"How's my profile?" An exploration of community profiling in Public Library Authorities

A study in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Librarianship

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Abstract

This study aims to explore how Public Library Authorities are using community profiling. To create an overall picture of how authorities view community profiling, the study investigates why it is used, how it is used to influence service developments and what problems are being experienced.

The study used questionnaire responses from 53 Library Authorities to explore general trends in use. Four interviews were carried out: two with authorities that have produced a Reference Community Profile and two that use community profiling as part of an integrated strategy.

The study highlights differences in effective use between authorities with and without a community profiling policy. Having a policy was found to have several benefits, these include: increasing libraries' ability to reduce social exclusion, improving the ability to plan effectively and enabling libraries to measure and improve performance.

The study concludes that community profiling policies are most effective when adapted to suit an individual authority. Effective community profiling requires supportive structures and formal procedures for it to be associated with successful service developments. The duplication of effort in producing a Reference Community Profile can be significant and should be avoided where possible. Recommendations for further research are also identified.

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Acknowledgements

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background to dissertation

The interest in the subject of this dissertation, Community Profiling, originally developed during the author's trainee year. Working in a busy public library the link between service provision and a noticeably rapid change in community diversity- in both need and social group- begged the question of how libraries record and respond to these changes. The research element of the course, provided by this dissertation, has allowed this interest to develop further. Initial research found this to be a valid subject to study for three main reasons:

1. Many library authorities have sited community profiling as a process that should be developed:

   Manchester Library and Information Service, Annual Library Plan 2002-2003
   '3.4.2 Priority Actions… community profiling exercise'

   Walsall Libraries and Heritage, Annual library Plan 2002
   '6.1 Areas for Development…user profiling'

   Medway Council, Public Library Position Statement 2003 (Draft)
   '2.3.2 Constraints and Challenges…lack of community profiling'

   Lewisham Library Service, Annual Library Plan 2001

'4.5 Quality Assessment…Lack of regular community profiling and use of management information to inform stock selection and promotion.'

Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, Annual Library Plan 2002-2003

'6.1 Analysis of Strengths, Areas for Development, Opportunities and Threats…*Areas for development…community profiling'*

2. The literature concerning community profiles within public libraries is limited. This, in itself would indicate the exact opposite; that community profiling in public libraries is not a topic currently in question. However, the citation of community profiling in Annual Library Plans, Reports and Statements suggests that there is a demand for community profiling literature. The literature presented in the dispersed review that relates directly to community profiling in public libraries is sparse and was published in the 1980's, it takes a traditional approach to community profiling that considers quantitative population demographics. Much of the literature on community librarianship was useful but was also from the 1970' and 80's. Other literature that was found comes from lateral subjects such as social inclusion, partnership working and information about community identity.

3. The proposed revision of Public Library Standards is expected to suggest the development of community profiling in public libraries:

(Advisory Council on Libraries, 2004)

It is important to make clear that the term *community profiling,* within this study, refers to information gathered about a community to inform decisions about service development. It does not refer to Community Information gathered for use as a public information resource.

1.2 Aims and objectives

The aim of this research is to explore the current practices used by library authorities throughout the UK to profile their communities. Analysis of the research will then identify Best Practice and provide recommendations for library authorities interested in developing their use of community profiling.

To achieve these aims specific objectives have been identified, these are:

- **To explore why libraries are using or not using community profiling.**
- **To identify the community profiling methodologies being used.**
- **To explore how community profiling is being used to influence service development.**
- **To identify problems associated with community profiling.**
- **To provide recommendations for the implementation of best practice and further research.**

1.3 Outcomes

During the research process a key concern has been to relate findings to the day-to-day tasks of the library on a frontline level. It is hoped that this study will provide recommendations that can realistically be considered by any authority that wishes to develop community profiling. It is acknowledged that library authorities have differences that mean generalisations cannot always be made. However, the concept of the recommendations provided in this study is that they act as areas for consideration by library authorities interested in community profiling.

1.4 Community Profiling: The wider context

It is an accepted belief that the public library has its own community. Ideally, that community values its library and shows pride in it by making use of all the available services. This is, as suggested, an ideal more often than a reality.

The modern public library is set in a society that, for many reasons that lie beyond this study, requires its traditional services less frequently (McCarthy, 1994). Community demographics and characteristics are changing at increasing speed. The modern public library can no longer rely on its more traditional, loyal and 'educated' users. However, the public library is still needed as much as it ever was. Unfortunately, in a changing society- a changing community- those who need it most may be those with the smallest voices, the lowest expectations and the least knowledge about the information that they have a right to access.

According to some, the modern public library is in 'continued long-term decline' (Coates, 2004) and has 'been neglected' (Audit Commission, 2002). Its once relied upon clientele have died or deserted. It has no option; it must reach out to its community and draw in new users, users who in fact may need it more than previous users ever did.

The fact that the existence of public libraries is in question more than ever before is one reason for them to reach out into their community to find out who potential users could be and what they need. Another, of course, is that it is required of them if they are to retain their integrity as a service for all. Libraries pride themselves on being available to everyone. They still cherish the ideal of being 'the heart of the community' (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2003). With many communities rapidly changing it is essential that public libraries are able to find out who their community actual is and what it needs so that it can both provide and survive.

To draw in new users, and to re-engage lapsed users, requires knowledge about their needs, information habits and opinion of the library service. Commercial organisations would consider market research integral to their success in identifying customers and providing a service that is used time and time again (National Women's Business Center, 1997). To the commercial world, market research is a continual process that enables constant re-evaluation and development of services and quality. There is every reason for public libraries to view their own success in the same way: without knowledge of their potential market they may be blindly running a service that is irrelevant to the needs of their communities.

Community profiling is, for public libraries, a more appropriate form of market research. Community profiling may involve processes of different kinds. There is not necessarily one successful way to profile a community. Although many methods of community profiling will involve gathering statistics concerning various social, economic and educational demographics some methods, may also consider more qualitative methods of gathering data. What is important in community profiling is

that, whichever methods are used, profiles are kept up to date and are part of a

process that utilises the information that is found.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 The history and development of community profiling

While evidence of the first 'walkabout' by a librarian was recorded in 1919 (Redfern, 1989), Dolan (1989) suggests that the concept of community profiling arose in the 1970's. This coincided with the idea of *community librarianship.* Authorities acknowledged the need to provide stock that was more suitable to the requirements of specific communities and used community profiling as a means to justify requested funding. As a result, community profiling was developed as a way of gaining specialist knowledge about libraries' communities.

In the early 1980's, as resources diminished, the interest in community profiling as a tool for planning and service provision to specific communities decreased. As Martin (1989) suggests, authorities believed in 'value for money by making services directly relevant to the needs of the mass of ordinary citizens'. The money previously available to accommodate specific groups of users had to be used elsewhere to ensure core services could still be provided.

In the late 1980's centralised book selection was introduced which was accompanied by the standardisation of opening hours. Martin (1989) observed that:

'The service had come to acquire a somewhat formal and bureaucratic image…more suited to the 1930's than the 1980's.'

Although standard opening hours made the administration of staff cover and associated tasks easier, Martin argues that libraries became restricted by the

structure of the organisation, local government, profession and by the physical building; decreasing the library authority's authority to respond to specific needs.

These trends continued for the next 10 years. Centralised book selection is still used today and is, in some cases, even being handed over to book suppliers. However, the issue of community profiling is resurfacing. Reports (*Cultural Diversity Statement,* Resource, 2003 and *Revision of Public Library Standards*, Advisory Council on Libraries, 2004) have cited community profiling and public consultation as areas for development in today's libraries. There is a growing expectation that the library should take responsibility for social inclusion and the regeneration of struggling communities. It is inferred that community profiling can assist in these targets.

2.2 Who are producing community profiles?

2.2.1 Community Librarians

Redfern (1989) suggests that successful community librarianship has so far depended upon 'inventive, imaginative and dedicated individuals working without formal guidelines or procedures'. Dolan (1989) agrees with this suggesting that community liaison is one of the most encouraged but least defined areas of work for local librarians. The Department of Recreation and Libraries (1989) provides an example of a community profile template used by community librarians as a tool for producing a community profile. Using the template the librarian not only collected data but also interpreted it by providing a descriptive analysis of the statistics.

In many library authorities this traditional method of community profiling still exists. However, Redfern (1989) suggests that community librarianship should be about working *with* the community to bridge the gap not just *assessing* the community. This suggests that although a Community Profile, as a mere document,

may enable the librarian to assess the community, without further consultation *with* the community, the librarian is unlikely to get to know the real needs of the community or establish important links with the community.

2.2.2 The Local Council

Many Local Councils are interpreting census statistics and making the information available on websites and Intranets. While this is produced, in some way, by most Local Authorities, there area relatively few who have interpreted statistics by ward or smaller.

However, it was virtually impossible to find Local Council sites that had added the additional information that departments within the council collect to this profile. All the sites identified, simply used Census information to create a Community Profile. Considering that many Council sites also have Community Information portals it is possible a wider Community Profile could be created and made publicly available. Information such as the number of schools, doctors, leisure facilities, transport links etc have potential to be included by combining Census information with other information. So, while in the future, it may be possible for the statistical element of community profiling to be done entirely by the Council who then disseminate it to all who wish to use it, this is not currently happening with any uniformity. In addition, many Council sites had not updated their statistics to include the 2001 census details and were relying on information from 1991 for their profiles.

2.2.3 Organisations in partnership

Despite the evidence suggesting a general lack of community profile development by Local Councils, an example of good practice was found in Devon County Council. They are in the process of producing a *District and Community Profiling Template*. The report, outlining the project, highlights their use of

consultation with agencies to identify key indicators that should be used to build a picture of local communities. They suggest that:

> 'Partnership working and the involvement of local people in community planning is key to the way we work together to respond to the complex challenges we face. A basic building block for success is a sound, shared understanding of the issues facing the communities of Devon.'

(Maconachie, 2001)

They describe their project as:

> 'A multi-agency framework for providing profiling information via the Internet.'

(Maconachie, 2001)

Accessing the community profile website (http://www.devon.gov.uk/profiles/homepage2.html) shows that a variety of information is available at ward level. By asking key stakeholders in service planning what information is needed they have identified key areas for further investigation. They have then taken it upon themselves to be responsible for providing this information to anyone who needs it.

Examples of using partnerships to build effective community profiles can also be seen within public/ private partnerships. *ComPaSS* (http://www.compassunit.com/default.asp) is an organisation comprised of a variety of organisations and agencies within Northamptonshire. It exists to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour. By producing detailed information that includes profiles by: Area, Crime, Risk, Offender, Victim, Disorder and Impact, they share information

with member organisations to inform planning that will help make communities safer. Although this particular organisation produces crime and anti-social behaviour profiles it is easy to see how this type of initiative could be taken advantage of by libraries and could be extended to cover different subjects and different areas of the country.

2.3 The benefits of community profiling: social inclusion

The main argument in support of community profiling is that it gives the library a clearer idea of who their community is. This, in turn, can fulfill its social inclusion policy to a higher degree. In terms of the library's role in social inclusion this statement from Mary Cutler in 1896 quoted by Redfern (1989) is still relevant and ideal today:

'…catch the spirit of civic life and relate the library to the whole,
as the organs of the body. Specifically that [the librarian] may reach the
entire population…open up new avenues of communication between the
library and the people.'

This quote encapsulates what is still aimed for by libraries today; to provide a service that *reflects* the community, that is *used* by the community, that *provides* for the community, that *listens* to the community, that *responds* to the community and a service that provides a *common link* to different sections of the community.

Reports and Statements have been issued from a number of organisations suggesting the implementation of community profiling.
In 2003 Resource (now MLA (Museums, Libraries and Archives)) issued their Cultural Diversity Statement. It highlights Libraries' need to improve efforts to reflect their communities. They suggest that 'collections, activities and exhibitions fail to reflect the diverse backgrounds of communities served'. They also state that

'libraries often have inadequate information about their users and community profiling is poor'. This observation suggests that community profiling is something libraries should be making a conscious effort to address.

The Government published *Framework For The Future* in 2003 (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2003). It was formed to provide the Government's vision on public libraries. It provides Library Authorities throughout the country with a general guide so that services can be consistent and best practice can be shared. Framework For The Future's emphasis on social inclusion is clear:

'Libraries have a central role to play in ensuring everyone has access to the resources, information and knowledge they need – particularly those groups in society who will otherwise be disadvantaged…'

(Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2003)

The idea that libraries can also contribute to developing communities is also highlighted in the document:

'…measures to tackle social exclusion, build community identity, and develop citizenship.'

(Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2003)

Many library authorities have been using Framework For The Future as a guide for developing Library Plans and issuing Statements. Community profiling, in one form or another, can be considered integral in developing the socially inclusive vision suggested in Framework For The Future.

Within the last year a revision of *The Public Library Standards* has begun (Advisory Council on Libraries, 2004). Although this is currently a proposed revision the report is expected to explicitly integrate the suggested use of community profiling into Public Library Standards. The following sections are part of the proposed revision of *PLS1: Accessibility*:

> 'There is some concern that the current standards for accessibility do not reflect community need nor do they reflect the varying types of local authority area, and aspects of each area, adequately.'

> 'It is important that authorities have a clear and structured consultation strategy which should include user surveys. This consultation strategy would be used in any self assessment and external inspection process to evaluate the effectiveness of authorities use of consultation tools to make decisions to improve services and identify community needs.'

> 'The standard for PLS1ii should be reconsidered in the context of the recommendation on community profiles…'

Rather than suggesting that every library has a Community Profile, the proposed revision of Public Library Standards suggests that community profiling be used to help achieve wider targets such as increasing opening hours and reflecting community need.

2.4 Resources available to assist community profiling

'As far as library use is concerned, a number of authorities have described social class as the best indicator of issues. Those with a higher level of education and in non-manual occupations, can be expected to be public library users.'

(Department of Recreation and Libraries, 1986)

This introductory quote was taken from a handbook on community profiling. The handbook highlights that, surprisingly, this view was still held by some authorities in 1986. In contrast to this view, the notion behind community profiling toady is that libraries can use a range of methods to establish the actual needs of groups and individuals and to encourage new users through fact, consultation and observation.

2.4.1 Statistical data

As Lathrope (1989) suggests, community profiling is a mixture of 'hard information' from sources such as government departments and 'soft information' from local sources such as community groups, individuals or general observation. The hard information referred to is most likely to be in the form of statistics that give an overall picture of the geographic area concerned. This may include social, economic and educational information such as:

Population: *By gender*

 By age

 By ethnicity

 By religion

 By country of birth

Crime: *No. of reported crimes*

Rate per 1000

By type

By cost

By age

Deprivation: No. on benefits

By deprivation index

Household income

Education: Class size

Qualifications held

School absences

Exam results

Workforce skills

Social services: No. and type of users

Community safety: Road accidents

Fatalities

Local Economy: Employment trends

Unemployment rates

No. of business by type

Average income

Health: Alcohol and cigarette consumption

Obesity

Deaths by type

Housing: House prices

Homeless

Environment: Pollution

Water quality

(Devon County Council, 2000)

The above list is only a small sample of the type of statistical data that can be considered by organisations when creating Community Profiles. For each of the categories there will be subsets of information that may be helpful in identifying areas for service provision.

Much of the statistical data is available either directly from the Census or from sources that have synthesised Census data into a more meaningful collection of statistics. In terms of libraries, the Census is particularly appropriate as it collects a huge amount of information and it collects it by ward. However, this does not always help determine the specific needs of communities within catchment areas. Dolan (1989) suggests that these can vary enormously:

'The most exciting aspect of the inner city is the compression into relatively small areas of so many different kinds of people.'

Added value Census statistics are a valuable resource. Many of these are online and include Council Intranet's, National Statistics and Public/ Private Initiatives.

Not everything is available from Census data and there are organisations that hold statistical information that is more detailed. These include:

The Basic Skills Agency (http://www.basic-skills.co.uk/datasite/)
The Department for Education and Skills (www.dfes.gov.uk)

Depending on the intended use of community profiling, statistical information can also come from Library Management Systems. The library's own system should provide a substantial amount of information concerning current members. This is not

only useful for service development but for comparing with other statistics to establish whether the library's current users represent the local community accurately.

An additional source of information about current users (apposed to current members) is the *Plus Survey* which, as Defra (2002), explain:

'…is a sample survey designed to assess how and why people use libraries and also contains some information about the postcode of users.'

