LOW ACHIEVERS LIFELONG LEARNERS

An Investigation into the Impact of the public library on educational disadvantage

by

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Abstract

The study aims to investigate the impact of the public library service on educational disadvantage. It focuses on its impact on adults who left school without recognised qualifications (low achievers). It explores the ways in which the public library service supports formal learners, helps adults return to formal learning, and acts as a resource for the independent learner.

The study undertook questionnaire surveys of over 650 adult learners, and over 1000 library users in two English local authorities. A sample of respondents was interviewed by telephone. A national survey identified the extent of provision of adult learners in English and Welsh Public Library Authorities.

The study found that low achieving adults are heavy users of the public library service but have special learning needs that are not always recognised. They may be resistant to using ICT and have difficulty evaluating the quality of the printed materials. Because of bad experiences at school some do not recognise that what they are doing through the public library (a pleasurable activity) is learning.

The study concludes that public libraries need to focus IT initiatives and user skills training on libraries serving areas of educational disadvantage where the majority of library users may be 'low achievers'. Staff need to be trained in providing learner support and educational information, advice and guidance as well as IT skills. Partnerships with education providers are valuable. Ways in which public libraries can improve their services to disadvantaged learners are identified.

Author details

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The Public Library and learning

"I didn't do brilliantly academically, but I would have done much, much worse without the silence and the safe space and the books and the help in finding information for my work at school. If you ask people they are so willing to help. I've loved them since I was small, and they are essential. If it hadn't been for libraries I'd probably be out sweeping the streets by now. In fact, I only recently found out that I suffer from extreme dyslexia, and so the public library even helped me overcome dyslexia" (Hadfield user)

"At my public library I can access the Internet at no cost. This is great educationally. Just having easy access to a wide range of books, videos etc means that I can dip in and out of different subjects, different authors etc. which can only be beneficial in terms of opening one's mind to different things. Books and the other services that libraries now offer can be the key that opens the door to a great many opportunities." (Southey User)

"You see, I'm the sort of bloke who gets bored and just wants to try something. I'm always nipping down for books on various things like carpentry and foreign languages."
(Swadlincote user)

"They cater for everybody. If you're young they have got people there to encourage and advise you, to read you stories and to cultivate a love of the printed word in you. They've got about half a dozen computers there for you. They try to encourage the older people to come in and read books and the papers even if they aren't members, and every word you read is another part of the jigsaw we call education." (Swadlincote user)

"A love of reading is a key to all other areas. The ideas you get from reading are important, I've got children now and the library is one of the few places where they'll actually sit still. The experiences that you can get through reading are very important."(Ilkeston user)

"It is an amazing privilege to be able to read and enjoy books and other resources on any subject, for free, whenever I want to. Whether it is for study or pleasure libraries are an excellent, easy to use resource. They enable me to broaden my horizons (educationally and otherwise) without denting my bank balance!" (Chesterfield user)

"The knowledge that is there. There's so much more that you can do like using the computers. Its an information centre – it all sorts of local things, what's going on with leaflets and things. There are displays of arts and crafts, there is a lecture theatre, there are concerts sometimes, talks. It's not just a lending library like they used to be – its far more." (Chesterfield user)

"I can sit there and it's like a wonderful bag of goodies. I trying to read all the old Derbyshire newspapers from 1785, and its superb – I know things the experts don't! When you're studying for qualifications you go in straight lines – now I wander." (Chesterfield user)

"You can order things, and they've got computers now. There is plenty of notification and leaflets especially in the larger libraries, and they've got all the further education prospectuses. It's all there in a nutshell really – anything you need to know about further education you can find at the library." (Shirebrook user)

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Key to Abbreviations

ABE   Adult Basic Education
AV   Audio Visual
BLRIC   British Library Research and Innovation Centre
BTEC   Business and Technology Education Council
CBT   Computer Based Training
CIPFA   Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
CLAIT   Computer Literacy and Information Technology
CSE   Certificate of Secondary Education
FE CATS Further Education Credit Accumulation and Transfer
FE   Further Education
GCSE   General Certificate of Education
GNVQ   General National Vocational Qualification
HE   Higher Education
IAG   Information, Advice and Guidance
ICT   Information Communications Technology
NGfL   National Grid for Learning
NOCN   National Open College Network
NOF   New Opportunities Fund
NVQ   National Vocational Qualification
PC   Personal Computer
PFI   Public Finance Initiative
PLA   Public Library Authority
TAPS   Training Access Points
TEC   Training and Enterprise Council
U3A   University of the Third Age
UCAS   University Central Admissions Systems
UfI   University for Industry
WEA   Workers' Educational Association

Executive Summary

Aims and objectives

The purpose of the study was to provide evidence for policy makers and practitioners to demonstrate the actual and potential value and impact of public libraries on those adult learners leaving school without recognised qualifications ('low achievers').

The study was concerned with the following areas:

- the ways in which the public library meets the needs of individuals and communities suffering from educational disadvantage.

- the extent to which the public library supports the formal learner.

- the extent to which the public library encourages take-up of further education.

- the extent to which the public library supports the independent learner.

- the ways in which current developments in information technology can improve the capacity of the public library to meet the needs of the educationally disadvantaged.

Methodology

Questionnaire surveys of students from four FE colleges, community education classes (local learners), users of ten libraries and all library authorities in England and Wales provided quantitative data. Interviews with learners and library users provided qualitative data.

Results

The public library and educational disadvantage

The data from the research suggests that although many low-achieving adult learners are using the public library service heavily, they are doing so predominantly for leisure and are not as aware of the potential of the public library as a learning environment as other users. The evidence suggests that public libraries are reaching low achieving adults in disadvantaged communities. In three libraries surveyed over 60% of users had no recognised qualifications. However, low educational achievers may have special learning needs that remain hidden and which the library service is not satisfying effectively.

Supporting formal Learners

The study found that low achievers are far less likely to return to formal education later in life and are more likely to be unemployed. The chief motivator for returning to learning is job-related. The research showed that there is a very strong link between public libraries and learning. The public library service was used regularly by about three quarters of the 514 formal learners surveyed. They relied primarily on printed materials, home ownership of computers being high for both achievers and low achievers participating in formal learning. The public library is already a valued resource irrespective of any initiatives it might take to meet the specific needs of learners.

Learners who use public libraries have an extremely wide range of learning interests, which the public library may have difficulty in supporting from printed material. Low achieving learners are far more easily satisfied by the library's services and appear to be far less aware of whether material is relevant or out of date. They use the public library less for study and reference.

Encouraging individuals to return to formal learning.

The library's influence in encouraging return to learning through specific Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) activities is weak. The evidence suggests that the most successful authorities are those that have active partnerships with education providers.

However, the library has a stronger influence long term in its ability to generate new learning interests through its materials provision. Many respondents recalled how browsing the public library shelves had sparked their interest in a subject and this, in turn, had led to formal learning. We believe browsing in a public library has not been sufficiently recognised as a powerful tool for encouraging learning, both formal and informal.

Supporting the independent learner

Low achievers appeared to use the library less for learning than achievers but much casual or incidental learning is taking place. Achievers tended to recognise this but low achievers were less aware of how they were benefiting from library use.

Many low achievers associated learning with negative feelings and did not connect the pleasure of visiting a public library with learning. Objectively, both achievers and low

achievers were using a wide range of library activities and facilities for learning although, again, printed materials predominated as a resource for learning.

Of the 113 public library authorities that responded in our national survey, about a quarter trained their staff in some way to support the disadvantaged learner. Of the rest, many appreciated the need, but resources had been prioritised for ICT training. Those authorities working in partnership with others were offering the most active provision. Partnerships need to be encouraged still further, and authorities need to be aware that over-emphasis of training in ICT could lead to serious deficiencies in other areas.

Low achieving independent learners appeared to have fewer problems using the service than achievers but, in reality, were less discriminating in their assessment of service quality. User education in libraries serving disadvantaged communities is imperative if learners are to get the most out of library resources.

Library authorities were undertaking a variety of initiatives aimed at the disadvantaged user but many were limited to a small number of authorities. More effective ways must be found to encourage authorities to share successes and ideas with each other.

The impact of the public library on educational achievement.
Interviews with over a hundred library users revealed that more than eight out of ten had been library members since childhood. Of these over 80% were achievers. The majority of interviewees believed that library use had enhanced their educational achievements, both in school and as an adult. The results suggest encouraging library use in childhood should be a priority, but more attention also needs to be paid to ways in which public libraries might attract adults who are non-library users.

The impact of the public library on groups whose participation in learning is low.
The study examined the public library's impact on males, disabled users, users from ethnic minorities, and the elderly, groups whose participation in formal learning is known to be low.   Males were in the minority in all samples and reaching this group appears to be a particular challenge. The other three groups studied were using public libraries in numbers broadly proportionate to numbers in the general population although, in the case of disabled and elderly users, their use of the public library for learning was low. Although

sample numbers of ethnic minority users were small and relate to only two libraries their use of the library for learning was relatively heavy.

Members of three out of four low participating groups were well represented amongst library users and the public library has the potential to make a significant impact in supporting their informal learning and encouraging them back into formal learning.

The impact of ICT on the low achieving learner

One of the most revealing findings of the study was the huge disparity between achievers and low achievers in their use of ICT. Around three quarters of library users with recognised educational qualifications used a PC. Around three quarters of those without recognised qualifications did not. PC use is, therefore, strongly linked to academic achievement. Those low achievers who did use PCs tended to rely on the public library more for access since few had either home PCs or access at work.

There was some suggestion that the heavy reliance on printed resources was, in part, due to the inability of users to conceptualise their library needs in non-traditional terms. This was a particular issue for some low achievers.

Large numbers of those suffering from educational disadvantage are using the public library service, and many value it as an educational resource. The public library is in a key position to find ways of engaging their interest in ICT and teaching them to use it. However, to maximise its potential as a resource for all learners the public library needs to help its users to interpret their needs in terms of services offered, particularly the 'invisible' services offered through ICT. Only if this can be achieved will more of those without qualifications be admitted to the information society.

Recommendations

Supporting Formal Learners

♦ That users surveys should, from time to time, include questions about users' formal lifelong learning 'histories'. This would ensure that local librarians were aware of unexpressed needs for learning materials.

- That basic user education in information seeking skills and the evaluation of printed materials should be offered. This should be a particular priority in communities known to have high levels of educational deprivation.

- That partnerships should be forged and strengthened between the public library service and local education providers to investigate joint initiatives, mutual training and the provision of learner support in the library.

Encouraging individuals to take formal learning opportunities

- That all library authorities should form working partnerships with local education providers and others offering information, advice and guidance on learning opportunities.

- That appropriate library staff should be trained to provide learning Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) services.

- That public libraries should be more proactive in promoting and publicising formal learning opportunities.

The low achieving independent learner

- That public libraries in all authorities should recognise and develop their role as a 'first rung' provider of learning opportunities for disadvantaged people.

- That public libraries should investigate how they might provide out of hours provision for disadvantaged learners. The objective would be to provide an enhanced study environment, which might include learning 'surgeries' and small group tuition to help users relate their needs to what can be provided.

- That public libraries should seek to improve facilities for disadvantaged learners. Such improvements might include simplified guides to services, concessions with regard to fees and charges, and longer loan periods for learners.

Maximising the use of ICT by low achievers

- That public libraries should seek ways of making low achieving users aware of the value and relevance of ICT in their lives.

- That public libraries should focus ICT provision and training on libraries serving communities suffering from educational disadvantage.

- That 'Taster' training sessions should be offered for specific disadvantaged groups, particularly those with low confidence – the elderly, and disabled users. Sessions should focus on helping users to understand how ICT can help their learning and information needs as much as on practical computer skills.

Improving the public library's capacity to deliver effective learning provision.

- That the Library Association in association with the Society of Chief librarians and the Association of Senior Education and Children's Librarians should work together to develop a Support Website for libraries engaged in lifelong learning.

- That each library authority should ensure that it has an explicit policy on lifelong learning which addresses the needs of disadvantaged learners

- That library authorities should ensure that a professional librarian is designated with sufficient time and authority to deliver lifelong learning initiatives in accordance with stated policies.

- That public library authorities should develop partnerships with all relevant education, learning and Information, Advice and Guidance providers in order to share resources and enhance provision.

- That public library authorities should investigate ways of sharing good practice and successes locally and regionally. Regular exchange of experience meetings/seminars should be arranged between those responsible for lifelong learning

Acknowledgements

Chapter 1 Introduction

The Project "Low Achievers – Lifelong Learners?" resulted from a successful bid under the British Library Research and Innovation Centre's Value and Impact Call in 1998. It arose from the findings of a previous piece of BLRIC funded research into the impact of the Sheffield Libraries strike (Proctor, Usherwood and Sobczyk 1996). Some of the findings of that project suggested that, during the strike, the public library was missed most for educational reasons in those communities where only a small percentage of respondents (less than 1%) had proceeded to further or higher education. This small-scale project led to the successful bid for the current study to investigate the impact of the public library on educational low achievement and disadvantage.   The Project began in October 1999 and was completed in June 2001. This is the Report of the findings.

1.1   Aims and Objectives

The purpose of the research was to provide evidence for policy makers and practitioners to demonstrate the actual and potential value and impact of public libraries on those adult learners leaving school without recognised qualifications ('low achievers').   This reflects the fact that improving access to lifelong learning and addressing issues of social exclusion are amongst the present Government's key objectives for the public library service.   The research strategy of Resource, the successor as research funding body to BLRIC and the Library and Information Commission reflects this (Resource 2001).   One of its research aims is to: "Demonstrate the long term impact of the sector on society and the economy, beginning with learning, access and inclusion agendas."

1.1.1 Specific Aims

The specific aims of the project were to investigate the role of the public library:

a)   in supporting low-achieving students who had returned to learning later in life.

b)   in providing a resource for independent learners

c)   in encouraging learners to return to formal education.

1.1.2 Specific Objectives

More specifically the research investigated:

- the ways in which the public library meets the needs of individuals, groups and communities suffering from educational disadvantage.

- the extent to which the public library supports the independent learner.

- the extent to which the public library encourages take-up of further education.

- the ways in which current developments in information technology can improve the capacity of the public library to meet the needs of the educationally disadvantaged.

- the performance of the public library in facilitating learning outcomes, e.g. adult literacy and numeracy, employment, access to formal education.

1.2 Scope, Terms of Reference and Definitions

1.2.1 General

The study was carried out in partnership with Sheffield Library and Information Services and Derbyshire Heritage and Libraries. All colleges and libraries selected for sampling were within one or other of these authorities.

1.2.2 Low Achievers and Educational Disadvantage

We use the term 'Low Achievers' throughout the study to define those individuals leaving secondary school either without qualifications or with qualifications of a level that might be considered to reduce employment prospects. In the case of the UK this comprises those leaving school without GCSEs grades A-C, or equivalent.

In recent years there have been efforts to minimise students' feelings of failure by extending the 'pass' criteria for GCSE qualifications to grades D -G. However, it is an unpalatable truth that Grades A-C are still considered to be the only 'real' passes, and this is recognised even by students themselves as this dialogue from *Bridging the gap,* (Social Exclusion Unit 1999) shows:

> SEU member: *"Have you any GCSEs?"*
> Young person: *"No".*
> Project worker: *"Yes, you do…"*
> Young person: *"Oh yes, I've got six but they're all D–G".*

Since our respondents were likely to include both people who had completed their secondary education before the advent of GCSEs and those who had pursued vocational alternatives, we identified the most common of these equivalents (Table 1.1) with reference to UCAS (1999):

GCSE (D-G)	GCSE (A-C)	A/AS Level	Degree
NVQ level 1	NVQ level 2	NVQ level 3	NVQ level 4
GNVQ Foundation	GNVQ Intermediate	GNVQ Advanced	Professional Development Award / Certificate/Diploma
City & Guilds part 1	City & Guilds part 2	City & Guilds part 3	BTEC Continuing Education Certificate
NOCN level 1	NOCN level 2	NOCN level 3	BTEC Higher National (HNC/HND)
FE CATS level 1	FE CATS level 2	FE CATS level 3	
	BTEC First	BTEC National (ONC & OND)	
CSE Grade 2-5	CSE Grade 1		
	GCE 'O' Levels	GCE 'A' Levels	
	School Certificate		

Table 1.1   Equivalent academic qualifications

We decided to relate our definition to lack of qualifications rather than, for example, lack of specific skills, since lack of qualifications is the primary criterion used by almost all the recent literature referring to educational disadvantage, e.g. Social Exclusion Unit (1999), DfEE (1999a, 1999b), OECD (2000), McKenzie and Wurzburg (1998), Hillage et al (2000), Bowman et al (2000).

We acknowledge that some may find the use of the term 'low achievers' slightly contentious. Indeed, one potential applicant for the research associate's post decided not to apply because she felt we were stigmatising the subjects of the study. A member of our Advisory Group also felt that it did not accurately represent those individuals failed by the education system itself.

However, a search of the literature did not reveal any alternative term that was totally value free. Additionally, the term was felt to be accessible and understandable. A web search under this term produced hits from 15 different countries including the USA, Canada, and Australia, more than any other search term. The term had also been used in recent educational research in the UK, (Weeden et al 2000) and in *Empowering the Learning Community* (Library and Information Commission 2000).

The issue of culpability has also been addressed in the literature of educational disadvantage. The Irish Government's Combat Poverty Agency (1998) suggests possible reasons for educational disadvantage:

- *Pathological views*: the view that as intelligence is largely genetically determined, no amount of education is likely to make a difference in achieved performance.

- *Transmitted deprivation*: The view that poor educational attainment is due to upbringing.

- *Home based factors*: Material deprivation affects schooling through poor health, lack of resources (like books and toys) and lack of facilities (like a quiet space for study). Family size and environment can affect the degree of stimulation a child receives and so development.

- *School factors*: Disadvantage may arise from the failure of schools to respond to needs. Problems include low resources, limited curriculum, and low teacher expectations. Streaming, the restrictive examination system, and high teacher turnover reinforce these.

- *Structural views:* Structural theories relate educational disadvantage to the structure of society. Class disadvantages and poverty are reflected in educational attainment because of the combination of home and school factors.

Although the study did not investigate the causes of educational disadvantage we did ask respondents what had deterred them from further study. The last three factors listed above were all mentioned.

1.2.3 Lifelong Learners

One of the decisions we had to make at the beginning of the study was to define what we meant by 'lifelong learners' in the context of public library use. The literature on lifelong learning is voluminous and a review of this material is not within the scope of the study. For those wanting a clear and full review, Brophy et al. (1998) is a good starting point. However, it is important to understand what we mean by lifelong learning before we begin to look at the impact of public libraries. Brophy et al (1998) point out that any definition of lifelong learning is 'messy' and that no all-embracing model can be devised. Longworth, (1999) identifies over 100 definitions in the literature. NAGCELL (1999) defines lifelong learning succinctly as: "the continuous development of the skills, knowledge and understanding that are essential both for employability and personal fulfilment" (4.3). It is this definition that forms the basis of the current study.

NAGCELL's definition encompasses two basic features of lifelong learning – On the one hand its motivation may be utilitarian: "If you haven't got qualifications, you'll be on a low pay…" as one of the respondents in Bowman (2000) put it. And on the other hand it may be carried out informally simply for the satisfaction it brings.

This very broad definition reflects what one of our Advisory Group said about library use for learning "lifelong learning covers just about everything people use a public library for."

The NAGCELL definition also implicitly includes both formal and informal learning and this is important in the context of public libraries. The importance of informal learning is often neglected in the literature of lifelong learning. Infed.org (2001) provides a very comprehensive and well-referenced introduction to its value both to the individual and to society.

McGivney (1999) stresses its importance in starting people on a learning pathway but also concludes that this is not necessarily the most important outcome. It may have far wider benefits that have not yet been recognised by policy makers. Schuller et al (2001) identify a number of these potential benefits or learning outcomes. They include: self-esteem; future orientation; resilience; attitudes and values; communication capacity, and health. .

This suggested that we should not ignore the 'softer' side of lifelong learning – those respondents using the library for personal fulfilment or for informal learning.

For this reason and also to reflect the importance of lifelong learning as part of the Government's economic agenda we determined that the study should focus, primarily, on three aspects of the public library's role:

a) Individuals using the library to support formal learning.
b) Individuals using the library to identify and/or access learning opportunities.
c) Individuals using the library as a resource for informal and independent learning.

1.2.4 Returners to formal learning

One of the objectives of the study was to evaluate what impact the public library service had had on the learning histories of those who had returned to formal learning. The study focused on students enrolled in further education colleges, and 'local learners' (students taking locally based community education classes). The focus on further education was a reflection of the point made in the Kennedy Report (Further Education Funding Council 1997) that:

" It is further education which has invariably given second chances to those who were forced by necessity to make unfulfilling choices. It said 'try again' to those who were labelled as failures and who had decided education was not for the likes of them."

We included local learners in the study to make sure our sample included those whose lifestyles precluded a long-term commitment to formal education and to reflect the importance of non-accredited learning (Jackson and Whitwell 2000).

No attempt was made to investigate students enrolled on higher education courses since evidence suggested all but a tiny minority of such students would already have taken some form of access course.

Chapter 2 Low Achievers, Lifelong Learning, and Public Libraries

2.1   Low Educational Achievement: A National Issue

The focus of this study on low achievers acknowledges the fact that educational disadvantage is costly both to society and to the individual. Much of the literature on lifelong learning focuses on the economic imperative – that individuals must continue to learn after leaving school if both they and society are to prosper in a rapidly changing world. This is particularly true of reports issued from various Government Departments and international agencies over the past five years.

A recent report on the motivation of learners from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD 2000) stresses the importance of encouraging low achievers to continue learning:

> "Across the OECD, it is estimated that between 15 and 20 per cent of young people leave school without worthwhile qualifications… These facts take on new significance in an era when one of the essential survival tools for individuals – and nations – is a willingness to learn and re-learn."

When the National Grid for Learning was first proposed (Department for Education and Employment 1997) Tony Blair, in the foreword stated:

> "Education … is key to helping our businesses to compete and giving opportunities to all. That is why we intend to lift educational standards in Britain to the level of the best in the world."

In *The Learning Age,* (DfEE, 1998), the Secretary of State for Education and Employment stressed the importance of learning as the 'key to prosperity' for this country. The Labour Government put learning 'at the heart of its ambition' seeing it as essential to the future success of the nation. In an explanation of why they are attempting to create a 'learning society' the government were keen to emphasise the personal economic benefits of learning:

> "Learning …helps all of us to improve our chances of getting a job and of getting on. Learning increases our earning power" (DfEE, 1998)

McKenzie and Wurzburg (1998) reinforce the idea of the economic value of lifelong learning explaining that 'better educated individuals have, on average, higher rates of participation in the labour force, lower unemployment and higher earnings than those with low qualifications.

However, the general focus in the literature on the economic advantages of lifelong learning has had its critics. Coffield (1998) notes that

> "despite the claims in the Green Paper that learning can make a wider contribution than securing our economic future, when it comes to specifics it is the economic role of learning which continues to dominate the thinking of the DfEE."

Lwin (1998) proposes that

> "a purely industrial model for education does not encompass a learning society. To create a learning society, it should ensure for us not only economic prosperity but also political freedom, social justice and loving kindness."

In the UK the *Kennedy Report* (Further Education Funding Council, 1997) identified, as a priority, groups whose participation in further education is low, and those who have not achieved their full potential in primary and secondary education. It stressed the social cost of having a society where, educational disadvantage exacerbates a growing gulf between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'.

Cannon (1998:45) also comments on the powerlessness of those who are socially excluded and asserts that "successful lifelong learning puts the individual in the driving seat." Payne (1995) agrees that learning leads to individual and collective empowerment.

The value of lifelong learning in encouraging active citizenship was stressed by David Blunkett, the Secretary of State for Education, in the preface to *The Learning Age* (Department for Education and Employment 1998) when he quoted J. F. Kennedy:

> "Liberty without learning is always in peril, learning without liberty is always in vain."

In the UK the non-economic value of learning has recently been recognised by the setting up of a DfES research Centre: the *Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning*. It's inaugural conference conceptualised the benefits as "lying within six domains: health, citizenship, family life, old age, leisure and consumption, with employment seen as linked to all of these, particularly in early adulthood." (Bynner 2001).

Although the value of lifelong learning both socially and economically is incontrovertible it has become a particular priority since evidence shows there are very large numbers of individuals who either fall within the category of 'low achiever' or fail to take advantage of learning opportunities after the age of 16.

The Learning Age (Department for Education and Employment, 1998) points out that the country's greatest weakness is in 'our performance in basic and intermediate skills.' Almost 30% of young people fail to reach NVQ level 2 by the age of 19. Seven million adults have no formal qualification at all. A study by the OECD's Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, (OECD, 2000), also found that in the UK seven million adults, i.e. one in five, have poor literacy and numeracy skills. It reported that 'while 80% of 18 year olds from senior managerial and professional backgrounds enter higher education, only 10% from unskilled backgrounds do so.' The report goes on to say that 'only a quarter of English adults describe themselves as current learners and one in three has taken no part in education or training since leaving school.'

The Social Exclusion Unit (1999) sums up the concern about the social economic and personal impact of low achievement. It estimates that, at any one time, 161,000 (9%) of 16-18 year olds are outside education, training and work. The same report continues:

> "Compared with their peers who were in education or work between 16 and 18, non-participating young people are, by the age of 21, not only more likely to be unqualified, untrained and unemployed, but are also likely to earn less if employed, be a parent and experience depression and poor physical health. Men are also more likely to acknowledge a criminal record as a barrier to employment. Women are also more likely to live in rented accommodation and considerably more likely to be coping with the additional burdens of home-care responsibilities, and concede that these present a barrier to employment. The most powerful predictor of unemployment at age 21 is non-participation for 6 months or more at age 16–18." (paragraph 2)

For all of these reasons, widening access to learning for the educationally disadvantaged has become a national priority, and it is hoped that this study will help to inform policy in this area.

2.2   The Public Library and Lifelong Learning

The mission of the public library in the UK has always been to provide access to learning and self-improvement in addition to, and in place of, the formal education system (Batt, 1998). The Audit Commission (1997:3) describes how 'the library service was established in order to raise educational standards throughout society' a role which is 'as important now as it was in the middle of the nineteenth century.'

Hull (1999:8) asserts that in the past the public library represented the only means for 'the impecunious to continue their education.'

It is only during the last five years, however, that this role of the public library service has been acknowledged to contribute explicitly to government policy. Public libraries are now expected to be integrated into a new 'national education system' (Library and Information Commission, 1998) and to become essential partners in the creation of the learning society (Library and Information Commission 2000). Line (1997) believes that this is where the greatest change lies for the public library, since in its tradition of supporting learning it has not previously been required to place it at the centre of the service.

Although the focus of this research is the impact of public libraries on low achievers, one of our initial objectives was to determine, in detail, how the Government saw public libraries relating to its policy objectives for lifelong learning. At the time the research proposal was developed (mid 1998) that relationship was not as clear as it is now, three years later. Although the *National Grid for Learning* (Department for Education and Employment 1997) and the *New Library People's Network* (Library and Information Commission 1997) had been proposed it was still too early to separate the rhetoric from the reality. Originally we had intended to interview policy makers to clarify their intentions but as the research got under way subsequent reports from different Government departments made policies explicit and interviews unnecessary.

It is now quite clear, for instance, that the Government's policies on education, lifelong learning and social exclusion are closely linked, and this in itself justifies the focus of this study. In the preface to *Libraries for all,* Department for Culture, Media and Sport (1999), Chris Smith, the Culture Secretary states:

> "A regenerated and proactive library sector can help both individuals and communities to develop skills and confidence, and help improve social networking. It also supports community, adult and family learning…. We want libraries to play a major role in supporting formal education and life-long learning for everyone." (p.4)

The Report itself states:

> "Public libraries are a focal point for the provision of information services in the community. As such they have an important role to play in helping to combat social exclusion and promote lifelong learning." (p.7)

The report also sets out what the Government sees as the public library's explicit role:

> "Libraries should be the local learning place and champion of the independent learner. Libraries are major learning resource centres. They should ideally develop this role to include the provision of homework facilities. For the community as a whole they should focus on developing facilities for informal and self-directed learning." p.17

A follow-up report, (Department for Culture, Media and Sport 2001c) sets out the Government's vision of the contribution that libraries, museums, galleries and archives can make to tackling social exclusion and states:

> "This policy also supports other important initiatives involving libraries, museums, galleries and archives, such as the People's Network and Culture Online, which will support lifelong learning and help realise the potential of learning as a way of combating social exclusion."

The public library service is also currently seen as contributing to the Government's cultural agenda, again through its role as a facilitator of lifelong learning. A recent consultation document (Department for Culture, Media and Sport 2001d: 15) states: 'a new life for public libraries will enable cultural learning, through books as well as the internet, to last through life.'

However, our preliminary literature search suggests that many public libraries may not yet have the capacity to deliver on the Government's policies, and have been hampered not only by a lack of resources but by a lack of clarity as to what is expected in terms of service delivery.

This issue has been addressed since 1998 in two ways. Firstly, Guidelines for Annual Library Plans make the Government's expectations much clearer (Department for Culture, Media and Sport 2001a).

Amongst the key 'influences' for 2001-2002 to which authorities are asked to respond are

- the adoption of social inclusion policies, in particular those described in "Libraries, Museums, Galleries and Archives for All" and the six point plan in "Libraries for All";
- "Empowering the Learning Community", and in particular co-operation with other agencies to provide a seamless access to learning resources;
- Support for lifelong learning, including staff training.

Public library services are required to relate their aims and objectives to the local authority's lifelong learning plan. In terms of service delivery Public Library Authorities (PLAs) should draw attention to 'policies designed to develop social inclusion, including responses to lifelong learning, reader development and partnerships.' (Section 3).

In Appendix 4 of the Guidelines PLAs are asked specific questions relating to lifelong learning initiatives:

- Has the authority responded to "Empowering the Learning Community"?
- Is there evidence of satisfactory linkages with the authority's education service?
- Is there evidence of seamless access to learning materials with other learning agencies?
- Has specific training for staff in relation to lifelong learning been planned?

In their appraisal of Annual Library Plans for 2000 (Department for Culture, Media and Sport 2001b) the Department comments on the wide range of lifelong learning initiatives reported and the large number of PLAs working with Education Departments and acknowledges the influence of Lifelong Learning Partnerships; Empowering the Learning Community; Education Action Zones; National Grid for Learning, and Independent Learning Accounts.

One 'given' for public libraries is that improvements in services for lifelong learners, in line with Government policies should embrace the increased use of ICT. The present Government's commitment is summed up in its response to the Kaufman Committee Report (House of Commons 2000b):

> "The Government has given an express commitment to providing convenient public access to the Internet. Through the New Opportunities Fund Community Access to Lifelong Learning (CALL) Programme our priority has been to ensure that Internet access will be available in all static library locations. Additionally, £5 million from the Programme has been set aside as a challenge fund to encourage innovative solutions including mobile library connectivity." (Para. 19).

