

INFORMATION NEEDS OF THE ELDERLY:
THE ROLE OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
Liverpool John Moores University for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy

March 1998

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the help given to me by my husband, Henry Nutter, and mother, Pamela Street, without whose financial support this work could not have been completed. Also to thank my supervisors, Glyn Rowland and Professor Ken Bakewell, for the advice and assistance they have provided throughout. Finally, to thank my colleague, John Boston, for his search skills in tracking down a number of references for me.

Abstract

This research examines the use made of information by the elderly with emphasis on the active elderly user. It considers how a specialised service, operated from within the public library service and working in co-operation with other specialised agencies, could be developed. In doing so, it analyses what is known about existing patterns of usage and examines the role of social, economic and technological factors in determining that usage. First the relevance of information provision to the elderly is examined in terms of both content and purpose at a national level. This enables the research to be put into an overall context. Next the informational contribution which the library can make to the community is assessed, particularly in relation to co-operation and collaboration with other information and advice agencies.

The model developed in the final section of the research is applicable to all authorities and represents an attempt at applying to the elderly the concept of a library-based inter-agency information service. The final results of this research are derived from a detailed examination of the following areas: identification of the elderly's information needs (expressed and unexpressed); designing the service, including areas such as management structure, what services should be provided, interaction with technology, and physical layout; planning publicity and assessing its effectiveness; staff training and implications on the library service in terms of space allocation/requirements in relation to other library functions.

A survey of literature, British and American, encompassing both public library services to specially targeted groups and community information developments revealed that the elderly had not been identified as a group with specific information requirements. Public library services to the elderly are still the traditional domiciliary services with emphasis on large print provision and home visits. To support this, a national questionnaire survey of library services to the elderly operated by local authorities was undertaken, together with a case study of two authorities: Knowsley and Liverpool. This included a market research exercise conducted on the over sixties in the former authority. The aim was to obtain a picture of the current state of information provision and the dissemination process as it relates to the elderly. The objective was to review the available evidence, identify gaps in knowledge, and finally develop a conceptual model for a personalised, comprehensive information service for the elderly.

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Introduction

"Ageing will represent the major social challenge for the remainder of the twentieth century when vast resources will need to be directed towards the support, love and treatment of the old" (Hobman, 1978).

"There was once a vision of a wonderfully fulfilling lifestyle for citizens of the advanced countries of the western world, a lifestyle made possible by a new technology which would lighten the burden of work and bring increased leisure to everyone" (Coleman, 1981).

These Utopian statements presuppose several factors when linked to the elderly. The first is that they are in a position to appreciate this acquired leisure time in terms of health, education and financial security. Sadly this is rarely the case and the elderly are often deficient in at least one of these areas. For this very reason it is necessary to ensure that an adequate level of information and provision exists. It is the need for this information and the role which the public library can play in its provision that forms the crux of this research. Recent years have seen a growing appreciation of the importance of information. Information in this context is not restricted to solely scientific and technical information but encompasses information generally.

"Information is a resource, a resource as fundamental as energy and matter,

which affects all human activity...namely that information must be at the service of the whole community i.e. particular institutions and social groups as well as society and individuals in general" (Anderla, 1973).

This investigation attempts to establish whether a need for greater emphasis on information provision to the elderly exists and if so, how the public library service can fill this need. The research examines how to give information to the elderly about topics such as education, health, welfare rights and leisure in a format suited to their requirements. The method of information delivery to this group has received little research attention in the past although a US study (Hale, 1985) stressed its potential value. This view was echoed by Abrams who included "the need for information and information networks within the whole world of informal care and between it and all sorts of formal agencies" as one of three priorities arising from his research (Abrams, 1985).

The starting point of this research is the contention that if the elderly are going to become increasingly active in society as a result of changing economic circumstances and government policies, then it is necessary to build on existing general models of information delivery. From this it can be seen that what distinguishes the elderly from the rest of the population is not specifically their age but a particular set of circumstances and specific information requirements.

The broad objective of the research was to stimulate awareness of information as a commodity and to provide a means of facilitating access to it amongst the independent elderly, defined here as those who do not live in institutions, i.e. those

residing at home either alone or with relatives or partners. The specific aims of this research can be defined as: to promote the use of existing community services by the elderly; to provide the elderly with relevant information on selected key areas which would promote a more positive lifestyle; to provide a personal means of imparting information to the elderly and to provide an information base for a co-ordinated approach to information giving which draws upon the knowledge, experience and expertise of relevant organisations.

While the information needs of the elderly could be said to be no different from those of other members of the community, something that is discussed more fully in the main text of the research, it must be stressed that the elderly may begin to need more services and benefits at a time when their access to networks and information sources has decreased through bereavement, retirement, lack of mobility or a variety of other factors. They need access to a co-ordinated, unintimidating information service because relevant services are provided by a diversity of agencies whose roles may be unclear. Furthermore, the elderly are likely to be the population group least able to visit various organisations due to poor mobility, financial restrictions and lack of confidence.

Accurate, up to date information is essential if one is seeking to provide an information service but in many cases information held by organisations serving the elderly may be out of date and confusing for the elderly to interpret. The first requirement for meeting the information needs of the elderly must be the collation and regular updating of relevant local community information. The question of written information versus orally delivered information is also important in the

question of information delivery. Findings by Tester and Meredith (1987) concluded that, for a successful outcome to most inquiries, a degree of personal contact was necessary. Information given in person was more likely to be remembered than that delivered by other methods. However, information delivered by alternative means can have a valuable role to play in reinforcing personally delivered information.

If the premise that personal contact is the most effective way of informing the elderly is acknowledged, the next question must be how can this information best be efficiently delivered? This research investigates this aspect of information delivery and attempts to develop a model to implement it. The research approach itself will comprise four principal elements:

1. A literature review intended to provide background information and illustrate important issues that will be raised during the study.
2. A postal questionnaire survey of English library authorities to elicit information on the current state of library services to the elderly. The aim of this is to set the scene with regard to the existing state of library provision to the elderly.
3. A case study of two local authorities to provide a more in depth view of the entire spectrum of services available locally to the elderly. Consideration is given to how they interact with the library. A market research exercise is conducted on the over sixties in one of the case

study authorities to enable a picture of how this group perceive their information needs to be established.

4. Analysis and review of the findings and the development of a hypothetical model of information delivery to the elderly. This is developed with specific attention to technological advances such as the “information superhighway” as well as a consideration of the effects on the library service’s infrastructure.

The complexity and multi-dimensional nature of information itself and the needs of the elderly are complicated by the nature of current service provision. As previously stated, information is available from such a wide range of statutory and voluntary agencies that the means of obtaining it is not necessarily obvious or direct. As a result of this complexity it can be argued that there is a need for an information broker who would assist the elderly to navigate the information provision network. Further support can be given to this argument when one considers the recent “information explosion” that has come about as a direct result of the Internet. The reasons for this need result from a variety of factors that can broadly be itemised as: ignorance of where to go for particular information amongst the elderly and their carers; the current lack of well established access to the information network; the lack of a single body with overall responsibility for advising the elderly on their rights to information concerning services and benefits and the fact that information is provided at local, regional and national levels with few links between these levels to ensure complete coverage.

In general there appears to be a fragmented approach to the provision of information. The following areas highlight particular concerns:

1. An unsystematic assessment of user needs. Many organisations assess the need for information by analysis of inquiries and then add their own perceptions of what needs to be known. Not all organisations attempt to analyse needs: many merely respond on an *ad hoc* basis, as and when a particular query arises.
2. A provision/demand led rather than consumer drawn environment. Studies of information provision to the elderly have commented on the lack of market orientation which exists. This is characterised by a poor response to changing user needs and inadequately developed links between the consumer and supplier of information.
3. A lack of evaluation on information provision. Little is known about whether information disseminated to the elderly is assimilated or acted upon.
4. The development of a large number of specialist information providers with little evidence of collaboration between them. This increases the chances for duplication and can lead to an element of competitiveness between information providers. Research has suggested that there is, in fact, a very limited exchange of information and contact between information providers (IT World, 1988).

One major barrier to the creation of a comprehensive information service appears to be the lack of management of information provision across all agencies. This is evident from the above points. Many of the agencies concerned with the elderly have clearly stated objectives or "mission statements" for the services they provide. These statements, however, tend to be of a very general nature and do focus on specific elements of the services provided. It is difficult for many agencies to provide an information service in the face of shrinking resources. This has led to a situation where many organisations need to supplement their finances by fund-raising techniques or voluntary contributions in order to survive. The move towards the creation of computerised databases is frequently driven by enthusiastic individuals who have to learn the relevant skills as they go along. The organised management of both computer based and manual information services will create the opportunity for resources to be better used and services better targeted.

This research examines information provision from the libraries' viewpoint and attempts to determine the actual needs of the elderly. It advocates the need for a method of information delivery operated by an individual information broker from within the library service who would develop a local community network by liaising with other related organisations. This would lead to the provision of a "one stop information shop" from which the elderly could obtain information, advice and referral.

The first section of the research places the elderly in a sociological context and examines the libraries' traditional interaction with this group. It concludes by

considering the need for, and use made by the elderly of, information from a variety of agencies. The next section examines provision to the elderly by the library service on a national basis. This looks at trends in general terms but does not seek, at this stage, to focus specifically on the question of information provision. Its intention is merely to set the scene with regard to library services for the elderly as they exist at the commencement of this research. The third stage of the research targets the Merseyside area and, using the case study technique, attempts to put current library provision to the elderly within the wider framework of the community. Attention is paid to work undertaken by other organisations involved with the elderly and one authority is used in a market research exercise. The aim of this is to assess the actual requirements of individuals within the target group rather than their needs as perceived by the library service.

The assumption of this research is that information provision aimed specifically at the elderly is still lacking in most public libraries. With this premise in mind, the final section will postulate a hypothetical model for an information service operated by the library which incorporates the expertise of other departments and organisations which exist within the local authority to serve the elderly.

Chapter 1

Research methodology

This research starts with the hypothesis that the section of the population commonly termed “the elderly” is in reality made up of a large group of individuals who are able to enjoy a full and active lifestyle. Linked to this is the hypothesis that the public library service does little to assist the specific information needs of this group and that services currently provided by the public library are essentially domiciliary in nature, comprising mainly housebound visits and services to residential and nursing homes. The aim of this research is to test the validity of both statements and to examine the possible need to develop a community information service for the active elderly which draws upon the expertise of organisations currently serving the elderly and in which the public library service has a central role to play.

With working hypotheses in place, the next question to consider is “how does one test the hypotheses?” The research process can be seen as the overall scheme of scientific activities in which the researcher engages to produce knowledge about an object of enquiry. This process consists of seven stages: problem, hypothesis, research design, measurement, data collection, data analysis and results/recommendations. The process of research itself is an evaluative one since tentative results to research problems will be tested logically and, if rejected, new ones will be formulated and tested. At this point it is worth considering, from a

theoretical perspective, some of the ways in which the hypotheses stated at the start of this chapter could be tested using current research techniques. It would also help to set this research in an overall theoretical framework by examining the range of methodologies used in research on other marginalised groups such as ethnic minorities and the disabled before going on to consider which information gathering methods would be most suited for this research. Since no published statistics exist to support the hypotheses, this chapter will outline the techniques adopted to obtain the data required by this research to enable the hypotheses to be tested.

The simplest way of gathering a large amount of information is by utilising the questionnaire as a research tool. This method does not always provide the depth necessary and can produce ambiguities at the analysis stage so the researcher may often need other techniques such as the interview, focus groups and case studies to supplement findings. Research into the information needs of minority ethnic groups (Bloch, 1993) adopted a case study approach using semi-structured interviews as the sole research tool. The latter were carefully selected to provide both linguistic and geographic coverage. Coventry's survey of its ethnic elderly population (City of Coventry, 1990) used a questionnaire as its main research tool, again supplemented by interviews with individuals living in four preselected areas of the city. A study into employment practices and ethnic minorities (Jewson et al, 1990) also adopted a case study approach using interviews as the primary research gathering method backed up by on-site observation and documentation provided by the organisations contacted. Research into employment initiatives for disabled people (Pozner and Hammond, 1993) was a much wider survey than those

previously described. The initial research, to obtain an overview of the current situation, was achieved by the distribution of a postal questionnaire to all Training and Enterprise Councils in England and Wales coupled with a review of current publications and other sources of relevant information. This was followed by a more in-depth study of ten agencies using a case study approach with a structured interview forming the main research gathering technique.

This brief examination of research methodologies used in other research on minority groups revealed that the case study approach and the use of interviews are favoured methods. Ultimately, however, research practices must depend not simply on what hypothesis the researcher wants to prove, but the resources that are available to test that hypothesis. This chapter will explain how and why the choices made for this research were arrived at.

Given that this research concerns the use made of information by a minority social group it is relevant to include here a reference to the work of the Community Development Foundation. In 1995 the Foundation established with IBM UK a national working party on social inclusion in the information society, known as INSINC. The working party's brief was to examine the impact of new information technology on local communities, and the potential for greater social inclusion of people in communities within the information society. This sentiment was linked specifically to the elderly at a conference organised jointly by the Community Development Foundation and the Community Services Group of the Library Association (Harris and Green, 1996) in which one of the speakers outlined the

ways in which the library building can be maintained as a locally managed community facility offering activity and meeting opportunities for elderly people.

The decision process: determining research strategy

The first step in planning a research exercise must be to establish the area to be researched and the overall objectives of the study. This is vital since these will influence the research strategy and help to ensure that the co-operation of those involved in the study, such as staff and respondents, is gained. To achieve the latter it is important that the overall purpose of the research is communicated. This should be both relevant and important to respondents in order to ensure their maximum interest and co-operation. This research will provide the following benefits:

1. A better understanding of the needs of the elderly.
2. A better targeting of information resources to the elderly.
3. The opportunity to develop new strategies, an integrated policy and to eliminate unnecessary duplication of resources.
4. Improved information on potential funding sources.
5. An increased take up of library services generally by the targeted group.

Having defined the areas of research to be undertaken, the next stage is to decide on an appropriate research strategy. The strategies chosen reflect factors such as available resources, time, coverage, ease of analysis. In deciding which research strategy to adopt, several factors had to be considered, including whether to select a quantitative or qualitative approach or a combination of both, the method of data collection and sampling strategies (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1992).

A fundamental choice of research strategy must initially be made before any other decision can be made. There is a tendency to think that quantitative social research techniques, because they are more objective, are somehow more “scientifically acceptable,” but this is debatable. The main difference between quantitative and qualitative approaches is that quantitative research seeks an objective explanation by statistical description. Qualitative research seeks to understand an event or behaviour from the users viewpoint (Silverman, 1997). In reality, this means that the techniques used for quantitative research are likely to be highly structured and standardised while qualitative research uses less structured techniques. The main concern in planning a user survey is the choice of a method of data collection. User studies draw on techniques from the social sciences and related disciplines (Black, 1993). The four most commonly used methods are: questionnaire; interview; observation and diary.

Questionnaire

This form of data collection is most often used in large scale surveys where there are not enough resources to interview respondents because it enables a large number of people to be contacted at a comparatively low cost. While not appropriate at the exploratory stage of research where ideas may be too formative for specific questions to be determined, it is frequently used as the main collection device.

The questionnaire as a research technique is a useful way of ascertaining information from a large number of people and organisations to provide a representative portrayal of a given situation. These results can then be used as the basis for formulating various hypotheses (Marshall and Rossman, 1995). The preparation of an effective questionnaire entails formulating questions that can elicit the required information and which can easily be interpreted by the target audience. Questions that are obtuse, misleading, have double meanings or may lead the potential respondent need to be carefully avoided since they can invalidate responses and make comparisons impossible. Several types of questions can be utilised, including factual, opinion and attitudes, and informational. The style of the question selected - open, closed or a mixture of both - will depend on the kind of data to be collected and the means of analysis envisaged.

Factual questions pertain to the respondents' age, education, membership of organisations and any other pertinent personal data required for the study. Often factual questions are posed so that the relationship between the respondents' characteristics (independent variables) and the object of the study (dependent

variables) can be determined. When the purpose of a survey is to obtain information about respondents' beliefs and values, opinion and attitude questions can be used. These are valuable to obtain measures of the direction and intensity of the respondents' opinions about a topic. In some types of survey research it might be necessary to determine how respondents know about a topic and when this knowledge was gained. To achieve this the researcher can use information questions. For the purpose of this research such questions could be: "what do you like and dislike most about the library's service to the elderly?"

Researchers sometimes require information about the self-perception of respondents. The questions allow individual subjects to compare their ideas with those of others. Some surveys attempt to determine how respondents will react in certain circumstances or how they feel about a new development. The latter situation is applicable to this research. Questions can also be classified into two categories, structured and unstructured. Unstructured questions allow respondents to reply freely without having to select one of several provided responses. These questions can be described as open-ended and are useful in exploratory studies in which various dimensions of a problem are examined but in which the hypotheses are not tested. Replies solicited from unstructured questions are, however, difficult to analyse compared with their structured counterparts. Structured or closed questions are characterised by a group of provided fixed results. Respondents are allowed to choose from among several fixed responses which are designed to reflect various views and feelings. Structured questions are closed since they do not elicit unpredictable responses. When numerical weights are assigned to fixed-alternative responses the questionnaire is said to be precoded. This precoding

facilitates the analysis of survey data. Although structured questions can enhance reliability, they can, if poorly worded, force respondents to select artificial responses. Another disadvantage of structured questions is that respondents can conceal ignorance. The typical approach employed in questionnaires incorporates the following combination of questions: filter questions which determine whether a person is qualified to respond to a series of survey questions; open ended questions which allow free discussion of personal opinions; directional questions which reveal if the respondent is favourably or unfavourably disposed towards the topic; intensity questions which allow the respondent to show the depth of their feeling; “why” questions which are designed to reveal reasons why respondents feel the way they do.

Interview

The interview can be used as a data collection method either quantitatively or qualitatively. One of the advantages of the interview is its flexibility in relation to the degree of structure required. Unstructured, semi-structured and structured interviews are all equally valid but may not always be appropriate to a particular situation. The interviewer can determine the situation and adapt accordingly (Silverman, 1993). These three methods can be described thus: structured, in which the questions and the response categories are determined in advance; semi-structured, in which questions are decided in advance but the responses are open-ended, and unstructured, in which the only thing planned is the topic of the research with the interview itself being spontaneous. An alternative to the one to one interview is the focus group. This has many advantages as a method of gathering qualitative data since group interviews provide a valuable tool for

gaining insights into how people think and learn about personal life experiences (Morgan, 1993). Group interviews are also a relatively inexpensive way of obtaining useful data on research topics while requiring little structure on the interviewers part.

Observation

This technique involves watching and recording phenomena as they occur. In a user survey this involves watching how people behave or listening to their oral interactions. Observation can be used at the exploratory stage of a user survey to get an idea of the problem to be examined.

Diary

This is a device in which users are asked to record their own activities over a set period of time. Users can be asked to record each time they perform a certain activity or to record everything done within a given time scale.

Choosing a technique may frequently involve a compromise, since many different considerations must be weighed up. Whatever technique or combination is chosen needs to fulfil the following requirements: it must be suitable for studying purposes; it must be within the available resources; and it must be within the competence of the staff using it. Part of the process of defining the purpose of a survey will involve determining who is to be questioned. This will determine the scope of the study: whether it will be possible to study all or only a sample of the group (population) and the method of data collection. A good study must resemble its parent population and be large enough to allow generalisation, within

measurable limits of accuracy, to the subject group from which it was selected. The more alike a population is, the smaller the sample can be (Marshall and Rossman, 1995).

The research process: defining the aims

Once the research areas and strategy to be followed have been established, the planning, procedure and evaluation that form the research programme can be defined. The first stage is to define the purpose of the research as a whole. It is not sufficient that the general purpose is made clear by an enveloping statement of intent, it must be spelt out in enough detail to enable research to proceed in a practical way. In the case of this research a general statement such as “the purpose of this study is to examine the information needs of the elderly” is not sufficient. It needs to be qualified by definitions about the range of elderly involved and the kind of information needs they might have. The answers to these questions will produce a more detailed statement of the purpose of the research. In the case of this research it is “to examine the information needs encountered by the elderly, to assess how far those needs are met by the local authority and to estimate the requirement of an information service to be provided by the library service.” From this statement it is clear that this research will involve an evaluation of current services to the elderly and will make recommendations about how these services might be improved and whether new services need to be developed. With this in mind the specific aims of this research programme can be now be defined as:

1. An evaluation of the current situation of services to the elderly provided by the public library service.

2. An evaluation of the information/advice needs of residents/users within a specified area.
3. The use of these findings as the basis for a general hypothesis of the state of information to the elderly nationally.
4. The development of a model for an integrated information service to the elderly utilising the established role of the library within the community in conjunction with the voluntary sector, council departments and statutory organisations.
5. An assessment of the financial, human resourcing and technological implications of developing and running a co-ordinated information service to the elderly in an effective manner.

Once the research has been planned, the next stage is to formulate the procedure to be followed.

