin.

In 1998 **Branching Out** highlighted the difficulties in providing equitable access to public services in a country with a demographic distribution like Ireland's. Figures from the 1996 Census showed that 1,518,096 people lived in the "Aggregate Rural Area", outside population clusters of 1,500 or more inhabitants, and a further 260,993 people lived in towns with a population of fewer than 5,000. Taking the two figures together, it could be said that 1,770,089 people or 49% of the population lived in rural areas or small towns. By the 2002 Census the combined figures were 47.6% and by 2006 44.9% or 1.9 million people. This indicates the demographic distribution highlighted in **Branching Out** still presents a challenge to the public library service in terms of access.

The change in population by Regional Authority Area from 2002 to 2006, which indicates higher than average growth rates in the Mid-East, Midland, South-East and West, will also impact on the demand for and delivery of library services in these areas.

The level of immigration into Ireland – an estimated 86,900 people in the 12 months to April 2006 – is of particular significance to national policy-making and service delivery across a wide spectrum of areas.

The main features of the 2006 Census in terms of immigration which are relevant to the public library service are as follows:

- Approximately two-thirds of the population increase in the year up to April 2006 was accounted for by migration with the remaining one-third due to the natural increase in population.
- Nearly half the immigrants (43%) were nationals of the 10 new EU member states, which joined on the 1st May 2004.
- 26% (22,900) of immigrants were from Poland while 7% (6,100) were from Lithuania.
- 23% of all immigrants originated from outside the EU and USA.
- More than half the immigrants (54%) were aged 25 – 44 while a further 28% were aged 15 – 24. Approximately 1 in 10 of the immigrants were children under the age of 15.

These demographic trends present the public library service with many challenges in terms of

- Physical infrastructure, including for example
  - The scale and type of accommodation,
  - Location of branch network both fixed and mobile,
  - The use of accommodation, e.g. for study, research, leisure, other community purposes.
- Service provision, including
  - Service delivery capacity,
  - Staff development,
  - Innovation in service delivery,
  - Resources.
- Engagement and participation, including
  - Developing partnership approaches and furthering co-operation on educational issues both with the education sector and with agencies involved in lifelong learning;
  - Supporting the integration agenda with the government departments and other appropriate groups to assist new communities and immigrants to participate and integrate more fully in society
  - Working with other government departments (such as the Office of the Minister for Children) in targeting services

to meet the needs of specific groups.

### 3.2 The Economy and Social Inclusion

There has been an increasing recognition that the relationship between growth in the economy and the development of a successful and sustainable society needs to be addressed. Among the points emphasised by the National Economic and Social Council in its seventh strategy report *Strategy 2006: People, Productivity and Purpose* (2005) are

- Demographic changes and high levels of in-migration are profoundly altering the context to practically all policy-making in Ireland.
- The economy will continue to prosper only if Irish society retains its cohesion and attractiveness.
- The core challenge to public service providers is to replace a vicious circle, in which slow change increases dissatisfaction with service standards, erodes public support and makes higher investment less likely, with a virtuous circle, in which continuous improvement and high standards underpin strong public support and high investment.
- Access to second chance education is regarded as critical to many people being able to leave welfare for work.

The economic growth in the period of **Branching Out** made available resources to address a range of long-standing social issues. The period also brought new challenges in

terms of issues which had hitherto been of lesser significance in Ireland. Issues on the social agenda of particular relevance to the public library service include immigration, urban and rural disadvantage and equality. Social policy responses to these issues which have been embraced by the public library service included:

- the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* (2000), *Sustaining Progress* (2003) and *Towards 2016* (2006) which set objectives to tackle social inclusion;
- *New Connections* (2002) the Government's Information Society action plan which provides a strategic framework for renewed commitment to the Information Society agenda including promoting universal engagement and participation, in particular through eInclusion initiatives and further developing the potential of eGovernment;
- *eInclusion* (2003) the purpose of which was twofold – to build ICT capacity and to make ICT relevant;
- *Building a Capacity for Change – Lifelong Learning in the Information Society* (1999) – which explores the potential for learning in the community with particular reference to the public library service;
- *eGovernment* (2003) which, in endeavouring to ensure that government services are socially inclusive, addresses issues of literacy and disability access;

