

The Value of Public Libraries in the Delivery of E-Government Services

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The Value of Public Libraries in the Delivery of E-Government Services

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Executive Summary

E-government refers to the provision of public services using information communications technology (ICT) particularly the Internet. It provides convenient access, 24/7 availability and an integrated approach to information regardless of originating source. However, background research, also, identified concerns about ICT's potential to create a new form of disadvantage – the “digital divide.” These related to lack of Internet access, skills required to use services and also lack of awareness of e-government content.

This aim of this research and implementation project undertaken by two library authorities - Dublin City Public Libraries and Longford County Libraries, supported by An Chomhairle Leabharlanna, was to establish the value of public libraries in the delivery of e-government services? This was considered under the interrelated framework of: access, content and skills.

Access

The research established that the public library's Internet network enables e-government access through libraries. The use of broadband, including Wi-Fi connection methods enhances and extends its Internet delivery capacity, removing barriers such as slower loading and downloading time and connection disruptions. The majority of libraries provide this facility free of charge and usage is higher (collectively) in those libraries than in libraries that charge for Internet access.

Content

E-government content ranges from information provision to transaction services where the user can pay or order a service online. Barriers to content use included: “no need “ perceived, lack of Internet access and skills, confidence in using a credit card online and lack of awareness of services available and its practical and relevant uses.

The research advocated a role for public library staff as “intermediaries “ “facilitators” and “enablers” of e-government content and the literature suggested that e-government represented an environmental opportunity to move beyond the public library's traditional role. Privacy and security issues were highlighted in the literature. Staff training solutions and approaches to change management emerged in both the national and international research as equipping libraries with the resources to take advantage of this opportunity.

Skills

A common theme, identified throughout the public consultation activities was that lack of Internet skills posed a barrier to the independent use of e-government services. This was specifically stressed in relation to “late adopters of technology”

In response to issues relating to access, content awareness and skills the project defined, delivered and evaluated or monitored three pilot programmes in eight selected libraries in Longford and Dublin.

Pilot Programmes

- A Library staff mediated information service to users which exploited online public service sources,
- Public Internet training and familiarisation, this included – WEBSmart aimed at members of the public, a workplace ICT readiness programme – Learning for Lifeskills, online demonstrations and thematic participative workshops.
- Dedicated Motor Tax Online facilities, (implemented in Dublin City only)

Pilot programme One

A review of 700 questions monitored during this pilot programme established the role of library staff as e-government intermediaries, by facilitating integrated access to quality of life information. This programme was implemented in all eight branches.

Pilot programme two

There were a range of approaches used in this programme, which took account of user needs and local library resources. 98% of respondents, who completed evaluation questionnaires, identified the experience as useful, and specific programmes attracted attendance by older people, members of the public with a disability and those working in skilled trades. These were identified as late adopters of technology.

Matching service relevant content with participants’ interests and needs ensured engagement with, and awareness of, e-government.

In 2007 there was significant progress in DCPL in this area, and the resolution of “Branching Out” negotiations created the necessary conditions for staff roles as Internet tutor and trainer to progress.

Pilot programme three

Although introduced as a self service option, staff facilitated use of a dedicated Motor Tax Online service by answering questions relating to “need to know” requirements. Transaction services present both opportunities and challenges in terms of user detail confidentiality and privacy and in response the project developed guidelines on staff support of the service. This was an example of a joint venture with DCC’s Motor Tax Department and was useful in promoting e-government delivery through public libraries.

Public library value in the delivery of e-government services can be summarised as follows:

- It enables e-government **access** through its Internet network,
- It promotes awareness of e-government **content** through a range of approaches,
- It supports users to develop the necessary Internet related skills to engage with the content independently.

Recommendations

Government at all levels should capitalise on the public library as a national resource by working in partnership with it and by providing it with appropriate resources to deliver e-government.

Public libraries should support members of the public in accessing e-government services by providing a quality Internet service. This should be enabled by the introduction of a broadband Internet connection where available (Check www.broadband.gov.ie for broadband services by location).

Realisation of a key role for public libraries in delivering e-government services requires implementation of an appropriate staff-training programme. The project’s training resource offers such a programme and should be delivered in accordance with local service requirements.

Public libraries should support members of the public in using e-government services, by providing equipment with enhanced “easy to use” features – software and hardware.

E-government services and public libraries should cooperatively promote the message: “Go to Your *Public Library to Use E-Government Services*”. Part One Background and Research

Part One - Background

Introduction

What is the value of public libraries in the delivery of e-government service?

This question informed the purpose of a research and implementation project involving two library authorities – Dublin City Public Libraries and Longford County Libraries, supported by An Chomhairle Leabharlanna.

As part of the background research, this project:

- considered motivations for e-government development,
- identified concrete examples of public services online,
- and reviewed policy reports which highlighted concerns about the potentially excluding effect of technology.

What is e-government?

Still in an early stage of development, definitions are evolving for e-government and its associated and variant terms “government online”, “e-services”, “public services online” and “eGovernment.” In a democratic context, government relates to local, national and EU (European Union) structures.

A recent report by the Irish Comptroller and Auditor General provided the following definition that, “the term eGovernment refers to the provision of public services using information communications technology (ICT) particularly the Internet.” (2008).

Reasons for delivering public service online were outlined in the Irish Government’s policy document *New Connections – A Strategy to Realise the Potential of the Information Society* (2002). These were identified as follows: user-centred services available on a 24/7 basis, integrated access to services structured around life events resulting in increased efficiencies and effectiveness and transparency.

E-government service development and availability is usually expressed in maturity stages or online sophistication. However, the focus of this project was to establish, practically, how public libraries support user engagement with services. The following examples illustrate the options, interactivity type and range of public services available online.

Examples of public services online

The websites of the two library partners - www.dublincity.ie and www.Longfordcoco provides facilities to find a planning application and view the development plan for the area. This enhances transparency in the decision-making process.

A portal website at www.checktheregister.ie facilitates access to each local authority's database to check if the user is listed on the voter's database or not. This is an example of a one-way transaction.

www.citizensinformation.ie website offers integrated access to information originating from a range of public services for user convenience. Using a Life Event¹ approach users can access information, download forms or visit other websites linked from this service.

The national Motor Tax Online service – www.motortax.ie is an example of a “user transaction” service where the user can order and pay for a motor tax certificate online.

www.revenue.ie provides information in eleven languages and along with Motor Tax online is identified as successful examples of e-government services, attracting and serving large numbers of customers annually.

An E111 (European Health Insurance Card) is available for users to either download or apply for online (depending on circumstances) at www.ehic.ie

Significantly, the role of public libraries in supporting and developing e-government content is growing. Initiatives include:

- www.borrowbooks which enables convenient and integrated searches of all public library catalogues concurrently,
- The Irish Times Digital Archive available free of charge in Irish public libraries through the www.askabutireland.ie website,

¹ Life Events are situations what occur which result in a series of transactions between an individual and various public sector organisations in Ireland, for example having a baby or getting married.

- Public Libraries, also, facilitates access to the Ordnance Survey Ireland www.osi map service and,
- The Irish Financial Services Regular recently announced that its www.itsyourmoney.ie would be available, free of charge in public libraries announced in a press release.
- **Note** ACL to provide details of European Information Centres.

E-Government progress to date

The Comptroller and Auditor General, in a Report on eGovernment (2007), concluded that:

- while the provision of online information has largely been achieved, there was mixed progress in developing transactional content,
- there was more success in delivering planned services to business than to individual users,
- while the Public Services Broker at www.reach.ie has facilitated the secure exchange of documents and data between user bodies and provides a facility to authenticate online user identity. It has not, however, delivered the self-service mechanism as originally envisaged.