2.4.2 Qualitative data

When considering the idea of *the community* it is not enough to rely on statistical data. It is qualitative data that can provide the richest, and most relevant, information. Statistical data is a good starting point but it is qualitative data that needs to be gathered to see how, exactly, issues raised through statistics are affecting communities. Kinnell and Sturges (1996) suggest that the Public Library Service centres on the 'dominating and limiting facts of life such as unemployment and racism'. The presence of these can be partway established through statistics but it is through first hand information that libraries can find out the effects that these issues have on people and, in turn, confront the problem.

Qualitative data may involve identifying individuals that represent groups within the community, speaking with residents about specific issues, identifying existing partnerships within the community or creating descriptive data about the community based on a number resources. Beal (1985) also

highlights collecting staff impressions of a community as a good source of information. She illustrates the value of qualitative information clearly:

> 'Where there is a substantial number of young mothers the profiler should try to understand not only how this group fits in to the social and age structure of it's community, but how it spends its time, where it goes, how it exists, what it's life is like, what it contributes to the life of the community or what it could contribute if given the opportunity, what the community does and does not provide for it in the way of resources, facilities and quality of life.'

Beal demonstrates how much difference the qualitative approach to community profiling can make.

In a recent CILIP workshop on community profiling, it is suggested that any information gathered should not just be 'nice to know' but should be sought because it will help service planning[1]. In addition, they warn of not duplicating easily available data but to ensure that by collecting the information you are adding value. Considering these points, it could be suggested that statistical profiling is used to identify areas that would benefit from additional qualitative analysis.

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[1] Kendrick, T. (2003). *Community Profiling.* Presentation notes from CILIP workshop.

2.5 Associated constraints of community profiling

2.5.1 The definition of *community*

The idea of *the community* can, in itself, be ambiguous. As many sources quote, there are 94 different interpretations of the word *community*. An authority has the potential to consider who its community might be in many ways. Its consideration of community can make a difference to whether the library will successfully provide for those who may wish, at any point in their lives, to use it. Dolan (1989) provides us with categories of communities that library services consider when evaluating services, these have been paraphrased and include:

Territorial communities: Formed by artificial boundaries such as roads, canals and parks. Used to define catchment areas and decide locations or library buildings. These can be important for assessing physical access to the library.

Communities of attachment: These represent groups of an area that hold different attitudes and represent different degrees of community spirit or sense of belonging. They may be small or large communities.

Communities of interest: These can be widely dispersed over an area and represent common leisure interests, social concerns, ethnic, class [or cultural] origin, age, sex or educational ability.

Communities of action: These involve groups concerned with positive change for specific members of the community. They provide vital information and advice for members and work on their behalf.

Communities of need: These are harder to identify and don't necessarily equate to 'problems' in the community. They rely on a social awareness by the library that

identifies areas where the library can respond to a lack of provision of information or a service.

Objective communities: This describes people who are not the subject of provision but want to contribute to how other communities are provided for through debate and action.

It is a fact that communities will change, however, this is not a valid reason for libraries not to reflect their communities adequately. Redfern (1989) suggests that every generation perceives current changes to be faster than before. However, she suggests that changes have always been fast and it is our slow responses to them that make them appear so. Matorasso (1998) agrees with this stating that:

'Change is inevitable: we are characterised only by our response to it.'

In terms of libraries this suggests that the ability to respond to change is what will determine their future success.

2.5.2 The ability to provide a 'service for all'

As Kinnell and Sturges (1996) acknowledge, 'the library has always suffered from ill-informed concepts of the role of public libraries'. Many Libraries are unsure of their priorities as a service; is it for recreation, education or information? In the case of it being for all of these there is the question of how libraries can balance these so they can provide for the whole community. The issue of providing a service for the whole community can also be problematic. Within a community the 'dominating and limiting' facts of life can, as suggested by Kinnell and Sturges, be unevenly spread making a service that is specific enough to be useful but general enough to be inclusive difficult to provide.

There is an argument that libraries are perhaps becoming too inclusive for their own good. Community profiling insinuates that libraries want to provide for everyone in their community, however, as Greenhalgh et al (1995) suggest, the provision of peripheral services can sometimes 'displace core activities'. This displacing of core activities begs the question of whether the library that people recognise will disappear under a blanket of personalised services. Greenhalgh et al consider the pressures that are 'driving libraries to continually extend their scope' and goes as far to suggest that libraries are being exploited as they provide 'add-on' services at no extra cost to any one but themselves in an effort to provide and survive.

2.5.3 The ability to respond to findings

Another problem connected with community profiling is that authorities must be prepared for the outcomes. If they are willing to find out who their community is and what they need then they must also be willing to act upon those findings. This may be a problem if resources are scarce and no extra funding has been allocated in anticipation of what is found during community profiling. It may not even be a case of unavailable funding, as Sheffield's Ethnic Minorities Unit (2004)[2] acknowledge, the provision of services or resources to minority users may be hard because the availability of good quality books, translation services, equipment or skilled staff does not exist or is hard to access.

Historically, as suggested by Dolan (1989), community profiling has often resulted in outreach work that has not attempted to change the library itself. Outreach work that involves much of the community has often been seen as an

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[2] Dutch, M. (2004). *Sheffield Libraries, Archives, Information and Diversity.* Taken from a presentation at Burngreave Library, Sheffield.

'add-on' service rather than managing to integrate itself into the library's core-services where it may be needed. If community profiling is going to be considered as a valuable source of information for the formation of services the library must accept that what they find may mean re-considering core services. The library must be willing to open itself up to change.

Lathrope (1989) cautions that many efforts can be forgotten once completed and that to be effective community profiles must be regular and be associated with change. The static Community Profile document that is just "something that must be done" is of no value if it is full of information that will have little practical influence on service development.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 The research approach

As mentioned in the introduction, this study has tried to maintain a practitioner's stance. Streathfield's (2000) analysis that the worlds of research and practice are linked by a desire to help improve lives and build knowledge underpins the ideology behind this study.

This study takes both a qualitative and quantitative approach. The national survey conducted at the beginning of the research gathers predominately quantitative data that shows what is happening across the country regarding community profiling. This has been referred to by Kane (1985) as descriptive research. However, within the survey small amounts of qualitative data are also gathered, these are underpinned by a quantitative analysis.

The use of interviews and case studies allowed a qualitative approach to be taken. Kane (1991) refers to this as explanatory research as it explains the *how* and *why* of the quantitative data. For this study to be useful the details of the subject are what will produce the richest information that can be used to inform recommendations and develop an awareness for the nuances of the subject. Esterby-Smith et al (1991) add that qualitative data is also about understanding the meaning and significance that interviewees attach to issues, information, ideas and statistics. This implies that it is not enough to record what is said but that value is added to qualitative data by relating it to wider issues to establish links, theories and consequences for everyday practice. The uncovering of new lines of enquiry also relates to an *inductive approach* as discussed in the next paragraph. However,

Stake (1995) warns that, qualitative data can produce questions more often than answers. Subjectivity and interpretation can be more relevant in qualitative data as can, as Stake (1995) also suggests, the ability of the researcher to maintain purpose and integrity throughout.

Elements of the research contain characteristics of naturalistic enquiry. According to Robson's (1993) description of naturalistic enquiry this study uses this approach in a selection of ways, these include:

- Use of *tacit knowledge* as a legitimate addition to knowledge acquired through research. An example of this in this study is that the original concept of the dissertation subject was derived from the tacit knowledge that community profiling is a useful, yet under-used, tool. However, it was not felt that enough prior knowledge was had to justify this being a deductive approach where the tacit notion that community profiling was under-used became a hypothesis.

- Use of an *inductive approach* as a way of allowing the subject to be more freely explored. As Glaser and Strauss (1967), sited by Esterby-Smith (1991), acknowledge, this approach also encourages the use of grounded theory in which theories emerge from the data. Grounded theory is closely linked with the constant comparative method (also known as *progressive focusing* (Stake, 1995) and *emergent design* (Robson, 1993). The constant comparative method allows the researcher to develop the themes of the subject through the gathering of data. This is particularly applicable to this study as it is through the methods of investigation that knowledge about the subject has been acquired. This has then affected the lines of enquiry of subsequent data gathering methods such as interviews. This inductive

approach allows the nuances and details of the subject to emerge from the data rather than proving or disproving a particular theory as in a deductive approach.

- Use of *idiographic interpretation* to interpret data. Robson (1993) explains this as interpreting data in terms of a particular case rather than applying 'law-like' generalisations. This is relevant in this study as community profiling is carried out in different ways by all library authorities making it difficult to directly compare cases. Robson (1993) also associates this with *tentative application* as this refers to hesitancy in making broad generalisations of the data. Esterby-Smith et al (1991) state that:

> 'Theory should be analytical enough to make general-
> isations but it should also be possible for people to relate
> the theory to their own experiences.'

Much of the richer data in this study comes from individual interviews and as these cases are hugely variable it would be invalid to conclude with generalisations that are too broad to allow for variations in organisations.

3.2 Methods of investigation

The methods of investigation used for this study were:

1. A literature review

2. An on-line discussion board

3. Questionnaires

4. Interviews

5. Case studies

Kane (1985) acknowledges that each research technique has the potential to obtain information that only it can yield. However, it is also acknowledged that individual methods can serve to reinforce each other. The using of multiple techniques is known as *triangulation* and works by analysing the same data through different strategies. Esterby-Smith et al (1991) add that triangulation is important as the strength of every method is flawed in some way.

Whichever method is used to research the subject the question of *validity* and *reliability* is important. Bannister and Mair (1968), as sited by Esterby-Smith et al (1991), define validity as 'the capacity of a test to tell us what we already know' and reliability as an assumption that 'the same information will be produced if the same questions are asked more than once of the same person'. Robson (1993), in addition, states that to be valid the study must be thorough, honest and unbiased; it must not select evidence that supports a particular case or opinion.

3.2.1 Literature review
Choice of method

A literature review is an important preliminary step in producing successful research. It allows the researcher to establish whether the topic of study is worth investigating and helps to form an overall picture of what themes are involved in the chosen topic. Clough and Nutbrown (2002) call this 'locating the positionality' of the research. In addition to establishing a research context, it provides the researcher with initial resources and references from which a preliminary investigation of the topic can be made. It establishes whether previous research has been carried out in the same or related subject and as a result can affect the topic itself or the context in which the study is produced. As well as being particularly important in the preliminary research stages, the literature review is a valuable method to use throughout the study. As new information is gained and new themes emerge it is

both sensible and effective to continue with a literature review, this is particularly

relevant in this study where an inductive approach has been used and a constant

comparative method undertaken.

Procedure

The dissertation proposal provided an ideal opportunity to perform a

preliminary literature review. This, alongside discussions with the study supervisor,

helped to focus the research into a manageable and relevant area. Initial searching

of library catalogues, journal databases, and of the Internet established a need for

lateral thinking, as there were few references to the use of community profiling in

public libraries.

As highlighted, the literature available on community profiling in public libraries

was extremely limited. This lead to 'reading around the subject' and so issues such

as social inclusion, the meaning of community, community librarianship and the use

of community profiles by other organisations were considered.

Limitations of the literature review

It must be acknowledged that, within this particular study, much of the

literature has been used to provide a background to the topic rather than to

illuminate any detail concerning current practice. Community profiling in public

libraries was last popular in the early 1970's and so the limited literature that was

found was quite dated and was, in some respects, irrelevant to the complexity of

today's communities. The lack of information regarding community profiling was,

indeed, a limitation in itself.

3.2.2 On-line discussion list (Appendix A)

Choice of method

To directly ask professionals within the library sector what their experiences of community profiling were was felt to be a convenient method of gaining an overview of the subject within a practical context. It was also considered to be a useful indicator in establishing how aware professionals are of the subject. This method was used early in the study and was also useful in providing contacts that were used later in the research.

Procedure

The JISCMAIL service provided by CILIP was used to post a message about the dissertation topic. The service works by posting the message on the on-line discussion board as well as sending it to individuals' e-mail addresses. As this was done in the early stages of the dissertation the emphasis was on establishing contact with people who had experience of community profiling in public libraries.

The number of responses was disappointing as there were only five. However, they did provide an idea about what is understood by the term community profiling. The issues raised also confirmed that the themes I had already chosen to pursue within the study were relevant.

Two respondents maintained contact and were integral in the provision of interviews used in the research so, although the response rate was low, the information received as a result was highly valuable.

Limitations of the on-line discussion board

The information was posted before an awareness of the importance of a sound methodology was learned. The way the message is written portrays the researcher as having their own opinion about the use of community profiling thus ignoring Robson's (1993) suggestion that research must be unbiased and must not select evidence that supports a particular case.

Although the particular mailing list used targeted an appropriate population and so takes advantage of a convenient sample, it was not always clear of the authority of the responses. This made it particularly important to assess each reply for it's validity rather than assigning any significance to the number of responses or drawing any conclusions about authorities from the responses of individuals.

3.2.3 Questionnaire (Appendix B)

Choice of method

As the first step in gathering primary data, questionnaires were an economical way of gathering a significant amount of quantitative data. They could then be used throughout the dissertation to inform lines of enquiry and provide general statistics concerning the current status of community profiling. As Milne (1999) highlights, questionnaires are standardised, each respondent receiving the same information, and so can be more objective than interviews, ideal for gathering factual data. The questionnaires also provided an ideal opportunity to establish contacts for use further on in the dissertation. As this study used a constant comparative method making contacts was essential for subsequent interviews.

Designing the questionnaire

It was crucial that the content of the questionnaire was useful and enlightening. As Thietart et al (2001) state, once the questionnaire has been sent out you cannot 'backtrack', making careful planning very important.

The questionnaire was aimed at management level, as the answers would require the respondent to speak on behalf of the organisation. This meant questions had to be factually lead rather than asking for opinions. The questionnaire was designed by examining the aims and objectives to ensure that relevant questions were asked. Esterby-Smith et al (1991) suggest that management personnel may be more guarded about providing both time and answers. In this respect a structured approach was favoured over the semi-structured to minimise the time needed to complete the questionnaire. The number of questions was kept to ten with only two requiring open-ended answers. Answers were in the form of *tick boxes*. As mentioned, this questionnaire was not interested in opinion and so a *likert scale* was not considered.

Procedure

Considering the population of any study is important as it determines what is asked, how it is asked and how valid and reliable responses are likely to be. In this case the population was all library authorities in the UK (including Northern Ireland and Scotland). An *opportunity sample* was used in that library authorities with known e-mail addresses were contacted. Those without a known e-mail addresses were not considered. The total number of library authorities contacted was 201.

Questionnaires were sent via e-mail attachments. This was considered to be the most appropriate method. Schonlau et al (2001) site low cost and almost

instantaneous delivery as advantages of the e-mail questionnaire. In addition the study supervisor already held an established list of e-mail addresses, this provided opportunistic access to the population concerned. Schonlau et al also suggest that e-mail questionnaires do not necessarily show any greater response rate than postal questions. However, considering the low cost and time efficiency, this approach was still considered to be most appropriate.

The questionnaire was initially e-mailed on July 1st with a reminder e-mail being sent two weeks later. Responses were slow at first but the total number of valid responses was 53, this gave a response rate of 26.4%.

The questionnaires were analysed using *SPSS 12.01* software. Data was inputted as questionnaires were received so as to avoid monotony and margin for error.

Limitations of questionnaires

Ambiguity over terminology and even concepts can be a common problem in questionnaires (Clough and Nutbrown, 2002). This should be considered in the design process and is a benefit of piloting the questionnaire before it is circulated.

Although the questions asked were to determine fact rather than opinion, it cannot be assumed that results always reflect this. Consideration should be made as to whether the answers given truly reflect the reality of the organisation or whether they have been filtered through a subjective perception of what that reality is. This highlights the benefit of triangulation to minimise flaws in reliability.

Flaws in the design of a questionnaire also raise questions about validity and reliability. Providing a list of possible options may be too suggestive in some

circumstances. Additional information was sought for some questions as a way of adding credibility to answers that relied on ticking suggested options.

One of the disadvantages of using e-mailed questionnaires, as suggested by *Bizhelp24* (2004), is that ambiguities cannot be explained, questions may be returned incomplete and technical faults may hinder sending and receiving. Other considerations are that e-mail addresses may be out of date, the addressee may no longer work there or the recipient's knowledge of the subject may not be enough to efficiently forward the message to the correct person. All of these were experienced during this study but on reflection, e-mailing questionnaires would still be considered the better option given limited time and resource.

3.2.4 Interviews

Choice of method

Many authors cite interviews as an opportunity for the researcher to 'probe deeply' (Esterby-Smith et al (1991), Thietart (2001), Kelley (1999)). In addition, Kelley (1999) suggests that a particular advantage of an interview is that that it can uncover underlying motives for decisions and opinions. Another advantage of the interview, as suggested by Kane (1985) is that ideas and questions can be clarified and there is opportunity to explain concepts and information. There is also the opportunity, if in the interviewee's work environment, for documentary evidence or examples to be used to explain answers.