- *A Strategy for Equality* (1996) - report of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities (1995) and subsequent legislation;
- *Barcelona Declaration* (1995) – EU manifesto on people with disabilities and their living environment;
- the RAPID Programme launched in 2001 targeting disadvantaged urban areas;
- the review of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy – *Building an Inclusive Society* (2002);
- *DEIS* (2005) – Department of Education and Science action plan for educational inclusion and;
- *Teenspace – the National Recreational Policy for Young People* (2007) – policy document of the Office of the Minister for Children outlining the strategy for the development and improvement of recreational facilities for young people.

### 3.3 Gaps/Areas requiring New Focus/Examination

The review of **Branching Out** considered in detail the recommendations contained in the 1998 report; it considered whether those recommendations had been fully or partly implemented or not implemented at all and identified those areas of the public library service still in need of development, as well as gaps in the service which have arisen in the period and which now need to be addressed.

#### **Branching Out – Future Directions**

addresses future library development under four broad headings and with reference to the specific recommendations in **Branching Out**:

- Access (financial, physical and social),
- Innovation and Mainstreaming (to ensure that the benefits of successful pilot and research projects are enjoyed throughout the public library service),
- Networking and Co-operation (to better address the physical and social barriers through contact with relevant government departments and agencies) and
- Marketing (to better promote the public library service at local and national level).

#### **3.3.1 Access**

Libraries are constantly challenged to provide a service that is in step with contemporary Ireland. They are planning services and helping to expand their reading experiences and responding to the changing ways people use libraries. People use libraries to quickly check their emails or carry out research on the Internet; to study in a quiet corner or attend a talk or reading; to improve their English or other language skills, in addition to or instead of borrowing books or other items. For most services, they do not need to be members of the library.

There is a need to look at how well library buildings deliver an attractive ambience to attract users, offering flexibility and choice, balancing community and cultural facilities with the requirements of individual use,

having regard to access for all. Demographic trends, lifestyle and work pattern changes have resulted in most public services examining their customer access policies – the public library service is no exception.

### Access (Financial)

While the Public Library Capital Programme has delivered some excellent new library buildings during the period, progress was slower than expected. The review has identified a number of contributory reasons at both local and national level. At local level, difficulties included: identifying and procuring suitable sites, planning issues, delays in producing plans, rising costs, reluctance or inability to provide matching funds, a lack of momentum in some areas. At national level, guidelines on investment in public library infrastructure recommended in the report have yet to be completed.

The challenge is now to project, through existing and new buildings, an image of a modern service by

- Extending the comprehensive network of library infrastructure begun under **Branching Out**;
- Encouraging more integrated development of libraries as part of a local authority's wider community service delivery in the arts, culture, amenity and recreation context;
- Exploring new sources of capital investment (private sector funding including Public Private Partnerships and income from development contributions;

- Examining the quality of the existing infrastructure and addressing the issue of inadequate, inaccessible, dated and/or poorly located public library buildings;
- Ensuring continued improvement in the range and quality of stock;
- Developing a collections development policy; and
- Reviewing charges levied by local authorities.

### Access (Physical)

**Branching Out** highlighted the difficulties faced by people with physical disabilities in accessing library buildings and equipment, and by people with learning disabilities in accessing library services. Much has been done in the period to address these issues *e.g.*

- all new libraries comply with the Building Regulations 1997-2006, in particular with Part M (Access for People with Disabilities);
- optical scanning facilities, with associated software to assist people with reading difficulties, have been provided in 95 libraries nationwide; and
- opening hours have increased by 25%.

In **Branching Out – Future Directions**, the challenge will be to make public library buildings (including mobile libraries) and the public library service more accessible to all in the community, by



- Considering proposed library projects and services in terms of population and demographic developments;
- Reviewing existing library infrastructure and services in the context of the Disability Act, 2005, Local Government sectoral plans, the National Rehabilitation Board Guidelines, *Library Access* (2003), *Making Access Happen* (2004) and *Making it Work for You* (2004);
- Extending and improving opening hours;
- Further developing ICT infrastructure.