Issues to be addressed

A number of reports highlighted issues relating to public access, use and awareness of e-government. While acknowledging the benefits offered by e-government, they caution that ICT has the potential to create a new form of disadvantage - digital exclusion. This was emphasised in the report - *eGovernment More than an Automation of Government Services* (2003). It cautioned that modern technology has, “the potential to reinforce existing social disadvantage by excluding the marginalised from participating in the Information society.” www.isc.ie

Groups at risk of exclusion

On a similar theme, the report *eInclusion: expanding the Information Society in Ireland* (2003) identified groups at risk of being excluded, categorised as later adopters of technology - “adults without Internet access or using it less than

once a month.” These included: women with home duties (housewives), retired people, tradesmen/skilled workers, workers in agriculture, forestry and fishing, unemployed. www.isc.ie

Importantly, recommended expanding the current and future capacity of the public library system for outreach to late adopters.

Internet access penetration

Significantly, while the number of households with Internet access is increasing, Internet penetration, which enables e-government delivery, remains stable with almost half of the population using the Internet from any location. This was identified by available research commissioned by (ComReg) 2007. www.comreg.ie

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) in its fourth annual survey on use of ICT (2006) established that 48.7% of households have a computer connected to the Internet. The main reasons given by households without Internet access were: did not need the Internet (content harmful, not useful etc) (33.1%), did not want the Internet (21.5%), equipment costs were too high (16.7%), lack of skills (14.6%).

This survey also highlighted a correlation between age and use of ICT. Nearly two-thirds of persons aged 16-24 have used a computer, as compared to 18% of those aged 65-74. www.cso.ie

Content

The “no need” reason cited, above, raises issues about awareness of e-government, content relevance and benefit to users. online.

In its seventh year of surveying e-government developments, Accenture² identified that while there was a 6% increase in e-Government take-up in Ireland, Irish citizens’ enthusiasm for its services was categorised as “dormant.” The report *eInclusion: expanding the Information Society in Ireland* (2003) also highlighted that, the need to build the capacity to use the technologies on the one hand, while seeking to create the conditions that make their use more relevant to people’s lives on the other.” www.isc.ie

² Consultancy Group

Skills and learning

The report, also, advocated the prioritising of ICT learning capacity over ICT skills acquisition for target groups and specific workforce employees and apprenticeship programmes. The distinction between ICT learning capacity and ICT skills acquisition takes account of literacy issues experienced by some late adopters of technology and support measures required. In research undertaken³ with senior citizens the need for the “right training” was identified as key to their use of the Internet, this research also highlighted little appetite for transactional use or shopping.

Government initiatives to support user engagement with e-government have been progressed at EU and Irish government level. The EU’s *i2010 eGovernment Action Plan: Accelerating eGovernment in Europe for the Benefit of All* (2006) includes a specific objective for 2010 is to ensure that “no citizen is left behind: advancing inclusion through eGovernment” so that by 2010 all citizens benefit from trusted, innovative services and easy access for all.”

In an Irish context, the Access Skills and Content (ASC, 2006) was established to provide practical support to those at risk of digital exclusion, in this instance, older people and people with a disability.

Project Scope

In response to issues relating to awareness, accessing and using e-government, two library authorities: one urban – **Dublin City (DCPL)** (project managers) and one rural – **Longford County**, developed a model which shows the value of public libraries delivering e-government services. Funded through the Public Library Research Programme, advised by An Chomhairle Leabharlanna, the project carried out research and implemented pilot programmes and ran from November 2004 until March 2006. This report includes an update for mid-2006 to 2007. Its scope was as follows:

1. to focus on e-government (online public services) via the Internet for each tier of government: local, national and EU,

³ Undertaken by Dr. Albert Jordan as part of thesis research

2. to identify the barriers and propose solutions for members of the public using e-government services,
3. to show the benefit of the Irish public library Internet service as an access network,
4. to establish the value of public library familiarisation programmes to support members of the public in using e-government services,
5. to highlight examples of how public libraries effectively provide value in the delivery of e-government services. (Practical initiatives informed by research and evaluated as effective by users)
6. The project carried out a range of research activities (see Appendix 1), which informed how the project team developed, implemented and evaluated the pilot programmes. A summary of research methods is provided below.

Surveys		Interviews
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questionnaire distributed to City and County Librarians – 100% response rate • Public Questionnaire– (37% response rate or 300 surveys) 	<p>Desk research on the international situation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • two United Kingdom library sector stakeholders • eight national key stakeholders • five focus groups sessions in Dublin and Longford

International Review

A review on the international situation identified that:

- the literature on e-government services originated for the most part in countries such as the UK, USA, Canada, Australia, Scandinavia and Singapore. Ireland also contributed through Bannister's⁴ publications and reports commissioned by the Information Society Commission.
- it included a number of International benchmarking surveys by organisations such as Accenture and Capgemini.
- there were fewer documented accounts of public libraries delivering e-government services as compared with reports describing online public library services.

Defining a Role for Public libraries

Interviews with a key stakeholder summarised the role of public libraries and e-government as follows,

“There is no precise definition in relation to e-government and public library service, but I believe that it is defined in terms of the following three key areas of activity:

- a) Provision of free access to the ICT,
- b) Provision of support and skills development to engage with ICT based services,
- c) Promotion and awareness of e-government services themselves, including e-library services, e-local government services, and e-national government services.” Stephen Walters, Principal Library Manager, Gateshead Councils' Library Service. *Key Stakeholder Interviewee*

In an Australian context, Berryman (2004) characterised the emergence of e-government as a transformational opportunity for public libraries to move beyond their traditional role to providing services other than information provision. Also noted is the need for an intermediary role to support the take-up of e-government.

⁴ Dr Frank Bannister, Senior Lecturer, Trinity College Dublin

Leadership and Change Management

This environmental change presents both an opportunity and a leadership challenge which Froud and MacKenzie (2002) suggest could transform the public library from being, “a lender of books to an enabler of IT skills for the community.” Issues to be addressed include: change management, partnership, organisational structures and skills, customer care, data protection, security, privacy and ethics, resources and management information.

Mediated Access

On a practical level, the research identified that support in the form of mediated access would enable use of e-government by some members of the public. This was established by research carried out on UK online centres and e-government.⁵ It comprised two strands:

1. Research on existing demand for e-government and potential of UK online centres to stimulate demand and to support users in accessing e-government services.
2. In parallel, it carried out the Pathfinder Project, which explored the potential of UK online centres to support the delivery of e-government by engaging users in nine different areas of provision.

Amongst its conclusions were:

- e-government services have the potential to change lives,
- centres can play a key role in the joined up delivery of central and local government,
- citizens found the idea of a “one stop shop” for government services attractive,
- the intervention of trained staff is vital for many users,
- local government is an area, which was insufficiently explored in the Pathfinder Project but should be considered in more depth.

Based on its findings it proposed three business models offering different types of support for users and requiring different inputs from government departments. The UK Online Centres: Supporting delivery of e-government services, Summary report (2005)

⁵ Centres are located in a range of community centres including libraries

Promoting awareness of content

Research on the UK online Centres also concluded that partnership with other government agencies was key. Similarly, the importance of partnership and the need to promote library services as sustainable entities in the delivery of e-government delivery was emphasised by Stackhouse⁶ (2004) in relation to the Canadian “Business Room” initiative. www.parl.ns.ca This initiative also identified the need for:

- a branded concept, in this case, “Government at Your Service”,
- the need to collect information on a thematic basis,
- the need for signage, pamphlet racks and promotional material to integrate print and electronic sources,

Another UK report emphasised the need to:

- target socially excluded groups more precisely,
- better promote the benefits of the Internet,
- enhance the literacy and ICT skills of socially excluded groups.”

eGovernment Reaching socially excluded groups? (2005)

Critical to enabling these activities are trained staff to support public use of e-government.

Developing library staff capacity

The international review highlighted the importance of training initiatives to enable staff to support public use of e-government. The following summarises the context, issues and requirements relating to staff training initiatives.