Procedure

A total of five interviews were held altogether: One was a telephone interview, two were part telephone followed up by structured questions that were e-mailed and two were face-to-face interviews which were, ultimately, used as case studies. The interviewees had been identified through questionnaire responses and through prior

knowledge of the library authority's use of community profiling. Five interviews are not enough to illuminate all the nuances of the subject that an interview has potential to reveal. However, many respondents from the questionnaires were not free for interview until August, it was felt that this would leave insufficient time for analysis. The decision was made to choose interviewees that were both convenient and representative of different aspects to community profiling.

The telephone interview

This was used on a Librarian who had produced a traditional Community Profile. It was an impromptu interview but explored the interviewee's experience of producing a community profile. Because the interview was not pre-arranged it had no formal structure. General questions were asked about what was thought to be relevant considering this person's experience of community profiling. This contact was made through, what Robson (1993) calls 'snowball sampling'; one informant recommends another who recommends another and so on.

The telephone/ e-mail interviews **(Appendices C and D)**

On initial telephone contact with each of these interviewees the purpose of the dissertation was explained. One interviewee suggested that, as they knew little about the subject and had limited time, that an e-mailed list of questions might be best. A structured list of questions was sent that were relevant to the interviewees relationship with community profiling. The other was originally scheduled as a face-to-face interview. However, extenuating circumstances meant that this had to be re-arranged as an e-mailed set of structured questions. In each case a telephone conversation was used to establish a context for the e-mailed questions and to assess whether further correspondence would be relevant. In both cases the e-mailed questions were structured, however, the questions were specific to each

individual's experience of community profiling and so they were not sent the same set of questions.

<u>The face-to-face interviews</u>

These were carried out on the 28th and 29th of July. A semi-structured approach was taken as the objective was to explore the circumstances in which community profiling was used within that particular organisation. Focus questions were used to ensure that the interview did not digress. Kane (1985) suggests that broad questions are used to gain detailed knowledge about the subject. Phrases such as 'Tell me about…' and 'Explain…' were used to open out the discussion. General findings from the questionnaires were also used as points for discussion. Follow up e-mails were used to clarify specific issues.

Considering that these two face-to-face interviews explored the authorities' use of community profiling in more detail they were used to form case studies.

In each of the cases the method of note taking, rather than using a Dictaphone, was employed. Although, as Thietart et al (2001) suggest, taking notes can detract from the discussion it was felt that the extensive time for transcribing and the unease of interviewees that using a Dictaphone can create outweighed the disadvantages of note taking.

The notes were written up along with additional information from memory as soon as possible to ensure as much accuracy as possible.

Limitations of interviews

Despite the disadvantages of using a Dictaphone it is acknowledged that this could have provided more reliable information. The ability to quote directly from an

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interviewee can make the evidence more credible. It was also found that using a semi-structured approach allowed interviewees to sometimes digress too far into related issues. This used valuable time and was often hard to recognise as not being appropriate. Kane (1985) suggests that the interviewer can influence the interviewee in many sub-conscious ways. The experience of interviewing confirmed that it is harder to not influence answers or project personal opinions than was anticipated.

3.2.5 Case studies

Choice of method

The main advantage of using a case study, as Robson (1993) highlights, is that it provides the research with a real life context. A process or idea (in this case community profiling) can be explored alongside realistic issues such as funding, staffing, organisational culture, policies and everyday problems. As Kelley (1999) suggests, case studies can allow a narrative to be explored in a factual manner.

Procedure

There were two case studies. One was chosen in response to the questionnaire they provided and one was chosen because of existing knowledge of their use of community profiling. Because each of the case studies used community profiling in different ways an exploratory approach was used to study both cases. Case studies were explored using face-to-face interviews. Details of each of the case studies are included below. Details that may identify the cases are not included due to confidentiality. See 2.2.4b *face-to-face interviews* for details on how the interviews were undertaken.

Case 1

This authority is based in Yorkshire and serves around 512,000 people (National Statistics, 2001) from within its authority. There are 29 wards within the authority which cover an area of 142 square miles.[3]

Case 2

This authority is also base in Yorkshire and serves around 715,400 people (National Statistics, 2001) from within its authority. There are 33 wards within the authority which cover an area of 217 square miles.[4]

Limitations of case studies

As a research method, Robson (1993) draws attention to the fact that case studies are questionable in their ability to provide generalisations. Stake (1995) warns that case studies require integrity on the part of the researcher. Concentration was needed during the case study interviews not to flatter the ideas and strategies used by the library authority too much in case, during analysis, criticisms were formed.

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[3] Information provided by the Authority's Library and Information Service's enquiry service.
[4] Information provided by the Authority's Library and Information Service's enquiry service.

Chapter 4: Why libraries are using community profiling

4.1 Introduction to the results

In total, 201 questionnaires were sent out. Barring technical problems, absent staff and human error, every library authority in the UK (including Scotland and Northern Ireland) with a known e-mail address received one questionnaire. In total 69 questionnaires were completed and returned successfully. However, 14 of these were received after the deadline that was set to allow for analysis and two were returned blank. This brings the total number of valid questionnaires received to 53, a response rate of 26.4%.

Although some generalisations may not be appropriate in this study without further research of examples of community profiling, it will allow subsequent questions to be raised and, in triangulation with qualitative data may highlight general patterns, trends and examples of good practice.

As mentioned in the methodology, five interviews in total were carried out. Two of these interviews were a way of studying, in more detail, two library authorities which were used as case studies. They will be referred to from here on as *case 1* and *case 2*.

This chapter attempts to give an overview of why library authorities are using community profiling.

Using questionnaire results it will show:

How many authorities use community profiling

How many authorities have a community profiling policy

What the reasons are for having or not having a policy

Using information from interviews, case studies and questionnaires, it gives detailed reasons behind the use of community profiling for:

Social inclusion

Service planning

Performance management

Other reasons

4.2 How many library authorities use community profiling?

During the research process it was anticipated that there would be some ambiguity as to what was meant by *community profiling*. While some authorities would be familiar with it as a description of the process used to collect information about a community, others may only understand it in it's traditional context as the document, or static object, that is *The Community Profile.* For this reason it was important to establish whether library authorities were gathering information about their community regardless of their understanding of the term *community profiling*. For this reason it is important to see early on the number of authorities that are profiling their communities on some level.

Figure 4.2 shows which resources are being used by authorities with a community profiling policy, without one and with one under development. The bar chart shows the percentage of authorities that are using the named resource.

The resources Libraray Authorities are using
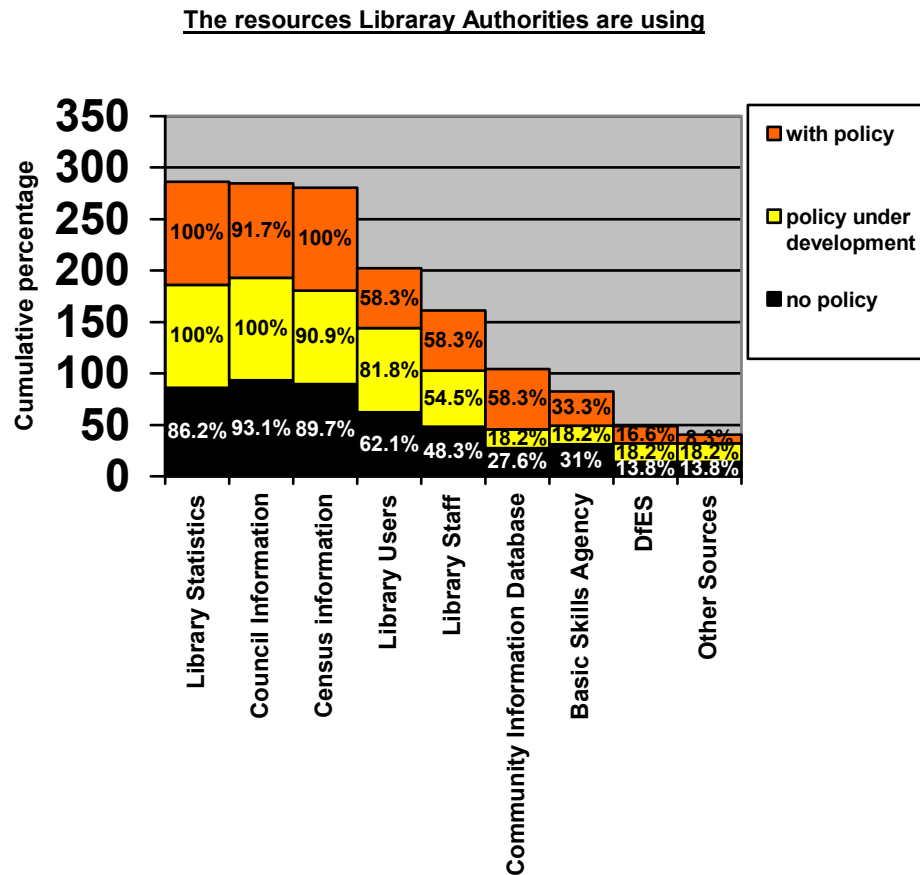
Figure 4.2

The results of the questionnaires show that 100% of library authorities are gathering information, on some level, about their communities. Further to this, the results show that 98.1% are gathering information from both internal and external sources. The most commonly used resources were Library Statistics and Council Information.

These figures have been included as it is important to realise that it is not necessarily the case that those who do not have a community profiling *policy* are not profiling their communities. However, what cannot be determined from this is that 100% of library authorities are using community profiling to inform management

decisions.The extent to which this information is being used to inform management decisions, will be discussed in *Chapter 7: How community profiling is being used to influence service development.*

4.3 How many library authorities have a community profiling policy?

It cannot be assumed from the above results that 100% of library authorities are using these resources as part of an effective community profiling strategy. Although this study takes an exploratory approach, there was a tacit assumption that for community profiling to be effective it should be carried out consciously and with purpose. As Robson (1993) acknowledges, tacit knowledge is a legitimate form of research when used in conjunction with other methods. The suggested implementation of community profiling by national reports, as discussed in the literature review, also suggests that community profiling should be carried out with purpose. To establish how much meaning and purpose was attached to the information found from the resources, library authorities were asked if they had a community profiling policy. The table below shows the results of this question.

<u>**The percentage of Library Authorities that have a policy**</u>

Policy status	Frequency	Valid percent
No	**29**	**54.7%**
Yes	**12**	**22.6%**
One is under development	**11**	**20.8%**
Up to individual libraries	**1**	**1.9%**
Total	**53**	**100%**

Table 4.3

The pie chart in Figure 4.3a demonstrates the figures found more clearly.

<u>Do they have a community profiling policy?: pie chart</u>

■ yes
□ no
■ Up to individual libraries
□ One is under development
■ Missing
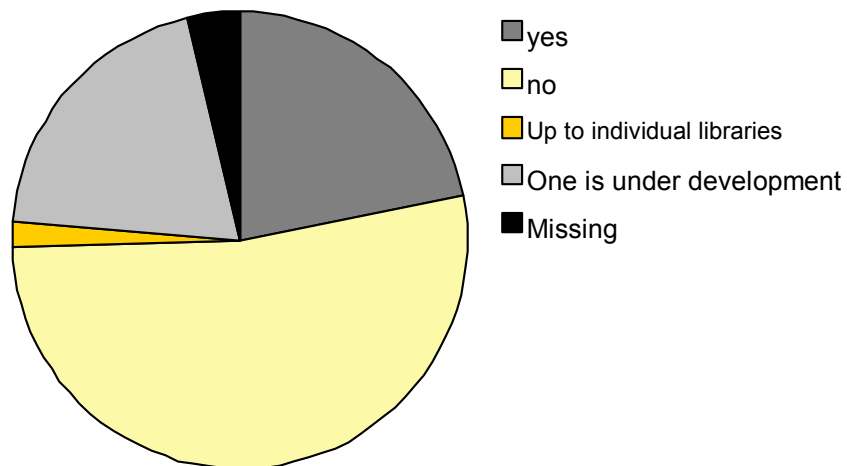
Figure 4.3a

Although the number of Library Authorities without a policy is clearly more than those with a policy, combining the number of those with a policy and those with one under development shows that the spread of negative and positive responses to this question is almost 50:50.

Figure 4.3b (next page) demonstrates the distribution of those with and without a policy.

There is an obvious lack of community profiling policies in Wales, Scotland and the South-west of England in comparison to Central, Northern and South-eastern England. Clusters of authorities with community profiling policies can be seen in the North-east and North-west of England and are evenly distributed among the Midlands. Although there are some instances of authorities with policies coinciding with the larger cities, there is also a mixed distribution in London and it's surrounding areas. This suggests that a direct link between cities, with more diverse communities, and authorities having a policy cannot be made.

Using tools such as *nearest neighbour* in The Institute for Finance's Website, www.libplans.ws, it may be possible to draw further connections between the authorities with a policy. However, to do this would require research that digresses further than would be appropriate in this study. The exploration of connections between authorities with and without a policy is recommended for further research.

Distribution of Library Authorities with and without a policy
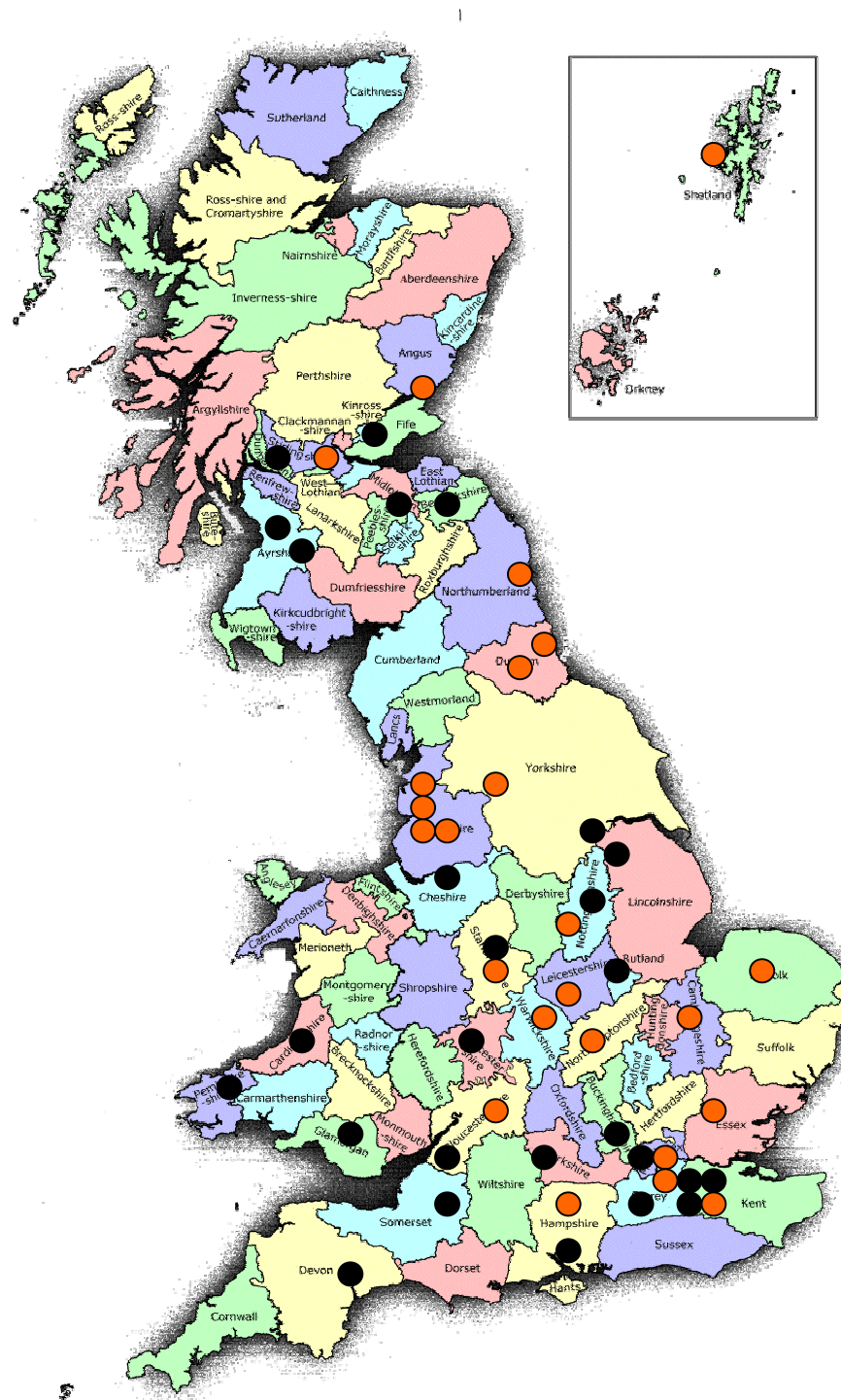
Figure 4.3b

4.4 What are the reasons for having or not having a policy?

In addition to stating whether they had a profile or not, authorities were asked their reasons for either having or not having a policy. (Respondents stating that *one was under development* were treated the same as those answering *yes* and asked to give a reason but those answering *It is left up to individual libraries* were not expected to answer this and were directed to answer the next set of questions.) They were asked to tick all that were appropriate. The sections below outline the reasons for having or not having a policy.