### Access (Social)

In addressing the provision of equitable access, **Branching Out** identified geographical isolation, both rural and urban, as a major issue. While a number of new mobile libraries have been provided during the period, much has also been done by way of research to address this issue.

The challenge in **Branching Out – Future Directions** will be to address a broader and more specific range of issues under the heading of equitable access, while still including geographical, social and economic isolation, by considering

- Rural and urban isolation in the context of the Taobh Tíre report and drawing on the results of the 2006 Census;
- Integration of immigrant communities in the context of the report *Meeting the Challenges of Cultural Diversity: a*

*report on the role of public libraries in Ireland* (2007);

- The age profile of library users with particular reference to the young and the elderly;
- Disadvantage in terms of support for children and teenagers;
- Literacy;
- Internet access; and
- Staff training.

### 3.3.2 Innovation and Mainstreaming

**Branching Out** identified the need for research in all areas of the public library service and recommended both the development of a Public Library Research Programme and the establishment of a Public Library Research Fund. While both recommendations were implemented and a significant body of research undertaken, the challenge for **Branching Out – Future Directions** will be to further develop the culture of research in relation to the public library service by

- Developing a research framework including examples of possible research projects;
- Developing a database on library research projects; and
- Ensuring the continuation of funding.

A great challenge may be the implementation and mainstreaming of research findings at both national and local level - adapted to local circumstances as needs be.

### 3.3.3. Networking and Co-operation

Progress in the area of co-operation between libraries and other organisations includes the development of a national strategy on co-operation *Joining Forces* (2000), the further development of the [www.borrowbooks.ie](http://www.borrowbooks.ie) service, and the expansion of The Euro-Focus on The Cultural Heritage to reflect the convergence of archives, museums and libraries in the digital age.

The public library service has evolved over time to encompass other roles and has renewed old Carnegie values. The challenge in **Branching Out – Future Directions** will be to further develop a network of contacts with relevant government departments and agencies to allow the library service to fulfil its potential to provide a space for all in the local community. This in turn will present its own challenge: to ensure that the broadening of the library service generates an enriched rather than a diluted public library service.

### 3.3.4 Marketing

**Branching Out** accepted that significant improvements were necessary in the way libraries are promoted and marketed. Some progress has been made in this area both at national and local level.

At national level, the PLUS survey and the Non-User survey were carried out to establish attitudes to the public library service. Some marketing campaigns, focusing on specific aspects or new services were launched, e.g.

READiscover, [www.askaboutireland.ie](http://www.askaboutireland.ie) and [www.borrowbooks.ie](http://www.borrowbooks.ie).

At local level, library authorities have carried out some community profiling and focused user surveys, e.g. Internet use. Generally, library authorities maintain good working relationships with their local radio stations and local newspapers which cover news items and feature events in the library, e.g. author visits, activities and competitions. Current performance indicators for libraries suggest that there are some groups which the service does not reach.

In the context of a rapidly changing society with increased affluence, multiculturalism, changing expectations and values, and with new forms of information access and delivery, the public library needs to examine its traditional image and services in order to be seen as relevant by potential users.

While public libraries have a broadly positive image in Ireland today, it is not seen as an essential or even relevant service in the lives of many people. The challenge in **Branching Out – Future Directions** will be to develop a marketing strategy

- to examine what would convince more people that public libraries are a relevant and useful part of their lives; and
- to position libraries so that they are seen as community focal points and gateways for and to local authority, central government and cultural services.

The challenges identified under these four broad themes now need to be addressed in practical ways in the identification of priorities for the future. Priorities identified in Chapter 4 take account of the overriding importance of improved access across the service, innovation and service delivery, networking as a means of adding value and disseminating best practice, and continued marketing and research to underpin the relevance of the service and the identification of key trends for the future.



four

**Priorities and Recommendations  
2008 - 2012**

4



Chapter 3 identifies the challenges facing the public library service as it embarks on a new programme. This chapter will address those challenges in practical ways through the identification of priorities for the period up to 2012 and the development of specific recommendations under five broad headings – infrastructure, quality of service, school library service, libraries as centres of culture and library co-operation.

