

**An exploration of the role played by outreach activities in Irish Public
Libraries today**

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Table of Contents

List of Tables and Figures	vii
Acknowledgements	viii
Declaration	ix
Abstract.....	x
List of Abbreviations	xi
Permission to Copy	xii
 Chapter 1: Introduction	 13
 Chapter 2: Literature Review	 16
2.1 Introduction	16
2.2 Defining the term 'outreach'	16
2.2.1 Reaching out to communities	17
2.2.2 User community needs	17
2.2.3 Developing partnerships and bringing communities into the library	18
2.2.4 Community Development	18
2.2.5 Definition of Outreach	19
2.3 Outreach in an International Context	19
2.3.1 The Development and Practice of Outreach in Public Libraries	20
2.3.2 International Policy	21
2.3.3 UNESCO/IFLA Public Library Manifesto	21
2.3.4 Library Standards and Guidelines	21
2.3.5 Lifelong Learning	22
2.3.6 Evaluation of Outreach	23
2.3.7 The Importance of Outreach	24
2.4 The Irish Context	25
2.4.1 Development of the Irish public library system up to 1945	25

2.4.2 Irish Library Council	26
2.4.3 Irish public libraries 1960's – 1990's	26
2.5 Outreach in Irish Library Policy	27
2.5.1 Branching Out.....	27
2.5.2 Raising Public Awareness	28
2.5.3 Partnerships	28
2.5.4 Consultation	28
2.5.5 Communities.....	29
2.5.6 Branching Out – Future Directions	29
2.6 Conclusion.....	30
 Chapter 3: Methodology	 31
3.1 Introduction	31
3.2 Choice of Approach.....	31
3.3 The Mixed-Method Approach.....	32
3.3.1 Complementarity	32
3.3.2 Enhanced Validity	33
3.3.3 Unanticipated Outcomes	33
3.4 Research Methods: Desk Research	33
3.5 Research Methods: The Survey	34
3.5.1 Descriptive Survey	34
3.5.2 Standardisation.....	35
3.5.3 Survey Questionnaire	35
3.5.4 Response Rates.....	36
3.5.5 Sample Selection.....	37
3.5.6 Sampling Bias.....	38
3.6 Research Methods: The Delphi Study	38
3.6.1 Consensus	39
3.6.2 Modification of the Delphi study	39

3.6.3 Number of Rounds	40
3.6.4 Delphi Questionnaire.....	40
3.6.5 Response Rates.....	41
3.6.6 Delphi Panel selection.....	41
3.7 The Semi-structured Interview	42
3.7.1 Interview questions.....	42
3.7.2 Interview approach.....	43
3.8 Additional Methodological Issues	43
3.8.1 Piloting	43
3.8.2 Use of e-mail.....	43
3.8.3 Validity.....	44
3.8.4 Analysis Techniques - Quantitative Data.....	45
3.8.5 Analysis Techniques - Qualitative Data	45
3.8.6 Constraints and Limitations.....	46
3.8.7 Ethics	46
 Chapter 4: Results and Analysis.....	 48
4.1 Survey Questionnaire.....	48
4.1.1 Introduction.....	48
4.1.2 Local Policy	49
4.1.3 Targeted Groups.....	50
4.1.4 Levels of success	51
4.1.5 Gaps in provision	52
4.1.6 Factors affecting the level of outreach.....	54
4.1.7 Targeting Methods.....	55
4.1.8 Development of partnerships	56
4.1.9 Measuring outreach activities	58
4.1.10 Further Development & Promotion	60
4.1.11 Conclusion	62

4.2 Delphi Study.....	63
4.2.1 Introduction.....	63
4.2.2 The value of outreach activities	64
4.2.3 The importance of the role of outreach.....	65
4.2.4 Gaps in outreach provision	66
4.2.5 Factors influencing the level of outreach activity.....	67
4.2.6 Promotion of outreach activities	69
4.2.7 Conclusion	69
4.3 Semi-structured interview.....	70
4.3.1 Introduction.....	70
4.3.2 An Chomhairle Leabharlanna	70
4.3.3 Comments on research findings	71
4.3.4 Conclusion	73
 Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations	 74
5.1 Conclusion.....	74
5.1.1 Level of outreach.....	74
5.1.2 Outreach policy.....	74
5.1.3 Targeted groups	75
5.1.4 Gaps in provision/Levels of success	75
5.1.5 Factors affecting outreach	76
5.1.6 Targeting and promotion	76
5.1.7 Partnerships	77
5.1.8 Level of value.....	77
5.1.9 Measurement.....	77
5.1.10 Summary	78
5.2 Recommendations	78
 Chapter 6: Reflections	 80

References.....	83
Bibliography	91
APPENDIX A: Examples of outreach initiatives	I
APPENDIX B: Outreach questionnaire	III
APPENDIX C: Delphi Round 1	IX
APPENDIX D: Delphi Round 2.....	XI
APPENDIX E: Delphi Round 3	XIII
APPENDIX F: Interview questions	XVI
APPENDIX G : Targeted Groups	XVIII
APPENDIX H: Examples of outreach initiatives in Irish public libraries	XIX

List of Tables and Figures

List of Tables

Table 4.1.2	Local policy regarding outreach services.....	49
Table 4.1.5	Presence of third level facilities.....	53
Table 4.1.8	Partnerships.....	57
Table 4.1.9a	Quantitative measurements.....	59
Table 4.1.9b	Qualitative measurements.....	59

List of Figures

Figure 4.1.3	Targeted groups.....	51
Figure 4.1.4	Levels of success in accessing targeted groups.....	52
Figure 4.1.5	Gaps in outreach provision.....	53
Figure 4.1.6	Constraints.....	54
Figure 4.1.7	Targeting methods.....	56
Figure 4.1.8	Partner organisations.....	58
Figure 4.1.10	Ideas for further development.....	61
Figure 4.2.1	Round 2 – Emergent themes.....	64

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Declaration

I declare the following:

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SIGNED:

Abstract

An exploration of the role played by outreach activities in Irish Public Libraries today

Patricia Nolan

Recent Irish public library policy, *Branching out –future directions* (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2008) has highlighted outreach services as being in need of development, noting the challenge to further develop contacts and fulfil the role of the library as a community space for all.

Outreach activities appear to be widespread in Irish public libraries, initiatives frequently publicised in Irish Library News (An Chomhairle Leabharlanna, 2011) and on individual library websites. However, an extensive literature review revealed a gap in current research in this regard, with no recent studies relating to outreach in Irish public libraries.

This dissertation is a first step in addressing this gap, aiming to examine, from a library perspective, the extent to which outreach activities are currently undertaken in Irish public libraries and the level of value they offer.

Having established a working definition of the term ‘outreach’ a mixed-method approach was applied, incorporating a literature review, survey questionnaire, Delphi study and semi-structured interview. Research participants included City/County librarians, library staff members and a representative of An Chomhairle Leabharlanna.

Results indicate an extensive level of outreach provision to a large and diverse number of community groups. Provision varies in line with the priorities and resources of each individual authority, as do their levels of success in engaging with targeted groups. Engagement in outreach has also led to increased development of partnerships with other departments and agencies.

Outreach was found to form an integral part of the Irish library service today, but one that is not formally measured. As such an important aspect of the library service further research in this area is recommended in order to put a set of relevant, realistic indicators in place. Such measurement would ensure that the value of outreach is recognised and not simply assimilated into the service.

List of Abbreviations

ALA: American Library Association

DoEHLG: Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Ireland

EBLIDA: European Bureau of Library, Information and Documentation Associations

FAS: Irish national training and employment authority

IFLA: International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions

ILN: Irish Library News – an online newsletter published by An Chomhairle Leabharlanna

KNLA: Kenya National Library Association

LAI: Library Association of Ireland

LEAP: Learning Enrichment After-School Programme - a programme providing homework assistance, computer literacy, library skills, and multicultural enrichment activities for school-age students

LGMSB: Local Government Management Services Board - provides services to Irish local authorities for the purposes of staff negotiations, human resources and other management services

NBLC: Nederlands Bibliotheek en Lektuur Centrum - the Netherlands Public Library Association

OLOS: Office for Literacy and Outreach Services

PULMAN: Public Libraries Mobilising Advanced Networks – an EU programme which promoted digital services in public libraries of the member, and some neighbouring, states

TNN: Today's News Now – an automated telephone service which 'reads' newspapers in digital speech

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

VEC: Vocational Education Committee – an Irish statutory local education body which administers some secondary and most adult education in each county

YLG: Youth Libraries Group – section of the Library Association of Ireland

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The policy document *Branching out: a new public library service* (Department of the Environment, 1998) sets a national policy framework for Irish public libraries. Informed by *Better local government* (Department of the Environment, 1996) this document examines all areas of library service provision presenting a number of recommendations. Among these is the proposal that library authorities “develop an approach to resource sharing and better service provision that will embrace co-operation with ... a wide range of groups and organisations operating locally”.

In *Branching out – future directions* (DoEHLG, 2008) progress in this area is noted, along with the continuing challenge to further develop contacts and to fulfil the role of the library as a community space for all. Molyneux (2005, p.58) uses the term ‘outreach’ to describe this line of work, defining it as “taking the experience of what libraries have to offer outside of the building by active involvement in community activities, forming partnerships and seeking ways to encourage library use”. As it incorporates the elements of outreach emerging from the literature review, this definition was used as a working definition for the study.

Outreach activities appear to be widespread in Irish public libraries with initiatives frequently publicised in Irish Library News (An Chomhairle Leabharlanna, 2011) and on individual library websites. However, an extensive literature review revealed a gap in current research in this regard with no recent studies relating specifically to outreach in Irish public libraries.

As a first step in addressing this gap, it was decided to focus this dissertation on outreach in Irish public libraries, under the heading –

“An exploration of the role played by outreach activities in Irish public libraries today”.

A piece of primary research on this topic, the emphasis is on examining outreach from a library perspective with the following aim and objectives:

Aim: To examine, from a library perspective, the extent to which outreach activities are currently undertaken in Irish public libraries and the level of value they offer.

Objectives

- To assess the level of outreach offered by Irish Public Libraries at present in the context of current Government, Local Authority and Public Library policy.
- To establish the range of community groupings targeted by outreach programmes, identifying gaps in provision and possible reasons for same.
- To identify the factors affecting the level of outreach offered.
- To measure the level of value these activities have brought to the public library service.

A mixed-method approach was selected as it presented the opportunity to combine methods, enhancing the validity of the study and offering improved understanding of this previously unexplored topic. As a result of data obtained from desk research in the form of a literature review, a survey questionnaire targeted at all City/County Librarians, a Delphi study involving an expert panel from Irish public libraries, and a semi-structured interview with a representative of An Chomhairle Leabharlanna, a clear picture of outreach activity in Irish public libraries has emerged. Use of the Delphi study approach enabled access to expert opinion, providing rich qualitative data on the topic and a high response rate to both this section of the study and to the survey questionnaire ensured reliability and validity of findings.

By addressing the aim and objectives of the dissertation, analysis of the results offers a clear understanding of the importance of outreach activities in Irish public libraries today. Research findings confirm widespread involvement in outreach, with all participating libraries (91%) indicating some level of outreach activity. A wide range of community groupings are targeted, to varying degrees of success, and working partnerships which have been developed with other departments and agencies are regarded very positively.

The level of outreach offered varies according to local policy, priorities and resources, limited resources being highlighted as the main factor affecting provision of such services. There is general consensus that outreach adds value to the public library – by raising public awareness, improving service to the local community and enhancing the profile of the library – all of which lead to increased usage of the library itself.

Although regarded by the study participants as an integral and valuable part of today's public library service, there is no consistent mechanism in place for measuring the success, or otherwise, of outreach programmes. It is recommended that a set of relevant indicators be developed to accurately capture such information and, in doing so, acknowledge the importance of outreach in Irish public libraries today.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This review examines existing material on the subject of outreach in public libraries from both an Irish and international perspective for the purposes of:

- providing a clear definition of the term outreach as it applies in the context of the public library
- examining the importance placed on outreach activity in the context of international policy and initiatives
- reviewing the literature pertaining to outreach from an Irish public library perspective

2.2 Defining the term 'outreach'

Study of the literature highlights the difficulty in providing a precise definition of the term 'outreach'. Weibel (1982) found that while the term was used in library literature from the mid-sixties on a definition was not readily offered, 'outreach' being used interchangeably with phrases such as "service to the disadvantaged" and "inner-city service". Boyce and Boyce (1995) also had difficulty in finding a formal definition of the term, as did Adkins and Bala (2004) who describe outreach as taking many forms but do not provide an encompassing definition. Martin (1984) considers various viewpoints, finding lack of an agreed definition more of an inconvenience than a matter of critical importance. Provision of a definition, however, was vital to this study in order to facilitate a meaningful investigation.

2.2.1 Reaching out to communities

Earlier studies (Foster, 1975; Weibel, 1982; Allen and Potter, 1986) describe the role of library outreach as that of providing services to the disadvantaged by reaching outside library buildings to these communities. As these services developed they became more specific in nature, targeted at more clearly defined groups such as the aged, the illiterate and immigrants. However, Orange and Osborne (2004) express concern about listing categories of users in any definition of outreach, as this may lead to this service being segregated from other library services. They advocate that library strategies ensure equitable delivery of services to all library users and potential users. From an Irish perspective, equitable access is highlighted as a priority in *Branching out – future directions* (DoEHLG, 2008) which sets the objective of providing a service to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse society.

2.2.2 User community needs

The view that outreach involves the action of reaching outside the library into deprived or minority communities is shared by Martin (1984) and Boyce and Boyce (1995). In addition, they emphasise the importance of considering the needs of the community being served, feeling that the true significance of outreach is in the provision of services meeting the needs of the 'ordinary' person. Consultation with communities is regarded by Sargent (2004) as the underlying principle of outreach and a crucial step in any outreach activity. In their study of Irish public libraries, Fitzpatrick Associates (2004) found that the majority of Irish library authorities were not consulting meaningfully with excluded groups, recommending that this issue be addressed in order to provide relevant, meaningful services. This concern was also raised in later reports – *Meeting the challenges of cultural diversity* (An Chomhairle Leabharlanna, 2007) and *Marketing for public libraries* (An Chomhairle Leabharlanna, 2008) - highlighting this as an important issue in the context of the Irish public library service.

2.2.3 Developing partnerships and bringing communities into the library

Building on the importance of consultation and addressing community needs, the importance of partnerships is highlighted by Muddiman et al (2000) and Adkins and Bala (2004), their opinion being that in order for outreach to succeed, activities cannot be developed in isolation from the people who are being served. They further develop the concept of outreach by placing emphasis on drawing community members into libraries, raising awareness of library services and resources, and forging links with communities for future activities.

2.2.4 Community Development

During the literature search, it became clear that much library outreach work had not been defined as such, being incorporated under headings relating to community development. A broad term, the aim of community development is to promote inclusion and equality by community members working together, the concept featuring in many Irish national policies and programs (Komolafe, 2009). This differs from outreach in that, although having similar aims, community development is an overarching concept whereas outreach is one of the mechanisms used to deliver relevant objectives through community development programmes.

This distinction is highlighted by Muddiman (2006) who found outreach to be one of the key methods of delivering community librarianship services – differentiating between the overall concept and the methods used to deliver services. The current theme of community engagement in UK public libraries (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2011) focuses on developing working partnerships with the voluntary and community sector and with other public services. The theory is that by encouraging the meaningful involvement of the local community the public library can be further developed as a key community resource (Goulding, 2009). Outreach activities are seen as the mechanism for driving this agenda, as evidenced by programmes such as the Word Festival in Newham, the Headspace project and the Vital Link programme (Hicks, 2008).

2.2.5 Definition of Outreach

To summarise, a review of the literature for the purposes of defining the term outreach has shown that, despite the lack of an agreed formal definition, the concept is treated similarly in many studies.