4.4.1 Reasons for having a community profiling policy or having one under development

Although eight options were given in all, there were two options that received a significantly higher number of positive responses than the others. The two most frequently cited reasons for having a community profiling policy or having one under development were:

> ***Communities are becoming more complex***
> ***The whole service needed developing***

The table below shows the full list of reasons for authorities having a policy or having one under development. Authorities ticked all that were applicable.

Reasons for Library Authorities having a policy or having one under development

Reason	Percentage of authorities who cited this reason
Communities are becoming more complex	50%
Whole Service needed developing	40.9%
Some community groups are insufficiently provided for	22.7%
Community Libraries needed developing	22.7%
The Mobile Library service needed developing	18.2%
Librarians have less time to get to know their community	13.6%
A particular Community Library needed developing	9.1%
The Central/ Main Library needed developing	4.5%
Other reason cited by authorities:	63.6%
As a tool for service planning	40.9%
In response to national reports/ documents re. Public Libraries	27.3%
For performance management	18.2%
To define catchment areas	4.5%

Table 4.4.1

One reasons for having a policy or having one under development that received a lower response rate than expected were:

Librarians have less time to get to know their community

The literature suggests that Community Librarians have less time now than they did 15 years ago (Redfern, 1989) to work in their communities both outside and within the library. This made the lower response rate to this option for having a community profiling policy surprising.

The most frequently cited reason –*communities are becoming more complex*- was suggested by 50% of respondents as being a reason for having a policy. The complexity of communities depends on the area. It cannot be assumed that all communities are becoming more complex or, if they are, at the same rate. Figure 4.4.1 demonstrates the geographical spread of Library Authorities with a policy. The red dots represent those who stated that communities were becoming more complex and the blue dots represent those who didn't.

As the map demonstrates, it is hard to identify any particular geographic pattern of those who stated community complexity was a reason for having a community profiling policy. However, what is apparent is that there is mixed opinion between authorities within the same County as to whether communities are becoming more complex or not. For example, there are four authorities within Lancashire; two believe that communities becoming more complex was a reason for developing a policy and two did not.

However, the issue of complex communities is itself, complex. As Dolan (1989) suggests, there are many definitions of community. Without researching further the nuances of each authority's community it is impossible to either confirm or deny that their communities are becoming more complex. Without further research, it cannot be determined whether the statements about community complexity are based on opinion or fact. It may be that those who did not cite community complexity as a reason for developing a policy may still believe communities are becoming more complex but it wasn't a contributing factor to the development of a community profiling policy.

However, an alternative way to view the contrast within Lancashire is that the mixed reasons for the emphasis on community complexity demonstrate that communities can differ greatly even within one area and so *are* more complex.

It is clear, from the analysis of the respondents, that no conclusions can be drawn from the spread of the authorities without further knowledge of the communities involved.

Geographic spread of Library Authorities who developed a policy because communities are becoming more complex
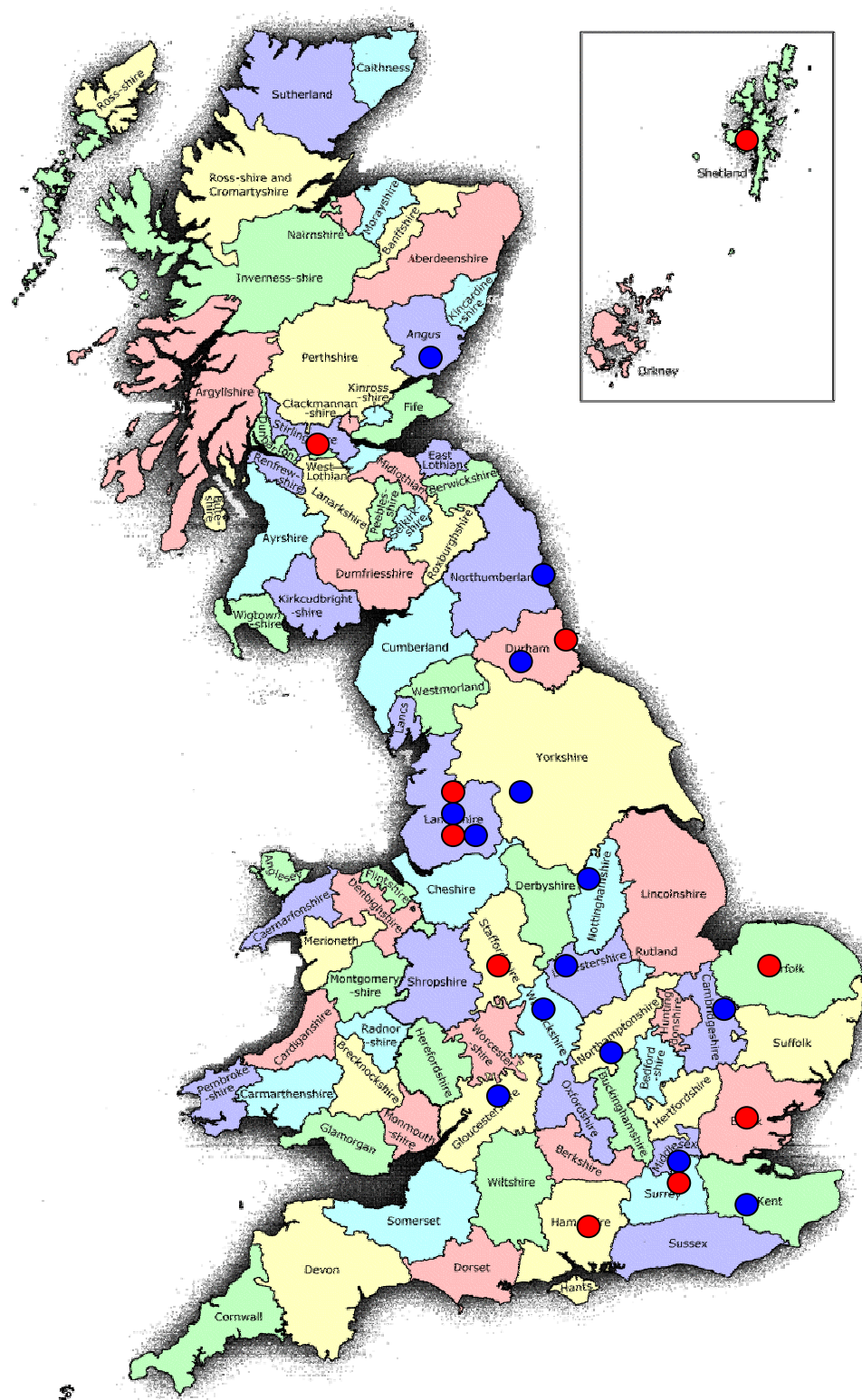
Figure 4.4.1

4.4.2 Reasons for not having a community profiling policy

Of the six options given there was one option clearly more relevant than the rest:

There is insufficient time or resources to develop a policy

Table 4.4.2 gives the full list of reason for authorities not having a community profiling policy.

<u>**Reasons for Library Authorities not having a policy**</u>

Reason	Percentage of authorities that cited this reason
There is insufficient time or resources to develop a policy	58.6%
Frontline staff have sufficient knowledge about their community	10.3%
It would be unsustainable	6.9%
Communities change too quickly for it to be useful	3.4%
We may be unable to respond to findings	3.4%
Other reason cited by authorities:	51.7%
It is used but there is no written policy	17.2%
It is not considered relevant	13.8%
It is under discussion	11.9%
Awaiting outcome of Public Library Standards	11.9%

Table 4.4.2

As the table demonstrates, a significant percentage (51.7%) of respondents gave other reasons as to why they did not have a community profiling policy. 39.8% of these respondents gave reasons that suggested that community profiling was being considered or was in use but with no written policy. This again suggests that, in authorities where there is no community profiling policy it may not be the case that community profiling is not being used or considered.

4.5 Reasons to use community profiling: a closer look

Using data from interviews, case studies and questionnaires, the reasons for using community profiling are considered in more detail. This gives the opportunity to explore what the benefits of community profiling might be.

4.5.1 Social inclusion

Through questionnaires and interviews it was found that social inclusion was a large factor influencing the development of community profiling. The suggestion made by respondents and interviewees that their objectives in using community profiling are to tackle social exclusion imply that community profiling is an appropriate tool to aid social inclusion.

Specific ways in which community profiling was suggested to assist social inclusion by respondents and interviewees were:

Understanding the needs of groups within the community

'[we] want to provide books in community languages- the first step is to identify demand within the local area- hence the need for a community profile.'

Understanding the culture of groups within the community and barriers to use that this may present

'…through [the Neighbourhood Renewal Manager] we knew that the outreach service ought to include some women in the Asian Community…they receive the housebound service.'

Raising staff awareness of needs and cultures of different community groups

'The provision of cultural awareness courses on the main communities.'

Increasing the ability to confront prejudice by reflecting community diversity

'It is important to provide stock that represents the diverse community. Representing through stock is as important as providing stock that will be used.'

Encouraging socially excluded groups by creating links between the library and the community

'…to encourage new users through targeting excluded groups…encourage staff to create links in the community using their own knowledge.'

In terms of community profiling as a tool to aid social inclusion, a number of common views exist between the literature and Library Authorities with a community profiling policy. The ability of libraries to confront prejudice by reflecting the diversity of the community, a benefit of community profiling cited by interviewees, is also believed by Resource (2003):

'Evidence shows that through their engagement with communities they can foster a sense of identity and racial harmony.'

The emphasis on social inclusion, as demonstrated by interviewees and respondents, corresponds with Dolan's (1989) belief in *community librarianship.* He suggests that the role of the community librarian is not necessarily to persuade people to use the library but to 'form a new library which better meets the needs of local people in their personal lives and as a community'. Responses of interviewees suggest that the way they intend to encourage new users and target groups is not by persuasion but by developing the service so it is able to provide for those groups and individuals.

4.5.2 Planning

Whilst interviewees highlighted social inclusion as a wider benefit of community profiling, one of the ways of targeting social inclusion was cited as being through planning. Through interviews and questionnaires a number of ways in which community profiling can directly influence planning were identified. These include:

Determining how relevant services and stock are to the community

'Stock is tailored to the community profile e.g. a library in a community with a large number of pre-school children will have a larger children's section.'

Re-consideration of Mobile Library routes

18.2% of authorities with a community profiling policy cited development of the Mobile Library Service as a reason for developing the policy.

Identifying how and where outreach services need developing

'We are trying to establish how many of our users and non-users are disabled. We feel there is an outreach service that needs developing here but getting hold of the right data is a challenge.'

By influencing recruitment and selection processes

' …it's possible that this information [from community profiles] will filter into the selection process.'

Relevancy of stock provision and services are highlighted in the above quotes as important planning considerations. 'Supply and demand' is also a consideration highlighted by interviewees; Bizhelp24 (2004) suggests that customer knowledge is essential for anticipating the needs and service use of customers.

4.5.3 Performance

Community profiling was also seen as a tool for helping to measure performance. Respondents and interviewees highlighted the following benefits to performance measurement:

Assists in determining how accurately library membership and use reflect the diversity of the community

'…through comparing census statistics to library user statistics we can determine to what extent the library reflects the diversity of the community.'

Identifies gaps in service

'...[the Community Library and information Officer] identified, through his community links, a need for Mandarin stock…'

Assists in the development of targets

'The community profiles allow staff to develop targets that have a community emphasis.'

Allows communities and individuals to express how well they feel the library is performing in specific areas

'...we have consulted with study support groups and a local secondary school…[they] raised some very good ideas about what they'd like to see in the library. We have also had a teenage focus group.'

4.5.4 Additional reasons for community profiling

As well as social inclusion, planning and performance there were other significant reasons for using community profiling that deserve to be mentioned. These include the expectation of community profiling to be included in the new Public Library Standards and the development of funding bids.

As the literature suggested, recent reports have endorsed the use of community profiling and emphasised public libraries' duty to reflect the communities they serve. In addition to eight authorities highlighting this within the questionnaires, the *case 2* respondent stated that the revision of Public Standards and *Framework for the Future* had prompted their authority to reconsider their strategy on how they make libraries relevant to their communities. This lead them to re-consider how their use of infrastructure, service provision and community profiles could develop a:

'Clear understanding of the value and contribution of a Library

Service at both a local and national level.'

Although this is just one example of how the revision of Public Library Standards may affect authorities' use of community profiling it does demonstrate the potential influence it could have.

The impact community profiles can have on funding was also highlighted by both case studies. The advantage of community profiles is that they provide quantitative data that acts as reliable evidence when producing bids for funding. The advantage of qualitative data such as identifying links both within the community and with other organisations is that it provides opportunities for partnerships to be formed. As both case studies highlighted, the current Government's emphasis on both the use of partnerships and social inclusion can be seen in initiatives such as *Closing the Gap* and the *Neighbourhood Renewal Scheme*. Evidence of partnerships, community profiling statistics and projects for social inclusion all increase the likelihood of funding bids being successful.

While social inclusion is widely supported by the literature as being a benefit of community profiling, planning and performance are less frequently cited. This suggests that the concepts of planning and performance have developed since the first use of community profiling in the 1970's and 80's. The majority of the literature available is from this time and so there are few resources available to assist Library Authorities in researching community profiling in the context of planning and performance. The development of literature and tools to assist libraries in their development of community profiling in today's society is recommended by this study.

4.6 Chapter summary

- **100% of Library Authorities profile their communities on some level. 98.1% of authorities gather information from both internal and external sources. The most commonly used of these are statistics from the Library Management System and Council Information.**

- **54.7% of Library Authorities do not have a community profiling policy. The most frequently cited reason for this was that there is insufficient time or resources to develop a policy. However 21.9% of those without a policy commented that it is used but there is no written policy or that a policy was under discussion.**

- **22.6% of Library Authorities do have a policy and 20.8% have a policy under development. The most frequently cited reason for these was that communities are becoming more complex and that the whole service needed developing. Librarians having less time to get to know their community was a less commonly cited reason for having a policy than the literature suggested.**

- **There were three areas highlighted as benefiting from community profiling, these were:**

  Social inclusion
  - **Understanding the needs and cultures of the community**
  - **Understanding the barriers to use of community groups**
  - **Raising staff awareness of different community groups**

- **Increasing the ability of the library to confront prejudice by reflecting community diversity**

- **Encouraging socially excluded groups by creating links between the library and the community**

<u>Planning</u>

- **Determining how relevant services and stock are to the community**

- **Reconsideration of Mobile Library routes**

- **Identifying how and where outreach services need developing**

- **Influencing the recruitment and selection process**

<u>Performance</u>

- **Determining how accurately library membership reflects the community**

- **Identifying gaps in service**

- **Development of targets, Annual Library Plans and Statements**

- **Allows community to express how well they feel the library is performing in specific areas.**

Chapter 5: The community profiling methodologies that are being used

5.1 Introduction to the results

Taking an exploratory approach to this study revealed that different authorities were utilising community profiling in different ways. Although, in most cases, similar information was being collected there were distinct differences in the contexts in which community profiling information was gathered. These different approaches to community profiling varied in purpose for collection, method of collection, method of dissemination and the extent and manner in which the information influenced service development. The different approaches identified could be grouped into distinct methodologies:

As and when required: community profiling is done in response to specific needs such as specific service developments or production of reports or statements.

The Reference Community Profile: Information about the community is gathered for the purpose of producing a document that becomes the profile of that community. It is often done as a one-off piece of research that is updated periodically. It can be done on a county level or at catchment area level. The purpose of the document is to act as a reference guide for any decisions that require information about the community. It is similar to the traditional Community Profiles produced in the 1970's and 80's.

As part of an integrated strategy: Community profiling in this instance can be less tangible. The community profiling is not the outcome of the research but a tool used to inform a wider purpose. Community profiling often consists of finding specific information that is directly relevant to the wider purpose.