## 4.1 Infrastructure

### Priorities for 2008 – 2012

A total of 31 public library projects are currently either under construction, (including mobile libraries on order) or recently completed but with continuing financial commitments. The balance of grant payments due on those projects is approximately €18 million. There are a further 28 projects approved under the multi-annual programmes which have not yet reached construction. These have grant commitments of approximately €50.5 million.

Priorities for the 2008 – 2012 period in terms of library infrastructure provision will be to

- ensure the early completion of the 31 projects currently under construction;
- review the commencement of the remaining projects;
- examine new sources of capital investment (private sector funding including PPPs and income from development contributions under the Planning and Development Act, 2000);

- develop a further multi-annual building programme with a built-in time frame for proceeding to tender;
- complete the audit of library infrastructure with a view to identifying those libraries (other than libraries which are to be replaced) where work is required to ensure that the full range of services are accessible to all library users including those with disabilities;
- provide grant-aid for works identified in the library infrastructure audit;
- examine provision of grant-aid for refurbishment works;
- protecting the stock of architecturally important library buildings;
- grant aid the provision of furniture, fittings, ICT and book stock in new library buildings being provided by library authorities without Exchequer funding;
- continue to provide 100% grant aid for mobile libraries and delivery vans; and
- revise Departmental procedure for the submission by library authorities of proposals for funding under the public library capital programme.

In terms of ICT provision, the priorities will be to

- position the public library service as a centre of Internet usage and support in the local community;



- provide an environment which will allow for a flexible response to access and storage of increasing digital content; and
- position the public library service at the forefront of eGovernment in delivering on-line local authority services.

This will be accomplished by building on initiatives developed during **Branching Out**, by enabling and enhancing the quality of access to a rich diversity of information now available on the Internet and linking with print resources.

The Department will continue to support the development of

- suitable ICT projects, including existing and new projects;
- appropriate partnerships in the area of ICT development; and
- continue to seek Exchequer funding for such projects/developments.

In terms of improvement in the range and quality of stock, the priorities will be to

- agree a per capita book fund target; and
- link the agreed target to the Consumer Price Index.

## Recommendations

**4.1.1** The Steering Group recommends the development of a further multi-annual building programme, with a built-in time frame for proceeding to tender. This will allow the continuation of work commenced under **Branching Out** but having regard to changing demographic trends in the intervening period and the need to ensure timely draw down of allocated funds. The rate of grant aid will be determined on an individual basis in the light of potential funding from other sources.

**4.1.2** In tandem with the recommendation on the building programme, the Steering Group recommends the revision of Departmental procedures for the submission by library authorities of proposals for funding under the Public Library Capital Programme.

**4.1.3** In order to ensure that the full range of services are available to all library users (including those with disabilities), the Steering Group recommends an audit of existing libraries and the provision of grant-aid to underpin necessary works.

**4.1.4** The Steering Group recommends that the existing capital programme be extended to include the provision of grant aid for furniture, fittings, ICT and stock in new library buildings being provided by library authorities, without Exchequer funding.

**4.1.5** The Steering Group recommends that ICT initiatives developed during **Branching Out** be further built on, thus enabling and enhancing the quality of access to a rich diversity of information now available on the Internet.

**4.1.6** In order to ensure continued improvement in the range and quality of stock as a component of library infrastructure, the Steering Group recommends continued progress towards a per capita book fund target of €3.77 and that this target be linked to the Consumer Price Index.

## 4.2 Quality of Service

### Priorities for 2008 - 2012

The objective of the local authority library service is to deliver a service to meet the needs of the public. At present 21% of the public are members of the service. In the next programme, it is envisioned that this percentage will increase to 30%. While library membership decreased from 824,985 in 1998 to 778,421 in 2005 (latest figures available), it is acknowledged that this does not reflect the real levels of usage or provide an accurate profile of the public library user in the Ireland of today. During the next period, the library service will also reflect increased use by a broad user base, with access to a wide network providing a comprehensive range of services, at times most suited to users needs. Library authorities will deliver increased access and provide more opportunities to use library services in various formats, both physically in library branches

and mobile libraries, and virtually by way of the Internet.

The current level of usage suggests that the library service does not attract its potential audience. Libraries are constantly challenged to portray an image that is in step with modern Ireland and it is recognised that better measurement methods for the variety of usage of the modern public library requires investigation.