Having evolved over time, the important elements of current library outreach activities which emerged from this research are:

- reaching out to underserved communities
- raising awareness of library resources
- bringing new communities into the library
- developing new, meaningful partnerships
- consulting with communities and involving community members in the development of services and activities
- equity of delivery and service

In her study, Molyneux (2005, p.58) defines outreach as

“Taking the experience of what libraries have to offer outside of the building by active involvement in community activities, forming partnerships and seeking ways to encourage library use”.

This definition incorporates the elements which emerged from the literature, highlighting the importance of engaging meaningfully with communities and avoiding the targeting of specific groups. On this basis it was decided to use this as the working definition of outreach for the study.

2.3 International Approach to Outreach

To ascertain the level of importance placed on outreach internationally the approach to outreach development and practice by different countries was examined, and relevant

policy documents reviewed. This included material relating to the lifelong learning agenda, which is closely linked with outreach activity in public libraries, and an overview of public library indicators and the measurements used to evaluate outreach services.

2.3.1 The Development and Practice of Outreach in Public Libraries

Having established a working definition of the term 'outreach', library initiatives were reviewed to determine the level of importance placed on outreach activities in public libraries.

Although a relatively new term, the practice of outreach within the public library system has a long history. In the 1890s Andrew Carnegie envisioned libraries as community catalysts (Storey, 2009), building them as recreational as well as educational centres in order to capture the imagination of the public. Adkins and Bala (2004) list various early library outreach initiatives in the USA, including the development of a travelling library service in New York in 1893 and staffed book collections in parks and on beachfronts in the 1930's.

The current level of practice of outreach within public libraries varies greatly and study of the literature has highlighted an interesting and varied approach to outreach in different countries. In addition to their outreach community libraries, Kenya National Library Services run camel and donkey mobiles, Braille libraries and HIV/Aids information services (KNLS, 2011). Australian public libraries offer Outback Letterbox Library services (Broken Hill, 2011), commuter 'express' libraries and telephone-based newspaper services (State Library of Victoria, 2005). In the Netherlands the American beachfront collections of the 1930s are mirrored today by beach libraries, which the public library service has been running successfully since 2005 (Storey, 2009).

The aim of this study, as a piece of primary research, is to present an overall picture of outreach activity in Irish public libraries and to examine the level of value offered by such activities. As the focus is on presenting an overview of outreach provision from a

library perspective, a detailed examination of the activities themselves, and those of other countries, falls beyond the scope of this study.

A brief outline of outreach development and practice in selected countries is included in Appendix A.

2.3.2 International Policy

Although not the subject of a policy document in its own right, outreach is referred to in international policy documents and regarded as an essential aspect of public library services. Review of the literature highlighted several policies of relevance to the research topic.

2.3.3 UNESCO/IFLA Public Library Manifesto

The UNESCO/IFLA Public Library Manifesto (UNESCO/IFLA, 1994) highlights the necessity for library services to adapt to the needs of the community it serves, stating that outreach programs must be provided in order to help users benefit from all resources. On publication it was recognised as an important statement of the fundamental principles of the public library service (Lynch and Yang, 2004), having much wider scope and being much more user-oriented than previous versions (Rahman, 1996). The development of new technologies prompted the introduction of additional recommendations to supplement the manifesto (IFLA, 2009). Here, again, the community role of the library is emphasised, highlighting the importance of the library building as a community space and the need for the service to connect with its local community.

2.3.4 Library Standards and Guidelines

Formulation of the UNESCO/IFLA Public Library Manifesto highlighted the need for a detailed set of standards for public libraries and the IFLA Public Library Guidelines

(Gill *et al*, 2001) were developed to provide a target at which all public libraries could aim. Recently revised, the current guidelines (Koontz and Gubbin, 2010) incorporate the principal elements of outreach, recommending that:

- Library development be planned “from a service rather than a building perspective” (2010, p.14)
- Attempts are made “to meet the needs of all groups in the community regardless of age and physical, economic or social circumstances” (2010, p.7)
- “Provision should be made to ensure services are equally available to minority groups” (2010, p.11)
- In order to play a full part in community activities the public library should be at the centre of the community and work with other community groups and organisations. “This will include...local government, the business community and voluntary organisations” (2010, p.44)

The *Council of Europe-EBLIDA guidelines on library legislation and policy in Europe* (Council of Europe/EBLIDA, 2000), although not binding, provide guidance for European government departments and library authorities on matters of library policy. In terms of outreach the guidelines highlight the importance of serving the needs of the user community, of working in consultation with community groups and of providing equality of access to all.

Although the UNESCO/IFLA Public Library Manifesto (UNESCO/IFLA, 1994) and subsequent guidelines are not compulsory, they have been accepted by many countries, including Ireland, and have been adopted by An Chomhairle Leabharlanna on behalf of the Irish public library service.

2.3.5 Lifelong Learning

Libraries have been highlighted as the obvious choice to deliver on one of the key messages of the *Memorandum on lifelong learning* (Commission of the European Communities, 2000) – that of providing lifelong learning opportunities as close to

learners as possible. The European Commission defines lifelong learning as “all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competencies, within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective” (European Commission, 2002, p.7) and public libraries are considered key promoters of lifelong learning policies due to their ability to encourage participation in today’s ‘Knowledge Society’ (Vitiello, 2000).

Eve, de Groot and Schmidt (2007) see the need for a new model of library service to advance the lifelong learning agenda, involving developing partnerships, reaching out beyond established services and users, and engaging with both user communities and wider policy agendas. In her study of British and Canadian public libraries, however, Kenneally (2003) found that public libraries felt they had always been doing these things e.g. literacy programs, reader development initiatives, homework clubs etc. She argues that rather than providing new services, existing outreach activities are now being linked to the lifelong learning agenda, especially in the UK, and often to enable access to project funding. *Branching out – future directions* (DoEHLG, 2008) recommends expansion of the role of Irish public libraries in relation to the lifelong learning agenda, seeking recognition of that role from education providers and other agencies.

2.3.6 Evaluation of Outreach

One of the objectives of this study is to measure the level of value that outreach activities have brought to the public library service. As this research approaches outreach from a library perspective, opinions expressed by participants on the value of outreach are largely subjective. However, this does raise the issue of evaluation of outreach services and how this should be addressed.

The *IFLA Public Library Guidelines* (Koontz and Gubbin, 2010) incorporate several statements regarding monitoring and evaluation. Guideline 6.10.3 (Koontz and Gubbin, 2010, p.105) highlights the need for appropriate evaluation, recommending that appropriate techniques “be developed to measure the quality of the services provided and their impact on the community”. A mixture of quantitative and qualitative

measurements is recommended to accurately capture all relevant information and the use of outcome measures is encouraged. The current ISO public library indicators do not include outcome and impact measures as evaluative methods. These measures, however, are highlighted as an evolving area of library performance measurement and the library and information community is encouraged to prioritise the development of such mechanisms (ISO, 2008).

Approaches to service measurement vary, the U.S.A encouraging the development of local indicators whereas other countries have developed sets of standards and criteria at national level. Irish public library indicators are set nationally, those currently collected being – opening hours, library visits, library stock and internet access through libraries (LGMSB, 2011) - however, these quantitative measurements do not capture the level of outreach that public library services currently engage in. In order to address this, *Branching out – future directions* (DoEHLG, 2008) recommends the development of more appropriate measurement methods to better gauge the variety of usage of the modern public library and to ensure that the service is attracting its potential audience.

Matarasso (1998, p. 49) acknowledges the importance of developing relevant indicators, noting that “in public service as elsewhere, what is not measured is very quickly deemed not to exist” and suggesting that the development of a range of more accurate, useful and responsive indicators is possible. His report recommends baseline measurement of usage and attendance numbers combined with other relevant data e.g. the number of groups formally linked to the library service, the proportion of hours used for organised activities etc. In contrast, Canadian libraries have developed a Community-led Service Planning Model (Williment, 2009) which incorporates more qualitative evaluation mechanisms and is proving very successful.

2.3.7 Summary

This review of international outreach policy and practice has highlighted the importance of outreach activity in the context of the international network of public libraries. Regarded as an essential aspect of the service, the opportunity that outreach

offers for engaging meaningfully with the community, developing partnerships, offering equality of access and delivering on the lifelong learning agenda is significant. The broad range of initiatives on offer and the emphasis placed on outreach in public library policy documentation confirms the value with which these services are regarded from an international perspective.

2.4 The Irish Context

Irish public libraries are the focus of this study and the development of the Irish public library system up to the 1990's is now briefly outlined, in order to place current policies and developments in context. This is followed by a more detailed review of the subject of outreach as highlighted in relevant library policy and research documentation.

2.4.1 Development of the Irish public library system up to 1945

The first truly public library in Ireland – Marsh's Library – was founded as far back as the 18th century (Grimes, 1998). In 1855 the *Public Libraries (Ireland) Act* was enacted but despite this only two public libraries had been established by 1880.

According to Moran and Quinn (2006), funding by the Carnegie grants was one of the most important factors in expediting public library development in Ireland from 1903 until the late 1940s. This funding led to the construction of library buildings and the introduction of the experimental county library schemes. The modern Irish public library service has its origins in this county system which was founded in 1922 (Castleleyn, 1984). Through this system books were distributed to readers country-wide via collections held in local schools, shops, post offices and co-ops. Other initiatives followed such as the hospital library service for patients in the 1930s and the formation of the Book Association of Ireland in 1943. This association held the first Children's Book Week event in 1944, highlighting children's librarianship for the first time.

2.4.2 Irish Library Council

By 1945 county councils had assumed responsibility for library services, but the uneasy political and economic climate of the time, coupled with the discontinuation of the Carnegie grants, meant that the development of library services stalled. One positive step was the introduction of the *Public Library Act 1947* which led to the formation of the Library Council, the first body dedicated to public library promotion and development in Ireland (Ellis King, 2003). The Library Council commissioned a survey of existing Irish public libraries (Library Council, 1955, cited in Castleleyn, 1984, p.220) followed by a study on borough and urban district libraries (Library Council, 1958, cited in Castleleyn, 1984, p.223), both of which highlighted the problems of library development in Ireland.

2.4.3 Irish public libraries 1960's – 1990's

The *Public Libraries Grant Scheme*, established in 1961, led to a programme of investment over the following decades, with emphasis on developing infrastructure and improving library collections. However, this focus on infrastructure meant that the service itself had not improved to any great extent (Dempsey, 2003). A report was commissioned by the government in 1987 for the purposes of reviewing the public library service. This review (Boland, Armitage and O'Byrne, 1987) found the service to be badly in need of modernisation, calling on the government to address several issues to bring the service up to standard and develop the information function of the library. Unfortunately, the recession of the 1980's led to cutbacks, the library service suffering from reduced book funds and staffing levels, and limited progress was made. This was to improve with the economic upturn of the 1990s, and it was during this time that Irish public libraries were first referred to in national policy documents and a specific library policy framework established.

2.5 Outreach in Irish Library Policy

At national level the evolving role of public libraries, including development of outreach services, was first acknowledged in the policy document *Better local government* (Department of the Environment, 1996). The focus of national policy at this time was on social inclusion and the document recognised the important role played by the public library service as an educational and information resource, as a provider of outreach programmes, and in the development of partnerships with other organisations.

2.5.1 Branching Out

Informed by this document, *Branching out: a new public library service* (Department of the Environment, 1998) set the first national policy framework for Irish public libraries, examining all areas of library service provision and presenting a number of recommendations.

Proposals relating to outreach recommended that public libraries -

- actively pursue a deliberate strategy at local level to identify physical, social and financial barriers, removing these through better use of service points other than libraries
- seek greater co-operation with other libraries and a wide range of local groups and community organisations
- focus on their contribution to issues such as ICT awareness, literacy and lifelong learning
- review how they serve isolated communities, exploring innovative solutions to meet identified needs
- ensure that all members of the community are made aware of what their library service has to offer

- have a named and trained person to act as liaison with potential users who may be referred to the library by any other agency

Several studies followed, exploring key aspects of the Irish public library system and its methods of service delivery. In terms of outreach the following themes were examined:

2.5.2 Raising Public Awareness

Regarded in *Branching out* (1998) as vital to the continuing relevance of public libraries, the issue of public awareness was also highlighted in *Arts and the magic of the word* (Public Libraries and the Arts Committee, 1998) – a study of public libraries and the further promotion of the Arts in Ireland. This report suggested that the library service be more active in developing its position, in finding new community needs it could meet, and in improving communication with the public in order to fulfil the potential of its broad civic role.

2.5.3 Partnerships

A key element of outreach, *Joining forces* (An Chomhairle Leabharlanna, 1999) found that only 29% of libraries had co-operated with non-library organisations, highlighting the need for research into the benefits and barriers in this area. McGrath, Rogers and Gilligan (2010) found little communication between libraries and second-level schools, acknowledging that such links require strong commitment on both sides. Both studies recognised the potential for developing links and strengthening the role of the public library service through building partnerships.

2.5.4 Consultation

A study by the Combat Poverty Agency (Fitzpatrick Associates, 2004) also explored the issue of developing partnerships from the public library perspective. However, as the majority of libraries participating in the study had not consulted with excluded groups

regarding their needs, they could not measure the success, or otherwise, of their outreach activities. This need for consultation is again highlighted in *Meeting the challenges of cultural diversity* (An Chomhairle Leabharlanna, 2007), which recommends that local community profiling should lead to the development of relevant policies to be incorporated into library development plans.

2.5.5 Communities

Following publication of *Branching out* (Department of the Environment, 1998) a major research and action pilot - the Taobh Tíre project - commenced in 2002. An innovative scheme targeted at isolated communities, service points were developed in remote regions in partnership with local agencies and staffed by community volunteers. The project report (An Chomhairle Leabharlanna, 2008) highlights the success of this system as a viable means of addressing community needs and improving levels of outreach activity within the community.

However, the research findings of two further studies - *A public space for all: use and non-use of public libraries* (An Chomhairle Leabharlanna, 2003) and *The value of public libraries in the delivery of e-government services* (Dublin City Council, 2008) - concluded that more could be done to target services to those at risk of being excluded. These findings suggest that progress in this area was limited in the intervening five year period, highlighting this as a potential concern for Irish public libraries.

2.5.6 Branching Out – Future Directions

Branching out – future directions (DoEHLG, 2008) builds on the original *Branching out* report (Department of the Environment, 1998), reviewing progress and setting policy for a five year period. Progress in library outreach activity is noted, along with the continuing challenge to further develop contacts and to further develop the community role of the library.

Recommendations include -

- development of more appropriate measurement methods for the variety of usage of the modern public library to ensure the service is attracting its potential audience
- piloting of innovative service delivery methods
- improved co-operation with other departments, libraries and community organisations
- development of the role of public library service as agents of cultural inclusion and lifelong learning

Although progress had been made since *Branching out* (2008), the issues of innovative service delivery and improved co-operation still arise, together with an acknowledgement of the need to further develop the role of the library as a community space for all.

2.6 Conclusion

This literature review provides a definition of outreach as a starting point upon which to base the research study. The importance placed on public library outreach at international level has been highlighted, along with a closer examination of policy and research relating to outreach activity in Irish public libraries, particularly since *Branching out* (Department of the Environment, 1998).

While the literature indicates progression in the provision of outreach services by Irish public libraries, there has been no study to date exploring the level and value of outreach offered by this sector with *Branching out – future directions* (DoEHLG, 2008) highlighting the need for improved methods of measurement to better reflect the wide range of usage of the service.

As a first step in researching the topic, this study examines and assesses the level of outreach offered from a library perspective.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Having formulated and established the relevance of the research question an appropriate methodology for the collection, analysis and interpretation of relevant data was chosen. In this chapter the selected approach is discussed and the research methods and data collection tools are examined. This section concludes with consideration of issues relevant to the overall study methodology i.e. piloting, use of e-mail, validity, analysis techniques, constraints & limitations and ethics.

3.2 Choice of Approach

The methodology of this study has been informed by the literature review through examination of the varied methodologies used in previous studies on similar topics. The survey approach is favoured in research among larger populations e.g. *The public library and the school* (An Chomhairle Leabharlanna, 2010), *Access to public libraries for marginalised groups* (Fitzpatrick Associates, 2004). In smaller-scale studies the case study method has been used e.g. *Public library services and the Polish community in England* (Listwon and Sen, 2009), *An evaluation of East Renfrewshire's Look at Libraries festival* (Rooney-Browne, 2008). Other researchers, including Molyneux (2005) and McGrath, Rogers and Gilligan (2010), have utilised a mixed-method approach.