The research elements: planning, procedure and evaluation

This section sets out the research methodology used in this thesis. Three distinct research elements are incorporated into this examination of the elderly and their information needs.

a survey of library authorities in England;

two case studies;

a user survey conducted on elderly library users;

The initial method of data collection is a review of the literature of social policy and librarianship undertaken in Part 1. This attempts to provide a comprehensive overview of the elderly within a sociological context and to describe their use of the library as both a place for recreational activity and information gathering. Attention is also paid to that segment of the elderly population that is unable actively to use the library. The literature review encompasses publications on current UK strategy and attempts to place this in a wider context by also looking at US literature. The reason for this is that developments in librarianship in the US and the UK often parallel each other. This can be seen in the field of community information with developments utilising the technology of the Internet to establish electronic community networks becoming commonplace on both sides of the Atlantic. These developments impact upon this research and are therefore worthy of inclusion as background information. The role of community information will also be appraised and several detailed studies on library and information provision to the elderly examined in depth.

To achieve the aim of this research, which is an investigation of the information needs of the elderly and the role of the public library in helping to satisfy those needs, several areas requiring research suggest themselves. It is necessary, initially, to establish a picture of current provision to the elderly by the public library service. Without this information it is impossible to determine what strategy should be adopted in the future and how it can be implemented. While a general overview of the public library service's policy to the elderly is helpful in setting

the scene, it does not provide information on the strategies of other groups, statutory and voluntary, which also work closely with the elderly. If a comprehensive examination of the information needs of the elderly is to be undertaken, a research element that examines the role and policies of other organisations interacting with the elderly and the library service is required. This may reveal duplication of work, collaboration between groups, or the fact that many groups work with their own specific agenda in complete isolation. Before a strategy of co-operation and the shared use of resources can be considered, detailed research is required to show how the various groups serving the elderly currently function.

Finally, the views of the target audience themselves are required. Libraries (and other groups) may develop services as a result of how they perceive needs rather than the actual needs of the population involved. What are those needs and are they compatible with the services being developed? If they are not, there is clearly an enormous waste of resources by creating and maintaining services that will not be used to their full potential. Research into these questions will enable a valuable profile of the requirements of this group to be formulated. The results of this research will enable a comprehensive picture of information use by the elderly to be established which will provide the background knowledge needed to enable the decision making process regarding service development to the elderly by the library proceed.

With these factors in mind the research strands in this work can be identified as:

1. A survey of the state of library provision to the elderly as it existed at the start of this research. This is intended to provide information on how libraries prioritise service provision to the elderly and what their strategies for the future are with regard to this group. The survey was limited to English library authorities since to take in Welsh, Scottish and Irish authorities would have been beyond the resources of the researcher. A list of the authorities who participated in this survey appears in Appendix 1.

The results of this survey will be considered, along with the results from an earlier survey (Edmonds, 1991), in order to determine the existing levels of service provision at the start of this thesis (1993) and to ascertain what developments, if any, have occurred in the three year period from 1990 to 1993. The objective of this research is a general one, to provide current information about the extent of library activity directed at the elderly and to indicate the way in which services to this group are currently defined. This quantitative data will be collected by a postal questionnaire survey. The main reason for this choice was that it is a relatively cheap method that offers a wide coverage: the only real cost was the postage. The findings from the questionnaire survey, undertaken in Part 1 of this thesis, will then be considered in the light of current debates in social policy concerning the interaction of economic and social definitions of old age and the impact of community care policies on all types of local services, including the library.

The questionnaires developed for both the survey of English library authorities and the user survey were largely structured ones but with the inclusion of one or two open questions. This gave an opportunity for respondents to state their opinions in

a specified area but limiting the number of such questions allowed the questionnaire to remain manageable from the analysis viewpoint. Given limited resources, ease of analysis was considered a major factor in determining questionnaire design.

The questions, response categories and order were carefully determined at the planning stage. The questionnaire needed to progress logically from the general to the specific, making use of the types of question categories outlined earlier. Since it was also considered important that the questionnaire was not too long, so that people would be deterred from completing it, careful thought was required to ensure that all the information required could be elicited from the questions selected. Responses can be characterised in several ways. Initially one can distinguish between questions to which the respondent is asked to choose one response from a set of given responses and those where the respondent may select one, several or all responses from a set of given responses. Since the surveys are an enquiry into the types of services available for, and used by, different categories of elderly users, the latter case is applicable in a number of questions. The first type of response is known as the single choice response. These may be from a set of categories which are related in subject matter but the order of which is not very important. The second type of response, the multiple response, may involve the user in ticking any categories which apply or being asked to rank responses in a certain order. Any questionnaire should be constructed in such a way as to keep the effort required from the respondent to the lowest level. The main consideration is, however, the wording of the questions. It is from this that the quality of the data

collected depends. Questions must be unambiguous, short, clear and only ask one question at a time. They must not make assumptions or be leading in nature.

The extent of commitment to the elderly by the public library service is likely to be difficult to assess simply by counting services to residential homes, the number of large print books held in stock or the existence of activities run specifically for the elderly. Developments in community information services have led to closer liaison with other departments and local agencies but this again can be difficult to quantify accurately. The elements of the questionnaire will be designed to provide information which attempts to give indicators of the extent to which changes in approach are reflected in practice.

2. An examination of provision to the elderly by the library and other interested organisations, both statutory and voluntary.

Services to the elderly are provided by a diverse range of statutory and voluntary bodies; by providing an in depth, evaluative analysis of these various groups, the research yields greater opportunity for the use of other research techniques such as interview and group discussion. Given the resources available and the widening of the field of enquiry to take in other organisations it was not possible to achieve the same breadth of coverage. The adoption of the case study technique and the narrowing of the research to two nearby local authorities seemed the best approach.

The case study approach is popular in the social sciences as it allows a concentrated focus on a single phenomenon and the utilisation of a wide variety of data gathering methods. An advantage of case studies over other methodologies is that they allow close examination of the specific problems relating to individual groups or situations. This approach is particularly apt in studying relationships between library services and a variety of social problems. It is especially applicable in research such as this, where the primary concern is the library as a social institution and its impact on, and performance in relation to, groups such as the elderly. The particular advantage of this technique is that it affords an opportunity for a thorough examination and analysis of a research problem so that findings can be applied directly to the object of an enquiry.

The disadvantages of the case study approach must also be recognised. It is often time-consuming and expensive and a single case study does not always yield definitive results. General procedures for conducting this type of research are: the research object is identified and an up-to-date description is given of the situation relating to it; information relating to the research is assembled and analysed and relevant terms and variables described; the research question is stated or an hypothesis formulated based on available information related to the topic; a “case” is chosen as the specific object to be studied in relation to the research problem. This can obviously be pluralised and any number of case studies undertaken; the object of the study is observed; finally, if enough research data are collected, the hypothesis can be tested with a degree of certainty. If the information collected fails to permit the hypothesis to be tested or to answer the researchers problems, the enquiry may need to be reformulated.

This section of the research starts by putting two selected authorities within the context of their area. The area selected was Merseyside, chosen for its proximity and familiarity to the researcher. The authorities chosen were Liverpool and Knowsley, for similar reasons. The former is a city environment occupying a relatively small geographical area but suffering all the problems associated with an inner city, the second a “new” area, geographically sprawling, with a high elderly population and many socio-economic problems. Both have well established library services with a strong outreach emphasis.

3. A market research exercise conducted on the elderly themselves within one of the local authorities used in the case study. The methodology behind this research is the user survey that utilises the questionnaire as the prime data gathering technique. The aim of this area of research is to determine the actual needs and information seeking habits of the group under investigation rather than their information needs as perceived by the library service.

Before any user survey is enacted various questions must be mooted:

who is using the service?

why?

are they using it effectively?

could the users' needs be met by modifying or extending the service?

are users satisfied with current service levels?

what is the budget division?

what is the location of services, both existing ones and those planned?

what are the technological implications?

User surveys may not always be necessary since the same answer can often be obtained from existing records more easily, cheaply and reliably. Direct contact with users is, however, necessary to discover people's information needs, both satisfied and unsatisfied; opinions and attitudes; preferences; and behaviour patterns.

A user survey of the elderly can best be achieved by the questionnaire technique given the need to gather a wide range of information and considering the time restrictions and available resources of both finance and manpower. These factors combine to determine the style of the survey; in this case the most appropriate style is an in-house survey involving all branch libraries in one selected authority. This would be the easiest method of information gathering to organise and manage and would provide a representative selection of the community geographically. Using a questionnaire would enable the survey to be monitored and controlled by library staff who would be on hand to provide information and assistance if required but who have very little real time to be involved in the administration and handling of data collection. The follow up visit made was to discuss how the administration of the questionnaire exercise went with the library staff involved in the exercise. This was done in the form of a group discussion.

The main disadvantage will be that respondents are all library users. However, despite this factor, there is no reason to assume that their use of the library

precludes the use of other information sources or that their use of the library is solely for satisfying information needs in the traditional sense. It could be for social reasons such as company and warmth, to obtain recreational literature or to attend organised events with the library as a venue. The survey will examine the library in the context of other organisations serving the elderly and attempt to show how the elderly use a range of services available to them. The overall aim is to provide a profile of the elderly within a community setting which will enable conclusions to be made about habits, interests and how information needs are satisfied.

The national survey and the case studies both concern services currently offered. They represent evaluative studies in that their primary purpose is to show what the situation for the elderly is now. The national survey will provide a broad overview of current service provision by the public library while the case studies will provide a greater depth of study of services available to the elderly from a range of specialist providers within a more focused geographic area. Having determined what library based services exist for the elderly from an analysis of data obtained from the national survey, the next stage is to determine what is actually required. This is achieved by approaching the very people the service is aimed at, the elderly. This can be achieved by the market research survey element that will be undertaken as part of one of the case studies and which will involve an assessment of people's needs and wants. The objective is to provide data that can be used to improve information provision and dissemination to the elderly in the community. To achieve this it is important to determine the actual, as opposed to perceived, information needs and wants of this group. Both are important but the greater

urgency attached to the needs of the elderly should be appreciated. “Need” signifies something that the individual stands in urgent requirement of to improve actual quality of life. “Want”, in this context is a wish or desire for something (in this case information) which might improve and enhance the elderly person’s existence but which could be done without.

This chapter has outlined the research methodology used and the three main research areas examined in this thesis. The reasons for the selection of a questionnaire as the dominant research technique, in spite of its disadvantages of this method as a reliable research tool, have been explained as well as a discussion of its merits against other research methodologies such as interview, observation and group discussion. The next section will deal with the first research element which is a survey of public library services to the elderly as they appear at the start of this research.

Part 1

Information and the elderly

Chapter 2

The elderly citizen: a sociological context.

This section considers what is meant by the term elderly and briefly examines the elderly individual within a sociological context. One cannot research the information needs of the elderly and the role of the library and other institutions within the community without first defining the very category this research is aimed at. Having defined what this research means by “elderly”, the remaining chapters in this section look at the role of both information generally and the library service specifically in the lives of the elderly. As this thesis illustrates, the elderly tend to be regular users of the library service and have very specific information needs. The final chapter of this section focuses on what those needs are and the role which the library service has in helping to fulfil those needs. This section makes frequent reference to literature about information use by the elderly: a literature which tends not to be library specific but is a result of other areas of interests and concern. This includes the need for social welfare information, a concern with health matters and the use made of other services run by public or voluntary agencies.

"Information is now widely recognised as the key to helping dependent older people and their carers to improve the quality of their lives in the community. To be able to make choices and have some control over their

lives, people need information on which to base their decisions" (Tester, 1992).

The ageing population.

Traditionally our understanding of old age is determined largely by economic factors, specifically the working environment with retirement marking the onset of becoming "old." Thus men become "old" at 65, women at 60. For the purpose of this research, the elderly are defined as being over 60, regardless of sex. This situation has become considerably more blurred with the recent phenomenon of "early retirement." It is in many ways ludicrous to describe an active 55 year old as elderly, just as it is equally ludicrous to lump everyone from 55-100 into a group defined simply as elderly when nearly a half century span is involved.

The elderly can, in fact, be subdivided into categories and gerontologists recognise three groups: the "young old" (aged 60-75); the "old" (aged 76-85), and the "old old" (86+). This thesis deals with the information needs of the active elderly, defined here as those who are able to visit the library. Because of the frequent loss of mobility that occurs as one becomes older, this inevitably involves the first category (the young elderly) more than the other two. This is not to say that the remaining two categories would not contain "active" elderly, just that it is likely to be less commonplace. Frequent references are made to the "young old" who represent the main constituents of this group and where appropriate these definitions are used to distinguish groups of elderly.

The percentage of elderly people in Britain has increased rapidly throughout the twentieth century. Two factors contribute to this: the fall in the birth rate and the increase in life expectancy. Official population projections put average life expectancy at 75 for men and 80 for women by the year 2011. Of the total UK population of 56.9 million, 21% of the population are now over sixty (Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, 1991). The reason for the increase is the dramatic improvements in medicine and health care that now exist, something that will continue to increase in future years. The most significant increases are forecast to occur in the number of “old old” elderly, those aged 85 and above, with a shift from 0.8 million in 1987 to over 1.4 million by 2025. This elderly population is predominantly composed of women. In fact 60% of all elderly people are women and this figure increases with age. By the 85 mark 3 out of 4 elderly are women (Simes et al, 1981).

Another increasing trend has been for the elderly to live alone in single households. In 1976 this figure was 30% of all elderly, of which four-fifths were women (Hunt, 1978). Seventeen years later the figure was much higher. At the end of the 1980s the majority of the 8 million people aged 65 and older in Great Britain lived in their own homes with about one third of them living on their own. The proportion of elderly living in institutions represents only a small minority of the elderly, although this figure has increased recently due to the dramatic shift in the number of “old old” elderly now living.

The needs and problems of the elderly.

Elderly people are not a convenient category that can be labelled and slotted in with the multitude of categories which we as a society are fond of identifying such as children, disabled, ethnic minorities. The spectrum is diverse, ranging from active, fit members of society forced to take early retirement, keen to fill their new found leisure time through to the very old, possibly suffering from mental and physical disabilities, but still with leisure time to occupy. Interests pursued when younger do not suddenly disappear and the danger of stereotyping the elderly is a very real one. The tendency to label the elderly is clearly seen in two very different models of the elderly identified by social scientists.

Model 1: the elderly as a burden on the community.

A common stereotype in the UK is that the working population, through tax, have to support an increasing number of elderly, specifically through provision of hospital and residential services. However it is a misnomer that the majority of elderly people live in homes; in reality the number of elderly residing in institutions has scarcely risen this century. In addition, references to the amount of the Social Services budget spent on the elderly ignores pension contributions, pressure to retire and evidence regarding the difficulty of ageing workers to find part-time employment. This stereotyped view of the elderly is further reinforced by medical emphasis on the amount of drugs taken by this group, the percentage of GPs' time occupied and an emphasis on visual and physical disability. This model has been accepted without question by the majority of librarians, hence the emphasis on housebound services and the narrow definition of the type of material which older people will enjoy by the majority of the authorities contacted in this

research. In reality, the majority of the elderly remain independent and active to a greater or lesser degree.

Model 2: the social interaction model.

Despite the traditional view of the elderly as infirm, there has been a shift in current government policy on retirement and service provision. Currently there are 8 million over sixty five year olds, 80% of whom live in their own homes with only 4% residing in institutions. In the case of the "old old" elderly (85+) only 20% are institutionalised.

Present governmental strategy is to transfer the traditional view of the elderly as a responsibility of the state to one where responsibility resides with the community or, more implicitly, the family. Community care and a trend towards social integration are dominant themes in most social policy strategies. With this change in emphasis comes the concept of retirement as a time for leisure, socialising and prolonged health. However this sentiment has completely disregarded the ability of the individual to pay and the lack of preparation for retirement that is all too prevalent amongst the recently retired, especially those forced into early retirement.

In reality neither model is wholly appropriate. Both are applicable in some instances but the elderly as a group cannot be conveniently stereotyped in this manner. An alternative view is models of old age which go beyond current policies. Both the previous models were guilty of stereotyping and this can lead to real issues and problems. Both views require a heavy investment by the

government and both are heavily dependent on the community (especially women) since they advocate essentially home-based support. What is needed is a shift in employment policy and social attitudes to counteract the separatism that is currently a trend in nearly all policies on retirement and the elderly.

For many elderly, the impetus to pursue old interests or develop new ones will require encouragement and help on a personalised level. However, the danger of segregation from the rest of the community that exists when talking about "needs of the elderly" is very real and makes it easy to lose sight of the individuality of elderly people.

"Elderly people must not be regarded as a separate group who somehow emerge after retirement. Each generation of people, as it moves beyond retirement, carries with it expectations and beliefs which have been built up throughout life" (Kempson, 1985).

Two of the major problems suffered by the elderly are financial limitations and physical disability. The OPCS (Office of Population and Census Statistics) census survey (1991) estimated that there were 6.1 million adults with disabilities in Great Britain. It also revealed that the number of disabled living in institutions was relatively small: estimates yielded a figure in the region of 500,000 disabled adults. The survey also concluded the most common form of disablement involved restricted mobility. Other common disabilities related to hearing and visual disorders. The second problem frequently encountered in old age is a severe reduction in living standards directly resulting from retirement and the loss of a

salary. For a large number of retirees, retirement means poverty and the need to claim some type of benefit. This suggests that as many as two thirds of older people live within the poverty margin. This factor does not tally with the view that the elderly, on retirement, have a wealth of leisure options and special activities available at their disposal.

Along with the financial loss associated with retirement is the subsequent loss of self-esteem that frequently follows. Preparation for retirement within the UK is still comparatively rare and, given economic conditions, an area employers will undoubtedly come increasingly to see as of low priority. Despite this, the need for adequate preparation prior to retirement could be considered vital (Rowe, 1984). Concern was primarily with adequate health care backed up by an education programme to inform people about health maintenance. He also commented that an active involvement by the elderly in voluntary work is beneficial since it releases an enormous pool of knowledge and experience and gives the elderly a sense of purpose in society which could offset much of the feeling of uselessness that comes after retirement.

The elderly in the community.

As has been seen, the majority of elderly people, far from being frail and in institutional care, are in actual fact fit and healthy and live within the community. This is a situation both satisfactory to the individual and financially economical to the government. Age Concern comments that: 75% of elderly people live healthy, normal lives and do not need assistance; 94% of the elderly do not live in institutions, and people aged 65-74 are more likely than any other age group to be

involved in voluntary work. These figures, obtained at the start of this research in 1993, certainly lend credence to the view that the majority of the elderly continue to maintain a healthy and independent lifestyle. The move towards care in the community by the government has led to programmes being developed which encourage individuals to remain in their homes for as long as possible, in preference to hospital/residential care. In theory this sounds admirable, but in reality "community care" calls for support from the family, friends and neighbours of the dependent person and an awareness by government that back up to these informal carers must be provided.

A review of the way public funds are used to support community care (Griffiths, 1988) recommended that Social Services departments should identify and assess individuals and their requirements and provide appropriate packages that form a backup to the contribution of carers. This backup would take the form of day services and long term care if necessary. Prior to this report, both the White Paper *"Growing Older"* (DHSS, 1981) and the consultative document *"Care in the Community"* (DHSS, 1981) envisaged utilising family support and volunteers without the need for a growth in statutory provision. Government support for this policy, which is envisaged as a money saving device, is such that recent years have seen a marked decline in the amount of funding being allocated to Social Services and the National Health Service. Community care as a policy is sexually biased since reports indicate that the main burden of responsibility falls on women (Equal Opportunities Commission, 1982). In addition, whereas women receive little or no help from informal sources, male carers tend to fare better both informally and

with community based services such as meals-on-wheels and home helps (Charlesworth, Wilkin & Duvie, 1984).

"The history of community care to date appears to be characterised by an enthusiasm in rhetoric and in policy documents not matched by an enthusiasm to commit resources to the kinds of services which might facilitate its development" (Finch & Groves, 1982).

In conclusion, community care, however ideal in theory, is impractical in reality. The assumption that women will be available as carers is also an unrealistic one. Women have now achieved freedom in terms of career, demography and finance. They are not likely to be willing to sacrifice these hard won benefits to take on the care of an elderly relative. This new found freedom is also likely to impinge on the traditional concept of elderly parents being looked after by a single daughter living nearby. Reductions in family size coupled with the increasing longevity of the elderly will also mean that fewer adult children will be available to act as carers. In addition, families have become increasingly mobile. The physical distance between the elderly and their children represents a considerable barrier to community care.

To regard married women as an alternative source of potential carers also fails to take account of the growth of divorce. The last twenty years has seen something like a 40% rise in the divorce rate with remarriages also increasing. The increase in divorce has created a large number of women (specifically the 30-45 age group) who have sole responsibility for a household budget. Single women are also likely

to be economically active on a full-time basis and the growth in employment amongst married women is a major area of recent social change. All these factors, coupled with developments in sexual equality and an emphasis on equal opportunities, make the traditional assumption of women as automatic carers of elderly relatives increasingly unlikely.

Chapter 3

The information needs of the elderly

"People will not be able to get their due as citizens of present day society unless they have continuous access to the information which will guide them through it, and where necessary the advice to help them translate that information into effective action, and unless they get their due they are unlikely to recognise the reciprocal obligation that all citizens have to society" (National Consumer Council, 1977).

What is the definition of information? Information can be divided into cognitive material such as facts, ideas and knowledge, and motivational/emotional material such as atmosphere, attitudes and objectives (Likert, 1961). When the former is provided it will consist of practical information giving individuals the opportunity to make choices. The second type of material will assist the enquirer to make use of this information. For information to be effective, several basic principles need to be adhered to:

1. Information should be targeted to specific groups of the population.
2. Information should be targeted to a specific geographical area so that it is locally based and more likely to be meaningful.