- Training activities in customer care and reference skills provided a valuable foundation to build staff capacity in e-government delivery. (Froud and MacKenzie) . There was a need for staff to be trained to at least ECDL/ICDL (European/International Computer Driver License level) (**Stephen Walters, Principal Library Manager**, Gateshead Councils’ Library Service. *Key Stakeholder Interviewee*.)
- The feasibility of training all staff was questioned, “the picture is less clear around the issue of how libraries and all library staff can support the whole range of e-Government services without being experts on the

⁶ Eric Stackhouse was the recipient of the Norman Horrocks Award for Library Leadership

entire range of services, particularly the more complex type.” **David Potts Senior Network Adviser**, The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, *Key Stakeholder Interviewee*.

- d) The need for bespoke internal training focusing on changing user requests was also identified. **Stephen Walters, Principal Library Manager**, Gateshead Councils’ Library Service. *Key Stakeholder Interviewee*

- The research identified a need for more toolkits, guidelines and training available to enable staff to use e-government services. There was a particular demand for training to support transactional services. *The UK Online Centres: Supporting delivery of e-government services, Summary report*.
- The majority of UK online Centres, particularly, library-led centres felt that they did not have sufficient staffing resources to support users in accessing e-government.

Specific examples of e-government training modules proved challenging to locate and the need to develop training responses was highlighted through the research.

National Situation

An audit of the national situation included: a survey of local authority City and County Librarians, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders and public consultation activities.

Information derived from the survey of City and County Librarians provided the following service profile as of 2005. (**Note** need to update this with Wi-Fi element)

Public Internet access points

- There were 1,383 public Internet access points in 346 libraries nationwide.
- Most library authorities used a mix of Internet access methods, with ISDN reported as the most frequently used type⁷.
- The majority of library authorities required Internet users to register as library members, all applied a time restriction system and print facilities were provided by 29 library authorities.
- The average take-up rate of the service was 73% nationally

And,

The majority of library authorities provided free Internet access. Where Internet charges apply, there was a lower take-up rate - 57% as compared with a 77% take-up where free Internet access was provided.

The availability of a broadband Internet access, specifically, the wireless option is increasing. This extends Internet connectivity because users with enabled laptop computers can access the Internet using the public library's wireless service. Using other Internet connection methods, the public library's Internet provision is a fixed function of both access points and library opening hours. For example, DCPL introduced broadband, including Wi-Fi access in 2007 and an analysis of usage period identified Wi-Fi network access during the Christmas period when libraries were closed.

⁷ Integrated Services Digital Network

Support for E-Government

City and County Librarians were strongly supportive of public libraries delivering e-government services as evidenced from the following.

- A significant minority (46%) of library authorities surveyed had already provided Internet training to members of the public.
- One-third of library authorities promoted e-government services and the majority (96%) would be supportive of this role for public libraries.
- The majority (71%) would also support free e-government information print service.

Internet access requirements

While the majority (56%) of respondents indicated that they had a moderate need for more resources, a significant minority (44%) indicated a high need for more resources. City and County librarians prioritised the following service development requirements.

Table No. 1 Public Library Service Requirements

Resources Required	High Demand	Low Demand	Not Needed	Don't Know
More Staff Training	80%	13%	6.7%	
More Staff	71%	12.9%	9.7%	6.5%
Replacements for Existing computers	71%	19.4%	6.5%	3.2%
Language Software	63%	23.3%	13.3%	
More Funding for Paper and Ink	53.6%	28.6%	17.9%	
More Computers and Furniture	51%	29%	16%	3.2%
Better Internet Connection	51.6%	22.6%	25.8%	

Survey of Internet users (Wexford County Libraries)

Wexford County Libraries has conducted an annual survey of Internet usage since the inception of this service in 2000. It provides details on its user

profile, online services used and has also tracked the impact of charges on the service. This service was available free of charge from November 1999-March 2004. A charge of €2 was applied per hour (€1 unwaged and students) in 2004, which resulted in a drop in usage. At the beginning of 2007 charges were abolished and service usage ranges from 90-95%

Profile of users

The survey identified that the majority of its (50% combined) were in the following age bands (20-29) and (14-19). It also identified that 16.6% of its users were aged 50 years or older and this represented an increase of 6% from the previous year.

Online services used

While email was cited as the most popular online facility used (57.6%) followed by leisure interest research (49.2%). The questionnaire also contained a question specific to e-government services. The three most popular services used were:

www.wexford.ie

www.motortax.ie

www.citizensinformation.ie

Interestingly, the survey findings highlighted that users in three library locations two thirds, on average, replied that they had Internet access at another location. The reverse occurred in one location, where, 65% of users responded that they did not have access to the Internet in any other location. This underscores the important of free public Internet facilities in libraries.

Key Stakeholder Interviews

Key stakeholder interviews provided sector insight on a range of e-government issues including:

- Internet access,
- barriers to inclusive participation,
- public libraries and e-government.

Broadband Internet Access

Key stakeholder interviewees emphasised the need for a quality Internet service to facilitate access to e-government services. The following point was made relating to the roll-out of the Mo Bhaile project.

“The issue in relation to broadband is the bandwidth, whether that is fibre in the ground or wireless point to point communication. I believe with the sophistication of the data we are trying to transmit and the high dependency on images that it is essential that people have access to broadband. ...I believe that it is essential that all citizens have access to broadband capacity.” **Joe Horan, County Manager, South County Dublin, Key Stakeholder Interviewee**

South Dublin County Council is currently implementing the Connect initiative, which aims to enable all citizens to use technology in innovative ways and to shape Internet content to be more relevant to local interests. <http://connect.southdublin.ie/connect/>

In rural context the need for competitively priced broadband access was identified as facilitating e-government delivery. The Group Broadband initiative was highlighted as an important initiative for towns with a population of 1,500 and under.

“The availability of high speed Internet access in all public buildings such as libraries and county council buildings is currently being done and must continue.” Noreen Heslin, Head of IT, Longford County Council, *Key Stakeholder Interviewee*.

Broadband Rollout

While e-government access can be achieved using other Internet connection methods broadband access provides a reliable, fast and transforms the experience of using the Internet from a frustrating one to an enjoyable one. The availability of broadband can impact on the extent to which users are encouraged to use the public library Internet service. The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016 contains specific provision to promote broadband rollout in rural areas. Funding under the Broadband Programme will focus on those parts of the country where the private sector will be unable to justify the commercial provision of broadband connectivity. Indicative investment over the period 2007-2013 will be 435 million Euros.

Barriers to E-Government Content Use

Barriers to service use...."Fear is one of them....another one, particularly with Motor Tax Online, is the lack of a credit card or debit card... not having access to a computer would be key as well" Maire Igoe, SEO (Senior Executive Officer), Dublin City Council, Motor Tax Department, Key Stakeholder Interviewee

Lack of English skills was also identified as a barrier to use by a service providers.

"We identified that 60% of callers are non-nationals who drop-in to Central Revenue Office. Numbers were identified as Polish, Revenue worked with Polish Embassies as intermediary agencies to promote Revenue information to members of the Polish speaking communities in Ireland Information relating to Online PAYE (Pay as You Earn) is currently available in 11 languages⁸.

Mick O'Hanlon, Assistant Principal, Manager of Revenue of IT Communications, Key Stakeholder Interview

Donal Rice, ICT Co-ordinator, NDA (National Disability Authority)

acknowledged that,

"More and more we are seeing websites being designed with accessibility in

⁸ The languages are: Czech, German, Spanish, French, Lithuanian, Polish, Portuguese, Slovak, Russian, Traditional Chinese and Simplified Chinese.

mind but traditionally accessibility hasn't been a criteria in either the tender process for that website, or for the development or the implementation of the website." *Key Stakeholder Interviewee*

Public Libraries Promoting Awareness

Stakeholder interviewees endorsed the value of public libraries in delivering e-government through access and support and by building public awareness of services.