5.2 The methodologies used: *As and when required*

Considering that the other two methodologies- the Reference Community Profile and community profiling as part of an integrated strategy-require a purposeful decision to use community profiling it can be assumed that the majority of those who stated that they did not have a community profiling policy but are gathering information about their community use community profiling as and when required.

On this assumption, results of the questionnaire give two relevant pieces of information illuminating some details of this methodology. They can show how often data is being gathered and what happens to the information once it has been collected. Table 5.2a shows how often library authorities without a community profiling policy are collecting information about their community. The total number of library authorities without a policy was 29. Many respondents chose to tick more than one option so the cumulative frequency is higher than 29. In comparison, the statistics for how often those with a policy collect data are shown in orange.

How often data is gathered by Library Authorities

No policy			With policy
How often gathered	**Frequency**	**Valid percent**	**Valid percent**
Continually	12	41.4%	50%
Annually	9	31%	58.3%
When census is published	4	13.8%	16.7%
When services are under-used	3	10.3%	0%
Other times	11	37.9%	16.7%

Table 5.2a

As demonstrated in the table, around 10% more Library Authorities with a policy are collecting data continually with around 30% more collecting data annually. None of those with a policy stated that they collected data when services were under-used; this may be the most significant statistic in the table as it suggests that those with a policy do not consider waiting until services are under-used as an effective use of community profiling.

Once again, *other times* was frequently cited. All but two of these responses stated that they gathered information when the need arose or in response to specific projects or developments:

'Generally at present for reports etc.'

'Every three years and when the need arises.'

'…we research in more detail when the need arises.'

'When needed.'

'To obtain specific information, eg about the use of IT facilities.'

'As and when required.'

'No particular pattern. PLUS survey= every 3 years. Occasionally when investigating an existing or launching a new service. Occasionally for specific exercises e.g. Best Value.'

It is likely that had *as and when required* been given as an option in itself, many more of those Library Authorities without a community profiling policy would have ticked this option. It is possible that choices by authorities without a profile were spread among the options as they chose to tick all those that roughly coincided with any community profiling they had done in the past.

Table 5.2b (below) shows what happens to information that is gathered. It was thought that exploring the procedures that are used in conjunction with community profiling would give an indication as to how effective the information would be. The options given were:

It is collated with information found from other sources: Collating information suggests that it will be considered in context with other types of information. It insinuates that, through the triangulation of different sources, an awareness of the broader picture is held by the authority.

An action plan is made: Producing an action plan indicates that the information found is valued and is being utilised. It ensures that it is not

just 'nice to know'[5] information. As Lathrope (1989) suggests, community profiling can become forgotten once recorded. An action plan ensures that information is translated into action.

Information is shared with other organisations and departments: Sharing information not only minimises the duplication of effort but provides valuable data for other organisations. The benefits of sharing information are demonstrated by Maconachie (2001) who produced 'A multi-agency framework for providing profiling information via the Internet'.

Information is made available to Librarians: Librarians are responsible for many procedures including stock selection, outreach work and individual library developments. Community profiles can provide valuable information for these purposes. As suggested by Redfern (1989), the librarian of the branch library is the link between the library service and the community; it makes sense that the librarian should have access to information about the community in which they work.

In comparison, in orange, are the results for those with a policy.

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[5] Kendrick, T. (2003). *Community Profiling.* Presentation notes from CILIP workshop.

What authorities are doing with information gathered

Without policy (Community profiling used as and when required)		With policy
Procedure used	Valid percent	Valid percent
Collated with other information	58.6%	75%
Action plan is made	44.8%	91.7%
Shared with other organisations or departments	27.6%	50%
Made available to Librarians	75.9%	91.7%
Other	17.2%	25%

Table 5.2b
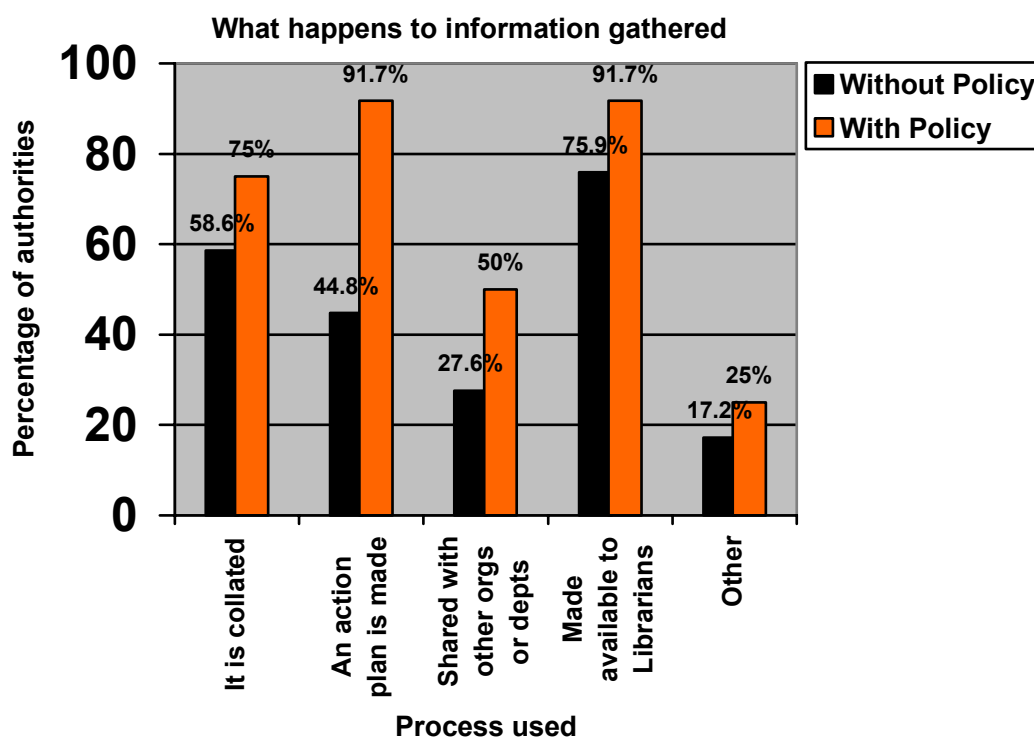
Figure 5.2

Figure 5.2 demonstrates the pattern found in the statistics: Library Authorities that have a policy are more likely to be using the procedures outlined in conjunction with community profiling. Although the procedures highlighted are not an exhaustive list of how community profiling is made effective, the results show a distinct difference in how data is used between authorities that use community profiling as and when required and those who have a policy.

5.3 The methodologies used: *The Reference Community Profile*

Details of this methodology have been explored through two interviews with staff from authorities that have produced a reference Community Profile.

Purpose

It would be inappropriate to generalise the purpose of all Reference Community Profiles as each of the interviewees suggested a different reason for its development. While one Reference Community Profile had originally been produced to fill a specific knowledge gap and subsequently used as a tool for general service development:

> *'…to provide books in community languages- the first step is to identify the demand for individual languages within the local area- hence the need for a community profile.'*

Another had a single purpose from conception:

> *'The elements included are only those which have a direct bearing on the process of stock management and selection…'*

Whatever their specific purpose, their existence as a static and tangible reference document is what sets them aside from other community profiling methodologies.

The *intended* audience is dependant on variables such as the profile's purpose, the staffing structure of the authority and the type of information gathered. However, the *actual* audience seems dependant on the perceived value of the community profile. While one interviewee suggested that multiple copies had been given to staff- Area Managers and Deputy, Head of Information and Local Studies, Head of Community Services, The Council House and a the local studies collection- another was unsure if anyone, except her, had a copy:

> *'It sits in a draw…it was not passed on to anyone, it has never been asked for by management.'*

Neither of the interviewees reported that the community profiles had been made available on the Library or Council Intranet.

The compilation procedure

The interviewees were both Librarians who had compiled the community profiles in response to community profiling strategies being introduced. Since it is likely that Reference Community Profiles will be different in procedure, details of each of the community profiles studied are given below rather than making generalisations.

5.3.1 Reference Community Profile 1

The authority had requested a community profile for each branch library, making this interviewee responsible for three community profiles. Only one was completed, this was done in March 2002.

The interviewee was provided with a template of the Community Profile they were to produce. The purpose of this Community Profile was to influence stock selection so each branch library was provided with the same template to ensure stock would be selected using the same procedure throughout the authority.

The data gathered was intended to be on a catchment area level.
It was stressed that 'detail recorded in local Community Information Files should not be repeated.' This correlates with information given in a recent CILIP workshop that profilers should always be 'adding value' to information they collect. The sources used were census information and housing information, these were accessed through the City and County Council serving the area concerned.

The Community Profile completed by the interviewee was three A4 pages long and consisted of the following information:

Catchment areas

      -work patterns, travel patterns, shopping/ markets, leisure interests/ tourism, medical facilities

Population (of immediate catchment area)

      -total population, approximate age breakdown, key areas of disadvantage

<u>Community</u>

> ***-schools, colleges, adult learning resources, special educational facilities, museums/ galleries, bookshops, community groups, sheltered accommodation, cultural groups, voluntary agencies***

In terms of updating, the template suggests:

> *'The community profiles are to be updated fully every five years, but sudden changes within the community are to be added as they arise.'*

5.3.2 Reference Community Profile 2

The Central Area Manager, who had used them in her previous job, introduced the community profiling policy. The Community Profile covers the catchment area ('town centre and surrounding residential areas') of the Central Library. It was completed in Spring 2004.

The interviewee worked with another member of staff on the profile. In total, it took about six months to complete. Models of other authorities' Community Profiles were used to decide what information should be included. The interviewee had no previous experience of community profiling and no additional training was provided.

The initial stage involved collecting the data available. Interpretation of the data was only used in terms of selecting relevant data to include in the profile, as the interviewee suggests:

'We let the facts speak for themselves rather than guide the reader into a particular way of interpretation- but the conclusions were clearly there anyway.'

Sources used include:

City and County Council Websites for the surrounding areas

Local Council information on facilities

Local Studies information

Voluntary Agencies directory

Council Intranet

Local College statistics

Tourist Information

1991 and 2001 Census Statistics

The Community Profile completed by the interviewee was 26 pages long and consisted of the following information:

<u>People</u>

> *-population (adults, children, young people, elderly), special needs groups, organisations for different age groups, employment/ unemployment*

<u>Ethnic mix and religion</u>

> *-ethnic minorities, religion, places of worship, community groups*

<u>Environment</u>

> *-housing, local business and shopping*

Services

-education, health, leisure, transport, other services

In terms of updating, the profile has already had one update. There is no formal updating procedure but the interviewee stated that:

> *'I suspect we will continue to update as new material becomes available…'*

Although the examples above collect useful statistical data, neither collect the qualitative data highlighted by Dolan (1989) and Lathrope (1989) as being important in learning about the community. The usefulness of statistical data alone is doubted by Redfern (1989) who suggests that:

> *'Community librarianship is about working with the community to bridge the gap not just assessing the community.'*

However, Reference Community Profiles may be appropriate as starting points for liaison work. Community Librarians could use them as an indicator of where qualitative research needs to be done.

5.4 The methodologies used: *Community profiling as part of an integrated strategy*

As suggested, the use of community profiling as part of an integrated strategy is harder to identify and consists of less tangible elements. Unlike the Reference Community Profile, the integrated approach may use statistical information, qualitative information that may or may not have been formalised, information gained through outreach and liaison or any combination of these. There is less emphasis on the documentation of this information for reference purposes, information is more likely to be recorded and interpreted alongside targets in the wider strategy. It is less likely that large amounts of general information will be gathered and more likely that specific information will be researched in more detail.

Once again, due to significant variables in authorities it is inappropriate to make generalisations about the use of community profiling as part of an integrated strategy. For this reason two examples have been researched through interviews and highlighted in this section. The two examples form case studies; these will also be referred in subsequent chapters.

5.4.1 Integrated strategy 1 (*case 1*): Social Inclusion

Purpose

Within this strategy the broadest target of all is social inclusion:

'Social inclusion underpins all service areas…community profiling is a way of identifying the community.'

The strategy to achieve this target involved the development of a Multicultural Forum. Examples of their objectives include:

To support multiculturalism and anti-racism through:

- *Training initiatives*

- *Ensuring publicity is appropriate for all community groups*

- *Monitoring distribution of materials funds*

- *Aiding the prioritisation of work in this area by ensuring equality targets are set*

- *Acting as a service point for information*

- *Maximising external funding in this area*

- *Supporting and guiding all staff*

Information from community profiling is a way of helping to inform and achieve these objectives.

Procedure

A key aspect determining the success of this strategy is that it has consciously employed Community Library and Information Officers who represent the diversity of the community. Currently these include officers who, in origin, are:

African-Caribbean

Chinese

Bangladeshi

Pakistani

They each have a city-wide remit with relevant community groups. They are able to liase closely with specific groups and through outreach work and are able to gather qualitative information that can be used to identify need. Their role is not

necessarily just with ethnic groups but with any group where equality needs representing or developing in the library service. This approach also allows changes in community demographics to be identified relatively quickly.

Unlike the Reference Community Profiles, the gathering of statistics is not done by library staff. The Local Council have dedicated Area Officers who serve four main areas within the city. Each of these four areas is split into 12 neighbourhoods. As the interviewee suggested:

'The neighbourhoods are relatively small so correspond quite well with catchment areas.'

The Area Officers are responsible for 'gathering detailed statistical and qualitative data through community representatives and contacts'. The Community Library and Information Officers work closely with the Area Officers to identify information that could influence service development to specific groups within the community. This is, as suggested by the interviewee:

'…a good way to work with the community and doesn't duplicate effort.'

If needed the Community Library and information Officers can research in more detail the information provided by the Area Officer.

The Community Library and Information officers have a budget of £35K between them, which they bid for each year. The amount they bid for will depend on the specific needs that have been identified.

Another role of the Community Library and Information Officers has been to produce an informative four-page booklet for general distribution. It provides a brief history and description of the community groups they represent. This includes information such as:

Map and description of where the group is from

Historical background of the country

Details about the language

How names are formed/ pronounced

First arrivals in the UK/ first arrivals in the city

Current population in the city

Details about religious culture

Celebration dates

Whilst the Community Library and Information Officers are linked to the Multicultural Forum, Community Development Librarians are also responsible for working with the Area Officers. It is hoped that the vision created by the Multicultural Forum can inform the practice of the entire service, as the interviewee suggested:

'...we want Community Development Librarians to take more responsibility for identifying community need…through the Area Officers and their own research.'

The interviewee highlighted that community profiling is only one of the methods being used to influence service. He suggested that:

'…you need a varied approach that changes depending on your communities…a triangulation of methods is always best.'

This statement suggests that community profiling is not seen as an end in itself but as one of many tools used to identify community need.

5.4.2 Integrated strategy 2 (*case 2*): Performance Management

Purpose

The questionnaire response given by **case 2** highlights how clearly they see how community profiling can be of use:

'Community profiles are seen as a fundamental tool to inform marketing decisions, service planning and development decisions…develop funding bids for work with hard to reach groups and to provide information against which libraries measure their performance as a community service.'

Discussed in the interview was the use of community profiling as a tool for performance management. The expected outcomes of the integrated use of community profiling held by the interviewee were:

Improved performance in the community

Informing the planning process

A portfolio in response to the revised Public Library Standards

These were targets forming part of a wider outcome which was to have:

'A clear understanding of the value and contribution of a Library

service at both a local and national level.'

Procedure

In anticipation of the revision of Public Library Standards and in response to Framework for the Future an initial vision of how the authority could respond to the documents' emphasis on libraries as a 'vital role as anchor institutions in our communities' (Department for Culture Media and Sport, 2003) was formed. This involved considering how they receive and disseminate information about the community, what impact the information has and how it is of value to the community and to the library service.

A CILIP workshop on community profiling was attended by the interviewee in 2003. Information from the workshop, in conjunction with the emphasis on community made in national reports, was used to develop initiatives that would achieve the desired outcome highlighted earlier:

'A clear understanding of the value and contribution of a Library

service at both a local and national level.'

The first initiative was entitled **Model Library** and was introduced in 2002. It was identified that the outcomes of various surveys and reports such as:

Quarterly activity reports
Annual reports
CIPFA survey results
*'**Do we measure up' audit**
Mystery visitor audit

were in-cohesive. As internal documentation suggests:

> *'The result of this activity for managers, has been a set of reports giving them management information about their libraries or services but with no mechanism to bring this information together.'*

The Model Library initiative was formed as a tool for managers to bring this information together. Community profile information is included in the Model Library in addition to the surveys and reports outlined above. As the interviewee described:

> *'…it shows basic statistics on how the library is performing in the community…by cross referencing census demographics against library user demographics…'*

As the interviewee suggested, community profiles are used to gauge how far the library is reflecting the community. It currently does this by cross-referencing census statistics on:

Occupations
Ages of population
Ethnic background
Population within 1 mile

against information from the Library Management System and user surveys. The Census statistics are gathered using a private/ public initiative that analyses and synthesises Census information and makes it available online.