3. Consideration should be given to the information seeking behaviour of those targeted. Content and form should also be appropriate to the target group.
4. Information should be widely accessible to a particular group so that they have a good chance of finding the specific information they require.
5. Co-ordination and collaboration should exist between all agencies concerned with planning a strategy for the production and dissemination of information.

The first major milestone in information provision for the general public was the establishment of Citizens Advice Bureaux at the start of the Second World War. They were perceived as a means of providing individuals with information on wartime measures and their emphasis on the simple exposition of official information by well-informed volunteers. After outliving their primary wartime purpose, a small network of CABx was retained with the system being strenuously revived in the last few decades. An American study of the British CAB network undertaken in the sixties (Kahn et al 1966) proposed adopting the model for information services in the US.

Linked to information provision is the need for a clear channel of communication. This has been classified into three stages: the transmission of material from sender to audience; its reception and comprehension; and its final acceptance or rejection.

The method for communication ranges from impersonal contact such as leaflets and posters, to personal contact either on a one to one basis or via groups (Likert, 1961). Most studies advocate the personal form of face-to-face contact as the preferred means of communication. (Troup, 1985; Tester and Meredith, 1987; Centre for Policy on Ageing, 1990).

The community information phenomenon and the public library service.

“...information is an activity, an activity that has purpose and hopes to have an end result” (Age Concern East Sussex, 1989).

The concept of community information as an area of service provision is a relatively recent one within the library environment. It is a logical development of community librarianship, which was itself an attempt by the library to become more relevant and "in touch" with the immediate community. In a decade of increasing dynamism and outreach, both to the community at large and to target groups specifically, community action has been a logical progression for many authorities. Community information goes beyond the immediate library environment, however, and many diverse groups within the community are involved. This section focuses on this concept in relation to the public library service. The next section considers the information services from the broader context of other groups within the community.

"Community information services can be defined as services which assist individuals and groups with daily problem solving and with participation in the democratic process. The services concentrate on the needs of those who

do not have ready access to other sources of assistance and on the most important problems that people have to take, problems to do with their homes, their jobs and their rights." (Library Association, 1980)

This definition is built on the assumption that an inequality in information provision exists and that this is biased against lower socio-economic groups. It can be argued that this category includes a large percentage of the elderly. As a result, services are concentrated on helping in areas such as housing, employment, family matters, consumer affairs, education, welfare rights and civil rights for those groups in the community who have least access to lawyers, accountants and other sources of help.

Community information can be regarded as having two principal aims: to link the client with a problem to the relevant agency that could help this need and to supply service providers with feedback from users of that service. The term "community information" was initially adopted because these services were essentially neighbourhood based. In addition, many problems confronting people could not simply be solved by access to information. As a result of this, advice services have increasingly stressed the importance of an advocacy role, community action and community education. All these terms have gravitated together under one umbrella commonly termed "community information." This term has come to represent a range of services which assist individuals and groups with daily problem solving and with participation in the democratic process. The services concentrate on the needs of those who do not have ready access to other sources of assistance and on the most important problems to do with their homes, their jobs and their rights.

The interest of the public library service in community information followed from two concerns. Firstly, a desire to assist the information flow in a democratic society. More specifically, its objective was to ensure that individuals or groups received information that was both prompt and answered their enquiry in adequate depth. The second concern was for the concept of outreach services and this led to public libraries developing special services to particular groups with emphasis on the need for them to be relevant and locally accessible. Community information differs from the traditional reference service in three ways: the sources used will often be people based rather than material based; the sources are frequently outside the library requiring further action on the part of the librarian; and finally a referral of some type, since the library will not hold all the relevant information within the library network.

Libraries have attempted to respond to this demand for advice services by increasing their supply of information material concerning social welfare. In addition, they have developed community profiles. Providing an information service goes beyond simply improving library stock, and where libraries have succeeded in this field it is in cases where they have set out to serve a specific group with definable needs. This group can vary, including businesses, unemployed, disabled, elderly etc. For the purpose of this research innovations affecting the latter category is examined in the next chapter. The remainder of this chapter looks at developments in community information provision among the wide range of organisations that exist at a community level to serve the needs of the elderly.

Community developments in information services to the elderly

This section looks at non-library initiatives in providing information services to the elderly within the community. Provision for the elderly is service-based and concerned with resource allocation. Consequently, the large majority of initiatives aimed at the elderly have focused on the "old" and "old old" elderly rather than the active elderly. Much of the literature on the information requirements of the elderly comes from sources outside librarianship. The first national social survey of the elderly in Britain took place over half a century ago (Nuffield Foundation, 1947). Since then there has been a variety of research studies on the specific needs of the elderly with regard to housing, health, social services but very little into the general information needs of this group.

Pensions and welfare benefits are one major area where the elderly need information. It was also an area focused on in a study of the information requirements of the elderly carried out some years ago (Epstein, 1980). Although its scope in terms of information needs of this group was a narrow one, this survey was important since it highlighted a number of vital issues. It drew attention to the vast number of agencies, both national and local, which were involved in information distribution: Post Offices; Citizens' Advice Bureaux; National Federation of Old Age Pensioners; Age Concern; statutory bodies such as the Department of Environment; Health Education Council; DHSS; National Gas Consumer Council; and a variety of voluntary groups such as Help the Aged, WRVS, Pre-Retirement Association, British Association for Services to the Elderly. Some of these groups were intended for the public generally, others exist specifically to help the elderly; some are for disability groups that include the

elderly under their umbrella, others exist to assist carers of the elderly. Some agencies exist solely as purveyors of information, while others provide direct service with information and dissemination existing as a secondary function. Despite the range of outlets, the format for information dissemination was common to all: printed material, namely leaflets.

The survey also revealed an ignorance amongst elderly respondents about these organisations and their roles. 40% could not say what the DHSS did, only 20% had heard of Age Concern and a similar number did not know what health visitors and social workers did. Epstein drew attention to the lack of information reaching the elderly by citing the fact that over one million people were entitled to welfare benefits and were not receiving them (Epstein, 1979). The problem was not so much shortage of information (one only has to look at the numerous leaflets provided by government departments) as a dissemination problem. The elderly are simply not receiving adequate and relevant information. The need for some research into the elderly and their particular information needs is attested to by the fact that, despite a variety of studies on information needs and services (EISSWA, 1978; Clark & Unwin, 1979; NCC/Cambridgeshire Information and Advice Services, 1980), relatively few have concentrated specifically on the information needs of the elderly.

Epstein's study revealed that the sources of help pursued by the elderly when they needed information was also revealing. Initially they consulted the family (30% of pensioners indicated that this was their first course of action); 14% went to neighbours; 12% to their GP; 11% to friends. The DHSS/Social Services

accounted for only 14% and the Citizens' Advice Bureaux 2%. The study also demonstrated that the current approach to information is a passive one. This effectively discriminates against the elderly who cannot "come and get it" due to mobility problems or ignorance. The report produced from this study revealed several interesting factors about the elderly and their information needs:

the "old" and "old old" elderly (74+) and those living in rural areas have the most urgent information needs;

confusion exists amongst the elderly about which services to approach for specific needs plus a dissatisfaction with inter-agency referral procedures when this happens;

the elderly receiving benefits are better informed than those who do not;

TV and radio appear to have little information value, indicating a reliance on information in the written form;

The elderly who attend clubs and day centres for that age group had no more information knowledge than those who do not attend such organisations, however those who attend clubs not specifically for the elderly were proved to be well informed generally.

The report further concluded that only a small percentage of the elderly were actually receiving leaflets (the primary means of disseminating information) despite the number produced and even fewer read them. In fact Epstein discovered that many older people do not read at all and thus have no idea of what is available. The report concluded that a need existed to educate those working in

professions attending the elderly, and to make information itself less hostile and forbidding.

In the current economic climate, service providers are less likely to spend money on publicity in case it generates a demand with which they cannot cope. The theory is that the better informed the public, the more demanding they will be. Epstein's report concluded by recommending that information is best directed at the families of the elderly and care workers. It further stated that agencies should improve the quality of their publications in terms of both print size and vocabulary selected.

Another area where information is needed by the elderly is in relation to housing. A study by Age Concern Greater London (1977) found that many elderly people were extremely confused about housing matters and displayed little understanding of sheltered housing and the role of housing associations. The study concluded by recommending the appointment of "housing advisers" to the elderly. A third area where there is a need for information is health and several articles looking at information provision relating to health care and mobile advice services in a hospital environment have been published. In Britain there tends to be a failure to make information about health aspects available. What is needed is a positive approach to personal health which focuses concentration on healthy, stimulating pastimes and a knowledge about how to care for the body throughout one's life. It is now a fact of life that the average person may now spend up to 30% of his or her life in retirement. This requires the medical profession to accept a responsibility for giving advice at a timely stage rather than concentrating on the consequences of mistakes made earlier in life. This need is further exacerbated by the whole

issue of care in the community. NHS changes commenced in 1991 with hospitals able to choose to opt out of local health authority control and become self-governing NHS trusts. Large general practices were also empowered to become fund-holding practices with their own budgets. These changes meant that older people may be treated in hospitals some distance away from their local areas thus meaning that those responsible for hospital discharge will need to be able to provide information about services in the patients local area. These reforms have increased the need for information about changes to services, criteria for eligibility and access. Such changes make access to information intended to help consumers exercise choice even more vital.

Information is recognised as crucial to any system of care and assessment within the community (Griffiths, 1988). The information provided to carers about service availability and how they might they might be helped with their onerous responsibilities is limited. That this problem is recognised is reflected in the fact that Hampshire Area Health Authority, in conjunction with the Wessex Regional Library and Information Service, produced *Help for Health* (Gann, 1981). This project concentrated on the needs of health care practitioners for information about organisations in support of health care. In *Caring for People* (1989) one of the priorities for elderly and disabled people is "ensuring improved access to information about local and national facilities including respite care." Health policy documents have generally acknowledged the need for information about health care services and health itself. The Cumberlege Report stated "the health authority should ensure that information is available for the public in all health services provided outside hospital" (DHSS, 1986).

Working for Patients (1989) stressed the importance of information concerning hospital services and acknowledged that, with the onset of new funding arrangements for hospitals, both general practitioners and patients will need to be well informed about what choices are available. The role that libraries can play in health and community care changes was highlighted in the Wagner Report (1988). This suggested that "the public library service in each locality should co-ordinate, and periodically update, a comprehensive outline of the help available from the social services and housing departments, the community health service, voluntary organisations and private agencies." Wagner suggested that information should also be available in places where people meet, such as post offices, doctors' surgeries and clubs. This approach has been adopted by an Information Centre for the Elderly in Bath (Rowe et al, 1991). The centre provides advice, in package form, on important aspects of health care that can be a problem in later life.

There has been a growing interest in recent years in the provision of consumer health information services with developments occurring in various disciplines: health education; community and advice work; nursing and librarianship. Special funding has enabled the establishment of services such as the Lister Hospital Information Service, the result of an approach made by Hertfordshire Library Service to the British Library Research and Development Department when the former was seeking to develop their health information service for the general public based at Lister Hospital.

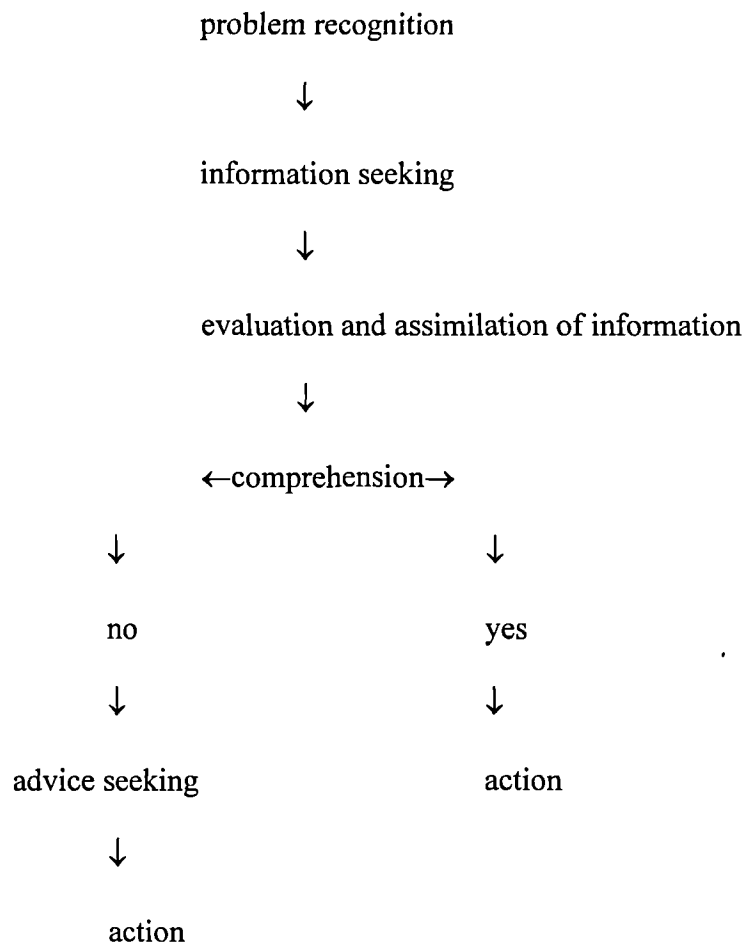
It is apparent that there is a growing interest in health information. Services like the Lister Hospital Health Service and Wessex Region's Help for Health (Gann,

1981) clearly illustrate that a need exists. Furthermore they have proved that, far from undermining the relationship between doctors and patients, consumer health information enhances it. What is vital, however, is that funding should be made available for such developments to continue. All the programmes to date have only been allocated funding on a short term basis. The major responsibility for funding such consumer health information services must lie within the sphere of the National Health Service.

This brief resume of some current initiatives directed at meeting the information needs of the elderly demonstrates that there is a need to adopt a broader definition of the information needs of retired people. One cannot deny the need amongst older people for reliable information on welfare, housing and health. The need may not always be expressed, but retired people do need help, encouragement and guidance if they are to make use of the opportunities inherent in a life free from work. Many of today's pensioners' early lives were lived before the advent of a welfare system and health service. As a generation they learnt the hard way about "making do" and this philosophy goes a long way towards explaining why so many elderly people do not claim social security benefits (Kerr, 1983). A generation that is used to "making do" is not likely to make demands for services or information and it is up to the providers of these facilities to take a more active role in promoting what they have to offer. The "come and get it" approach to information provision must be recognised as wholly inadequate on its own. To a large extent information must be taken to the places where the elderly meet: post offices, health centres, doctors surgeries, community/day care centres and public libraries.

Information services to the elderly are not complete unless they encompass the entire range of needs, real and potential, that this group may require. This includes reference to educational opportunities, sporting and cultural activities, clubs, holidays and a range of leisure pursuits. For this reason, information providers need to adopt a high profile stance, encouraging a generation which is largely uneducated in the use of leisure time to take advantage of the variety of opportunities available to them. When discussing information needs, it should be remembered that these needs are "multi-dimensional, crossing the boundaries of service provision." (Coopers and Lybrand, 1988). With the elderly one could ask "why could its lack be severely disadvantageous?" Older people are not an homogeneous group and there are different sub-groups within this population with differing needs.

How do the elderly find information? Various models of information processing have been formulated. One example is the 6 stage model (Age Concern East Sussex, 1989) which can be represented as:



This model and the experiences it provides will influence information seeking behaviour in the future. The first stage of the model, recognition, can result from a traumatic stage within the individual's life. In the case of the elderly, retirement or bereavement are key candidates. Such an event reduces ability to seek information while, paradoxically, the need for such information increases. The result can be termed an information deficit (Mullings, 1989).

As far as finding information goes, the determining factor was frequently a case of which of the multitude of services available the individual happened to be in contact with at the time particular information was required. It was more often chance rather than a judgmental decision that led to the selection of an information service (Roberts, Steele & Moore, 1991). This implies not only that all groups in contact with the elderly should have access to information on a range of topics, but also that information should be disseminated as widely as possible through a variety of methods and forms. In striving towards fulfilling these aims, the development of an information service linking individuals and groups co-ordinated by the library service can have a valuable role to play.

There are many agencies at the national and local level that are concerned with producing information for the elderly. The impact of the work of these agencies work should not be ignored when considering planning for an integrated service model with the library as the focal point. Information agencies should be encouraged to experiment with more non-print material as well as striving to present better designed, more accessible information. Some of the funds currently being spent on leaflets and books could be directed to projects involving local radio and television. Despite an awareness of the importance of information to the elderly, research in this area is lacking (Todd, 1984). This fact has been echoed by other writers (Crook, 1980; Bowen and Pearce, 1987) with the latter work being specifically related to the information needs of pre and post retirees.

After examining a range of publications on this theme, the overall conclusion was that despite the numerous national and local groups dispensing information on

welfare benefits, many people were still not receiving their entitlements. Todd's suggestion to counteract this was a personal approach. This involved taking information into homes/clubs and into individuals' own homes, as well as using the public library, which is seen by many people as an unthreatening means of obtaining knowledge and information. This is largely due to the libraries unique role as a freely available local community resource. Other research undertaken (Hall, 1978) has indicated that from the elderly persons' point of view, information was preferred when delivered orally. Furthermore it was equally likely to be obtained from informal or formal sources.

This fact was substantiated by a report undertaken with funding from Age Concern into the information requirements of older people in Scotland (Troup, 1985). The report originated from a Scottish National Council information booklet aimed at school leavers. This publication showed the value of relevant information when it is provided simply and accessibly and is a scenario that can be applied to older people. It was the Scottish National Council and Age Concern Scotland's belief in this fact that led to the *"Education Opportunities for Older People Information Project."* The report recommended that local community information services have a responsibility for establishing local initiatives designed to encourage older people to be aware of the range of community services that provide information. These initiatives should focus on the development of local information networks and should seek to identify specific information needs of various groups within the older age group and, through personal contact, work with older people to meet those needs.

The report also identified specific areas of information needed by the elderly, including advice on educational opportunities; planning for use of leisure time; welfare/benefit rights; information about sources and providers of information nationally and locally. Increased awareness of health also needs promoting as does information on how the elderly can use their skills both to their own and the community's benefit. The report examined needs and made recommendations but little has yet been done regarding an information service aimed specifically at the elderly.

One such initiative which has been of benefit to the elderly has been a computerised client record system introduced by Gateshead Social Services Department (Johnson, 1982). As well as collecting information for statistical use, the system offers information on welfare benefits and a shopping information service. Two of these outlets are based in branch libraries with clients needing only to go to one service point instead of several for information. This has led to a higher take up on benefits and an increased sense of achievement amongst elderly users. There is evidence to indicate that locally based services can reduce barriers to usage.

A study of the Scottish Women's Rural Institute (Mosely, 1982) looked at the needs for an information service in rural areas and examined the activities of mobile information centres in rural areas. The report also drew attention to the differing needs of enquirers in urban and rural areas. It pointed out that it is the elderly, who form the largest proportion of rural residents, who have significant information needs concerning housing, health and social security entitlements. An

outreach experiment by Brent Mobile Citizens Advice Bureau (Fears, 1981) involved a bedside information service for patients in wards of a large London hospital. Wards visited by the Citizens' Advice Bureau yielded a significant number of enquiries but research also revealed ignorance on the part of the professionals with regard to information, a fact also born out by Epstein's findings.

A publication of papers presented at a conference on the theme of "*Educational Information and Guidance for Adults*" (Mercer, 1981) made recommendations about making information provision a priority. These recommendations included greater use of the media, lobbying other agencies and outreach activity through mobile information services. Consideration must also be given to such factors as: funding, location of information services, evaluation, inter-agency co-operation and training. All these are areas that are examined in depth when developing a model for a hypothetical information service for the elderly.

All the studies considered in this chapter have contained a number of common key elements in service and information provision. These can be identified as: outreach activities; media usage; individual involvement; and tailoring provision to meet individual needs. Although all these surveys are of value in shedding light on how people obtain information, any study of needs is a complex procedure. Local surveys only reveal the expressed needs of a small proportion of the community and care needs to be taken before making generalised pronouncements on information provision to the elderly. Surveys such as these, however, are of use in the decision making process needed for planning service provision since they

provide indicators of local feeling. It is in this context that the case studies and market research exercise that comprise part 3 of this research were undertaken.

Chapter 4

The library and the elderly user

The early library service, with its emphasis on self-improvement has traditionally orientated its service towards the young and employed, largely ignoring the needs of other groups within society. One reason why the elderly were neglected was demographic, the elderly having represented an insignificant percentage of the population at that time. Another reason is that older people did not need library services to fill their recreational and psychological needs due to their status within the extended family and a continued social interaction which meant that they had little need of specialised information services. This situation changed with increased social mobility and the rise of the nuclear family. The elderly no longer retained the same level of interaction within the family unit or indeed the physical closeness that had existed, and had to learn to cope with socially imposed changes in status.

British librarianship has, over the last few decades, moved towards specialisms: services to children (with sub-divisions such as under five's, teenagers), the unemployed, ethnic minorities, the disabled and elderly. This trend has seen a move towards specialist librarians whose brief is to address the needs of these groups and develop a service strategy. The danger exists that, in over specialising, these groups may become separated from the "general user" and a stereotyped image with a subsequent loss of individuality will develop. Realisation needs to be

given to the fact that, although these groups have special needs in terms of service delivery, their requirements should not subsequently be pigeon-holed. Professional interest in the elderly as a special group initially developed in the 1940s. During this period Brown (1971) identified four factors which had implications on service delivery. These were: limited education meant little intellectual stimulation for reading; the increasing trend for the elderly to live in institutions made it easier to deliver services; modern reading aids made it possible for a greater number of the elderly to read, and the elderly have more leisure time for reading. Those in institutions have little to do except eat/sleep and pursue a hobby or interest.