"Public libraries developing awareness and usage of service by members of the public in cooperation with www.revenue.ie ." **Mick O'Hanlon, Assistant Principal, Manager of Revenue of IT Communications,** *Key Stakeholder Interviewee*

"This is a good thing: public libraries delivering e-government; ROS.ie's (Revenue Online Service) strategy makes use of as many different channels as possible. Revenue Online Services would be very keen on promoting public access PCs in public libraries as a means of accessing and using ROS.ie The RLO (Revenue Liaison Officers' Network) could effectively work with public library users and staff in this regard. This is a national expanding network.) **Conor Hegarty, Marketing Manager Revenue Online Service,** *Key Stakeholder Interviewee*

One interviewee also advised an emerging role for public libraries as follows:

"I would say that they have been invaluable to date. However, with increasing home access and the growth of Internet cafes etc, this may change. It is a challenge for public libraries to stay relevant in the 21st century. They should become the gatekeeper between the local area and the rest of the world."

Councillor Seamus Butler, Longford County Council, *Key Stakeholder Interviewee*

Public Consultation

Public consultation activities including a survey and focus group discussions captured public opinion on accessing and using e-government services.

Key survey findings confirmed the role of the public library as follows:

- as a source of government information, and,
- as a free Internet service provider.

While just 30% of respondents used the public library to access the Internet, this represented the highest ranked access location.

Significantly, twice that number identified the public library as a source for government information and awareness of the public library as a free Internet service provider received even higher recognition.

Website Usability

Interestingly, the majority of respondents (62%) were familiar with e-government services, and a significant majority (70%) found the required information. However, a number of respondents who answered that they were not familiar with e-government services, subsequently, answered questions relating to website usability. This could suggest issues in understanding the concept of e-government.

Barriers to Inclusive Participation

The focus group discussions provided insights into barriers experienced and importantly, views on the role of public libraries delivering government services. The following summarises points made.

- Participants at the Longford discussion groups identified Internet access issues due to physical distance from the library.
- Some participants said that they would like to see convenient access to public library's Internet service, without a need to book the computer.
- A convenient, fast Internet connection would also facilitate use of e-government services.
- "Free to print "or reduced printing charges would eliminate or reduce financial barriers.

- Participants suggested that public libraries should target those who are socially excluded, those with low literacy levels and provide specific time-slots for older members of the community.

Participants made the following comments in relation to using e-government services.

- They found it difficult to know where to start and how to find information, given that there was so much information available.
- A lack of basic computer skills prevented some from using the services.
- A personal need for information or service would entice them to use the services.
- They would be interested in information about their local area available on the websites.

In a public survey undertaken by the project team:

- 30% of respondents used the public library to access the Internet service (highest ranked location)
- 60% identified the public library as a source for government information
- 80% were aware that the public library provided free Internet access

Summary of research findings

The following summarises key research findings arising from both the international and national situation.

- Barriers identified included: lack of computers and skills, lack of awareness, confidence and motivation issues emerged as reasons for not accessing and using e-government information.
- Lack of a credit or debit card or fear of using such a card online prevented some members of the public from using e-government transaction services.
- The literature on public libraries and e-government identified an environmental opportunity, provided by e-government, for public libraries to extend their traditional information role.
- Leadership, change management and staff training and development were required to take advantage of the opportunity offered by e-government developments.
- Partnership with government agencies and the need to demonstrate public libraries as sustainable players in the delivery of e-government is key.
- City and County Librarians, were supportive of a role for public libraries in the delivery of e-government services, and identified staff training, more staff and replacements for existing PCs as priority service requirements.
- Stakeholders from the e-government sector were positive about a role for public libraries in the delivery of e-government.
- Stakeholders, also, identified that a broadband Internet connection would provide a reliable, quality experience. A quality Internet connection is likely to impact on reasons for using the library's Internet service.
- The research highlighted the need to target specific groups at risk of being excluded, these included: women with home duties (housewives), retired people, tradesmen/skilled workers, workers in agriculture, forestry and fishing and the unemployed.
- The need to brand the public library as an enabler of e-government was identified as an effective approach in the literature.

Research Defining the Pilot Programmes

The definition of the pilot programmes took account of:

- barriers experienced by members of the public relating to the access, use and awareness of e-government.
- user requirements relating to accessing, printing or downloading information to ordering and paying for a service online.
- different contextual and outcome requirements for using e-government services. These included:
 - access to **personally relevant** information potentially having a quality of life impact,
 - **participation** in ICT programmes which would extend e-government's reach in a more **e-inclusive** way,
 - provision of a **dedicated transaction** service delivered in partnership to promote the take-up of a specific service – www.motortax.ie

The three pilot programmes, enabled by each library's Internet service were:

1. Pilot Programme One – Library Staff Mediated Information Service.
2. Pilot Programme Two - Approaches to Develop Independent Use of E-Government (familiarisation workshops and E-Government WEBSmart programme delivered by library staff),
3. Pilot Programme Three – Provision of a Dedicated Transaction Service – www.motortax.ie

The research had established that mediated access provided in this instance, by library staff would enable e-government use. This required the development of a staff-training module to enable different levels of intervention. Underpinning each activity was the need to promote awareness of e-government through public libraries.

Staff Training Requirements

The research highlighted that appropriate training would develop existing library staff capacity to enable use of e-government.

On the advice of DCC's Training Officer, two project team members participated in a "Train the Trainer"⁹ programme to equip themselves with skills required to develop and deliver effective training solutions.

Training solutions were designed and delivered relevant to the requirements of each pilot programme. Also required was an understanding of the issues and approaches to leading and managing change

- 96.8% of library service managers would support a common format staff-training programme

Survey of City and County Librarians (2005)

Training module – mediated information service

The e-government training module included the following learning objectives which enabled library staff:

- to search e-government services to respond to user questions,
- to develop an understanding of service options,
- to become familiar with online local area information.

In advance of developing a training module, project staff mapped a range of e-government services under various headings such as content, search features and level of service. They subsequently compiled an *E-Government Directory: Finding Information using E-Government Websites*, updated in 2007.

Training – delivering public Internet familiarisation workshops

The e-government training module formed the bedrock for developing public familiarisation workshops in terms of e-government content. Also useful was the external training received on delivering effective presentation covering aspects such: presentation logistics, using visual aids, structuring workshops to include appropriate learning opportunities, managing group dynamics.

Using the "Train the Trainer" approach was effective in developing workshop delivery skills which and subsequently developed in other staff members.

⁹ Provided by Professional Development Business and Training Consultants recommended by DCC's Training Officer

Training activity – supporting Motor Tax Online users in libraries

Additional training activities in DCPL included familiarisation workshops on the Motor Tax Online website to staff in the four project libraries in Dublin. These sessions were delivered by DCC's Motor Tax Office staff and dealt with the "need to know" details of using the service.

During the pilot programme 78 staff members from both library authorities participated in the e-government training module. Longford included the local authority Training and Partnership Officers in their sessions and delivered sessions to local CIC (Citizen Information Centre) staff.

2007 update (Including the industrial relations context)

(Note this is new.) Negotiations in the industrial relations arena relating to "Branching out" and libraries restructuring concluded in DCPL in late 2005. and staff promotional opportunities were progressed in 2006. The importance of staff training was, once again, noted in the deliberations. The successful conclusion of negotiations provided the necessary conditions for staff to deliver public Internet training.

PMDS (The Performance Management Development System) has been implemented in DCPL and in other local authorities in 2007. This provided a structured approach to identifying and delivering training needs and solutions at individual and team level.

The training on a scheduled basis was advanced as follows in 2007.

- Additional 106 frontline staff members have participated in the e-government training module DCPL since the project completion
- 88 staff have trained as tutors to deliver public Internet training as part of the WEBSmart programme.
- In the summer of 2007 staff from the four Dublin Library authorities at Grade Seven level attended a workshop on "Managing Change through Others"¹⁰

¹⁰ Sourced through CILIP (Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals) , UK and delivered In Dublin.