Furthermore, *Towards 2016* states that the public service must continue to modernise and at a faster rate than heretofore if it is to continue to meet the expectations and requirements of an increasingly sophisticated, complex and diverse society and sets out the principles of organisational change and service delivery options which will assist in achieving modernisation and flexibility.

Priorities for the 2008 – 2012 period will be

- to assess the value of measurement of usage where it is already measured;
- to look at an appropriate methodology of more widespread measurement of users;
- to review the suitability of opening hours of each branch;
- to ensure that the opening hours of libraries are responsive to community and cultural needs, including the provision of access for community purposes;
- to develop, in the context of *Towards 2016*, innovative solutions to extending

opening hours and maximising the availability of the professional expertise of library staff for users and to consider the use of volunteers;

- to provide equitable access to library services responding to the results of the PLUS surveys;
- to develop a collections development policy in each library authority;
- to build on successful initiatives in the Changing Libraries programme and enable and enhance the quality of access to a rich diversity of information now available on the Internet, linking with print resources;
- to continue the online development of local studies content and information by An Chomhairle Leabharlanna and the library authorities;
- to enable library staff through quality facilities, technological enhancements and training programmes to develop their managerial and information skills;
- to expand the role of the public library service in lifelong learning and to seek to have that role recognised by education providers and other agencies; and
- to pilot and mainstream as appropriate innovative service delivery methods.

## Recommendations

**4.2.1** In order to ensure that the library service attracts its potential audience, the Steering Group recommends that the value of existing measurement of usage be assessed and, in tandem, that an appropriate methodology of more widespread measurement of usage be developed.

**4.2.2** In order to ensure the provision of equitable access to library services, the Steering Group recommends that library authorities

- review the suitability of opening hours of each branch in the light of the results of the PLUS surveys;
- develop innovative solutions to extending opening hours and maximising the availability of the professional expertise of library staff for users; and
- pilot and mainstream, as appropriate, innovative service delivery methods.

**4.2.3** In line with the life cycle approach identified in *Towards 2016*, the Steering Group recommends that the role of the public library service in lifelong learning be expanded and that library authorities seek to have that role recognised by education providers and other agencies.

**4.2.4** In order to ensure that library staff can fulfil their potential, the Steering Group recommends that they be enabled through quality facilities, technological enhancements and training programmes to develop their managerial and information skills.

**4.2.5** The Steering Group recommends the development by library authorities of a collections development policy.

### 4.3 School Library Service

#### *Priorities for 2008 - 2012*

Library services to primary schools are currently provided by the 32 library authorities. Approximately 34% of the cost of the service is borne by the Department of Education and Science through a per pupil grant paid to library authorities. The remaining costs are borne by the library authorities. The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government provides 100% grant aid towards the purchase cost of shelved school delivery vans.

The further development of this service was recommended in **Branching Out**. The Steering Group set up the Schools Libraries Working Group, which reported in 2002. The Public Library Research programme invited calls for proposals for further research into the school library service in 2007 and has accepted the proposal *The Public Library and the School* from Dublin City Public Libraries which will examine the services which libraries can provide to support the primary school curriculum.

The project will review recent reports and developments, including the *Borrowers at*

*School Report* (2002), the *Model for a Schools Library Service Report* (2002), the School Library Demonstration project and the [www.askaboutireland.ie](http://www.askaboutireland.ie) Student Zone and other web-based curriculum content.

Under the DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) action plan, further and enhanced cooperation on educational inclusion issues between the school library service and the education sector will be pursued. In particular, the school library service and schools and school clusters/communities in the School Support Programme under DEIS will work together to promote a culture of reading and the development of literacy skills.

#### **Priorities for the 2008 – 2012 period will be for**

- the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government to continue to work with the Department of Education and Science with a view to achieving further progress in developing the support role of the public library service across all education sectors;
- the library authorities' school library service to continue to complement schools' policy in relation to the development of literacy skills; and
- the continued use of public library resources and content to support and inform curricular work in schools at all levels.

### Recommendations

**4.3.1** The Steering Group recommends that the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government continues to develop co-operative opportunities with the Department of Education and Science with a view to maximising the value that public libraries can provide to support education at primary, secondary and continuing adult learning levels.