Although these 'official' sources suggest all is well, there is some evidence that continues to raise questions about public libraries' capacity to deliver on lifelong learning. *Closing the Digital Divide* (Department of Trade and Industry 2000) raises the issue of the public library's appropriateness for low achievers in particular:

> "…while many people will be content to use facilities in schools and libraries, others with poor experiences of formal education can find these venues unattractive." (p.39)

Other Reports have also questioned the public library's perceived relevance for disadvantaged groups. Research by Roach and Morrison (1997) found that public libraries lacked 'cultural relevance' for many ethnic minority users, whilst Harris (1998) reports a focus group participant as saying, *"library users are a bit like opera lovers – they're an elite group".* Pateman (1999) makes some forceful arguments about the preponderance of middle class people amongst library users and attributes this to institutional failings.

The significance of these views, however, should not be overstated and there may be many reasons why some working class people do not use public libraries, culture and lifestyle amongst them. Pateman himself quotes a respondent from a Merton survey:

> *"I think your flogging a dead horse here, because people in this room don't really use a library and I don't think whatever you call it you're not gonna get us through the door. Its because we don't read…."*

Hull (1998) in her investigation of barriers to library use collected no evidence to suggest that public libraries were off-putting to the educationally disadvantaged, except in the attitudes of staff: *"…I think a qualification for being a librarian must be to be miserable."* and *"If you wanted to take a book out it was a mortal sin."*(p.76). Hyde (2000) investigated the appropriateness of library services for students with learning difficulties and concluded that any failings were the result of financial constraints rather than their intrinsic unsuitability.

Financial constraints certainly can seriously affect physical accessibility. The Department of Trade and Industry (2000) comments on reductions in public library opening hours and consequent access problems. These same issues were also raised by the Kaufman Committee (House of Commons 2000a) and by Proctor, Lee and Reilly (1998).

The Kaufman Committee also found that at least one library user group saw lifelong learning, especially within the context of ICT as 'an expression which is being used to bludgeon library officers into a pro-active educative role, for which they are neither trained, nor qualified.' Other User Groups and the Library Campaign also expressed reservations about the adverse impact of ICT on traditional services, both in terms of cost and space.

Although the evidence presented so far suggests that the Government are wholeheartedly behind a central role for public libraries in the delivery of lifelong learning, there is still some work to be done. The Kaufman Committee (House of Commons 2000a) expressed their feelings that the principle was not always obvious in practice:

> "It is a matter for regret that the potentially invaluable role of public libraries was neglected during the development of the National Grid for Learning and the University for Industry. If there is to be continuity in the delivery of information and communication technology, it is essential that, even at this late stage, libraries are seen to be at the centre and not at the periphery of the delivery of these new services" (Para 69).

Recent reports addressing lifelong learning issues produced by agencies and organisations outside the library sector leave one with the impression that the central role of public libraries in the delivery of lifelong learning is not yet fully acknowledged, (McGivney 1999, NAGCELL 1999, Department for Education and Employment 1999a, 2000b, Department of Trade and Industry 2000). This is not just a British problem. The European Bureau of Library, Information & Documentation Associations (2001) stated:

> "EBLIDA is disappointed to note that libraries are mentioned only once in the Commission Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, along with shopping malls and bus stations."

This neglect has been recognised by some. Slater (1999) describes a campaign sponsored by the *Times Educational Supplement* to extend library opening hours and improve the public library service to provide better access to learning. During the Campaign, Bill Lucas, chief executive of the Campaign for Learning said it is: 'nonsensical to be creating new learning centres at the same time as we are closing existing libraries.' The *Times Educational Supplement* (1999) quoted a poll by the Campaign for Learning which discovered that three quarters of adults prefer to learn through books and written materials. At the launch of the campaign the paper also stated that:

> "libraries…are one of society's most potent weapons against social exclusion. Through them, individuals – no matter what their social or educational background – can take charge of their own learning."

Developments in new technology are increasing the potential of the public library service to meet the needs of the educationally disadvantaged and this has been recognised both in this country: e.g. the current Library Integrated System for Telematics-based Education (LISTED) Project (Solihull Education, Libraries and Arts 1998) and abroad (Shubert 1993).

The way in which educational opportunities are made accessible to disadvantaged adults is a key issue and one in which the public library service appears to have both a present impact and a huge potential for the future. Previous studies into the role of the public library in meeting the needs of adult learners e.g. Allred and Hay (1979) have not addressed the needs of this group. It is this important area that is the focus of this study.

Chapter 3 Methodology and Methods of Investigation

3.1 Methodology

We chose a combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques to achieve the aims of the research. We used quantitative techniques to identify patterns and relationships in the way that learners and library users used the public library to support their learning and to identify patterns of provision for lifelong learners amongst public library authorities. We also used the quantitative data to determine how far the qualitative data reflected a more general pattern (Stone and Harris 1984).

Qualitative data, obtained through interviews and open-ended survey questions helped us to throw further light on the associations found in the surveys (Patton 1990). By using two research strategies the range of information was increased without compromising the depth of study (Robson 1993).

The approach to data analysis was inductive, drawing conclusions from the data (Bell 1993) and allowing patterns, themes, and categories to emerge from the data as it was collected and interpreted, rather than imposing them on the data from the start (Patton 1990). For example, we were particularly concerned to draw conclusions about library provision from an analysis of the characteristics, attitudes and perceptions of learners rather than simply talking to the providers. For this reason, the initial step was to survey learners and use the results of this survey to inform the content of a later national survey of public library authorities.

3.2 Methods of Investigation

3.2.1 Literature Review

The purpose of studying the literature on the topic to be researched was first to raise questions about the topic and secondly to provide background information for the reader of the final report. Yin (1994) suggests that 'a literature review is a means to an end not…an end in itself.' The literature review also enabled us to identify what might be significant for data analysis (Strauss & Corbin 1998).

We deliberately avoided covering general ground well trodden by previous research into lifelong learning and focused primarily on issues related to public libraries and low

educational achievement. However, we also sought out literature that gave us an insight into the educational needs and characteristics of low achievers.

One of the issues for any reader of research reports is the time consuming nature of locating and following up references. During our search we became aware of the very large amount of full text material on the Web, particularly Government and International Agency reports and papers. Because of the immediate accessibility of this material, once the Uniform Resource Locator (URL) is known, we have made a deliberate attempt to record the Web addresses (where they can be found) of all the material we have referred to, even when this has been in hard copy.

3.2.2 Adult Learner Survey

A two-part survey of adult learners was undertaken between December 1999 and March 2000. The aim of the questionnaires was to determine the extent to which the public library service had contributed to individuals' learning histories.

The first part consisted of a self-completion questionnaire survey of adult learners enrolled in four FE Colleges in Sheffield and Derbyshire (Appendix 1). Contact was made with the Colleges and arrangements made for tutors to distribute questionnaires in a variety of classes. The strength of this approach was that it was likely to result in a large number of questionnaires being distributed to both library users and non-library users. With the co-operation of the tutor we also believed it would result in a greater response rate. 1200 questionnaires were distributed in all, using the judgement of each contact to decide how many could practicably be distributed. However, not all the contacts managed to distribute all the questionnaires they had asked for and less than 1200 questionnaires were actually distributed to students. Response rates were as follows:

College	Number of Respondents
Clowne College	120
Chesterfield College	170
Sheffield College	143
SE Derbyshire College	81
Total	**514**

Table 3.1   Questionnaire response rates by college

The college sites chosen were those whose catchment areas included communities

suffering from deprivation (Office for National Statistics 2001a).

32% of respondents were low achievers, that is, they had left school without the equivalent of GCSEs grade A-C.

The second part of the survey involved the distribution of 200 questionnaires to 'local learners' in Derbyshire - students in community education classes. (Appendix 2). The questionnaire was almost identical to the FE students' questionnaire but the vocabulary was changed slightly to take account of the fact that students would not be learning within a college environment (e.g. with an on-site library). 121 questionnaires were returned from students on a variety of courses including Flower Arranging, Keep Fit, Welding, Creative Writing and Word Processing. 32% of respondents who gave their qualifications were low achievers.

Piloting the Questionnaire(s)

The learner questionnaires were piloted through a member of Rotherham College Library staff who had recently undertaken Masters research into the use of libraries by students with severe learning difficulties.

With the help of these students and their tutors she was able to identify questions where there might be distortion caused by ambiguous wording or question order and where the language used might not be clear to someone with only basic literacy skills.

The data from the questionnaires was coded and analysed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Scientists.)

3.2.3 Library User Survey.

In consultation with our partner authorities we selected a number of communities in which to conduct a questionnaire survey of library users (Appendix 3). The survey was designed to determine the different ways in which library users were using the public library service for learning. We used the DETR indices of deprivation (Social Exclusion Unit 2000b) to identify communities which ranked above average for multiple deprivation, and more

specifically, in the educational domain.[1] A prerequisite for selection was that each community should have an accessible local library.

Secondary criteria for selection were:

a) that the libraries should include one or more making special provision for learners; and

b) that the libraries should cover a variety of populations: rural, urban, council estate and inner city.

1800 questionnaires were distributed amongst 10 libraries in Derbyshire and Sheffield with the help of the staff at each of the libraries. Numbers distributed in each library were broadly proportional to the number of registered users, the percentage adjusted, for practical reasons, to the number staff felt they could distribute within a week. 1040 completed questionnaires were returned, a response rate of 57.8%. 45.7% of respondents were low achievers.

Community and Library Profiles

Community and Library profiles are as follows. The deprivation indices for each location are given in Tables 3.2 and 3.3 which follow the profiles.

Derbyshire

Bolsover is an ex-mining town with a strong identity and sense of community. Its mining heritage is very important to local people. The castle, which dominates the town, adds to the character of the town centre, although a significant proportion of the residential areas suffer from poor conditions.

Bolsover library is centrally situated and well used by the local community. It is seen very much as a community resource and includes a meeting room used by local groups. ICT provision in May 2000 consisted of 2 publicly accessible PCs connected to the DELTA network, and a video conferencing machine.

Chesterfield is a market town with a resident population of approximately 100,000. It has a role as a regional centre for the whole of North East Derbyshire. The local economy is

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[1] The only community which did not fit our criteria entirely was Hadfield, a rural community which although 'deprived' on combined criteria scored slightly above average for the educational domain.

undergoing a period of change as new manufacturing industries and service based businesses replace traditional industries. Although only ten miles from Sheffield, the town maintains a markedly different character, being situated close to the Peak District, yet being large enough to support a good range of shops and services to which people from the surrounding area are attracted.

Chesterfield Library, which is located in a modern building, is the largest of Derbyshire's libraries and has an important role in supporting users of the wider library system. It ranks amongst the top 20 highest issuing libraries in the UK, attracting users from a catchment population of around 250,000 ranged well beyond the town itself. Over 800,000 users visit the library each year and staff handle over 150,000 enquiries annually. At the time of the survey Chesterfield was fully operational with the new Concerto library management system and was equipped with 11 public access computers linked to the county's DELTA network.

Hadfield is a village some two miles from Glossop, situated on the edge of the Greater Manchester conurbation with which it has a direct rail link to the city centre. Parts of Hadfield suffer from relatively high levels of deprivation. Glossop town centre is perhaps too far away to benefit Hadfield greatly in terms of shops and services.

Hadfield Library occupies an old shared-use building and had no IT facilities at the time of the survey, but it is a busy, friendly local library and a hub of local information.

Ilkeston has a population of approximately 35,000 and is sited close to the Nottinghamshire border in the Erewash Valley. The nearby cities of Nottingham and Derby and close proximity to the M1 means that Ilkeston experiences a daily net outflow of residents travelling to work. From being an area of heavy industry, it has changed to light industry, manufacturing and warehousing. Visitors are attracted to the twice-weekly open market and the annual Charter Fair. The town is large enough to encompass areas having a range of economic conditions, including a large multiply-deprived council estate on one side and an equally large area of new private housing on the other.

Ilkeston Library is the second busiest branch in Derbyshire and uses the Concerto computerised issue system. At the time of the survey there were 3 public PCs offering access to the Internet, CD ROMs, and personal computing.

Shirebrook is situated in the heart of what was the North Derbyshire coalfield area and is now an area of great deprivation with high unemployment. As a result of extra funding, however, many new projects have flourished here, including 'Sure Start', a government-funded project supporting families with young children.

Shirebrook Library is housed in a 1960s building, light and attractively laid out, having very good links with schools and the local community. It is one of the few library buildings in the county of adequate size for the population served. There is a thriving reading group based here. ICT provision at May 2000: one PC with video conferencing facilities.

Swadlincote has a population of around 25,000 and is situated in South Derbyshire just five miles from the much larger Staffordshire town of Burton-on-Trent. The town has a weak mixed economy and includes a number of deprived urban areas, although the surrounding countryside is largely rural and characterized by scattered villages, some of which are rather isolated. The presence of Burton and of Derby about 10 miles to the North means that Swadlincote lacks the ability to attract some people into the town centre.

Swadlincote Library is purpose-built and well situated in the town centre. It is the only significant library in the whole of South Derbyshire, although some potential users prefer to use Burton and to a lesser extent Ashby (Leicestershire). The library uses the Concerto management system and at the time of the survey had three PCs connected to the County Council's DELTA network.

	Indices of Deprivation 2000, rank of index of multiple deprivation rank (out of 8414 wards)	Indices of Deprivation 2000, rank of education domain (out of 8414 wards)
Bolsover*	947	824
Chesterfield*	2233 *Out of 354 Districts: 83*	2807
Hadfield (St. Charles ward)	2959	4339
Ilkeston*	1678	1345
Shirebrook*	327	551
Swadlincote	2624	3791

* Average of Ward totals.

Table 3.2   Indices of Deprivation - Derbyshire Communities

Darnall is an inner city community of about 19,500 population situated in the Lower Don Valley, about 2.5 miles from the city centre. In the 1970s and 80s the community was badly affected by the closure of most steel firms in the valley. The area has been re-developed over the last ten years although the benefits of new jobs have not been reflected in local unemployment figures which remain almost twice the national average. Darnall is a multicultural community with substantial numbers of Pakistani and Bangladeshi families. Darnall suffers from multiple deprivation with some of the highest figures for overall and educational deprivation in the country.

Darnall Library was built in the heart of the shopping area with urban programme money in 1981. It is a single storey building with a community room used by a wide range of local groups. However, the library's size has always been inadequate for the needs of the community and it now has some structural problems. ICT provision in May 2000 was 2 PCs, one with Internet access. One PC was funded by the Open Learning Fund and the other by Citinet – a city-wide computer network.

Parson Cross is a suburban community about five miles north of the city centre. Parson Cross Council Estate is the largest in Sheffield and the community has very high levels of deprivation, with low incomes, high unemployment, and health problems. In1996, 76% of all households on the estate were economically inactive.

Parson Cross Library is a purpose-built library open three days a week. There are good links with community organisations and schools. Regular coffee mornings are held and a specialist careers worker is available once a week. At the time of the survey the library had no ICT provision apart from an in-house Management System (Ameritech) and a public OPAC.

Southey. Southey is contiguous with Parson Cross and about 4 miles north of the city centre. It consists largely of Council owned property. The community is epitomised by poor health, lack of facilities and resources and poor housing, most of which is over 60 years old. Southey Green Ward is the third most deprived ward in the city on the Townsend (1988) scale.

Southey Library is a purpose built library about 30 years old. It has a separate children's library but no community facility. There are good links with local regeneration groups and

a drugs awareness/support group. The library has close links with SPELL-NE (Sheffield North-East Partnership on Education and Lifelong Learning). At the time of the survey the library had no ICT provision apart from an in-house Management System (Ameritech) and a public OPAC.

Upperthorpe is an inner-city community about 1.5 miles north west of the city centre. It was one of the earliest areas for steel making in the city. It as experienced substantial modernisation and re-building of its housing stock and has received various forms of government funding almost continuously for the last 15 years. However, it is still one of the poorest areas of the city. The main ethnic communities in the area are Somali and Yemeni. The estimated ward population in 1998 was 16,000.

Upperthorpe Library is one of the oldest public libraries in Sheffield. It was built in the 1870s and is an imposing two-storey property. The library now operates from the ground floor while the upstairs has been converted into community rooms. The library is physically linked to a swimming pool and close by are more community rooms. The whole complex is the subject of a Healthy Living Centre bid. The library has received over £100,000 government funding for a learning centre project between 1998-2001. In May 2000 the library had five Internet linked PCs, two scanners, a digital camera, two printers and over 100 CD ROMs. The learning centre is co-ordinated by two externally funded workers.

	Indices of Deprivation 2000, rank of index of multiple deprivation rank (out of 8414 wards)	Indices of Deprivation 2000, rank of education domain (out of 8414 wards)
Darnall	561	116
Upperthorpe (Netherthorpe Ward	1787	2385
Parson Cross/ Southey (Southey Green Ward)	43	4

Table 3.3   Indices of Deprivation - Sheffield Communities

3.2.4 Learner and Library User Interviews

We asked respondents to all three questionnaire surveys to give their contact details if they were prepared to talk to us in more detail about their responses. From the affirmative responses to this question we selected those who met the criteria of 'low achiever' and undertook telephone interviews with a sample of these. Semi-structured telephone

interviews were conducted since this was felt to be the most cost effective way of reaching respondents widely scattered over two local authorities (Robson 1993). Lavrakas (1993:125) explains that there are several advantages of telephone interviewing over face to face interviewing. In face to face interviewing it is 'neither feasible nor practical to immediately check completed interviews' and unlike telephone surveys personal interviewing does not allow the interviewer as much freedom to consider the information already held on the interviewee while the interview is in progress. Also, as Bailey (1994:201) suggests, 'the information gained from telephone interviews is in no way inferior to face to face.'

An Interview guide was used (Appendix 4) since this offered a flexible approach to the 'unpredictability' of the personal interview situation (Busha & Harter 1980) and could be reviewed and expanded as more was learned about the research topic (Mellon 1990).

3.2.5 Survey of library authorities

A questionnaire survey of library authorities in England and Wales was carried out in the summer of 2000 (Appendix 6). It was designed to find out what provision individual authorities were making to meet the needs of lifelong learners. The questions were informed both by the results of the learner surveys and input from a Research Workshop (Appendix 5) held in May 2000 and attended by 28 invited representatives of PLAs. Copies of the draft questionnaire, constructed after the Workshop, were e-mailed to those attending. The resulting input of Workshop members was invaluable in ensuring a coherent, comprehensive and relevant questionnaire.

160 questionnaires were distributed to all library authorities in England and Wales. 113 were returned, a response rate of just over 70%.

3.3 Input of Partner Authorities

A distinctive feature of the research was the relationship we built up with two partner authorities: Sheffield Libraries and Information Services and Derbyshire Libraries and Heritage. Four professional staff from each library authority plus a representative of Derbyshire's Education Department were involved in the research. They formed an Advisory Group that met four times during the life of the Project. The partners were also instrumental in facilitating access to FE Colleges and were involved in data analysis. The

role of the partners was essential in 'establishing and maintaining the research relationship with the…situation being studied.' Mellon (1990:49)

3.4 Triangulation

We hoped that the surveys of learners and library users would give us slightly different perspectives on the value of the public library service. The inclusion of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies also helped to improve the richness of the data. It is a widely accepted view that a combination of both quantitative and qualitative research methods will produce the most informative data. This process of 'triangulation' ensures a 'better view of things by looking at them from more than one direction' (McNeill, 1990:123) and enabled us to exploit the advantages of both methods of research.

3.5 Limitations of the methodology

The sensitive nature of some of the questions, e.g. about qualifications (or lack of them) and why respondents may not have continued with their education meant that we anticipated that there would be a significant percentage of questionnaires that would be incomplete, and this proved to be the case. This means that the number of respondents answering these questions tends to be much lower than the total number of respondents.

The number of low achieving respondents prepared to be interviewed was relatively small and those that did agree were often not available at the pre-arranged time. This was particularly true of the FE College respondents. In all, the number of respondents successfully interviewed was lower than hoped for, although sufficient to enable us to develop an insight into learner and library user perceptions.

The role of partners was not developed as intensively as originally envisaged. The need to keep to very tight project timescales proved not to be compatible with the priorities and problems of running two busy library services. For this reason tasks which partners should have been involved in, e.g. interviewing, were carried out by others.

Chapter 4 Learners and Library users: the characteristics of respondents

An analysis of respondents' characteristics helps us to understand why they might use public libraries in a particular way. The analysis below covers basic characteristics relevant to the study. The survey of FE College students resulted in 518 completed questionnaires from respondents in the four target FE colleges: Sheffield, Clowne, Chesterfield and SE Derbyshire College. The survey of local learners enrolled in Derbyshire community education classes resulted in 121 completed questionnaires, 639 in total. The survey of library users in ten local libraries resulted in 1040 responses.

4.1   Qualifications and gender

Respondents were asked to indicate their qualifications on leaving school and any other qualifications held. This information was used to establish those respondents who were educational low-achievers in the terms of the study. 39.7% of respondents overall fell into this category, having no qualifications equivalent to GCSE Grade C or above.

There were some differences in the three sample populations (Table 4.1 below and Fig. 4 1 p.40). There was a higher proportion of male low achievers in the FE sample (40.2 % men were low achievers compared with 25.4% women). To a lesser extent this male weighting was also reflected in the library user sample where 51.3% men were low achievers compared with 42.6% women. Both local learner and library user samples showed a predominance of female respondents. Over three quarters of local learners (75.2%) and over two thirds of library users (67.2%) of were women.

	FE Students		Local Learners		Library Users		All Respondents		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
Low Achievers GCSEs grade D or below	80 (40.2)	69 (25.4)	5 (18.5)	30 (36.6)	134 (51.3)	228 (42.6)	219 (45.0)	327 (36.8)	546 (39.7)
Achievers GCSEs grade C or above	119 (59.8)	203 (74.6)	22 (81.5)	52 (63.4)	127 (48.7)	307 (57.4)	268 (55.0)	562 (63.2)	830 (60.3)
Total Respondents in category	199 (42.3)	272 (57.7)	27 (24.8)	82 (75.2)	261 (32.8)	535 (67.2)	487 (35.4)	889 (64.6)	1376 (100.0)

Table 4.1   Qualifications of respondents on leaving school

4.2   Achievements by age

4.2.1 Learners

As can be seen from Table 4.2 and Figs. 4.1 below, the number of FE students falls off rapidly with age. Over 63% of FE respondents were under the age of thirty and only 14% were over the age of 40. This pattern is reversed for local learners. Less than 10% of local learners were under the age of thirty, whilst over half (54.2%) were over the age of 40. The majority of local learners (60.5%) were aged between 30 and 50.

4.2.2 Library Users

The age pattern of library users was quite different from that of FE students and local learners. A far higher proportion of respondents were in the older age ranges, with more than a quarter of respondents over 60 year old and nearly two thirds of respondents over 40 years old as Table 4.2 shows.

Age Range	FE Students (%)	Local Learners (%)	Library users (%)
16-19	39.7	0.9	4.8
20-29	23.9	8.3	11.7
30-39	22.4	36.7	18.9
40-49	8.2	23.8	21.1
50-59	3.4	16.5	16.6
60+	2.4	13.8	26.9
Totals	100.0	32.1	100.0

Table 4.2   Age range of respondents

However, the high proportion of people in the older age ranges does not necessarily reflect the true distribution of library use across age ranges. Although the questionnaires were distributed by library staff during the whole range of opening hours over a three week period, when we cross-tabulated age with frequency of use it became clear that frequency of library use increased with age. More than 40% of those aged 60 or over used the library at least weekly, compared with 24.8% of those under the age of 40. Elderly people were, therefore more likely to be recipients of our questionnaires.

Figs. 4.1 below show the proportions of low achievers in each age range. The most significant finding here (Fig. 4.1.3) is the high proportion of low achievers amongst older library users and the very low proportion of low achievers amongst the youngest users. 59.2% of library users over the age of 40 were low achievers. 18.3% of library users under

the age of 30 were low achievers compared with 30.9% of FE students and 60% of local learners.
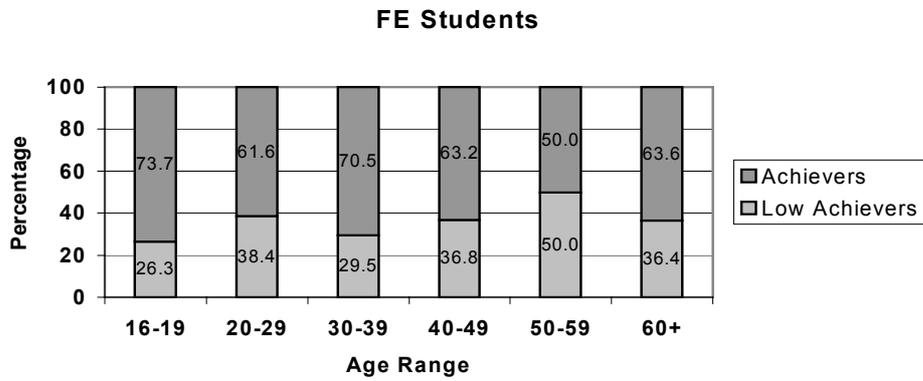
FE Students

Figure 4.1.1 Low achievers by age - FE Students
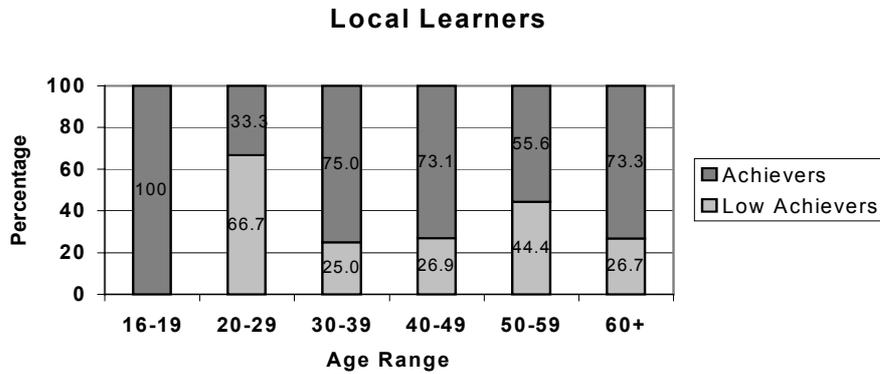
Local Learners

Figure 4.1.2 Low achievers by age - Local Learners
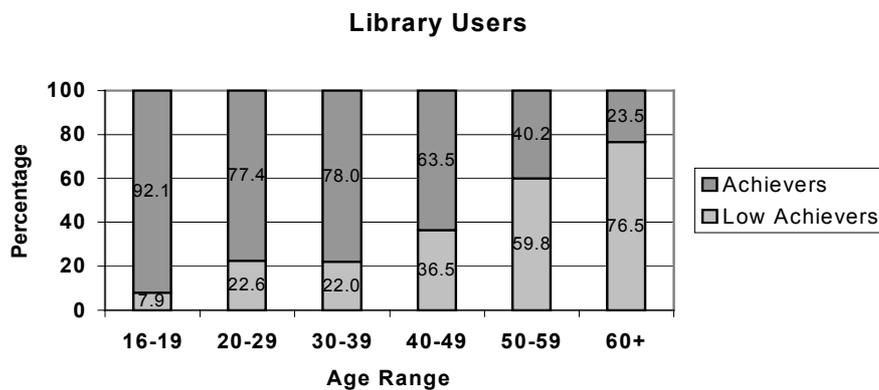
Library Users

Figure 4.1.3 Low achievers by age - Library Users

4.3 Low Achievers by library

Table 4.3 below shows the proportions of low achieving library users by library. What is significant about these results is the high proportion of low achievers using some libraries. In five out of ten cases (Bolsover, Shirebrook, Darnall, Southey and Parson Cross), low achievers outnumber achievers. In four cases over 60% of library users have no qualifications equivalent to GCSE Grade C or over. The highest figures come from those communities that ranked highest in the educational deprivation indices and there is a very close correspondence between the rest. This suggests that, in this important respect, the public library is attracting users who are educationally disadvantaged.

It can, of course, be argued that, in view of the nature of the communities, the percentage of 'low achievers' in the samples should be even higher and this is probably true. However, our results do not necessarily suggest a failing institution, but one that is able to offer relevant services to those suffering from educational disadvantage. The challenge is for the service to encourage others to take advantage of these facilities.

Library	Achievers	Low Achievers	Total
Bolsover	10 (37.0%)	17 (63.0%)	27 (100%)
Shirebrook	37 (38.5%)	59 (61.5%)	96 (100%)
Chesterfield	135 (73.8%)	48 (26.2%)	183 (100%)
Hadfield	34 (66.7%)	17 (33.3%)	51 (100%)
Ilkeston	47 (73.4%)	17 (26.6%)	64 (100%)
Swadlincote	83 (55.0%)	68 (45.0%)	151 (100%)
Upperthorpe	11 (78.6%)	3 (21.4%)	14 (100%)
Darnall	23 (46.0%)	27 (54.0%)	50 (100%)
Southey	26 (36.1%)	46 (63.9%)	72 (100%)
Parson Cross	29 (31.9%)	62 (68.1%)	91 (100%)
Total Respondents	435 (54.4%)	364 (45.6%)	799 (100%)

Table 4.3   Low achievers by library

4.4   Learners and their courses

FE respondents were taking a very wide variety of courses. Those who had entered college with one or more GCSEs grade C or above, (achievers), were taking 66 different courses ranging from Business Studies to Welding and Fabrication, from Beauty Therapy to Italian, from Electronic Engineering to Sign Language. Low achievers were taking a similar range of courses with others appropriate to their specific needs such as Pre GCSE English and Learning Difficulties. A full list of courses is given in Appendix 7.

Local learners were also taking a wide variety of courses. 55.7 % of students were taking computer related courses, and others mirrored the FE students' choices, such as GCSE language courses, GCSE maths and welding. As might be expected, leisure based courses such as flower arranging, yoga, creative writing and aromatherapy were also represented although these were in the minority. There were no courses specific to low achievers.

The public library user survey asked library users what courses they had taken since leaving school, which led to a qualification (Table 4.4).

Qualification	Library Users		
	Achievers	Low Achievers	All Respondents
Degree	113 (34.8%)	5 (2.1%)	118 (21.1%)
City & Guilds	71 (21.8%)	40 (17.1%)	111 (19.9%)
GCSE	35 (10.8%)	17 (7.3%)	52 (9.3%)
NVQ level 2	30 (9.2%)	17 (7.3%)	47 (8.4%)
BTEC/ONC	37 (11.4%)	7 (3.0%)	44 (7.9%)
A/AS level	39 (12.0%)	4 (1.7%)	43 (7.7%)
BTEC/HNC	35 (10.8%)	5 (2.1%)	40 (7.2%)
NVQ Level 1	13 (4.0%)	9 (3.8%)	22 (3.9%)
NVQ Level 3	13 (4.0%)	4 (1.7%)	17 (3.0%)
No Qualification taken	55 (16.9%)	155 (66.2%)	24 (4.3%)
	270 (83.1%)	79 (33.8%)	349 (62.4%)
All respondents	325 (58.1%)	234 (41.9%)	559 (100%)

Table 4.4   Qualifications taken by library users since leaving school

Of the 559 respondents who answered this question, 62.4% had completed some qualification. The most frequently taken qualifications are given in Table 4.4 above.