The research methodology selected must be the most appropriate way of gathering the data to best answer the research question (Panacek, 2008) and sometimes there is more than one valid approach. Survey methodology is incorporated into the study as a suitable method for providing an overview of outreach in Irish public libraries, but it was felt that the survey alone could not provide adequate data to meet with the more qualitative objectives of the research. In contrast, case study methodology offered the opportunity to explore the topic among a smaller, focused range of people (Gray, 2004).

A multiple-case study would have been appropriate but time-consuming considering the time constraints of the research programme. In addition, as the dissertation aims to provide a broad picture of outreach activities nationally, the case study approach would possibly be better suited to more detailed, subsequent research.

3.3 The Mixed-Method Approach

The overall purpose of the mixed-method approach is to reduce uncertainty and increase understanding (Greene, Benjamin and Goodyear, 2001), a purpose suited to the study of a previously unexplored topic.

As a primary piece of research relating to the Irish public library service in its entirety, and due to the qualitative nature of the research question, it was felt that this approach was most appropriate for this study. Rationale for the decision was based on the opportunity for complementarity, enhanced validity and unexpected outcomes that this approach offers (Bryman, 2006).

3.3.1 Complementarity

Complementarity refers to the results of one method being used to clarify and enhance those of the other (Bryman, 2006), the theory being that a more complete picture can be established by combining different research strategies (Erzberger and Prein, 1997). As a primary piece of research it was felt that an overview of the national picture was necessary to set the context, complemented by richer information from a more in-depth study. By combining the results of a survey targeted at all Irish public libraries, with qualitative data obtained from a Delphi study among a panel of public library representatives, further enhanced by a semi-structured interview with a representative of An Chomhairle Leabharlanna the mixed method approach helped to achieve this objective.

3.3.2 Enhanced Validity

Use of the mixed-method approach offers the option of combining results for the purposes of corroboration i.e. triangulation (Erzberger and Prein, 1997). This increases validity, presenting the opportunity for confirmation and completeness of results (Adami, 2005). The theory, as presented by Greene, Benjamin and Goodyear (2001) is that threats to validity can be vastly reduced by measuring the same phenomenon using different methods.

As similar questions were posed using varied data collection tools this enabled corroboration of outcomes. Results from the survey questionnaire enhanced understanding of the Delphi study and vice versa, both being further validated by the semi-structured interview. The research methods and designs employed were informed by the literature review, further enhancing validity of the research.

3.3.3 Unanticipated Outcomes

Greene (2005) finds that use of the mixed-method approach increases the potential for unanticipated outcomes. Sometimes findings do not converge and may even conflict with each other, requiring further analysis in order to reach a satisfactory conclusion (Greene, Benjamin and Goodyear, 2001). In terms of this investigation, this presented the opportunity for issues to be raised and left the study open to unexpected results, reducing the possibility of bias. Findings can converge, complement or diverge (Erzberger and Prein, 1997) and use of the Delphi approach allowed the study to remain open to all possibilities.

3.4 Research Methods: Desk Research

Desk research relies on data that already exists in one form or another and is essentially qualitative due to the interpretative nature of the process (Pickard, 2007). This method has a very specific focus and offers unbiased critical analysis of the literature studied. A wide range of primary sources is vital to the reliability of such an investigation and, as

the starting point of this study, the first step involved a review of relevant literature both from an Irish and international perspective.

One purpose of the literature review is to examine previous work in such a manner that new understandings are uncovered, thereby opening the way for new research (Bruce, 2001), in this case highlighting a gap in the literature which this paper aims to address. Review of other literature also helped to set the dissertation in context, particularly from the perspective of Irish public libraries, and informed the study methodology by highlighting appropriate methodologies, relevant themes and issues requiring further investigation.

3.5 Research Methods: The Survey

Survey methodology involves the systematic collection of data with the focus on obtaining information from a representative population sample, the findings of which can then be generalised to the population as a whole (Kelly and Long, 2001). One of the most popular research methodologies used today, Pickard (2007) describes descriptive and explanatory surveys, both of which offer the opportunity of generalizing findings provided they are representative and standardised.

3.5.1 Descriptive Survey

The survey was selected as an appropriate method to establish the level and range of outreach offered nationally, and to examine whether the concept has been incorporated into library development policy at local level. The descriptive survey method was used because –

- This is an appropriate method when seeking relevant data that are currently unavailable (Calder, 1998). As established in the literature review there is a lack of existing relevant data on the subject of outreach in Irish public libraries.

- The descriptive survey offers the opportunity of obtaining informative data which may be used as a basis for more detailed investigation (Gray, 2004). This survey involved the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, offering a broad picture of outreach activities which was then explored on a deeper level using the Delphi study.
- This method addresses the issue of what is currently happening in the population being studied (Kelly and Long, 2001) and is a useful way of providing a snapshot of a particular point or period in time (Janes, 1999), which suits the nature of the research topic.
- Administration was possible from a distance, making this approach more efficient in terms of time and financial constraints.

3.5.2 Standardisation

The survey method in general employs standardised questions which allow for the collection and comparison of similar data, in this case from each participating library authority. An advantage in this respect, standardisation is also regarded as a weakness of this method (Colorado State University, 2011) as the questions need to be general enough to be appropriate to all respondents but as the survey was administered among a non-random population sample this was not regarded as a concern for this particular study. The survey method can also be regarded as inflexible as the initial study design remains constant throughout the process and it was felt that use of the mixed-method approach helped to balance the study in this regard.

3.5.3 Survey Questionnaire

Oppenheim (2001) suggests that well designed questionnaires should have a clear layout, a variety of question styles and good sequencing. The survey questionnaire (Appendix B) was constructed according to Oppenheim's 14 steps of social survey

design (2001, pp.7-8), using a mixture of open and closed questions based on the study aim and objectives. Each item was examined for relevance to the research area and based on themes which emerged from the literature (Kelly and Long, 2001).

The questionnaire was developed by mapping the questions so they flowed logically through the topic areas. Careful attention was paid to the ordering of questions, beginning with closed, pre-coded questions in order to ease respondents into the subject (Brace, 2008). Question types were varied to make the questionnaire more attractive and user-friendly with a mixture of open, closed and scale items (Gray, 2004) and use of standardised questions ensured common and transparent meaning. Closed questions were used as they encourage a good response rate in self-administered questionnaires (De Vaus, 2004), with open questions offering the potential of obtaining rich responses and data which may not have been anticipated by the researcher (Gray, 2004). In a relatively new investigative field such as the topic being researched, Panacek (2008) recommends the use of some open-ended questions, Aldridge and Levine (2001) advising that, although this type of question introduces variety, they should be used sparingly as they are more difficult to answer, code and analyse. Bearing this in mind only two open-ended questions were included in the survey questionnaire.

The layout of the survey instrument was kept clear and uncluttered, with use of white space maximised to make the questionnaire more user-friendly (Janes, 1999). According to Panacek (2008), the probability of survey completion and achievement of good response rates is inversely proportional to the length of the survey instrument. To encourage response rates the questionnaire was kept as short and focused as possible without omitting any significant questions.

3.5.4 Response Rates

Kelly and Long (2001) highlight the fact that response rates influence the representative nature of the data. Securing the optimum level of participation was a concern, but it was hoped that the assurance of anonymity and use of email would encourage

participation by both guaranteeing confidentiality and enhancing expediency of the process (Northcote *et al.*, 2008).

Previous survey questionnaires involving City and County Librarians had typically yielded high response rates ranging from 66% (Fitzpatrick Associates, 2004) to 100% (An Chomhairle Leabharlanna, 2007), and it was hoped that similar levels could be achieved. To encourage response rates, librarians were offered the option of forwarding the survey questionnaire to a relevant member of staff for completion and 66% of those initially contacted did so. The questionnaire was distributed shortly after the LAI annual joint conference which was entitled *The Future starts now: Libraries adding value through Information and Innovation* (LAI and CILIP Ireland, 2011). The theme of this event was the development and delivery of customer-focused services, so the timing of questionnaire distribution was opportune and possibly had a bearing on the overall response rate achieved which was 91% (29 out of a total of 32 library services).

3.5.5 Sample Selection

An essential step in research design is selection of the population sample which must be clearly defined from the outset. In this study the researcher aimed to select a sample appropriate to the research question, drawing a balance between practical constraints and methodological imperatives (Calder, 1998).

Pickard (2007) draws attention to the fact that effective selection will produce a sample that is directly related to the study, the research question, and the type of evidence needed in response to this question. Selection of the initial population sample is an essential step of the research process (Oppenheim, 2001) and the convenience sample of the 32 City and County Librarians as a small, relevant grouping presented an ideal sample frame.

As previously stated, the City/County Librarians were then offered the option of participating themselves or acting as gatekeepers by selecting a relevant member of staff to complete the questionnaire. As the research question relates directly to the Irish

public library service, the respondents were deemed to form an adequate, representative sample.

3.5.6 Sampling Bias

When a sample is not representative of the population from which it has been drawn distortion occurs, Gray (2004) defining this as sampling bias. Researchers face the challenge of overcoming bias, particularly in non-random sampling, and where the threat of bias exists this must be acknowledged if the research is to maintain credibility. As the survey uses the convenience sample of the 32 Irish City and County Librarians, in relation to a research question which is clearly defined as studying outreach from an Irish public library perspective, the sampling frame is deemed relevant.

3.6 Research Methods: The Delphi Study

Designed originally as a forecasting technique (Maceviciute and Wilson, 2009), the Delphi approach offers the opportunity to engage a panel of experts in a consensus building exercise. Often used as part of a larger study (Mead and Moseley, 2001), the general structure of this method aims to stimulate thought and raise participant's awareness of different viewpoints by the pooling of knowledge (Linstone and Turoff, 2010).

An iterative, multistage process, designed to transform opinion into group consensus (Hasson, Keeney and McKenna, 2000), the Delphi study was selected because:

- It is a particularly appropriate method when there is no historical data (Gupta & Clarke, 1996) and little previous work has been conducted on the topic (Mead and Moseley, 2001), as has been demonstrated in this case.
- It suited the time constraints of the study by offering the ability to access expert opinion at times and places convenient to the panel members (Linstone and Turoff, 2010).

- This method offered the opportunity to develop a rich picture of outreach activity by utilising open-ended questions.
- The anonymous, collaborative approach reduces the possibility of influence and constraint, the final data emerging from a series of iterations rather than the imposed viewpoints of particular panel members.

3.6.1 Consensus

A concern regarding the Delphi study is that it can be perceived as one which forces consensus, with greater emphasis being placed on results than is justifiable (Hasson, Keeney and McKenna, 2000). This method, however, incorporates the opinions of all participants (Howze and Dalrymple, 2003) and the movement towards consensus is a transparent process. Failure to reach consensus does not constitute a failed study – even if there is lack of agreement the process helps to clarify the important issues (Buckley, 1995).

3.6.2 Modification of the Delphi study

In a modification of the panel selection process a request for volunteers to participate in the Delphi study was incorporated into the survey questionnaire. As Ireland has a relatively small number of public library services it was considered that this approach would receive a better response and attract the attention of those with particular interest, and expertise, in the field. In addition, as this area is not well documented it would be difficult to compile an appropriate panel by other means. By linking the questionnaire and the Delphi in this way it was envisaged that this would constitute a more robust study and ensure a high level of expertise on the panel as the questionnaire was initially distributed to city and county librarians.

3.6.3 Number of Rounds

Due to the time constraints of the research, and also being cognisant of potential problems of availability over the summer months, the decision was taken to limit the study to three rounds. Previous researchers have found two rounds to be adequate - (Cape, 2004; Howze and Dalrymple, 2003) – but this is understood to be the absolute minimum (Pickard, 2007). Hasson and McKenna (2000), Mead and Moseley (2001) and Northcote *et al.* (2008) found that most often no more than three rounds are needed and it was felt that this number would offer sufficient opportunity for the panel to address the questions asked and clarify their input if necessary.

3.6.4 Delphi Questionnaire

It is in the design of the questionnaire that the difference between a Delphi study and survey become apparent (Howze and Dalrymple, 2003), first round Delphi questionnaires normally consisting of a number of open-ended questions (Pickard, 2007). As highlighted by Mead and Moseley (2001) there are many ways of conducting a Delphi study and the stages of the process are not fixed. In this study first round questions were generated from initial survey results combined with themes arising from the literature review and the overall objectives of the dissertation.

The initial questionnaire consisted of five open-ended questions, encouraging members of the panel to provide detailed and descriptive responses (Appendix C). Responses were analysed, statements which had already achieved consensus were removed, and in round 2 panellists were requested to rate the remaining statements on a scale of 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree), adding comments if desired. It was felt that a seven point scale would offer more scope to panellists as the interval between scale points is not too large, making it easier for the participant to adjust ratings. These statements were grouped by category with headings removed in order to reduce risk of the 'halo' effect (Mead and Moseley, 2001). In the final round panellists were asked to review the top rated statements indicating their agreement with the ranking or stating their preferred ranking at this stage (Appendix D).

3.6.5 Response Rates

In order to maintain the rigour of the study Sumison (1998, cited in Hasson and McKenna, 2000, p.1012) recommends a response rate of 70% per round in the Delphi study. In this case a 100% response rate was maintained - of the initial thirteen volunteers nine participated in the first round, all nine seeing the study through to completion.

The anonymous nature of the process can be a drawback of this method. Northcote *et al.* (2008) discuss the absence of 'social-emotional' support felt by panellists during their study, who complained of inadequate feedback from the panel co-ordinator. To prevent this from happening the researcher maintained regular contact with the panellists, recognising that maintaining a link was vital to sustained participation and a successful outcome.

Informing the sample and use of reminders were other factors which encouraged participation. Panellists were provided with explanatory material at the outset outlining the input required and proposed timeframe for each round. Reminders were sent where necessary, enabling the study to flow and helping to maintain momentum.

3.6.6 Delphi Panel selection

In a Delphi study the panel is chosen not to be representative but expert (Mead and Moseley, 2001), in this case library service staff members with particular interest in, and experience of, outreach. Participation in the Delphi study was voluntary with each of the 32 library authorities being offered the opportunity to take part, thereby removing the threat of bias.

The researcher sought a panel of 8-10 participants, needing to be practical in terms of the time constraints of the study. The composition of the panel is crucial in order for consensus to have merit and a panel of varied experience is preferred. Although the approach to panel selection was modified in this case, participants were geographically

dispersed with various levels of expertise thus enhancing validity (Ludwig and Starr, 2005).

3.6.7 Sampling Bias

Hasson, Keeney and McKenna (2000) highlight the possibility of exposure to bias in panel selection as panellists need to have an interest in the research topic but also the ability to remain relatively impartial. As the panel was formed on a voluntary basis this has exposed the study to the potential of such bias. However, by utilising a mixed-method approach, the researcher felt that the depth and range of emerging data would outweigh any threat of bias and enable the process to remain open and transparent.

3.7 The Semi-structured Interview

Following completion of the survey questionnaire and Delphi study, a semi-structured interview was held with a representative of An Chomhairle Leabharlanna to further validate findings. As a “state agency that provides advice, assistance and services to local authorities and central government in relation to the public library service” (An Chomhairle Leabharlanna, 2011) it was felt that such an interview would enhance the overall picture of outreach activities in the Irish public library service.

3.7.1 Interview questions

The semi-structured interview was selected as it is non-standardised and often used in qualitative analysis (Gray, 2004), thus suiting the nature of the research question. The researcher prepared some questions based on the findings of the survey questionnaire and Delphi study, using these as a general guide for the interview (Appendix F). The use of open-ended questions allowed for greater richness and spontaneity of answers (Oppenheim, 2001), the opportunity to probe and to allow the respondent to expand on their answers.