Along with other comparative information concerning performance such as:

User satisfaction

Access

Appeal

Active use

Staff

each library is provided with a Model Library Profile stating how their library is performing against existing targets, standards and community demographics.

Using the Model Library Profile, staff from each library set themselves performance targets for the following year. These, in the past, have included:

Increasing the number of visitors by 5%

Increasing the success of finding books or information

Meeting learning session targets

Increasing customer satisfaction

However, the emphasis on *community* in the targets wasn't being addressed. As the interviewee suggested:

'..the first three years staff came up with quite inward looking targets...they were do-able but didn't think widely enough about the community.'

In response to this the **Model Community** initiative was formed. It existed to complement to Model Library by broadening the targets set by library staff. The

Model Community works by utilising staff knowledge about their communities. As highlighted by the interviewee:

> *'To get staff to think more broadly about the community we wanted to formalise links staff already had within the community and to extract the knowledge of staff about the community.'*

It asked frontline staff to write down everything they knew about their community and asked them to think in particular about any links they could make with community groups they identified. Examples included:

> **Community Information: Asian Women's Group**
> **Potential Link: Use of the Library's meeting room**

> **Community Information: Local Primary School**
> **Potential Link: School visit to promote summer reading game**

Asking the staff to use their own knowledge of the community encouraged staff to think more broadly about how the library could involve the community.

Separate training workshops were given to staff in interpreting community data and planning service developments. The interviewee suggested that the initiatives had gained support from the staff:

> *'…there is a degree of competition between libraries…it reaffirms the value and purpose of the library to staff…it shows them it's not all about issue figures.'*

In a similar way to *case 1*, *case 2* also produces information leaflets on community groups. The Neighbourhood Renewal Manager, a post created as part of a reorganisation two years ago, creates profiles for targeted user groups such as Asylum Seekers. These are made available to staff who can then use the knowledge to establish links with those groups.

5.5 Chapter summary

- **Through interviews, three distinct methodologies were identified: The use of community profiling as and when required**
  The production of a Reference Community Profile
  Community profiling as part of an integrated strategy

- **<u>The use of community profiling as and when required</u>**
  This methodology includes all authorities that profile their communities but do not have a policy. Most of these stated they were profiling their communities continually, with 26.7% explicitly stating that they profiled their communities as and when required. The most commonly used procedures are making the information available to Librarians and collating the information with information from other sources. In comparison to those with a policy, fewer authorities using community profiling as and when required, collect information at regular intervals and formally process information.

- **<u>The production of a Reference Community Profile</u>**
  The reasons for the development of Community Profiles in this methodology vary between examples, as do their size and contents. What they have in common is their existence as a tangible document

used for reference purposes. In the examples studied, statistical data had been gathered to determine various community demographics and spread of local facilities. There was no use of qualitative data in either example. Doubts were raised as to whether the examples studied would be updated regularly or could be useful in times of rapid community change.

- **<u>Community profiling as part of an integrated strategy</u>**

  This methodology is harder to define or generalise. Community profiling, in this case, is used as one of many tools in achieving a wider target. The targets of the examples studied were social inclusion and performance. Community profiling is used to identify gaps in knowledge or service, to identify need or to inform the Library Authority about recent changes in the community. Whatever is identified, community profiling is only a basis from which to do further research or to develop strategies for improvement. Authorities using it as part of an integrated strategy emphasise the triangulation of methods and sources to achieve targets; community profiling is just one method. In this methodology there was more awareness of using the information within partnerships and to identify opportunities for networking and using other sources of information that avoid duplicating effort. Community profiling was used as evidence for funding in both of the examples studied. Both examples had experienced difficulty in staff fully utilising information from community profiling.

Chapter 6: How community profiling is being used to influence service development

6.1 Introduction to the results

This chapter examines the influence of community profiling on service development. As Lathrope suggests, for community profiling to be effective it must be associated with change. This chapter will explore how much influence community profiling is having on change in libraries in the UK.

Using questionnaire results, interviews and case studies it explores differences in service development between authorities with a policy and those without a policy. There was insufficient data collected during this study to explore the effect of the identified community profiling methodologies on service development. This is a logical progression for further research and is highlighted within the recommendations made by this study. However, to examine the differences between authorities with and without a profile will help determine if community profiling, used in a formal and structured way, can assist service development.

6.2 Specific examples of service developments influenced by community profiling

By highlighting specific examples of how authorities have used community profiling to develop their library service, it is possible to explore the value of community profiling in practical terms.

Using questionnaires, interviews and case studies, this section highlights examples of specific service developments that have been influenced by community

profiling.

They are broken down into categories highlighting the type of development that has taken place. The categories are:

Targeting excluded groups

Improving existing services

The following section includes all the examples provided by respondents and interviewees regardless of whether they have a policy or not.

6.2.1 Targeting excluded groups

Sub-categories were formed from the examples in this section, these are:

Improving stock selection

Changing existing procedures

The introduction of new services

Targeting advertising

Securing funding

The sub-categories below give a selection of examples taken from respondents.

Improving stock selection

'A new parenting collection was created at one library where the rise in young families (and the lack of provision for them) was identified.'

'Asylum Seekers and Refugees-introduced information and book stock in relevant languages, after consultation with local government departments and

befriending groups.'

'Large Asylum Seeker population with over 40 languages spoken-information gathered indicated that these people wanted to learn to read and speak English, rather than have services provided in their native tongue, so ESOL [English for Speakers of Other Languages] collection introduced. A concessionary rate was also introduced for fines and charges.'

'…identified, through community links, a need for Mandarin stock…he trialled a small collection and did a special launch of it.'

'[Pushto] was identified as a need by a local councillor. We were surprised at the size of the expressed need so did some more research…the demand was far less…we purchased a small collection and set up a reciprocal loan arrangement [with another library with a collection].'

'The Outreach Team have introduced new collections of books in languages identified as being under-represented in the libraries. We have introduced Arabic, Tamil and Somali collections.'

'COMMUITY FUND- top-sliced stock fund against which community librarians prepare formal bids to address social inclusion in their area.'

Changing procedures

'Development of the 'Welcome to your Library' project for Refugees and Asylum Seekers. We are looking at changing our joining procedures and developing our services as a result of research by the project officer.'

Introduction of new services

'Gypsy and Traveller site with no library provision, tried to introduce a Mobile Library stop but vehicle couldn't access the site so a deposit collection of books has been set up.'

Targeted advertising

'Specific areas of the city were targeted-Social Inclusion Partnership areas- and promotional material was used to encourage people to use the library facilities-by highlighting the advent of the People's Network terminal in Library buildings and free Internet access.'

'Promotion of services to disadvantaged wards through targeting services to children.'

Securing funding

'Information on Asylum Seekers in the city used to inform funding bid…to improve our service to Asylum Seekers.'

'Developed a successful bid to the Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities fund. Project is exceeding all targets.'

6.2.2 Improving existing services

The examples in this section have also been re-grouped into sub categories, these are:

Changes in opening hours

Changes in ICT provision

The reconsideration of Library buildings

Planning Mobile Library routes

Improving services to specific user groups

The introduction of new staffing roles

Changes in opening hours

'Used the PLUS survey to change aspects of our services and offer new resources and extend/ different opening hours.'

'Our consultation process (PLUS and an annual customer satisfaction survey) highlight customer needs, such as a desire for extra opening hours…'

'One example is a specific community survey on preference on changed/ increased opening hours.'

Changes in ICT provision

'Surveys of ICT users has lead to some libraries restricting access on certain PC's to 15 minutes…'

'Our consultation process highlighted customer needs such as…and more ICT provision- both of which we have been able to improve in the past few years.'

'People's Network Survey- introduced scanners, memory sticks and CD Burner.'

Reconsideration of existing Library buildings

'Community consultation on redevelopment of a local library being planned.'

'Replacing very small libraries with state of the art mobiles.'

'Catchment population figures are essential when determining new buildings/ refurbishment requirements.'

'At the moment we are using community profiles to inform public consultation re the possibility of a new library…'

Planning of Mobile routes

'Currently using GIS Mapping to plan Mobile routes.'

'Our outreach services review has shown that mobile library routes/ timings need to be adjusted according to community needs.'

'MOBILE LIBRARY PLUS- initiative to provide half-day weekly stops in a large village.'

'Develop new mobile library service timetable based on new housing developments.'

Improving services to specific user groups

'A recent consultation exercise we have undertaken regards a new teenage section we are planning in the Central Library. For this, we have consulted with our study support groups (teens aged 11-16) and a local secondary school…they have raised some good ideas…horror books, drinks and snacks, PS2 or X-Box, bean bags, artwork on walls.'

'Mapping of basic skills needs in the city is being done to inform a project funded by YMLAC to produce a model for improving our service to people with basic skills needs.'

'Libraries have set their own targets to improve performance against community profile information and action plans.'

'We've use catchment data linked with census data to identify priorities in improvements in services to housebound people.'

Introducing new staffing roles

'…a community profile identified a need to develop services to very early years and their parents. Consequently an early years literacy development worker was appointed and services developed.'

6.3 Identifying differences in service developments between authorities with and without a policy

6.3.1 Differences in the number of service developments

Table 6.3.1 provides some general statistics on how libraries without a policy compare in their provision of service development examples to those with a policy and with a policy under development.

Comparison of service developments

Policy status	% of authorities giving at least one example	% of authorities giving more than one example	Contribution to total number of examples given	Average number of examples per library
No policy	75.9	0.3%	46.2%	0.8
With policy	75%	44.4%	38.5%	1.7
Policy under development	60%	20%	15.3%%	1.3
Total	**73.1%**	**21.1%**	**100%**	**1**

Table 6.3.1

Interpretation of Table 6.3.1

Percentage of authorities giving at least one example

In terms of ability to provide an example of how community profiling has influenced service development, there is little difference between authorities with and without a policy. Fewer authorities with a policy under development were able to provide an example of how community profiling had influenced service change.

Percentage of authorities giving more than one example

During analysis of the examples, there seemed to be an obvious difference in how many examples were being provided by authorities with different community profiling policy statuses. Analysing the number of examples, as well as other factors discussed in the next section, was a way of establishing whether having a community profiling policy can directly affect service developments.

Contribution to total number of examples

The total number of examples of service developments influenced by community profiling provided by all the questionnaires and interviews was 52. Within these, 22 authorities without a policy provided 24 examples, 9 authorities with a

policy provided 20 examples and 6 authorities with a policy under development provided 8 examples. The total percentage of Library Authorities *with* a policy is 22.6%. So: 22.6% of the total population is contributing to 38.5% of the total number of service developments influenced by community profiling in the UK's library service. In contrast, the total percentage of Library Authorities *without* a policy is 54.7%. So: 54.7% of the total population is only contributing to 46.9% of service developments influenced by community profiling in the UK's library service.

Average number of examples per library

To explore further whether the number of developments made by each library through community profiling correlated with the use of a community profiling policy, the number of developments made by each library was found. To apply this to the total population, the number of developments per library was worked out by including all respondents, not just those who gave examples. Applying these figures suggests that the average number of service developments influenced by community profiling made by all Library Authorities with a policy across the UK is 1.7 per library. In contrast, the average number made by Library Authorities without a policy is 0.8 per library.

The results in the table clearly show that authorities with a community profiling policy are using information gathered through community profiling to influence more service developments than those without an actual policy. This suggests that community profiling used as part of a formal procedure is more effective than when used as and when required.

What this study cannot answer is whether community profiling is more or less effective on service developments than other decision-making tools or methods. Research into this is suggested in recommendations made by this study.

6.3.2 Differences in the type of service developments

To determine if there are any differences between the type of service developments made by authorities with a policy and authorities without a policy, factors beyond the number of developments are considered. These include:

- **Has the development relied on information from existing users?**

- **Has the development involved working within the community?**

- **Has the development required:**

  Continual funding?

  Capitol investment?

  No additional funding?

- **Are developments on a service-wide level?**

- **Are developments on a branch level?**

- **Have developments been made to improve opening hours or ICT?**

- **Do the developments use new ideas or think particularly broadly?**

- **Is information about the developments non-specific or lacking detail?**

These factors have been considered as they represent issues that may influence the level of effectiveness of the development introduced. They have also been chosen to highlight any similarities or differences between authorities.

However, it must be acknowledged that the full details of each example of service development were not researched. Whether the service developments suggested by each of the authorities fulfill the following factors is subjective. This section has been produced as a method of illuminating trends or patterns. Its aim is not to emphasise the exact statistics concerning each of the types of development

but to highlight general differences between authorities with and without a policy.

The statistics produced in the following section are gathered by finding the percentage of examples provided which fulfill the criteria suggested in the heading. They are arranged by authority policy status to identify differences between the developments in terms of policy type.

6.3.2 (a) The development has relied on information from existing users only

During the research, it was suggested by respondents and by the literature (Thompson, 1989), that effective community profiling gathers information from the wider community. As one respondent of the online discussion suggested:

'If community profiling is to be anything more than flavour of the decade, it needs to focus on why non-users prefer other sources for whatever aspect of LIS provision they are either consciously or unconsciously ignoring.'

The emphasis on profiling non-users is also suggested by Dolan (1989):

'Success is determined by using the real meaning of community librarianship, i.e. Getting to know the whole community.'

Percentage of developments that rely on information from existing users only

Policy status	% of developments that fulfil the suggested criteria
No policy	37.5%
With policy	0%
Policy under development	0%

Table 6.3.2a

Table 6.3.2a suggests that authorities without a community profiling policy are developing the services of existing users. Although gathering information from existing users will enable improvements to be made, it may not provide information that will help in the development of services that may encourage non-users into the library.

6.3.2 (b) The development has involved working within the community

It was suggested by the case 1 interviewee that:

'Qualitative information from staff and outreach is very important, anyone can do a profile but a profile alone won't make any improvements or develop the service.'

This belief was used to explore the differences in developments in terms of whether qualitative information had been gathered from the community between, those with and without a policy.

Percentage of developments that involve working with the community

Policy status	% of developments that fulfill the suggested criteria
No policy	12.5%
With policy	45%
Policy under development	50%

Table 6.3.2b

Table 6.3.2b shows that 45% of the examples given by authorities with a community profiling policy involved working within the community. This compares to only 12.5% of those without a policy. This suggests that authorities with a policy view community liaison as a key element of effective community profiling.

Authorities with a policy under development worked within the community on more service developments. This may be significant as it may suggest within their development of a policy they will continue to value first hand information from the community.

6.3.2 (c) The development has required funding

The responses from the case studies suggested that community profiling allowed them to apply for funding:

Case 1

'The Labour government are keen on social inclusion, initiatives such as 'successful neighbourhoods' and 'closing the gap' have meant support for libraries…evidence of statistics and methods of gathering information are really helpful in making bids successful.'

Case 2

'The Library and Information service also has a Neighbourhood Renewal Manager…they use community profiling as part of their work towards 'closing the gap' which allows them to apply for funding.'

Considering this, the issue of whether authorities without a policy were able to implement developments that required either one-off spending or continual financial input was thought to be important.

Percentage of developments requiring funding

Policy status	Continual financial input	Capitol investment	No additional money
No policy	8.3%	16.7%	33.3%
With policy	15%	30%	35%
Policy under development	37.5%	50%	25%

Table 6.3.2c

Table 6.3.2c shows less significant differences between authorities with and without a policy than in the previous criteria. However, there are still differences. Almost twice as many authorities with a policy are implementing developments that require any kind of financial input.

The figures for authorities with a policy under development are interesting as, in many cases, they are developing services that show a high financial commitment. They are making significantly more developments that require continual financial input and capitol investment than both those with and without a policy. These authorities were not considered in detail but further research into what their current practices are and their reasons for developing a policy is recommended.

6.3.2 (d) Are developments on a service-wide or a branch library level?

During the research the difference in the level of developments was not obvious. This criterion has been used to explore this initial observation. There is little suggestion in the literature to favour one level of improvement over another and so these results take a completely exploratory approach to this particular issue.

Percentage of developments made on a service-wide and a branch library level

Policy status	Service-wide level	Branch Library level
No policy	25%	37.5%
With policy	30%	30%
Policy under development	62.5%	12.5%

Table 6.3.2d

There is little difference between those with and without a policy in service developments on both levels. Once again, the most significant difference is in those with a policy under development. It is possible that when an authority plans service-wide developments there is a higher need to support decisions with evidence and this, in retrospect, has been acknowledged by the planned development of a community profiling policy.