Fig. 4.2 below analyses these qualifications by level:

	Degree or equiv.	A level or equiv.	GCSE or equiv.	Entry or equiv.
▢ Achievers	43.9	25	22.5	8.6
▨ Low Achievers	12.3	14	50.9	22.8
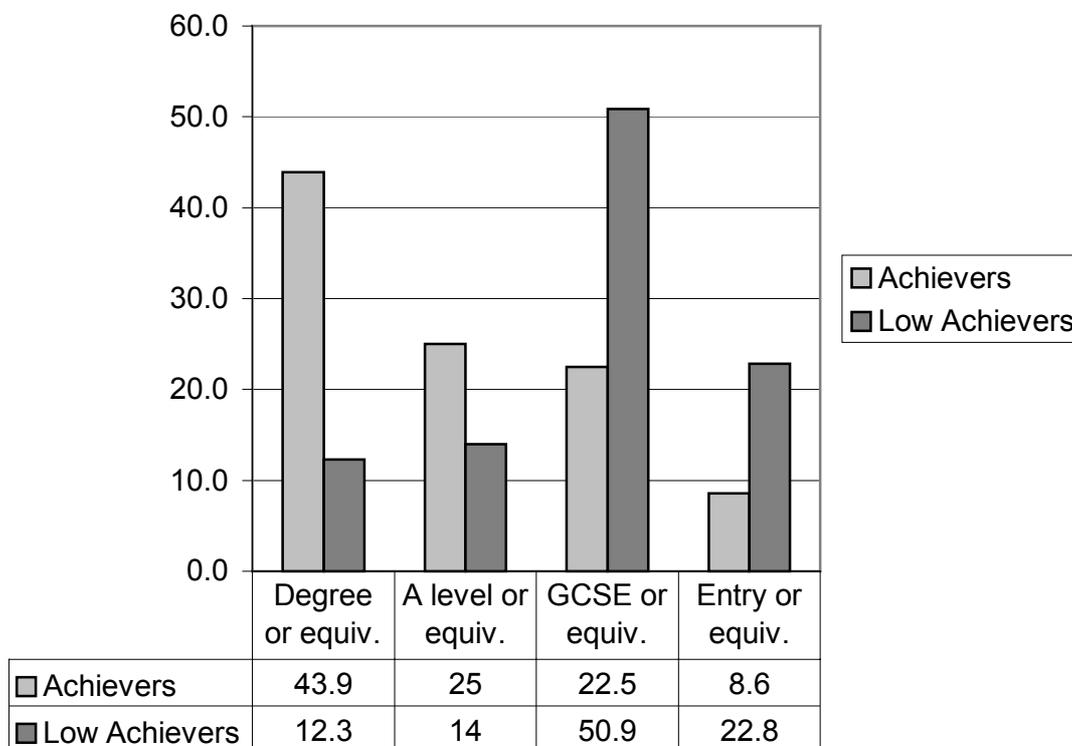
Figure 4.2 Level of Qualification taken by library users since leaving school

The results of this part of the survey show that a high percentage of library users had undertaken further qualifications since leaving school. This suggests that there is already a strong link between public library use and lifelong learning. The survey was carried out in educationally deprived communities and yet over a fifth of respondents were graduates and over 83% of achievers had taken some further qualification. The figures for low achievers are much lower yet over a third had taken a further qualification. There is a clear and predictable difference in the type of qualification taken. Low achievers are represented poorly in 'academic' categories – Degree, A levels, BTEC, with much higher proportions taking courses such as City and Guilds and NVQs. An attempt to make up for lost time is suggested by the higher percentage of low achievers who had taken GCSEs or their equivalent since leaving school.

The premise that there is a strong relationship between lifelong learning and the use of public libraries was reinforced by an analysis of learning opportunities taken up by library

users that had not involved a qualification. 25.3% of all respondents had taken a non-qualification course since leaving school. Of these 73.4% were achievers and 26.6% were low achievers. The range of courses taken was extremely wide ranging from art to youth justice, body massage to sugar craft, Egyptology to lampshade making, and Irish history to making a radio programme. A full list of responses is included in Appendix 8.

Respondents included some dedicated course takers. In answer to the question 'What courses have you taken since leaving school that did NOT lead to a qualification some individuals recorded up to four courses and others responded: 'Dozens!', 'Lots!', 'Too many to list', 'Numerous professional courses', 'Several', 'Too many to itemise', 'Various', and 'WEA (numerous)'.

Many respondents volunteered 'WEA' 'Adult Education', and 'Night School' in their responses. There was evidence that some courses were work related, e.g. 'Fire Service Courses', 'Personnel Management' 'IT courses in work' and more generally 'work courses (in house)' but these were in the minority.

When we cross-tabulated the responses to this question with the earlier question asking what courses leading to a *qualification* respondents had taken since leaving school we found that 69.4% of respondents who answered the question had participated in some form of class-based lifelong learning. Of these 74.1% were achievers, 25.9% were low achievers.

This evidence suggests that those individuals leaving school with GCSEs grade C or above are three times as likely to become lifelong learners as those who left school without recognised qualifications.

4.5   Employment Status of Respondents

The literature (Social Exclusion Unit 1999, McKenzie and Wurzburg 1998) suggests that low achievers are more likely to be unemployed than achievers and our findings from the FE student survey supported this. Of the 218 FE respondents who gave full details of their employment status over twice as many low achievers were unemployed, (45.5%) as achievers (22.4%) (Table 4.5).

However, an analysis of local learners shows no such relationship between achievement and employment. This suggests that the motivation to study might be less related to employment needs. Far more low achievers (44.0%) than achievers (27.1%) were in part-time employment. It is interesting to note that retired people did not dominate our sample of local learners, and there could be a number of reasons for this. It may be that course attendance, even at a local level, may have a more purposive role than time-filling. This conclusion is reinforced by the predominance of subjects taken which could either be work or leisure related. The lack of retired people also confirms other research findings (Carlton and Soulsby 1999, Aldridge and Tuckett 2001) that elderly people tend to be amongst those groups whose participation in lifelong learning is low. Our interviews suggested that amongst the obstacles elderly people often had to overcome were personal ill health and having to care for a frail or disabled partner. Lack of confidence was also an issue. The comment *'I'm too old to learn'* was frequent.

The survey of library users reflected the large number of low achieving older people already commented on (Fig. 4.1.3). 55.4% of low achieving adults were retired.

	FE Students		Local Learners		Library users	
	Achievers	Low Achievers	Achievers	Low Achievers	Achievers	Low Achievers
Full Time Employment	47 (30.9%)	15 (22.7%)	18 (25.7%)	3 (12.0%)	146 (38.9%)	36 (10.8%)
Part-time Employment	61 (40.1%)	18 (27.3%)	19 (27.1%)	11 (44.0%)	99 (26.4%)	45 (13.5%)
Unemployed unwaged	34 (22.4%)	30 (45.5%)	22 (31.4%)	7 (28.0%)	74 (19.7%)	68 (20.4%)
Retired	10 (6.6%)	3 (4.5%)	11 (15.7%)	4 (16.0%)	56 (14.9%)	185 (55.4%)
Totals	152 1 (100%)	66 (100%)	70 (100%)	25 (100%)	375 (100%)	334 (100%)

Table 4.5   Employment status of respondents

4.6   Summary

The results show that there is already a very strong relationship between learning, educational achievement and public libraries.

The findings raise a number of issues for public libraries. The very wide range of courses taken by learners, and the prior learning revealed by the library user survey implies that the public library service must provide access to an exceptionally wide range of learning

materials if it is to support learners effectively. How effectively the service is able to do this will be explored later.

The high proportions of low-achievers using libraries in areas of educational disadvantage is particularly significant. The figures are not only reassuring with regard to the penetration of the library service into the whole community. They also confirm the belief that one of the most effective ways of reaching low achieving adults is through the public library service.

The importance of this is underlined by the figures for those individuals who had already participated in some form of learning since leaving school. Around three quarters of participants were achievers.   Only 25.9% of low achievers had participated in any form of learning since leaving school.

The public library is also in an excellent position to reach the elderly, one of the groups whose participation in lifelong learning is low. Large numbers of retired people who are not active participants in formal learning are using public libraries. Public libraries would, therefore appear to be in an ideal situation to promote formal learning opportunities to this 'captive audience'.

However, there are two areas of concern. First, the results suggest that the public library service may not be reaching younger learners. One reason for this may be that younger learners are more likely to be enrolled on college courses and may not be so reliant on public libraries for the supply of learning material. However, the public library service needs to consider how it is to reach those younger members of society who are not undertaking formal learning.

Secondly, we found that three out of the five libraries with the highest number of low achieving users had no on-line ICT facilities. This raises questions about whether current initiatives to improve on-line educational resources are consistently targeting areas of educational disadvantage.

The public library's capacity to deliver support to those whose participation in formal learning is low will be explored later.

Chapter 5 Attitudes to learning

Many studies have taken place which focus on the motivation of individuals to learn and the barriers that prevent them from becoming lifelong learners, (OECD 2000, Sargant, 1997, 2000, Weeden et al. 2000). We were interested in this area since we felt it might help to inform the ways in which low achievers used the public library for learning.

5.1 Barriers to study

We asked both learners and library users what had stopped them from studying since leaving school (Table 5.1).

By far the most commonly cited reason for not studying was lack of time. Over half of all respondents cited being too busy as a reason for not pursuing further study. Achievers appeared to have busier lives than low achievers, possibly because higher numbers of achievers were in full time employment (see Table 4.5 p.45). However, long hours were also a deterrent:

> *"I see [courses] advertised, I were looking at them, but when I start work I have no time. I get home around 10pm and I have to work at 7 in the morning, just stuff like that stops me."*

Financial problems had influenced nearly 30% of students. The cost of formal learning was too high for many. As respondents told us:

> *"If it costs me any money I can't afford to do them."*

> *"I looked into it once but obviously there are financial implications of having to pay for it to be able to do it. It's hard. ...there's not money left for further education really."*

> *"[Returning to learning?] I don't know, something that would help me I suppose and didn't cost me any money"*

The relative importance of each reason given in Table 5.1 is similar for each category of respondent. However, two factors appear to affect low achievers more than achievers - negative experiences in school and self-image as a poor learner. This reflects findings in recent educational research (OECD 2000, Weeden et al 2000). Around 30% of low achieving students felt that these two factors had put them off studying, compared with around 13% of achieving students. The difference is slightly less marked for library users but still nearly twice as many low achievers as achievers cited one or other of these two factors as an issue.

Reasons for not returning to study	Learners		Library Users		All Respondents
	Achievers	Low Achievers	Achievers	Low Achievers	
I was too busy	152 (53.0%)	68 (38.9%)	178 (62.0%)	117 (48.5%)	515 (52.0%)
Financial	64 (22.3%)	37 (21.1%)	112 (39.0%)	76 (31.5%)	289 (29.2%)
I didn't think I was clever enough	40 (13.9%)	57 (32.6%)	39 (13.6%)	58 (24.1%)	194 (19.6%)
Put off by experience at school	38 (13.2%)	52 (29.7%)	16 (5.6%)	24 (10.0%)	130 (13.1%)
Course was full or not running	18 (6.0%)	9 (5.1%)	32 (11.1%)	5 (2.1%)	64 (6.5%)
Family commitments	23 (8.0%)	10 (5.7%)	18 (6.3%)	10 (4.1%)	61 (6.2%)
Work commitments	14 (4.9%)	11 (6.3%)	6 (2.1%)	7 (2.9%)	33 (3.3%)
Total respondents	287	175	287	241	990

Table 5.1   Barriers to study

5.1.1 The influence of school

There is much evidence to suggest that what happens in school has a significant effect on attitudes to learning. Weeden et al. (2000) found that lower achievers in particular were strongly affected by their views of both the subject and the teacher in terms of their commitment to their work. OECD (2000) concluded that pupils who are unlikely to achieve high grades might be de-motivated by the British school system's preoccupation with outcomes and normative comparisons. Bowman's research for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that fear of academic failure and negative experiences at school and other colleges were major concerns for interviewees of all ages. (Bowman et al. 2000).

Recent research in the USA (ACT 1999) suggests that students' perceptions of their abilities are related to prior educational achievement. Students who have low self-esteem are far more likely to be low achievers than high achievers (39% vs. 11%). The study also found that students who had a high level of anxiety about their schoolwork were five to six times as likely to be low achievers.

5.1.2 Social and family pressures

However, not all low achievers had been poor learners. Other factors had brought a premature end to secondary education:

"I had to leave school at 16 because I was pregnant I didn't take any of my qualification exams."

"I couldn't continue because ...I had to get out, earn some money, help keep house for my family."

Older respondents had been victims of prevailing social attitudes during their school days:

"Both my brothers went to University but the girls were not encouraged to take up further education. I always felt I could have done it if I'd had the opportunity and the encouragement."

"I am 63...And I took the 11+ exam, but I was not allowed to go to grammar school because I was not considered physically fit enough and I was very, very angry. They considered that my health would be impaired by extra study. In England at that time children were given an awful lot of homework and you would get stressed. And Stress causes asthma. So my education from then on became self-educated."

Although less than 10% of respondents cited family commitments as a reason for not studying, personal circumstances had played a significant part in limiting opportunities for formal study.

"I just wish that I could get the education that's available now. My husband's ill he's got disabilities and a bad heart. So I have my husband and myself to see to."

"I had a stroke eight years ago and I lost my confidence and I stopped the word processing course, I think that I've confidence back now and I want to start learning again."

"I would have liked to have been a nurse. But I can't because I've got a nine year old boy and I just don't have the time to devote towards coursework."

5.2   Reasons for returning to study

We asked students currently on courses what had influenced them to return to study, (Table 5.2). Reasons for returning to study were predominantly pragmatic – either work-related, so that the respondent could progress to further study, or to learn new skills.

	FE Students		Local Learners		
Reasons for studying	**Achievers**	**Low Achievers**	**Achievers**	**Low Achievers**	**All Learners**
To learn new skills	138 (42.6%)	78 (51.0%)	51 (68.0%)	26 (74.3%)	293 (60.2%)
I was interested in the subject area	164 (50.6%)	62 (40.5%)	31 (41.3%)	16 (45.7%)	273 (46.5%)
To get into University/college	143 (44.1%)	50 (32.7%)	1 (1.3%)	0 (0.0%)	194 (33.0%)
To help find work	58 (17.9%)	38 (24.8%)	13 (17.3%)	10 (28.6%)	119 (20.3%)
To help change my job	58 (17.9%)	29 (19.0%)	3 (4.0%)	4 (11.4%)	94 (16.0%)
I needed to study for my job	44 (13.6%)	20 (13.1%)	3 (4.0%)	3 (8.6%)	70 (11.9%)
Total respondents:	324	153	75	35	587

Table 5.2   Learners' Reasons for returning to study

5.2.1 Work related reasons

There is some suggestion that many adults undertake learning because they have no option – it is a job requirement or is needed for career progression. La Valle and Finch (1999) in their longitudinal study of adult learners found that 28% of respondents surveyed three years earlier had become adult learners and of these 24% were taking vocational courses. This reinforces the findings that it is job-related learning that provides the significant motivation to make people initiate a learning experience of some kind.

Nearly half our respondents (48.2%) gave a job-related reason for returning to study. Some (20.3%) felt study was essential to find a job. Others (16%) needed to re-train or needed additional qualifications in order to change their job. A third category (11.9%) needed to study for their present job. These findings were reinforced by interview responses:

> *"These courses were for my job. I work for the Health service and they openly encourage staff to take exams and better themselves."*
>
> *"We had to pass City and Guilds to get through the apprenticeship before you could become a fully qualified plasterer."*
>
> *"It was care in the community and it was help the aged. I was a housekeeper at a nursing home."*
>
> *"Because I wanted to become a nurse. I was a support worker and I wanted to take it a step further. And my children are old enough now for me to go back to college."*
>
> *"Career direction change. I used to be a policeman but was made redundant I just decided to go back to education again. I did a few A-levels and then this legal course."*

As might be expected more low achievers than achievers were studying to help find work and gave practical reasons for studying. 33% of respondents saw their course as a stepping-stone to more learning – either a university degree or advanced college course. However, this motive for learning was almost entirely confined to FE students. Only one local learner had knowingly started out on a path that might take them into higher education.

5.2.2 Personal interest

Nearly half the respondents (46.5%) said they had returned to study because they were interested in the subject area. Many students who ticked this option also ticked one of the work-related options. This suggests, at least, that not all of those forced to study because of their job needs were reluctant learners:

> *"Because I wanted more knowledge I think when you leave school, you leave with a basic knowledge and you want something that is extra, that why I took them on."*

> *"The course was word processing. I must admit, I really do enjoy the computer. It's obviously not something we ever did when I was young, but I really do enjoy just about everything on a computer. I took the course basically because I'm interested in it and I've done quite a lot with it."*

> *"I really just wanted to do it. Lit has always been my interest for as long as I have had interests. It was really the next step. I had taken CSEs and 0 levels a couple of years after that. And now the four A levels after a longer gap, but it's the next step."*

Fewer FE low achievers were studying because of their interest in the subject area suggesting, perhaps, some element of outside pressure in their decision to return to learning. This premise was reinforced by the results for local learners where more low achievers than achievers had returned to study because of an interest in the subject. A much lower percentage of local learners had cited job-related reasons for studying.

No FE respondents volunteered additional reasons for studying. However, individual local learners also cited 'to improve my self-confidence', 'to help my children' and 'for social reasons'.

5.2.3 *The influence of the learning experience itself*

One of the interesting findings was the increasing enthusiasm for study once the initial step had been taken. There was evidence that once encouraged to return to study, the enjoyment of the experience itself was sufficient to turn individuals into lifelong learners, and this was as true for low achievers as it was for achievers:

> *"I went back and did GCSE English and enjoyed that so much that I did A-level English. Then I decided that I would do something on the Access course and now I'm back into it."*

> *"I really just wanted to do it. Lit has always been my interest for as long as I have had interests. It was really the next step. I had taken CSEs and O levels a couple of years after that. And now the four A levels after a longer gap, but it's the next step."*

> *"I left school without any qualifications at all. Last year I went back to college and did an RSA advanced Diploma. I thought it was absolutely wonderful, so I decided to take the 10 week-course at Sheffield Hallam University."*

5.3   Summary

Responses from those already in formal learning show that return to study is largely purposive and pragmatic, either connected with work or addressing a need for further qualifications. The conventional role of the public library is to offer support in the form of resources for these students, particularly local learners whose needs may not be met by an accessible college or workplace library. What is significant here is the range of courses

being taken (see Appendix 7 and Appendix 8). Meeting the support needs of students taking this range of courses may be a particular challenge, and close links with education providers are essential in order to inform resource selection.

The findings confirm that some low achievers have particular problems of self-esteem. The large number of low achievers in the library user sample suggests that the public library might have a particular role in encouraging some of these users back into formal learning. The results suggest that there is a great potential for further learning amongst individuals that is yet to be realised. Some older respondents had had frustrated academic careers when younger and since over 43% of library users were over the age of 50, there seems to be an opportunity for the public library service to encourage these users to take up formal learning again.

Interview evidence suggests that respondents found going back into learning to be unexpectedly enjoyable and many had taken more than one course after returning to learning. The first step back into formal learning therefore appears to be particularly important and the public library is in an ideal position to provide the initial encouragement and 'first rung' provision people need.

Chapter 6 The public library's support for formal learners.

One of the key objectives of the study was to determine the extent to which the public library was supporting adult learners, and low achievers in particular, in their return to formal learning.

To achieve this objective our surveys of FE students and local learners asked respondents to tell us what part the public library had played and was playing in their current learning. We were interested in the different ways the public library had helped students and also the problems they had had in using the service. We also asked library users who had taken a formal course to tell us whether they had used the public library to support their learning and how.

6.1 Characteristics of Library use

Our first task was to determine learners' general patterns of library use. Because we felt the results might be different for FE students and local learners taking less formal and more local courses, in the following analysis, the two categories of student are dealt with separately.

6.1.1 Frequency of library use.

78% of FE respondents and 74.4% of local learners used a public library, at least occasionally. There were small differences between achievers and low achievers. The results of the FE survey showed that 80% of achievers used a public library compared with 73.9% of low achievers. For the local learner survey the figures were 78.7% and 62.9% respectively. .

The large difference between the figures for FE low achievers (73.9%) and low achievers who were local learners (62.9%) remains unexplained. However, it could be that local courses generally require less compulsory reading and study. If this is true then perhaps the less academically gifted may be less motivated to use a public library.

In both cases, however, library use amongst adult learners surveyed compares very favourably with the 60% figure for membership quoted in *Libraries for All* (Department for Culture, Media and Sport 1999)

Of those respondents who did use a library, 454 indicated both their educational qualifications and the frequency with which they used a public library. Table 6.1 shows that, again, there are no significant differences in frequency of library use between the achievers and low achievers surveyed. The FE Survey showed that 58.4% of low achievers were using the library at least monthly, compared with 60.7% of achievers. For the local learner survey the figures were 50% and 44.2% respectively. 31.1% of all learners were using the library at least once every two weeks, the criterion for frequent use adopted by the DNH Review of the Public Library Service (Aslib 1995). The Aslib Review's survey of over 3,000 people nationwide found that 30% of respondents were using the library on average every two weeks.

Average Frequency of use	FE Students		Local learners		All Library Users
	Achievers	Low Achievers	Achievers	Low Achievers	
Once a week or more often	62 (23.8%)	29 (25.7%)	3 (5.1%)	4 (18.2%)	98 (21.6%)
Once every two weeks	26 (10.0%)	10 (8.8%)	6 (10.2%)	1 (4.5%)	43 (9.5%)
Once every three weeks	21 (8.1%)	9 (8.0%)	7 (27.1%)	1 (22.7%)	38 (8.4%)
Once a month	49 (18.8%)	18 (15.9%)	16 (27.1%)	5 (22.7%)	78 (19.4%)
Less than once a month	102 (39.2%)	47 (41.6%)	27 (45.8%)	11 (50.0%)	187 (41.2%)
Total Respondents	260	113	59	22	454

Table 6.1   Frequency of Public Library Use

6.1.2 *What are learners using the public library for?*

Having established that the majority of students who responded to this questionnaire were using the public library, we then tried to determine exactly what learners were using the public library for (Fig. 6.1 below:).
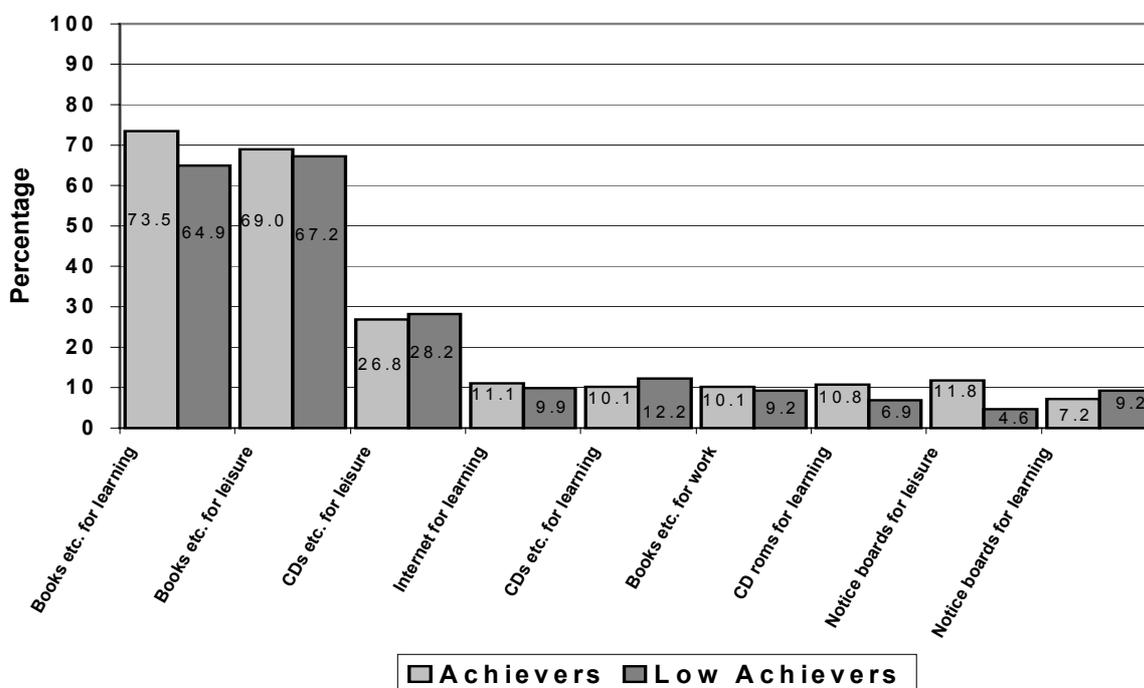
Figure 6.1 Public library facilities used by learners enrolled on courses

Fig. 6.1 shows that both low achievers and achievers considered the library primarily as a place where printed literature can be accessed. Just under three quarters of students were using printed materials for learning – more, in fact, than they were for leisure, although the difference is not great. There was a slightly lower percentage of achievers than achievers using the library for learning in each category but the differences do not appear to be significant.

Audio-visual materials were used less than printed materials and primarily for leisure. About 11% of learners were using AV for learning. This low figure may reflect the sort of materials the library stocks as much as learners' motivation to use AV. AV materials in public libraries are predominantly provided for entertainment and leisure use.

6.2   Access to Formal Learning. The public library's influence

The questionnaire asked how the public library had helped learners in their studies. We first asked whether the public library had helped learners to take up their current course. Fig. 6.2 shows the responses:
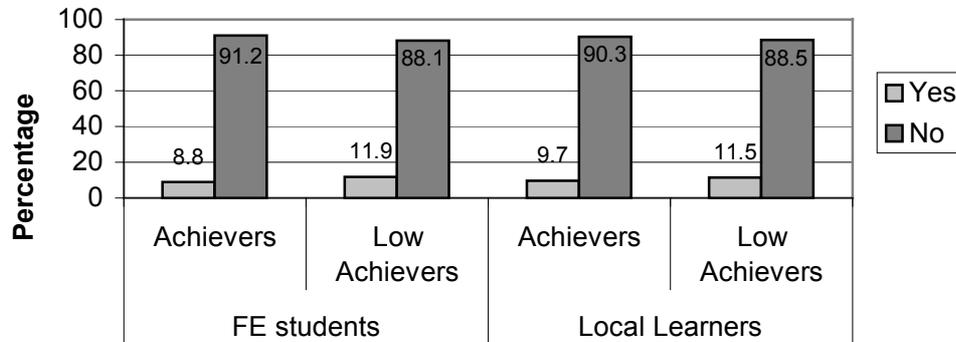
Figure 6.2 Has the public library helped in the take up of courses of study?

Fig. 6.2 shows that only a small minority of respondents felt that the public library had purposefully helped them to take up their course of study. Interviews revealed that a few respondents had first become aware of learning opportunities in their local library:

> "It was at the library where I first saw the college advertised."

> "Well, I was reading some leaflets and that was telling me about these courses that I could take."

> "I wanted to find out when and where there was night school for word processing and I found the information in the library."

There was some evidence that respondents did not expect the public library to be proactive:

> "No I tend to regard the Library as a tool rather than an influence."

> "No, [the decision to take up a course] was a personal decision."

However, some respondents went on to say in interview that they had been encouraged to take up formal learning because the library had first developed their interest either through its stock or its activities:

> "I suppose you could say it did. I got interested in the subject and then started thinking about courses. The librarian was very helpful."

> "… the information that I found in the library went further afield and was more detailed and I became more interested in the subject. And then I looked for a course."

> *"No. Well actually I go to the toddlers group at the library and that's been good because from the Toddlers group, I've been able to do a little course. And that has acted like a springboard to do other things."*
>
> *"I thought about a course then left it…the library got me interested again."*

This suggests that the major impact of the public library in getting people back into learning may be subtle and long term, depending on the influence of the library itself as a learning environment rather than as a place where learning opportunities are actively promoted. This will be explored later. The questionnaire results, however, suggest that some libraries may be passive in the way they promote learning opportunities and this was reinforced by interview responses:

> *"Leaflets about courses are kept at the back of the library and a lot of people don't know that they are there".*
>
> *"There's a lot of stuff about evening classes on the tables just before they start but I've not noticed anything else. I get [those leaflets] through my door any way"*
>
> *"I looked [for information on courses] but I couldn't find anything. No. I didn't ask the staff."*

6.3   Support for Formal Learning: The public library's role

Our FE Student and Local Learner Surveys asked respondents who used the public library to list three ways the library had supported their courses. This was an open-ended question and we anticipated low response rates. However we felt that it was important to let respondents express their own ideas. Table 6.2 shows the top seven responses overall.

	Learners enrolled on courses		Total respondents
	Achievers	Low Achievers	
Having subject related books available	84 (42.9%)	32 (51.6%)	116 (45.0%)
Quiet areas and study space to work in	39 (19.9%)	8 (12.9%)	47 (18.2%)
Being able to borrow materials	28 (14.3%)	6 (9.7%)	34 (13.2%)
Useful reference books	14 (7.1%)	3 (4.8%)	17 (6.6%)
Access to a PC	10 (5.1%)	6 (9.7%)	16 (6.2%)
Being able to order books	12 (6.1%)	3 (4.8%)	15 (6.2%)
Helpful staff	9 (4.6%)	4 (6.5%)	13 (5.0%)
Total	196	62	258

Table 6.2   Ways in which the public library has helped with courses

The results presented in Table 6.2 above suggest that learners taking courses value the public library's book stock above all else. Smaller percentages of respondents also commented on the range of stock and the presence of stock on particular subjects. A significant minority of learners also valued the availability of somewhere to study.

It appears from these results that low achievers have less need than achievers for study space and this finding is confirmed by their lower use of reference material. Learning in a library environment appears to be less important to low achievers. However, use of the library PCs was mentioned by a higher percentage of low achievers than achievers. This reflects the finding, commented on in a later chapter, that computer ownership is closely related to educational achievement (Hull 1998). ICT provision in public libraries is of particular value to low achievers.

The spread of responses was very wide and the above analysis only presents those features with an overall response rate higher than 5%. The full list (Table 6.3) reveals the range of different features valued by learners enrolled on courses.