3.7.2 Interview approach

The semi-structured approach offered flexibility and allowed for the generation of further information should this arise, allowing for clarification of issues between interviewer and interviewee and the opportunity to react and adapt to responses. The disadvantages of time and cost were kept to a minimum as only one interview was conducted and the threat of bias was addressed by using the semi-structured approach, allowing the interviewee to raise issues/express opinions as they arose during the course of the interview.

3.8 Additional Methodological Issues

Having discussed the selected approach and examined the research methods and data collection tools chosen, this chapter concludes with consideration of issues relevant to the overall study methodology i.e. piloting, use of e-mail, validity, analysis techniques, constraints & limitations and ethics.

3.8.1 Piloting

Before distribution, a thorough piloting phase was undertaken, evaluating all questionnaires and accompanying documentation (Gray, 2004). Feedback raised some issues of content and phrasing and these items were adjusted as necessary. Revised drafts were then resubmitted to those engaging in the pilot, the process continuing until all identified problems were amended. Those selected to engage in the pilot testing were key informants rather than experts (Aldridge and Levine, 2001), chosen as people who could alert the researcher to false assumptions, presuppositions and problems in language usage.

3.8.2 Use of e-mail

Pickard (2007) confirms that the mechanism used to collect data will not alter the structure of the study, provided the design remains constant. In this investigation both

the survey and Delphi study were conducted using self-administered questionnaires which were distributed via e-mail. Formatted questionnaires were sent as an attachment to be returned via email or printed-out and returned by post.

Northcote *et al.* (2008) recommend the email approach, highlighting speed, efficiency, and personalised interactivity between researcher and participants as its main advantages. Use of email facilitated efficient turnaround times – a frequent problem with Delphi studies (Okoli and Pawlowski, 2004) - which minimised attrition and helped to maintain the flow of information.

In using email there is the concern of participant's access to a computer and their level of computer skills (De Vaus, 2004), but as the targeted group were professionals with individual email addresses this was not considered an issue in this case. Absence of an interviewer removes a major source of potential bias in responses (Brace, 2008) but can lead to misunderstandings where clarification may be necessary. As participants had ready access to the researcher via email any concerns raised were resolved quickly and as they arose.

3.8.3 Validity

Process validation is vital to the reliability of research outcomes, and various steps were taken in designing the research methodology to enhance validity of the study.

- Participants in the study had knowledge and interest in the topic (Hasson, Keeney and McKenna, 2000).
- Thorough piloting of the data collection tools ensured that the questions related to the research topic and accurately measured what was intended.
- The mixed-method approach enhances validity through complementarity and triangulation. By combining qualitative and quantitative data following interpretive and statistical analysis, the strengths and weaknesses of the methods used complement each other (Erzberger and Prein, 1997).

- The survey was designed to be representative of the survey population and, in doing so, maximised external validity (Calder, 1998).
- The Delphi study uses a consensus approach which is open and transparent with no pressure for convergence (Hasson, Keeney and McKenna, 2000).
- Member checking (Cho and Trent, 2006) was used both during and after the Delphi study and interview and where clarification was needed in the survey questionnaire.
- As previously mentioned, the higher the response rate the more representative the outcome (Kelly and Long, 2001). This study yielded high response rates, enhancing validity by helping to minimise non-response bias.

3.8.4 Analysis Techniques - Quantitative Data

Nominal and ordinal data were collected from the survey questionnaire, coded according to the prepared code book, and entered manually into a data matrix. These data were then analysed using the arithmetic mean, this selected as being the most useful and stable of the averages (Stephen & Hornby, 1997). Results were then illustrated graphically using bar and pie charts as appropriate for this type of data (Black, 1999, cited in Gray, 2004, p. 294). Quantitative data analysis was also used in round two of the Delphi study where the mean ranking of each statement was calculated and statements then sorted in order of preference.

3.8.5 Analysis Techniques - Qualitative Data

Open-ended questions were used in the Delphi study, interview and to a lesser extent in the survey questionnaire. Responses to these questions were analysed using the constant comparative method as outlined by Pickard (2007, pp. 241 - 245) and the interview was recorded and transcribed before undergoing analysis. By using this process of open coding, statements were allocated codes and grouped into categories

which were allowed to emerge from the data and were not established a priori. Where appropriate the number of statements was reduced by collapsing two or more statements into one, this technique used sparingly. Analysis of results is provided in the form of a written account with quotes from participants.

3.8.6 Constraints and Limitations

The methodology of the study was also shaped by the overall constraints within which the research was conducted. The limited timeframe meant that the research process needed to be carefully planned in order to be realistic and achievable. Previous studies noted how carrying out research over the summer months had a negative effect on their response rates (Cape, 2004; Kirk, McMenemy and Poulter, 2004). In an effort to prevent this problem from arising, the survey and Delphi study were carefully scheduled and participants fully informed of all relevant dates.

As resources were limited the most cost-effective methods were chosen, use of e-mail proving to be very efficient. Design of data collection tools and analysis of results was carried-out by the researcher in order to keep costs to a minimum. Analysis of data, particularly qualitative data, is a time consuming exercise but with careful, realistic, time management this was achieved.

3.8.7 Ethics

The researcher has conformed to Northumbria University's ethics policy (Northumbria University, 2010), adhering to ethical responsibilities as outlined by De Vaus (2004, p.59):

- Voluntary participation - in encouraging rates of response, care was taken not to pressurise potential participants

- Informed consent – all participants were supplied with an overview of the purpose of the study. Completion of the questionnaires constituted informed consent and this was stated in the explanatory materials
- Anonymity & confidentiality – as the identity of respondents was known to the researcher the term ‘quasi-anonymity’ may be more accurate (McKenna, 1994, cited in Hasson, Keeney and McKenna, 2000, p.1012). The researcher assured confidentiality, and all opinions expressed remained anonymous. Participants were completely anonymous to each other, their dealings being restricted to email contact with the researcher alone (Northcote *et al.*, 2008).
- Privacy – as email addresses of the target population are publicly available, use of these did not constitute an invasion of privacy. All responses were anonymised and available only to the researcher.

All participants were offered the opportunity to comment on the analysis of the data before completion, and each received a copy of the final report.

Chapter 4: Results and Analysis

4.1 Survey Questionnaire

4.1.1 Introduction

The survey questionnaire was distributed via e-mail to all 32 City and County Librarians, securing 29 responses. Such a high response rate (91%) ensured good regional representation with a suitable mix of urban and rural counties, thereby increasing validity of the results. The aim of this questionnaire was to gather information concerning the objectives of the study, and key findings are summarised under the following headings:

- **Local policy:** the level of outreach currently provided by Irish public libraries and incorporated into local policy
- **Targeted groups:** the range of community groupings currently targeted by library outreach activities
- **Levels of success:** the levels of success achieved in targeting and accessing these groups
- **Gaps in outreach provision:** areas where outreach is currently less targeted
- **Factors affecting the level of outreach:** the factors that encourage, and those that inhibit, the level of outreach being offered
- **Targeting methods:** methods used to target groups and raise awareness of activities and programmes
- **Development of partnerships:** the range and level of working partnerships developed with other departments, libraries and community organisations
- **Measuring outreach activities:** how outreach activities are currently being measured and evaluated by library services

In the analysis of all data collected, figures were rounded to the nearest whole number.

4.1.2 Local Policy

Results indicate an extremely high level of outreach, with 100% of respondents replying that their library service actively engages in outreach activities.

As outlined in Table 4.1.2, the concept of outreach has been incorporated into the majority of Library Development Plans (93%). The same percentage of parent organisations have prioritised community engagement and the development of partnerships in their corporate plans – both concepts which are closely linked with outreach as outlined in chapter two.

During the literature review the issue of community consultation was raised, the need for improved consultation being highlighted by reports including *Access to public libraries for marginalised groups* (Fitzpatrick Associates, 2004) and *Meeting the challenges of cultural diversity* (An Chomhairle Leabharlanna, 2007). The survey found that 76% of library services engaged in consultation with community groups during the preparation of their current development plans, suggesting an improvement in this area.

Table 4.1.2: Local policy regarding outreach services

Question	% Yes	% No	No Ans.
Does your library service actively engage in outreach activities?	100	0	0
Is the concept of outreach listed as a priority in your current Library Development/ Business Plan?	93	7	0
Were community groups/agencies consulted in the preparation of your current Library Development Plan?	76	21	3
Does your Local Authority/ Council prioritise community engagement and development of partnerships in its Corporate Plan?	93	7	0

A question on staff policy in relation to outreach services highlighted a varied approach, with library services employing different models of practice. Almost half of the respondents (48%) indicated that outreach development is assigned to a specific member of staff, 71% of these services having a full-time designated co-ordinator or development team, the remainder having staff allocated on a part-time basis due to staff shortages. These staff members co-ordinate activities and events for the whole service, working in partnership with library branch managers.

In those services where there is no designated co-ordinator (52%) the role of outreach is shared among staff and allocated to branch managers as one of their responsibilities. Two of these library services did have assigned staff until recently but the role has been scaled-back due to staffing constraints. Over one quarter (27%) of these respondents indicate that the introduction of a designated co-ordinator would be beneficial to their service.

4.1.3 Targeted Groups

Many of the reports consulted during the literature review highlighted various community groupings in relation to public libraries and outreach. Twelve distinct groups were identified, respondents being asked to indicate whether their service targeted these groups and to detail any others not listed.

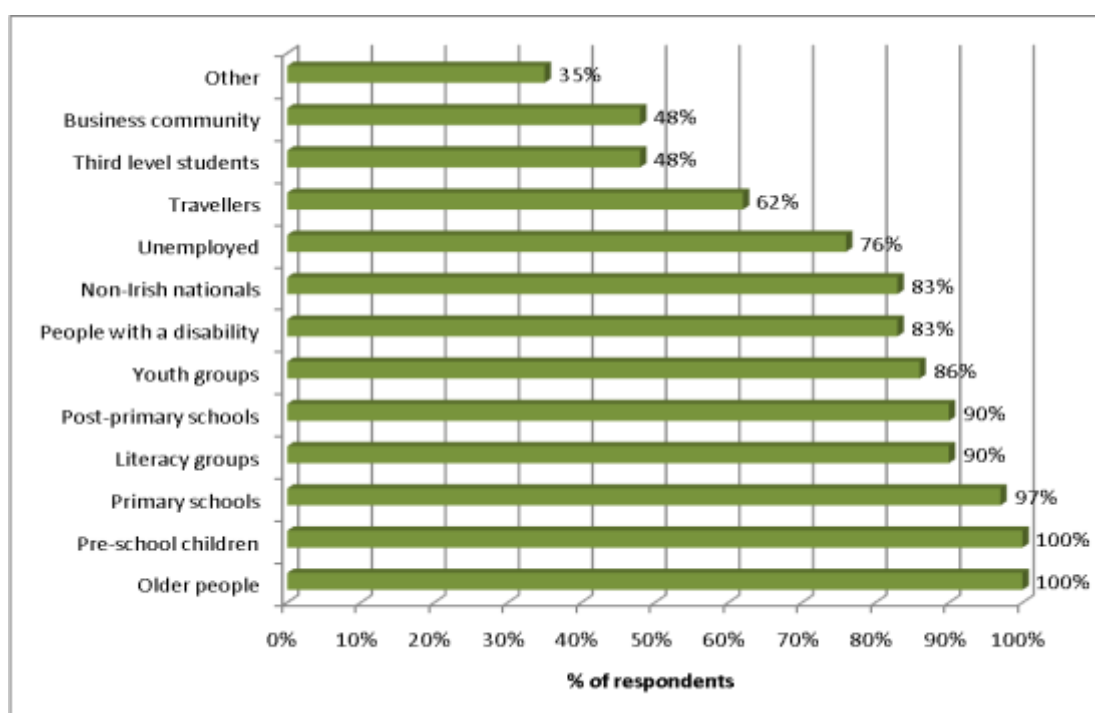
Results (Figure 4.1.3) indicate that the most consistently targeted groups are older people (100%), pre-school children (100%) and primary schools (97%). Initiatives noted in these areas include: the Bealtaine Festival, Silver Surfers, Mother and Toddler groups, the Summer Reading Challenge and the Children's Summer Book Bus.

The least targeted groups at present are third level students (48%), members of the business community (48%) and Travellers (62%). Some respondents highlight initiatives in these areas, one library service having introduced a business library

to cater for their local business community. Another service has introduced ‘Capsule Libraries’ - small self-sufficient libraries with internet access - on local Traveller halting sites, and others note successful joint initiatives and workshops with members of their local Traveller community.

See Appendix F for a complete list of initiatives as outlined by survey participants.

Figure 4.1.3: Targeted groups



Additional groups/organisations targeted are represented under the label ‘other’ (35%). These include the housebound, single parent families, children with learning difficulties, animal welfare groups and isolated rural communities. The complete list is attached in Appendix G.

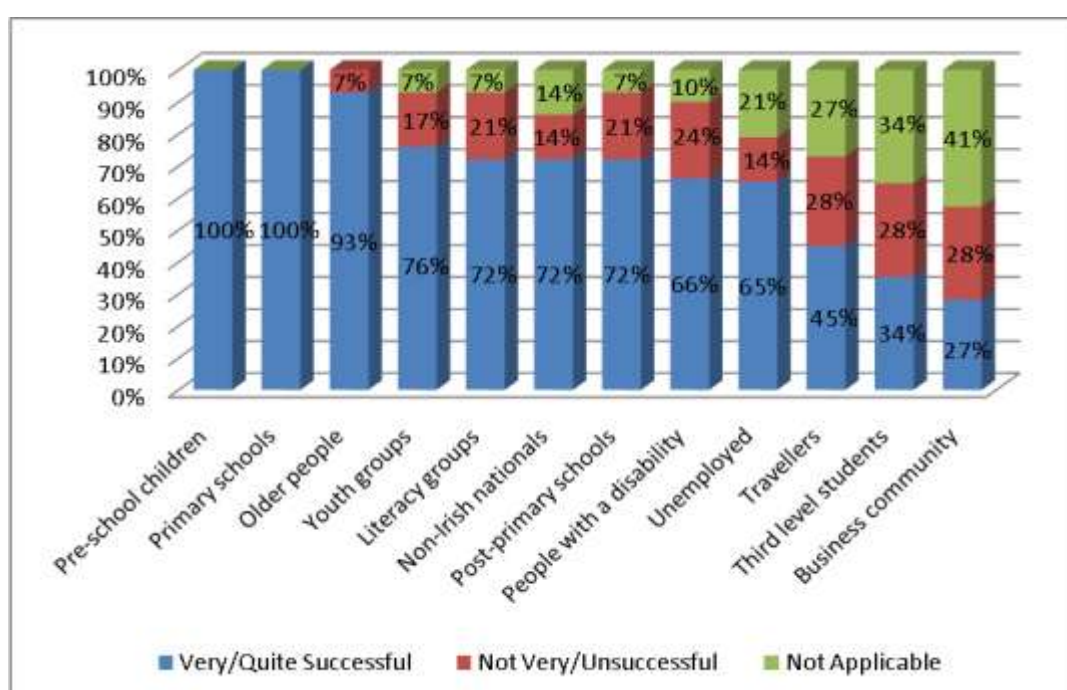
4.1.4 Levels of success

The more successful levels of access through outreach correspond with the most consistently targeted groups - pre-school (100%), primary schools (100%) and older people (93%) being rated most successful. Some of the least targeted groups emerge as having the lowest success rates – notably outreach targeted at Travellers (28%), third level students (28%) and the business community (28%).

These findings suggest that lack of success in accessing these groups may be a contributing factor to the low level of targeting of these areas.

A reasonably high percentage of library services were relatively unsuccessful in accessing other groups, notably - people with a disability (24%), post-primary schools (21%) and literacy groups (21%). As these are considered well-targeted areas (see figure 4.1.3), the findings suggest underlying reasons for lack of success which would require further investigation at local level.