With library provision to the elderly, research has tended to concentrate on the library rather than the needs of the individual. Reports have been produced which detail the moves made by library authorities to respond to the perceived needs of this group but little market research has been undertaken on what the needs of the elderly in relation to the library actually are. This situation has been addressed for the purposes of this research by a market research survey of elderly library users. This is reported in detail in chapter 13.

The most significant research in this area from the library viewpoint has been two reports published in the 1980s. The first of these reports (Dee and Bowen, 1986) developed out of work done by the Public Libraries Management Research Unit at Leeds Polytechnic on library services to the elderly in day care centres in three towns (Simes et al, 1981). This earlier study revealed the existence of growing numbers of elderly living in the community, and led to a questioning of whether the potential needs of this group have been recognised by librarians. The report

that resulted (Dee & Bowen, 1986) indicated that whilst nearly 50% of English library authorities have a policy on services to the elderly, resources were still centred on setting up housebound services and services to homes. The second work relevant to this research was a report commissioned by the British Library Research and Development Department (Edmonds, 1990). This supported most of the results of the earlier survey, namely that “much of the literature on library provision for elderly people appears to concentrate on the library, rather than on the people; few of the reports in this field contain market research data on the needs and requirements of older people.”

Other research on services to the elderly during this period included a British Library Seminar which examined movements in America and Sweden which were also addressing the role that public libraries should play in meeting the needs of the elderly (Heeks and Kempson, 1985). A paper produced in response to “*Measuring Up*” (National Consumer Council, 1986) identified “radically different approaches” to service delivery by library authorities but stated that specific programmes aimed at the elderly beyond the usual domiciliary services are patchy, with the libraries’ response to the active elderly being less marked (Allen & Potter, 1986). Improvements in the physical layout of buildings have enabled easier access to the disabled elderly e.g. ramps, lifts, lower shelves, but relatively few programmes aimed at attracting the elderly into libraries exist. There are, however, some good examples of initiatives in this area. Some library authorities have attempted to encourage active users into the library by setting up library clubs (Parker & Cannon, 1989). These library club programmes have led to an increase not only in the use of the library facilities but also in an awareness amongst the

elderly of the functions, range and scope of all the services available to them and of the role of the public library as a community resource. Many people have begun to take a renewed interest in reading and are now investigating new interests. The clubs have also led to the enhancement of existing co-operation between library staff and individuals from the voluntary and statutory sectors. An example of this is the co-operative venture between Age Concern and Leicestershire Library Services which resulted in the development of the Age Concern Library in Leicester (Shepherd & Hoy, 1987). Other authorities that have developed initiatives in this area include a case study on the interests of the elderly in Hertfordshire (Kempson, 1984) and an overview of services to the elderly in areas such as Wakefield, Dublin and Lambeth (Dee & Kempson, 1987).

In general the active elderly user is likely to be penalised in terms of fines and reservation charges compared with the housebound user. Large print material exists in all libraries for active users, but the choice is limited with stock generally comprising "light" novels and little non-fiction. A survey of large print reading tastes concluded that every group contacted "was dissatisfied with the range but pleased with the books themselves" (Bell, 1980). This reinforced the view of Dee that "it is a service which seems to be based on infirmity in old age as no other specialist service exists for the active older adult." (Dee, 1985). Libraries need to consider how, in the present economic situation, they can effectively support the active, "elderly" person who could retire at fifty and spend a lengthy period at leisure in the community. This is a situation that could encompass caring for an even older, dependent relative. In addition there is the all too common frustration that is encountered by an inability to find employment and the feeling of being

consigned to the scrapheap. For many forced into early retirement, loss of work means a loss of motivation and dignity, and a feeling of worthlessness. "Active retirement" is a relatively new phenomenon and there is ample scope for the library to be involved at this stage on pre-retirement courses. Few firms acknowledge a need for this type of help and in the rare instances where such courses are run, the content is frequently too narrow.

An important movement in this area is the University of the Third Age, with which the library could forge links. This organisation embodies the concept of a place of learning for older citizens who have more leisure time available. It was launched in France in 1972 and was followed by the creation of the International Association of U3As (AIUTA). The idea quickly spread world-wide and the first British Universities of the Third Age were formed in 1982. There are now more than 350 local U3As throughout the UK with a membership of over 63,000 men and women. Local U3As are autonomous self-help organisations whose individual structures and activities are planned and carried out by their own elected members on a voluntary basis. Although called a University, no educational qualifications are required. It is an organisation where retired or semi-retired people from all backgrounds can meet like-minded members to expand their knowledge, share interests or acquire new skills.

Library services to the elderly: the 1984 survey.

Since there has been little research into the information needs of the elderly, it is perhaps worthwhile to consider in more detail the two major reports on the public

library and the elderly that were referred to earlier. The aims of the 1984 survey were defined as:

1. To see how public libraries in England and Wales have interpreted their responsibility to older people who, for various reasons, have difficulty gaining access to material and information.
2. To identify and investigate resources and funding available for providing a service to the elderly.
3. To determine what co-operation exists with other local authorities and voluntary agencies.
4. To examine the difficulties of acquisition of appropriate material and to evaluate the effectiveness of different types of provision.
5. To evaluate the success of library and information services to the target group and make recommendations for future developments.
6. To review relevant literature encompassing both social policy and librarianship, in the UK and America.

The survey encompassed all public libraries in England and Wales by utilising the questionnaire as a research gathering tool. The format of this was structured under a number of headings in order to yield information that could be drawn together to

provide general indicators of the extent to which the various of needs of this group were recognised. The costs of using the service were acknowledged and the level of co-operation and collaboration that existed with other related organisations was gauged.

The survey findings suggested that the "medical model" of the elderly was still the accepted view, with librarians generally perceiving them as frail and infirm. This was reflected in a continued concentration on providing housebound services, deposit collections to residential homes/day care centres and large print material in branch libraries. "Older people who can visit the library themselves are not perceived as having special needs other than for certain kinds of material, notably large print" (Dee and Bowen, 1986).

Although services to the elderly were seen as a priority by about half the authorities in England and Wales, the survey revealed little evidence that libraries were providing any services for the active elderly. Although around half the authorities surveyed had a member of staff with responsibility for services to the elderly, their time was mainly taken up with the housebound service and services to residential homes. The general conclusion was that "there have been a few initiatives in developing library clubs and self-help groups. Only about one third of all respondents have recognised the need to provide information and advice services for older people."

In addition to the questionnaire, the survey was backed up by six case studies comprising a: Midlands authority, Northern metropolitan district, Welsh county,

Northern county, Southern county and a London borough. The findings indicated that, in the majority of cases, the initiative for interagency co-operation were taken by the library with other departments seemingly unaware of what the library could offer. A number of generalisations could be drawn from the case studies which could usefully be incorporated into any strategy developed for the elderly.

An approach to older adults through leisure activities seemed successful. Good opportunities for development would be through co-operation with volunteers, voluntary organisations and community groups. Librarians have a specialist knowledge regarding materials and this knowledge could be useful to other agencies and departments provided librarians widen their horizons and look beyond large print material when thinking of the elderly. Training is vital to ensure that staff see services to older people as part of their job rather than thinking it should be passed over to another department. Equally important is that librarians who deal with the elderly should have close contact with senior management and a chance to have an input into policy decisions related to this group. The most active librarians are those involved in community information gathering. This includes disseminating information and materials, channelling information about ageing to the public and providing information to policy makers. Dee and Bowen concluded by highlighting areas of future policy implications for service development to this group.

Library services to the elderly: the 1990 survey.

The aims of the 1990 study (Edmonds) were an extension of the earlier survey, namely: to undertake a survey of services provided by public libraries for the

elderly/physically handicapped; to undertake case studies to illustrate positive services to this group; and to make recommendations for new developments in service provision. The research focused on examining issues related to the role of the public library in enabling the housebound to play a positive role in the community; the costs and financial considerations of providing special services; co-operation and collaboration with other local authority departments and information services in the private and voluntary sectors.

The literature review conducted during the first phase of the project revealed that a number of library authorities had introduced a programme of services to the elderly, many of them since the previous survey. The 1990 survey was narrower in scope than its predecessor, encompassing authorities in England only, but again used the questionnaire as a research tool to request information on the range of services available to the elderly. The survey results revealed that just over one third of authorities who responded recognised the need to alter or expand the service they currently offered. It also revealed that there appeared to be two elements to the changes in service provision to the elderly by public libraries. These could be identified as an attempt to expand services to the elderly within the home and day care/residential centres and an attempt to improve the quality of services currently provided to this group. This included increasing the variety of material available and increasing frequency of service delivery.

The survey concluded that authorities were eager to develop services to specific groups of disabled users and that a number of authorities had in fact developed initiatives to these specialised groups within the last two years. Many of the

research projects that had been initiated were carried out in partnership with other departments or the private sector (Buckingham County Library Service, 1990) and around 69% of authorities in England and Wales had a specially appointed member of staff dealing with this group.

The recommendations of the survey were that the elderly should be regarded not as a problem but as a target market for library services. A range of services to the elderly within the community should be provided and recognition given to the individuality of the elderly. To help to achieve this, prolonged use of mainstream library services should be encouraged by providing an environment suited to the needs of the elderly. This would include as standard such things as: good access; comfortable furnishings; appropriate, varied stock; understanding staff; and transportation (in partnership with voluntary agencies). In addition, library authorities should provide flexible services for those who cannot use mainstream library services. These services would encompass a deposit collection to residential homes, a mobile library serving places where the elderly regularly congregate and a programme of home visits. All these recommendations require funding and to this end library services should review financial planning for demographic change; joint projects with other departments; sponsorship, especially for capital equipment and special projects; and partnerships with voluntary organisations.

The developing role of libraries to the elderly.

The role of the library service in relation to the community has been defined as "easily accessible, free, customer-orientated and user-friendly." Its resources can offer mental stimulation and social contact as well as opening the door to a range

of opportunities and to new absorbing interests. Above all, it is a service already heavily used by elderly people from a variety of backgrounds and communities and one that can actively contribute to the elderly person's quality of life (Shepherd and Hoy, 1987).

“Libraries are more widespread in the community than almost any other agency and it is likely that users may well be stimulated to use sources of information relating to their rights and problems simply because this material is given a new emphasis in libraries" (Astbury, 1981).

Both the Dee and Bowen and the Edmonds surveys concluded that relatively few library authorities had developed extensive library based services to meet the needs of the elderly, preferring to concentrate on the relatively small percentage of infirm elderly in institutions. Although true, these results are nonetheless surprising since the elderly have always made heavy use of the public library service (Simes et al, 1981) as well as forming a rapidly growing section of the community. If the library service is to move away from its present domiciliary role towards the elderly then it needs to re-evaluate its strategy to this group. The areas outlined here are representative of the direction that the public library service needs to follow if it is to take a more proactive stance. These areas are dealt with more fully later in the research.

Outreach.

The traditional domiciliary service offered to the elderly by most authorities has been outlined. Those who do not visit the library have tended to be passive

receivers of book material which is deposited and changed after a period of time but is rarely varied in format or imaginatively presented. Opportunity exists for the development of information services, tape/video loans, reminiscence work and storytelling, plus a more personalised individual service where the librarian has time to talk to residents. In instances where visits occur, they tend to be fleeting "drop offs" with contact more likely to be with a volunteer than the librarian responsible.

Educational opportunities.

Public libraries are in a position to offer help to elderly users pursuing independent learning, educational courses or requiring retirement education. Libraries can contribute by providing help ranging from a good readers advisory service to a venue for organised meetings. Library support for formal education courses should encompass accurate, up-to-date information about local education opportunities and back up these with appropriate stock. There is mileage in the concept of the library as a venue for such events since a public library is likely to be regarded as less awesome than a school or college venue. Retirement education is another area in which the library can play an active role. It has already been stated that pre-retirement programmes occupy a low priority in most organisations and the physical/mental repercussions of leaving the work market mark a dramatic and often frightening watershed in most people lives. The library can help in re educating those individuals.

Co-operation and collaboration.

Dee and Bowen (1986) commented that conclusions drawn from their literature review suggested "that public libraries are potentially a community resource for a wide range of older adults but that other agencies need to be persuaded that this is an appropriate role for them to play." Co-operation between both internal departments and outside organisations has a role to play in providing resources at a time of financial constraint as well as utilising the talents and expertise of a wide range of professionals. The latter is particularly true in the case of services to the elderly where the multi-disciplinary nature of services means that relevant literature is dispersed through many professions, e.g. health care, social work, education, leisure, social policy. This increase and diversity in materials and services means that the library, as a handler of information, has a role to play.

The joint venture approach (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) as a means of enabling organisations to cope with and control their own environment is seen generally in the use of inter-departmental and inter-agency links. Examples are seen in the informal co-operation and liaison between Citizens' Advice Bureaux and the Clwyd Library services through the Clwyd Information Providers Steering Group (Astbury, 1981) and in Bradford's "Play Bus" which carries a librarian, advice worker and adult literacy worker on board (Bowen, 1978). The objectives of the information service aspect of the book bus were: to take everyday community information to those who don't know where to obtain it; to provide an information service through involvement with other agencies; to exploit the bus for one-off campaigns by library staff and other agencies and ultimately to utilise the mobility

of the bus to take information where it is most needed and establish the concept of libraries as information providers in the public mind.

"Good use of inter-departmental links can serve as a means of promoting the work of departments in symbiotic relationship in order to ensure that staff of all agencies working with older adults realise each others potential"

(Dee, 1985).

One reason for lack of co-operation in the past can be attributed to a desire to retain control and influence and a wish to protect the "mystique" of individual professions. Liaisons with outside organisations, however, do represent a useful device in times of financial stringency for gaining additional resources, either financial or human. Traditionally the private and voluntary sectors have always played an important role in the provision of "personal" social services in the United Kingdom. One example of this is the percentage of people in private residential homes. The importance of inter-agency co-operation to librarianship is strongly endorsed in Dee and Bowen's survey where 89% of respondents stated that their library had liaised with some other agency in an attempt to improve services to the elderly. The service provided by Leicestershire Library Authority has already been cited as an example of such co-operation (Thomas, 1984). Findings from the Edmonds survey revealed a number of research projects and surveys, largely unpublished, into a variety of topics linked to the elderly. Several of these initiatives had been joint ventures with other local authority departments and private sector organisations (Bradford Libraries Division, 1982; Buckinghamshire County Library Service, 1990).

Library and Social Service Departments have always tended to make extensive use of volunteer workers when providing services to older adults. Sadly volunteers are frequently used as a cheap substitute for professional services instead of complementing the professional (Hadley and Hatch, 1981). Training is limited and in the library environment volunteer services have traditionally consisted of housebound work involving little more than dropping off books to disabled users. This under-resourcing of special services, necessitating a high use of volunteers, was also highlighted in the Dee and Bowen survey. Volunteers were found to be supplementary to library staff in 58% of authorities of which 88% were concentrated solely in the housebound service.

Materials and reading aids.

Planning for the future of library provision to the elderly needs to be carefully considered. It has already been stated that the elderly are individuals with individual tastes and needs. Stock selection in the majority of libraries is one area that has failed to appreciate this. However, consideration must also be given to the question of disabilities. Although they are not confined solely to old age, a high percentage of the elderly are likely to suffer visual impairment, deafness and loss of mobility, this is a fact that must be considered when planning for provision to this group.

While most libraries provide Large Print collections, few provide much beyond "light" fiction, non-fiction large print presenting little more than a token gesture. Many authorities now purchase talking books and some also stock talking newspapers. Videos and sub-titled videos targeted specifically at the deaf are also

available in some libraries. Despite the fact that elderly people may wish to and do make use of audio-visual material loaned by public libraries, the charges frequently imposed for this service can inhibit use since the elderly are often on restricted incomes. Also available in a number of libraries are reading aids (magnifiers, Kurzweil reading machines, closed circuit television) details of which are provided in "*Can't see to read*" (1989). Clearly there is an identifiable need for more libraries to provide reading aids for the elderly. Initiatives have already been made at Gateshead Libraries and in Nottingham and Kensington.

Information services.

"The area of information for the elderly has yet to be developed in any depth. The elderly do have special information interests about retirement and ageing, how to cope with a new socio-economic status, health and nutrition, and the most effective use of retirement income" (Coleman, 1982). A number of initiatives have been made both by libraries and other local authority departments but as yet much remains *ad hoc*. with little research produced (Mullaney, 1985). The exact nature of the information needs of the elderly together with the existing situation relating to information provision for this age group, as provided by the library service, will be looked at in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

The role of the public library as an information provider

One cannot consider the role of the library in information provision without making reference to developments over the last few decades in the United States. The public library service in the US has frequently developed in parallel with the United Kingdom, a development that is very evident in services provided to the community. For this reason it is useful to give a brief overview of the situation in the US before looking at how the library service, specifically in the field of community information, has developed in the UK.

The United States situation.

The role of the public library as a community resource and purveyor of information has been extensively written about on both sides of the Atlantic. If libraries are to continue to develop as a relevant community resource, they need to review their present management style with a view to switching from a traditionally passive one to a dynamic proactive one within the market place. In addition, public libraries need to consider their attitudes to public relations, stress the need for information in a changing society and emphasise the importance of community study and profiling, counselling libraries to see themselves as stimulators within society (Durrance and Vainstein, 1981).

Users are not necessarily aware of their own information needs or how to satisfy them. The library must reach out into the community with information and needs to stress the importance of qualified personnel advising in libraries and the positive advantages of providing tapes with information on health, consumer matters, tax, continuing education and benefit entitlement for loan (Anthony, 1981). This suggestion is a practical example of how a dynamic form of librarianship, utilising new technologies and aiming to establish the library as a central force in the community, could develop. Librarians are now anticipating the information needs of their users and are actively disseminating information to meet these needs. Marketing information is no longer simply a matter of making information available by supplying pre-packaged information. Public libraries have now universally acknowledged that linking a client with resources outside the library may often be the best way to meet certain basic information needs. Active performance planning for the library "can stimulate awareness of informational needs, promote the library as an effective source of information, expand the public concept of the informational framework that is the province of the public library, put more people directly in contact with living information sources and inspire interest in new ideas and issues" (Curley, 1981). In a recession hope for a "better life" is vital and public libraries, with a new dynamic approach to service provision, are likely to enjoy increased use and esteem from the public.

American concern with provision to the elderly dates back forty years, Cleveland Public Libraries *"Live Long and Like It Club"* being an early example of such an initiative. Guidelines for the responsibilities of public libraries in serving the elderly have been developed from the twin fields of professional librarianship and

social gerontology. The mid 1950s saw a questionnaire sent to 31 large public libraries. The results indicated that comparatively few library services had independent programmes for the elderly. An attempt at a more wide ranging study of public libraries' services to the elderly was undertaken via a postcard survey sent to all US public libraries in communities of 2500 or more (Phinney, 1959). The results revealed that an increasing number of libraries were working in co-operation with agencies serving the elderly and were becoming involved in community committees and local groups serving the needs of the elderly.

Despite an increasing commitment to meeting the library needs of non-traditional clienteles during the 1960s, services to the elderly became a less important issue. The National Survey of Library Services to the Ageing (NSLSA) completed in 1972 did not make encouraging reading. This survey revealed that less than 2% of the elderly received specific services from public libraries and less than 20% of public libraries provided such services. The National Survey blamed this lack of services for the elderly on "the traditional philosophy of library services held by most librarians, namely that the library should provide services of universal scope and appeal. The result of this approach has been to submerge the needs and requirements of a particular group that might have a unique claim on the resources of the library" (NSLSA, 1971).

The American Library Association Reference and Adult Services Division outlined three areas of library involvement. These were: gathering resources in libraries for the elderly and agencies serving the elderly; acting as an information centre for services to individuals and organisations in the community; and initiating new

services. Support for the above came from an evaluative study of the elderly which revealed that 66% of the target population questioned were "favourable" to all types of specialised library services (Drennan, 1975). Given this support, US libraries clearly had a mandate to develop services to specific client groups. The basis of developing any new programme for the elderly must begin with an understanding of problems involving physical accessibility to the library; this includes an awareness of the problems created by poor lighting, steps, small print and badly placed shelving. In addition to physical barriers to access, libraries must also take into account psychological barriers such as stereotyped views on ageing. The specific requirements of the elderly for information on transport, health care, nutrition, legal advice, companionship and nursing care must also be acknowledged when planning a programme for this group (Battle et al, 1977).

Methods for disseminating information to the elderly in the US have been many and varied. An information centre concept was developed by the Tulsa City County Library Service (White, 1960). This involved establishing a centre to help link elderly people from three counties with the vast array of social services available to them. The centre used a three way telephone system which linked client, librarian and agency representative, thus enabling them to ensure appropriate referral and follow up. The Dallas Public Library Service worked along the same lines, but in print, and developed an exhaustive *Directory of Services to Senior Citizens*. In Wisconsin an innovative information packet was developed for use by elderly library users across the state with a grant from the State Division of Library Services. These packets were "multimedia, multi-sensory" kits built around a particular theme or experience of relevance to the

elderly. By utilising smells, sounds and pictures, the elderly were provided with a nostalgic trip into their past (Haws, 1978). These programmes and others developed across the US have shown varying combinations of cultural, recreational, social service and educational components geared to the needs of individual users, their community and library staff. They all have in common an emphasis on reaching out to and bringing in the target population.