Public library features valued by learners enrolled on courses	
Library easily accessible	Access to photocopier
Affordable way of accessing books	Help with reading skills
Access to books on computers	Good easy-to-use catalogue
Access to local history	Meeting point for friends
Availability of annual reports	Helps me to relax
Easy to use systems	Convenient opening hours
Access to a word processor	Helped to prepare to study
Access to a PC	Help to find courses
Access to the Internet	College advertised there

Table 6.3   Features of the service found to be helpful to learners

The Survey findings were replicated in our interviews:

> *"The study areas with desks to work at are very useful."*

> *"The library helped me to prepare for studying by providing me with more knowledge in the subject area."*

> *"I have used the library to read up on companies I'm applying for jobs at."*

> *"I make use of the computers to type up my work."*

> *"Being able to use PC software in the library is useful."*

> *"When I have used the library for research purposes I have always found the staff to be very helpful in helping me to find what I am looking for."*

"Being able to borrow books instead of buying them helps keep expenses low. I would only be able to afford a couple of books if I had to buy them."

"Gives me access to the more expensive books I wouldn't be able to afford."

"Out of college opening times helps with finding materials for study."

"The library stays open for longer hours than it used to a few years ago and there are more computers which is great."

"... public libraries are fairly well set up for everything I need. They've not got the specific books in that I particularly want but ...if I did need to order them I could do."

Users expanded on the way library materials had helped with their formal learning:

"At the moment I'm doing coursework on car pollution and oil shortages. I've come up with the idea that if you put carbon with oxygen in a certain way then it makes water and this is one way to decrease car pollution. That's what I've been using the reference books for."

"Whenever I'm doing a course I know the reference books are there and I can browse and pick out what I want."

"I took a computer course… which I don't know anything about. That is another thing that the library's good for, I can look up information about computers. The public library is good for things like that. If they ever shut it, we'd be lost."

6.4 Learners' Problems using public libraries

Respondents were asked what problems they had had using public libraries. 167 learners responded to this question and of these 25.7% had experienced no problems. Only three issues appeared to be at all significant. These are presented below in Table 6.4.

	Achievers	**Low Achievers**	**Total number of responses (%)**
Relevant materials not in stock	32 (26.9%)	8 (16.7%)	40 (24.0%)
Too few copies of certain texts	28 (23.5%)	11 (22.9%)	39 (23.4%)
Out of date materials	12 (10.1%)	2 (4.2%)	14 (8.4%)
No problems	27 (22.7%)	16 (33.3%)	43 (25.7%)
Total Respondents	119	48	167

Table 6.4   Respondents problems with local libraries

The focus on materials reflects the findings of the previous section (Table 6.3). Similar percentages of achievers and low achievers felt that the public library stocked too few copies of key texts. This seems to reflect inappropriate expectations of the public library service where single copy provision of study materials is the norm. It is interesting to note that where the quality of the stock is concerned (relevance and currency) a lower percentage of achievers cited any problems

This suggests that low achievers are less discriminating when looking for materials and therefore much more easily satisfied. This conclusion is further supported by the higher percentage of low achievers (33.3%) who said that they had experienced no problems using the public library service for learning.

The importance of library stock was confirmed by our interviews:

> *"Quite often the books I need have been taken out."*
>
> *"Finding up-to-date materials is sometimes a problem as is getting hold of some books not always in stock."*
>
> *"Most of the books on my subject area are old and no longer relevant"*
>
> *"There are no books covering my subject area."*
>
> *"There aren't enough specialist books available."*
>
> *"There are too many reference books, I prefer to take books home and read them there."*

Individual respondents mentioned other disadvantages. These are listed in Table 6.5.

Problems experienced by learners in the public library	
Need to increase number of books allowed on loan at one time	Staff technical knowledge is too limited
Need to reserve texts	Noise in the library distracting
Time it takes for ordered material to arrive	Problems finding books
Too few/no PCs	Unsuitable opening hours
Internet access too expensive	Better wheelchair access needed
Lack of privacy for using ICT	No childcare facilities
Too many reference-only books	Fines for overdue material
Library understaffed	Unhelpful staff
	Inconvenient location of library

Table 6.5   Range of problems cited

Six achievers mentioned noise, an understandable complaint for those wanting to study in the library. Noise was only an issue for one low achiever. Eight respondents mentioned unsuitable opening hours and three the cost of fines. A few ICT related issues arose. Six respondents mentioned the lack of PCs and four mentioned the cost of Internet access.

Again, these findings were reinforced by our interview respondents:

> *"Ordered books take too long to arrive."*
>
> *"The books I have reserved haven't come in time for me to use them."*
>
> *"The fact that there are no computers in my local library is a real let down."*
>
> *"The fines are a bit of a problem for me because I can't always get back to the library in time."*

"I don't use [the library] every day or every month, I just use it when I need to really because when you are borrowing books they need to be back in a fortnight and its not always possible. It's just a bit awkward to go into town and borrow books."

"There's only 2 computers and you can't always get on, you usually have to book a slot, a half hour or an hour and you usually find that you haven't got enough time. Usually when I've got time the kids are out of school and you struggle to get on it so they could do with more computers."

"I think the Internet charges are too high."

"I find the phones in the library distracting."

"People talking can often be distracting."

"Children making lots of noise during the school holidays."

"Going there with two small children and a double pushchair is very difficult, there should be better access to the building... and a play area would be ideal!"

"I do find the opening hours somewhat restrictive."

"The opening hours are not always clear and they vary from library to library."

"I often have difficulty finding where the books are available and I have to ask for help a lot of time."

"I had to wait for the use of the videos because other users were using them. I personally thought that the waiting period was too long."

6.5 The value of the public library to formal learners

The results presented so far suggest that a high proportion of learners enrolled on courses make use of the public library to support their studies. However we also needed to know how valuable this support was. We therefore asked our respondents to let us know the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statement: 'If I no longer had access to a public library my coursework would suffer.'

We first looked at the relationship between respondents' answers and the frequency of their library use. Table 6.6 below shows that there is a strong relationship between the frequency of library use and the learner's dependence on it. Respondents using the public library weekly or more frequently were more likely to agree that their work would suffer than those using the library less frequently. The table also shows a very significant difference in the attitudes of achievers and low achievers. Low achievers appeared to be far less dependent on the public library service and the 'Don't know' responses show that they were generally less certain of its value.

	Once a week or more often		Once every two weeks		Once every three weeks		Once a month		Less than once a month	
	Achievers	Low Achievers	Achievers	Low Achievers	Achievers	Low Achievers	Achievers	Low Achievers	Achievers	Low Achievers
Totals:	46	25	26	9	24	7	55	20	115	47
Agree	65.2%	40.0%	61.5%	11.1%	29.2%	28.6%	38.2%	10.0%	20.9%	17.0%
Disagree	19.6%	48.0%	38.4%	55.5%	58.3%	42.9%	54.5%	85.0%	69.6%	74.5%
Don't know	15.2%	12.0%	0.0%	33.3%	12.5%	28.6%	7.3%	5.0%	9.6%	8.5%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 6.6   Would your coursework suffer if you no longer had access to a public library?

Fig. 6.1 showed that both achievers and low achievers use printed materials heavily. However, Table 6.6 suggests that, although low achievers may use them heavily, books are less important to them.

The results were then cross-tabulated against the level of course respondents were taking, and the kind of course, both by topic and also whether the course led to a qualification. There was no apparent relationship between the results and these variables.

6.6 Summary

Those individuals currently taking courses were, in general, satisfied with the quality of the public library service. However, the results suggest that low achievers in particular may lack the knowledge to make informed judgements about service quality. The findings here suggest that where library users include high numbers of low achievers, user surveys may return a high level of satisfaction that does not reflect the real level of service quality.

The results may also suggest a need for more basic information skills teaching, particularly in those libraries where many of the users are less well educated. This conclusion was reinforced when we analysed the results of our Survey of Library Users. Regular library users appear to have a much more in depth knowledge of the service and their expectations of it are more realistic. It is interesting, for instance, that learners did not mention information provision as helpful, yet our library user survey showed that this was a valued feature of the public library service in relation to users' learning needs. (Table 7.1 p.68). This may indicate learners' lack of knowledge about the service and what it can offer. If the conclusions drawn about the value of the service to low achievers are correct, then it raises interesting questions about the extent to which ICT may prove to be a more accessible and acceptable means of delivering learning materials. This issue will be dealt with in chapter ten.

Chapter 7: Users and Lifelong Learning

The previous chapter examined some issues specific to those learners enrolled on formal courses, either further or community education. The present chapter looks at the extent to which the public library is used as a resource for lifelong learning by the general library user.

A key objective of the study was to identify the extent to which the public library might be serving the specific needs of adult learners, and more specifically low achievers (those who had left school with no qualifications equivalent to GCSE grade C or above). We were also interested in the impact of the public library in communities suffering from educational disadvantage.

For this reason a survey of public library users was undertaken in ten libraries serving areas of educational disadvantage using the DETR indices of deprivation, (Social Exclusion Unit 2000b), see Chapter 3 page 28. 1800 questionnaires were sent to libraries for distribution to users by library staff. 1040 were returned. Relatively few questionnaires were completed in their entirety and this accounts for the different response rates in the following tables.

The Library User Survey was supplemented by telephone interviews of a sample of 47 low- achieving respondents. These were all individuals who had indicated, on their completed questionnaires, that they would be willing to be telephoned for further information. None of our interviewees had achieved qualifications at school equivalent to GCSE grade C or above.

7.1   Library users and learning

We began by examining our respondents' attitudes to learning so that we could make some judgements about the extent to which low achievers were aware of the library's role in lifelong learning. Did they, for instance, perceive learning to be about qualifications and courses or did they have a wider view of it as a lifelong process? We deliberately did not introduce the term 'lifelong learning' simply asking the question 'How would you define learning'?

Our interviews focused on this issue and almost all respondents made it clear that their idea of learning was very broad:

> *"You're always learning. Life's a big learning curve… if you're in that frame of mind to learn then you learn twice as much, I think everything is learning."*

> *"You learn every day from everything. It is very broad spectrum. It's not necessarily a very structured thing. Learning is continued throughout our lives."*

> *"Experience, Life's experience if you like. You're learning from both and you never stop learning."*

> *"Learning is basically a good thing. It is good to learn more as you get older. I left school about 5 years ago and I learn new things every day, which is how it should be."*

> *"There are lots and lots of ways to learn. Learning is the greatest advantage you can possibly have to improve yourself, to give you meaning in life and to progress. And you're constantly learning everyday you learn something, don't you?"*

> *"It doesn't stop until you die really does it?"*

> *"I don't think that anyone is ever too old to learn. Regardless of where you are, who you are, how you start. We can always, always, always learn."*

Some respondents made a clear distinction between learning for qualifications and learning more generally:

> *"Learning is not about getting qualifications to get ahead and getting better paid, although I've nothing against that, it is essential because then you can make your own contribution to life. Learning is about where you are in the world, what you're doing in the world and what the world is doing to you and what you know about it. The library is there to pursue whatever objectives you like."*

> *"I don't think it's just confined to the classroom. [People] can go in [the library] and read about different things and then leave."*

Some of the professional librarians who had participated in our workshop part way through the study had expressed some doubts about the scope of our study and where we might draw the line in our assessment of the public library's contribution to learning. Our respondents confirmed the view that there can be no objective definition of a 'learning resource' as far as the library's provision is concerned. Whatever the library provides can be a source of learning for someone and learning may be incidental to the primary activity of reading for pleasure or for information. This concept of *incidental* or *casual* learning is discussed by Rogers (1997). An important issue, however, is the extent to which the individual recognises that they have learnt, and this assessment is entirely subjective.

A novel, for example, to one reader is nothing but a source of entertainment and escapism:

> *"Learning? I don't think so. It's just fiction isn't it?"*

To another reader, however, the same material might be a treasure house of learning:

> *"I think I've learned more about history by reading novels than I ever did reading a textbook."*

> *"Fiction gives me an insight into human nature and society."*

> *"I'm reading one [novel] at the moment ...And I've just actually learned what impeachment means. They actually impeached the president and it...explains in real technical terms what impeachment means."*

> *"You're always learning if you are prepared to learn. Some people can read a novel and put it down and not know what they've read."*

Toyne and Usherwood (2001) provide evidence for the value of imaginative fiction for learning. The importance of fiction reading is emphasised by Kendall (1998:55) who notes that:

> "Fiction reading for pleasure is…the means by which many adults learn informally: about the experiences of others, about life in other countries, about other periods of history."

Many low-achieving respondents identified reading itself as the key learning activity:

> *"What it does in effect is to take a person who is an avid reader out of a narrower life and given them an opportunity to have a very full life within the confines of their own home."*

> *"It expands my knowledge. I've always been for non-fiction. I've never gone in for fiction very much. Mostly reference, biology quite a lot."*

> *"You can sit in your own armchair and go anywhere in the world and do anything you want... You pick up a book and you can be involved in world politics or comedy or whatever you want by reading books. I read a lot of techno-novels (being technical myself) and political being also of that bent."*

> *"Reading is to learn, to broaden one's horizons, to travel to different countries without having to leave your own home. You can literally find anything in a book… It enables you to have a better conversation with someone. I can't imagine not having a book."*

> *"I also like factual books because I like the information. I feel it is meaty and I feel I've got some purpose out of reading. It is both a relaxation and a stimulation."*

> *"I find answers that I know are not things that I learned at school…Also if you are reading about a foreign land…you are getting a taste of their sort of culture."*

> *"You can learn from life and learn from books. If you encourage a child to read then you encourage imagination, which I think is lacking a lot today."*

> *"... every word you read is another part of the jigsaw we call education."*

> *"I think with regards to education, it enhanced my enjoyment of reading, and thereby acquire knowledge, whether that be through reading about the Roman Empire, or just through learning big words."*

Our Library User Survey gave us a valuable overview of how individuals used the library for learning. The first question on this topic (Q2) required respondents to tick pre-selected choices (Fig. 7.1).
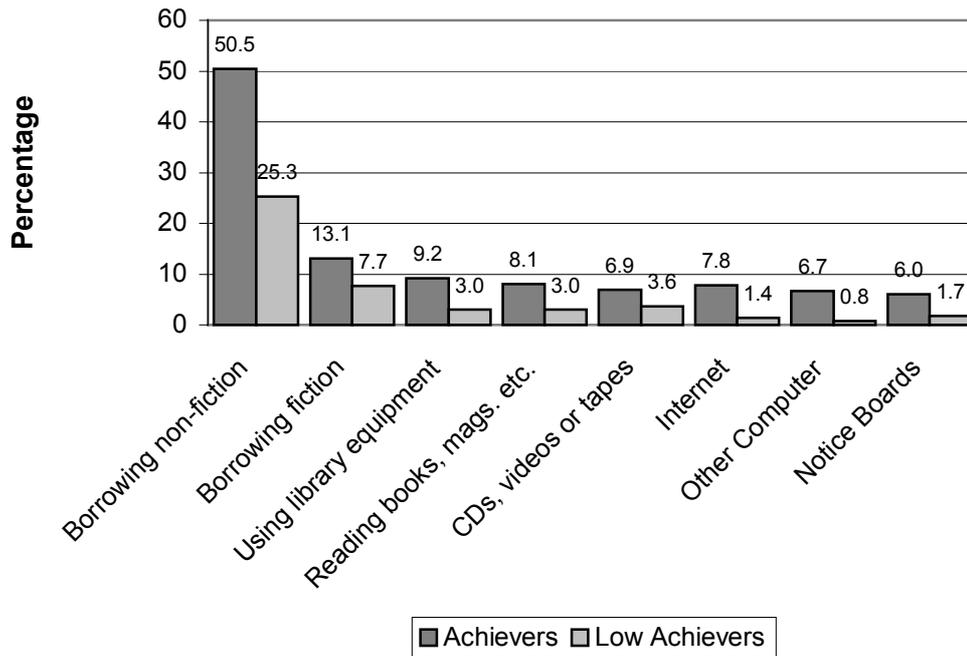
Figure 7.1 Facilities used in the public library for learning

Fig. 7.1 above shows that there are significant differences between achievers and low achievers. On every indicator low achievers appear to be far less likely to be using the library's facilities for learning. This contrasts with Fig. 7.2 below showing the same respondents' use of the public library for leisure. Here there is much less difference between the figures for achievers and low achievers.
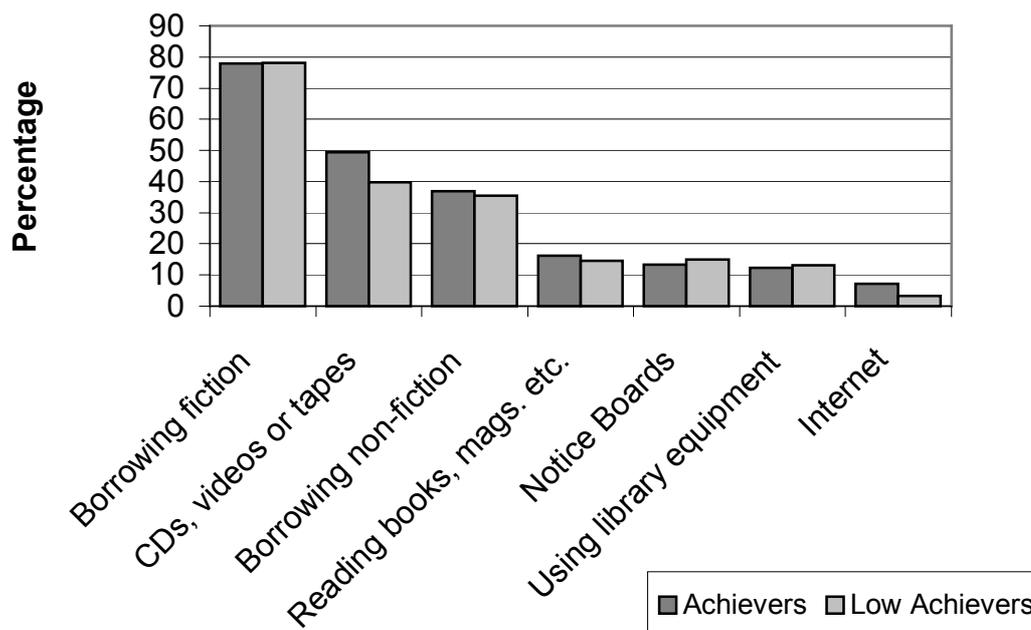
Figure 7.2 Facilities used in the public library for leisure

However, there was some evidence to suggest that some low achieving respondents were less likely than achievers to see the relationship between reading and learning noted earlier in this chapter. Replies like these below suggest there may be some under-reporting of the value of the public library as a learning resource:

> *"No I don't use it for learning, just for hobbies."*
>
> *"I use it for entertainment mostly. I've always got a book out but only for entertainment."*
>
> *"I read a lot but I'm not sure I learn anything. I don't think so... No."*
>
> *"Reading's a great pleasure for me. I love to read, and I read a lot. I don't know if it does me any good – it keeps the mind active I suppose, doesn't it?"*
>
> *"I wouldn't have said it made any difference, as I use it mainly for entertainment."*

Godfrey (1999:27) in a ground clearing exercise for this study found the same thing. Some of her respondents who stated explicitly that they only used the library for leisure responded to other questions in a way which suggested that they were also learning. As she reports:

> 'One respondent who stated that she only used the library for leisure purposes was later asked if she could think of any advantages or disadvantages to learning in the library, she thought for a moment and then reconsidered her original statement: *"I suppose books on gardening could be learning and I am reading something on natural beauty…I'd never thought of it like that before."'*

There may be a more general issue here. Although casual or incidental learning (Rogers 1997) may not always be recognised, it may be that some library users find it difficult to conceptualise the value they get from the public library. Arrowsmith (2001) in her study of mobile libraries and social inclusion reports a senior library manager's comments about users and reading groups:

> "At some places reader groups were already established but didn't see themselves as reader groups. People…go and choose their books, go to someone's house for a cup of tea and talk about their books. But they don't see that as a reader group…"

Harris (1998) in his study of attitudes to the social value of public libraries noted that some library users found it difficult to conceptualise the social value of the public library.

An additional factor could lead to under-reporting of the library's value as a resource for learning. A large number of low-achieving respondents told us how much they enjoyed using the public library, and, as can be seen from Table 7.2 above, low achievers' use of the library for leisure was high. Many of these same respondents had had negative experiences at school and did not associate learning with a pleasurable experience.

That is, since using a public library was enjoyable, they felt it couldn't have anything to do with learning. Respondents made these comments:

"I have always used libraries for pleasure, not learning…"
"For me libraries aren't for learning, you go there because you enjoy it"
"It's lovely going to the library. It's not like learning something…"

Kosmidou (2001), in a study associated with the present research, investigated the use of public libraries for learning by elderly people and found a similar perception. As one of her respondents said: '*No I'm not learning. I just do it for pleasure.*'

Again this underlines the difficulty many low achieving respondents may have in conceptualising the benefits of the public library as a resource for learning.

7.2 How the public library helps learning

To find out more accurately how the public library helped our low achieving respondents to learn we also asked the open question in our survey: 'List three ways that your library has helped or is helping you to learn' (Table 7.1). This was similar to the question we asked formal learners about the ways the library had helped with their coursework. The results from the previous table (Table 6.2, p.57) are given (in grey) for comparative purposes.

	Library Users		Learners enrolled on courses		
	Achievers	Low Achievers	Achievers	Low Achievers	Total respondents
Having subject related books available	36 (15.9%)	16 (21.6%)	84 (42.9%)	32 (51.6%)	168 (29.7%)
Being able to borrow materials	72 (31.0%)	21 (27.6%)	28 (14.3%)	6 (9.7%)	127 (22.4%)
Providing information on a topic	72 (31.0%)	24 (31.6%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	96 (17.0%)
Quiet areas and study rooms to work in	15 (6.6%)	1 (1.4%)	39 (19.9%)	8 (12.9%)	63 (11.1%)
Useful reference books	20 (8.8%)	2 (2.7%)	14 (7.1%)	3 (4.8%)	39 (6.9%)
Access to a PC	12 (5.2%)	9 (7.9%)	10 (5.1%)	6 (9.7%)	37 (6.5%)
Being able to order books	17 (7.3%)	4 (5.4%)	12 (6.1%)	3 (4.8%)	36 (6.4%)
Helpful staff	12 (5.3%)	6 (8.1%)	9 (4.6%)	4 (6.5%)	31 (5.5%)
Totals	232	76	196	62	566

Table 7.1   Ways in which the public library has helped with learning

Only 20.9% of low achievers who gave their qualifications responded to this question. This compares with 53.5% of achievers. For those low achievers who did reply, again, study facilities and reference books appear to be far less important than they are for achievers.

The most significant difference between the three categories of respondent is that respondents in our Library User Survey rated the provision of information very highly, nearly a third of respondents mentioning this. Perhaps just as significant was the range of features library users mentioned as helpful (Table 7.2 below). The richer responses from library users suggest a greater depth of knowledge about the service, perhaps acquired over time.

How does the library help you to learn?	
Helping parents with school projects	Suggesting sources of further information
Providing access to a computer	Providing maps
Improving computer skills	Access to microfiche
Being local and convenient	Providing videos and CDs
Job seeking	Advertising local events
Helping with learning English	Long opening hours
Having helpful staff	Having a clear system
Helping with literacy	Wide selection of newspapers
Having a photocopier	Providing material not available elsewhere
Inter-library loans	For hobbies
Being child-friendly	Open university tutorial material
Providing books (on a named subject)	Reserving books
Providing information (on a named subject)	Resource for research
Wide range of material	Book club (interact with others)
Helps use of imagination	Providing books to the housebound
Notice boards and leaflets	Having talks
Reference section	Getting requested material quickly
Local history material	Work-related information
Helping with quiz team	Providing material I could not afford to buy
Opportunity to meet friends	Provides a quiet place to study
Development of knowledge and understanding	Advertising local courses
Help with interview preparation	

Table 7.2   features of the public library that users found helpful for learning.

We asked interviewees to elaborate on their questionnaire responses and tell us more about the way they used the public library for learning. It was interesting to note the differences in emphasis between respondents. Libraries seemed to impact on their learning in a number of ways:

7.2.1 To support personal interests

There was strong evidence that the library was used as a resource to support personal interests:

> "Well, I do quite a bit of research, law books. History books. I work on my own projects that I run. I research mainly historical studies. British and American law studies. Old law cases."

> "...hobbies mainly. You look things up...you learn more...."

> "I couldn't do without it [the library]. I took up Chinese painting and wanted books on it. I needed to know where to get the supplies from. Now I get the real paper... straight from China."

> "[The librarians] let me know when anything new comes out on my subject."

> "But then I think, how am I going to learn if I don't try? And it helps with religious literature queries. In my religion, if I'm not sure sometimes I can always find an answer."

> "I've always used the library. We've got a house full of books, but we never seem to have the one we want..."

> "I have a little interest in coins, old coins and I used to look up things about that and photography, I've been keen to use it for that."

7.2.2 To meet specific needs

The library was also used as a resource when respondents needed information to meet a specific need:

> "We just moved to this part of the city and I didn't know anything about it. So I went to the...library and got a book out about the village and read-up about the Methodist churches and so on. So it's about information and that's learning isn't it?"

> "I was going abroad and wanted to know what the country was like and the librarian got me some books about Mexico where we were going on holiday."

> "This morning we've been out shopping and we bought lavender plants. And after she had lunch she brought out all the books on lavender, but if there hadn't been a book on it in the house, she would have gone down to the library to look up the information. We both would have. We quite often go to the library and spend an hour looking at half a dozen books and come out with none of them because we found what we needed. We use it as a reference in that respect."

> "I use it to do with the computer or with motor vehicles or jobs that have got to be done around the house."

> "When my uncle and my dad weren't well I used the library to look up these medical terms if I had never heard the term, then I would look it up to see what it was supposed to be. I've gotten DIY books as well and knitting copies of patterns that I liked that I might want to copy. Also anything my son has wanted to know...about football or other things. When he was younger he wanted to know something about bowling and I didn't think that I would find one, but I did."

7.2.3 To stimulate learning interests

We began the study with an assumption that individuals using libraries would either be purposive seekers after knowledge or would simply be absorbing information from what

they read in a more or less unstructured way. However, our findings suggested that the library was an often unexpected starting point for an interest in new topics. The value of browsing as a long term encouragement to more purposive learning has already been mentioned in Chapter six. The evidence suggests it also has a wider value:

> *"It's not easy to put it succinctly, but browsing along bookshelves and being of an inquisitive nature you often find books that catch your interest, you open it up and read the flyleaf or you read one or two pages, thinking "What's this about?" and end thinking "I'll read that!" You've no intention of reading before you went in the library. It hadn't crossed your mind, but it's there in front of you."*
>
> *"What I like is finding information in books that you don't know about."*
>
> *"It's surprising what you're interested in if you read a new subject…."*
>
> *"I'm a browser. I love just going along the shelves not knowing what I'm going to find."*

Allred (1998) points out that learning in a library 'can allow learners to move around in the topic, and even to change their goals.' Coughlan (2001) noted in her study of non-borrowing use of public libraries that 27.4% of her respondents used the library for browsing – not necessarily connected to borrowing.

The library staff was also instrumental in expanding users' interests:

> *"And I think its nice to use the library in the capacity where someone, like the librarian, can very often say 'have you read such-and-such!' And my first instinct would be, 'I don't read that sort of thing' but then you do and it's great…"*

7.3   Learners' problems using public libraries.

Although these comments showed that the library was generally of great value to low achieving learners we also wanted to know about the problems they had experienced in using the service for learning. We asked questionnaire respondents to record any problems they had had using a public library for learning. This was another open question and as a result less than half the respondents completed it. However, we felt that allowing respondents to express their own views would give us a more accurate picture of real concerns than pre-determining aspects of the service. The results are shown in Table 7.3 below:

Problem Experienced	Achievers	Low Achievers	Totals
No problems	100 (45.0%)	82 (66.7%)	182 (52.8%)
Lack of materials	55 (24.8%)	13 (10.6%)	68 (19.7%)
Opening hours	26 (11.7%)	2 (1.6%)	28 (8.1%)
Delays when ordering books	16 (7.2%)	0 (0.0%)	16 (4.6%)
Excessive Noise	10 (4.5%)	3 (2.4%)	13 (3.8%)
Computer provision	11 (5.0%)	2 (1.6%)	13 (3.8%)
Borrowing period too short/fines	7 (3.2%)	4 (3.3%)	11 (3.2%)
Classification scheme too hard to understand	5 (2.3%)	2 (1.6%)	7 (2.0%)
Staff	3 (1.4%)	5 (4.1%)	6 (1.7%)
Library environment: heat/light/ventilation	4 (1.8%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (1.2%)
Catalogue problems	3 (1.4%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (0.9%)
Poor study space	2 (0.9%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (0.6%)
Total Respondents	222	123	345

Table 7.3   Problems using public libraries

Overall respondents were satisfied with the services offered although there were two significant issues for all users – stock and opening hours.

Criticisms about stock (19.7% of respondents) were generally about a lack of new materials and general inadequacy of provision in specific subject areas. Opening hours were felt to be too short (8.1% of respondents). Criticisms about delays in ordering books (4.6% of respondents) focused particularly on interlibrary loans, whilst specific complaints about noise (3.8%) were about mobile phones and school classes. Complaints about provision of computers (3.8%) fell into three categories: shortage or lack of PCs, Internet charges, and computers not working. Complaints about staff were low but achievers commented about unhelpful, condescending staff whilst low achievers complaints were focused on lack of help with equipment and computers.

Table 7.3 again highlights the differences between achievers and low achievers' experience of the service. Achievers appeared to be far more critical of the service in almost every

way. They felt stock inadequacies more keenly, felt more frustration over delays and opening hours and were less tolerant of computer problems. Study related problems – library environment, study space, noise and catalogue issues were all more significant for achievers. Low achievers recorded more staff related problems than achievers. These included a lack of help with computers and equipment, staff making mistakes when serving them and fear of security staff.

Respondents raised other issues not tabled above. These included a request for annotations on catalogue entries to help with the choice of suitable learning materials, and problems with disabled access, both to library buildings and to the shelving.

In our interviews we asked our low achieving respondents how they felt the library could help them to learn more effectively. This was a difficult question for most interviewees and many were adamant that the library met all their needs:

> *"They're very good at what they do. One of the best in the business. They got a great reference section and always someone attending there."*

Some respondents expressed the need for extra help with learning, both informal and formal:

> *"It could have helped more if there was someone there who you could explain the train of your thoughts and they could help digest it and say a book or books that would send you along not necessarily the channel that you were working along. But one that ran parallel that would have helped."*

> *"Possibly if you put classes on. There are places where you can get fairly good computer training, but there is always a need for other places."*

Better provision of materials and study space also came up as issues:

> *"The availability of more books, that were the type that I needed."*

> *"I think that public libraries around could have more books related to learning. They don't have a great deal. They have your basic ones but they don't have a great deal in depth."*

> *"And sometimes I think you need the space if the library and could make the space for us to sit comfortably and take out reference books the facts you need. There's not always space to do that in a library."*

7.4 Summary

One of the key findings of this part of the study is the extent to which low achieving users appeared to be so much more accepting of the library service provided than achievers. This finding reinforced what we had already concluded from our survey of FE and local learners. Low achievers who use the library for learning appear to be far less

discriminating than achievers in the way they receive it. Their expectations are lower and from this it can be inferred that they are much more likely to put up with an inadequate service.