Part Two Pilot programme implementation and evaluation

Libraries Selected to Implement the Pilot Programmes

Ireland, an increasingly urban society, also retains a strong rural backdrop and its communities are becoming more diverse. These factors are reflected in the eight libraries selected to implement and test the pilot programmes. All public libraries are community resources, which provide a range of lending, reference, and information services as well as local history collections, cultural programmes and Internet facilities. Four libraries in each library authority were selected to implement and evaluate the pilot programmes.

DCPL's Central Library provides diverse services such as music, business, lending and an Open Learning Centre (OLC). The OLC provides computer and language learning facilities and is a unique resource in an Irish public context. Members of the public from all over the city and region extensively use the Central Library; its users are also representative of a culturally diverse Ireland.¹¹

Ballyfermot Library is located in the South West of Dublin in an area designated by the Irish Government as a priority under the URBAN 11 criteria.¹² The library has an established role in building community and local identity through its heritage, local partnership and programming activities.

Pearse Street Library located in the Dublin City Library and Archive, is situated in the South Inner City, a RAPID designated area¹³. The Library is close to the revitalised Docklands area.

Opened in 2001, **Cabra Library** is located on the North Side of the City in a large suburban area. The library's users are drawn from the local community and from neighbouring counties due to the library's accessible location on a major commuter route. The library's public access Internet PCs have supported Dublin City Council's **Return to Learning Programme**.

¹¹ In 2006 users from 101 nationalities registered to use its facilities.

¹² Followed on from a review of ten most disadvantaged areas in Ireland with regard to URBAN criteria.

¹³ Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development.

Each of the **DCPL** branches selected for the pilot programmes is open for **54** hours per week; Monday – Thursday 10am-8pm and Friday and Saturday 10am-5pm

Internet PCs in DCPL branches:

Central Library: 20

Ballyfermot Library: 12

Pearse Street Library: 11

Cabra Library: 15

This includes assistive technology PCs, business PCs, Internet learning PCs and PCs with OSI Historic Map Viewer Dedicated motortaxonline PC

Longford County Library selected the following libraries:

Longford Library is located in the county's principal town. The library has six public access Internet PCs. It is a Europe Direct Information Centre and has an information kiosk connected to the Internet with access to public sector websites. The Library is open for 47 hours per week including lunchtimes, two late nights and Saturday mornings.

Granard is a market town situated in the North of the county. **Granard Library** has three public access Internet computers and an information kiosk connected to the Internet. The library is open for 26 hours per week, including one late evening opening.

Located in North Longford, **Drumlish Library** is open for 15 hours per week including two late-nights and Saturday mornings. The library has two public access Internet PCs and an information kiosk with Internet access to local, national and EU public services websites.

Lanesboro is situated in the Southwest of the county. **Lanesboro Library** is open for 26 hours per week including two late nights and Saturday mornings. There are two public access Internet PCs and an online information kiosk.

Image 1 here

A focus group meeting in Longford Library (left to right) Mary Carleton-Reynolds, Longford County Librarian, Stephanie Igoe, Longford Irish Countrywomen's Association, John Channon, Longford Older Person's Network and Laura Heneghan, Community and Enterprise Development Officer, Longford County Council

Pilot Programme One – Library Staff Mediated Information Service

The research identified that access to public service information can potentially change lives. This pilot programme was implemented to respond to a personal need for information and exploited the flexible, searchable and wide range of online information. It builds on traditional recognition of public libraries as sources of government information and significantly, extends public library resource availability without cost implications.

Library staff monitored questions and the main categories (listed below) underscored public need for “quality of life” information answered by their local library.

- **Local area and local authority services’** information: e.g. location of health centres, tax offices, libraries and schools, planning and waste collection services.
- **Topical and time-bound** information: e.g. what is the current status on Avian flu, details on the CAO (Central Applications Office).
- Questions on **benefits and entitlement** information were wide-ranging e.g. rent allowance, early retirement, free travel, household benefits package, medical cards.
- **Local** and **national democratic** process: how to check the Register of Electors and find contact details for **local representatives** and spokespersons for political parties.
- Information relating to “**life events**” e.g. application forms for driving test, job applications, starting a business, and housing.
- **National and EU** publications e.g. Bills and Acts of the Oireachtas, Statutory Instruments and other official Regulations, EU farming.
- **Library** related information. These include how to use the online catalogue, how to renew books online and details of www.borrowbooks.ie and *LifeSteps* initiatives.
- The information needs of those recently arrived were also reflected in requests relating to **immigration** and **citizenship**.

Pilot Programme Information Service

27% of questions were requests for information

70% were requests to print an item

3% related to applying for a service online

700 questions recorded during pilot phase, Nov 2005 – March 2006

Staff monitored questions asked by members of the public, the majority of which were requests to print application forms, reports and other documents. Library staff recorded a small number of questions about applying for a service online.

Printing

In the majority of cases there was a need to print information from an e-government website. For the duration of the project, members of the public received e-government related information free of charge up to a maximum of 15 pages.¹⁴ This removed a financial barrier to accessing quality of life public service information.

“Up until now I found it difficult to access up-to-date EU information for work. Thanks to a member of staff I’m now regularly using www.europa.eu.int “
Comment made by member of the Public at Central Library’s Business Information Centre, Dublin

- 73% of library service managers would support a free print out service in relation to e-government information. (1 library service already provides free print outs))

Survey of City and County Librarians (2005)

¹⁴ Public libraries usually charge for printouts. During the pilot programmes Dublin and Longford libraries waived 20 cent per-page printing charges up to a maximum of 15 pages. (this took account of usual application form/information leaflet size). 1,608 pages were printed during the information service, equalling €321.60.

Benefits and Lessons Learned

"I'm at the early stage of researching starting a business in Ireland. I found the website www.basis.ie really useful, particularly the funding section. The downloads and links are also great."

Comment made by member of the public at Central Library's Business Information Centre, Dublin

The following is a summary of benefits and lessons learned during this pilot programme.

- Library staff exploited the integrated online range of information ; this resulted in a convenient "one-stop-starting" point for members of the public.
- Staff awareness of the range of online public services increased in response to the range of questions asked.
- Up-to-date, searchable information was the crucial element in delivery of the information service.
- Each of the four portal sites identified during the training programme provided a useful starting point when searching for information.
- E-government services, which provided a separate searchable "forms" section arranged in alphabetical order were useful.
- Sites, which provide a keyword search, were more helpful than those, which did not.
- A "service finder" facility, searchable by local area, was useful.
- An email "comment" facility was used effectively to alert services of any information issues.

"Thank you for bringing www.coronerdublincity.ie to my attention; it is a very informative website. As a result of your feedback I have provided a link from the OASIS document on "Victims of crime and coroner" to the frequently asked questions section of www.coronerdublincity.ie"

Email sent to one of the project libraries. 06 April 2006

Websites used to answer questions:

- 43% www.citizensinformation.ie (portal site)
- 24% other e-government websites
- 13% www.dublincity.ie
- 12% www.gov.ie (portal site)
- 5% www.longfordcoco.ie
- 1% www.basis.ie (portal site)
- 1% www.reachservices.ie (portal site)
- 1% e-Government Directory

Pilot Programme Two – Public Internet Engagement Programmes

The research stressed the importance of developing approaches which showed the relevance of e-government to people's lives while enhancing the ICT (information communication technology) capacity of those at risk of exclusion. Two approaches were used:

- a. Scheduled online demonstrations and, in most cases, themed participative workshops. These assumed a basic knowledge of ICT and aimed to promote awareness of e-government content. These were delivered as a single workshop
- b. An ICT learning programme – E-government WEBSmart¹⁵ featuring examples of online public services and aimed at those with little or no computer experience.

Online demonstrations and participative workshops

Examples of Online demonstrations and participative workshops included:

Lost in Cyberspace, focused on how to search a range of e-government websites; **Culture Online**, which highlighted websites of national cultural organisations and public libraries; **Begin Your Family History** using online sources and websites for those interested in **Starting Your Own Business** or when approaching retirement.