**4.3.2** The Steering Group recommends that the Department of Education and Science maintain, and increase where feasible the current level of grant aid for the provision of the school library service to library authorities.

## 4.4 Libraries as Centres of Culture

### Priorities for 2008 - 2012

Public libraries contribute significantly to the quality of life of their communities and are a means of enrichment both through the material they provide and the space they make available for cultural activities of all kinds. Public libraries have huge potential to reach out and engage with everyone: as community cultural spaces; as resources for cultural expression; as a collective memory; as agents of cultural inclusion; and as spaces for a truly multi-cultural Ireland. Cultural activities e.g. readings, exhibitions and talks nourish cultural expression in the local area; they build on libraries' core skills in promoting reading, fostering intellectual freedom, and enabling independent and lifelong learning.

In terms of community cultural spaces, priorities for the 2008 – 2012 period will be

- to look at redesigning and extending older library buildings in order to create a more welcoming revitalised civic space;

In terms of libraries as resources for cultural expression, priorities will be

- to develop and enhance the range and comprehensiveness of library collections, and increase library authority investment in this resource;
- to support early learning and cultural expression by young people, by introducing them to the world of arts, and to the oral and material heritage of their community, by implementing programmes and events such as exhibitions of children's own work, children's drama and music events, reading programmes, Children's Book Festival, author visits and storytelling;
- to give greater attention to teenagers and young adults, with the provision of areas in the library dedicated to teenagers, which are comfortable and teenage-focused and where they can do homework, use the Internet, play music, computer games, chess, and take part in literary quizzes, etc., and socialise after school;
- to foster reading and comprehension skills by devising and implementing reader development strategies such as the READiscover programme;

- to develop and enhance the range of cultural programmes for adults, including support for book clubs, lunchtime and evening talks, regular author visits, literary and cultural festivals, music recitals, etc., and
- to continue to build on successful initiatives in providing services to multi-cultural communities.

In terms of libraries being the collective memory of the county and city, priority will be given

- to continuing to collect and make available local studies material in all formats, documenting the changes in our towns, cities and communities;
- to being a centre for local studies, energetically promoting the understanding of our communities through the resources and the study of local history and culture;
- to showcasing holdings on the library websites and on [www.askaboutireland.ie](http://www.askaboutireland.ie); and
- to welcoming and responding to increased interest in and demand for local studies material, and working closely with schools to develop materials for project work in the evolving curricula.

In terms of libraries and cultural inclusion, the priorities will be

- to offer an increasing range of services to the 'new Irish' - immigrants and asylum seekers amongst others. Libraries will provide a space for

English language learning, as well as language learning materials, books and other media, and a range of newspapers and magazines in foreign languages, in print form and via the Internet.

- to ensure that stock selection reflects the demands of these new communities, based on the principle of inter-culturalism and integration - people from different cultures living together with mutual respect and in harmony - and having regard to the need for materials in the relevant mother tongues and on the relevant cultures of origin, and the need for English language learning.

### Recommendations

**4.4.1** The Steering Group recommends that library authorities continue to develop their potential and online potential as providers of community cultural spaces; as resources for cultural expression; as a collective memory; as agents of cultural inclusion; and as spaces for a truly intercultural Ireland through the development and implementation of cultural programmes and events.

**4.4.2** Linked with the recommendations at 4.1 and 4.2 in relation to stock, but in terms of resources for cultural development, the Steering Group recommends that the range and comprehensiveness of library collections be developed and enhanced and that library authorities increase investment in this resource.



## 4.5 Library Co-operation

### Priorities for 2008 - 2012

Priorities will be to continue North/South co-operation through COLICO and to further improve co-operation within local authorities, between library authorities and with other organisations. This will involve

- addressing co-operation within local authorities on education, the broader cultural areas, and the uneven level of service across authorities;
- the further development of [www.borrowbooks.ie](http://www.borrowbooks.ie);
- at European level, co-operation with of the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism's initiative in co-ordinating relevant digitisation programmes at national level and supporting the co-ordination of European digitisation and responding to EU research calls; and
- ongoing co-operation on North/South matters through COLICO.