The question that was constantly being asked was "will public library systems, in co-operation with other libraries and social service agencies, be a significant force in providing quality service for the information and leisure needs of this growing body of citizen?" Libraries were now becoming increasingly involved in new areas that could mean a great deal for older adults. Among these are included information and referral services and co-operative programmes with social service agencies. What is clear is that in any future developments along these lines, information services for the elderly, whether library based or not, must go beyond the traditional approach. While it is frequently emphasised that the elderly need better access to relevant information and programmes designed for their particular needs, it must also be remembered that librarians and other information providers need help in identifying and obtaining the information which will help them serve their elderly users effectively. American literature in the late 1970s commented that "library and information services to older adults may at last be on the way to recovering the attention they warrant. We enter the 80's sharply aware of the massive consideration of how to fund such services. Inflation and the shrinking dollar are problems that we inherited from the 70's and must be dealt with" (Casini and Appel, 1979). This view still holds true a decade later, as seen in the concern

shown by the United States National Commission on Libraries and Information Services for the information needs of the elderly, now seen as the fastest growing section of the population and one gaining increasing power and a political voice (Moore and Young, 1985).

The British situation.

This statement is also beginning to hold true across the Atlantic. Authorities in Britain are now recognising that information services to the elderly are worthy of special consideration. By 1981 the responsibility of public libraries to the elderly had developed into a definite policy statement advocating increased library interaction with older clients at all levels as well as special budgeting for improved services.

“In the Public Library we have a social agency that is in danger of allowing its historic success as a purveyor of general books and reading to the public in an era of scarce information resources to become a handicap in an era of plentiful information resources” (Garrison, 1977).

This comment suggests a need to look at the shortcomings of the public library service as it currently operates in the UK. These shortcomings have to be overcome if the library is to establish itself as a major provider of community information services for the future. Other important barriers to public library use are factors such as attitudes, beliefs, knowledge and expectations. Two studies in the 1970s (Luckham, 1971; Totterdell & Bird, 1976) revealed that the average person did not have strong feelings about the library except to conclude that they

are "a good thing." The last two decades have seen an attempt by public libraries to move away from this view with the development of a range of "special" services aimed at the disadvantaged, the young, unemployed, ethnic minority groups and the elderly. The situation should not, however, be regarded as totally negative. On the positive side the public library is considered to be more impartial than other public offices, and many people prefer to discover their answers in the more informal setting of the library before making an application to a local authority department or outside organisation. The public library system is more widespread and enjoys longer opening hours than other public offices. Furthermore, much of the information likely to be required is already there and staff are trained in assisting the enquirer.

Many librarians have been slow to recognise that, while reading preferences do not change when an individual reaches retirement, information needs often do. Librarians frequently assert that "older people have the same needs as everybody else." This, however, is to ignore the very real information needs that accompany the biological, financial and social aspects of growing elderly in society today. Deteriorating health often catches elderly people unprepared, both emotionally and financially. Providing appropriate library support can significantly lessen the trauma. The needs of the elderly in this area include information on their changing health requirements and encompass literature on fitness, exercise, diet and cooking (for one or two). Also needed is information for older people and their families on coping with ill health, their entitlements and how to get the support they may come to require.

Many older adults need information on retirement planning, budgeting, income tax, pension schemes and benefit opportunities. Bereavement is also probable and an elderly woman may, for the first time, have to assume financial responsibility for the household. She may suddenly require information on insurance, banking and investments. Information on coping with bereavement and living alone may also be required. Many elderly people would benefit from library programmes aimed at increasing confidence and self-image in addition to assertiveness skills. People accustomed to working may need information on relaxation methods or referral to local voluntary groups who are frequently in need of additional helpers and are likely to welcome their skills and energy. Involvement in such groups can help to provide a new interest and a renewed sense of usefulness.

While many librarians recognise that the elderly have special information requirements, they frequently believe that these can best be met through integrated services. There still exists a reluctance to consider the elderly as a special clientele when planning library collections for fear of segregating them further from the general adult population. Special programmes for the elderly should not be intended to replace their use of general services; rather they should be viewed as a means of enhancement by increasing options and resources. Their purpose is to prevent the segregation of the elderly by making available information and information-related activities that will facilitate full participation in society.

The elderly make it imperative that developments to this group continue.

"Serving a population must start with an assessment of the needs and interests of the people. Once these needs and interests are identified, relevant materials must be identified, acquired, organised and delivered by means of a system specifically designed to reach particular people" (Greer, 1981).

To achieve this, an understanding not only of the elderly's needs, but also of the community they and the library service inhabit, is required. Community profiling is an activity that has been undertaken by many library services and to be achieved successfully must consider various aspects of the community. These include: the demographic characteristics of the population; the number, diversity, purpose and membership of other groups involved and the purposes, diversity and characteristics of corporate agencies which provide products and services to the community, and aspects of community life such as history, topography, transportation, recreational and cultural activities and political orientation.

The related area of community information has been dealt with more fully in a number of publications (Bowen, 1978; Bowen, Walley & Watson, 1980). The reasons for a need for this type of information are the result of the increasing complexity of bureaucracy that surrounds every individual's life. The designers of a community information service, however, relate to the needs of a particular group of users, "people who have no other means of access to information and advice,

[or] those people normally described as disadvantaged" (Coleman, 1981) - in the case of this thesis, the elderly.

The active role of the library in relation to community information relates directly to its secondary purpose, that of educating the users to be aware of and to use information. As such, the relationship between librarians and users requires a greater degree of interaction than that found in traditional advisory work. This interaction extends beyond the library to encompass other departments and outside organisations and the library must become part of a network of information dissemination; community information by its very nature excludes organisations from working in isolation. Information provision to the elderly has tended to be limited to material involving community information and welfare rights, but libraries are now becoming aware of the wider information needs of this group. An example of this recognition is the Buckinghamshire County Library Project, set up to investigate information needs of the elderly in the county (Buckinghamshire County Library, 1990). Various studies have identified differing information requirements. These include areas such as retirement education (Bowen & Pearce, 1987) and health which remains a concern for many elderly people as shown by Dublin's *"Active Age Week"* and the production of a *"Golden Years Directory"* (Mullaney, 1985) both of which were aimed at pinpointing and answering the information queries of the many of the elderly.

This chapter has outlined the current situation regarding information provision to the elderly. Clearly there is scope for the library to take a more active outward looking role in information provision for this group. Before this can be achieved,

many public libraries must re-educate themselves since service provision has traditionally been based on assumptions about stereotypes rather than a real understanding of actual requirements. The next section comprises the first research element of this thesis. Its aim is to give a detailed appraisal of the level of service public libraries in the UK are providing for the elderly at the time this thesis was started (1993).

Part 2

Library provision to the elderly

Chapter 6

Library services to the elderly: the current situation

This section examines the role of the public library in service provision to the elderly. This role was briefly considered in chapter 4 and the surveys conducted by Dee and Bowen and Edmonds were alluded to. In this chapter the Edmonds survey is considered in more detail and, since it remains the most recent and extensive attempt to examine provision to the elderly nationally, it is used as a starting point for the research to be undertaken in the next chapter. This research determines the nature and level of services to the elderly as provided by the library service at the commencement of this thesis and places this picture in a national perspective. These findings are then analysed and the Edmonds survey of 1990 used as a baseline to determine whether the three intervening years, 1990-1993, have seen advances in provision for the elderly user, especially in the area of information provision. The conclusions drawn from this analysis will form the background to this thesis.

Since the intention was to compare findings, the questionnaire used was modelled on that of Edmonds and constructed to examine the same areas: general information; large print material; housebound services and other outreach services. In addition, the survey conducted for this research places an increased emphasis on information services to the elderly but excludes separate references to physical disabilities.

The main points to emerge from Edmonds' research, which encapsulated the situation that existed in 1990, were: the library service is a crucial part of many peoples' lives and elderly people must be regarded as individuals not stereotypes; any services provided must be flexible enough to meet the needs of the individual elderly; and the housebound should be encouraged to leave their homes. Volunteers can have a vital role to play here in transporting clients to and from the library. Finally access for the elderly goes beyond simply enabling them to enter library buildings. Once inside they have specific requirements which include comfortable chairs, bright lighting, catalogues and notices in large print type. Shelf height and wide aisles are important, as are toilet facilities.

The period since the Edmonds survey has seen an increased awareness among council departments and library services of the importance of catering for the needs of minority groups wherever possible. This has led to an appreciation that libraries should be attempting to provide the kind of environment in which the elderly feel comfortable, including many of the factors highlighted by Edmonds such as: stock appropriate to their needs, for example large print paperbacks for ease of transport as opposed to heavy hardback large print books, which are frequently bulky and difficult for the elderly to handle; staff that are sympathetic to specific needs; and libraries where transport is available. In conclusion the requirements of the elderly should be regarded in a positive rather than negative light, i.e. not as a problem but as a rapidly increasing target market.

While these aims are commendable, the current financial situation precludes the possibility of large scale capital investment in libraries. As a result of this, libraries

have been forced to pursue a more proactive financial stance which has included options such as: charging the end user; obtaining funding from community care resources (viewing the library service as part of the community care infrastructure and making it eligible to seek provision from the Social Services Department); seeking sponsorship; using more volunteers, but bearing in mind that this has training and vetting implications and is not acceptable to all voluntary agencies or indeed to library staff and unions; and pursuing collaborative ventures with other organisations.

Co-operation, both between libraries and between libraries and other information providers, was one of the areas examined in the report referred to in the previous chapter (Edmonds, 1991). Information providers were looked at under three categories: Local Authority information services; business information services; and community information services. The remainder of this chapter considers these categories in greater depth and looks at a number of new initiatives that fall within this sphere. Collaboration can exist in one of two ways, either as an exchange based on reciprocity or as a coalition with services acting together to provide common services or joint assistance. Some libraries have worked together with other information providers to develop information resources or produce joint publications. Alternatively libraries may provide a service to other organisations or offer space within the library building to other organisations.

Although not specific to the elderly, there are several umbrella organisations which represent the interests of a number of agencies providing community information. These include the Lambeth Umbrella Group, representing the interests of over 40

independent advice services; the Advice and Information Working Group in Newcastle, providing a forum for discussion for advice workers in the city; CHAIN (Charnwood Information Network) in Leicestershire, encompassing a range of voluntary and statutory organisations active in the Borough. The example of LINK (O'Rourke, 1974) could be useful in developing services to the elderly. LINK is a special service for Lambeth business and industry which supplies technical, commercial and scientific information to member organisations and arranges courses, newsletters and information exchange. By giving their service a name and recruiting members, Lambeth makes its members aware that the LINK Liaison Officer is an information source to which they can turn when the need arises.

It is beneficial for libraries and information units within the Local Authority structure to co-operate with each other. Because services are funded by the same authority it should be easier to maximise the potential for co-operative agreements. It is also beneficial for libraries within the local authority to co-operate with other departments concerned with information provision. Libraries are well placed to provide literature and information for other agencies in the community. This can vary from small collections of reference material to current awareness bulletins catering specifically for the needs of local advice workers. Libraries often have access to computer techniques which may not be so readily available to other agencies. This technology has been harnessed in some authorities to develop the information resources within a locality. An example of this is Wiltshire Library Service's WIRE (Wiltshire Information Resource Exchange) guide, now renamed the Wiltshire Societies and Organisations Guide. Leicestershire Libraries and

Information Service are developing VODIS (Voluntary Sector Directory and Information Service), which is intended to list all voluntary organisations active in the county by loading their organisations details on to the council's mainframe computer. This will then offer the facility of on-line searching and printouts in various formats.

The difficulty with increased co-ordination is that, although a range of library and information services are operated within the local authority structure, responsibility for each service generally falls within individual departments. This autonomy would be severely curtailed if departmental boundaries were eroded by increased co-ordination and co-operation. It is important, however, that local authorities encourage co-operation between libraries and information units and that all departments concerned with information provision are involved. One strategy that could be adopted for a co-ordinated approach to the elderly would be to establish an information resources group within the authority to consider the potential for greater co-operation between departments. This group could bring together representatives of libraries and information services plus staff from other departments within the authority which are concerned with the provision of information to the public.

Co-operation has undoubtedly contributed to the development of library and information services within local authorities. It has broken down many of the barriers between libraries and has resulted in better services for users. Shared efforts and funds have enabled many activities to be undertaken which would not have been possible for a single library or organisation alone. Several factors which

can be summarised as political, economic and co-operative, have led to this situation. Libraries cannot always make independent choices about their policy generally, or co-operative activities specifically, since they are not solo entities but form an integral part of the organisations that fund them. These organisations may have differing priorities and library services can find themselves subject to inter-departmental policies and even party politics. While appearing attractive as a means of making economies, co-operation can be expensive in terms of staff time. The uncertain state of future funding levels also inhibits long-term planning for co-operative action. The existence of local library co-operatives can have a considerable impact on co-operation within a local area. Organisations act as a forum for discussion which can lead to new ideas for activities.

The following are recommendations from Edmonds which are significant to this research and which will form the basis of future discussions on services to the elderly.

1. Public libraries should encourage prolonged use of mainstream library services by the elderly by providing an environment suitable to their needs.
2. Public libraries should provide a flexible range of services to those elderly who are unable to use mainstream services.
3. Public libraries should provide a range of services to the elderly that recognises the individual needs of members of this target group.

4. There should be an active marketing of the service to ensure that all people who may wish to use the service are aware of its existence.
5. The same high level of service to this group should be available throughout the authority.
6. Public libraries should review various options regarding funding for the development of services to the elderly, including: joint projects with other local authorities and departments; sponsorship programmes seeking support from private organisations; partnership with other voluntary organisations; planning for future demographic changes by taking account of this in budget allocation.

Having set the scene regarding services for the elderly from the library perspective the next chapter moves on to the first research element of this work. This is an examination of the current level of services to the elderly that exists nationally at the commencement of this research in 1993. The purpose of this is to support the hypothesis that library services to the elderly are still essentially domiciliary in their nature and that there is scope for research into how the library can assist the elderly in their need for information.

Chapter 7

Provision to the elderly: analysis of a national survey

This chapter analyses the results of the survey into the state of current provision to the elderly by the public library service and assesses the extent to which the aims of this stage of the research have been achieved. The objective was to provide a national perspective of current services to the elderly as provided by public libraries. With this in mind a postal questionnaire was administered to 110 English Local Authorities in two stages between June and August 1993. By the end of September 1993, 68 completed questionnaires had been returned, a response rate of 62% which is relatively high for a postal questionnaire. This response can be broken down into: Counties (38%); Metropolitan Districts (13%); London boroughs (11%).

This survey can be seen as a precursor to the need to improve information provision to the elderly. This need can not be examined in isolation but must be set within the more general question of library provision to the elderly. To achieve this, it is necessary to determine to what extent the elderly are perceived as a target group by library services and, if they are, what attempts had been made to ascertain and fulfil their needs. The survey also sought to elicit information on current provision with regard to the level of domiciliary services available, stock provision and suitability, the amount of liaison that exists between the library and other groups involved with the elderly and the level of budget allocation and other

extension services targeting this group. The objectives of the questionnaire were to determine:

whether the elderly are a target group;

what services beyond the traditional domiciliary service, operated in some form by all local authorities, are offered by the library service;

whether specific library based programmes of activities for the active elderly exist;

whether there is there a separate budget allocation for services to the elderly;

whether information services of any description have been developed for the elderly by the library service and, if so, what are they and whether they are they fulfilling the needs of this group;

how developed is co-operation between the library service, council departments and other organisations providing services and information to the elderly;

whether authorities had undertaken market research to discover the actual as opposed to perceived needs of the elderly.

Certain hypotheses were postulated:

little exists in the way of services to the active elderly (interpreted here as those aged 60-75 who are able to use the library) as opposed to the housebound and those residing in institutions;

what exists in libraries is primarily large print material and talking books. Other services are *ad hoc* and vary considerably from authority to authority; specialised information services for the elderly are virtually non-existent. Folders and leaflets aimed at the elderly exist as part of a general community information programme but there is little in the way of formal, personalised in-house information services for the elderly; market research into the needs of the elderly by the library service is virtually non-existent; considerable scope exists to develop co-operation with other council departments and organisations within the area which are themselves actively involved with the elderly either in a caring capacity or as purveyors of information and advice.

It was the intention that the survey should try to test them in an attempt to ascertain the validity of this research proceeding further.

Results of the questionnaire survey

The questionnaire commenced with an open question asking how respondents defined the term "elderly." It was anticipated that this would provide useful information about how library authorities perceived this varied section of society. Analysis of the responses revealed a relatively standard definition of the elderly as being anyone over retirement age (differentiated as 65 for men and 60 for women). A relatively high number (23.5%) sadly offered no definition. Because of this, the result although interesting, cannot be used to draw any meaningful conclusions. Some authorities chose to highlight the disabled and housebound elderly,

indicators that the perception of the library towards the elderly, in terms of service provision, still focuses on the "elderly infirm" or those requiring "special services".

Definition of "elderly"

50+	60/65+	70+	No definition	Abstract view
10.3%	54.4%	4.4%	23.5%	7.4%

The first section attempted to elicit background information about the range of services provided and the degree of liaison involved. Of the 86% of authorities which provided specific services for the elderly, 76% had developed a written policy statement with an even smaller number, 29%, actually having undertaken market research into the needs of the elderly. As mentioned earlier, libraries are still providing services which are perceived as being required rather than actually attempting to define what their users want and then seeking to respond to those wants.

Services provided for the elderly

Yes	No	No response
88.3%	8.8%	2.9%

Policy statement on provision for the elderly

Yes	No	No response
76.5%	19.1%	4.4%

Market research on the elderly

Yes	No	No response
29.4%	69.1%	1.5%

The 1990 survey revealed that 69% of the 81 participating authorities had a specially appointed member of staff for this group. This figure had shown little increase in the three year period. In reality the figure is probably lower since most of the posts will include other responsibilities, the most common being the title of Special Services Librarian which includes the disabled and a range of other special services. The number of authorities with a member of staff responsible for the elderly and no other group is likely to be comparatively small, although an actual figure cannot be determined.

Member of staff responsible for the elderly

Yes	No
55.9%	44.1%

A general enquiry to elicit information about the range of services provided to the elderly listed 11 such services. All libraries stated that they provided large print material and talking books. With one exception, all libraries also provided domiciliary services and services to residential organisations. 92.6% claimed improved access to service points, a factor which is bound up with provision to the disabled and which has been given increased emphasis as a requirement to all buildings involving public access.

A similar percentage (91.2%) had extended domiciliary provision to day centres, thus covering all aspects of residential and institutionalised care. 73.5% of the total respondents provided reading aids, again closely linked to provision for the disabled and not bound solely to the elderly. A similar number (72.1%) also provided information material in leaflet/folder format. This appears to be an increasing trend with many authorities and can be seen in terms of the increased emphasis now being placed on community information. What is not clear, however, is how many authorities produce information separated from the general range of community information and actively targeted at the elderly. It is likely to be a relatively small number with the majority providing a range of information and leaflets from which the elderly can select relevant information. Assistance would not be a specific service but would come under the aegis of the general enquiry service.

63.2% of respondents provided reminiscence collections, an area rapidly increasing in popularity but generally controlled by a separate member of staff who liaises with library staff. 48.5% of respondents run clubs for the elderly, varying from highly organised activities run in conjunction with organisations such as Age Concern to simple *ad hoc* coffee sessions and informal meetings. Not surprisingly the lowest response was for personalised information services. The percentage of respondents operating a genuine information and advice service specifically tailored to the needs of the elderly is likely to be very low (almost non-existent) since respondents are likely to have interpreted this question as meaning the function performed by the enquiry desk which is in fact a personalised information service for all library users. Three library authorities claimed to

operate an information service available to the elderly and utilising computer technology.

Facilities and services provided for the elderly

Services/facilities	Yes	No
Improved access	92.6%	7.4%
Large print material	100%	
Talking books	100%	
Reading aids	73.5%	26.5%
Reminiscence collections	63.2%	36.8%
Domiciliary/housebound services	98.5%	1.5%
Services to residential accommodation	98.5%	1.5%
Services to day centres	91.2%	8.8%
Clubs for the elderly	48.5%	51.5%
Information material	72.1%	27.9%
Information services	39.7%	60.3%

Services to the elderly developed in the last three years

Yes	No
64.7%	35.3%

The next question asked authorities to specify which services had been developed within that time period. Of the 65% that responded positively, the most common

developments were reminiscence work, improved access, talking books/information leaflets and day centre services.

Developments in the last three years

Services/facilities	Yes	Developed 1990-93
Improved access	92.6%	22.1%
Large print material	100%	8.8%
Talking books	100%	20.6%
Reading aids	73.5%	16.2%
Reminiscence collections	63.2%	27.9%
Domiciliary/housebound services	98.5%	19.1%
Services to residential accommodation	98.5%	30.9%
Services to day centres	91.2%	17.6%
Clubs for the elderly	48.5%	5.9%
Information material	72.1%	20.6%
Information services	39.7%	4.4%

Only 58.8% of authorities were allocated specific funding for services to this group. It is hard to determine whether respondents interpreted this as meaning all services or were just considering the domiciliary services in isolation. Since several respondents actually claimed not to acknowledge the elderly as a separate group, it is not surprising that there is a significant negative response to the enquiry. Of those who did allocate funding, 82.3% were unable to give a percentage amount, while the majority who did (17.7%), stated that it represented

under 5% of the total library budget for 1992/3. Even when a figure was given, it was difficult to draw many conclusions since some authorities have only given funding for specific activities involving the elderly and have disregarded any amounts used for stock e.g. large print. Given the responses in Section C it is unlikely many authorities have access to these figures.