The selection of content was critically important in engaging participant interest, criteria included:

- Selecting concrete examples of every day interest, e.g. transport timetables, library services and health and social welfare application forms,
- selecting content representative of the range of facilities e.g. search for information, print an item, fill-in a basic online form, order or pay for a service online,
- selecting local and cultural content with contrasting text and image material.

The following provide examples of online demonstrations and themed participative workshops. (Note insert the following as colour pieces)

¹⁵ WEBSmart was originally designed by an Internet Resident

Practical Example One – Longford Library Internet Familiarisation Workshops

Once a week, throughout the project duration, Longford County Library held basic Internet sessions. Members of the public learned how to browse and navigate websites and how to use email. Staff delivering the sessions used www.gov.ie and www.citizensinformation.ie and www.longfordcoco.ie and highlighted issues relevant to users such as retirement and local authority information.

- The workshops provided ongoing support to members of the public, using existing library resources, and
- Increased public recognition of the library and appealed to a wide audience,
- Repeat sessions were available so people could continue their learning.

Practical Example Two – Workshops with Irish Deaf Society Members, Cabra

During the project members from the **Irish Deaf Society** (IDS), Cabra attended hour-long taster workshops on computer basics and searching public sector websites featuring www.citizensinformation.ie and www.LifeSteps.ie websites. A follow-up session focused on www.gov.ie. A library staff member delivered the presentation and a tutor from the Irish Deaf Society “signed” for the duration of the events.

Benefits

- The workshops introduced participants to a range of online public services and enabled greater accessibility especially for those who did not normally use a PC.
- The workshops encouraged participants to join the library and use a range of services. Library staff observed that participants on repeat visits were more likely to engage with staff.
- Participants indicated a preference for library staff facilitated workshops because of level of guidance and support provided. Participants commented that they, also, enjoyed the practical “hands-on” element of the workshops.

E-government WEBSmart

WEBSmart provides a modular approach to develop an understanding of the basics of ICT, and using the Internet. It featured examples of public services online and registering for and using email. It was delivered over four workshops to members of the public in two of DCC's pilot programme branches.

Practical Example Three – Workplace learning

The Learning for Lifeskills programme was developed in cooperation with DCC's Training Officer as an approach to providing generic and transferable skills in the workforce and developing ICT readiness for sector specific training. This is identified as a requirement in the Social Partnership Agreement (2006-2015).

Aimed at employees located in DCC's Housing Maintenance Sections it was delivered over three workshops and included group learning and individual practice activities. Workshops took place in libraries nearest the participant's workplace providing an accessible, cost effective and valuable local authority training opportunity.

In the programme evaluation, 100% of those who completed questionnaires found the programme useful and were interested in attending further activities. The majority of respondents were non-traditional library users and the programme included an introduction to library resources. It was useful in reaching those identified as "hard-to-reach" in an adult education context. All participants were male.

"Friendly staff, relaxed atmosphere, informative course."

Participant who attended the Learning for Life Skills Programme

43 staff from Housing Maintenance Department and from cleaning services participated in the Learning for LifeSkills Programme during the pilot programme. It received ongoing support from DCC's partnership forum. Its roll-out continued in 2007, DCC's Training Officer has acknowledged this programme as providing a valuable contribution to DCC's training effort.

LifeSteps

The following preparation and delivery aids provided effective workshop experience for participants at the WEBSmart and Learning for LifeSkills workshops, they included:

- *LifeSteps Guides* Each participant received the *Internet Basics LifeSteps Guide* and other relevant subject guides,
- explanatory handouts including step-by-step practice examples,
- selection of public service website addresses,
- computer screen projector and laptop PC.

LifeSteps consists of a website www.LifeSteps.ie and a series of printed guidebooks on how to use the Internet for various life events. The project was funded by the Information Society Fund through the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and is aimed at those who have not used the Internet before or who use it infrequently.

- Library staff from local authorities around the country researched and wrote the guides in simple, jargon-free language. They chose 23 different topics for the guides based on the range of questions they received from members of the public,
- Topics covered include: *Government Information, Buying a Home, Internet Basics, Retirement, Family History* and *Finding a Job*,
- Each guide contains a glossary and a step-by-step “how-to” section such as booking a flight on the Internet, purchasing goods online, applying online for a driving test,
- LifeSteps guidebooks are branded with distinctive colours, logo and illustrations.

“The Information given to us was very helpful for independent research – simple language makes steps appropriate and user friendly.” Participant at Ballyfermot Library workshop who used the *Research, Start your own Business, Government Information* and *Travel* LifeSteps Guides

Evaluation

A total of 308 people attended the familiarisation workshops and those who completed participative workshops (one or more) completed overvaluation questionnaires. 98% of those who completed questionnaires found the programme useful and comments emphasised the library as a relaxing non-completive learning environment.

Participant Profile

Over one-third of participants had either never used the Internet or used it once a month or less and the age group “65 or over” had the highest representation. This indicates the public library’s capacity to meet the needs of the “late adopter” group. Those in employment (fulltime and part-time) were the highest represented occupational group. This group included both skilled and unskilled workers who participated in the “Learning for Life Skills” workshops.

Members of the public with a disability participated in workshops in Ballyfermot (Ballyfermot RehabCARE and the Deaf Society, Cabra members). Also noted in Ballyfermot was a family approach to learning where, spouses and family members attend the workshops.

While almost half of the participants used the Internet once a week, they were unfamiliar with e-government services and responded that they had benefited from the sessions.

The following summarises learning points relating to this pilot programme.

- Regularly scheduled Internet workshops proved more effective in attracting attendees than “once-off” sessions. Themed workshops were useful as taster sessions when integrated with existing programming activities, such as the annual Start Your Own Business in Dublin’s Central Library.
- A participative approach was effective as it relied on adult learning principles, such the usefulness of demonstrating relevant examples, motivating participants by proving “hands on” practice opportunities Also important was engaging user with content by marching personal interests with relevant services.

- For members of the public with age-related sight, literacy, or dexterity issues, the following “easy-to-use” facilities assisted: large screen monitors, mouse with wheel, keyboards with enlarged key display, screen magnification, text to speech software, sound cards and head-sets to listen to spoken words¹⁶. Also useful is the software plug-in - Browsealoud¹⁷ textHELP which reads website information.
- This programme confirmed the developing role of library staff as facilitator, tutor, and trainer and knowledgeable in the online public services resources.

2007 Update

- The successful conclusion to the Branching Out negotiations, in DCPL, created the necessary conditions for a number of library staff (88 in DCPL) to train as WEBSmart tutors. A total of 412 members of the public participated in the four module WEBSmart programme in 2007 and an additional 575 participated in one-to-one appointment based tuition. The delivery of tuition in either group or one-to-one form is dependent on local resources (number of public access PCs and number of staff). One-to-one tuition was a viable option for branches in “two-person” branches.
- The upgrading of Internet facilities to broadband access, including Wi-Fi access, in DCPL and the replacement of public access PCs has enhanced the quality of experience in terms of a more reliable, error-free and increased practice time.
- The rollout of the Learning for LifeSkills continued, an additional 78 DCC staff participated in the programme. This included delivery of the programme via DCC’s Learning Bus to staff located in the Water Division section¹⁸.
- Building on the learning experience of the project, DCC received a grant aid from the ASC fund and from its Training Section to develop a digital learning facility in Ballyfermot Library. This provides both online and

¹⁶ The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government funded “access PCs” with enhanced facilities. See LSS3/02

¹⁷ <http://www.browsealoud.com/>.

¹⁸ Located in Liffey Works, Ballymore Eustace, Co. Kildare

software resources in adult basic education context, in ICT learning and in the creation of local area digital content.

Image Number 3 Here

Family History Electronic Resources Discussion Group in the Dublin City Library and Archive, Pearse Street. The group continued to meet after the conclusion of the research project.