It is important to note that, while **Branching Out** included a specific group of recommendations in relation to co-operation, developments over the period in a range of areas have involved wider co-operation with various bodies and groups and these will continue where appropriate.

### Recommendations

- 4.5.1** The Steering Group recommends greater co-operation within local authorities on education and broader cultural areas in order to ensure an even level of service delivery across authorities.
- 4.5.2** The Steering Group recommends the completion by library authorities of their strategies on co-operation thereby enabling the incorporation of the individual strategies into the national strategy set out in *Joining Forces* (2002).
- 4.5.3** The Steering Group recommends the continued co-operation on North/South matters through COLICO and, at European level, the co-ordination of digitisation through The Euro-Focus on The Cultural Heritage, participation in the Member States Expert Group and other national and European initiatives.

## 4.6 Marketing and Research

### Priorities for 2008 - 2012

In the context of a rapidly changing society with increased affluence, multi-culturalism, changing expectations and values, and with new forms of information access and delivery, the public library needs to examine its traditional image and services in order to be seen as relevant by potential users. While public libraries have a broadly positive image in Ireland today, the library service is not seen as essential or even relevant in the lives of

many people. The priority will be to develop a marketing strategy

- to examine what would convince more people that public libraries are a relevant and useful part of their lives; and
- to position libraries so that they are seen as community focal points and gateways for and to local and central government and cultural services.

In terms of research and implementation the priority will be

- to ensure the implementation and mainstreaming of the findings of the research projects undertaken during **Branching Out**; and
- to develop a research framework and database on library research projects.

### Recommendations

**4.6.1** The Steering Group recommends that a marketing strategy be developed to examine what would convince potential users of the relevance and usefulness of the public library service in their lives.

**4.6.2** The Steering Group recommends the continuation of the Public Library Research Programme (at a level to be agreed) and with stronger emphasis on dissemination and implementation of research findings.

**4.6.3** In the context of a rapidly changing society, the Steering Group recommends that public libraries position themselves as community focal points and gateways for and to local authority, central government and cultural services.

Building on the significant progress already made under **Branching Out**, implementation of the new recommendations now made will require continued commitment, by all parties, to appropriately increased resources, adequate staffing levels and continuing flexibility and change in the delivery of services.





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Appendices

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Recommendations from Branching Out 1998	Achievements 2007
<p><b>Category 1</b></p> <p>The need to deliver a better library service to meet changes in Irish society by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Developing enhanced opening hours.</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Aggregate opening hours</b> – 25% increase 1998 to 2005 (7,761 hours to 9,723).  <b>Lunchtime opening</b> – up from 100 (31% of libraries) to 162 (46%) from 1998-2004.  <b>Evening opening</b> (at least one night per week), up from 261 (80% of libraries) to 295 (84%) from 1998-2004.  <b>Weekend opening</b> up from 208 (64% of libraries) to 262 (75%) from 1998-2004.  <b>Combined evening and weekend</b> accounts for 2,403 opening hours or 25% of total (2004).  <b>Standard day</b> – 17% of libraries open after 5pm and 12% after 6pm (2004).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Investing in library staff.</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Staffing levels</b> – up from 1,301 in 1998 to 1,649 in 2005 (+27%).</p> <p><b>Training</b> – Standing Committee on Public Library Staff Training and Development established in 2001.  <b>Courses</b> organised – 19.  <b>Places taken</b> – 900 (82% of places provided).  <b>Specific Training</b> in relation to Information Society Projects – Internet training for 750 library staff in 2001, training in digitisation and Internet publishing methods delivered in 31 library authorities, research methodology training to 22 library staff.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Improving equality of access to library services;</b></li> </ul>	<p><i>Access for All and Making Access Happen</i> reports.</p> <p><b>Research projects</b> – Taobh Tíre, Libraries and Cultural Diversity.</p> <p><b>Information Society Fund projects</b> – Agora, Virtual Communities.</p>