Allocation of total library budget to provision for the elderly

Under 5%	5-10%	11-15%	15%+
8.8%	5.9%	1.5%	1.5%

The question of liaison with other council departments and outside agencies occupied the next four questions. All authorities were found to consult with other departments such as Education, Social Services and Housing. 40% did this on a regular basis and 60% occasionally. The preferred means of liaison was a mixture of formal/informal with no authority communicating solely on a formal basis. This emphasises the importance of the informal network and the fact that a considerable amount of communication is undertaken via informal chats and telephone conversations rather than through formal, minuted meetings and committees. Regular contact with related organisations was slightly higher but two authorities did admit to having no contact whatsoever. Again contact was overwhelmingly a mixture of formal/informal (68%).

Contact with outside organisations

Regular	Occasionally	Never
53%	44.1%	2.9%

The next question was an attempt to discover the types of organisations, voluntary and statutory, that library services most commonly dealt with. The most common, not surprisingly, was Age Concern, an organisation which is both widespread and high profile in its dealings with the elderly. Next in popularity was the Social services Department followed by the WRVS, clubs for the elderly and Help the Aged. All were mentioned enough times to warrant inclusion here. While only two authorities stated on the questionnaire that they never liaised with other groups involved with the elderly, 8% did not respond to the question at all. The accuracy of answers derived must be treated with caution: many authorities may only have included organisations liaised with on a regular basis; organisations consulted sporadically may not have been considered worthy of inclusion.

Organisations liaised with on a regular basis

Organisations	% of library services
Social Services	35.3%
WRVS	23.5%
Age Concern	58.8%
Housing associations	1.5%
Clubs for the elderly	19.1%
Hospices	1.5%
University of the Third Age	8.8%
Help the Aged	11.8%
Disability groups	11.8%
Carers associations	8.8%
Citizens' Advice Bureaux	4.4%
Others	14.7%
Health promotion	13.2%

The final question in this section concerned publicity produced for the elderly. The split here revealed that, despite all that is provided for the elderly in terms of services, the majority of library authorities still do not provide specifically targeted material for this group. Results revealed that 44% provided such publicity and 56% continued not to do so. This can be seen, not so much as a lack of specific publicity for one group, but as a general failure by library services to provide sufficient publicity for the community at large.

The next section attempted to give a brief overview of large print provision in public libraries. Unfortunately questions concerning budget allocation and percentage of total loan stock were not particularly successful. 65% of authorities were unable to state how many large print books they stocked. Slightly fewer (59%) were unable to state this as a percentage of their loan stock and 50% could not ascertain the annual budget for large print either as an amount or percentage of the total bookfund. What responses were received are of limited value, since some authorities, although providing figures, commented that this related to domiciliary stock only and that figures for stock in branches could not be determined. These figures do not provide a true representation of the large print situation across the authority and thus have little value to this survey. With hindsight, what responses were received proved impossible to correlate and unable to provide information that could be utilised here. All that can be stated with any accuracy is that all authorities do stock large print material in branches and on mobile libraries serving the elderly.

Number of large print volumes in stock

Volumes stocked	% of library services
no response	64.7%
under 25000	17.6%
under 50000	7.4%
under 75000	2.9%
under 100000	5.9%
over 100000	1.5%

Percentage available for loan

% of loan stock	% of library services
Not known	58.8%
under 1%	1.5%
1-5%	23.5%
5%+	7.4%
10%+	2.9%

The last two questions in this section provided more useful information and revealed that, while all authorities provided large print material, only 17.6% had a catalogue of large print material that was produced in large print format. Elderly members of the public requiring large print stock would presumably be unable to use conventional library catalogues to locate reading material. It would appear that all libraries appreciated the worth of large print material but few had actually thought through the process and attempted to provide the tool to locate stock in a suitable format. Whether this was through lack of resources, time or appreciation is impossible to determine. A slightly higher number (33.9%) provided a selection of booklists in large print format. The fact that 63.2% did not attempt to improve access to this area of stock shows that there is still a long way to go in marketing services to the elderly.

The next section surveyed housebound services, an area that, according to past surveys, all authorities have developed in an attempt to serve the needs of the elderly. It is this very policy that revealed the stereotyped view of the elderly

commented on by Dee and Bowen (1984). Only one authority did not provide a housebound service at all; the remainder (98.5%) all operated one in some form or another. The majority operated their housebound service from a central point, a significant number of respondents stated that their service was operated on a local basis with individual branches responsible for services within their particular catchment area. The remainder combined a central and local operation, although precisely how this operated could not be determined from the information given.

Style of operation

Central	Local	Both	Neither
47%	32.4%	19.1%	1.5%

The next question dealt with deployment of staff within the housebound service. Only 10% of authorities stated that they did not have a professional librarian involved with the housebound service. This meant that 90% of library authorities surveyed were running a service operated by professional staff. What the survey did not clarify, however, was whether these professional librarians were solely responsible for the housebound or even the elderly generally. It is more likely that in many instances this area is just one part of the responsibilities of a professional who might also be involved with other minority groups which all come under the umbrella of Special Services. The percentage of authorities operating a service utilising non-professional staff was 65%. Of this figure, 59% also had professional staff involved. The remainder clearly operated with no designated professional, although presumably professional staff in other areas such as branch librarians

must have been involved if only to determine policy and supervise proceedings. Clearly some degree of inconsistency exists between this answer and the response from the earlier question on professionals employed, which indicated that 90% of authorities employed professional staff within the housebound service. Those library authorities that only employed professionals may have also used volunteers to administer the daily running of the service under the auspices of a library department, most likely headed by a Special Services Librarian or equivalent. This scenario, while probably an actuality, cannot be conclusively deduced from the survey results with any degree of accuracy.

Not surprisingly, given economic constraints on operating services beyond that of a basic lending service, the number of authorities utilising volunteers to run their housebound service was significant. The likelihood of this is that a large number of these volunteers would themselves be classed as elderly, i.e. over 60, given that it is the retired that most often have the time, commitment and inclination to become involved in such ventures. Volunteers are most likely to be female and involved in other organisations such as the WRVS. The subject of whether or not libraries are morally justified in operating extension services with such a reliance on volunteer help is a contentious area. Many authorities would not be able to offer this service without reliance on volunteer assistance, at the same time this reliance can be seen as representing a threat to library staff themselves, their professional expertise and union rights. These results indicate that, whatever the rights or wrongs of this dilemma, volunteer help is an ever present reality, with many authorities only able to operate a service that many regard as a necessity and part of the library's role with the help of this valuable source of labour.

Volunteer usage

Yes	No	No special service provided
60.3%	38.2%	1.5%

The number of clients served by the housebound service in each authority can only be meaningful when examined in the context of that authority's size and number of elderly residents within that authorities catchment area. This is something that is dealt with in the case studies described in the next chapter. Of the authorities surveyed only 84% could actually give a figure for the clients served. What is more standardised is the regularity of visits, which were generally undertaken on a monthly basis.

Number of clients served by the housebound service

Number of clients	% of library services
no answer	14.7%
under 500	2.9%
under 1000	26.5%
under 2000	17.6%
over 2000	4.4%

Frequency of visits

Frequency	% of library services
monthly	42.6%
3 weekly	22.1%
2 weekly	22.1%
variable	8.8%
no answer	4.4%

The type of stock supplied was analysed and all authorities were found to provide a mixture of fiction and non-fiction books. Increasing rapidly in popularity were the spoken word cassettes supplied by 90% of the library services. The success of these is not surprising when one considers the average age of those benefiting from such material and relates this to the increase in visual impairment found in the elderly. Also increasing in popularity are records and music cassettes and community information material.

Where community information was provided to the housebound, it was in written format, primarily leaflets dealing with specific topics relevant to the elderly and available on request. In no instance did the housebound service attempt to dispense personal advice in a structured service format, although to what extent information was provided informally in terms of "I'll see what I can find out" and "I'll ask...for you" is impossible to determine. As far as dispensing information formally, volunteers used for the service would not have sufficient knowledge or training to act as advisers on the library's behalf; their function would be confined at the most

to offering friendly conversation over a cup of tea in a “drop-in” service. Even when the housebound are visited by professional library staff it is unlikely that the time factor would permit anything beyond a chat. Housebound services are generally well-subscribed to and, without additional staff and restructuring, it would be impossible for them to cope with an additional workload. It is unlikely that many elderly users would even consider using this contact as an advice gathering method, since research has shown that they tend to rely on family and friends.

Type of material provided in the library

Type	Yes	No
Books	98.5%	1.5%
Talking books through subscription	17.6%	82.4%
Periodicals	29.4%	70.6%
Music records/cassettes	75%	25%
Videos	29.4%	70.6%
Spoken word cassettes	89.7%	10.3%
Community information material	64.7%	35.3%

The final section of the questionnaire dealt with other outreach activities such as services to institutions, day centres etc. The first question attempted to determine exactly which services were provided by local authorities. All authorities provided a service to authority run old people’s homes, with 94% also serving sheltered accommodation and 91.2% day centres. These results confirm earlier findings that

all local authorities in England provide a housebound service and a mobile service to old people's homes run by the local authority; (private homes for the elderly are not necessarily provided with this service: much depends on individual policy both within the authority and the library service itself).

The results also reveal that practically all authorities have extended this service to include other institutions such as day care centres and sheltered accommodation. As to how this service was operated, at least 63% of authorities utilised all three stated methods: a domiciliary service, mobile service and deposit collections. The majority of respondents used the last method, clearly the most popular and cost efficient means of servicing these institutions. Volunteers can be utilised to deliver a preselected collection to the requiring establishment. This can then be left for a month or longer and then simply changed for another selection again chosen at the library by members of staff. There was very little difference in popularity between the first two options, the mobile service was marginally less popular - a fact that could be due to the initial expense in purchasing and equipping a vehicle to ensure its suitability plus expensive running and maintenance costs.

Type of services used

Type of service	Yes	No
Domiciliary service	73.5%	26.5%
Mobile/book bus service	63.2%	36.8%
Deposit collections	97.1%	2.9%

An enquiry into the stock selected for these institutions revealed that all authorities provided fiction and non-fiction material. Few authorities, however, provided periodicals, videos or talking books. Slightly more than half did attempt to vary the collections by also providing records and cassettes and community information. An attempt to ascertain the precise nature of this community information revealed much the same results as those to question D4. Where community information was provided it was in written format, primarily leaflets dealing with information of specific interest to the elderly available on request. Again, in no instance did the deliverer of this service attempt to provide personal advice beyond that of the most perfunctory type.

Type of material provided by outreach services

Type	Yes	No
Books	100%	
Talking books through subscription	26.5%	73.5%
Periodicals	20.6%	79.4%
Music records/cassettes	55.9%	44.1%
Videos	25%	75%
Spoken word cassettes	83.2%	16.8%
Community information material	54.4%	45.6%

The last question ascertained the frequency of visits to these institutions. This varied considerably and proves difficult to analyse since a large number of authorities operated both mobile and deposit collections worked on independent,

quite different time scales. Generally speaking, deposit collections were left in situ for 8-12 weeks on average while the mobile library visited on a fortnightly or monthly basis in most instances, presumably acting as a "top up" to the more static collection and more likely to carry community information and non-book material. In the instances where the deposit collection was the only contact, visits tended to be more frequent, (4 to 8 weeks).

Frequency of visits

Frequency	% of library services
monthly	55.8%
2 weekly	20.6%
2/3 weekly	19.1%
variable	1.5%
other	3%

In conclusion, the analysis of the postal survey revealed that while services to the elderly are considered a priority in over 75% of library authorities, the emphasis continues to be primarily on providing collections to residential homes and day centres and operating a housebound service to the elderly unable to visit the library themselves. Reservation and fining policies are less stringent for clients in residential care and the housebound than for people over the retirement age who are able to visit the library. Any special funding that is available has been concentrated on establishing and developing domiciliary services at the expense of the independent elderly whose needs have frequently been taken for granted. All

libraries provide large print material and about 90% also select audio-visual and/or reminiscence material with the elderly in mind. Nearly 60% said they had initiated or continued to develop in-house programmes, with local history/reminiscence sessions and coffee mornings being amongst the most popular. There is still little recognition of the needs of people approaching or just past retirement age, although a small number of library authorities (9%) had contact with the University of the Third Age (U3A).

A further fact that emerged was that library budgeting in most instances did not allow for the itemisation of client groups. The only exception to this was children who have traditionally been viewed as a totally separate group with their own staffing and budgetary structure. All the authorities purchase large print, but only about 35% of respondents felt sufficiently able to estimate what proportion of the total stock this represented and estimates varied from 2% to 20%. There was also difficulty in determining when this figure took account of branch holdings and when it referred to mobile stock only or a combination of the two. Staffing levels are also difficult to evaluate since in many cases staff had responsibility for several client groups, including the elderly. The housebound service in particular was likely to depend strongly on volunteer help (60%) with very little training generally being provided for staff and volunteers working with the elderly. There are dangers in extending the housebound service if such extension is to be heavily reliant on substitute, untrained voluntary labour. It will become increasingly difficult to offer the range of services complete with professional knowledge and experience without the involvement of a committed professional staff. Information, advice and knowledge of the wider resources applicable to the elderly, especially

the housebound, can only be provided within a professional framework of service provision.

The survey also indicated that co-operation between local authority departments with similar interests has not been fully achieved. Recent cuts may have exacerbated the situation, since increased competition for resources is likely to outweigh collaborative ideals. Emphasis should be placed on schemes which adopt a joint approach with more attention given to joint training and training of non-professional staff. Social services, education departments and library services have a common interest in the needs of the elderly. This common interest should be emphasised with more managed co-operation between the statutory departments.

A further fact revealed by the survey was that inter-agency co-operation is largely a mixture of informal and formal activity (70%) and is undertaken on an erratic basis, presumably as and when there is felt to be a need for an exchange of information, e.g. a new policy development emanating from local government. It is worth noting that in most instances where co-operation takes place it is the library which initiates contacts. 40% of respondents said that an information and advice service was available for their elderly users with 70% offering information in written form. There still appears to be a wariness concerning advisory work, although it is difficult to determine whether this arises from lack of expertise, time, a general reluctance to develop a service beyond the traditional "enquiry desk," a fear of giving incorrect information which could either result in blame falling on the information provider and/or harm to the recipient or the possibility of inadvertently breaking the law.

Finally, the survey revealed a continued emphasis on services to residential homes, day centres, and the housebound suggesting that, despite improvements in stock, in-house services and information provision, the traditional model of the elderly as largely infirm and in need of support, epitomised by a domiciliary service, is still the norm for a large number of library authorities. The results showed that a strong concentration on domiciliary services still existed with all authorities operating some form of outreach service to the elderly, whether in their own homes, institutions, daycentres or a combination of all three. Equally, all authorities provided collections of large print material, although few authorities were able to provide specific information about the percentage of large print books held as a total of the adult stock or the amount allotted from the total budget for its purchase. In these respects things differed very little from the results revealed by Edmonds in 1990.

This chapter provides an appraisal of the current state of library provision to the elderly nationally and proves the validity of the hypotheses stated earlier. This survey was undertaken at the start of this research in 1993, three years after the extensive survey undertaken by Edmonds, the results of which were outlined in the previous chapter. The final chapter in this section brings the surveys together and, by considering the results of both, attempts to see how far the public library service has developed its service strategy to the elderly in the period from 1990 to 1993.

Chapter 8

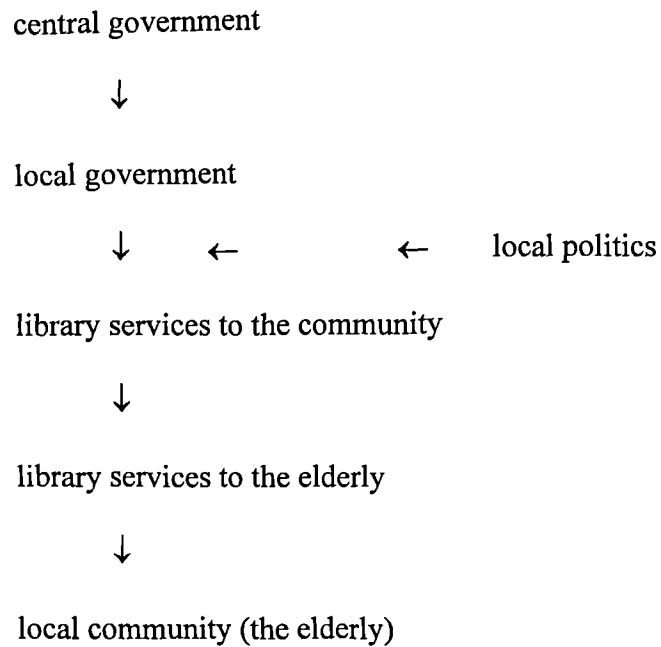
Developments in library services to the elderly: 1990-1993

At the end of the second part of this research, a survey of all English library authorities, the intention was to look at developments in library provision to the elderly over the three year interim period between Edmonds survey in 1990 and the commencement of this research. It was hoped that the findings would present a positive message by revealing that options available to the elderly within the library context were developing in both variety of choice and depth of market penetration. A much needed and largely unfilled need, that of information provision for this age group, was selected as a prime area to research.

Economic and political factors, and their relation to local authority public spending, have meant that things have not moved on as much as might have been hoped for; in fact services in many areas have actually taken a retrograde step. While the elderly have continued to enjoy a high profile in the media, their limited political power and frequent low status as viewed by other social groups has allowed them to become a target for many recent governmental initiatives. Care in the community, the declining state of the health service, increased unemployment and its relationship to enforced early retirement, declining interest rates and the subsequent devaluing of savings and the recent imposition of taxation on domestic fuel and inheritance concerns have all taken their toll on the elderly in particular.

Library provision for the elderly is inextricably bound up with the position in which the local authority currently finds itself. In a situation where other, established service areas are being pared to the bone the likelihood of investment on a long term basis in new initiatives is unrealistic. Local government's resource dependency situation on central government in which successive savage public spending cuts have seen fewer and fewer finances available to mainstream statutory services has meant that a climate conducive to expansion, however worthy, does not exist.

The resource dependency perspective was first postulated by Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) and belongs to a range of environmental management models. It stated that organisations are not complete in themselves, but require resources such as money, equipment, staff and information in order to function effectively. To obtain any one of these requirements they must interact with others who control these resources and make up their external environment. The library service is dependent on the local authority, which is, in turn, dependent upon central government for resource allocation. A situation that can be represented as:



This resource dependency condition is the very situation in which local library services are forced to operate and, in order to cope, they must mobilise their resources. They are unlikely to be able to obtain additional funding from local authorities and are increasingly forced to look towards private sponsorship and some of the strategies suggested by Pfeffer and Salacik (1978), such as joint ventures with other organisations and diversification.

The terms of reference of the survey.

This thesis is concerned with information provision to the elderly. To obtain a consistent impression of how services to this group have developed and to allow for a comparison between both surveys to be made, the style of the questionnaire used for this survey adhered closely to the Edmonds one. This meant it was general in its nature, encompassing all aspects of library provision to this group. This was felt to be important since it would provide an overall picture of all library based services to the elderly and so enable the question of the need for information

provision to be looked at in a broader context. The following areas were considered: the financial aspects of operating a specialist service; co-operation with other local authority departments and organisations in the private and voluntary sectors that had an involvement with the elderly. In addition it attempted to obtain a standardised view of how "the elderly" were perceived by service providers, in this case the library service. Coupled with this, the questionnaire sought to elicit what marketing strategies were being used by authorities to promote the library to elderly residents. The question of whether the library service is in tune with the actual needs of this section of the community can only be achieved by market research aimed specifically at this group. This is impossible to undertake nationally but was carried out within the case study element that comprises part 3 of this thesis.

Few attempts had been made by library services to examine consumer needs and requirements of the elderly within their catchment areas by conducting market research. Only 2% of library services had undertaken research of this nature, revealing that the need for such information was not considered a priority or that time and finances did not permit the indulgence of what many would undoubtedly consider a luxury. 9% of the authorities surveyed had undertaken market research into the needs of the elderly but this research had been at the instigation of departments other than the library and as such revealed nothing about the elderly's attitudes and expectations with regard to the library service.

The individualism of the elderly.

While it is often necessary to talk in general terms about the elderly and their needs for the purpose of developing a service strategy, this does not mean that the elderly can be easily defined as a group. The varied answers to the question of how the term “elderly” is defined by authorities proves the truth of this statement. The elderly, as has been indicated earlier, have the same diverse range of interests as the rest of the population; old age does not result in a loss of identity or individuality. It is important that librarians appreciate that the elderly have individual requirements and that the service provided should be sufficiently flexible to cater for this variety as well as for the specific needs of those within the client group who are unable to use mainstream services because of physical or other disabilities.

It is in this respect that improvements have been slow to materialise. Whereas some library services have shown initiatives in developing new and varied services to the elderly: clubs; information packs; audio-visual material; equipment for those with disabilities. The majority still do little more than provide a traditional domiciliary service and a small selection of appropriate stock represented by large print material. While it is commendable to concentrate on services to those unable to use mainstream material it must be remembered that this comprises only a small percentage of those classed as elderly. Developing and maintaining these necessary services should not be done at the expense of other, potentially much needed services to the active elderly.