Figure 4.1.4 Levels of success in accessing targeted groups



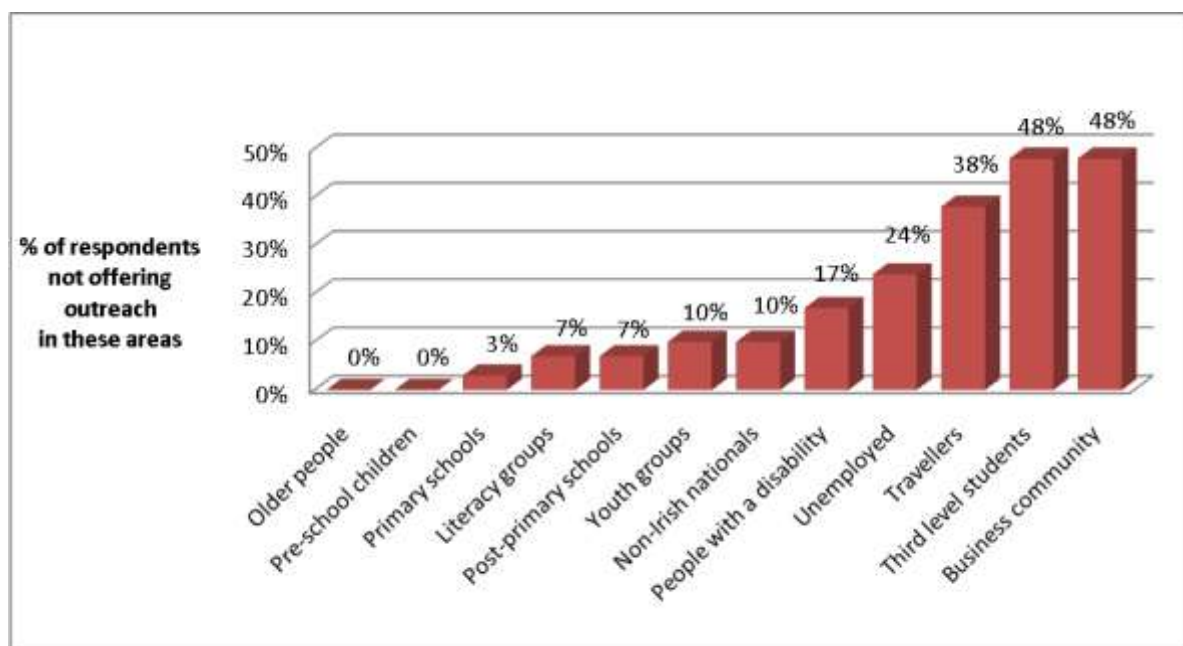
(No Response: Third level students - 4% Business Community - 4%)

4.1.5 Gaps in provision

Current gaps in outreach provision as determined by the survey responses are illustrated in Figure 4.1.5. The local business community, third level students and Travellers have emerged consistently as the more unsuccessfully targeted and untargeted groups. However, the data collected in response to this question also highlight other areas of concern. These figures indicate that almost one quarter (24%) of participating library services are currently not actively targeting the

unemployed as a specific target group, with 17% not targeting services at people with a disability.

Figure 4.1.5: Gaps in outreach provision



In order to further examine the gap in provision to third level students, the presence of third-level facilities in relevant counties was determined, yielding the following information:

Table 4.1.5: Presence of third level facilities

Outreach activities targeted at this group	3 rd level institution present in service area	3 rd level outreach centre present in service area	No 3 rd level presence in service area
YES	72%	14%	14%
NO	72%	14%	14%

As the figures are identical for both groups it is evident that the level of outreach provision for third level students is not determined by the presence of a third level institution in the area.

Limited resources and unwillingness of groups to participate are identified as possible reasons for these gaps in outreach service provision. These and other factors are discussed further in the next section.

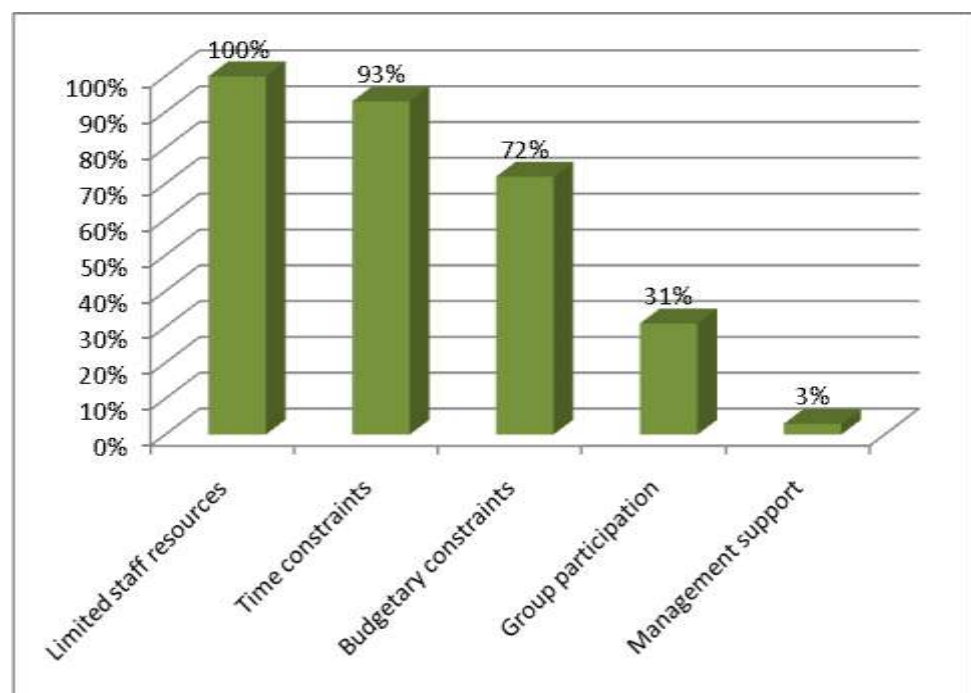
4.1.6 Factors affecting the level of outreach

The principle factors influencing the level of outreach, according to the survey results, are limited staff resources (100%), time constraints (93%) and budgetary constraints (72%).

Although budgets are a huge concern some respondents feel that it is possible to continue a level of outreach using existing staff skills –*we can do our best, with very limited resources, to continue to advertise what activities we have in place and make the best use of staff talents to keep the quality of what is offered as high as possible, while keeping the overheads at a manageable level.*

Others do not consider this a possibility – *doing well until embargo, now a question of priorities and maintaining service in core areas i.e. within our buildings.*

Figure 4.1.6 Constraints



Almost one third (31%) of respondents find that unwillingness of groups to participate is a factor and this may account for low success rates with some groups and gaps in provision where these occur. Much work is dependent on the willingness of local volunteers to encourage and promote activities, as one respondent commented – *when targeting adult groups the response does not always reflect the amount of work invested in the organisation*

It must also be acknowledged that other services did not have this problem, finding most groups eager to engage with them.

Other constraints highlighted were

- the lack of understanding by other agencies of the library's potential to support them
- the lack of champions in related professions

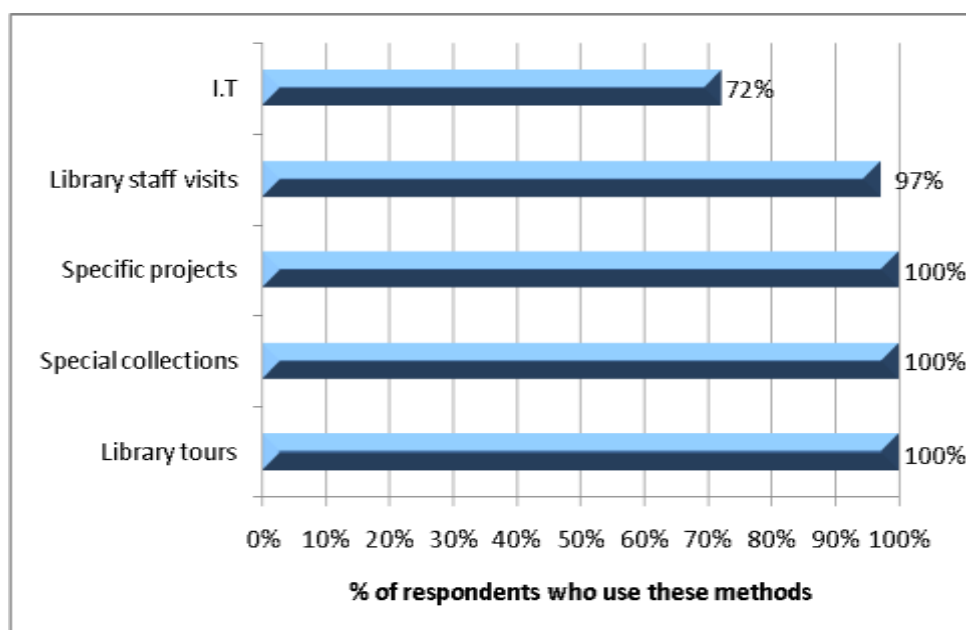
This may indicate the need to raise the profile of the library service through improved publicity and targeting methods.

4.1.7 Targeting Methods

All services surveyed use specific projects, special stock collections and organised library tours as targeting methods. The majority (97%) also engage in library staff communication with, and visits to, community groups and organisations (Figure 4.1.7).

Social media e.g. Facebook, Twitter and library websites were highlighted as being increasingly used by both the public and library services. Services that have developed their social media outlets find them very useful in *encouraging library use...getting our message out there...and great for gauging reaction*. Currently standing at 72%, many respondents indicate ongoing developments in this area and plan an increase in their use of this medium.

Figure 4.1.7 Targeting methods



Additional targeting methods referred to include:

- Networking and integration with other council departments
- Targeted advertising in the form of mailshots, through local media, word-of-mouth and support for local literary and art festivals
- Specific outreach policies and policies relating to promotion of the library service to the community
- Liaising with representative groups and sector champions

4.1.8 Development of partnerships

One of the recommendations of *Branching out-future directions* (DoEHLG, 2008) was that co-operation of each library service with other departments, libraries and community organisations be improved. As evidenced by this study (Table 4.1.8) the library service is actively engaged with other council departments and outside agencies, with 90% of respondents confirming the development of working partnerships through engagement in outreach activities. This indicates a vast improvement on the findings of *Joining forces* (An Chomhairle Leabharlanna,

1999), which found that only 29% of libraries had co-operated with non-library organisations.

Table 4.1.8 Partnerships

Question: Has your library service developed working partnerships through it's development of outreach activities?		
Yes 90%	No 7%	Don't Know 3%

In questionnaire responses various partner organisations were listed including:

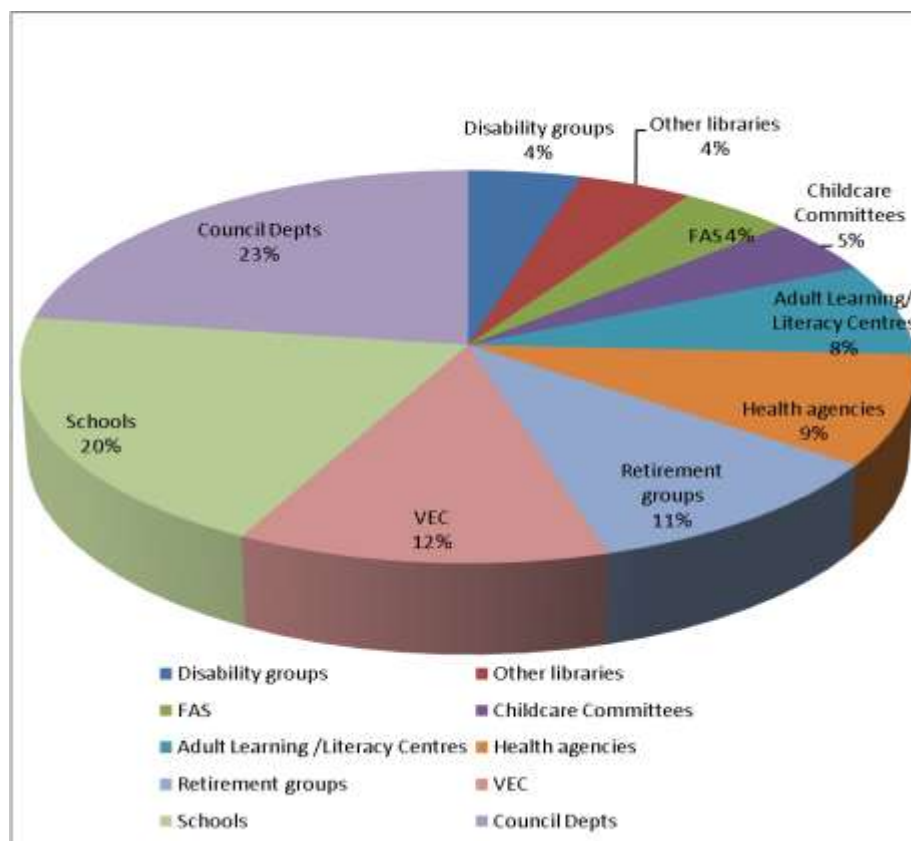
County Council Departments – including Arts, Heritage, Community & Enterprise, Environment, County/City Development Boards, RAPID and Social Inclusion Units.

Others mentioned by more than one respondent include – Local schools, the local VEC, FAS, childcare committees, neighbouring libraries, health agencies, retirement groups, adult learning centres and disability groups.

Figure 4.1.8 illustrates the breakdown of figures based on agencies/groups which two or more services list as working partners, the most common partnerships being with other council departments (23%) and schools (20%).

These results indicate a very positive approach by libraries to networking with other departments and agencies. As summarised by one respondent - *the links established have resulted in valuable services and activities being developed in response to users needs.*

Figure 4.1.8 Partner organisations



4.1.9 Measuring outreach activities

Over half of the library services participating in this survey (55%) have developed methods of measuring their outreach activities, with 45% replying in the negative. Where measurements are in place these consist of quantitative and/or qualitative indicators.

Quantitative Measurements: The most popular quantitative methods of measurement are the collection of attendance numbers (38%) and loan statistics (31%). Library management systems are used by many services to collect such data e.g. memberships, loans etc., one service indicating use of a specific module on their system which captures outreach activities quantitatively. Some services collate these figures from regular library branch reports and attendance registers.

Table 4.1.9a Quantitative Measurements

Indicators Used	% of respondents
Attendance numbers	38
Loans	31
Number of events	25
Number of visits	19
Memberships	13

Qualitative Measurements: Participant feedback is the most commonly used qualitative measurement. Some services indicate regular reviews and evaluations of events and activities (31%), others also seek feedback but not on all events (25%). These data are collected via evaluation forms, interviews with stakeholders, and customer fora, with one service distributing an annual outreach questionnaire seeking customer input.

Results indicate that qualitative measurements are generally less rigorously and systematically applied, respondents find such measurement difficult due to the *subjective and ongoing nature of the events and their successes*.