It could be argued from the results that the public library is less important to low achievers for learning. However, our interviews demonstrated that many low-achieving respondents had a high awareness of the value of the library for learning and used it for that purpose. It seemed to us that there is a potential for the public library to do more for low achievers using the library for learning. Their expectations and awareness both need to be raised and efforts need to focus particularly on:

   a) the evaluation of materials (currency, level, relevance)

   b) the use of stock for reference and information

   c) mechanisms for obtaining material not in stock

It can also be argued that public libraries should establish comments systems that encourage people to voice their concerns. Low achievers not only appear to be less discriminating, they also appear to be less likely to complain about unsatisfactory service. Although low achievers comprised nearly half our public library sample population only 34% completed the question about problems using the service.

Chapter 8 The Public Library's impact on groups whose participation in formal learning is low.

One of the objectives of the study was to investigate the public library's impact on educational disadvantage. From the literature we identified four groups whose participation in lifelong learning was known to be low: people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, men, and the elderly.

8.1 Disabled people

Disability as a barrier to lifelong learning is well documented. NIACE (2000), for example, reports Royal National Institute for the Blind research which shows that over one million people in the UK experience levels of sight loss significantly affecting their ability to study. Research in the US, (Kaye 2000), suggests that disabled people have more limited access to ICT and e-learning opportunities.

The extent of disability rises with age. Although the number of long-term disabled of working age (16-64) is given as 17.5% (Office for National Statistics 2001b), 31% of 50-59 year olds nationally consider themselves to be disabled (Department for Education and Employment 2000a).

Results of the present research showed that 18.4% of library users who answered the question on disability considered themselves to be disabled (n = 786). The figure for working age respondents (16-59 years) was 15.5%; and for those aged 50-59 – 25.7%. These figures do not fall far short of the national figures cited above and suggest that our sample libraries were reaching disabled people.

When we analysed the data from disabled respondents by educational achievement we found that over two thirds (69.7%) of disabled respondents were low achievers, compared with 40.4% of respondents who did not consider themselves disabled. The results here suggest that disability is a barrier to educational achievement and interview results confirmed this. However, they also confirmed the value of the public library as an accessible educational resource:

> *"I had a stroke eight years ago and I lost my confidence and I stopped the word processing course, I think that I've confidence back now and I want to start learning again. That's why I'm here in the library."*

"I've been physically incapacitated in different way since being a child. And the library for people like that…is a lifeline…."

"I was considered an oddity for having asthma. So my education from then on became self-educated. If I wanted to study a subject I just got the books."

"I was disabled for a time, and had to get a new job, and I found that by getting a book out from the library I was able to learn about that job and do it better."

We analysed the ways in which disabled respondents' use of the public library differed from those who did not report a disability. Table 8.1 below confirms that a lower percentage of disabled library users use ICT in the library. The lower use of video and CDs may reflect the problems of users with hearing and vision impairment. The low use of non-fiction recorded is similar to the difference reported earlier between low achievers and achievers in general (Fig 7.1) page 66.

FACILITY USED FOR LEARNING	Library users with a disability	Library users without a disability
Reading fiction	45.2%	50.5%
Reading non-fiction	25.4%	38.0%
Reading newspapers and magazines	6.8%	4.9%
Using CDs and videos	3.4%	5.0%
Notice Boards	2.3%	3.9%
Using a Word Processor	2.3%	3.1%
Using the Internet	1.1%	5.0%
Using other information via a computer	2.8%	3.9%
Using library equipment	7.3%	5.3%

Table 8.1   Disabled users use of public library facilities for learning.

When we asked users to suggest ways in which they had found the library helpful in their learning the results were as follows:

FACILITY found most helpful	Library users with a disability	Library users without a disability
Providing access to the Internet	0.0%	7.3%
Providing access to a computer	15.1%	6.2%
Having helpful staff	0.0%	8.0%
Help with literacy	7.5%	1.4%
Providing a wide range of materials	0.0%	4.8%
Providing CDs and videos	3.8%	6.2%
A quiet place to study	0.0%	5.5%
Advertising local events	5.7%	0.0%

Table 8.2   How the public library helps disabled users' learning

Although Table 8.1 showed that use of library-based computers was lower amongst disabled users, Table 8.2 suggests that those who did use it found it of particular value. Although the Internet was not volunteered as a helpful resource in answer to this question, some disabled users clearly found it important:

> *"I'm actually a disabled athlete [table tennis player] so I need to get access to the Internet to find out when the next competition is, in which country I can enter."*

The findings for the use of the library as a study space may again reflect the lower use of the library as an educational resource, although more disabled users mentioned the library's helpfulness for literacy.

8.2 Elderly People

The value of learning for elderly people and the factors obstructing their access to it are well known (Carlton and Soulsby 1999). Aldridge and Tuckett (2001) note that retired people have scarcely been affected by the expansion of lifelong learning opportunities and point to the benefits of enhancing their participation - improved health, extended economic activity, and prolonged active citizenship.

Van Fleet (1995) suggests that elderly people require choice and control of their learning environment and, in support, cites a number of pieces of research from the late 70s. This, she argues, makes the public library an ideal learning environment for elderly people.

If this is true, then it is not reflected in the use our elderly respondents made of the library for learning. Table 8.3 below shows a breakdown of library use for learning by broad age range. This provides strong evidence that elderly people are less likely than those in other age groups to use the public library as a resource for learning. Use of ICT for learning is negligible (0.8% of those aged 60 or over) whilst even use of traditional resources for learning is low (17.8%).

FACILITY USED FOR LEARNING	Library users Aged 16-39	Library users Aged 40-59	Library Users Aged 60+
Reading fiction	15.0%	11.5%	4.0%
Reading non-fiction	42.7%	45.5%	17.8%
Reading newspapers and magazines	6.2%	6.2%	3.4%
Using CDs and videos	5.9%	5.3%	2.8%
Notice Boards	3.6%	5.7%	1.7%
Using a Word Processor	5.9%	2.2%	0.8%
Using the Internet	7.8%	4.3%	0.8%
Using other information via a computer	7.5%	2.8%	0.8%
Using library equipment	6.5%	5.9%	3.7%

Table 8.3   Elderly users use of library facilities for learning.

Of 345 respondents who competed the question "How has the library helped you to learn?" (Table 8.4) only 17% were aged 60 or over (total sample population over 60 = 26.9%). This supports the view that elderly people may perceive learning to be of limited importance.

FACILITY found most helpful	Library users Aged 16-39	Library users Aged 40-59	Library Users Aged 60+
Providing books on a topic	17.6%	16.5%	18.6%
Reference materials	6.9%	6.3%	8.5%
CDs and videos	5.0%	7.1%	6.8%
Inter-library loans	5.0%	7.9%	6.8%
Providing access to the Internet	8.2%	4.7%	3.4%
Providing access to a computer	6.9%	7.9%	8.5%
Being local and convenient	0.6%	0.8%	1.7%
Having helpful staff	5.7%	6.3%	10.2%
Help with literacy	2.5%	2.4%	1.7%
Providing local history material	1.9%	3.1%	3.4%
A resource for research	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%
For hobbies	0.6%	0.8%	1.7%
A quiet place to study	8.2%	2.4%	1.7%

Table 8.4   How the public library helps elderly users' learning

Table 8.4 shows the opinions of those who *were* using the library for learning about the helpfulness of specific resources and facilities, again split by broad age range. Here there is a general consensus about the usefulness of many facilities – for example, providing

books on a topic, reference provision and inter-library loans. Internet use however, was less valued by the elderly, although the provision of computers in general was valued.

8.3 Males

The evidence is strong that males are more reluctant than females to participate in learning activities. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (2001) statistics show that in 1999-2000 registration for HE access programmes in the UK was split 27.8% male, 71.2% female. McGivney (1998) points to increasing concern about the low participation of some groups of men in any form of learning. These include manual workers, African-Caribbean men, disaffected young men and men aged over 40. Table 4.1 page 38 showed that there were fewer men than women in all our samples: FE students, Local Learners and Library Users.

Table 8.5 shows a gender breakdown of respondents' use of library facilities for learning. Gender differences appear not to be significant except for the predominance of males amongst magazine and newspaper users. Use of ICT, including the Internet is slightly higher amongst males. This table suggests that, when men do use the library service, it provides an effective and useful resource for learning.

FACILITY USED FOR LEARNING	Male library users	Female library users
Reading fiction	50.3%	48.2%
Reading non-fiction	36.7%	34.0%
Reading newspapers and magazines	8.5%	3.5%
Using CDs and videos	3.9%	4.9%
Notice Boards	3.0%	3.8%
Using a Word Processor	3.3%	2.6%
Using the Internet	5.2%	3.7%
Using other information via a computer	4.5%	3.1%
Using library equipment	4.8%	6.0%

Table 8.5   Male and female use of the library for learning

Table 8.6 below shows male and female users' perceptions of the library's usefulness for learning. The most significant finding here is that males appear to value the public library's impact on literacy more than females. Again, males are more enthusiastic than females about the usefulness of ICT in the library.

FACILITY found most helpful	Male library users	Female library users
Providing access to the Internet	6.7%	5.7%
Providing access to a computer	10.8%	5.7%
Help with literacy	5.0%	0.9%
Providing a wide range of materials	5.8%	3.1%
Providing books	19.2%	27.3%
Providing CDs and videos	7.5%	5.3%
Use of reference books	10.8%	4.8%
Advertising local events	3.3%	1.8%

Table 8.6   How does the library help male/female users' learning?

8.4   Ethnic minorities

The problems facing learners from ethnic minorities in the UK has been well documented, (Sargant 2000, Social Exclusion Unit 2000a, 2000c). We recognised at the beginning of the research that comprehensive data on the use of libraries for learning by users from ethnic minorities would be deficient. Of the libraries selected for the study only two had significant numbers of ethnic minority users in their catchment areas. These were both in Sheffield –Upperthorpe has a strong Somali and Yemeni community with non-whites constituting 8.1% of the ward population and Darnall has strong Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities, non-whites constituting 14.8% of the ward population.

Initially it seemed that an analysis of non-white use would not be useful since overall sample numbers were so low – only 34 non-white users completing questionnaires. However, when we analysed the results for Darnall and Upperthorpe we found that, in the case of Darnall, 6.8% respondents were Pakistani, and 12.3% respondents were from non-white ethnic minorities. For Upperthorpe 6.7% of respondents categorised themselves as 'Ethnic Minorities – Other'. These figures do not fall far short of the ward population figures quoted above and are reassuring. It would appear that, at least where services are geared to specific needs, the public library service is well used by local ethnic minority communities.

An analysis of the facilities used for learning by library users from ethnic minorities gives further reassurance. In almost every respect (Table 8.7) the public library's facilities were used for learning more by users from ethnic minorities than by white users. As resources for learning, use of CDs and videos, the Internet, computers for other information, newspapers and magazines and notice boards was significantly higher amongst the ethnic

minority communities. The value of newspaper and magazine provision for ethnic minority communities was also noted by Coughlan (2001).

FACILITY USED FOR LEARNING	White library users	Ethnic minority library users
Reading fiction	49.1%	40.6%
Reading non-fiction	34.0%	46.9%
Reading newspapers and magazines	4.6%	18.8%
Using CDs and videos	4.3%	12.5%
Notice Boards	3.5%	6.3%
Using a Word Processor	2.6%	3.3%
Using the Internet	3.9%	12.5%
Using other information via a computer	3.4%	6.3%
Using library equipment	7.4%	6.3%

Table 8.7   Ethnic minority use of the public library facilities for learning

The relative value placed on facilities for learning can be seen from Table 8.8 below. Here the Internet, staff help, audio-visual materials and study space were all thought to be particularly helpful by users from ethnic minorities.

FACILITY found most helpful	White library users	Ethnic minority library users
Providing access to the Internet	0.0%	7.3%
Providing access to a computer	15.1%	6.2%
Having helpful staff	0.0%	8.0%
Help with literacy	7.5%	1.4%
Providing a wide range of materials	0.0%	4.8%
Providing CDs and videos	3.8%	6.2%
Developing knowledge	5.7%	2.1%
A quiet place to study	0.0%	5.5%
Advertising local events	5.7%	0.0%

Table 8.8   How does the public library help ethnic minority learning?

8.5   Summary

This part of the study raised some interesting questions about the public library's impact on educational disadvantage. It was reassuring to find that the public libraries studied were attracting disabled people, elderly people and (in at least two cases) ethnic minority users in proportions broadly equivalent to their numbers in the overall population. However, male library users were in the minority and this may be an issue for public libraries in general.

Roach and Morrison (1997) found the public library was considered to be culturally irrelevant by many people from ethnic minorities. However, they studied ethnically diverse communities and it may be that the communities in Sheffield were less diverse and, therefore, easier to serve. Certainly Roach and Morrison's findings were not reflected in our Darnall or Upperthorpe samples, although overall sample numbers were small. This is an area which may justify further research.

The public library's potential benefits as a learning resource are very well documented but the findings suggest that a significant number of people with disabilities, males and older people who already use the public library have yet to take advantage of its facilities as a resource for learning.

Chapter 9 The public library's impact on educational achievement

At a late stage in the research it was suggested that length of public library membership might be a significant factor in individuals' educational achievement. Earlier in the study only 'low achievers' had been interviewed and we realised that interviewing a sample of library users that included some achievers might enable us to examine the extent to which our respondents felt the public library had had an impact on their educational attainment. Had it, in fact, *minimised* low achievement?

For this reason additional telephone interviews were carried out with a random sample of questionnaire respondents, both achievers and low achievers. As well as quantitative data on length of library use, this would also enable us to ask respondents for their own opinions about its benefit. In November 2001 110 interviews were carried out. Respondents were asked how they thought library use had helped their educational attainment both in childhood, where this was applicable, and in later life.

9.1   Length of membership

We recognised that a simple correlation between length of use and highest qualification achieved would be misleading. Library use is only one of many factors, which could have an impact on educational achievement, and isolating this variable was beyond the scope of this study. The difficulties of measuring the library's impact on educational impact was acknowledged by Linley and Usherwood (1998:23) who stated:

> "In the area of educational impact, as with many other themes, the data illuminate and illustrate rather than represent the role of the library. We can, however, say that public libraries provided some support to some adult and young learners and have some beneficial effects in some circumstances"

When we analysed length of library use we found that an extremely high percentage of users (83.6%) had been members since childhood (Table 9.1 below). No one aged 40 or over had been a library user for less than 20 years.

Duration of of public library use	Number	Percentage of all respondents
Less than 5 years	3	2.7
6-10 years	2	1.8
More than ten years	2	1.8
More than 20 years	11	10.0
Since childhood	92	83.6
Total	110	100.0

Table 9.1   How long have you been a library member?

Because the distribution of results was so unexpected we looked for sampling faults but could find little to explain why so many respondents had been members since childhood. The sampling frame included all those questionnaire respondents who had originally said they were prepared to be interviewed. However, it may be that questionnaire respondents with a long-term commitment to public libraries were more likely to offer themselves as interviewees. As can be seen from the table below use since childhood was high across all age ranges.

Age range of respondents	No. of respondents in each age range	Used pl since childhood (% of age range)
16-19	2	100.0%
20-29	10	90.0%
30-39	27	81.5%
40-49	30	90.0%
50-59	17	76.5%
60 or over	22	81.8%

Table 9.2   Use of public library since childhood by % age range

These findings provide much food for thought. If public libraries are as valuable a resource for lifelong learning as the literature suggests, then it would seem that encouraging public library use in childhood may be the most effective way of ensuring that they are used effectively throughout adult life. On the other hand, these results also suggest that public libraries might need to give more thought about how the library habit might be encouraged amongst adults who are not members.

We next looked at the broad educational achievements of our interviewees and compared these with length of public library use. 97 respondents had given us their qualifications on leaving school. We found that 82.7% of those using a public library since childhood were achievers, that is they had left school with GCSE's grade C and above. We then compared

the educational achievements of this sample with those of library users who completed the original questionnaire. Of 796 library users who had given us their qualifications, only 54.5% were achievers.

The difference is so great it is possible to suggest that there could be a relationship between public library membership from childhood and high educational achievement. However, what this relationship is remains unclear. It could be that public library use results in higher educational achievement. On the other hand it might be that the brightest and most motivated children are more likely to become public library users as their quest for knowledge take them beyond the classroom walls.

9.2 The public library's impact on achievement at school

There is little quantitative data on the public library's impact on educational achievement and this is unsurprising. Too many variables affect educational achievement for the public library's role to be easily identified. Stone, (1999) in a study associated with the present research, reviews these. Stone investigated the public library's impact on primary school children and although a direct relationship could not be found, she concluded that those children who were public library users benefited from reading a much wider and more demanding range of material.

The evidence for reading's impact on educational attainment, and by inference, that of the public library as a reading resource, is strong. Research with low achievers in the US (ACT 1999) suggests that young people who read are more likely to be high achievers than those who do not read. Wade and Moore (1993) in the UK, also provide strong evidence. The impact of the 'Bookstart' scheme (Wade and Moore 1998) is incontrovertible. The Library Association Record (1999:78) noted that

> "Although the importance of early literacy development is unquestionable, it was the dramatic results from the pilot project which led the organisers to recommend guaranteed funding for Bookstart to make it a national project – and the right of every child."

To enrich the quantitative data we asked respondents whether they felt the public library had made any difference to the quality/standard of results they had achieved at school. Many found this question difficult to answer, echoing the experience of Harris (1998) whose questions about the social impact of the public library met with a similar hesitant

response. The response *'Not really no – well… yeah, I suppose it must have!'* typifies many of our respondents.

Of those interviewees who had been members since childhood almost two thirds (64.9%) felt the library had had a beneficial impact on their educational achievement at school.

It was interesting to note how different respondents interpreted this question. Some saw the public library's educational value purely in terms of curriculum support:

> *"I don't really remember reading books to do with schoolwork."*
>
> *"No – the public library didn't have academic material back then."*
>
> *"To be perfectly honest no, I don't think it did except in the broadest of ways. I got books out for fun and not for schoolwork."*
>
> *"Probably not. I've never found that the books in the public library have been relevant to my studies."*
>
> *"Using a public library didn't make a difference to the quality of my studying. It has though, helped to make me a prolific reader."*

As the last quote above suggests, some feel that the public library's impact on educational achievement through its encouragement of reading is so intrinsic to the core business of the institution it can be taken for granted.

Even respondents whose answers were positive tended to disregard this feature of public library provision:

> *"Apart from borrowing books? Well, there's the reference section obviously…"*

However, many respondents were unequivocal that the public library had helped their studies through its encouragement of reading:

> *"It certainly helped at Primary School level, as the school I went to was not rich in reading material and my parents could not afford to buy many books. I became an avid reader purely from borrowing books from the library."*
>
> *"… Mum used to take us and I learnt to read from an early age – in fact when I was seven I was reading at the age of a fourteen year old."*
>
> *"Yes – I learnt to read before I went to school, as my family encouraged me in the use of libraries and reading."*
>
> *"Yes, because when I was at school I had a very good English master, and he pointed out some very good books for me to read, which I then got out of the library."*
>
> *"It probably did, because I was able to read an awful lot. I did A-level English and I think it helped a lot then."*
>
> *"I'm sure it did. My spelling was always very good… and my reading, and I think my general knowledge where you just read things and pick them up."*

"Reading is so much a way of my life, so…yes!"

"I would say definitely. It definitely improved my reading."

"Yes – I know it does. I can see it in my own children, as they were able to read before they went to primary school."

9.3 The Public library's impact on adult achievement.

We followed up our question about the library's impact on schoolwork by asking whether respondents felt the public library had had an impact on their educational progress since leaving school. Over two thirds (70.7%) felt the library had had a beneficial impact although not all related it to the achievement of specific qualifications. The higher figure for beneficial impact here may simply be because this was an easier question to answer. The impact of the library was more recent and therefore easier to remember.

Those who answered 'No' tended to be those who had pursued formal courses of study, commenting specifically on the public library's lack of in-depth resources:

"No – what I was doing was too academic. I very much needed the specialist stuff in the University library."

"No – the library just contains 'surface' information. Up to A-level I used the school library, and after that the one at college".

"No – I don't think I used the public library, because I used the college library. You see, the college library had much more detailed stuff about catering."

"I find out about courses from the public library, but generally we don't use the public library to supplement what we can get from the college library."

"A little bit – I don't think there was as much information there as I would have liked at degree level. I tended to use the university library."

"At the college the public library was terrible. Since leaving school more or less everything I've done is to do with computers. You get given the manual, and so I've not needed the library."

Others however, valued the public library as an additional resource for their studies:

"Yes, I used to get books from the public library, as well as the university library."

"Yes – I could take books out when I was at home from uni."

"I came into teaching late, and I used it [for my studies] then. I also used it all the time for the children when I was setting them projects."

"Yes, I went to the Edinburgh college of art, and I used the library a lot then for my dissertation, I did work in there."

"Yes, especially at college, as it gave me access to books that I couldn't afford to buy."

"Certainly – some of the course books – particularly the additional material – I ordered from the library, and I then had them for an extended length of time."

"When I was doing my degree in Sheffield we did used to use the city library, not just to get books but also as a place to study."

"Oh yes, because you can't get all the text books from the place that you're studying at – they often don't have one for each student."

"I went to teacher training college, which was a rare thing from our village – I couldn't have gone if me aunt hadn't paid for me. Anyway, the teachers sent out a reading list and I got them from the library – they we're about 7/6 which was a lot of money in those days and I wouldn't have been able to afford them, and they were brand new."

"I've been able to get inter-library loans with much less difficulty than from the university library, and been able to keep them longer - this was crucial whilst doing my part-time degree here at Sheffield and completing my final projects."

Some related their success after leaving school to earlier use of a public library:

"I would say so – it gave me a foundation for my literacy and numeracy skills, so I would say it helped all the way through".

There were many other, more general comments:

"Well, there are lots of information services, which help me as a parent. I'm currently doing a computing course and I go to the library to get reference books, and if they haven't got it they will get it for the next day. It's so friendly, much better than a shop where you don't get any conversation, and you end up traipsing round all day looking for something – in a library you just have to ask."

"Oh yes definitely. They had a wider range of books, which I couldn't afford to buy, as well as access to a computer."

"Well now at my public library I can access the Internet at no cost…This is great educationally and for leisure purposes. Just having easy access to wide range of books, videos etc means that I can dip in and out of different subjects, different authors etc which can only be beneficial in terms of opening ones mind to different things."

"My main use has been recreational, but just that helps by fostering reading and curiosity. So yes, but not necessarily directly."

"Yes definitely, particularly reference books. At one time you couldn't borrow reference books, but the reference library was an ideal solution."

"Yes – there were particular reference books that I found useful."

"Yes – any book I couldn't afford, I'd go into the library and they would either have it, or would order it for me."

"I've used the databases and computers – once I got some information for places to apply for an academic grant – and the reference books of course. Increasingly, access to the Internet makes a huge difference."

"Definitely – you see, I'm the sort of bloke who gets bored and just wants to try something. I'm always nipping down for books on various things like carpentry and foreign languages."

"It made a difference when I left the air force because I went into teaching and I needed to cram in all the knowledge I could!"

"Yes – I'm doing a computer course at the moment, and if there is something I don't know about, I just go and get a book."

"Retrospectively speaking, I've spent more time in reference libraries as an adult studying than I did when I was at school."

"One or two of the courses that I have done I did need specialised information… the public library got me things from all over the place."

> *"I had to teach English literature, and it was so useful to be able to enter a public library and have the books there in front of you for you to choose which would be harder to get from elsewhere."*

9.4   Summary

There was strong qualitative evidence from our respondents that the public library had made a real difference to their educational achievements both at school and after school. Even those whose responses were negative tended to take for granted the public library's impact on literacy, without which their achievements would not have been possible.

The findings on length of library membership are too limited to draw anything but tentative conclusions. Both quantitative and qualitative data suggest that the public library is of real benefit to learners, and the majority of library users believed the public library had played a role in improving their educational achievements.

It would be too simplistic, however, to assume that this improvement is always reflected in high academic achievement. One of our interview respondents made this very clear to us. This was a male in his forties who had left school with 1 GCSE grade C:

> *"Yes – I didn't do brilliantly academically, but I would have done much, much worse without the silence and the safe space and the books and the help in finding information for my work at school. If you ask people they are so willing to help. I've loved them since I was small, and they are essential. If it hadn't been for libraries… I'd probably be out sweeping the streets by now. In fact, I only recently found out that I suffer from extreme dyslexia, and so the public library even helped me overcome dyslexia!"*

Chapter 10 Learners' use of ICT

One of the study's objectives was to determine the receptivity of low achieving adults to the use of computers for learning. We wanted to explore what sort of access respondents had to computers, and what they used computers for. For library users we were also interested in their attitudes to computers in libraries.

The study focused on ICT for two reasons. First, the present UK government is investing heavily in ICT in public libraries and has a target of providing public access PCs in all 4,300 static public libraries by the end of 2002 (House of Commons 2001). We hoped that this focus would help to maximise this investment.

Secondly, previous research has concluded that information technology provides considerable benefits for adult independent learners, low achievers and those with learning difficulties (Bates, 1995, Further Education Funding Council 1999, Hyde 2000.) As the OECD (2000:29) report on motivating learners suggests:

> 'Difficult-to-motivate students often benefit from individualised computer-based work because it enables them to make mistakes and correct them without losing face. Their self-esteem also grows as their mastery of the technology develops.'

10.1 Learners and Library users: computer use

First we needed to know how many of our respondents used a computer and where they had access to one. The results are shown in Table 10.1 below.

The percentage of learners with computer access, (96.7% achievers, 93.7% low achievers), is understandably high since the respondents to our FE survey all had access to a computer at college. The figure is less than 100% for learners because a number of local learners did not have college access.

The figures for public library users show a dramatic difference in computer use between achievers and low achievers. Over three quarters of achievers (76.0%) used a computer, whereas nearly three quarters of low achievers (71.6%) did not. We have already shown the possible link between formal learning and computer ownership, but these figures suggest that there might be a general relationship between academic achievement and

computer ownership. Stock (2001) writing for the Benton Foundation, reports US research which seems to confirm this.

10.2 Access to computers

Table 10.1 shows that learners who used a computer at college also tended to have a computer at home. Computer ownership for formal adult learners was 68.4%, (70.6% achievers, 63.7% low achievers). The overall figure is slightly less than the 73% for home computer ownership by students found in recent US research (National Science Foundation 2001). Home computer ownership was high for both high and low achieving formal learners. Low achieving learners had less access to computers at work as might be expected in view of the higher unemployment rates for low achievers (See chapter 4).

The figures for computer use at a public library are at first sight disappointingly low. However the figures are, to some extent, misleading since three of the sample libraries (Hadfield, Parson Cross and Southey) did not have public access computers at the time of the survey. When the respondents from these three libraries are excluded, the figure for achievers using a computer at a local library rises from 23.0% to 29.0%, whilst the figure for low achievers rises from 11.0% to 16.8%.

		At home	At work	At college	At a local library	Respondents with computer access	No computer access	Total Respondents
Learners	Achievers	266 (68.2%)	72 (18.5%)	266 (68.2%)	70 (17.9%)	377 (96.7%)	13 (3.3%)	390
	Low Achievers	107 (59.8%)	19 (10.6%)	115 (64.2%)	25 (14.0%)	168 (93.9%)	11 (6.1%)	179
Library users	Achievers	221 (50.9%)	148 (34.1%)	64 (14.7%)	100 (23.0%)	330 (76.0%)	104 (24.0%)	434
	Low Achievers	68 (18.7%)	25 (6.9%)	18 (5.0%)	40 (11.0%)	103 (28.4%)	260 (71.6%)	363

Percentage figures are % of all respondents

Table 10.1 Where do you have access to a computer?

There are still questions to be raised, however about the very large percentage of low achievers (71.6%) who say they do not have access to a computer yet are using a library where computers are provided. In view of the relatively low proportions of low achieving respondents using public libraries for learning, this may be because computers are perceived as a tool for learning rather than leisure or information. The higher percentage of achievers using computer facilities at local libraries again suggests a relationship between achievement, learning and computer use.

This was reinforced in our interviews with low achieving formal learners. They were unambiguous about the value of computers in libraries and most of their comments came in the form of criticisms:

> "There's only 2 computers and you can't always get on, you usually have to book a slot, a half hour or an hour and you usually find that you haven't got enough time. Usually when I've got time the kids are out of school and you struggle to get on it so they could do with more computers."

> "The fact that there are no computers in my local library is a real let down."

> "Internet access is too expensive."

Since the analysis in Table 10.1 did not enable us to identify people who only had library access to a computer we undertook a further analysis of those people who had a home computer and those who only had access to a computer in a local library (Table 10.2). For this analysis we ignored respondents who had computer access either at work or at college since in both these cases computer use was likely to be restricted in some way.

Computer access Home/Library	Library users		Learners	
	Achievers	Low Achievers	Achievers	Low Achievers
Respondents with a home Computer	221 (82.5%)	68 (72.3%)	269 (92.1%)	96 (89.7%)
Home use only	169 (63.1%)	54 (57.4%)	223 (76.4%)	81 (75.7%)
Home and public library	52 (19.4%)	14 (14.9%)	46 (15.8%)	15 (14.0%)
Public library only	47 (17.5%)	26 (27.7%)	23 (7.9%)	11 (10.3%)
Total Respondents using a public library computer	99 (36.9%)	40 (42.5%)	69 (23.6%)	26 (24.3%)
Total Respondents with computer access	268	94	292	107

Table 10.2 Respondents with and without home computers.

Although the figures for low achievers who only use a computer in a public library are still low (27.7% library users and 10.3% learners) they are significantly higher than the figures for achievers (17.5% and 7.9% respectively). To these may be added those respondents who had home computers but were still making use of the public library's facilities. Of those respondents who had access to a computer, 42.5% of low achieving respondents in our library user survey, and about a quarter of low achievers in our learner surveys were making use of a computer in a public library. This suggests that the public library is making some impact on educational disadvantage through ICT.

10.3 Attitudes to computers in public libraries

In our interviews we asked low achieving library users for their opinions about using computers for learning. Many responses were negative although some respondents could see the value of computers for others, if not for themselves. This double standard is similar to that found by Linley and Usherwood (1998) and (Lilley (1999:109) one of whose respondents summed up what they wanted from the public library in the memorable phrase "*cutting edge but warm and fluffy please!*"

There was a suggestion that older users were not enthusiastic about by computers.