Clearly, reading is an activity which provides great pleasure well into old age. Although the elderly generally read recreationally, many of the active elderly are likely to enjoy reading with a purpose, whether it be to trace family history or developing an interest in the local community or furthering their own education. Whatever the motive, such reading should be fostered, wherever possible, by the local library, both with written material and guidance to activities and organisations linked to a particular interest. The value of a housebound service cannot be emphasised enough. Clearly users enjoy the visits from the library service, despite their brevity, but the main pleasure undoubtedly lies in the material provided itself. For many this represents a lifeline to the outside world. Despite the restrictions imposed by current library funding, there remains vast scope for improvement in services offered to the elderly through alternative methods such as partnership, sponsorship and fund-raising.

The elderly's use of library facilities.

There is no denying that the elderly as a group make considerable use of libraries. This fact alone is sufficient to argue in favour of the introduction of an information point within the library since it is one of the few places where the elderly are already a captive audience. This is inextricably bound up with increased leisure time and the fact that the library provides a free service, thereby making it assessable to all. Despite this evidence, there is still a significant number of elderly who are prevented from enjoying mainstream library services, largely due to a restriction on mobility or a visual handicap.

Restrictions on mobility can occur to a varying degree, ranging from inability to walk short distances without assistance to total inability to leave the home. This latter group are generally termed "housebound" by the library service and are served by the traditional services operated by all authorities. There are, however, either through ignorance, lack of motivation or communication, likely to be a large number of elderly individuals in all areas who are missing out on this service. In addition, a large number of elderly, while not qualifying as "housebound," are likely to experience difficulty walking distances and carrying heavy loads such as library books. Many elderly people are not car owners, do not have access to family and friends with transport and are unable to make use of the public transport system due to geography, cost or both. As a result, this group may be deterred from enjoying a service that would, under other circumstances, be beneficial to them. It should, however, be remembered, with regard to the cost factor, that some authorities, including Knowsley and Liverpool, operate a free system of travel while a number of others offer subsidised facilities.

The majority of people experiencing visual handicaps are likely to be over retirement age. Many older people want to read but have problems with the print size of normal text or find it difficult to read text for any length of time. Both the Edmonds survey and the survey undertaken in this thesis revealed that a number of library services acknowledged this problem and provided equipment to assist the visually impaired reader e.g. Kurzweil machines, magnifying glasses. Virtually all library services stock talking books both in their branches and on mobiles visiting institutions and the housebound. Libraries have come to realise the value of this format as a means of enabling the elderly to continue to enjoy books. This fact has

been helped by the recent national publicity on the needs of the disabled and council policy to target disadvantaged groups. Added to this are the vast increases in the cost of written material in relation to audio visual. Talking books now cost a fraction of the cost of a hardback novel and are therefore cost effective to purchase. Large print material, again stocked by all authorities in branches and on mobiles, is invaluable for the elderly with slight visual impairment, but as sight declines this media will be rendered redundant. Talking books are widely available, rapidly expanding in choice and offer an excellent alternative for the elderly. This format has expanded to encompass newspapers and a small number of libraries are developing this service. A few library services have also experimented with putting local community information and benefit information relevant to the elderly on to audio tapes. This represents a potentially valuable area in terms of information provision which could be further explored and which the library service could develop in partnership with other council departments and organisations involved with the elderly.

The economics of service provision to the elderly.

During the course of the survey it proved difficult to obtain precise costs of the provision of services for the elderly, since services for this group are provided from many areas of the library budget. The costs of domiciliary services were easier to extract if use was made of dedicated stock and if the service is operated by specialist staff. If the service is operated locally using stock and staff from branch libraries, the costs are rarely available.

Despite a lack of specific figures, the general consensus appeared to be that the provision of a good library service to the elderly is expensive. Costs can be broken down into three main areas: stock, staff and equipment. With regard to the first area, the cost of large print books, talking books and cassettes are no more expensive than their conventional counterparts. With audio-visual material the difference lies in their durability. Whereas books can be repaired many times a tape, once damaged, can rarely be salvaged. Even if it does not suffer damage, constant usage means a rapid deterioration in sound quality.

Staffing any specialised service is expensive and must be budgeted for and justified on an annual basis. Domiciliary services are staff intensive, requiring a considerable number of staff to select and deliver materials to housebound users. The exact cost is hard to quantify, since some authorities operate centrally with designated staff while others operate locally utilising branch staff whose time is often at the expense of other duties. The question of volunteer help has to be considered here. Twenty-eight per cent of authorities admitted to relying on volunteer help. Since the wish of the library service to develop specialist services to groups such as the elderly is diametrically opposed to current governmental policy to control local authority spending, it is difficult to see how such services could be developed without private sponsorship, partnership with other organisations and volunteer assistance. Equipment would require a major capital investment and this is often achieved in the initial stages of project development through grants such as Urban Aid, special funding, or contributions from local organisations such as Round Table or Rotary. This strategy would be reflected in the purchase of a specially adapted mobile library vehicle accessible to the

disabled, reading aids for the visually impaired or furniture within the library specially suited to the needs of the elderly.

In order to enjoy mainstream services, the elderly have a number of requirements. While suitability of stock was examined in the survey, other factors such as accessibility, comfort, sympathetic staff and transport were not. It is worth outlining briefly the importance of these now, since they also have a bearing on the way services to the elderly will be formulated. Many local authorities have ongoing programmes to improve access to public buildings including libraries. Due to design and available space some library buildings are particularly difficult to adapt and authorities frequently have little choice but to continue to use buildings that are unsuitable not only to those in wheelchairs, but also to those who have difficulty in climbing stairs. This, in effect, puts entire sections of public buildings out of bounds to a number of elderly people.

A considerable amount can be done to make libraries more appropriate to the needs of elderly people by making minor adjustments to their interior design and furnishing. The use of lighting and colour is important to those with poor eyesight. Notices should be large, with clear typeface. High back easy chairs should also be available and the introduction of supermarket style trolleys for the elderly to use when selecting books would be of considerable help. Shelf height should also be considered at the design stage, ideally material should not be shelved too high or too low. Wheelchair height and the difficulty of the elderly in bending are important factors when making selections. The survey indicated that few authorities had considered adapting library interiors to the needs of the elderly

whereas they had given thought to the range of stock and equipment required i.e. large print, talking books, Kurzweil machines, CCTV and magnifying glasses, all of which are vital aids to the disadvantaged user (Bakewell, 1997).

Despite the comments above, many elderly people continue to be able to use the same types of reading material as younger library users. Achieving the age of 60 does not suddenly mean the onset of visual and aural problems. The fact remains, however, that, as the elderly age, some of them will require material specially adapted to their needs. The most common problem is that of reading small print and many will require large print material. This area is rapidly expanding in choice and books are available in both hardback and paperback format. The survey, although incomplete in this area, indicated that libraries had increased the amount spent on large print material. Large print stock in library authorities that responded to this question now represents 8.5% of adult lending stock, an increase of 3.2% from the 1990 survey when it stood at 5.3%. In addition to large print material, talking books are becoming increasingly commonplace in libraries and have proved to be extremely popular with elderly users, some of whom do not have visual problems but simply find it difficult to concentrate on reading for long periods of time. Information services are also being targeted towards the needs of the elderly, with many library services now stocking officially produced leaflets which deal with specific problems pertaining to the elderly. Some authorities provide an on-line community information service which contains information of particular relevance to the elderly. A small number of authorities are also starting to provide specialised services for the retired and those about to retire. The survey demonstrated that libraries are becoming increasingly aware of the need to provide

specialist material for the blind, partially sighted and deaf, groups invariably including a high proportion of the elderly. A number of library services are operating cassette loans specially targeted towards those with visual impairment while others are providing daily newspapers on cassette as well as holding copies of local talking papers.

A number of library services are now providing training courses to ensure staff are aware of, and sympathetic to, the needs of the elderly. These courses are often run in association with specialist organisations or with the Social Services Department within the local authority. In order to ensure that the needs of elderly people are considered in the planning of library services, it is important that a member of the management team has specific responsibility for this group. This task has too often been left to the domiciliary library staff operating from a relatively low level within the organisation. The survey revealed that a number of authorities had, in fact, made senior management appointments in this area. What is more difficult to determine is how many of these appointments have responsibilities beyond the elderly. The survey revealed that many senior positions were actually designated Special Services Librarian or similar, indicating involvement with groups such as prisons, hospitals, ethnic communities, children, disabled and a host of other minority groups, amongst which it is often convenient to lump the elderly.

Many housebound people are only confined to their home because of lack of suitable transport. A number of library services are now experimenting with projects that bring readers to the books rather than vice versa. The elderly are likely to enjoy these visits to the library on the basis that it is a "day out" and an

opportunity to meet others and converse, as well as providing the facility to choose their books unhampered by any preselection process. A number of library services have expanded this facility and developed clubs for the elderly, often in partnership with other agencies such as Age Concern. Many elderly people are, however, unable to travel to the library due to severe physical disability. The survey revealed that virtually all authorities provided services for housebound clients whether they lived in their own homes or in residential accommodation. The results revealed a variety of services currently being provided which include: deposit collections within residential institutions changed on an average of 2-3 months; mobile vehicles serving residential institutions, sheltered accommodation and day centres, and home visit services which deliver material to individuals in their own homes.

Any service aimed at the elderly must be flexible in the range of services provided and the time scale operated upon. The needs of the elderly alter as their physical and mental condition varies. Services must be capable of adaptation to suit these changing needs. The staff themselves must also be trained to observe changes in the attitudes and behaviour of the elderly people they serve and be encouraged to make suggestions or seek help where appropriate.

Funding services to the elderly.

The survey revealed that many library services are constantly reviewing and developing services to the elderly. The key issue is not willingness but how to fund these services. Various tactics have already been mentioned earlier in this chapter but it is worth elaborating on them here.

Financial planning and population factors

By the end of the twentieth century, 25% of the potential users of the library service will be over 60. Since the survey results indicated that this class *en masse* are perceived as "the elderly," it is apparent that future planning and resource allocation should take a heightened account of this groups needs and expectations. In marketing terms the public library has within its control a group of consumers who wish to actively obtain their product. The public library is not in a position to recoup the costs of goods and services provided directly from the consumer. Instead it relies upon local authority funding to provide services and must balance the needs expressed by one group with the requirements of the rest of the community. Any financial planning undertaken by the library service must take into account demographic changes that are occurring. Because of the dramatic growth in the elderly population it may be necessary to reallocate resources if there is a need to prioritise the needs of one group against another.

Charging for services

The potential of charging elderly people for services is severely limited by economic factors. The over 65s have less disposable income than those under retirement age. However, within this group, wide disparities do exist. These can broadly be defined as: those elderly whose income is at or below the average for households and who are dependent solely on state benefits; those elderly who are likely to be owner occupiers and to have an income from occupational pensions; and those elderly whose incomes are at least double the average for similar households mainly dependent on state benefits. The last group is a mixture of married couples and single people and the majority are owner occupiers. They can

be described as the affluent elderly, and this wide variance in disposable income must be considered when planning services. The view of the elderly as impoverished as well as infirm is undergoing rapid change. The future is likely to see a shift towards retired couples who have inherited property from parents, who may both have had careers and now possess joint private pensions in addition to the state benefits. This places them in a very comfortable position, able to enjoy the benefits of travel, hobbies etc. This social change has led to the creation of a relatively complex hierarchy within this group which has attracted the recent attention of social scientists.

The realisation that the elderly will increasingly encompass an element with considerable purchasing power has led to the emergence of such acronyms as GLAMS (greying leisured affluent middle-aged spenders), WOOPIES (well off older people) and JOLLIES (jet-setting oldies with lots of loot). These marketing acronyms are, to a large extent, a misnomer. It is doubtful if more than the top 5% of elderly are truly affluent. The 1990s have seen an increase in well off older people but the true "age of affluence" amongst the over 60s is largely an advertiser's dream. Many elderly enjoy comfortable lifestyles but poverty is still a very real issue for many within this group. In library terms, charging the elderly is still a political "hot potato" with many authorities. Elderly people excite considerable sympathy: recent government legislation to impose VAT on fuel bills has illustrated this beyond doubt. It is unlikely that any further moves to impose charges on this group would meet with public or media approval.

Collaboration and co-operation with other local authority departments

The survey revealed that a mixture of formal and informal co-operation occurred on a regular basis between the library service and other council departments. The department most frequently liaised with was Social Services. The reason for this is likely to be related to community care policies currently being developed by most authorities. These, in line with governmental recommendations, envisage a shift towards services delivered in elderly people's own homes. By providing library services for housebound people, the public library is playing an integral part within the community care programme operated by the local authority. As a direct result of this, libraries and social services have, to an extent, been thrown together since they are providing services to the same clients in many instances. Such an example of interaction would be the social services assessing an elderly person's needs for stimulation and contact and making a referral to the housebound service provided by the library.

Some local authorities have supported this liaison in a practical way by providing funds for the development of library services for housebound users from the community care budget. In Leicestershire an allocation was made to the library service from funding designated by the local authority to support the implementation of community care programmes. In Birmingham funding was provided by the social services department for the development of a library service to housebound users within a local area.

Partnership with voluntary and statutory organisations

Survey results revealed that virtually all authorities liaised with voluntary and statutory organisations involved with the elderly on a regular, informal basis. These ranged from Age Concern through to local pensioners clubs, retirement groups, disability groups etc. The exact nature of this liaison is harder to determine and could vary from an exchange of information to providing accommodation for groups within the library building. Costs of service provision are expensive in both staff time and salaries and can be significantly reduced by using volunteer help. If volunteers affiliated to registered organisations are used, then agreement must be made with the unions concerned and a clear agreement on performance levels needs to be established between the library service and organisations providing personnel. The library service must also ensure that it provides appropriate levels of training and support required by volunteer helpers (Hadley & Hatch, 1981).

Sponsorship is an ideal means for companies to donate money and items to community projects while gaining a commercial advantage such as publicity in return. Projects which stand the best chance of obtaining sponsorship in a competitive market must be well-defined and have strong public appeal. This is an area in which public libraries have relatively little experience. On the plus side, the provision of services to the elderly has considerable emotional appeal. In addition the increase in the number of elderly means that they will become a strong focus of marketing activity. This could represent a useful market opportunity in investment terms for potential sponsors. To date, several authorities have explored this opportunity and others are increasingly likely to try as local authority funding becomes more difficult to obtain. The Buckinghamshire Bookreach Project (1990)

aimed to attract large and small scale investment and its brochure stated "we are seeking sponsors for a variety of projects aimed at strengthening the independence and quality of life of the groups identified." It itemised both amounts, and what each figure could provide, so that future sponsors could see exactly where their money would be spent.

Information provision to the elderly

Community information, and the realisation that the elderly have specific information requirements, has led to a number of library services providing leaflets produced by statutory organisations for their elderly users. These cover topics such as bereavement, claiming benefits, retirement information, investments, health information etc. A number of library authorities have also gathered community information together in folders and book form for ease of access. This information is aimed at the community in general but with sections that are of particular interest to the elderly. In some instances library services have isolated this information and produced it in a separate leaflet/booklet for the elderly. A more recent development has been the introduction of on-line community data bases which enable information on specific areas and for specific groups to be obtained quickly and efficiently.

This chapter has given a broad overview of the current situation with regard to library services to the elderly. A number of areas closely allied to services to the elderly were identified and the findings from the survey were examined in terms of these factors. The intention was to enable some conclusions on how services have developed from the 1990 survey to the start of this research to be drawn. This

research is essentially concerned with information provision but it is apparent that this cannot be treated in isolation. To determine the information needs of this group and the library's current policy, an understanding of the overall situation must be achieved. At the beginning of this chapter several hypothesis concerning service provision to the elderly were postulated. An analysis of the survey findings indicated that these hypotheses were largely correct. There is considerable scope for further work by libraries in this field, especially directed towards the active elderly who continue to use mainstream services.

The next section of this research focuses on two specific local authorities. Using a case study approach, the methodology of which was outlined in chapter 1, this section looks beyond the confines of the library service and its role in serving the elderly to the wider issues of service provision to the elderly within the community as a whole. This necessitates a more detailed appraisal of the role of the library service within a specific community as well as a general examination of all other organisations, both statutory and voluntary, local and national, that exist within that community environment to provide a service to the elderly. The specific area concentrated on is that of information and how this plethora of groups co-exist and attempt to fulfil this need for the elderly within their community. The section concludes by conducting a market research exercise in one authority. This looks at the information needs of the elderly from their perspective rather than the needs perceived by the groups existing to serve them. The section concludes by asking whether the elderly's needs are being addressed by these organisations. Are the groups claiming to provide the elderly with information, the library service included, and the elderly themselves on the same wavelength?

Part 3

The case study

Chapter 9

Case study 1: Liverpool City Council

Services to the elderly are provided by a diverse range of statutory and voluntary bodies in addition to those provided by the public library service. The first section of this research concentrated on services provided solely by the public library. In this section of the research the aim is to look beyond the library service and to consider the role of these other diverse organisations. To achieve this, the research area is narrowed to two local authorities. The case study approach was selected as the most appropriate research methodology to accomplish this since it allows for a focused concentration on a single phenomenon and the utilisation of a variety of research gathering techniques. In selecting the number and type of authority to use for a case study approach the determining factors were:

- the number of authorities which could be adequately handled in terms of the data generated;
- which authorities had demonstrated a commitment to the elderly;
- their accessibility to the researcher;
- sufficient difference in type between authorities to provide a varied range of information regarding the services encompassed.

The area to use was relatively easy to decide since the north west was geographically the most practical area to both visit and establish contacts with. It

was also felt that two differing authorities would provide a contrast and were within the scope of the researcher to handle. More than two case studies would create difficulties in terms of both workload and the amount of information generated that would have to be analysed by the researcher.

If the case studies were to be successful good communications would need to be established with members of staff within the selected areas. The researcher had worked in Knowsley for more than ten years and therefore already had a knowledge of the area and a number of contacts. Liverpool was selected because, as an urban area, it provided a good contrast to Knowsley, a sprawling new town development with a range of socio-economic problems. Liverpool was also an area with a strong political past and both areas boasted an active library service and a council strategy that was proactive in providing services to specific groups in the community: such as the elderly; children; and the unemployed. Both authorities also had members of library staff whose specific areas of responsibility included the elderly and who were willing to be involved in providing information for this research. This chapter looks at services to the elderly in Liverpool; the following chapter will examine the same service structure in the nearby authority of Knowsley. Chapters 11 and 12 focus on the planning and analysis of a market research exercise undertaken in the latter case study authority. This represents a major aspect of the research element since its intention is to determine, from the user's viewpoint, how information is found and used and the role which the library is perceived as having in this process.

Before moving on to examine services to the elderly in this area it is useful first to set the scene by giving a brief description of Liverpool. The title of city was first conferred on Liverpool by Royal charter in May 1880. As a town Liverpool's history dates back to 1207. It is famous as one of the world's most important ports and there is a wide diversity of industry and commerce within the city's boundaries. Great wealth was earned by the city's merchant class and ship owners and this is reflected in the many fine buildings visible throughout the city: the eighteenth century Town Hall, Bluecoat Chambers, Walker Art Gallery, St George's Hall, Liverpool Museum and the Royal Liver Building. Other fine architectural examples are the two cathedrals. Added to Liverpool's attractions are the renovated Albert Dock complex which includes the Tate Gallery and Maritime Museum. Liverpool is also justly famous for its musical achievements and its major football successes. The population of Liverpool stands at 470,826 9 (1995) and the city covers an area of some 11,276 hectares. Liverpool Library Service comprises one central library situated in William Brown Street and 25 branches. The service also includes services to the housebound and old people's homes as well as being well equipped to serve the needs of the disabled.

This chapter starts by setting the elderly within a sociological and economic community framework and then goes on to examine the work currently undertaken by the library service in relation to the elderly. It concludes by looking at the work of other council departments and considers the range of tasks undertaken by national organisations and local groups based in Liverpool in relation to serving the elderly. The information and figures cited in the next two sections were obtained by making contact with council departments which were considered to

have an involvement with the elderly. These departments were: Social Services; Planning; Housing and Education. All the departments approached sent documentation outlining their specific policies to the elderly. If further information or clarification was required this was achieved by telephoning the relevant department.

Profile of the elderly in Liverpool

The total population of the City has fallen by 8% since 1981 and now stands at 470,826. This population change is the result of several factors, including migration of younger adults and migration, predominantly, by the unemployed (81%). These factors have increased the proportion of unemployed within the city and depleted the network of "informal" carers that previously existed. The latter has left a large number of people in need of assistance, particularly the elderly who are among the most vulnerable with a greater dependence on community care. The result of population migration in the Liverpool area has been to create a smaller population with more people who have particular needs. This includes the elderly who, along with the following groups, have been identified by the council as special service areas which draw on the various agencies responsible for social care, support and health services within the city. These groups can be said to comprise:

elderly (taken here to mean over 65)

learning disabilities

mental health

physical/sensory disability

substance abuse

HIV/AIDS sufferers

alcoholics

The elderly, as well as being a recognised group in their own right, can also fall into several of the other groups. These are most commonly mental health sufferers (Alzheimer's/senile dementia are primarily elderly individuals) and those with physical and sensory difficulties (the elderly are the category most likely to suffer from deafness, declining sight and reduced mobility).