Table 4.1.9b Qualitative Measurements

Indicators Used	% of respondents
Participant feedback – all events	31
Participant feedback – some events	25
Evaluation and assessment of specific projects	19
Outreach questionnaire	6

An area of concern highlighted by these figures is the indication that a large percentage (45%) of library services are not currently measuring the success, or otherwise, of their outreach services. Considering the high level of outreach engaged in by services in general, consistent measurement of these activities would be beneficial to the service as a whole. To quote one respondent - *measuring the success of these activities is crucial as often they go unnoticed and their value diminishes because of this. It would require good qualitative evaluation techniques which could be then used as local indicators by the service.*

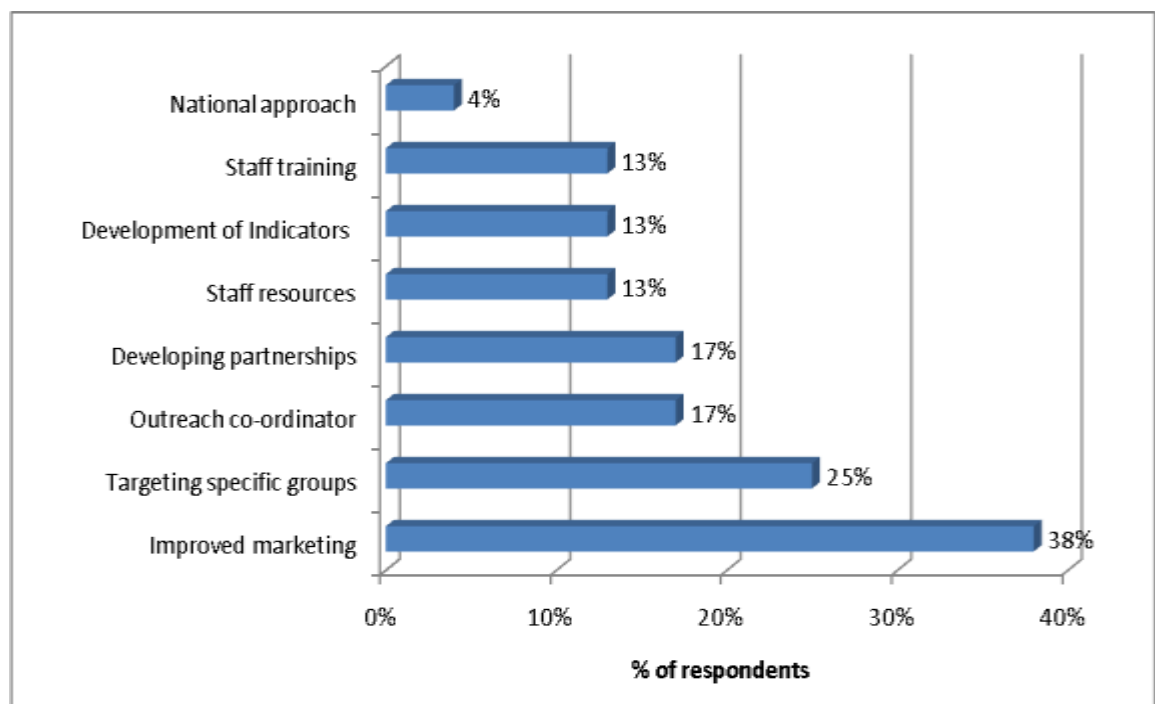
4.1.10 Further Development & Promotion

An open-ended question, regarding further development and promotion of outreach activities, was posed towards the end of the questionnaire (Figure 4.1.10). Responses were open-coded and categorised with the following outcomes:

- **Improved Marketing:** there is recognition of the potential and need for improved publicity, particularly the development of library websites and use of social media
- **Targeting specific groups:** suggestions include - identification of areas where development is needed, further development of successful projects, keeping abreast of local developments that can be targeted, devising and updating outreach policies
- **Outreach co-ordinator:** some respondents feel that the introduction of a designated outreach officer would be beneficial to the development of outreach activities in their service
- **Developing Partnerships:** respondents acknowledge the need to maintain existing partnerships and emphasise the importance of establishing new links to provide for local requirements

- **Staff resources:** increased availability of staff would enable further development of outreach programmes
- **Development of indicators:** events and activities need to be properly evaluated and success levels measured using good qualitative evaluation techniques
- **Staff training:** provision of support and training to all staff is considered important to encourage development of outreach services
- **National approach:** a more strategic approach nationally could be a useful way of developing outreach throughout the public library network

4.1.10 Ideas for further development



One quarter (25%) of the respondents to this question feel that the safeguarding of present levels of outreach is their main priority at the moment and are hoping to be able to maintain the level of outreach currently offered. As summarised by

one participant - *we are lucky to be able to do as much as we do at the moment and will be lucky to continue to do so within current constraints on staff and budgets.*

4.1.11 Conclusion

Analysis of responses to the survey questionnaire has resulted in a better understanding of the importance of outreach activity in Irish public libraries today. The results indicate that development of outreach services is widespread and incorporated into the majority of relevant local policies.

Many community groups are targeted very successfully and working partnerships have developed and strengthened as a result. The findings have also highlighted where access to groups has been less successful and where there are currently gaps in service provision. The constraints to outreach, as outlined, provide some insight as to why these gaps may occur and this topic is further explored in the Delphi study.

Various targeting methods are used, with an acknowledgement of the increasing need to utilise social media in raising awareness of services. However, the main priority for many services at present is maintenance of their current level of outreach.

Despite the high level of outreach in Irish public libraries the lack of measurement and evaluation of activities is very evident. In the current economic climate, public libraries are under mounting pressure to demonstrate their impact and need evidence to both prove their effectiveness and quantify their value (Havens and Storey, 2010). For an area that is otherwise well developed, and an important part of the day-to-day work of the library, the survey results highlight this as an area for concern.

4.2 Delphi Study

4.2.1 Introduction

The Delphi study was conducted over three rounds among a panel of 9 public library representatives, all with expertise in the area of outreach. As the panel was relatively small questionnaires were analysed manually by the researcher.

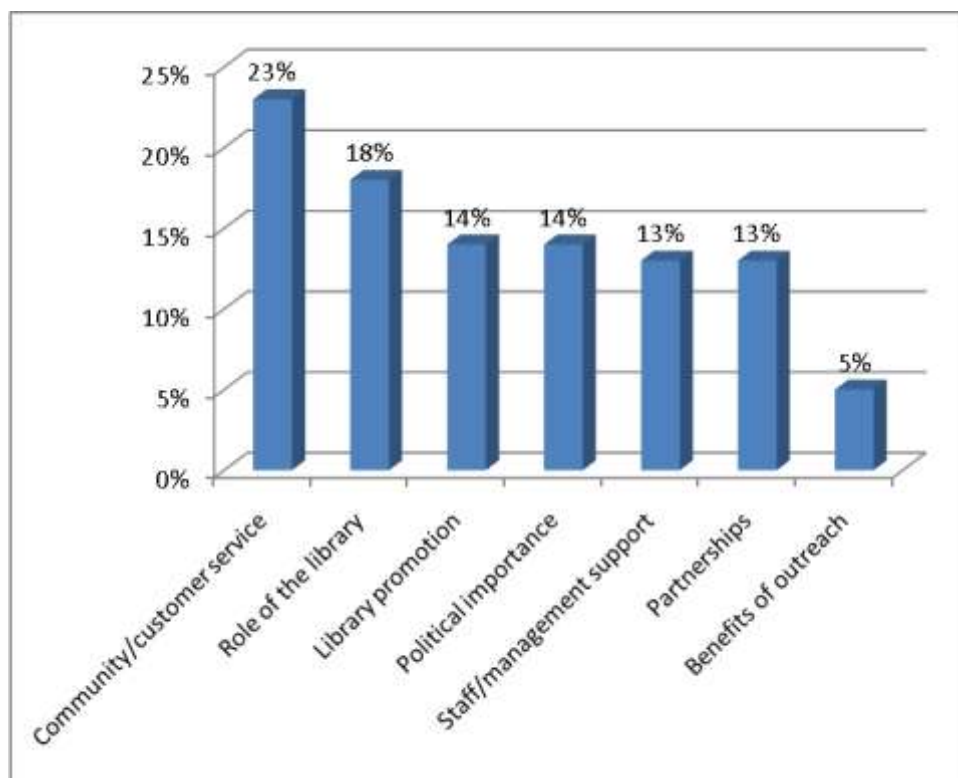
The initial questionnaire (Appendix C) consisted of five open-ended questions which panellists were invited to consider. Upon completion of Round 1, consensus had been reached on the following:

- The negative impact of limited resources on outreach activity
- The opportunity for publicity that outreach activity provides
- The significance of outreach activities in raising awareness of the library service among users and non-users
- The importance of outreach activities in fulfilling the community role of the public library
- The importance of staff motivation and skills in running outreach activities

In Round 2 (Appendix D) the panel were then asked to consider the remaining 78 statements, rating them on a scale of 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree).

The mean rating for each statement was calculated and these were then ranked in order of preference, with 22 statements achieving the full consensus of the panel. The content of these statements was further analysed using the constant comparative method with several emerging themes (Figure 4.2.1). This graphical representation was used as an aid to give the panellists a visual sense of the emergent themes at this stage.

Figure 4.2.1 Round 2 – Emergent Themes



In the final round (Appendix E) the panellists were asked to further consider the top 22 statements and change the ranking if desired. At this stage all participants indicated their agreement with the ranking as it stood, so no further analysis was necessary. An account of the study findings follows.

4.2.2 The value of outreach activities

The panel was asked to consider how outreach activities currently add value to the Irish public library service, consensus being reached in several areas.

- **Raising awareness among users and non-users:** there was agreement that by engaging in outreach activities people are drawn to the library, thereby raising their awareness of other services and resources that the library offers. Activities help to spread the word to specific groups and, as a result, outreach can lead to increased usage of the public library.

- **Increased publicity:** participants felt that outreach offers the opportunity for more publicity, harnessing a positive message about the public library service. In addition to advertising what the library has to offer, it is also a way of reaching non-users and stimulating interest. *Outreach is a useful marketing vehicle and allows the public library service to promote itself and sell the service to a wider audience.*
- **Community role:** *engaging in outreach improves the service we can provide, not only to the particular groups engaged with, but to the whole community.* The panel highlighted how outreach allows the service to respond to community needs and remain relevant to the community it serves. There was consensus that the library is not ‘just about books’ anymore and has developed into a community space with activities and events adding breadth and depth to the service provided.
- **Political:** the panel agreed that outreach activities are popular with city and county councillors, helping the library service to become a ‘good news story’. In this respect outreach is a valuable asset to the library as it increases the value of service in their eyes, which is vital for maintaining financial support.

4.2.3 The importance of the role of outreach

Panellists were asked for their opinion on whether the role played by outreach services in Irish public libraries today is integral to the service.

The overall consensus was that yes, outreach has become part of today’s service and plays an important part in the developing role of the library. There was agreement that the service needs *to look beyond library walls and waiting for people to come to us*, with one participant drawing attention to the *Branching Out*

(Department of the Environment, 1998) and *Joining Forces* (An Chomhairle Leabharlanna, 1999) reports and the fact that their very titles point to the importance of outreach work. In the current economic climate it was felt that this role is even more important and that the message needs to be spread in a professional and sustainable way. As one panellist summarised: *outreach activities have developed into an important service in recent years as the realisation that public libraries need to make links with communities and people, sometimes outside the physical building, has become apparent.*

4.2.4 Gaps in outreach provision

Although consensus was not reached on where gaps in provision lie, many groups were mentioned including: teenagers, rural communities, the housebound, 20-40yr olds (particularly those unemployed), working classes, Travellers, post-primary schools, pre-school children, young offenders and literacy groups.

Consensus was achieved, however, on reasons why these gaps may occur.

- **Limited Resources:** lack of resources in terms of funding, personnel and time was highlighted as the major factor adversely affecting the level of outreach on offer. Services are finding it increasingly difficult to organise and adequately staff outreach programmes, panel members being of the opinion that when resources are low outreach is often a casualty. As outlined by one respondent - *outreach activities need to be strongly supported but there is probably a tendency for this area to be seen as more discretionary than necessary.*

- **Staffing levels in smaller branches:** the issue raised here is the disparity in staffing levels between library branches. Panellists feel that smaller libraries are at a disadvantage which can lead to uneven distribution of outreach activity, as there is less opportunity for their staff to visit local groups and organisations.
- **Lack of recognition of outreach:** responses indicate that there is a lack of priority given to outreach services and that they are often developed on an ad hoc basis. For this reason, panellists fear that libraries may not receive the resources they need to play the role in outreach provision that they aspire to.

4.2.5 Factors influencing the level of outreach activity

Consensus on the following emerged from the study:

Factors that encourage outreach

- **Staff skills and motivation:** flexibility of staff and willingness to work out of hours was acknowledged as a major factor in the successful running of outreach events and programmes. Staff motivation is seen as a crucial factor, as one panellist commented *two or three dynamic individuals who lead the way in engaging in outreach activities can have a huge effect on how almost everyone performs.*
- **Leadership:** leadership from management - by offering staff members the opportunity to share ideas and consider examples of best practice - is also considered essential. The panel feel that *leadership skills can motivate and staff can be encouraged to use their individual talents to augment the programmes offered.*

- **Support from library service staff:** in order to be successful, respondents agree that positive support for outreach activities from the rest of the library service is necessary. The panel were of the opinion that enthusiasm and understanding from staff and management enhances the level of outreach offered, such support being a vital element in maintaining the level and effectiveness of outreach services.
- **Partnerships:** according to the panel the development of working partnerships with other departments, organisations and agencies plays an important role in encouraging the development of outreach services. One participant suggests that this will become more important in the current economic climate when the sharing of resources, ideas, costs etc. can be mutually beneficial.

Inhibitors

Limited resources: this issue was regarded as the single greatest inhibitor to the provision of outreach services.

The recruitment embargo is having effect and will have increasing effect as retiring staff are not replaced. As one of the participants explained *librarians will be increasingly curtailed in their movements and visits off site will be more difficult to arrange as branch libraries try to operate on minimum staff numbers.*

From a financial perspective library budgets have diminished making it more difficult to run some activities. Partner organisations are in a similar situation which may limit future participation, and sponsorship for events is more difficult to secure which may also have an adverse effect.

4.2.6 Promotion of outreach activities

Reflection on the level of promotion of outreach activities, yielded consensus on matters relating to national and local promotion.

National Level

- *Many outreach activities blossom under a nationwide strategy e.g. the National Reading Initiative, Babies Love Books, but without sustained funding and commitment these schemes peter out and further outreach opportunities are lost.*
- The panel felt that the government doesn't understand or appreciate the level of outreach programming that takes place each year in the public library network. It was suggested that, perhaps, *librarians need to reemphasise the importance of outreach programming and the benefits from it to politicians and government, especially in the current climate.*

Local Level

Panellists feel that library promotion has greatly improved with much more use now being made of local media, library websites and more recently social media such as Facebook and Twitter. However, it was also acknowledged that more can be done to improve the level of promotion, particularly in targeting the non-user.

4.2.7 Conclusion

This study was conducted with the aim of examining in greater depth the level and value of outreach activity in Irish public libraries today. The initial questions posed were based on the dissertation objectives, the nature of the study offering the opportunity to collect rich, qualitative data on the subject.

The overall picture that emerged is one of a library service where outreach activities play a major role in serving the local community, in raising the profile of the library and in promoting the service to both users and non-users. The

support and motivation of library staff and management are regarded as vital to successful outreach programming and, although promotion of library activities has improved, it is acknowledged that more can be done.

Gaps in provision do exist, these being due, in part, to limited resources, uneven staffing levels and lack of recognition of outreach services. Panellists suggest that the case for protection of funding and ongoing development of library outreach may be strengthened if the level of outreach was understood and appreciated by government at national level.

4.3 Semi-structured interview

4.3.1 Introduction

On completion of the survey questionnaire and Delphi study a semi-structured interview was held with a representative of An Chomhairle Leabharlanna. The main purpose of this interview was to obtain an overview of their position in relation to public library outreach in Ireland. Opinions were also sought on key issues which arose during the course of the research up to this point. For the purposes of this study, matters pertaining to the structure and business of An Chomhairle Leabharlanna are taken to be matters of fact whereas all opinions expressed are the participant's personal views.

4.3.2 An Chomhairle Leabharlanna

The organisation is supportive of outreach work undertaken in Irish public libraries and recognises the vast range of activities ongoing throughout the service network. The library council itself does not currently have a specific policy in relation to library outreach but some aspects are covered in the Frontline training programme for library staff which is ongoing. The topic of

outreach is regarded as a local issue and it is left to the discretion of local library management as to how they prioritise and develop their services. There is acknowledgement of the fact that public library services have different levels of resources available to them which, in turn, affects the level of outreach they can engage in.

In terms of promoting the Irish public library service the role of An Chomhairle Leabharlanna is to promote the service at national level. Much work is done by meeting and talking with other organisations, national committees, charities etc. raising their awareness of the public library service and its potential as a conduit for information to the public. Initiatives such as the FAS e-learning project have arisen from partnerships developed in this way and have then rolled-out through individual libraries.

An Chomhairle Leabharlanna also liaises with the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government on library issues and the feeling is that the department has a good understanding of the range of services that the public library offers.