Recommendations from Branching Out 1998	Achievements 2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Improving specialised services</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Optical Scanning Facilities</b> have been installed in 95 public libraries providing the visually impaired equal opportunities to access the Internet</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Improving libraries information services;</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Public Library Research Programme</b> project undertaken by Dublin City Libraries to examine the delivery of information services with a particular focus on eGovernment.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Developing lifelong learning services.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• White Paper on Adult Education.</li> <li>• Taskforce on Lifelong Learning</li> </ul> <p>Submission by An Chomhairle Leabharlanna to relevant Government Departments.</p>
<p><b>Category 2</b></p> <p>The need to provide adequate infrastructure – a network of modern, properly equipped and staffed service points covering the entire country that will ensure libraries play a key role in the information society.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Investment in infrastructure</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>72</b> library buildings (built, under construction or in planning).</p> <p><b>20</b> announced before 1999 (17 branches and 3 HQs).</p> <p><b>52</b> announced post 1999 (45 branches and 7 HQs).</p> <p><b>52</b> now operational (45 branches and 7 HQs).</p> <p><b>20</b> libraries remain to be completed</p> <p><b>25</b> Mobiles announced</p> <p>Internet Access <b>PCs grant aided</b></p> <p>Library <b>Automation funded</b></p> <p><b>DoEHLG</b> Expenditure – 1999 – 2007 Capital €91.918m. ICT €12.095m.</p> <p><b>Local Authority Funding</b> L.A. estimated current exp. 1998 - €47.2m (€13.00 per capita). L.A. estimated current exp. 2007 - €117.9m (€27.81 per capita).</p> <p>Total L.A. capital expenditure outturn 1998–2005 €92.89 m. Total L.A. capital income outturn 1998–2005 €71.35 m.</p>

Recommendations from Branching Out 1998	Achievements 2007
<p><b>Category 3</b></p> <p>The need to develop new service-delivery methods that will enable areas of low population and other isolated communities to have equal access to library services in a cost-efficient manner.</p>	<p>Taobh Tire <b>Research Project</b> carried out by Donegal County Council, outlined in Chapter Two.</p>
<p><b>Category 4</b></p> <p>The need to improve the range and quality of stock.</p>	<p>Local authority net expenditure on stock increased between 1998 and 2007 (from €5.8 m to €13.6m). Per capita spend has increased from €1.61 to €3.20.</p>
<p><b>Category 5</b></p> <p>The need to improve local and national marketing of library services.</p>	<p>Public Library User Survey (PLUS) Survey 2002 and 2007</p> <p>Non Users Survey</p> <p>Marketing project</p>
<p><b>Category 6</b></p> <p>The need to improve co-operation between libraries and other organisations.</p>	<p>READiscover promotion programme</p> <p><a href="http://www.lifesteps.ie">www.lifesteps.ie</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.borrowbooks.ie">www.borrowbooks.ie</a></p> <p>Joining Forces Report, 2000.</p> <p>The Euro-Focus on The Cultural Heritage.</p> <p><a href="http://www.culturenet.ie">www.culturenet.ie</a></p> <p>Europe Direct Relays.</p> <p>MinervaPlus.</p> <p>Links with RTE, Abbey Theatre, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, Humanities Research Group, National Adult Literacy Agency, Irish Financial Services Regulatory Authority, Equality Authority, National Economic and Social Forum, National Library, Library Association of Ireland, British Library.</p>

Recommendations from Branching Out 1998	Achievements 2007
<p><b>Category 7</b></p> <p>The need to improve schools library services.</p>	<p><b>Report of the Working Group on School Library Service.</b></p> <p>Junior Certificate School Programme Demonstration Library Project.</p> <p>DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools)</p>
<p><b>Category 8</b></p> <p>The need to develop the library as a centre of culture.</p>	<p>4 pilot projects examined the promotion of reading and the arts in public libraries.</p> <p>Cultural Heritage Project 2002 - to date</p> <p>National Digitisation Strategy</p> <p><a href="http://www.askaboutireland.ie">www.askaboutireland.ie</a></p>
<p><b>Category 9</b></p> <p>The need to improve the service through library research.</p>	<p>Public library research fund established 2002 with matched funding from DoEHLG and L.A.s.</p> <p>Taobh Tíre.</p> <p>Libraries and Cultural Diversity.</p> <p>Marketing for public libraries.</p> <p>eGovernment.</p>

## APPENDIX II

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