“In the 1997 International Adult Literacy Survey, 25% of the Irish population were found to be at the lowest level of literacy.”

www.nala.ie

Pilot Programme Three – Motor Tax Online dedicated facilities

The research identified specific issues with the take-up of transaction services – paying or ordering a service online. This related to lack of interest – (generally age related), confidence in using credit cards online or lack of access facilities and skills to use them.

During the consultation phase of the project, stakeholders from the e-government sector expressed an interest in co-operating with public libraries to progress an e-government agenda. DCC's Motor Tax Department initiated a dedicated facility by sponsoring the introduction of Motor Tax Online, *which* met the following requirements:

- it extended access to those without Internet facilities,
- It provided convenient access to transactions which take minutes to complete online (no advance booking required),
- It provided a structured, managed and cooperative approach to the introduction of this service,

This programme was developed as follows:

- Dublin City's Motor Tax Department sponsored the introduction of four public access PCs dedicated to paying motor tax online in the Central Library, Cabra, Ballyfermot and Pearse Street Libraries.
- Members of the public had "walk-in" access to the Motor Tax Online site www.motortax.ie. There was no need to pre-book computer use,
- Members of the public could print, free of charge, the transaction confirmation screen,
- Staff from Motor Tax delivered familiarisation sessions on the service to Library staff,
- Motor Tax and Libraries undertook a range of activities to promote and market the service, e.g. bookmarks and posters, alert message in motor tax renewal notices and a local radio advertisement,
- DCPL's Systems staff restricted PC access to the Motor Tax Online service only.

Security and Privacy Issues

Security is a feature of transaction systems. E-Government providers take stringent measures to ensure public confidence in systems to prevent unauthorised use as evidenced in service security policies. Privacy relates to an individual's expectation that their personal details remain confidential such credit card details. The project team developed *Good Practice Guidelines for Staff on E-Government Transactions* to support members of the public using e-government transactions. Additionally, if necessary, public libraries could create a semi-private space by using privacy screens for computers.

For some members of the public, lack of a credit card, or fear of using one online, poses a barrier to using e-government services. A possible solution lies in credit or laser card technology – the 3V Voucher that is a disposable 16-digit VISA debit card. Members of the public pre-pay a specific amount. Transactions can be made up to the monetary value of the voucher¹⁹.

Monitoring Take-up

While offered as a self-service facility, staff in the branches noted that some users requested information on "need to know" service essentials, such as PIN (Personal Identification Numbers), Insurance provider and policy number and payment methods accepted.

The following table tracks use of the PCs during the period of the project - February-May 2006. For transaction purposes, this captured sequential "hits" for each visit as far as the transaction confirmation page and screen capture method was applied on a current as opposed to retrospective basis.

Library	Feb 06	Ma r06	Apr 06	May 06	Total
Ballyfermot	02	06	03	09	20
Cabra	07	10	08	12	37
Pearse St.	18	16	01	07	42
Central Lib	12	16	12	33	63
	39	48	24	61	172

Note checking the situation for 2007.

¹⁹ <http://www.3v.ie> Note this needs to be checked

Promoting Awareness of E-Government through Public Libraries

“Centre staff provided the most effective means of promoting e-government to users, alongside referrals from staff in partner organisations and word of mouth.”

UK Online Centres: Supporting delivery of e-government services, Research Summary (2005) www.ufi.com

Building awareness of e-government and stimulating demand for services was a parallel activity throughout the project.

There are situations when people may not know what is on offer and how it could assist them. For e-government services there is a need to promote the availability of online services while also maintaining other communication channels: walk-in, telephone and postal.

The project team identified two methods to promote its message of e-government available through public libraries. These were:

- a **logo** to promote the message of the libraries as an access channel,
- a **storyline narrative in poster format**²⁰, to engage the
- interest of members of the public.

“e.gov at public libraries” logo

The project team commissioned the following logo to promote the message of public libraries delivering e-government.



The project team included the logo and a listing of relevant e-government services on library promotional material relating to programmed events e.g. *Parenting Week*, *Seachtain na Gaeilge* and *Start Your Own Business*. This logo is now included on all relevant promotional material.

Irish e-government usage rates increased by 6% from 2005 to 2006

Leadership in Customer Service: Building the Trust (2006)
www.accenture.ie

²⁰ Logo and storyline posters designed by Pennewstone Ltd., 25 Georges Street, Dublin 2.

Promotional Message - Storyline Approach

Telling a story is an engaging way to get someone's attention. The content must attract attention by telling a relevant, lively and memorable message.

The project team decided to use this approach in an experimental way and commissioned two storylines for poster distribution.

"You'd have to Laugh" and *"I love It!"* emphasised the convenient, range of practical services and ease of accessing e-government information at your local library.

Communication Channels

The project team used a range of channels to promote the message:

Go to Your Public Library to Use e-government Services.

These included:

- library communication channels, (see **Example Seven**)
- local community venues in each library catchment areas,
- citywide taxi shelters,
- local newspapers and local community radio,
- e-government service channels,

Local Community Venues

Library staff had long established contacts with community venues for distributing library publicity materials. Each library participating in the e-government project distributed the two storyline posters (A4 size) and leaflets to local community centres, churches, health centres and retail outlets.

The **Canadian Business Room** example identified the need for:

- a branded concept – e.g. *Government at Your Service*,
- and use of promotional material,
- and the need to promote public libraries as sustainable players in the delivery of e-Government public information and services. www.businessroom.ca/

City-wide Taxi Shelters

DCPL enlarged one of the storyline posters and placed copies in a number of taxi shelter community display panels. Dublin City Council owns panel display rights and the public libraries availed of the advertising option without cost to the project or to libraries. This was an effective example of a co-operative approach to promotion of common objectives.

Local Newspapers and Community Radio

Other promotional channels included a paid advertisement in local newspapers for Ballyfermot, Cabra and Pearse Street areas and on a community radio station, Dublin City Anna Livia FM. The effectiveness of a national radio channel was evident earlier in the year when the campaign promoting the *LifeSteps Guides* aired. It immediately triggered numerous enquiries to libraries from members of the public.

E-Government Service Channels

Through Dublin City's Motor Tax Department, Motor Tax Online I inserted an alert message about the library's Internet services into 70,000 customer renewal notices. The message included details of the four libraries with a dedicated www.motortax.ie service. It also emphasised that this service was additional to public Internet access service available throughout the city and county.

During the summer of 2006, the Revenue Commissioners used public libraries to promote the new PAYE On-Line service. Revenue distributed posters and a CD-ROM on how to use the service to public libraries countrywide.

Benefits and Lessons Learned

When members of the public approached staff with an information enquiry, staff asked them how they found out about the service. The following summarises responses and lessons learned.

- The majority of people said they found out about the service via the library - the library has its own communication channel and a quality service promotes itself.
- This was followed by word-of-mouth as the next most useful method. This can be expected, given that word-of-mouth tells about the personal experience of using a service. But it was useful to have it substantiated by user response.
- A fewer number said that they found out about the service via other sources such as An Garda Síochána (Ballyfermot). Building relationships with other community organisations can lead to referral business for the library.
- The poster method was more effective in promoting an event than promoting a specific service, and was marginally more effective in a rural than in an urban area.
- Using the channels of an e-government service was one the most effective ways of reaching a wider responsive audience. It is likely to be most effective if there is a specific message such as: Go to your Local Library to Renew Your Motor Tax - No Queuing.

**Pilot Programme 1:
Information Service-
How did you find out about the service?**

- 46% Library
- 33% Word of Mouth
- 19% Other
- 2% Poster/leaflet

**Pilot Programme 2:
Familiarisation sessions-
How did you hear about this session?**

- 64% Library Staff
- 17% Friend/Local Group
- 12% Other
- 7% Poster

Model for Public Libraries Delivering E-Government

A key outcome of the project is a model for public libraries providing value in the delivery of e-government services. The research and pilot programme findings have informed the development of this practical and proven model, which is relevant to the needs of the public.

Its three pillars are:

- provision of **Internet access**
- support for public use of e-government
- **promote** awareness of e-government through public libraries.