Table 6.3.2d shows that authorities with a policy are spreading their service developments evenly across branch libraries and the whole service. Those without a policy are making 12.5% more service developments on a branch library level than on a service wide level. During the interview, no qualitative evidence was produced to suggest why this was. It is likely that further research into the use of different community profiling methodologies may explore this particular issue.

6.3.2 (e) Developments have been made to improve opening hours or ICT

This criterion was used as opening hours and ICT were common examples of service developments given in the questionnaires. It was important to establish if there was a pattern in which authorities were developing these. Opening hours have been cited in the literature as needing to reflect the needs of the community more

accurately:

'…*opening hours focused on the need of the community.'*

<div align="right">(Advisory Council on Libraries, 2004)</div>

The advent of the People's Network and the 'Government's commitment to give everyone in the UK the opportunity to use computers and access the Internet' (Museums, Libraries and Archives, 2004) has encouraged libraries to improve ICT provision.

Percentage of developments made to improve opening hours or ICT

Policy status	% of developments that fulfill the criteria
No policy	20.8%
With policy	10%
Policy under development	25%

<div align="right">*Table 6.3.2e*</div>

More developments by authorities without a policy have been made to improve opening hours or ICT issues. This correlates with Table 6.3.2a in which it was also found that authorities without a policy relied on information from existing users in a high percentage of their developments. It is likely that information used to find out if opening hours and ICT provision are adequate is taken from the annual PLUS Survey and other specific surveys of existing users.

6.3.2 (f) The developments use new ideas and think broadly about service provision

As suggested by Matorasso (1998), public libraries can be inconsistent, while some are innovative and responsive to the changing needs of the community others define themselves by buildings and resources. The notion of innovation was explored through the examples. Examples of more innovative developments include:

'Gypsy and Traveller site with no library provision, tried to introduce a Mobile stop but vehicle couldn't access the site so a deposit collection of books has been set up.'

'We had limited material in Gujarati and larger collections of Bengali but the Indian community felt that their languages were not represented in our collections. We worked with the community and conducted a survey through community meeting places…'

Percentage of developments using new ideas and thinking broadly about service provision

Policy status	% of developments that fulfill the criteria
No policy	8.3%
With policy	25%
Policy under development	25%

Table 6.3.2f

The results of this analysis suggest that those with a policy are able to implement developments that involve new ideas or think more broadly about service provision.

Although it is a subjective decision to make without researching in more detail all the examples provided, Robson (1993) suggests that tacit knowledge is a valid tool for research in naturalistic enquiry. Considering that the tables have been used to identify general trends rather than specific statistics, the notion of subjectivity is less problematic.

6.3.2 (g) Information about the development is non-specific and lacking detail

In the examples provided there was a noticeable difference in the detail about each of the developments between those with and without a policy. The lack of detail is highlighted in examples such as:

'Results from Mobile Library consultation and some other smaller projects.'

'Recent Portuguese settlement to work in a meat factory.'

'People's Network.'

Considering that detail, as suggested by Esterby-Smith (1991), adds reliability to information it was important to explore if authorities with a policy were any more able to provide evidence that made examples reliable.

<u>**Percentage of examples that are non-specific and lacking detail**</u>

Policy status	% of developments that fulfill the criteria
No policy	**58.3%**
With policy	**15%**
Policy under development	**25%**

Table 6.3.2g

Those with a policy were generally more able to cite specific cases of service developments and provide details that made the development reliable. Those without a policy generally provided generic answers that failed to cite where the development took place, who was involved and the difference it had made.

6.4 Chapter summary

- **Examples of service developments influenced by community profiling can be grouped into two categories. These categories can be sub-divided into specific types of development:**

<u>**Targeting excluded groups**</u>   <u>**Improving existing services**</u>

Improving stock selection   **Changes in opening hours**

Changing procedures   **Changes in ICT provision**

Introduction of new services   **Reconsideration of Library buildings**

Targeting advertising   **Planning Mobile Library routes**

Securing funding   **Improving services to specific users**

    Introduction of new staffing roles

Differences in service developments were identified between authorities with and without a policy. These are outlined below:

- **Authorities with a policy are using community profiling to influence more service developments than authorities without a policy. Across the UK, authorities with a policy have an average of 1.7 service developments per library, this compares to 0.8 by authorities without a policy.**

- **37.5% of service developments made by authorities without a policy use information from existing users only. Authorities with a policy gave no examples of service developments that had only used information from existing users and had worked within the community on 45% of their service developments. 12.5% of service developments from authorities without a policy had involved working within the community.**

- **Twice as many service developments from authorities with a policy require continual financial input and capitol investment than those without a policy.**

- **Little difference was identified between those with and without a policy in terms of the level at which developments took place. Both made similar numbers of service developments to branch level and service-wide developments. The only difference was that those with a policy spread their developments equally between branch level and service-wide level while those without a policy made 12.5% more service developments on a branch level.**

- **Twice as many service developments are being made to improve opening hours and ICT by authorities without a policy.**

- **Authorities with a policy were making 16.7% more developments that could be considered innovative than those without a policy. There was also a difference in the detail given in examples by those with and without a policy. 15% of authorities with a policy provided examples that were non-specific or lacking in detail, this compares to 58.3% from those without a policy. Those with a policy provided more examples with details including the type of information used, how it was gathered, what changes were made and how they affected users than those without a policy.**

Chapter 7: The problems that are being experienced in association with community profiling

7.1 Introduction to results

During the research, interviewees highlighted specific problems associated with community profiling. In order to produce a valid study on the effectiveness of community profiling it is important to explore these problems.

The problems identified fell into two distinct types of problem: problems to do with sources of information and organisational problems. Each is discussed in the following sections.

7.2 Problems with community profiling information

As one online discussion respondent highlighted:

'The biggest problem with Community Profiling is identifying what any library's catchment area is, especially in urban areas, where there is much multiple use. We don't have the resources to do this properly at the moment…'

Questionnaire respondents had experienced a similar problem:

'We have started a similar pilot project, using the catchment area as defined by the postcodes of the people who have joined that

branch. The problem then is linking electoral data to that

catchment area, when it is easier to pull figures from ward

statistics.'

'When we rely on other people's data, we have to use their

definition and parameters. We use what we can get, but we're

hoping for better consistency of definition when the Community

Profile Model comes out.'

As the quotes above suggest, libraries using community profiling are often

finding it hard to locate and interpret information relevant to their catchment area.

They also highlight the fact that they are bound by other people's 'definitions and

parameters' of *community*. As suggested, ward statistics are easily available. The

census provides information on ward level and, is used by 90.4% of the authorities

that responded to the questionnaire. 34.6% of questionnaire respondents stated that

they defined their communities in terms of catchment areas. These statistics

suggest that the sources of information available to assist library staff in community

profiling are, currently, not ideally developed for effective use by libraries.

An associated problem, was highlighted by the *case 1* respondent:

'Liasing with Area Officers is a good way to work with the

community as it doesn't duplicate effort however, these profiles

can have an emphasis on economic regeneration as they are

produced by the council.'

The Library Authority of *case 1*, as outlined in chapter 5, doesn't produce

Community Profiles itself but uses profiles that are produced by the Local Council

by Area Officers. The library access the information through liaison with the Area Officers. In the example of *case 1*, it is not the definition of catchment areas that is the problem (Area Officers work within neighbourhoods that correspond to catchment areas) but the slightly different contexts in which the Library and the Council operate.

It was acknowledged by interviewees that statistics themselves could be deceptive:

'[Pushto was] identified as a need by a local councillor. We were surprised at the size of the expressed need so did some more research and found that while many people within the Pakistani community might converse in this dialect the number who could 'read' the language and required it rather than Urdu was far less.'

Case 1 continued to suggest that it is not just statistical data that can be unreliable, even qualitative data cannot always be fully relied upon:

'The community representatives tend to be of the older generation and don't always represent their community as well as they think.'

The complexity of community profiling information has lead to *case 2* introducing training workshops. These have been in data interpretation and using statistics for service planning and have been provided for all staff involved in community profiling:

'We didn't expect them to know how to do these new tasks…training in analysis was given to the staff so they could interpret community data…'

The ability of staff to effectively utilise statistics had also been problematic for **case 2**, as she suggests:

'…for the first three years staff came up with quite inward looking targets [based on community statistics]…which were doable but didn't think widely about the community.'

As suggested by **case 1**, working with the council does avoid the duplication of effort. Within interviews, and through studying examples of Community Profiles, the duplication of effort was particularly noticeable in Reference Community Profiles. Despite, both the interviewee's of authorities that have a Reference Community Profile stating in the questionnaire that they define their communities by catchment area, both Reference Community Profiles were based on the nearest ward information. Ward information is already readily available through the census and also, as the literature review suggested, by many council intranets and websites. While individual libraries may benefit from access to a Community Profile it is unlikely to use all the information available on a community at any one time.

The duplication of effort was also considered in terms of the libraries role in service provision by the **case 1** interviewee:

'We can't respond to community profiling in isolation. You need skills, resources and knowledge on specific subjects. For example,

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basic skills in the community. We do not have the knowledge to

address this alone and there is no point in duplicating the effort

that professionals in the area already put in. It's best to try and

work in partnership.'

This comment by the interviewee highlights the fact that authorities must be willing to respond to information found. Community profiling is also a way of identifying potential partnerships in the area.

The literature warns against the collection of 'nice to know' information as it can become out of date quickly (Beal, 1985). However, it cannot be denied that Libraries *should* have access to this information along with many other council departments and local organisations. This brings into question who is most suitable to be creating traditional Community Profiles that contain statistical and infrastructural community information and whose role is it to provide this information, the Council or the Library?

7.3 Organisational problems

An issue that may pave the way for further problems is if the authority, or staff within the authority, do not see the value in community profiling or are not committed to it. A comment by one interviewee raises the question of if authorities who, in the questionnaires suggested they considered community profiling irrelevant (13.8%), would want to implement community profiling strategies:

'We don't, as yet, feel forced into developing community profiles

but our stance on them has definitely been influenced by these

documents [Framework for the Future, Revision on Public Library

Standards]…I'm not keen on a National Standard for community profiling.'

The *case 1* interviewee suggested that cultural ideology played a crucial role in the Library Service. 10.3% of authorities that answered the questionnaire considered their staff to have sufficient knowledge about their community. However, the literature and research question this opinion. Beal (1985) directly states:

'…most librarians will say they know their community but how well do they really know it?'

One interviewee also contradicted the suggestion that staff have enough knowledge about their community to make community profiling irrelevant:

'It certainly gave an insight into the community when I was doing the work on compiling it- quite a few surprises (no mosque for example- proves you can't assume you know an area just because you've lived and worked there all your life).'

The perceived value of an idea may make a large contribution to how successful that idea is going to become. Without the support and encouragement of individuals within the organisation it is unlikely to succeed. This is suggested by the *case 1* respondent:

'Undoubtedly, it's enthusiastic individuals that make things happen. Value comes from knowledgeable, skilled and dedicated staff…'

The perceived value of community profiling can make a significant difference to how effectively it is utilised. The interviewee who was asked to complete three Community Profiles but, in fact, had only completed one had not seen the value in what she was doing. The Profile was intended for stock selection but had never been used:

'It sits in a draw and has no influence on stock selection or management…I suppose it could be useful for service provision but updating every five years is no good in areas that change quickly.'

In this particular case, the interviewee could not see the value for two reasons. Firstly that the information wasn't updating regularly enough to be useful and secondly, it was highlighted by the interviewee, that her authority was considering centralised stock selection. Both these factors imply that the method of community profiling was not fully considered by the authority. The interviewee also stated that:

'…it's never been asked for by management.'

Without the commitment and endorsement by the authority it is unlikely staff will fully utilise community profiling or see the value in it. The issue of centralised stock selection also suggests that authorities should consider how community profiling could be used to suit their particular authority before introducing it. The development of a Community Profile for stock provision clearly sends mixed messages to staff of an authority that are considering centralised stock selection.

Despite the acknowledgement by the *case 1* respondent that positive change takes enthusiastic individuals, he also suggests that an appropriate structure is needed to support this:

'However, it can't just be left to individuals. Without a structure in place the progress will stop if individuals leave or are no longer responsible for that area.'

He continues to suggest that the formalisation of encouraging change, which has so far relied on enthusiasm, is something that requires developing in his authority.

This formalisation of procedures may also assist another associated problem of community profiling. The communication channels of an organisation are important for all aspects of the service. In terms of community profiling, communication channels allow information to be shared, disseminated and, therefore, fully utilised.

An improvement in communication was cited as needing development by both case studies:

Case 1

'Currently Community Development Librarians are not linking up with the Area Officers. This is an area that perhaps needs more training.'

Case 2

'…using the Intranet, particularly for sharing The Model Community information, that's something we'd like to do in the near future.'

The ability to share information would also reduce the duplication of effort, as discussed earlier.

The most commonly cited reason for not having a community profiling policy by questionnaire respondents was that there was 'insufficient time or resources'. However, this was not cited as a problem by any interviewees. This questions whether enough is known about community profiling by authorities and whether community profiling is still associated with the traditional practice of producing a substantial reference document.

7.4 Chapter summary

- **The problems identified fitted into two categories:**
  Problems with community profiling information
  Organistional problems

Problems with community profiling information

- **It was commented that libraries are bound by other peoples 'definitions and parameters'. The inability to find information that directly relates to catchment areas was cited as a problem. Ward information is easily available but skills are needed to interpret its relevance for catchment areas. Considering that 36.4% of libraries define their communities by catchment area there are few sources available to support them.**

- **It was stated that statistics could be deceptive. Qualitative information often relied on older representatives of community groups who do not always present unbiased information. The consideration of both statistical and qualitative information to increase reliability was not always used.**

- **Interpretation of data by staff was identified as a problem when using community profiling information for planning. Information was not always understood in its widest context by staff responsible for using the information.**

- **There were instances of the duplication of effort, especially within the Reference Community Profiles. Information from Intranets and Council Websites was repeated in the examples studies.**

- **The Reference Community Profiles studied had no formal plans for being regularly updated.**

Organisational problems

- **A lack of endorsement or follow-up from management of staff completing reference Community Profiles can lead to a decline in the perceived value of the profile. This results in the Profile not being used or updated.**

- **Contradictions between the reason for community profiling and developments of the authority lead to ineffective community profiling. The development of a Community Profile for stock selection was introduced in an authority that was considering centralised stock selection.**

- **It was identified by case study interviewees that structures and procedures that allow community profiling information to be used need formalising. There is currently a reliance on the enthusiasm, skills and knowledge of individuals.**

- **An area cited for development was that of disseminating and sharing information with colleagues, departments and organisations. Intranets were not used to share information by any of the authorities interviewed.**

Chapter 8: Conclusions and Recommendations

8.1 Introduction

The question of how Library Authorities are using community profiling to learn about their communities and respond to what they learn has been explored in this study through the following objectives:

- To explore why libraries are using or not using community profiling.

- To identify the community profiling methodologies being used.

- To explore how community profiling is being used to identify need and influence service development.

- To identify problems associated with community profiling.

The citation of community profiling in national reports has brought this study into a contemporary context. The issue of community profiling is of increasing interest to Library Authorities, this makes the conclusions and recommendations particularly relevant at this time.

8.2 An overview of the statistics

- 98.1% of Library Authorities gather information from external sources as well as existing users in order to develop services.

- The most commonly used sources for gathering information are the Library Management System, the Local Council and the Census.

- 54.7% of Library Authorities do not have a community profiling policy. The most commonly cited reason for this is that there is insufficient time and resources.

- 22.6% of Library Authorities do have a community profiling policy and 20.8% have a policy under development. The most frequently cited reasons for this is that communities are becoming more complex and that, in those authorities, the whole service needs developing.

8.3 Why libraries are using community profiling

Three main areas benefit from community profiling and were cited as reasons for using it:

<div style="border:1px solid black">

SOCIAL INCLUSION

Understanding the needs and cultures of the community
Understanding the barriers to use
Raising staff awareness of different community groups
Increasing the ability of the library to confront prejudice
Encouraging socially excluded groups

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<div style="border:1px solid black">

PLANNING

Determining how relevant services and stock are to the community
Reconsidering Mobile Library Routes
Identifying how and where outreach services need developing
Influencing the recruitment and selection process

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<div style="border:1px solid black">

PERFORMANCE

Determining how accurately library membership reflects the community
Identifying gaps in service
Development of targets, Annual Library Plans and Statements
Allows the community to express their opinion on library performance

</div>

While all three areas were highlighted as benefits of community profiling, it is social inclusion that underpins all else. Social inclusion is the wider benefit that is achieved through planning and performance. Community profiling is a tool used in planning and performance. While literature that highlights the benefits of community profiling (social inclusion) is readily available, literature that provides practical help in using community profiling to improve performance and plan services is difficult to locate and access.