> *"I've never been much of a computer user. I've used them for work, but by the time computers became a common place, I was in my late 50s. I wouldn't just surf the net just to surf it. I would have to have a problem in mind and be looking for an answer."*

> *"I'm hopeless!... [and] there's no emotion in a computer"*

Others put more emphasis on the traditional role of the library service.

> *"I suppose I'm a slight traditionalist as I would say books are best. In a sense it is not something that I have done, not really learnt that way with that medium. I can see the value of it with things like Encarta."*

> *"Do you mean having computers there in the library? It might get a bit overcrowded. I think lots of people might be going into the library to take advantage and use the computers. I don't know if the all the other people would come in."*

Some lacked confidence in their ability to learn how to use computers.

> *"It's just not for me. The computer course that I would take probably would not teach me enough".*

> *"I'm absolutely useless with them. I know how to turn one on and that's about it. They are good though, I mean everyone's got to use them because it's all computers now."*

Since previous research had suggested that lack of confidence or ignorance was an issue we asked respondents whether lack of knowledge had prevented them from using computers in the library. Their responses are shown in Fig 10.1 below.
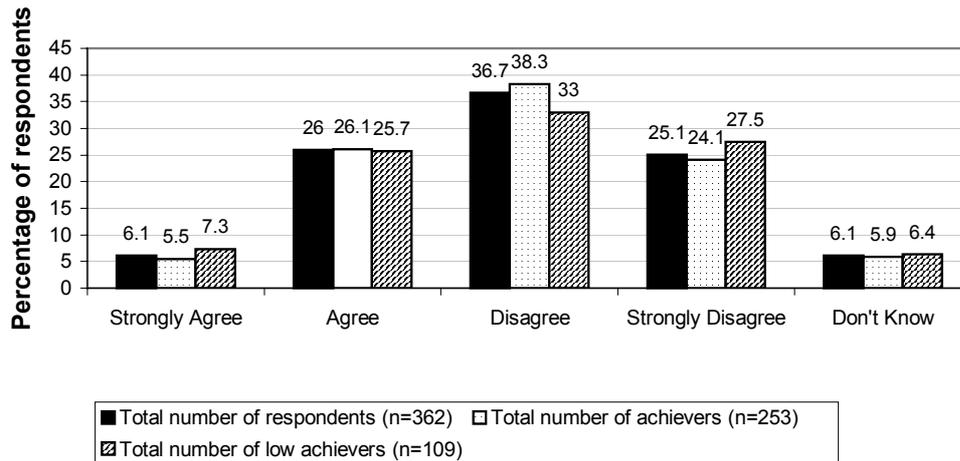
Figure 10.1 "I avoid using electronic sources of information held in the public library because I don't know how to use them"

It is telling that nearly a third of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. There was little difference in the responses of achievers and low achievers.

Many library users could see the benefit of computers, particularly for children:

> *"I think that it's a good idea if the kids are computer literate".*

> *"Provided that [children] are using them for learning, it is good. There are too many games, that children seem to be preoccupied with."*

> *"but having said that I have two grandsons...and they can use the computer as easily as I'm talking to you. The older boy when he was finishing his O-levels needed a question on America and he went through to the town to where the information was and he got 100% with an A and two pluses."*

> *"I think it's a good idea for the kids. We are going to get one for the kids at Christmas, because we think it's a good idea."*

> *"I think that they are alright if we don't become too dependent on them. The children should learn their tables also."*

> *"Children can study a lot better now at the library because they've got computers there now, but I'm still learning how to use my video!"*

At the other end of the scale some respondents were enthusiastic about the value of computers:

> *"They're wonderful. It's going to change people's outlook on everything, because soon you're going to be able to do courses on your computer and things like that, degrees and such."*

> *"I think it's a good idea to use computers for learning, because it gives you more help and guidance for what you're learning."*

> *"It would be nice to have them in libraries actually. So that you're not just looking at books, but you'd able to look at a computer as well."*

"I think it's brilliant. We have one at home."

"I think they're really good. I use them quite a lot. I've got one at home. I have used the word processor, Encarta Encyclopaedia and the Internet. I find it all really helpful. When I use the Internet, I use it to look up something. I don't just play about. It is usually for a specific reason."

"The knowledge that is there -its far more accessible now that it used to be, there's so much more that you can do using the computers."

"They now have computers available. I just think it's a really good resource, not only for written things, but also pictorially, and for ideas."

10.4 Use made of computers in public libraries

We were interested to know the nature of our respondents' use of computers in libraries. Table 10.3 below shows the proportion of achievers and low achievers using different computer facilities in the library.

	Library Users		Learners	
	Achievers	**Low Achievers**	**Achievers**	**Low Achievers**
Internet	64 (20.3%)	20 (22.2%)	27 (8.1%)	10 (7.7%)
CD Roms etc.	21 (6.7%)	4 (4.4%)	24 (6.3%)	8 (4.7%)
Electronic Library Catalogues	31 (9.8%)	6 (6.7%)	22 (5.8%)	7 (4.1%)
E-mail	24 (7.6%)	3 (3.3%)	7 (1.8%)	3 (1.8%)
Word Processing	32 (10.2%)	10 (11.1%)	19 (5.0%)	6 (3.5%)
Total respondents	315	90	380	171

Table 10.3 Computer Facilities used in the library

This table shows that the Internet is the most valued feature of public library computer provision, used by over 20% of those library users who used a computer. No other feature is used particularly heavily. The figures for learners, from the learner survey, are much lower than those from the library user survey since most learners had access to a computer at college and were less dependent on the public library service.

Interviewees also commented on their use of library computers:

"I like to take my nephew and my son so they can use the Internet. I think it's a nice environment for them, especially the children's section."

"I haven't got a computer, so I go to the library to type up letters for jobs. I got some help from a librarian recently when I was looking for some information on the Internet as well".

> *"The library benefits me, or has benefited me, in that it has an internet access computer. I used this quite regularly until I bought my own home computer."*
>
> *"I've used the databases and computers – once I got some information for places to apply for an academic grant – and the reference books of course. Increasingly, access to the Internet makes a huge difference."*
>
> *"Being able to use the facilities that you haven't got at home, like the computers."*
>
> *"I have been using the Internet as well, as I don't have a computer."*
>
> *"Well if I want to know anything I'll look it up in the reference library, or even on the computer these days."*
>
> *"When I was doing it I'd just get the books, but of course nowadays they've got the computers as well – I've seen some of our lot [nurses] looking up the medical literature on them."*
>
> *"There are two things really. Firstly, they have a computer, something which I don't have access to at home."*

The evidence suggests that computers in libraries are, for many people, a much-valued resource, particularly for those without access at home.

10.5 Summary

The results show that ICT facilities in public libraries are of particular value to those who are not engaged in formal learning. Although formal learners in our survey used the public library heavily, they found ICT provision less useful than printed materials because the majority of them had access to computers at home.

The most significant finding was the difference between low achievers and achievers in their use of computers. Three quarters of those library users who had left school without the equivalent of GCSE grade C passes or higher did not use a computer even when one was available in the library.

The findings suggest that this may be for a number of reasons. Some users lack confidence and are unfamiliar with the equipment and facilities provided. Nearly a third of respondents, both achievers and low achievers, said that lack of knowledge of the equipment had prevented their use. This suggests that computer awareness training is a necessity if the current investment in ICT is to be maximised and if an impact is to be made on social exclusion.

There also appeared to be an issue about what computers could be used for. The evidence suggests that the link between computer ownership and use and academic achievement is

strong. Computers are seen by some primarily as tools for formal learning. Library users need to be made more aware of their value in supporting hobbies and interests, in information seeking and for informal learning in general.

We have commented in previous chapters about low achievers' difficulty in conceptualising their needs in terms of anything other than traditional printed materials. Electronic resources are largely invisible and cannot be 'browsed' in the same way as printed material. The results suggest that public libraries need to be aware of this issue and, perhaps, offer small group or individual 'taster' sessions that are specific to users interests. We believe that teaching library users basic computer skills is not enough. Learning how to 'drive' is one thing. Knowing where and how far the 'vehicle' can take you is quite another. Only when the user knows the answer to the second point will they be motivated to use computers.

We found that motivation was also an issue of self-confidence, particularly for many older individuals. Many low achievers could see the value of computers for others but had not got the confidence to try them for themselves. It was reassuring, however, that all categories of user could see the value of computers and accepted their introduction as a legitimate part of what the public library should be doing. This finding corroborates previous research into user attitudes (Eves and Brophy 2000).

Computers in libraries were used for a variety of reasons but primarily for access to the Internet. Since the number of low achieving non-computer users is so high, there is the potential for public libraries to make a significant impact on these individuals' membership of the information society by raising their awareness of what computers can do and reducing their levels of apprehension.

However, there was also some evidence that some current users were already frustrated by the small number of computers available, and the expense of using them. Continuing investment in hardware is required to satisfy latent demand.

Chapter 11 Public Libraries' provision for lifelong learners

Public libraries support lifelong learning in three ways: They provide resources and facilities for the formal learner, they encourage the take-up of formal learning opportunities and they provide a variety of resources and facilities for the independent and casual learner.

During the course of the project a Workshop was held involving 28 senior public librarians with an interest in lifelong learning. As a result of this workshop a questionnaire was developed to explore the extent to which library authorities in England and Wales were addressing lifelong learning issues and targeting disadvantaged users. The draft questionnaire was e-mailed to workshop participants some of whom contributed to the final design. The questionnaire was sent to all public library authorities in England and Wales. 113 responses were received.

We were particularly interested in the resources that library authorities were committing to lifelong learning, strategies they had adopted to address issues of educational disadvantage, and initiatives they had taken that they considered to be successful.

11.1 Policy and Resources

With the help of workshop participants we devised three criteria which might indicate the priority with which an authority might treat lifelong learning. These were

- a) the authority should have a policy for lifelong learning
- b) there should be a post to manage lifelong learning
- c) there should be a budget for lifelong learning materials.

Table 11.1 below shows the survey results:

Library Authorities with Policy or Guidelines for lifelong learning	61 (58.7%)
Library authorities with a post responsible for lifelong learning	52 (50.0%)
Library authorities with a budget for lifelong learning materials	26 (25.0%)
Library authorities with a policy and post – no budget	18 (17.3%)
Library authorities with neither, policy, post nor budget	13 (12.5%)
Library authorities with a policy, post and budget	10 (9.6%)

Table 11.1 Authorities with lifelong learning policy and resources

As can be seen from the figures above less than one in ten authorities had a policy, a post and a budget for lifelong learning materials. However this gives an inaccurate portrayal of current activity as can be seen when we look at each of these in turn.

11.1.1 Lifelong Learning Policies and Guidelines

Only 20% of authorities had completed their Best Value review at the time of the survey (mid 2000) and a further 17 authorities were planning to develop a policy. Policies were either stand-alone documents, statements within an Annual Library Plan, or part of the authority's Best Value Review.

We asked authorities to let us have copies of their Lifelong Learning documentation and a number complied. These authorities were clearly putting a considerable amount of thought and effort into lifelong learning provision as these examples show:

SAMPLE LIFELONG LEARNING STATEMENTS

Mission Statement (County)

1. To provide materials and information appropriate to the learning needs of all age groups and abilities, in any relevant format.

2. To support and assist individuals or groups following formal education courses or independent learning and self development paths, and those seeking information or guidance on education and training opportunities.

3 To actively foster and promote key skills, especially literacy, numeracy and information skills, throughout the age and ability range.

4. To support education, training and guidance providers in schools, community education, further education and elsewhere with materials, advice and practical help.

5. To be a major contributor to a comprehensive Lifelong Learning Network within [the Authority] linking Public Libraries, Resources for Learning, Schools and Colleges and other organisations.

Learning for Life. Extract from an Annual Library Plan (County)

Purpose
To facilitate and support learning and inspire people to learn throughout their lives.

Principles

I. We will provide a very wide range of learning materials -to borrow and to refer to in the library -to meet the needs of the people of [the Authority] for independent and unprogrammed learning.

2. Through the national inter library loans system, we will provide access to all other available learning materials.

3. We will provide a secondary learning materials service for students and pupils of educational institutions which are responsible for providing the primary library service for their learners.

4. We will provide learning materials and appropriate conditions of use for play groups, after school clubs, for WEA, ABE and U3A classes, and for reading groups.

5. We will speak out for and argue the importance in the learning process of independent and unprogrammed learning, and the cost-effectiveness of public libraries in helping and inspiring up to 33,865,000 people nationally and 386,700 in [the Authority] to learn, and the value of government and educational agencies investing in learning through public libraries.

6. We will provide as learning materials books, multimedia packs, multimedia programs, encyclopaedias and indexes in appropriate formats and access to appropriate databases, web sites and the National Grid for Learning.

7. We will provide guided study packs and direct students to sources of tutorial advice.

8. We will make the formal (taught) learning process accessible to the people of [the Authority] through the extensive provision of information, access points and, in partnership with educational agencies, guidance.

9. We will form partnerships with the formal learning sector to bridge the gap between unprogrammed and directed learning, using ICT and "learning town" concepts, and a greater understanding between the sectors and of the needs of learners.

10. We will help people to practice their literacy and ICT skills through the provision of books and ICT .

11. We will work to extend the hours of access to our learning infrastructure, alone and in partnership with education agencies.

12. We will emphasize libraries' learning role and brand them as learning places.

13. We will provide branded Open Learning Centres and Local Learning Centres as appropriate.

14. We will provide primary research material through the record offices and funded museums and we will work towards publishing primary and interpreted source material appropriate to learning on the World Wide Web and Grid for Learning.

15. We will make it easy to search for and retrieve information about primary and secondary sources through automated and integrated catalogues and indexes.

11.1.2 Lifelong Learning Budgets

We asked respondents 'Do you have a specific budget for lifelong learning materials?' We also asked them what it covered. This seemed a simple question but many respondents found it difficult to answer. They felt strongly that 'lifelong learning' could not be separated from general materials provision. This reinforced the view expressed by many respondents in our library user survey that libraries by their very nature are about lifelong learning. Users can learn from a novel as well as they can from non-fiction or textbook provision. Public Library Authorities commented:

> *"All materials are seen in the context of Lifelong Learning."*
>
> *"All of our materials are lifelong learning related."*
>
> *"What are lifelong learning materials? We think we provide these as part of our normal stock provision."*
>
> *"What are lifelong learning materials? We still buy books."*
>
> *"Sorry this is a poor question. Libraries are formal and informal learning centres. Much of our provision is this."*
>
> *"The budget is integrated in our materials budget – commitment to educational support."*
>
> *"It could be argued the whole [materials fund] is for lifelong learning."*
>
> *"Everything we do contributes to lifelong learning so a separate budget makes no sense."*

However, a number of authorities told us that they made separate provision particularly for Open Learning materials. The amounts spent differed greatly and did not seem to be related to the size of the authority. Responses included these:

> *"£25,000 for family learning centre and learning zones."* (Unitary)
>
> *"£24,000 GCSE, A Level, NVQ texts, learning skills, basic skills, return to work/study, careers, work related texts*." (Met. District)
>
> *"£20,000 [not specified]"*. (County)
>
> *"£15000 open learning packs, books, videos and CD ROMS."* (Welsh)
>
> *"£12,000 for all learning resources/materials."* (Met. District)
>
> *"£11,000 specialist open learning/textbook material and basic skills."* (London Borough)
>
> *"£10,000 Open learning materials for loan."* (Met District)
>
> *"£8,000 Open learning."* (County)
>
> *"£5000 ESF/SRB support plus a small amount of our own book fund. It covers open learning materials in all formats."* (County)
>
> *"£3000 Open Learning materials."* (County)
>
> *"£3000 Open Learning materials."* (Welsh)
>
> *"£2500 Open Learning materials."* (County)

> *"£2000 Open Learning materials in two service points."* (Met. District)
>
> *"£1,400 for one Open Learning Centre."* (Unitary)
>
> *"£1200 open learning, £500 basic education."* (Welsh)
>
> *"£908 Open Learning Materials in one library."* (County)

A response, which typified most respondents, was this:

"6k specifically set aside for ... Open Learning Centre materials but we are spending much more through CD ROM, ICT and general book fund."

Our findings show that it would be wrong to condemn authorities for failing to identify a budget for lifelong learning materials. However, this does suggest that other indicators are needed to ensure that adequate provision is made. The diversity of topics public library users had studied formally (listed in Appendix 7 and 8) suggests that a very wide ranging non-fiction stock indeed would be needed to support users' learning interests. The inability of all but the largest community libraries to provide this kind of range reinforces the arguments for electronic resources.

11.1.3 Staff Resources for Lifelong Learning

When we examined the nature of the posts responsible for lifelong learning it became obvious that responsibility for lifelong learning was often a late add-on to a post with very different responsibilities and it was sometimes difficult to see any functional relationship between the two. Some of the more unusual pairings included: Community Information; Health and Safety; ICT Services; Income Generation; Local Studies; Mobile Services; Music and Drama; New Buildings; Personnel; Room bookings; Reference Services; and Staff Training and Development.

In half the authorities surveyed the lifelong learning post also had responsibility for children's work and/or school library services. In about another quarter (24.0%) responsibility was shared between a number of different line-management posts.

There was a dedicated post in a minority of authorities (16.8%). Post titles included: Learning Resource Manager; Libraries & Lifelong Learning Manager; Learning Support Librarian; Development Officer - Lifelong Learning; Lifelong Learning Co-ordinator; and a number of posts with the title Lifelong Learning Manager, Librarian or Officer.

In three authorities there was a senior management post with the responsibility made explicit in the post title: Assistant County Librarian, Learning & Special Services, Assistant Director of Education: Lifelong Learning. In others the responsibility lay at 'Principal Librarian' level.

11.2 Lifelong Learning Initiatives for library users

Our findings on policies, staffing and budgets gave us a picture of some of the resources that were dedicated to lifelong learning. However we also needed to know something about outputs, - what the service was actually delivering to learners. We looked initially at training activities. Table 11.2 below shows the percentage of authorities offering specific types of basic skills training to the public.

TRAINING OFFERED TO USERS	No. of respondents	% respondents
How to use computers	71	62.8
Basic literacy	45	39.8
Electronic information seeking skills	42	37.2
Basic numeracy	34	30.1
Other training	26	23.0
Non electronic information seeking skills	22	19.5
No training currently offered	27	23.9
Planned how to use computers	23	20.4
Planned electronic information seeking skills	18	15.9
Planned basic literacy	10	8.8
Planned basic numeracy	8	7.1
Planned non electronic information seeking skills	6	5.3
Total Respondents	113	

Table 11.2 Training offered library users. Present and planned

The table shows that the present focus on computer training is likely to continue with 83.2% of respondents either offering or intending to offer training in how to use computers and 53.1% offering or intending to offer electronic information seeking skills training. Recent research (Usherwood et al 2001) has suggested that the emphasis on ICT training has led to the neglect of other areas of training for staff. The results above suggest that this could also be true for training offered to library users. 28% of those authorities offering training were only offering ICT training. Nearly a quarter of respondents (23.9%) at the time of the survey were offering no training at all.

We asked respondents to tell us what other training they were offering and 17.7% of respondents listed training they did not feel fitted into our pre-selected categories. The responses included the following:

> *"Tutor support for users of Open Learning material"*
>
> *"BBC education initiatives such as Webwise & Count Me In"*
>
> *"Careers Advice"*
>
> *"Courses by WEA&FE College in Lifelong Learning Centres provided by Library."*
>
> *"In partnership, opportunities for women returners"*
>
> *"Introductory tours of library given to family literacy groups"*
>
> *"Planned reading development"*
>
> *"Semi Formal classes on Basic Computer Literacy"*
>
> *"Small Business Related Skills"*
>
> *"Training to adults around book selection"*
>
> *"Volunteers support rota for ICT facilities"*
>
> *"Educational Opportunities"*
>
> *"Reading to children: part of formal childcare course"*

We were interested in the extent to which libraries were taking the initiative on training and asked respondents who had initiated their training. 93 respondents answered this question and the results are in Table 11.3 below.

TRAINING INITIATIVE	No of respondents	% initiated by the library service
Non electronic information seeking skills	25	80.6
Electronic information seeking skills	43	75.4
How to use computers	64	67.4
Basic literacy	26	43.3
Basic numeracy	21	42.0

Table 11.3 Training initiated by the library service

The table suggests that the majority of libraries involved in training activities are very active in initiating training but are also working in partnership with others.

Indeed, the importance of partnership working came through very strongly, and most lifelong learning initiatives and activities reported by our respondents involved working in partnership with others.

11.3 Working Partnerships

We asked respondents to provide us with details of the learning partnerships in which they were involved. The results are shown in Fig. 11.1 below
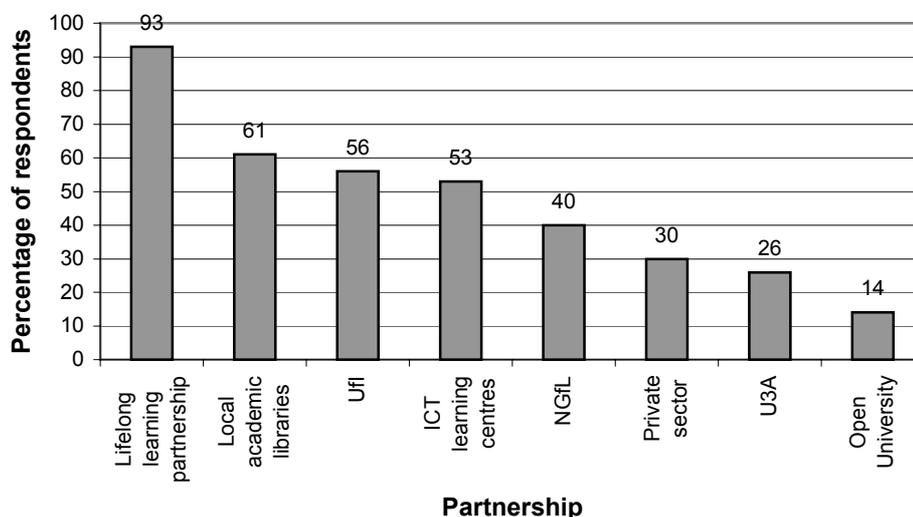

Figure 11.1 Local Authorities involved in learning partnerships

Respondents reported a wide variety of partnerships and partnership projects. Initiatives with local academic libraries included a Learn IT centre with local colleges, college computers and student resource collections in local libraries. One authority was developing 'On line learning in real time'. Another was developing fibre-optic communications links to a college, the Citizens' Advice Bureau, a Women's Resource Centre and UfI. In others colleges were providing literacy skills training for the public and ICT skills training for staff. One reported a 'unique' initiative whereby the public library service ran local resource centres for a university and college.

NGfL initiatives included the digitisation of resources, a regional broadband partnership and the provision of local history content. In two authorities funding was being provided to connect libraries and schools. Some authorities had gained NGfL 'Pathfinder' status.

A number of authorities were involved with the private sector. For many this amounted only to the private sector being represented on Local Learning Partnerships. However some had been successful in gaining sponsorship. Donors had included Canary Wharf, Colmans, Glaxo Wellcome, BT and the Post Office. The importance of local sponsorship was highlighted by authorities that had managed to get local companies (e.g. a car

manufacturer) to fund ICT suites in libraries. In a few authorities private sector companies were involved in offering careers guidance in libraries. In one authority a private sector company was providing ICT training for staff and another had managed to get PFI funding for a Technology Learning Centre in a new Central Library.

Other initiatives involved providing course material, study centres, surgeries and open days for Open University students. A number of authorities allowed free lettings for learning providers, e.g. WEA, and others were active in providing courses for the U3A. Most were in discussion with partners about new initiatives or putting funding bids forward either directly or through local Learning Partnerships.

11.4 Successful Initiatives

We asked respondents whether they had undertaken any projects or initiatives which they felt had been particularly successful. This question (Question 15) required respondents to tick a 'Yes/No box and then describe the initiative. Results for this quantitative part of the question are shown in Table 11.4 below.

SUCCESSFUL INITIATIVES	No. of authorities	% authorities
Promoting learning opportunities in your authority and elsewhere	53	52.0%
Supporting independent learners	50	49.0%
Encouraging people to go back to formal education	42	41.2%
Supporting students on formal courses	27	26.5%
Encouraging effective use of paper based resources	20	19.6%
Total authorities	102	100%

Table 11.4 Successful Learning Initiatives

This table shows that authorities are putting their energies into three main areas: promotion of learning opportunities, support for independent learners and encouraging people to get back into formal education. These findings are reassuring since they play to the public library's strengths. It is not surprising that there are fewer specific initiatives to support formal learners. Many library authorities would consider that libraries in the appropriate educational institution should be the primary means of support for formal learners. The value of the public library for the majority of formal learners lies in its general printed resources (see Table 6.2 p57).

Very many of those who described their initiatives mentioned Adult Learners' Week and listed a variety of different activities in which they were involved from 'Taster' sessions for taught courses to promotion of learning opportunities at galas and fetes. For a number of authorities Learners' Week was the only activity mentioned and the above table may give an over-positive picture of provision. The following examples (11.4.1-11.4.5) may present a more accurate reflection of the variety of activities taking place. As well as giving a picture of the range of activities it is hoped that this list might encourage other authorities to extend their provision.

11.4.1 Support for students on formal courses

Adult learners project collections (1 week loan)

Network gives access to learning resources via the Internet

College in community courses in most libraries

GCSE Revision evenings in libraries

Maths and English A Level college short courses in the library

Students on IT courses can practice on the library PCs using special 'Fit for CLAIT' CD ROM

11.4.2 Support for independent learners

Free Internet access to college sites

Joint project with local technical college enabling their students to use computers in the library to follow their courses, then sit their exams at the college. (Lack of tutorial support was a problem)

'Learning Freeways' in 11 libraries enabling learners to access computer based training (CBT)

Open learning club with dedicated PCs loaded with training packages

Tutor support for independent learners from local college

Virtual reference library

A series of help guides and support materials e.g. Where to find materials on the Web

Internet user education sessions

Laptop loans for housebound users

Lifelong Learning Internet portal

One to one learning support on IT equipment

Specialist staff give initial advice and guidance then support and encourage learners to make links with the local college

Two community learning centres – a joint initiative with BT, TEC and Adult Education. Uses volunteers as mentors

'Unlock your potential' campaign aimed at absolute ICT beginners. A week of Internet introductions

11.4.3 Encouraging effective use of printed resources

Formal study support sessions where we encourage learners to use as wide a range of resources as possible

Introductory sessions on reference sources

Special events for Local History groups

User education for adult learners

Working in partnership with a local school to provide a Skills Passport which encompasses ICT and printed resources

11.4.4 Encouraging people to return to formal learning

Adult Education outreach worker based in a library on a Council estate with a low level of take up of FE opportunities

FE College 'Studybase' in a local library for literacy and numeracy classes

Careers & training guidance shops in two libraries

'Silver surfer' programme

Visually Impaired Suite has given some of our visually impaired users the confidence to consider formal learning and/or buying a PC

11.4.5 Promoting learning opportunities in the authority and elsewhere

Library inserts in adult education brochures

Learning folders in every library

TAPS database

College ICT tutors in Central Library

College/library promotion project in supermarkets at weekends

Freshers' Day stands at Colleges

Library to be accredited for Guidance Council's Quality Standards on the provision of Information, Advice and Guidance services.

Mobile library and TEC trailer promote adult learning visiting towns across the District during Adult Learners Week.

Taster sessions for different courses during a Learning Fortnight.

Learning Strategy -Idea stores. Library Authority to open seven 'Idea Stores' combining library and adult learning provision by 2003

11.5 Low-achievers. Initiatives to reduce barriers to learning

We did not expect library authorities to have targeted low achievers explicitly in their initiatives. Low-achievers are generally a hidden population unless they participate in literacy and basic skills initiatives. About 40% of library services were offering or hosting literacy classes and 30% numeracy classes (see Table 11.2)

However we were interested to know the extent to which library authorities had addressed the needs of groups that the literature suggested might include higher than average proportions of low achievers. Although these categories were pre-selected we gave respondents an opportunity to provide details of other activities. Table 11.5 below shows the overall results:

ACTION TAKEN TO REDUCE BARRIERS	No of respondents	% respondents
Providing special facilities for physically disabled learners	67	62.0%
Reducing/eliminating charges for those on low incomes e.g. unemployed	67	62.0%
Directing resources to libraries serving areas of poverty/exclusion	63	58.3%
Providing signs, leaflets for learners in minority languages	53	49.1%
Providing special facilities for housebound learners	39	36.1%
Increasing opening hours in libraries serving areas of poverty/exclusion	32	29.6%
Providing special facilities for people with dyslexia	31	28.7%
Providing special facilities for geographically isolated learners	21	19.4%
Providing special facilities for people with learning difficulties	19	17.6%
Providing special facilities for homeless people	11	10.2%
Total Respondents	108	

Table 11.5 How have you reduced barriers for socially excluded groups?

Nearly two thirds of respondents were either providing or improving access for disabled people and about the same proportion were also making concessions on library charges to one or more groups. Over half were prioritising areas of poverty when allocating resources. About a half were providing leaflets and signs in minority languages whilst less than a fifth were addressing the needs of people with learning difficulties, geographically isolated learners and the homeless.

Where authorities were doing something distinctive it was often as the result of an initial successful bid for funding. An example is Kent's 'Words without Frontiers' DCMS/Wolfson funded project which 'provides asylum seekers and refugees with the means of keeping, using, and promoting their cultural heritage(s), learning English and becoming active members of our communities.'

The third phase of Derbyshire's DELTA Project, also DCMS/Wolfson funded, extends 'the benefits of computerised information services to three large mobile libraries, serving twenty-one isolated communities. All of these suffer disadvantage of one kind or another, either because of geographical isolation or because of the decline of their traditional economic base.'