4.3.3 Comments on research findings

Some questions were posed in relation to the research findings up to this point, with the following opinions expressed:

Unsuccessfully targeted groups: from experience, the interviewee has found that some groups are more difficult to engage with than others and where problems arise there is a need to explore what the barriers are and make efforts to overcome them. This takes time and staff resources and, consequently, is dependent on the local availability of both. It was felt that there are many good initiatives aimed at Travellers e.g. Threading Tales, Pictureogs, Capsule Libraries but there is a difficulty in sourcing suitable materials targeting their culture and interests. Previous work with literacy agencies highlighted the need to encourage

tutors, who are often not library users themselves, to visit the library with their students.

Defining Groups: the point was raised that groups such as the business community and the unemployed are difficult to qualify and are perhaps not homogenous groups in their own right. Some library authorities provide business libraries and related events; others have targeted local unemployment offices e.g. the Learning Bus (Gannon, 2011) and other community libraries such as Westside in Galway City and Watch House Cross, Limerick (O'Leary, 2011) have been developed, successfully targeting communities where unemployment is a major problem.

Measurement of activities: it was felt that this is an important but very difficult area to measure. At present An Chomhairle Leabharlanna collects statistics concentrating on the main areas e.g. memberships, issues, book funds etc. Statistics measuring the number of exhibitions and talks held in public libraries are also collected but these do not encompass the wide range of outreach activities that libraries engage in. The interviewee was of the opinion that many of these activities have been absorbed into everyday services to a large extent, making them increasingly difficult to quantify. Nevertheless, the feeling is that qualitative measurements should be in place but this is a practice that is, again, dependent on local resources.

Communication: at present there is no centrally co-ordinated group for library authorities in relation to outreach provision. Groups such as the public library section of the LAI and YLG, however, do address specific service provisions from time to time. It was suggested that some of the currently available online resources could be better used to share ideas. Platforms such as LinkedIn (LinkedIn, 2011) have become increasingly popular and could be used to create a

user group re: library outreach, sharing ideas and offering support and advice among members.

4.3.4 Conclusion

The overall picture emerging from the interview was that outreach plays a major part in the Irish public library service today but is very much dependent on priorities and resources at local level. An Chomhairle Leabharlanna recognises the amount of work being done throughout the public library network, supporting this where possible and promoting the service nationally.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The overall aim of this dissertation was to examine, from a library perspective, the extent to which outreach activities are currently undertaken in Irish public libraries and the level of value they offer. Utilising a mixed-method approach, the aim and stated objectives of the study were addressed by means of a literature review, survey questionnaire, Delphi study and semi-structured interview. Following data analysis, the findings were combined resulting in the following conclusions:

5.1.1 Level of outreach

Results of the study reveal an extremely high level of outreach offered by Irish public libraries at present. All participating services indicate active involvement in outreach provision and a large number of initiatives were outlined (Appendix H). Regarded by the expert panel as an integral part of the public library today, the level of outreach activity offered varies from service to service. As such activities are dependent on available resources and the priorities of each individual library authority there is no uniform level of outreach provision across the public library network.

5.1.2 Outreach policy

The concept of outreach has been incorporated into the majority of participating library development plans, and consultation with local community groups was commonly undertaken as part of the preparation process. The formulation of specific outreach policies is not widespread among the library authorities and An Chomhairle Leabharlanna does not have an outreach policy per se but is extremely supportive of all library initiatives.

There is, again, a varied approach to staff policy in relation to outreach - some services having a central co-ordinator or development team while others share the role among staff, assigning responsibility to branch managers as part of their duties. The research findings indicate that while the position of designated outreach co-ordinator is not vital to the success of outreach programmes, it is of benefit and encourages a more structured approach to outreach provision. The concern was expressed that the development of outreach on an ad hoc basis may lead to lack of recognition of the importance of these services and impact negatively on the availability of resources.

5.1.3 Targeted groups

A large range of community groupings are currently targeted by outreach programmes, the study focusing on the most common groups which emerged during the literature review. This is not an exhaustive list and the nature of groups is sometimes hard to define, but in terms of the study it was necessary to work with recognisable categories. A wide variety of groupings are targeted by the public library network and others which emerged during the course of the research are listed in Appendix G. The most commonly targeted groups are older people, pre-school children and primary schools, with third level students, the business community and Travellers emerging as the least targeted at present.

5.1.4 Gaps in provision/Levels of success

Varied levels of success in accessing groups were reported, the more successful levels of access corresponding with the most targeted groups, as listed above, and vice versa. The research did highlight some other gaps in provision, notably – people with a disability, post-primary schools, literacy groups and the unemployed. As the level of outreach activity varies from service to service, so the precise reasons for these gaps are difficult to ascertain as each library authority works to its own priorities. A number of

factors affecting the level and success of outreach emerged during the course of the study and are discussed below.

5.1.5 Factors affecting outreach

The limited availability of resources was highlighted as the main factor which negatively impacts on the level of outreach currently offered. On-going budgetary constraints combined with decreasing staff numbers mean that library services are finding it increasingly difficult to organise, finance and staff outreach programmes. For many services, maintenance of present levels of outreach is currently their chief priority.

Reluctance of some targeted groups to actively engage with the library service and participate in outreach initiatives is a problem that accounts for low success rates in certain areas. Overcoming such barriers requires time and resources which some library services are finding difficult to provide.

Staff and management support is regarded as vital to the success of outreach activities and is an important motivating factor. Positive support from all library staff and positive leadership from management encourages the development of these activities.

5.1.6 Targeting and promotion

At local level promotion of Irish public library activities has greatly improved. Targeted promotion of outreach activities through local media and by increased networking with representative groups within the community have helped to raise the profile of the local library. There is also widespread and increasing use of library websites and social media e.g. Facebook and Twitter as promotional tools. Nationally, An Chomhairle Leabharlanna works to publicise and promote events, highlighting outreach initiatives through their website, by networking with other agencies and through Irish Library News (An Chomhairle Leabharlanna, 2011). Despite improved efforts at promotion

however, the research findings also indicate that there is still a lack of awareness of the library service and what it has to offer, particularly among non-users and other agencies and organisations.

5.1.7 Partnerships

The majority of respondents have found that, through engagement in outreach activities, working partnerships have developed with other council departments and outside agencies. These are regarded very positively and play an important role in encouraging the development of outreach services. Such partnerships ensure that the activities developed benefit the user and are best suited to the targeted groups and, in so doing, are considered an important element in maintaining success levels.

5.1.8 Level of value

There is general consensus that outreach adds value to the Irish public library service in several ways. Activities and events help to raise public awareness of the library and its resources, creating an opportunity for extra publicity and offering a means of reaching non-users and stimulating their interest. Such activities improve the service offered to the local community by responding to local needs and encouraging development of the library as a community space. This in turn can lead to increased usage of the library and improved service indicators. Politically such events are welcomed by city and county councillors, helping to raise the profile of the library in their eyes which is vital when it comes to protecting budgets and funding.

5.1.9 Measurement

The level of value of outreach as outlined is from a library perspective and based on views as expressed by research participants. The study highlights, however, the lack of a standard set of measurements in relation to outreach in general. A large percentage of

services do not evaluate their outreach activities and where measurements are in place many are not undertaken on a regular basis. Quantitative measurements in relation to attendance figures and loan statistics are the most commonly used indicators with qualitative data collected in the form of participant feedback and project evaluation.

5.1.10 Summary

Outreach has become part of the day-to-day work of the Irish public library service with varied levels on offer dependent on local priorities and resources. Regarded as an integral part of today's library service, outreach activities add value in terms of publicity, raising public awareness, increased usage and improved customer and community service. A wide range of community groupings are targeted leading to the development of a number of successful working partnerships. Despite the widespread development of outreach services there is currently no standard method for their evaluation and where services are evaluated it is largely on an ad hoc basis.

5.2 Recommendations

On the basis of these findings a number of recommendations are made:

- The research highlighted the increased value that outreach offers to the Irish public library service yet, to date, there is no consistent measurement of these activities. It was also suggested that the government doesn't understand or appreciate the level of outreach programming that takes place each year in the public library network. Development of a set of relevant indicators is recommended to accurately capture this information and, in so doing, acknowledge and verify the important role played by such activities. Such measurement would also be in keeping with the *Branching out – future directions* (DoEHLG, 2008) recommendation encouraging the development of more appropriate measurement methods for the variety of usage of the modern public library.

- In the absence of a set of defined indicators all outreach activities and programs should be evaluated in some manner. By formalising outreach at local level through the development of an outreach policy, setting priorities and procedures, this would improve recognition of the value of such services and enable better service planning.
- This study has highlighted some gaps in outreach provision and some less successfully targeted areas. Where difficulties occur it is recommended that the underlying reasons be evaluated and addressed where resources allow.
- Increased, sustained use of I.T. in library promotion at local level should be encouraged. On-going development of library websites and targeted use of social media are all necessary to raise the profile of the public library service and its outreach activities. An online forum could be established or an existing forum used to develop an outreach user group among library staff to swap ideas, seek/offer advice and support.
- This dissertation studied outreach from a library perspective. Further research evaluating outreach from a user and community perspective would complement this study and offer a more complete picture. This could be achieved through a series of in-depth case studies and may also prove useful in developing relevant indicators.

Chapter 6: Reflection

The process undertaken in preparation of this dissertation was a challenging one as many of the tools and methods employed were new to the researcher. A daunting prospect initially, the experience proved to be very stimulating and led to the development of new skills and insights which will be of lasting benefit. Reflecting on the study as it unfolded raises several points which the researcher felt to be significant. Some are positive, some negative, but all contributed to the overall experience.

The search for relevant literature was more problematic than initially envisaged. As discussed in the literature review, the term 'outreach' itself is difficult to define. Much relevant literature did not use the word outreach in the title and many studies which did so were not recent. This meant that the search for literature took some time, using a variety of search terms e.g. 'community', 'social inclusion' etc. During the course of the study the term 'outreach' itself was discussed and whether its meaning is clearly understood in library terms. This was a concern from the outset, but as the most appropriate term available, the decision was taken to use the term which was well understood by all of the research participants. There is the possibility that this concept may need further clarification for those not directly involved in public libraries but, for the purposes of this study, it was anticipated that provision of a working definition of the term would prove sufficient.

In order to assess the level of success of outreach a number of community groupings were selected for use in the study. These groupings emerged through the literature review and were deemed relevant by those assessing and piloting the questionnaire before distribution. Some of those selected, however, may not be considered homogenous groups per se e.g. the unemployed, the business community, and therefore difficult to assess. In addition, people not targeted as members of one particular group may be targeted as members of another. The nature of groups is hard to define and those used in the study serve as an indicator of targeted outreach services.

This is by no means an exhaustive list but in order to present meaningful results it was necessary to work with commonly understood categories.

Response rates to the survey questionnaire were beyond expectations - reminders being used to encourage participation and the use of e-mail working very well in this regard. Rather than using an online facility to design and administer the questionnaire it was developed by the researcher and distributed as an email attachment with the intention of encouraging response rates by streamlining the process for the respondent. However, although piloted on several systems, a small number of respondents had difficulty in completing some parts of the form. Where this occurred, participants were encouraged to forward any additional information they wished to contribute but there was a sense of momentum being lost. As this occurred with a very small number and on limited parts of the questionnaire the reliability of the study was not compromised, but an additional check through the I.T department may have flagged and resolved this problem.

Originally, the use of case study methodology was considered in addition to the survey but, on reflection, the Delphi study proved to be the better option. This was much better suited to the nature of the study and much more achievable in the time allotted. As a primary piece of research the Delphi study offered the opportunity to obtain rich information adding to the broad picture of outreach in Irish public library system today. It was decided at the outset of the Delphi study to engage in three rounds in order to achieve the best result, however, after completion of round two, it was felt that the study had reached saturation point. Rather than end the study at this stage the decision was taken to proceed with round three as timetabled, offering panellists the opportunity for further comments or amendments. As no further data emerged from this round perhaps it was surplus to requirements but it did serve as final confirmation of the findings among the panel. As this is an iterative process by nature it was difficult to foresee how long the study would take, by leaving time for three rounds this offered some flexibility to the schedule should it be required.

Initially the study methodology comprised the literature review, survey and Delphi study. During the course of the research the inclusion of an interview with a representative of An Chomhairle Leabharlanna was suggested. Held after completion of the survey questionnaire and Delphi study, this semi-structured interview complemented the research findings and proved a worthwhile experience. As the statutory body guiding Irish public libraries this input added value to the study and helped to shape an overall picture of outreach and its importance in the Irish library system today.

One of the findings emerging from the study was the lack of measurement of outreach activities and their value. Evaluation of outreach was addressed in the survey questionnaire and was discussed during the interview but was not dealt with specifically during the Delphi study. In hindsight, a question in relation to outreach evaluation may have yielded some extra useful data. This is an issue that needs further exploration and has already been highlighted in the recommendations as something which should be addressed.

In conclusion, the selection of the mixed-method approach was well suited to the research topic. By providing the opportunity to combine methods and examine the subject from different perspectives it helped to produce a clear picture of an area that has been scarcely researched. It is hoped that this dissertation has gone some way towards addressing this gap as a first step in exploring the level and value of outreach in Irish public libraries today.

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APPENDIX A: Examples of outreach initiatives

USA: Adkins and Bala (2004) list various library outreach initiatives including the development of a travelling library service in New York in 1893 and staffed book collections in parks and on beachfronts in the 1930's. Since its inception in 1876 the American Library Association has advocated for services to different populations, regarding outreach of such importance that a dedicated office was established in 1980, known today as the Office for Literacy and Outreach Services (Osborne, 2004). This office identifies and promotes services that promote equitable access and are inclusive of underserved populations. Its role is also to assist libraries in developing strategies and programs targeting new users by offering training, access to information resources and technical assistance (ALA, 2011). Examples of current initiatives include InfoBUS, a mobile service dedicated to the immigrant and refugee population of Memphis-Shelby County, LEAP, a multi-faceted after-school programme serving children and teens in Philadelphia and the Tribal Libraries program of the New Mexico State Library (Osborne, 2004).

Kenya: Established in 1965, Kenyan National Library Services introduced a Community Library Development Policy in 1990. Due to dwindling resources new development strategies were needed and the policy was put in place to ensure equitable distribution and provision of innovative library services among communities (Kibandi, 2008). 31 outreach libraries have been established since 1991. This programme has meaningful impact as service provision is initiated by the community itself and partnerships are established between persons and institutions in response to their true needs. In addition to their community libraries, the Kenyan public library service runs camel and donkey mobiles, a book box service by motorcycle, Braille libraries and HIV/Aids information services (KNLS, 2011).

Australia: In their recently published guidelines (Quinn and McCallum, 2011) the Australian Library and Information Association recognise the need to increase the level of outreach activities engaged in and to form partnerships with community organisations. This is the first set of national guidelines for public libraries in Australia and sets specific targets in relation to underserved groups including indigenous Australians, culturally diverse communities, young and older people. This is an evidence-based guide, building on the work being done by Australian libraries. *Reaching Out to the Community* (State Library of Victoria, 2005) offered the first

comprehensive study of the value that Australian public libraries add to their community. Outreach activities highlighted include housebound services which are offered where required and regardless of age, a commuter library titled the Frankston Library Express and TNN – a telephone based newspaper service. The study found the service to be highly valued by the community they serve, running programs that promote lifelong learning and literacy, and building connections both with their community and other organisations.

The Netherlands: In the Netherlands the public library system consists of a network of local, provincial and national services - described in the PULMAN Report (2003) as a national public service manifested in the local community. These libraries have a long history of working closely with the communities they serve (Calimera, 2005), providing services to target groups, working in partnership with other institutions and organisations and supporting them through outreach activities (NBLC, 2011). One of the requirements for library certification is the identification of relevant user groups and co-operation partners, highlighting the importance placed on these aspects of outreach. Boekenpret is a recent national reading and language skills programme targeted at low-income families, other initiatives are the Hotel Library in Limburg, MediaMaat (an ATM for books) and the Library for Occupational Travellers service provided by Rotterdam public library. The American beachfront collections of the 1930s are mirrored today in the Netherlands where public libraries have been running beach libraries since 2005. These have grown from strength to strength, averaging 25,000 visits annually. (Storey, 2009)

Outreach in Irish Public Libraries

Outreach can be defined as:

“taking the experience of what libraries have to offer outside of the building by active involvement in community activities, forming partnerships and seeking ways to encourage library use”(Molyneux, 2005).