Internet Access

The public library's Internet service is the foundation stone of public libraries delivering e-government and provides an access method for members of the public who wish to use e-government services.

Support for Public Use of E-Government

Where access alone does not guarantee e-government use, the following support measures will assist those members of the public who for a variety of reasons do not use e-government services. The support measures include:

- library staff mediating an information service,
- approaches to develop independent public use of e-government,
- a dedicated e-government transaction service for Motor Tax Online.

Library staff is the key enablers of members of the public using e-government services. These support measures are scaleable, replicable and can be delivered according to local needs and requirements.

Promoting Awareness of E-Government through Public Libraries

A cooperative approach is the most effective way to promote awareness of e-government through public libraries. This can be achieved through partnership between e-government services and public libraries, which provides benefits to all participants.

Conclusions and Recommendations (To be rewritten)

Public libraries are "front door" to online public services. They provide "joined-up" delivery for local, national and EU government, across the range and extent of online public services. This builds on public recognition of libraries

as sources of government information

The national availability of the public library's Internet service, in a welcoming, safe and supportive environment, and its value-added activities position it at the heart of e-government delivery. It is a valuable asset in reducing the "digital divide" between those who can access e-government services, and those who cannot.

Access alone, however, does not guarantee e-government use. Some members of the public, for a variety of reasons, require personal support to use e-government. Library staff can fulfil this crucial and varied role in supporting public use of online public services.

Characteristics associated with the public library as the "Space for All" offer an inclusive, 'non-threatening' and 'non-competitive' learning environment for those who might otherwise be excluded. Its capacity to respond to the Internet learning needs of a diverse audience is signalled in this project.

A partnership arrangement between e-government services and public libraries provides a managed, co-operative and effective approach to the take-up of e-government in public libraries, which provides benefits to all participants.

The model of e-government delivery through public libraries is practical, replicable, and scalable to suit local service requirements, i.e. every library with an Internet service can deliver e-government regardless of physical size or resources.

Public libraries provide a viable solution to the challenge of achieving inclusive e-government and are key participants in its delivery.

Draft Conclusions and Recommendations

Identified during the consultation process as a source of government information, public libraries provide a viable solution to the challenge of achieving inclusive e-government.

Building on this profile, the project's pilot programmes demonstrated that public libraries can be the "front door" to e-government services by removing barriers to participation. Barriers identified in the research related to accessing, using and finding out about e-government services.

Recommendation One

Government at all levels should capitalise on the public library service as a national resource by working in partnership with it and by providing it with appropriate resources to deliver e-government.

The public library's Internet service is a valuable asset in reducing the "digital divide" between those who can access the Internet and those who cannot. This was established in an audit of library authorities' Internet provision and was endorsed by key stakeholder interviewees from the e-government sector. The research highlighted that this network can be further strengthened through the introduction of broadband Internet. Importantly, in the national audit City and County Librarians were emphatic about the role of public libraries delivering e-government services.

Recommendation Two

Public libraries should support members of the public in accessing e-government services by providing a quality Internet service. This should be enabled by the introduction of a broadband Internet connection where available (Check www.broadband.gov.ie for broadband services by location).

The research emphasised that access alone does not guarantee e-government use - an observation noted in Irish public policy reports. This was echoed in research on the international situation, which also highlighted the enabling role of library staff in supporting e-government use. Significantly, City and County Librarians ranked staff training as the highest service

development requirement and in response the project team developed, implemented and evaluated a training programme. The pilot programmes confirmed the enabling role played by library staff in supporting e-government use.

Recommendation Three

Realisation of a key role for public libraries in delivering e-government services requires implementation of an appropriate staff-training programme. The project's training resource offers such a programme and should be delivered in accordance with local service requirements.

Participant evaluation at the Internet familiarisation workshops was unanimous in identifying the public library as a supportive learning environment. The participant profile included those identified in the research as "late adopters of technology" and therefore at risk of being "digitally excluded". The evaluation process also revealed that the public library was responsive to needs of a diverse audience. This capacity can be developed by providing technology designed to support user needs identified during the

Recommendation Four

Public libraries should support members of the public in using e-government services, by providing equipment with enhanced "easy to use" features – software and hardware.

DCC's Motor Tax Department sponsored the introduction of dedicated PCs for the online transaction service www.motortax.ie. Using a cooperative approach, this joint venture exemplified how to effectively market and promote e-government service availability in a public library using existing channels. International practice suggested the use of a branded approach to the delivery of e-government through public libraries by developing a logo.

Recommendation Five

E-government services and public libraries should cooperatively promote the message: "Go to Your *Public Library* to Use *E-Government Services*".

The proposed model of e-government delivery through public libraries is practical, replicable, and scalable to suit local service requirements, i.e. every

library with an Internet service can deliver e-government regardless of physical size or resources.

The evidence suggests that the national availability of the public library's Internet service and its value-added activities can position it at the heart of e-government delivery.

Appendix One - E-Government Topic Preferences Identified through Research

Topic	Public Survey Response	Focus Group Discussion	Survey of City And County Librarians
Business Information	5 %	√	
E d u c a t i o n	1 8 %		
E m p l o y m e n t	1 8 %	√	√
E U i n f o r m a t i o n		√	
G r a n t s		√	
Health Information	1 3 %	√	√
Immigration		√	√
Legal Information	7%		
Local Information		√	√
Local Council	7%	√	
Maps		√	
Motor Tax		√	√
Political Information	5%	√	
Social Welfare	8%	√	√
Taxation	7%	√	

Appendix Two : Research Consultees and List of Project Reports

- Mr Stephen Walters, Principal Library Manager, Gateshead Council Library Service.
- Mr David Potts, Senior Network Adviser, The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council.

City and County Librarians

Seamus Butler, Elected Representative, Longford County Council,

Mary Clark, Dublin City Archivist, Dublin City Council,

Noreen Heslin, Head of IT, Longford County Council,

Conor Hegarty, Marketing Manager, Revenue Online Service,

Joe Horan, Manager, South Dublin County Council,

Maire Igoe, Senior Executive Officer, Dublin City Council, Motor Tax Department,

Thomas Murray, Chairperson of Dublin City IMPACT Trade Union Branch,

Mick O'Hanlon, Assistant Principal, Manager of Revenue IT Communications,

Donal Rice, ICT co-ordinator, National Disability Authority,

1. *Report on the International Situation* (February 2005)
2. *Survey of City and County Librarians* (May 2005)
3. *Report on Key Stakeholder Interviews* (May 2005)
4. *Report on Public Participation and Consultation* (August 2005)
5. *Summary Report on Staff Training Requirements* (August 2005)

6. *E-Government Directory: Finding Information Using E-Government Websites* (September 2005)
7. *E-Government WEBSmart: A Programme on Developing Internet Skills using E-Government Content.*(January 2006)
8. Staff Training Resource (September 2005)
9. *Mid-term Progress Report on Pilot Programmes: Information Service and Familiarisation Sessions* (February 2006)
10. *Guidelines for Library Staff on E-Government Transactions* (March 2006)
11. *Public Familiarisation Evaluation Form* (November 2005)
12. *Information Service Monitoring Form* (November 2005)

Appendix Three: List of Referenced Sources (Updated)

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The Public Library Research Programme

The Public Library Research Programme assists local authorities in carrying out public library research. The Programme is co-funded by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and Local Authorities, and managed by An Chomhairle Leabharlanna/The Library Council.

- **Public Library Research Committee**
- Dave Corcoran, Assistant Principal, representing the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government
- Norma McDermott, Director, representing An Chomhairle Leabharlanna/The Library Council
- Fionnuala Hanrahan, County Librarian, Wexford County Library, representing the Library Association of Ireland
- Professor Michael Casey, Department of Library and Information Studies, National University of Ireland, Dublin
- Chair: Annette Kelly, An Chomhairle Leabharlanna/The Library Council

Executive Secretary: Susan O'Toole, An Chomhairle Leabharlanna/the Library Council