BLINI (Birmingham Libraries Inner-city Network Initiative), connects 'ten libraries situated in the most disadvantaged areas of Birmingham'

11.5.1 Examples of initiatives aimed at socially excluded groups.

a) Directing resources to areas of poverty

Initiatives mentioned included GIS mapping to locate areas; targeted materials fund; and training suites in towns with an unemployment problem. A number of respondents pointed out that *all* their libraries had such features as Learning Zones and free Internet Access. One authority had special 'Share a Book' mobile provision.

b) Increasing opening hours

Many libraries reported increases in opening hours either throughout the service or in areas of deprivation. Sunday opening was common, one small authority reporting all of its libraries open on Sundays. Another reported a learning centre open 65 hours per week in an area of poverty. Two authorities reported out of hours study support in libraries, in one case provided by community education tutors.

c) Reducing/eliminating charges

The majority of authorities reported some concessions. These included free Internet access either throughout or for disadvantaged users, special concession cards for UB40, unemployed and elderly users, and free use of Open for Learning, family learning centres and multimedia centres. Concessions in some authorities applied to disabled, dyslexic,

blind, deaf users and those on income support. One authority reported that fines had been reduced by 25% since 1999.

d) Special facilities for homeless people.
Initiatives included agreed guidelines to allow people with no permanent address to borrow books, picture books for homeless mums via nursery nurses, easy joining for asylum seekers, and special facilities for refugees. One authority undertook reading and writing development with Big Issue sellers. Jones (2001) in research into library provision for the homeless found that 36 of her 71 UK public library respondents allowed people to borrow without proof of address. Of these, 17 applied differential borrowing rights.

e) Providing facilities for learners in minority languages
Almost all respondents with ethnic minority populations translated basic leaflets, opening hours, borrowing facilities etc. Others reported that all service leaflets were translated into as many as five minority languages. Fewer authorities had translated signage. One authority reported a 'Heritage Language collection' of home country material, another Asian word processing.

f) Special facilities for those with learning difficulties
Only a small number of authorities made special provision for people with severe learning difficulties. Two authorities reported sheltered work placements, and another a Bookbus visiting centres for those with learning difficulties. Some authorities offered free meeting room use and touch screens on PCs. One had appointed a Special Needs Librarian and another held music appreciation sessions. One authority had extended charge exemptions to people with learning difficulties.

g) Special facilities for physically disabled learners.
Many authorities had upgraded physical access and a number reported that all libraries now had access for the physically disabled. A large number also reported exemptions from fines and free audio. A number also reported induction loop systems for hearing aid wearers in all libraries. One authority had opened new 'Hearing and Visually Impaired Centres' and another a 'Multi-Media Centre for the Visually Impaired'. Others reported guided visits and a 'Deaf Issues' collection. With regard to ICT provision a number of libraries reported adjustable workstations for wheelchairs, large screen monitors, and specialist keyboards. One mentioned having special inductive fabric neck loops for deaf

PC users. A number of proprietary aids and software were mentioned including Robotron readers, Kurzweil and Reading Edge machines, Perkins Brailler and the 'Jaws' speech synthesiser for office applications and web pages.

h) Special facilities for learners with dyslexia

Some authorities reported liaison with local dyslexia groups and associations and others consultation with special needs advisors. Several authorities had special dyslexia collections, in one case funded by the local dyslexia society. One authority was planning training for staff in dealing with dyslexia. A few authorities reported exemptions from charges for spoken word cassettes and fines.

i) Special facilities for housebound learners.

A number of respondents pointed out that learning materials were available through their Housebound Service. Of those authorities with web catalogues only two mentioned this as a specific boon to housebound users with computers. One authority's housebound service liaised with home tutors whilst another made Open Learning Packs available. One authority loaned laptops for housebound users to learn how to use computers.

j) Special Facilities for geographically isolated learners.

Several authorities had first targeted rural communities when introducing ICT. In one, Community Education used local libraries out of hours for classes in isolated areas. One authority had a mobile library that targeted isolated schools and others made use of village hall centres.

It is interesting to note that out-of-hours use by students and/or their tutors was mentioned by only two respondents. Although exceptional here, elsewhere it seems to be more common. In Norway, the 'NELL' Project (Ørnholt 2000) was set up to establish public libraries as centres of education. It found:

> *"The majority of libraries offered admission to students outside regular opening hours. Some lent out the key to part of the premises, some allowed visitors during office hours before the library officially opened, while others permitted students to stay on after closing time, trusting them to close the door behind them when they left. These arrangements worked very well, cost nothing and represented a worthwhile initiative for the students concerned."*

The Project questions whether extended opening hours are a cost effective way of meeting the needs of learners. The study suggests:

"It is far better to ensure control of arrangements, for example by setting aside 3 hours every week outside normal opening hours and letting students book places in advance to give personal assistance."

11.6 Staff Training

Ørnholt (2000), found that 'a vital factor in establishing the public library as a learning centre was "to ensure that library personnel had received training and information as to the needs of adult students and were suitably motivated to help this group." Building the New Library Network (Library and Information Commission 1998) states that public library staff should be able to 'direct learners of all kinds to sources of specialist help and assistance' and to 'identify people's learning needs and to judge the level of material required to support the learning.' Staff support and guidance is fundamental if the adult learner is to be served effectively.

Our survey aimed to find out the extent of staff training to support lifelong learning, either directly or indirectly. The results are given in Table 11.6 below.

AREA OF TRAINING	No of respondents	% respondents
Present		
How to use computers	89	78.8%
Non-electronic information seeking skills	83	73.5%
Electronic information seeking skills	77	68.1%
One to one educational guidance	16	14.2%
Users' basic literacy	15	13.3%
Users' basic numeracy	9	8.0%
Planned		
Electronic information seeking skills	35	31.0%
How to use computers	29	25.7%
One to one educational guidance	16	14.2%
Non-electronic information seeking skills	14	12.4%
Users' basic literacy	10	8.8%
Users' basic numeracy	10	8.8%
Total respondents	113	

Table 11.6 What training do you offer staff?

The table shows that about three quarters of respondents were training their staff in ICT related skills. Some respondents were already training using their own resources but were also intending to do more using National Opportunities Fund (NOF) funding. On the basis of these results this means that 96.5% of library authorities are either training in ICT skills or planning it. Only four authorities reported that they were neither offering ICT training

nor planning it. 59.3% of respondents were intending to use NOF funding for basic computer training and 55.8% for training in electronic information seeking skills.

The only other form of training offered by most authorities was training in information seeking skills using books and journals.

Authorities training staff to deal with those requiring educational guidance and help with basic skills were in the minority. Only 26% of authorities were either delivering or planning to deliver training for staff in educational advice and guidance and the respective figures for literacy and numeracy support training were 22.1% and 16.8%.

The Social Exclusion Unit (2000a) emphasises the importance of adequate training of professionals in all sectors in order to deal with issues and people in disadvantaged areas effectively. This point is also made by the DfEE (Department for Education and Employment 1999a) and by Asta (2000) who talks of the need for a new 'learner/trainer' model for the professional librarian.

On the evidence of the results it seems that public library authorities need to do much more support-skills training if services to disadvantaged learners are to be delivered effectively.

11.7 Measuring the effectiveness of provision for learners.

All but two of the authorities indicated whether or not they had taken any steps to monitor or measure the effectiveness of their provision for learners. About a quarter of authorities had done so. Methods included user surveys, postal questionnaires, a feedback board, and the use of integrated management systems to provide data on stock usage and completion of courses. One authority held user meetings and another maintained a book recording stock gaps.

A number of authorities said that measurement was included in their best Value Review, 'Plus' and CIPFA Surveys. The importance of performance measurement was recognised by many authorities and 41% told us that they planned to take steps to monitor and measure the performance of their learning initiatives.

11.8 Summary

The study shows the wide range of facilities offered by public libraries to meet the needs of lifelong learners. Many authorities are working hard to develop services to formal and independent learners and are sensitive to the needs of disadvantaged groups of learners.

However, given the emphasis the present Government is placing on lifelong learning both through policy initiatives and Best Value reviews it is of concern that a large minority of authorities have still to match the rhetoric with action.

We recognise that questionnaire responses are always partial and the present study is no exception. To what extent did respondents give the necessary attention to those questions asking for open-ended answers? To what extent were initiatives so well integrated into the service that they were not included in responses? Omissions of this sort may account for some gaps but nonetheless it does seem that there are a very large differences in provision from authority to authority. Some authorities listed as initiatives what other might call basic provision – the display of adult education leaflets, for example, or the availability of trained staff. Almost all the initiatives listed at 11.4 and 11.5 were mentioned by only a handful of authorities.

It is our feeling that the sharing of good ideas and success stories needs to be improved. The dissemination of innovation is an international issue (Rogers 1995, Watts 1996, White 2001) and this is as true for the public library service as it is for other organisations.

Several authorities were 'discussing options' or 'planning provision' on a base of no specific facilities for disadvantaged users. This group included large county and Metropolitan District libraries. Indeed some of the most comprehensive and innovative provision seemed to be in small unitary authorities. Some authorities, at the time of the survey (mid-2000) still had no policy, no budget and no staff dedicated to lifelong learning provision. A number had no plans to change this situation.

In these circumstances, the conclusion must be that learners in many authorities are currently losing out because their library service is not prioritising services to learners sufficiently to distinguish them from other service provision.

Our survey of learners using libraries showed that quiet study areas and a good choice of up to date and relevant stock were particularly important. To this extent, those authorities that told us all their stock and services were about learning were correct. 'Initiatives' are important to focus activity on particular groups or particular needs, but underpinning all the high profile activities that libraries undertake should be a relevant and up to date selection of stock and somewhere quiet for people to use it.

Coughlan's (2001) study of non-borrowing use of public libraries found that use of stock in the library itself is largely unmeasured and under-estimated. Learners in our own survey expressed a need for somewhere quiet to sit and read. This confirms what Kosmidou's (2001) respondents said in her study of elderly library users and their use of learning materials

> *"quiet, solitude, no interruptions."*
> *"quiet place you can go to study."*
> *"somewhere where you can concentrate solemnly on what you are doing."*

It also confirms Coughlin's (2002:48) assertion that

> 'the provision of an open and accessible public space where people can come and sit is perhaps one of the most important and enduring functions of the small community library'

In view of the resources the Government is putting into ICT training by it is not surprising that every authority reported that they were already training or were planning to. Most of the planned initiatives were NOF funded, many building on in-house provision.

Authorities may need to ask, however, whether they need to do more to train staff to participate effectively in other activities for learners. Services providing advice and guidance and help with literacy and numeracy all need trained staff, and here only a small number of authorities were actively training.

Chapter 12 Conclusions and Recommendations

12.1 Introduction

 'Low Achievers-Lifelong Learners' was designed to help policy makers and practitioners to understand the needs of low achieving adult learners, to increase their understanding of the impact of the public library service on educational disadvantage and to suggest ways in which the service might be developed to meet their needs more effectively.

The study looked at

- the part the public library plays in supporting the studies of formal learners
- the impact the service has on helping people to return to learning
- the ways in which the public library service is addressing the needs of independent learners
- the extent to which the library acts as a learning resource for its users, both formal and informal.

12.2 Background

Almost all the financial resources that the present Government have been committing to the public library service since 1998 are committed because the Government believes that the service can be instrumental in making an impact on social exclusion. It further believes that encouraging all citizens to take up opportunities for lifelong learning is one way of achieving social inclusion.

It is incontrovertible that those without recognised qualifications are more likely to be unemployed, and more likely to suffer from multiple deprivation. It is therefore in society's interest economically, to encourage as many people as possible to become lifelong learners.

As well as the economic arguments for lifelong learning, it is also true that becoming a 'learner' can help to improve quality of life. Adult and community learning in non-traditional settings has been shown to maintain health and active ageing, improve self-esteem, communication skills, and family relationships (Callahan et al 2001)

However, as this study has confirmed, those who left school without recognised qualifications are less likely than others to take advantage of learning opportunities later in life. This may be because they have acquired a negative view of learning through their experiences in school, or suffer from low self-esteem because of a belief that they are not clever enough to benefit from formal learning opportunities. As the LEARN project discovered (Weeden et al 2000) 'For many low-achievers, learning appeared to be blocked by years of relative failure…'

It is for these reasons that the public library as a resource for learning is potentially of great value. Over half the people in this country are public library users. For them it is a non-threatening environment in which they have access to a treasure house of learning resources which they can use at their own pace, in their own way and at their own time. This is one of the distinctive features of the public library's role is supporting low achieving adults. As research by Dunn (1996) has shown: 'low achievers perform significantly better when they capitalize on their preferences.'

It is vital that the public library should be used to its utmost potential as a learning resource, and this study, we hope, will help to achieve this. This chapter summarises the major findings and makes recommendations for future action.

12.3 The public library and educational disadvantage

As the DfEE have pointed out (Department for Education and Employment 1999a) low educational achievement means that people are more likely to be unemployed and, consequently, poor. Low levels of skill also sap people's self-confidence and reduce their capacity and willingness to get involved in initiatives which help to build communities. It is in this area that public libraries can make an impact. Linley and Usherwood (1998) and Proctor, Lee and Reilly (1999) have both commented on the ways in which people using public library services can have their self confidence and self image raised.

One of the most heartening and reassuring findings of the study was the extent of public library usage by low educational achievers in the most disadvantaged communities. In the three most disadvantaged communities (one of them the fourth most deprived in the country) over 60% of respondents in our library user survey had left school with no recognised qualifications. This suggests that individuals from all educational backgrounds see the public library as an accessible and useful resource.

The findings also confirm the belief that one of the most effective ways of reaching and influencing low achieving and disadvantaged adults is through the public library service. Through providing facilities for people to learn in their own time and at their own pace, and through the encouragement of trained staff the public library can make a significant impact on the self confidence and self esteem of low achievers.

The results also suggest that the public library is accessible to at least some of the groups most likely to suffer from educational disadvantage. In communities with a significant ethnic minority population, use of the public library for learning by those ethnic minorities was high. People with disabilities and elderly people also made heavy use of the public library, although not necessarily for learning.

However, there are a few areas of concern. First, the results suggest that the public library service may not be reaching younger learners. One reason for this may be that younger learners are more likely to be enrolled on college courses and may not be so reliant on public libraries for the supply of learning material. However, the public library may need to consider how it is to reach those younger members of society who are not undertaking formal learning.

Similarly, men were in the minority in all our samples. This is not just an issue for public libraries, but for all learning and education providers. However, of all the resources for lifelong learning the public library is perhaps the least threatening and most accessible for the reluctant learner. Some thought, therefore, needs to be given to ways in which men can be motivated to use the public library service.

Although some disadvantages groups used the public library heavily purposive use of the library for learning was, in the case of disabled and elderly users low, reflecting the generally low participation of these groups in learning of any kind. The public library, however, since it is already used by these groups for other purposes, is in an excellent position to promote lifelong learning opportunities relevant to their needs and interests.

We believe that investment by the government in the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities and resources through public libraries would pay rich dividends. Many adults whose participation in learning is low or who live in the most disadvantaged

communities already use public libraries and are already familiar with basic learning resources – i.e. printed and audio-visual materials.

With regard to ICT for learning, there seems to be further to go. We found that three out of the five libraries with the highest number of low achieving users had no on-line ICT facilities. This raises questions about whether current initiatives to improve on-line educational resources are consistently targeting areas of educational disadvantage. The following sections summarise the results in specific areas of activity.

12.3.1 The Public Library's Impact on the Formal Learner

One of the most significant findings of the study is that there already seems to be a very strong relationship between active learners and the public library service. This is as true for low achievers and for disadvantaged communities as it is for high educational achievers and more affluent communities. Nearly three quarters of low-achievers enrolled on courses were active users of the public library service. The majority used the public library at least monthly and nearly a third used it at least once every two weeks. A high proportion of learners used more than one service point. In all ten communities we studied the library was used extensively by those engaged in formal learning.

The strength of the public library service, as a resource for the formal learner, is still at present, its print-based collections – its book stock, journals and associated materials. The public library's stock enhances and complements the stock of educational institutions and is often more accessible because it is nearer the learner's home. However the public library was valued by learners for a wide range of reasons – for its helpful staff, its facilities, and its easy-to-use systems amongst them.

High PC ownership amongst all those enrolled on formal courses means that these traditional strengths of the service are likely to remain the most valued. This situation is only likely to change when the public librarian's skills at retrieving electronic resources matches those of their counterparts in educational institutions.

However, there are two issues which the public library service needs to address. First, we noted the extremely wide range of courses taken by learners and there is some evidence that the library's stock is sometimes not adequate to meet the learner's needs. Both

achievers and low achievers told us that their main problem in using the public library was that it did not always have the material to support their learning.

Of course, it is unreasonable to expect even a large community library to be able to satisfy all the demands placed on it, but how far the service can meet these latent needs consistently and speedily with printed materials is an open question. Services first need to be aware of the learning interests of their users, many of which may not be articulated, and secondly they need to dedicate resources specifically to materials for learning.

In many public library services learning resources are absorbed into general non-fiction provision where there are many competing demands. The argument that all materials are for learning, voiced by some respondents in our national survey, is understandable but to some extent specious. Resources for learning should be targeted to ensure that specific needs are met. And, in future, electronic resources must, inevitably, play an increasing role in meeting learners' needs.

The second key issue is that low achieving learners were far less critical of the library's provision than achievers. There was evidence that low achievers were far less aware of the importance of the relevance and currency of the material they use for learning.

This suggests two things. First, it suggests that any library serving a community with high numbers of users who are educationally disadvantaged will get artificially high readings in any satisfaction survey. Comments and complaints about the inadequacy of stock are likely to be low, irrespective of the actual stock quality.

Secondly, and more important, it suggests that user education for adults is of primary importance, especially for those libraries serving areas of educational disadvantage. Such training needs to cover basic stock evaluation techniques, enabling users to know how to judge whether a resource is out of date, or unsuitable for their needs. Low achievers also used reference collections less than achievers and this may also be because users are unsure how to use contents pages, and indexes.

12.3.2 The public library's impact on the take up of formal learning opportunities.

The provision of educational Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) is a key issue in improving the take up of lifelong learning. A recent report on strategies for neighbourhood renewal (Department for Education and Employment 1999c) presented evidence that 'sympathetic information, advice and guidance services delivered in the right way can have an important role in changing people's minds about learning and in seeing how it might benefit them.' Ironically, the report did not include public libraries amongst the local institutions it encouraged to work together to improve local information, advice and guidance services for adults.

Our survey of those in formal learning revealed that about 10% of respondents had received specific help from the public library in their decision to return to formal learning. Although this figure is small, it is still significant. Our findings showed that nearly half of those returning to learning had done so for work-related reasons and it is reasonable to suppose that many of these would not have needed to refer to the library service, having been directed to learning opportunities by employers or work colleagues.

However, our findings showed that in many cases 'help' was no more than finding a rack of college brochures displayed and there was little evidence from our user survey that libraries were making a specific effort to encourage learners back into formal learning.

Our national survey of library authorities provided a more optimistic picture. The majority of authorities were taking part in Adult Learners Week and others, in partnership with education providers, were taking part in a variety of initiatives.

The challenge for many public library authorities is to extend information, advice and guidance from the one-off annual initiative to mainstream day-to-day provision. This, again, means making themselves aware of their users learning needs and providing whatever encouragement is appropriate on a one to one basis. It also means that trained staff must be available. Our national survey showed that very few authorities were involving staff in IAG training.

Our findings also showed that relationships with other organisations were important. Those library services that were most active had almost all entered into fruitful

partnerships with others – schools, colleges, and careers services. Careers services were running advice sessions in libraries, and libraries were promoting lifelong learning opportunities in schools and colleges.

As Tyler (1999) found in her study of Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) services in rural areas, initiatives taken by education providers are often partial and biased towards the home institution. Partnerships involving the public library service are essential if unbiased information is to be available to all.

One of the unexpected findings of our study was the extent to which the library's stock and activities were themselves encouraging users back into learning. Through browsing library users are discovering new interests all the time and a surprising number of respondents told us how this had led to more purposive study and even taking up a course.

Abbott (2000), talking about learning styles, quotes research by Hennessey and Amabile which shows that "People will be most creative when they feel motivated primarily by the interest, enjoyment, satisfaction…not by external pressures." It is this that makes browsing such a powerful tool for the potential learner.

The public library clearly influences people to return to formal learning but this influence is not limited to its IAG initiatives. The library as a learning resource itself has an influence, which is subtle and long term.

12.3.3 The public library's impact on the low achieving independent learner.

A number of our national survey respondents told us that they believed that everything the public library did was related to lifelong learning. Although this view may not help public libraries to target resources for learners, it is a belief that respondents to our library user survey endorsed. The key to satisfying the needs of independent learners is to provide a general stock that is up-to-date, relevant and extensive enough to offer a choice of resources through which learning can take place.

Like formal learners, independent learners still rely largely on print materials although many can see the advantages and necessity to provide ICT, at least for other people.

We believe there is an issue here. Harris (1998) commented on how difficult it was for his respondents to conceptualise the value of the library service, except in traditional terms. Arrowsmith (2001) makes a similar point about reading groups. Proctor, Lee and Reilly (1998) found significant differences between users' views about the service and their actual behaviour.

Many of our respondents found it difficult both to articulate their library needs and to recognise the full value of the library as an educational resource for themselves. This was particularly true of low achievers. Why, for example, did such a large percentage (around 70%) tell us they had no access to ICT for learning when, for many, the public library they were using was providing it?

The answer, we believe is that some users find it difficult to relate their needs to the facilities the library provides. There is a general challenge here for public library services and implications for the way new services such as ICT are developed. Many users need more help than we think to see the relevance of the services public libraries offer. It is also true that computer-based resources are invisible to the casual library user and those used to searching for conventional printed materials may not consider the wealth of resources 'in the box'.

We have commented in an earlier chapter on the fact that low achievement is a hidden characteristic of library users and this makes it hard for library services to recognise their needs and target resources. In our national survey we asked authorities to identify initiatives directed at specific groups of disadvantaged users. The results showed that there is a wide variety of initiatives taking place throughout the country, but few that are common to all or even most authorities. The difference between authorities is striking. Some are taking a very proactive approach to satisfying the needs of disadvantaged learners. Others are doing very little.

One problem faced by authorities is that they may not be aware of initiatives taking place elsewhere that they might apply themselves. Opportunities to share experiences with other authorities and learn from them may be limited, and many examples of excellent practice are never written up in the professional press.

The Library Association is active in promoting the role of libraries in lifelong learning and establishing codes of practice (Library Association (2001) but it takes a multi-sector overview. There is a strong case for the Library Association to be more proactive in helping libraries to share their experiences electronically either through a professional advisor or through an appropriate Group such as the Public Libraries Group or the Community Services Group.

The American Library Association, for example, hosts a 'Roads to Learning' Website which 'encourages linkages among libraries, community organizations, and service providers to improve service to learning disabled people, their families, professionals, and other interested people.' (American Library Association 2001).

Some public libraries have already tried to enhance their services for learners by extending opening hours, particularly in areas of disadvantage. Whilst this is a very worthwhile strategy, there is some evidence that suggests an alternative approach. A significant minority of learners commented on the problem of noise in libraries and the lack of somewhere quiet to sit. At the same time, disadvantaged learners rely more on the help of staff. In particular, library users with literacy and numeracy problems or dyslexia need more help than can normally be given when the library is busy. Some respondents commented that they had problems because 'the library is too busy' or 'there are not enough staff'.

One or two authorities told us they were operating out of hours provision for learners and this seems a strategy worth considering by more authorities. It has worked elsewhere in Europe (Ørnholt 2000) and might be a more cost effective way of meeting the needs of disadvantaged learners than extending opening hours.

The public library is in the best possible position to make a difference to the lives of many thousands of people. The Final report of the Policy Action Team (PAT2) on skills (Department for Education and Employment 1999a) commented that not enough is done actively to engage adults in disadvantaged communities in learning; and that more should be done to provide 'first rung' provision. The team recommended that 'there should be a step-change in the level of "first-rung" provision that is available to disadvantaged learners. Such provision should be delivered where people live through neighbourhood learning

centres, in the management and operation of which local people should wherever possible have a significant stake.'

Public libraries already are 'neighbourhood learning centres' and it makes economic sense to build on what is already, in many places, a very successful service.

12.3.4 Public libraries, disadvantaged learners and ICT

The provision of networked learning resources through ICT is Government policy, and even if it were not, it would be a necessity if only because of the potential demands placed on the public library service for learning support. Although our study showed that printed resources are at present the medium of choice for the majority of learners using public libraries, it also suggests that libraries may have difficulty satisfying the needs of learners through print materials because their range of learning interests is so wide.

With every public library due to be 'wired up' by the end of 2002 one might suppose that this problem was on the way to being solved. Similarly, the goal of providing computer access for every individual without a home computer is likely to be achieved.

However, our study showed that even with physical access to a computer through a public library the most disadvantaged in society may still be disenfranchised.

One of the most telling findings from our study concerns the close association of computer ownership and use with educational achievement. The study found that those individuals without academic qualifications were far less likely to have access to a computer in the home, at work or through an educational institution. And yet, their use of computers in local libraries was very low. There is a challenge here for public libraries. They must both engage the interest of those who see the computer as having no relevance to their lives, and must overcome users' fear of computers based on lack of confidence and self-esteem.

Willson (1999) suggests that "systems and services (in libraries) should be designed and planned involving people with different abilities". More thought needs to be given to ways in which potential users can be involved in the way ICT is provided.

12.3.5 The training of library staff

It was reassuring to find that over 96% of public libraries were either offering or planning to offer computer training to staff. It was less reassuring to find that only about a quarter of authorities were offering or intending to offer Information, Advice and Guidance training and only one in five literacy and numeracy support training. The implication here is that few staff are being trained in ways of addressing the needs of disadvantaged learners and this needs addressing with some urgency.

Authorities which were offering this training were often doing so in local partnerships where costs could be minimised. We believe that all local authorities should be encouraged to seek similar solutions.

Much basic computer training is taking place, with the objective of enabling staff to help users to understand how to use computers themselves. Our findings suggest that technical proficiency in itself may not be enough to encourage disadvantaged users to make use of ICT. The challenge is not just to make users proficient, but to motivate them to want to become proficient. Just as staff need training in general Information Advice and Guidance approaches, staff also need to be trained to diagnose users' needs/interests and to offer specific computer resources and solutions. This presupposes a level of expertise in identifying and accessing quality electronic resources that many public library staff may still not have, raising yet another training need.

12.4 Recommendations

The research findings provide strong evidence that the public library is a vital resource for both formal and independent adult learners. They also suggest that in many authorities the public library's potential as a resource for disadvantaged learners has either not yet been realised or has been neglected. To realise this potential, we believe action needs to be taken

- to improve the public library service's support for low achieving formal learners
- to encourage more educational low achievers to return to formal learning
- to enhance services for the disadvantaged independent learner
- to maximise the use of ICT by educational low achievers
- to improve the public library's capacity to deliver high quality services for the disadvantaged learner.

The following recommendations are therefore made:

12.4.1 Supporting Formal Learners

♦ That users surveys should, from time to time, include questions about users' formal lifelong learning 'histories'. This would ensure that local librarians were aware of unexpressed needs for learning materials.

♦ That basic user education in information seeking skills and the evaluation of printed materials should be offered. This should be a particular priority in communities known to have high levels of educational deprivation.

♦ That partnerships should be forged and strengthened between the public library service and local education providers to investigate joint initiatives, mutual training and the provision of learner support in the library.

12.4.2 Encouraging individuals to take up formal learning

♦ That all library authorities should form working partnerships with local education providers and others offering information, advice and guidance on learning opportunities.

♦ That appropriate library staff should be trained to provide learning Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) services.

♦ That public libraries should be more proactive in promoting and publicising formal learning opportunities.

12.4.3 The low achieving independent learner

♦ That public libraries in all authorities should recognise and develop their role as a 'first rung' provider of learning opportunities for disadvantaged people.

♦ That public libraries should investigate how they might provide out of hours provision for disadvantaged learners. The objective would be to provide an enhanced study environment, which might include learning 'surgeries' and small group tuition to help users relate their needs to what can be provided.

♦ That public libraries should seek to improve facilities for disadvantaged learners. Such improvements might include simplified guides to services, concessions with regard to fees and charges, and longer loan periods for learners.

12.4.4 *Maximising the use of ICT by low achievers*

♦ That public libraries should seek ways of making low achieving users aware of the value and relevance of ICT in their lives.

♦ That public libraries should focus ICT provision and training on libraries serving communities suffering from educational disadvantage.

♦ That 'Taster' training sessions should be offered for specific disadvantaged groups, particularly those with low confidence – the elderly, and disabled users. Sessions should focus on helping users to understand how ICT can help their learning and information needs as much as on practical computer skills.

12.4.5 *Improving the public library's capacity to support learning.*

♦ That the Library Association in association with the Society of Chief librarians and the Association of Senior Education and Children's Librarians should work together to develop a Support Website for libraries engaged in lifelong learning.

♦ That each library authority should ensure that it has an explicit policy on lifelong learning which addresses the needs of disadvantaged learners.

♦ That library authorities should ensure that a professional librarian is designated with sufficient time and authority to deliver lifelong learning initiatives in accordance with stated policies.

♦ That library authorities should develop partnerships with all relevant education, learning and Information, Advice and Guidance providers in order to share resources and enhance provision.

♦ That library authorities should investigate ways of sharing good practice and successes locally and regionally. Regular exchange of experience meetings/seminars should be arranged between those responsible for lifelong learning.

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Student Questionnaire

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Thank you for agreeing to fill in this questionnaire. The questionnaire forms part of a study being carried out in the Department of Information Studies at Sheffield University examining learning routes followed by students in Sheffield and Derbyshire. The responses given will be treated in the strictest confidence and will not be made available to anyone else.

It is important that we have as many questionnaires returned as possible, so they have been designed to take no more than 5-7 minutes to complete. Most of the questions can be answered with a tick.

Please answer *all* the questions and hand the questionnaire back to your tutor.

Thank you for your help.