Bearing this definition in mind please complete the following questionnaire.

Local Policy

Q.1 Does your library service actively engage in outreach activities (e.g. community projects, targeted reading initiatives etc.)?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Q.2 Is the concept of outreach listed as a priority in your current Library Development/ Business Plan?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Q.3 Were community groups/agencies consulted in the preparation of your current Library Development Plan?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Q.4 Does your Local Authority/ Council prioritise community engagement and development of partnerships in its Corporate Plan?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Q.5 Is outreach development assigned to a specific member of library staff as part of their duties?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Please give more details

Outreach Activities

Q.6 Which groups do you target with your outreach activities and services?

Older people	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
People with a disability	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Literacy groups	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Youth groups	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Travellers	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Non-Irish nationals	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Pre-school children	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Primary schools	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Post-primary schools	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Third level students	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
The business community	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
The unemployed	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

Others (please specify):

Q.7 How successful do you feel your service has been in accessing these groups?

	Very	Quite	Not Very	Unsuccessful	N/A
Older People	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People with a disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Literacy groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Travellers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Non-Irish nationals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pre-school children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Primary schools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Post-primary schools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Third level students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The business community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The unemployed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Others (please specify):

Q.8 Are there any successful initiatives that you would like to describe in more detail?

Q.9 How are groups targeted?

Library staff contact/ visits	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organised library tours	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Special stock collections	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Specific projects	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
I.T. (e.g. library website)	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please explain):

Q.10 Has your library service developed working partnerships through it's development of outreach activities? (e.g. with other council departments, community organisations, government agencies etc.)

Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐

Please give more details

Q.11 Which of these factors influence the level of outreach activity engaged in by your library service?

Time constraints	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Limited staff resources	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Budgetary constraints	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of management support	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unwillingness of groups to participate	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>

Further details/Other (please explain):

Success and Promotion

Q.12 Has your service developed any indicators to measure the success, or otherwise, of outreach activities?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, please provide details

Q.13 In your opinion, how can your library service further develop and promote their outreach activities?

Further Research

Q.14 Please indicate if you are willing to take part in some further research on the topic, by providing more detailed responses to some further questions (4 approx). This study will be conducted via email and respondent's identities will remain anonymous.

Yes, I am interested in participating ☐

No, I am not interested in participating ☐

If you are willing to participate please supply your email address:

Completed by:

**Library
Authority:**

Thank you for your time and co-operation

Reference: Molyneux, W. (2005) 'A study measuring the effectiveness of outreach work, as a means of increasing public library use and social inclusion in order to meet Public Service Agreement targets', *Library & Information Research*, 29 (92), pp. 52-61.

APPENDIX C: Delphi Round 1

OUTREACH ACTIVITIES IN IRISH PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Dear ,

Thank you for indicating your interest in participating in further research on this topic. The purpose of this stage of the study is to examine in greater detail the value these activities have brought to the Irish public library service.

This research takes the form of a Delphi study involving a panel of library representatives from around the country. Initially you will be asked to consider 5 questions and submit your thoughts on these. In rounds 2 and 3 an analysis of results will be provided for your consideration to which you may add further comment if desired.

It is hoped to conclude this study over a series of 3 rounds, timeframe for panellist contributions as follows:

ROUND	DATES
1	11th -20th May
2	7th - 14th June
3	21st - 30th June

As indicated in the questionnaire, this study will be conducted via e-mail and respondent's identities will remain anonymous.

Data compilation will comply with the ethics policy of the university available at - http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/static/5007/respdf/ethics_handbook_2.pdf

Any questions may be directed to myself or my supervisor - Susannah Hanlon, Senior Lecturer, School of Computing, Engineering and Information Sciences, Northumbria University. Tel: 0044 191 227 3771, Email: susannah.hanlon@unn.ac.uk

Please find round 1 questionnaire attached.

Best Regards,

Trish Nolan

OUTREACH ACTIVITIES IN IRISH PUBLIC LIBRARIES

DELPHI STUDY: Round 1

Please answer the following questions giving reasons for your thoughts and comments; the length of response is at your own discretion. If you have further questions or suggestions please feel free to include them.

The research objectives are listed at the end of the page should you wish to refer to them in your answers.

1. In what ways do you feel that outreach activities currently add value to the Irish public library service?
2. In your opinion is the provision of outreach services an integral role of the Irish public library service today? Please give reasons for your opinion.
3. Are you aware of any gaps in outreach provision and why these may occur?
4. What factors encourage and/or inhibit the level of outreach activity offered?
5. Are outreach activities well promoted in your opinion? Please elaborate.

Please return by Friday 20th May

Study Objectives

- A.** To assess the level of outreach offered by Irish Public Libraries at present, in the context of current Government, Local Authority and Public Library policy.
- B.** Identify the factors affecting the level of outreach offered.
- C.** Establish the range of community groupings targeted by outreach programmes, identifying gaps in provision and possible reasons for same.
- D.** To measure the level of value these activities have brought to the public library service.

APPENDIX D: Delphi Round 2

Dear ,

I hope all's well. We are now moving on to round 2 of the Delphi study, many thanks for your input so far.

To explain the process further, the aim is to reach consensus among the panel on the importance of the statements generated in response to the round 1 questionnaire. These responses have been collated and I have removed the statements on which consensus has already been reached, notably: the role of outreach in raising awareness among users and non-users, the community role of library outreach, the problem of limited resources, the importance of staff motivation in running outreach programmes and the opportunities for promotion of the library service that outreach activities provide.

These will be included in the final analysis of which you will receive a copy for any further comment.

In Round 2 you are asked to read and rate each of the statements according to the following scale:

Completely Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Completely Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Comments can be added if wished and if there is anything else you would like to add please do so.

If you have any questions or need further clarification, do not hesitate to contact me.

PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN BY TUESDAY JUNE 14TH

Best Regards,

Trish.

Document Sample

QUESTION 1:

In what ways do you feel that outreach activities currently add value to the Irish public library service?

1. Outreach shows libraries as dynamic and modern, embracing new technology such as e-books etc.

RATING:

COMMENTS:

2. Engaging in outreach activities ensures that the library is not peripheral to the community, but is an active agent in the community and fully embedded in the life of the area.

RATING:

COMMENTS:

3. Outreach activities harness a positive message about the public library service, promoting it as a key player in education, information and entertainment for all ages.

RATING:

COMMENTS:

4. At local level branch librarians initiate, develop and maintain close connections with other statutory, community and voluntary organisations in the catchment area of the library.

RATING:

COMMENTS:

ETC.

Outreach Activities in Irish Public Libraries

Delphi Study

Round 3

Instructions

- Please read through the following statements rated highest by the panel in round 2.
- Then indicate whether you -

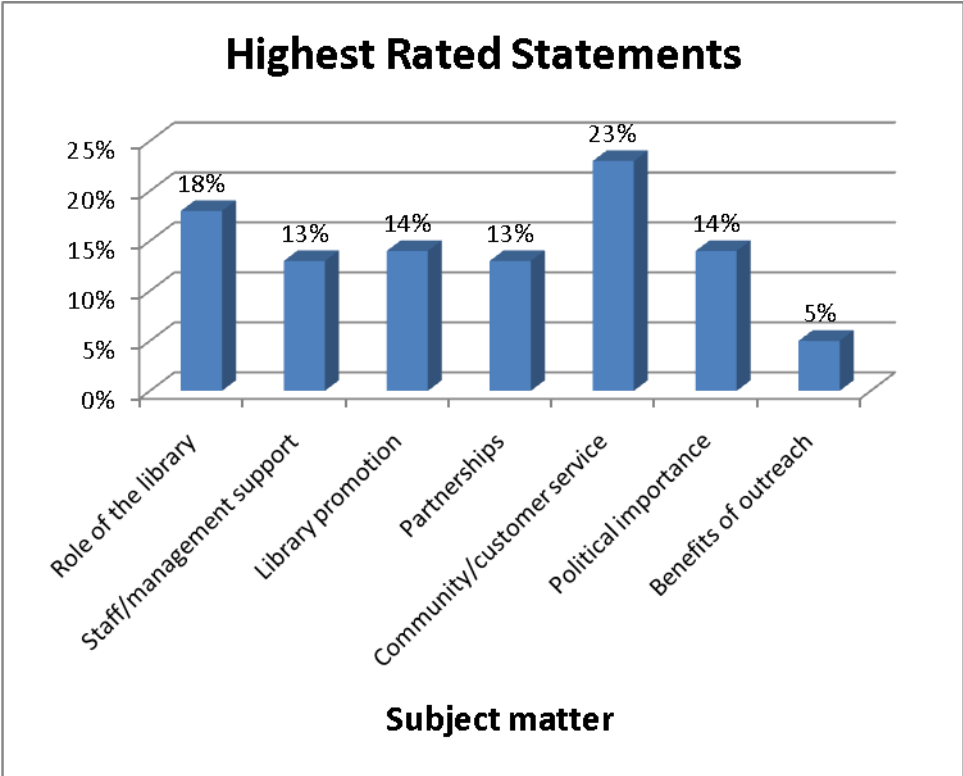
A. agree with the list as it is

OR

B. wish to change the ranking

- If you wish to change the ranking please show what changes you would make

The following table indicates the subject matter of the statements rated most highly by the panel.



Document Sample

1. Libraries are not 'just about books' anymore. This is reflected in their use as community meeting spaces for a range of activities, their use for public access to computers and the internet, places to study, hold and launch an exhibition/talk/workshop.

COMMENT:

Libraries are about 'what people want/expect'. Peoples expectations are varied and so library services should also be

Your rating: 7

Panel Rating: 6.8

2. There are very few places where members of the public can come together in a safe and welcoming environment and enjoy a variety of educational, social and recreational activities whilst meeting new people. Most of the activities are FREE or have a nominal fee.

COMMENTS:

- All events organised by our Libraries are free to the public
- We need to keep promoting this as an important service of the local authority and not as a weaker service

Your rating: 7

Panel Rating: 6.8

3. The public library service is being funded by public money and it is essential that it stay relevant to the community it serves.

COMMENTS:

- More feedback from the community might be useful in helping the service stay relevant perhaps in the form of a national survey on a regular basis – maybe every 5 years or so.
- This is crucial – relevancy has never been more important in today's recessionary times

Your rating: 7

Panel Rating: 6.7

ETC.

Do you agree with the order of the list as it is?

If not, please indicate your preferred order below.

ORDER	STATEMENT NO.	ORDER	STATEMENT NO.
1		12	
2		13	
3		14	
4		15	
5		16	
6		17	
7		18	
8		19	
9		20	
10		21	
11		22	

THANK YOU!

APPENDIX F: Interview questions

Interview Questions

- 1. What is your understanding of the term outreach in relation to the public library service?**
- 2. Do you feel the term is well understood?**
- 3. Is outreach recognised as an important part of the role of the public library service? Why?**
- 4. Do you see its merits? What are they?**
- 5. Is outreach in public libraries considered a priority by An Chomhairle Leabharlanna?**
- 6. Are any staff members allocated responsibility in this area?**

Yes: what is their role?

No: is it approached on an ad hoc basis?
- 7. Does the library council offer any training or support in this area? E.g. working with community groups, facilitation skills**
- 8. Do you feel it would be beneficial if each library service were to have an outreach co-ordinator or contact person linked to a co-ordinator in the Library Council? Is this feasible?**
- 9. What do you consider to be the main factors affecting the level of outreach currently being offered?**
- 10. An issue highlighted during the research was the lack of understanding by other agencies of the library's potential to support them. Do you agree that this is a problem?**
- 11. Do you feel that library activities in this area are generally well promoted?**
- 12. Results of the survey indicated a significant percentage of library services who have been relatively unsuccessful in accessing other groups**

People with a disability (24%) – do you find this surprising given the emphasis on improving access to library buildings over the past few years?

Post-primary schools (21%) – any comment?

Literacy groups (21%) – any comment?

- 13. The most successfully targeted groups were pre-schoolers, primary school children and older people – does this tally with any information you may have?**
- 14. The least successfully targeted groups are members of the business community, third level students and Travellers - any comment?**
- 15. 24% of respondents indicated a gap in outreach provision targeted at the unemployed – are there any initiatives currently under development in this area?**
- 16. 45% of survey participants indicated that they have no procedure in place for measuring their outreach activity. Where activities are evaluated they are often on an irregular basis. Is this an area that could be considered at national level with the development of a standard set of indicators?**
- 17. Participants agreed that outreach activities are regarded favourably by councillors who see them as a ‘good news story’. If measured more effectively by a standard set of indicators would this be an advantage in protecting book funds and library budgets?**
- 18. Is outreach prioritised by City and County Librarians as a group?**
- 19. The Delphi panel felt that Government don’t understand or appreciate the level of outreach programming that takes place each year in the public library network and it was suggested that this work goes unnoticed and is undervalued as a result. Would a more strategic national approach address this issue? Is this feasible?**
- 20. Any other information/suggestions/questions?**

APPENDIX G : Targeted Groups

Adult education organisations

Animal welfare organisations

Camera club

Children with learning difficulties

Creative writing groups

Film club

Gardening and environmental groups

Housebound people

Isolated rural communities

Local dialysis group

Local museum

Local studies interests

Long-term hospital patients

Mental health groups

Non library- based reading club

Nursing homes

Prison libraries

Retired teachers

Rural community groups e.g farmers and the I.C.A. (Irish Countrywomans Association)

Single parent families

APPENDIX H: Examples of outreach initiatives in Irish public libraries

All Join In campaign – visits to every class in every school in the county and to parents meetings. Every child issued with a library card with no guarantor necessary.

Art Trails – theme-based displays of older people's artwork in conjunction with arts centres and older people's networks

As Gaeilge reading groups for adult and young people

Bealtaine Festival

Bibliotherapy collection in association with local health professionals

Block loan facility for pre-school, primary and secondary schools

Book clubs

Business Library

Capsule Libraries – small self-sufficient libraries, with internet access, on Traveller halting sites

Childcare Partnership – information day about children and reading in the library

Children's Book Festival

Children's Summer Book Bus

Community Choir

Community Libraries – run by dedicated volunteers. Library provides stock, support and training for volunteers.

Creative writing classes for adults with an intellectual disability

Creative writing groups

Day Care Centre Scheme

Describe Project – scribing with children

East meets West group

FAS Ancestral Project

FAS E-learning Courses

From Page to Stage Project

Home library service for rurally isolated and immobile members

Hospital book delivery service

Housebound service – specially designated wheelchair accessible van incorporating mini library of books and audio material

Independent book clubs – library support re: book stock

Intercultural Information Fair – library display

Joint initiative with local Traveller workshop

Launch of Newspapers online service – targeting of members whose country of origin is from outside Ireland

Learning Zones for primary school children

Library friend system – matching older adults with nominated volunteers/family to liaise with the library on their behalf

Library Learning Bus

Living Together – cultural diversity project

Mental Health Reading Scheme

My Place My World – intergenerational project

National Council for the Blind Audio Book Clubs

Nursing Home Scheme

One Book, One Community initiative

Open days in shopping centres

Open Learning Centre

Polish mother and toddler group

Post-primary Initiative – in partnership with the local Education Service involving contact between library staff, teachers and students and culminating in a writing masterclass for students and a published book of the students work.

Pre-school initiative – offering a free picture book to keep to pre-school children joining the library

Pre-school promotions – targeting playschools and pre-school groups

Primary school visits

Primary schools – festival type initiatives and artist based workshops

Schools mobile library

Silver Surfer – internet instruction for older people

Six Book Challenge

Summer Reading Initiative for children – addressing the extension of reading skills and reading for enjoyment over the summer months with very positive feedback from children and their parents/guardians

Taobh Tire – community outreach service points

Teenspaces/ Teenzones

Threading Tales and Pictureogs – a series of interactive and reflective workshops aimed at marginalised groups where participants develop skills of story making, telling and recording.

Writing 3.0 – an annual writing festival