8.4 The methodologies that are being used

Three distinct methodologies were identified:

AS AND WHEN REQUIRED

This methodology includes all authorities that gather information about their communities but do not have a policy. Authorities profile communities continually or as and when required. Information is most commonly collated with other information found and passed onto Librarians. There are no guidelines to stipulate what is gathered, when it's gathered and what is done with it.

AS A REFERENCE DOCUMENT

As a reference document, information is used to produce a traditional Community Profile. The reasons for its production vary between authority as do their size and contents. Reference Community Profiles more commonly gather statistical data rather than qualitative data to determine community demographics and local facilities.

AS PART OF AN INTEGRATED STRATEGY

Community profiling in this methodology, is used as one of many tools in achieving a wider target. Community profiling can be used a number of ways depending on the wider target. What is common is that community profiling is used to gather specific information that will be used for a specific purpose. Authorities using this methodology emphasis the triangulation of methods to achieve targets and so community profiling is not seen as an objective in itself.

In comparison to the other methodologies, fewer authorities using community profiling as and when required collect information periodically or apply the information to procedures that increase its effectiveness.

Doubts exist over whether a Reference Community Profile is an efficient method of gathering information for influencing service developments. Unless the

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Profile is updated regularly, it does not represent the community accurately. Considering that changes in a community are likely to be small but regular, the updating of a large profile is uneconomical. It also raises the question of whose role it is to be creating Reference Community Profiles that contain statistical and infrastructural community information, the Council or the Library? After all, a Reference Community Profile, that is updated regularly and contains information about each ward or smaller, could be a valuable reference document for many council departments, local businesses and citizens. The use of community profiling through an integrated strategy avoids this problem. By taking the specific information they need they save time and only gather what is relevant. They are then able to follow this up through qualitative research, liaison and outreach.

Of all the methodologies identified, the use of community profiling as part of an integrated strategy seemed the most appropriate for the Public Library and Information Service. Authorities using this methodology attributed the use of partnerships and networking opportunities to community profiling. They also stated that it was highly valuable in funding bids, this wasn't mentioned by authorities using the other two methodologies. There was a higher awareness of avoiding the duplication of effort by those using this methodology.

8.5 Influences on service development

Service developments influenced by community profiling came under two categories:

TARGETING EXCLUDED GROUPS	IMPROVING EXISTING SERVICES
Improving stock selection	**Changes in opening hours**
Changing procedures	
	Changing ICT provision
The introduction of new services	**Reconsideration of Library buildings**
Targeting advertising	**Planning Mobile Library routes**
Securing funding	**Improving services to specific users**
	Introduction of new staffing roles

Although authorities both with and without a policy provided examples of how they had used community profiling to influence service developments, there were distinct differences between the types of developments between authorities.

Authorities with a policy are making more service developments per library (1.7 per library) than those without (0.8 per library). This suggests that community profiling, used as part of a formal procedure, is more effective than community profiling used as and when required.

Authorities without a policy rely more often on information from existing users alone to implement service developments. Authorities with a policy use information gathered from within the community on significantly more of their developments than those without a policy. This suggests that those with a policy are more conscious about gathering data from non-users and the wider community than those without a policy.

Twice as many service developments from authorities with a policy require financial input than those without a policy. This suggests a higher financial commitment to developments that are influenced by information about the community from authorities with a policy.

Authorities with a policy make more developments that can be considered innovative than those without a policy. In the questionnaires, they were also more likely give specific and detailed answers than authorities without a policy. This suggests that the existence of a formal policy increases the use of community profiling information in the development of specific services.

8.6 Problems with community profiling

Problems associated with community profiling fall into two categories:

Problems with community profiling information
Organisational problems

When gathering information, libraries are bound by other people's definitions and parameters. 36.4% of authorities define their communities by catchment area while the majority of information used defines communities by ward. This suggests that sources used are not currently appropriate for effective use by libraries. There were few sources available that supported the information needed to profile catchment areas.

The triangulation of sources is not being utilised by authorities. This is particular important as the research suggests that both statistical and qualitative data each have their own reliability problems. The interpretation of data by staff is also a problem; information is not always understood in its widest context or fully

utilised. This suggests that training those involved with using community profiling increases its effectiveness.

The duplication of effort experienced in Reference Community Profiles questions who is most suitable to be producing a large Community Profile. Reference Community Profiles often contained the same information that was on Council Intranets and Websites with little added-value information.

A lack of formality in community profiling combined with little endorsement or follow-up work from management results in a low perceived value in community profiling from staff. This, in turn, makes community profiling ineffective.

Contradictions between the reason for community profiling and developments in the authority can reduce the effectiveness of the policy. This suggests that authorities should develop community profiling policies that suit their particular authority's structures, beliefs, resources and priorities.

There is a reliance on the enthusiasm, skills and knowledge of individual staff to successfully use community profiling. This suggests that more structures and formalities need to be used with community profiling in order for its wide-spread use to be effective.

The sharing and dissemination of community profiling information was highlighted by authorities as being an area for development. Intranets would be of mutual benefit but are not currently being utilised by Library Authorities as a way of sharing information or communicating with other departments.

8.7 Recommendations

Two sets of recommendations have been made:

a.   Recommendations for the implementation of best practice

b.   Recommendations for further research

8.7.a. The implementation of best practice

Define the role of the Community Profiler

The research uncovered a significant duplication of effort between the Library

Authority and the Local Council. Community Profiles produced by libraries often

replicate information already available from Council Intranets and Websites. Many

Councils are starting to collate their information into publicly available Community

Profiles. It is recommended that, before deciding to produce a Community Profile as

a reference document, Library Authorities carefully consider if it is their responsibility

to be producing the document in this form. The proposal of a joint development

should be considered in cases where no Community Profile exists as this would

give the opportunity for the Library Authority to suggest what level and type of

information would be useful to know.

Find the most suitable method

Community profiling practices have been hard to generalise in this study. This

indicates that the most suitable community profiling method varies between

authorities. Library Authorities should carefully consider the following before

deciding upon a policy:

What will we use the information for?

Who will be responsible for each stage of the process and do they have the skills?

What type of information is going to be most useful?

Who are our community and how do we define them/ communicate with them/

provide for them?

How can we ensure information remains up-to-date?

Is anybody else already doing this?

What will we need to support this procedure?

What information will we respond to?

Collect qualitative knowledge

Some of the most effective uses of community profiling have come from authorities

that value qualitative knowledge alongside the statistics. They have gathered this

through networking, liaison, outreach and the gathering of staff knowledge already

held within the Service. The development and support of the Community Librarian

role has enabled authorities to establish links within the community that have been

used to influence service developments and encourage new users.

Use formal procedures and ensure efficient structures are in place

Authorities have identified a lack of formalisation as a problem in community

profiling. For information to be gathered, processed, analysed and used effectively

the placement of formal procedures is recommended. Targets should be made as

often as appropriate to ensure information is effectively utilised and becomes

associated with positive change with both staff and users. The Library Authority

should also ensure that appropriate structures exist within the organisation for the

policy to be supported at every stage.

8.7.b Further research

The effectiveness of different community profiling methodologies

Unfortunately, this study did not gather enough first hand information to explore the degrees of effectiveness of the different community profiling methodologies identified:

As and when required

As a Reference Community Profile

As part of an integrated strategy

Although these methodologies were explored in terms of how they work in practice their ability to use community profiling effectively was not fully investigated.

The effectiveness of community profiling as a tool for service development compared to other methods

Although the study demonstrated that community profiling, used as part of a formal policy, is more effective than community profiling used without a policy, it cannot be concluded that community profiling is more effective than other tools for service development.

Exploration of authorities with a community profiling policy under development

This study has not explored in detail the statistics found from authorities with a policy under development. However, a large percentage (62.5%) of the developments made by these authorities were on a service-wide level and were considered innovative. As these policies develop, it would be interesting to explore how they compare with the methodologies that have already been outlined and what

information they are using to decide what kind of policies to have. This would be particularly appropriate as decisions they make about how they will use community profiling may coincide with the Revision of Public Library Standards.

An audit of the tools available for Public Libraries to effectively profile catchment areas

The research identified a difficulty in using available resources to appropriately profile catchment areas of libraries. This is significant as many authorities define their community by catchment area while information is most easily available by ward.

Developments of Community Profiles by Local Councils

The research highlighted confusion over whose role it is to be producing a Community Profile as a reference document. While some Council Authorities already have them available on the Websites others rely on The National Statistics to provide citizens with information. Since Libraries, along with other departments, would benefit from Community Profiles that include information from Council Departments as well as the Census, research to explore how Local Council's are collecting, collating and sharing information about their communities is recommended.

Exploration of connections between Library Authorities with and without a policy

The study identified patterns in the distribution of authorities with and without a policy. Further investigation of this would be appropriate in conjunction with the recommendation to explore community profiling methodologies. It may be the case that certain authority types are able to use community profiling effectively because

of a particular characteristic of the organisation or location. Identifying common characteristics may help authorities wishing to develop a policy.

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APPENDIX A

Reproduction of the on-line discussion posting

Posted: 24th June 2004

To: Chartered Library and Information professionals discussion list

http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/LIS-CILIP.html

From: Laura Ewart

Subject: Community profiling in public libraries

Hello

I'm a Librarianship student at Sheffield University and am looking at the use (or non-use) of community profiling in public libraries throughout the UK for my dissertation.

Are you aware if your library has a community profiling strategy?

Are you part of a management team who uses council data, the census or online resources to find out about your community?

Are you a Community Librarian who is frustrated by not having enough time to go out into the community and discover new users or do you, in contrast, receive regular information from management about new groups in the community and their needs?

Are you a Librarian who feels they could benefit from more regular community information to assist with stock selection and service provision?

Do you have your own ideas about improving knowledge about your community?

I will be sending out questionnaires to Library Authorities but any, more informal, comments regarding this would also be enlightening. Thanks for reading.

Laura Ewart

APPENDIX B

Community Profiling in Public Libraries Questionnaire

E-mailed: 1st July 2004
Response Rate: 26.4%

COMMUNITY PROFILING

To be completed by the Service Development Manager or other relevant Personnel

I am an MA Librarianship student at Sheffield University, researching the use of community profiling in public libraries for my dissertation. The information you provide will help to form an overall picture of what strategies and practices are being used throughout the UK. **Please note that no individual authority will be identified in my dissertation.** Results will be posted on the CPLIS website (**http://cplis.shef.ac.uk/**) towards the end of the year.

Please type your answers into the spaces provided and return to lip03le@shef.ac.uk or print off and send to Laura Ewart, 658A Mansfield Rd, Sherwood, Nottingham, NG5 2GA by Wednesday 14th July. If you have any problems returning the Questionnaire by this date please e-mail me.

Thank you

Laura Ewart

In this questionnaire the term 'Community Profiling' refers to information gathered about a community to inform management decisions. It does **not** refer to community information gathered for use as a public information resource.

Q1. Which Library Authority do you work for?

Q2. What is your Job Title?

Q3. Does your library authority have a community profiling policy?
Place an X in the relevant bracket

No   [ ] Go to Q3a
Yes   [ ] Go to Q3b
It is left up to individual libraries   [ ] Go to Q4
One is currently under development   [ ] Go to Q3b

Q3a. You answered 'No' to Q3, what are the reasons for this?
Place an X in the brackets of all that apply and continue to Q4

Frontline staff have sufficient knowledge about their communities   [ ]
There is insufficient time or resources to develop a policy   [ ]
It would be unsustainable   [ ]
Communities change too quickly for it to be useful   [ ]
We may be unable to respond to findings   [ ]
Other (please explain)   [ ]

Q3b. You answered 'Yes' or 'One is under development' to Q3, what are the reasons for this?
Place an X in the brackets of all that apply

Librarians have less time to get to know their community   [ ]
Communities are becoming more complex   [ ]
Service provision needed developing in the:
-Whole service   [ ]
-Mobile Library service   [ ]
-Central/Main Library   [ ]
-Community Libraries   [ ]
-A particular Community Library   [ ]
Some community groups are insufficiently provided for   [ ]
Other (please specify)   [ ]

Q4. How do you define *community* when gathering information?

_____

Q5. Which of the following resources do you use to collect information about communities within your authority?
Place an X in the brackets of all that apply and state how you access them and what information you take from them. Please use the space underneath each listed resource to complete your answer.

National Statistics	**[ ]**
The Basic Skills Agency	**[ ]**
The DfES	**[ ]**
Census Information	**[ ]**
Local Council Publications/ Information	**[ ]**
Other Council departments	**[ ]**
Library Statistics/ Management System	**[ ]**
Your own community surveys	**[ ]**
Community Information databases (please state which)	**[ ]**
Library Staff (please state how this is gathered)	**[ ]**
Existing Library Users (please state how this is gathered)	**[ ]**
Informal Sources (please state how this is gathered)	**[ ]**
Other (please specify)	**[ ]**

Q7. At what level do you gather information regarding your communities? Place an X in the brackets of all that apply

County level	**[ ]**
Ward level	**[ ]**
Enumeration District level	**[ ]**
Catchment area level of branch library	**[ ]**

Q8. How often do you gather information about your community?
Place an X in the relevant bracket

Continually	**[ ]**
Annually	**[ ]**

When the census is published	[ ]
When services are under-used	[ ]
Other (please specify)	[ ]

Q9. What happens to any information that is gathered?
Place an X in the brackets of all that apply

It is collated with information found from all other sources	[ ]
An action plan is made	[ ]
Information is shared with other organisations or departments	[ ]
Information is made available to Librarians	[ ]
Information is made available to library users	[ ]
Other (please specify)	[ ]

Q10. Do you have any examples of how you have directly used information gathered about the community to introduce new services, encourage new users, promote services or develop existing services?

I would like to conduct telephone interviews with a sample of my respondents. If you are happy for me to ring or e-mail you please put your contact details below.
Name:
E-Mail:
Telephone:

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Your input is integral to the success of this dissertation and is much appreciated.

Please return you completed questionnaire to lip03le@shef.ac.uk or
print off and send to Laura Ewart, 658A Mansfield Rd, Sherwood,
Nottingham, NG5 2GA.

Please feel free to include additional comments below this sentence.

APPENDIX C

Copy of e-mailed interview

Interview 1

Sent: 19th July 204

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1.   How many individual libraries are currently producing Community Profiles?

2.   How long have Community Profiles (CP) been used to influence stock selection?

3.   Do staff receive any special training so they can create CP's?

4.   Are CP's made available to management?
   a.   Is it possible to spot county wide patterns from individual library's CP's
   b.   Do the current CP's influence core services?

5.   Are there areas other than stock selection for which you think CP would be useful?
   a.   Do you intend / would you like to develop these in the future?
   b.   What would the barriers to developing these be?
   c.   What resources would be needed to develop these?

6.   Have you been influenced by Framework for the Future, Revision of Library Standards or other documents in your consideration of Community Profiling?
   a.   Do you feel forced into developing CP?
   b.   Do you feel there should be specific standards or procedures enforced for CP on a national level?

7.   Are you aware of any other authorities that use Community Profiling or have a well-developed policy?

APPENDIX D

Copy of e-mailed interview

Interview 2

Sent: 30th July 2004

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1. How do the libraries in the Community profile relate to catchments areas?

2. Was this CP a council initiative or a LIS initiative, in either case how and why did you become involved?

3. Did you work alone or in consultation with other staff or management?

4. How long did the CP take to compile and produce?

5. Did you have any precious experience of Community Profiling?

6. Were you given a blueprint of what the profile should contain or were you responsible for deciding the most important factors? If a blueprint was provided, do you know what considerations were made as to what information should be collected?

7. Did you feel you were just collecting data or did you need to do a significant amount of analysis and interpretation to make the information suitable for the CP?

8. Were you given any training in preparation for carrying out the CP?

9. Who was the CP originally intended for?

10. What was it's original purpose, eg for planning, marketing, stock selection?

11. Have other LIS staff be given copies of the CP?

12. How aware, in your opinion, are staff of the existence of the CP?

13. **What has the CP been consulted for so far?**

14. **Have you had any feedback from users or readers of the CP?**

15. **As far as you know, have any links been made with community groups that were identified in the CP?**

16. **Are there set plans to update the CP periodically?**

17. **Is this CP available on the council or LIS Intranet?**

18. **Are you aware of any further developments for Community Profiling use in your Library Authority?**

19. **How useful have you found both the process of compiling the CP and the document itself in service development?**