We would like to start by asking you about your education:

1. Which of the following did you leave school with? *(Please tick all boxes that apply) If you would prefer not to answer this question please leave it blank and go straight to question 2* Please list any other qualifications you have in the space below

GCSEs grade C or above	☐	**How many?** _____
GCSEs grade D or below	☐	**How many?** _____
'O' Levels grade C or above	☐	**How many?** _____
'O' Levels grade D or below	☐	**How many?** _____
CSEs grade 1	☐	**How many?** _____
CSEs grade 2 or below	☐	**How many?** _____
Left without qualifications	☐	

2. What course(s) are you studying now at college and at what level? *(Please say below)*

Are you:

A Full Time Student ☐	**In Full Time Employment** ☐	**Unemployed** ☐
A Part Time Student ☐	**In Part Time Employment** ☐	**Retired** ☐

(Please tick all boxes that apply)

3. Why did you begin this course? *(Please tick all boxes that apply)*

To help find work	☐	**I needed to study for my job** ☐
To learn new skills	☐	**To get into university** ☐
To help change my job	☐	**I was interested in the subject area** ☐

Any other reasons? *(Please say in the space below)*

4. What has stopped you from studying in the past? *(Please tick all boxes that apply)*

I could not afford to study ☐	Loss of benefits as a result of studying ☐
I was too busy ☐	I didn't think I was clever enough ☐
Course was full or not running ☐	Course was too hard to get to ☐
Put off by experience at school ☐	

Any other reason? *(Please say in the space below)*

We would now like to ask you a few questions about your use of computers:

5. Please tick the suitable box if you have access to a computer via:

College ☐   Home ☐

Work ☐ A local library ☐   Please say which library_____

---

6. Have you used any of the following? *(Please tick all boxes that apply)*

	At College	At Work	At Home	At a public Library
Internet	☐	☐	☐	☐
CD Roms	☐	☐	☐	☐
Electronic Library Catalogue	☐	☐	☐	☐
E-Mail	☐	☐	☐	☐
Word Processor	☐	☐	☐	☐
Computer Games	☐	☐	☐	☐

---

7. If you have problems using computers who do you turn to for help? *(Please tick all boxes that apply)*

Manuals / Books ☐	College Tutors ☐	College Technicians ☐
On-Screen Help ☐	College Library Staff ☐	Family Members ☐
Other Students ☐	Public Library Staff ☐	Friends ☐

Anywhere else? *(Please say below)*

We would now like to ask you a few questions about your use of the public library. That is, libraries you use that are _not_ college, school or workplace libraries:

IF YOU DO NOT USE OR HAVE NOT USED PUBLIC LIBRARIES PLEASE MOVE TO QUESTION 14

8. On average how often do you use the services offered by a public library? *(Please tick one box only)*

Every Day ☐	**Once a fortnight** ☐	**Less than once a month** ☐
More than once a week ☐	**Once every 3 weeks** ☐	
but less than every day		
Once a week ☐	**Once a month** ☐	

Which public libraries do you use? *(please say below)*

9. What do you use the public library for? *(Please tick all boxes that apply)*

	For entertainment me learn	To help with my job	To help	or leisure
Reading or borrowing books, newspapers or magazines	☐	☐	☐	
Using or borrowing CDs, videos or tapes	☐	☐	☐	
To access the Internet	☐	☐	☐	
To use the CD Roms	☐	☐	☐	
To read the notice boards	☐	☐	☐	

Any other reason? *(Please state below)*

10. Did the public library help you to take up the course you are currently doing?
Yes ☐   **No** ☐

11. Please list *up to 3 ways* that your local public library has helped you or is helping you in your studies:

12. Please list any problems you have had when using the public library:

13. Please say whether you agree with the following by putting a circle round the most suitable response:

'My local public library helped me to locate the course I was interested in undertaking'
Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree   Don't Know

'If I no longer had access to a public library my college work would suffer'
Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree   Don't Know

'I avoid using electronic sources of information held in the public library (e.g. Internet and CD ROMs) because I do not know how to use them'
Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree   Don't Know

We would be grateful if you could give us some information about yourself:

14. Are you:

Male ☐   **Female** ☐ *(please tick)*

15. Please tick the age group that you belong to:

16 to 19 ☐   **20 to 29** ☐   **30 to 39** ☐   **40 to 49** ☐   **50 to 59** ☐   **60+** ☐
(please tick)

16. Which of the following would you describe yourself as:

White ☐   **Indian** ☐

Black ☐   **Pakistani** ☐

Caribbean ☐   **Bangladeshi** ☐

African ☐   **Chinese** ☐

Other ☐   *(please tick)*

17. Are you disabled?

Yes ☐   **No** ☐   *(please tick)*

Finally, we would welcome the chance to speak to a number of students about any educational issues relating to the project. Would you be willing to speak to me at a later date?

Yes ☐　　No ☐　*(please tick)*

If YES please give your name and a telephone number and/or email address you can be contacted on:

Name:

Telephone Number:

E-Mail Address:

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME.　PLEASE HAND THE COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE BACK TO YOUR TUTOR

Craig Bartle, Research Associate

Appendix 2 Local Learners Questionnaire

> *Local Learners Questionnaire*

Thank you for agreeing to fill in this questionnaire. The questionnaire forms part of a study being carried out in the Department of Information Studies at Sheffield University examining learning routes followed by learners in Sheffield and Derbyshire. The responses given will be treated in the strictest confidence and will not be made available to anyone else.

It is important that we have as many questionnaires returned as possible, so they have been designed to take no more than 5-7 minutes to complete. Most of the questions can be answered with a tick.

Please answer *all* the questions and hand the questionnaire back to your tutor.

Thank you for your help.

We would like to start by asking you about your education:

1. Which of the following did you leave school with? *(Please tick all boxes that apply) If you would prefer not to answer this question please leave it blank and go straight to question 2*

GCSEs grade C or above ☐	**How many?** _____	Please list any other
GCSEs grade D or below ☐	**How many?** _____	qualifications you have
'O' Levels grade C or above ☐	**How many?** _____	in the space below
'O' Levels grade D or below ☐	**How many?** _____	
CSEs grade 1 ☐	**How many?** _____	
CSEs grade 2 or below ☐	**How many?** _____	
Left without qualifications ☐		

2. What class/course are you now enrolled in? *(Please say below)*

Are you:

In Full Time Employment ☐	**Unemployed** ☐	**A Full Time Student*** ☐
In Part Time Employment ☐	**Retired** ☐	**A Part Time Student*** ☐

(Please tick all boxes that apply)   * *apart from your current course*

3. Why did you begin this course? *(Please tick all boxes that apply)*

To learn new skills ☐	**To help find work** ☐	**I needed to study for my job** ☐
I was interested in the subject area ☐	**To help change my job** ☐	**To get into university** ☐

Any other reasons? *(Please say in the space below)*

4 What has stopped you from studying in the past? *(Please tick all boxes that apply)*

I could not afford to study ☐	**Loss of benefits as a result of studying** ☐
I was too busy ☐	**didn't think I was clever enough** ☐
Course was full or not running ☐	**Course was too hard to get to** ☐
Put off by experience at school ☐	**Any other reason?** *(Please say in the space below)*

We would now like to ask you a few questions about your use of computers:

5. Please tick the suitable box if you have access to a computer via:

College ☐   Home   ☐
Work   ☐   A local library ☐ Please say which library_____

6. Have you used any of the following? *(Please tick all boxes that apply)*

	Place of study	At Work	At Home	At a public Library
Internet	☐	☐	☐	☐
CD Roms	☐	☐	☐	☐
Electronic Library Catalogue	☐	☐	☐	☐
E-Mail	☐	☐	☐	☐
Word Processor	☐	☐	☐	☐
Computer Games	☐	☐	☐	☐

7. If you have problems using computers who do you turn to for help? *(Please tick all boxes that apply)*

Manuals / Books	☐	**Course/college Tutors**	☐
Course/College Technicians	☐	**Family Members**	☐
On-Screen Help	☐	**College Library Staff**	☐
Other Students	☐	**Public Library Staff**	☐
Friends	☐		

Anywhere else? *(Please say below)*

We would now like to ask you a few questions about your use of the public library. That is, libraries you use that are _not_ college, school or workplace libraries:

IF YOU DO NOT USE OR HAVE NOT USED PUBLIC LIBRARIES PLEASE MOVE TO QUESTION 14

8. On average how often do you use the services offered by a public library? *(Please tick one box only)*

Every Day	☐	**Once a fortnight**	☐
Less than once a month	☐	**More than once a week**	☐
Once every 3 weeks	☐	**but less than every day**	
Once a week	☐	**Once a month**	☐

Which public libraries do you use? *(please say below)*

9. What do you use the public library for? *(Please tick all boxes that apply)*

	For entertainment or leisure	To help me learn	To help with my job
Reading or borrowing books, newspapers or magazines	☐	☐	☐
Using or borrowing CDs, videos or tapes	☐	☐	☐
To access the Internet	☐	☐	☐
To use the CD ROMs	☐	☐	☐
To read the notice boards	☐	☐	☐

Any other reason? *(Please state below)*

---

10. Did the public library help you to take up the course you are currently doing?

Yes ☐   No ☐

---

11. Please list *up to 3 ways* that your local public library has helped you or is helping you in your studies:

---

12. Please list any problems you have had when using the public library:

---

13. Please say whether you agree with the following by putting a circle round the most suitable response:

'My local public library helped me to locate the course I was interested in undertaking'

Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree   Don't Know

'If I no longer had access to a public library my course work would suffer'

Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree   Don't Know

'I avoid using electronic sources of information held in the public library (e.g. Internet and CD ROMs) because I do not know how to use them'

Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree   Don't Know

We would be grateful if you could give us some information about yourself:

14. Are you: Male   ☐   Female   ☐ *(please tick)*

15. Please tick the age group that you belong to:
16 to 19 ☐   20 to 29 ☐   30 to 39 ☐   40 to 49 ☐   50 to 59 ☐   60+☐
(please tick)

16. Which of the following would you describe yourself as: *(Please tick)*

White	☐	**Indian**	☐
Irish	☐	**Pakistani**	☐
Black - African	☐	**Bangladeshi**	☐
Black - Caribbean	☐	**Chinese**	☐
Black - Other	☐	_____ *Please specify*	
Other	☐	_____ *Please specify*	

17. Do you consider yourself as having a disability?
        Yes ☐   No ☐   *(please tick)*

Finally, we would welcome the chance to speak to a number of adult learners about any educational issues relating to the project. Would you be willing to speak to me at a later date?
        Yes ☐   No ☐   *(please tick)*

If YES please give your name and a telephone number and/or email address you can be contacted on:
Name:

Telephone Number:

E-Mail Address:

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME.   PLEASE HAND THE COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE

BACK TO YOUR TUTOR

Craig Bartle, Research Associate

Appendix 3 Library User Questionnaire

> *Library User Questionnaire*

Thank you for agreeing to fill in this questionnaire. The questionnaire forms part of a LIC (Library and Information Commission) study being carried out in the Department of Information Studies at Sheffield University examining the use of public libraries for learning in Sheffield and Derbyshire. The responses given will be treated in the strictest confidence and will not be made available to anyone else.

It is important that we have as many questionnaires returned as possible, so they have been designed to take no more than 5-7 minutes to complete. Most of the questions can be answered with a tick.

Please answer *all* the questions and hand the questionnaire back to a member of the library staff.

Thank you for your help.

We would like to start by asking you a few questions about your use of the public library.

1. How often, on average, do you use the services offered by a public library?
(Please tick one box only)

Every Day	☐	**Once a fortnight** ☐	**Less than once a month** ☐
More than once a week ☐		**Once every 3 weeks** ☐	
but less than every day		**Once a month** ☐	
Once a week ☐			

Which other libraries do you visit? *(please say below)*

2. What do you use the public library for? *(Please tick all boxes that apply)*

	For Leisure or Entertainment	For Learning	For Personal Information *e.g. benefits rights , local info. etc.*
Borrowing novels, fiction, story books	☐	☐	☐
Borrowing non-fiction, factual books	☐	☐	☐
Reading books, magazines, newspapers in the library	☐	☐	☐
Using or borrowing CDs, videos or tapes	☐	☐	☐
To read the notice boards	☐	☐	☐
To use a computer for word processing	☐	☐	☐
To use a computer to access the Internet	☐	☐	☐
To use a computer to access other information	☐	☐	☐
To use library equipment *(fax/photocopier etc)*	☐	☐	☐

Any other reason? *(Please state below)*

3. If you have used the public library for learning was this to support a course you are/were taking?   YES / NO *(please circle)*

Please give the course title(s)

4. Please list *up to 3 ways* that your local public library has helped or is helping you to learn:

5. Please list any problems you have had when using the public library:

We would now like to ask you a few questions about your use of computers:

6. Please tick the appropriate box if you have access to a computer via:

Home ☐ **College** ☐

Work ☐ **A public library** ☐ **Please say which library_____**

If you ticked none of these boxes please go to question 9

7.   Have you used any of the following computer facilities? *(Please tick all boxes that apply)*

	At a Public Library	At Home	At Work	At College
Internet	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other Electronic Information Sources *(CD ROMs, DVD etc.)*	☐	☐	☐	☐
Self-Learning Programs	☐	☐	☐	☐
Electronic Library Catalogue	☐	☐	☐	☐
E-Mail	☐	☐	☐	☐
Word Processor	☐	☐	☐	☐
Computer Games	☐	☐	☐	☐

8. If you have problems using computers who do you turn to for help? *(Please tick all boxes that apply)*

Public Library Staff ☐ **Manuals / Books** ☐

Family Members ☐ **On-Screen Help** ☐

Friends ☐ **Computer help-lines** ☐

Work colleagues ☐ **College Staff** ☐

Anywhere else? *(Please say below)*

We would be grateful if you could give us some information about yourself:

9. Are you:
      Male ☐   **Female** ☐ *(please tick)*

10. Which age group do you belong to:
      16 to 19: ☐ **20 to 29:** ☐   **30 to 39:** ☐   **40 to 49:** ☐   **50 to 59:** ☐   **60:** ☐
      (please tick)

11. Which of the following would you describe yourself as: *(Please tick)*

White	☐	**Indian**	☐
Irish	☐	**Pakistani**	☐
Black - African	☐	**Bangladeshi**	☐
Black - Caribbean	☐	**Chinese**	☐

Black - Other ☐ _____ *Please specify*
Other ☐ _____ *Please specify*

12. Do you consider yourself as having a disability?
      Yes ☐   **No** ☐   *(please tick)*

13. Which of the following qualifications did you leave school with? *(Please tick all boxes that apply)*

A / AS Levels ☐ **How many?** _____
GCSEs / O Levels grade C or above ☐ **How many?** _____
GCSEs / O Levels grade D or below ☐ **How many?** _____
CSEs grade 1 ☐ **How many?** _____
CSEs grade 2 or below ☐ **How many?** _____
Left without qualifications ☐

Please list any other qualifications *you left school with* in the space below:

14. What courses have you taken *since* leaving school that led to a qualification?
(Please say below)

A Level / AS Level	☐		**HNC/HND**	☐ **Level**_____
GCSE	☐		**City & Guilds**	☐ **Level**_____
NVQ	☐ **Level**_____	**Degree**	☐ **Level**_____
GNVQ	☐ **Level**_____	**BTEC**	☐ **Level**_____
None	☐			

Other: *Please specify*_____

15. What courses have you taken since leaving school that did NOT lead to a qualification?

(e.g. WEA, Adult Education class)

---

16. Are you:

In Full Time Employment	☐	A Part Time Student	☐
A Full Time Student	☐	Unwaged	☐
In Part Time Employment	☐	Retired	☐

(Please tick all boxes that apply)

---

17. What, if anything, has stopped you from studying in the past? *(Please tick all boxes that apply)*

I could not afford to study	☐	Loss of benefits as a result of studying	☐
I was too busy	☐	I didn't think I was clever enough	☐
Course was full or not running	☐	Course was too hard to get to	☐
Put off by experience at school	☐		

Any other reason? *(Please say in the space below)*

Finally, we would welcome the chance to speak to a number of people about any educational issues relating to the project. Would you be willing to speak to me at a later date?

Yes ☐ No ☐ *(please tick)*

If YES please give your name and a telephone number and/or email address you can be contacted on:

Name:

Telephone Number:

E-Mail Address:

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME. PLEASE HAND THE COMPLETED

QUESTIONNAIRE BACK TO ONE OF THE LIBRARY STAFF

Craig Bartle, Research Associate

LEARNERS Interview Guide
(Including notes for Interviewer)
OBJECTIVE

- To explore how the public library has helped to support formal learners.
  Library can:
  support a formal course leading to a qualification
  support a formal course not leading to a qualification (e.g. adult ed. class)
  Help people get back into formal learning.

INTRODUCTION

We are interested in your use of the public library. We are trying to find out how important the library has been in helping to support your studies. [This is a national study funded by the Government.]

**1. Clarify anything on questionnaire that's not complete or is confused.
     COMPLETE AND ANNOTATE THE QUESTIONNAIRE AS NEC.**

2. USE OF LIBRARIES

Check out extent of library use

What made you join a public library?

For those listing more than one library they use
    Why do you use two/three different libraries?

3. QUALIFICATIONS and SUPPORT FOR LEARNING

You left school with xxx qualifications (Question 1)
Tell me how you got back into formal studying?

Tell me what part the public library played in supporting your studies

**PROMPTS: Did the public library influence your decision to study or help
             you take up your course(s) in any way?**

             How could the library have helped you more?

Negative respondents:
             Why didn't you use the library a source of support?

4. EXPERIENCE OF COMPUTERS

Tell me about using computers for learning.

             Tell me about using computers in public libraries

LIBRARY USERS Interview Guide
(Including interviewer's notes)

OBJECTIVE

- To explore how the public library helps people's formal or informal learning.
  Library can:
  support a formal course leading to a qualification
  support a formal course not leading to a qualification (e.g. adult ed. class)
  support informal group learning e.g. a reading group, a club.
  support informal independent learning.
  promote formal and informal learning opportunities.

- To find out what perceptions people have of 'learning':
  Purposive learning e.g. following a topic through books vs Incidental learning, e.g. learning from a novel in passing; borrowing non-fiction. Are people aware of getting more out of books etc. than entertainment.

INTRODUCTION

We are interested in your use of the public library. We are trying to find out how important the library is in helping you to learn things. [This is a national study funded by the Government.]

1. Clarify anything on questionnaire that's not complete or is confused.
   COMPLETE AND ANNOTATE THE QUESTIONNAIRE AS NEC.

2. USE OF LIBRARIES

Question 1 **Check out which is the library they use most often (home library)**
   What made you join a public library?

For those listing more than one library they use
   Why do you use two/three different libraries?

ABOUT LEARNING and LEISURE USE OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Question 2 You've ticked that you use *[these services]* **for learning.**
Tell me a bit more about the ways the public library helps you to learn.

PROMPTS   How does reading fiction [etc.] help you to learn?
   Non-fiction – what sort – hobbies? Interests?
   `What's the main pay-off? Entertainment/Learning?
   CDs Videos etc. How do they help you to learn?
   What do you mean by 'learning'?

OR

Question 2 You've ticked that you use the library for leisure/entertainment.
Tell me a bit more about what you get out of your reading. What are the benefits?
PROMPTS   Have you ever used the library to help you to learn anything?
   Tell me about it…..

3. QUALIFICATIONS and SUPPORT FOR LEARNING

You left school with xxx qualifications (Question 13)
Tell me what you feel about people being encouraged to carry on learning after they leave school.

1. Those who listed a course at Question 14

What made you study when you did?

1a Those who listed a course at Question 14 and answered YES to Question 3

You said the library supported you with the course(s) you took. (Q3)
How, exactly, did the public library help/support you?
(Check whether it was the course mentioned in Question 14)

PROMPTS: How could the library have helped you more?

Did the public library influence your decision to study or help you take up your course(s) in any way?

1b Those who listed a course at Question 14 and answered NO to Question 3

You said the library didn't help you with the course(s) you took. (Q3)
Why didn't you use the library a source of support?

PROMPTS Did the public library influence your decision to study or help you take up your course(s) in any way?

2. Those who DIDN'T list a course at Question 14

What would have encourage you to study?

4. EXPERIENCE OF COMPUTERS

Question 6 and 7 If Public Library Boxes are NOT ticked.

Tell me about using computers for learning.

PROMPTS What would encourage you….?

What puts you off…….?

How could the public library help [more]

Do you know if computers are available to you at any of the public libraries you use?

Do you know what facilities they have? e.g. Internet access

"LOW ACHIEVERS - LIFELONG LEARNERS"
A study of the public library's impact on
educational disadvantage

WORKSHOP PROGRAMME
Sheffield Hilton Hotel (previously Stakis)
Tuesday 16th May 2000

10.00   **Coffee and tea for delegates on arrival**

10.30-10.45   **Welcome and Introduction to the Project**
                     Richard Proctor, Project Leader

10.45-11.15   **Report on the research results so far.**
                     Craig Bartle, Research Associate

11.15-12.15   **Group Discussion**

12.15-13.30   **Lunch**

13.30-14.30   **Group Discussions contd.**

14.30-15.00   **Group Discussions: Report Back**

15.00-15.15   **Tea**

15.15-16.00   **Plenary Session**

<div align="center">

WORKSHOP
"Low Achievers – Lifelong Learners"
Sheffield Hilton Hotel May 16 2000

GROUP WORK (2 x 1hr. appx.)

</div>

THE AIM

The aim of today's Group work is to discuss issues around lifelong learning in public libraries and identify any that are specific to 'low achievers' (those who may have left school without qualifications). The outcome (we hope) will be a range of topics, questions, ideas and examples of good (and bad) practice which will help to inform a national survey into the ways public libraries are supporting and might support lifelong learning.

THE TASK

In your groups we would like you to address the following questions and come up, at the end of your discussions with

a) a list of key points, issues, challenges, ideas.

b) a list of areas/topics which the national survey of lifelong learning in public libraries might cover.

1. What do public libraries do now?

In what ways do public libraries currently support lifelong learning?
a) *local adult learners* e.g. those returning to formal education or enrolled in local classes, e.g. adult education, WEA;
b) *independent learners*
c) in promoting *access to formal and local learning*

What works? What doesn't? What are the barriers and constraints? Please give specific examples if you can.

You might like to clarify what lifelong learning means in the context of a public library.

2. What might public libraries do in future, given the resources?

What impact might IT have? e.g. should staff become IT trainers?
How should public libraries respond to increasing access to IT in the home, workplace, and community meeting points such as pubs.

REPORT BACK (Max. 8 minutes per Group)

Please elect a reporter to give the Workshop a summary of your discussions:

What are the key points, issues and challenges, ideas?

What areas should a national survey of lifelong learning in public libraries cover?

APPENDIX 6

NATIONAL SURVEY
LIFELONG LEARNING IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES

This Questionnaire is part of a National Survey investigating the impact of public libraries on educational disadvantage and exclusion: (LIC/Resource funded project, "Low Achievers - Lifelong Learners If you have any queries or prefer an e-mail copy of this questionnaire please ring Richard Proctor (0114) 222 2646; or e-mail - r.proctor@sheffield.ac.uk.

NAME OF AUTHORITY: _____

Please tick here if you do not wish your authority to be identified in the Final Report
   [   ]

A   Policy and Resources

1. **Has your library produced any current policy documentation or guidelines relating to** the following (including statements in Annual Library Plan)

	YES	NO	PLANNED
a) Support for adult learners?	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
b) Promotion of learning opportunities?	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

If YES, please describe briefly in the space below and/or enclose any relevant documentation:

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2. **If you have completed your Best Value Review to what extent does it prioritise lifelong learning?** Please circle number, which reflects its priority:

No mention **0   1   2   3   4   5** *Highest priority*

Please enclose the relevant extract from your review or comment below

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3. **Do you have a specific budget for lifelong learning materials? YES [   ]   NO [   ]**
Please give details of 2000-2001 provision and what it covers

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B   Services

4. **Do you have a post responsible for lifelong learning (excluding head of library service)?**
              YES [   ]   NO [   ]

If *YES* please give the post title: _____

Please give below any responsibilities of this post besides lifelong learning:

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5. Does your library service provide *STAFF* with specific opportunities for training in any of the following? Please say if ICT training is NOF funded:

	YES	NO	PLANNED	NOF funded
Users' basic literacy	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Users' basic numeracy	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Information seeking skills: books, journals etc.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Information seeking skills: electronic	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
How to use computers	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
One to one educational guidance	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

5. (contd.) Please briefly describe any other training you provide, relevant to lifelong learning, in the space below. Please say whether this is NOF funded

6. Does your library service either directly or in partnership provide *adult users* with *formal* training/learning opportunities in:

	YES	NO	PLANNED
Basic Literacy	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Basic numeracy	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Information seeking skills: books, journals etc.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Information seeking skills: electronic	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
How to use computers	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Other (Please briefly describe below)			

7. Please say who initiated the provision for library users in Q6 and where it is located:

	INITIATED BY		LOCATION	
	Library	Other Org.	Library	Elsewhere
Basic Literacy	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Basic numeracy	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Information seeking skills: books, journals etc.	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Information seeking skills: electronic	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
How to use computers	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Other	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

8. Has the library service taken any steps to eliminate or reduce barriers to library use by socially excluded groups in any of the following ways? (*a-e below are about general provision, f-I are specifically about provision for learners*)

a) Directing resources to libraries serving areas of poverty/deprivation
   YES [   ] NO [   ]
   Details:

b) Increasing opening hours in libraries serving areas of poverty/deprivation
   YES [   ] NO [   ]
   Details:

c) Reducing/eliminating charges for those on low incomes e.g. unemployed
   YES [   ] NO [   ]
   Details:

d) Providing special facilities for homeless people
   YES [   ] NO [   ]
   Details:

e) Providing signs, leaflets for learners in minority languages
   YES [   ] NO [   ]
   Details:

f) Providing special facilities for people with severe learning difficulties
   YES [   ] NO [   ]
   Details:

g) Providing special facilities for physically disabled learners
   YES [   ] NO [   ]
   Details:

h) Providing special facilities for people with dyslexia
   YES [   ] NO [   ]
   Details

i) Providing special facilities for housebound learners
   YES [   ] NO [   ]
   Details:

j) Providing special facilities for geographically isolated learners
   YES [   ] NO [   ]
   Details:

C   Performance Measurement

9. Have you taken any steps to monitor or measure the effectiveness of your provision for learners?:
   YES [   ]   NO [   ]   PLANNED [   ]
If you have answered *YES* to the above please give details below.

D   Information Technology

10.Who is responsible for the development of Information Technology (excluding head of library service?

Please give the post title _____

Please give any responsibilities of the post besides IT in the space below:

11. Do you provide *networked* public access to any of the following resources?
(i.e. resources delivered to service points electronically)   **If you answer *YES* please enclose promotional lit. or give details below.**

	YES	NO	PLANNED	Is this facility accessible via the Internet?
a) Library Catalogue (OPAC)	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	YES [ ] NO [ ]
b) Learning Material / Software	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	YES [ ] NO [ ]
c) information about courses/training	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	YES [ ] NO [ ]
d) Other (please describe below)	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	YES [ ] NO [ ]

12 . How many service points have access to networked resources?
   Static_____   Mobile _____

13.How many service points house 'learning centres' (Open, CALL, Study Support etc.)

PRESENT   Static_____   Mobile _____

PLANNED   Static_____   Mobile _____

14.How many service points are there in total?
Static_____   Vehicles _____
 (Please count libraries with e.g. separate lending, reference depts. as one service point)

15. We would like to identify examples of good practice that other authorities can learn from: **Have there been any library initiatives, experiments or projects in your authority which, in your view, have been successful in any of the following. If *YES* please describe briefly under each heading and/or enclose documentation**

a) Supporting students on formal courses?
    YES [   ] NO [   ]
    Details:

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b) Supporting independent learners?
    YES [   ] NO [   ]
    Details:

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c) Encouraging effective public use of paper based resources?
    YES [   ] NO [   ]
    Details:

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d) Encouraging people to go back to formal learning?
    YES [   ] NO [   ]
    Details:

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e) Promoting learning opportunities in your authority and elsewhere?
    YES [   ] NO [   ]
    Details:

D Partnerships

16.   Is your authority involved in learning partnerships with/through any of the following?

	YES	NO
a) [Lifelong] Learning Partnership Details:	[ ]	[ ]
b) Local academic libraries Details:	[ ]	[ ]
c) Private sector Details:	[ ]	[ ]
d) U3A Details:	[ ]	[ ]

e) UfI	[ ]	[ ]

Details:

f) Open University	[ ]	[ ]

Details:

g) ICT Learning Centres	[ ]	[ ]

Details:

h) NGfL	[ ]	[ ]

Details:

i) Other partnerships: (Please list and describe briefly)

	[ ]	[ ]

17.   Name of person completing questionnaire:

Telephone Number:

E-Mail Address:

We would like to interview respondents in a sample of authorities. Would you be willing to speak to me at a later date?

YES [   ]   NO [   ]

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME.   PLEASE RETURN THE COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE IN THE ENVELOPE PROVIDED To: Craig Bartle, Research Associate, Department of Information Studies, Western Bank, Sheffield S10 2TN

PLEASE RETURN BY Monday 7th August 2000

Appendix 7 Range of courses taken by adult learners

FE STUDENTS

Advanced Business
Art
Art & Design
Automobile Engineering
Basic Skills
Beauty Therapy
Biology
Body Massage
Book Keeping
Business
Business Administration
Business and Finance
Business Studies
Business Technology
Care
Catering
Chemistry
Child Care
Civil Engineering
Commercial graphics
Commercial Studies
Computer Studies
Construction
Electrical Engineering
Electrical Installation
Electronic Engineering
English Literature
English
Gems
Geography
German
Health & Social Care
Health Science
History
Holistic Therapy
Humanities
Interior Decoration
Interior Design
IT
Italian
Joinery
Law
Learning Difficulties
Learning Support
Leisure and Tourism
Leisure Management
Massage Therapy

Mathematics
Motor Vehicle
Nursery Nursing
Performing Arts
Physics
Private Secretarial
Psychology,
Public Services
Science
Science & Technology
Sign Language
Social & cultural studies
Social Sciences
Social Studies
Sociology
Spanish
Sport Science
Sports Studies
Study skills
Textiles
Welding/Fabrication
Woodwork

LOCAL LEARNERS
Aromatherapy
Art
Basic computing course
Computers for beginners
Conversational French
Creative writing
Desktop publishing
Document presentation
Drawing
Flower arranging
French
French (conversational)
Human physiology
Keep fit
Key skills. English
Maths
Printing
Shorthand
Text processing
Typing
Welding
Word processing
Wrought iron work
Yoga

Appendix 8 Range of courses taken by library users

Advanced Driving
Archaeology
Art
Art and Craft
Art History
Badminton
Basketwork
Beginners French
Beginners German
Bird-watching
Body Massage
Book-keeping
Bridge
Cake Decorating
Calligraphy
Car maintenance
Car Mechanics
Caring for carers
Caring for the elderly
Child development
Childcare
Communication course
Comparative Literature
Computer course
Computer Literacy
Computing
Conversational French
Conversational German
Conversational Spanish
Cookery
Counselling
Craft courses
Craftwork
Creative writing
Credit Union Training
Dancing
Dealing with customers
Drama
Dressmaking
Egyptology
Electrical Installation
Employment training
English Language
Equal Opportunities
Financial Advice
First Aid
Flower arranging
Forestry
French 'get by'

French Language
Garden Design
Geography
Geology
German Language
Greek Language
Guitar lessons
Hairdressing
Health & Safety
Health and Hygiene
Health and Social Care
History
History of Local
Government.
How to use spreadsheets,
Hygiene
Informatics
Information Technology
Internet
Irish History
Keep Fit
Lace Making
Languages
Literature
Local History
Looking at nature
Man Management course
Management for women
Maths
Media Studies
Mountain Expedition Leader
Moving and Handling
Music
Music Appreciation
Natural History
Natural Science
Nurse Training
Office management skills
Painting
Peak District Geology
Personal Development
Photography
Play
Pottery
Psychology
Public Service
Rhythm dance classes
Secretarial
Sewing

Shorthand typing
Sign Language
Singing class
Social Studies
Sociology
Spanish Conversational
Spanish 'get by'
Spanish Language
Spinning
Sugarcraft
Tai chi
Tap Dancing
Teaching skills (basic)
Tenant Participation
Training to be a volunteer
Typing
Upholstery
Urdu
Walking
Watercolour Painting
Woodwork
Word for Windows
Word processing
Word Processing
Yoga
Yoga
Young Enterprise
Youth Justice
Youth work