The figures that follow relate to people over retirement age (60 for women and 65 for men). It must be remembered that this thesis makes no distinction between the retirement ages of the sexes and is concerned with the over 60's generally. Population estimates for Liverpool, based on projections for 1993 from the 1991 census, reveal that nearly 75,000 people (16% of the total population) are 65+. Of this group, 31,000 (6.5%) are 75+ and 7,000 are 85+. These figures are now out of date given the unanticipated increase in population loss that has occurred since 1993. There are, however, a number of major age group changes that will occur between 1995 and 2001 whatever the overall size of the population. One of these is a further big increase in the number of pensioners over 85 but a continued fall in the numbers below that age. It is likely to be this latter group that will require specialist care of the type envisaged in the "care in the community" scheme. Many of this group (plus, in fact, some of the "younger" elderly) will be supported by carers who will also need help, advice and information of a practical nature.

Evidence from past studies has indicated that 5% of people over 65 and 20% of those over 80 are likely to suffer from severe mental confusion. Meeting the needs of this group and their carers must, therefore be viewed as a high priority. On a more general level, the elderly have a particular need for: food, warmth, housing; safety/security in the home and outside, and access to leisure, education and recreational facilities. While other groups within Liverpool have increased or depleted, it is the age patterns of the City's elderly which has most effect on the potential demand of community care. Advancing age corresponds to increasing frailty, loss of mobility, mental confusion and long term ill health. 1981-1993 has seen the following trends within the 65+ section of society:

a decrease of 16% in the 65-74 group

a decrease of 8% of the 65+ group generally

a decrease of 5% in the 75-79 group

an increase of 11% in the 80-84 group

an increase of 23% in the 85+ age group

This breakdown reveals that, despite a decline in the 65+ population generally and the under 80's specifically, the "old" elderly are rapidly expanding. The repercussions for community care are immense. Demands on council services are likely to be severely stretched in the future, as it is this group within the elderly that will be most heavily reliant on support services.

Health is an area of particular relevance to the elderly. *The Liverpool Health Authority's Public Annual Health Report* (1992) included positive

recommendations to improve overall health. In planning services across Liverpool, the number, proportion and levels of disability/dependency of the elderly must be taken into consideration. It is important to plan for a complete leisure range of services in the community, taking into account the increasing proportion of elderly who will be living in Liverpool in the next century. In conclusion, the community needs of this group must be monitored to ensure that the elderly obtain the appropriate care they require.

The community care plan developed by the council, which has definite repercussions for the elderly, was intended to build on the links that exist between service users, their carers and interested bodies in planning and running services. Opinions need to be gathered from a variety of sources about what the elderly need and want in relation to community care. These include: service users, in this instance the elderly, to ensure that services are appropriate to needs; racial/cultural minority groups; carers and relatives; community groups; resident's associations; pensioner groups; representative groups which reflect opinions of groups with special needs; and voluntary organisations, since they have valuable experience of working with users and providing services.

Council services to the elderly

The Social Services Department is responsible for the control and operation of 22 residential homes, 6 day centres, a meals on wheels service, a home support service and a centre for sufferers of Alzheimer's Disease. In addition, the council provides grant aid to luncheon clubs and local resource centres for the elderly and services for people who are visually impaired (frequently a large number of the

elderly). The Social Services Committee has a net budget of £78 million (1993/4). Of that figure circa £29 million was spent on the elderly. The foundation of community care is to enable people to live independently with support appropriate to their needs. The work of the Housing Department has a vital role to play in this philosophy. In an area where a large percentage of the population live in council accommodation, adapted housing is required for the particular needs of a variety of groups including the physically frail and disabled (generally the elderly). The Social Services Department provides various services for the elderly, including:

Home Help Service

The City Council employs approximately 1,300 Home Helps, mostly part-time, who provide help each year for about 6,500 people living in their own homes. The majority of service users are over 65 although services are also provided to the disabled, those with learning difficulties etc. Home Helps perform a variety of tasks according to an individual's need. These range from assistance in getting in and out of bed through to shopping and meal provision. This service aims to maintain people's independence in their own homes.

Home Care Service

The home care service provides intensive domiciliary care for a limited period following discharge from hospital. The Home Care Home Help will perform all the tasks provided by the Home Help Service and will help people to regain their confidence in the home after a period in hospital.

EMI (Elderly Mentally Ill) Scheme

This scheme provides domiciliary care to the elderly suffering from dementia or mental illness. The scheme is hospital based and as such has close links with the health service. A Community Psychiatric Nurse provides help and advice to staff and is involved in assessing the scheme.

Carer Support Scheme

The main aim of this scheme is to provide a domiciliary service for elderly people and those with disabilities. Carer Support Workers assist in the caring process and relieve the usual carer on a regular basis. This enables people to remain in their own homes and retain their independence and dignity. Duties undertaken include close personal care as well as accompanying people on visits to local shops or health centres. The scheme currently operates in the Anfield, Walton and Fazakerley areas of the city only, but it is hoped that it can be extended in the future. These services all fall under the heading of domiciliary care. In addition, Social Services provides day and residential care to the elderly in Liverpool.

Day Care

The Council provides day care for the elderly at six centres across the city. There are places for 350 people in total and most centres are open 7 days a week. Transport is available to bring people to and from the centres, although individuals may make their own arrangements if required. Most centres are open from 9.30am until 3.30pm with tea and toast and lunch included. A variety of activities is arranged in the centres. These include art and crafts, games, cookery, singing

sessions etc. Staff are available to help with personal care, such as bathing, if required.

Residential Care

The council provides residential care for the elderly in 22 homes located throughout the city. Currently plans are being carried out to re-develop these homes by closing those that are in poor condition and building new homes. The basic rights of individuals do not disappear when they live in a care home. In the council's homes individuals are encouraged to keep their independence and take responsibility for their own decisions. They are encouraged to take a full part in decisions about daily living arrangements and, in addition, have the opportunity to mix with other people in the community.

The development of a community care programme has emphasised the need for close collaboration between housing agencies (including the council department and housing associations), health and social services, in planning housing strategy. Hospital discharge agreements and assessment procedures for community care will have frequent implications for housing providers. Consultation between concerned groups is vital and this is becoming more apparent on a daily basis with the advent of joint planning arrangements, the housing forum for the elderly and through various council sub-committees. The importance of this level of planning for the elderly is beyond question. Sheltered accommodation is increasingly being seen as a method of providing the elderly with safe and secure accommodation while reducing personal isolation. With constant community care reforms, the need to present viable alternatives to nursing and residential home care will increase. This

can only be achieved if a range of suitable accommodation backed with practical help and support can be provided as the basis for a home based service.

Liverpool Health Authority has a responsibility for assessing the health needs of its residents. This includes domiciliary health care which specifically relates to the elderly. The elderly comprise one of eight priority groups identified by the authority and account for the largest amount spent on a single group, currently £23.5 million. In addition to this, the authority makes available £8.3 million to voluntary organisations for the provision of community based services such as nursing care outside a hospital setting. Currently this amounts to supporting 526 places in nursing and residential care homes.

Since Liverpool City Council has designated the elderly a "service area" within their community care plan, they are subject to a development plan which will eventually influence and inform evolving local authority service plans. The individual objectives and their resultant targets can be itemised as:

1. To improve of the quality and availability of information about services which can assist the elderly including those with visual and auditory impairment.
2. To ensure that a comprehensive co-ordinated housing and accommodation strategy, incorporating all relevant agencies, is set up to meet the needs of the elderly.

3. To strengthen respite care services for the elderly and their carers.
4. To provide appropriate systems and equipment to assist the elderly to live safely and securely in their own homes.
5. To develop an overall training strategy for staff and volunteers working with the elderly.
6. To establish systems that permit high quality service for the elderly to be planned and delivered.

Interestingly, the library is not specifically referred to in any of these statements of intent. This raises the question of the extent of library involvement in the internal workings of other council departments and what strategy the library should adopt towards to remedy this situation.

Library services to the elderly

The role of other council departments in service provision to the elderly has been examined briefly. This section looks in more detail at the services provided for the elderly by the library specifically. This information was obtained by making telephone contact and arranging to meet the member staff responsible for the housebound and special services. An informal interview enabled a profile of services to the elderly to be obtained. In addition, a considerable amount of documentation on existing library services to the elderly was made available to the researcher.

In Liverpool the library service falls under the auspices of the Leisure Directorate who offer a range of recreational facilities in the city, the usage of which is positively encouraged by people with particular needs. As well as one central library, twenty five branches, a mobile and a book bus, the department also has seventeen sports/leisure centres, some of which run groups whose aim is to encourage use by older members of the community (50+). These groups are organised in conjunction with Age Concern. Liverpool has a Special Services Unit and has attempted to look at the level of service delivery provided across the city with a view to assessing how improvements can be made. This exercise was initially undertaken in 1992 and revealed that provision to the elderly and other groups with special needs was extremely uneven throughout the city.

Housebound service

Liverpool City Council produces a promotional leaflet on its Housebound Service. This outlines what the service is, the type of service provided and general information together with a contact name and address. The service, as is typical of most, is provided free to people who are unable to visit the library for health reasons. It is operated by a van which calls on the same day every four weeks at homes requiring the service. Stock is varied, including large print material and talking books, and aims to satisfy the majority of reading interests. The housebound service also aims to provide a limited information service and offers to supply books and leaflets on all topics including information about rights and benefits. A contact phone number is available together with an offer that states staff will be available to give information/advice on any subject. When there is no one available, an answer phone is in operation but most people are suspicious of

answer phones and the elderly are more likely than most to fall into this category, so it is debatable just how many individuals would leave a message. Requests for specific material are also encouraged and this service is also free.

A separate leaflet is also provided which is intended to give a simplified picture of the service while providing slightly different information. The main difference is in the information concerning joining the scheme. This leaflet tells prospective users that they can apply themselves or through a friend by completing an application form and leaving it at the library. The housebound service will then make contact with the requester. The leaflet does, however, carry a warning that a waiting list exists although the service will attempt to accommodate new users as quickly as possible.

The housebound service is operated by one vehicle and three staff: the Housebound Librarian, an assistant and a driver. Currently the Housebound Librarian uses the first Monday in the four week cycle to visit new readers. These initial visits serve a dual purpose: to establish if the reader qualifies for the service and to clarify what the reader expects from the service. From this visit a user profile is created, which is used as the basis on which to select books/tapes each month. The reader is assigned to a specific route and visited on the same day each fourth week to avoid confusion and establish a routine. There are always a small number of readers in limbo, generally because they are in hospital or convalescing. After three months the housebound service will contact them to see if they wish the service to resume. The Housebound Librarian tries to maintain the number of active users at around 360/370. This is the maximum number which the stock can

adequately cope with while ensuring an effective, regular service is maintained. Figures for 1993 provide a rough guide to stock statistics: adult non-fiction 282; adult fiction 4079 and spoken word cassettes 429.

The fiction stock caters predominantly for leisure reading; little serious literature is actually included in the core collection. The housebound service relies heavily on branch stock to provide non-fiction titles. The housebound fiction stock is 35% large print, however, a survey undertaken by the housebound service in 1992 revealed that the figure using large print stock was nearer 40%. The shortfall is currently made up by branch stock. On average the service issues fewer than 100 non fiction titles per month, compared with an average fiction issue of 1500 titles per month. The spoken word tapes average around 170 issues per month. The housebound service's book fund has remained constant over the last few years at around £5,000. The service also stocks a range of leaflets but these are seldom asked for; possibly the problem lies in the approach taken to marketing this aspect of the service. At present the housebound librarian simply orders, on an automatic basis, leaflets aimed specifically at the elderly. These are then sent out automatically with each reader's loans, with no facility for feedback and evaluation.

The housebound service, as it is currently operated, is not uniform throughout the Liverpool area. Readers who live outside areas where the service operates have to rely on their nearest branch library with no specialist help available. The service provided to the housebound by branches is *ad hoc* in that it relies on the user to take the initiative, something that a large number of elderly in need would not do

(assuming they were aware of this facility in the first place). The service works on a demand system with the reader contacting the branch when they require books. A member of staff, usually the attendant, will then take a selection out to the requesters home for selection to be made. This system is stretched and branches are virtually unable to take on new housebound enquiries.

A report produced in August 1992 by the previous Housebound Librarian made various recommendations for service improvements. One suggestion was that the service operated by the housebound team could be extended to become city-wide by the addition of a second housebound vehicle. A second limit to the service's effectiveness was strain on the bookstock itself. It was becoming increasingly difficult to select books for readers, especially those with a limited number of reading interests. The report commented that it was only through using stock from the Lister Drive Branch to supplement stock that requests for non-fiction material had been satisfied. To expand the housebound service successfully a massive injection of cash to the bookfund, plus an equally large injection of stock, would be necessary. These recommendations were never implemented due to financial constraints and the system remains stretched to capacity.

Mobile service to institutions.

A promotional leaflet entitled "*New Mobile Service*" is used to disseminate information about the current service. The mobile is intended for all groups but, as part of its duties, it visits old people's homes and day centres throughout the city. These institutions are visited on a four weekly basis with visits lasting, on average, one hour. This enables elderly and disabled users to have an opportunity to get on

board and choose their own books and cassettes. To this end the vehicle has been specially designed with elderly and disabled users in mind. These facilities include: easier access on and off the vehicle; grab handles; a public seat; good large print section and a choice of spoken word cassettes. The vehicle carries a stock of 3000 items and is designed to offer a quality service to all groups in the City.

Branch services.

Branch based services to the elderly are predominantly encompassed in the range of services aimed at those users in the community with disabilities (of which the elderly invariably form a large percent). One such development is the VISTA service operated from Larkhill Branch Library. VISTA is designed to help people with any kind of visual impairment to have access to information and material for leisure reading. It is not specifically for individuals with severe visual handicaps; rather it focuses on the vast majority of "visually impaired" whose sight is simply failing and who experience varying degrees of difficulty in reading standard print. The fact that a large number of VISTA's potential clients will probably be housebound is recognised by the housebound librarian. A means of promoting this service more extensively to this group of the community urgently needs to be explored.

VISTA's facilities include the following: a Kurzweil reading machine, which converts print or typescript into synthetic speech and can be used for reading personal documents, books and magazines; a CCTV magnifier which enlarges documents and books on to a TV screen; books on tape; large print books;

Liverpool Talking Newspaper; and information on tape. Information on cassette, which is free for loan, covers a wide range of topics including British Airways; British Gas; British Telecom; Water services; Department of Health; Environment; Social Security; Education; Royal National Institute for the Blind and matters of local interest such as Speke, Princes Park and All Saints Church.

Services to the visually impaired, co-ordinated by a dedicated member of staff, herself visually disabled, operate from Liverpool Central Library. This special service offers readers access to CCTV, Kurzweil readers, Braille transcription service, enlarge photocopying, talking teletext and reading to tape. The lending wing of the service for the visually impaired consists of large print books (available in all branches) and spoken word cassettes. Both formats are also available through the housebound service with up to 40% of housebound readers utilising them. It is worth noting that information provision is also moving in the direction of providing leaflets in these formats. The library service also appreciates the importance of aiming to provide all in-house publicity material in large print and spoken word formats.

Loss of hearing is another problem often associated with increasing old age. The deaf tend not to be such an easily identifiable group as the visually impaired. It is, however, important to ensure that all branch libraries are as user-friendly as possible. One long term aim by the Special Services Unit is to put a sign language user in all branch libraries. In addition, a minicom service is planned for all larger branches with improved contact being made with the Deaf Centre.

Access for the physically disabled and those with the general loss of mobility normally associated with old age is still a problem in most branch libraries. Many do not have disabled access but at the least priority must be given to ensuring positive changes are made as libraries are refurbished. This includes attention to the height of shelving, adequate lighting in the large print areas, space for wheelchairs in aisles and under tables. Of paramount importance with any internal refurbishment project is consultation with concerned groups before any decisions are finally taken. The best people to offer advice are users themselves and their opinions should be sought at all stages in planning and implementing any changes.

Statutory and voluntary groups working with the elderly

In 1971 Liverpool Welfare Organisations Committee became a permanent committee forming a part of Liverpool Council for Voluntary Service. At present there are 50 organisations who are members. The role of the committee is to provide a co-ordinated viewpoint from the voluntary sector and to act as a communication link between the voluntary and statutory sectors within the community. For this case study three organisations were selected for a more detailed examination of the services which they provide to the elderly. The objective was to provide an overall perspective of the level and types of services provided by groups in this sector. The organisations chosen were Age Concern Liverpool, Association of Carers, and Liverpool Association for the Disabled. Contact was initially made by telephone followed by an appointment to discuss the interaction each organisation had with the elderly. This was achieved by a semi structural interview with a member of staff.

The Department of Health is currently helping to fund an initiative by Age Concern which has been designed as a practical response to the White Paper *The Health of the Nation* and will contribute £180,000 over a three year period towards this study. Age Concern England has commissioned eight projects to promote to older age groups the concept of measurable improvements in health. The projects are based in Liverpool, Macclesfield, Cheshire, Northumberland, Stoke-on-Trent, Wakefield, Hereford and Worcester, North Yorkshire, Warwickshire and South Devon. The project, entitled "*Healthy Ageing*", involves the development of a network of co-ordinators and volunteer "senior health mentors" who will develop work on peer health counselling. The pilot project, based in Liverpool, is a joint initiative between Age Concern Liverpool and the Pre-Retirement Association which aims to enable the elderly, through the use of their life experiences and additional training, to help other elderly people in the community to understand and identify their own needs.

Another Age Concern initiative was an Information, Advice and Housing Support Centre opened in 1993. This provides help and support on a range of issues with special emphasis on housing related problems. Specially trained staff will advise callers on the options which may be open to them whether they want help to enable them to stay in their own home or to move to more suitable accommodation. Sessions are held once a month at locations in the City as well as being available to the housebound through the Good Neighbourhood Service.

Although the work of Age Concern is too numerous to look at in detail it is worthwhile mentioning one other service they provide. The Good Neighbour

Service referred to above exists for the frail elderly. It provides home support to enable this group to continue living in the community. The service is operated free of charge and is provided by volunteers supported by paid staff based in local offices. It is funded by Liverpool Social Services through an agency arrangement with Age Concern Liverpool. A "Good Neighbour" is a volunteer who makes two or more weekly visits to between 6-8 people, collecting pensions, shopping, paying bills, cooking a light meal and generally offering support and friendship. Good Neighbours will also regularly visit and sit with an elderly dependent relative thus enabling the carer to have some time away from the home. There are currently 9 offices situated throughout Liverpool. Each office has an organiser and two other members of staff plus 75 Good Neighbours who are paid an honorarium to cover their expenses. There are at present over 4,000 elderly housebound people being visited throughout the service.

Age Concern Liverpool, in partnership with the Social Services and Education Departments, is responsible for running luncheon clubs throughout the City. These clubs provide a range of activities along with a meal served by volunteers. The active pensioner who is able to travel can attend a different venue every day if so desired. The clubs provide dinner, dessert and tea for the modest charge of £1. They also provide a valuable opportunity for the elderly to socialise and enjoy a nourishing meal at the same time.

Age Concern Liverpool also serves as a daily link with other groups involved with the elderly by providing a communication network of consumer councils or forums. This enables pensioner organisations and associated agencies to send

representatives to share information and discuss ideas affecting the life and well-being of the elderly members they serve. Each council covers a specific geographical area of the city. Areas currently represented are: Walton; Eastern; Central; Everton and Vauxhall; Toxteth and Kirkdale; Southern. Organisations and groups located in each area send a representative to the council meeting for their particular area. Meetings are also attended by representatives from the departments of Social Services and Health, the police and other agencies on a co-opted basis. Each council elects one or two representatives from its members to a central committee. This central committee elects a Chair and nominates people to various committees who are then able to feed back information, issues and decisions to each consumer council. These councils will, in turn, give their reactions to be input back into the system, thus ensuring a dynamic and representative structure. This network is being used to provide user representatives on key committees, forums and groups throughout the statutory and voluntary sector in Liverpool.

The Ageing Well project involves the recruitment and training of older volunteers, called Senior Health Mentors. When selecting candidates to become mentors certain criteria must be satisfied. These helpers should have empathy, sensitivity, shared interests and a lifetime's experiences and acquired skills. The project's overall goals are to promote a positive attitude to ageing, to encourage a healthier lifestyle and to provide independence. Mentors are trained by professionals to help the elderly with these goals in mind. Ageing Well achieves these objectives by providing a free, confidential and listening service for people over sixty.

Ageing Well is an alliance of voluntary, government and corporate sectors committed to meeting health needs identified by the elderly. Each project is monitored by a local advisory group of health professionals, community workers and individual elderly people. These projects are UK wide and focus on key areas of health need such as coronary heart disease, cancer and strokes. Specific projects include: discussion groups; one-to-one counselling; and healthy eating activities. Venues for these activities are varied: clinics; leisure centres; health shops; clubs and individuals homes. Interestingly the promotional leaflet for these activities neglects to mention libraries. Ageing Well UK is part of a European network co-ordinated by Eurolink Age. The UK programme is supported by the Department of Health and managed by Age Concern England in partnership with Merck, Sharp and Dohme Ltd. and P.P.P. (Private Patients Plan).

The investigation also revealed that there is a large number of local groups having connections with the elderly in Liverpool. Realistically it would be impossible to attempt to contact them all on an individual basis but information was obtained on one of the main groups working within the city. This is the Nugent Care Society, founded in 1881 by Father James Nugent. The society provides a range of services offering individual care for the elderly. A fully professional team of workers offers advice and services appropriate to the needs of retired and elderly people from the very active to the most frail. While the majority of the elderly are not confused, incontinent or housebound it is, without doubt, a period of great change. As years pass, friends and relatives die and individuals find themselves without the opportunity to make social contact, thus increasing isolation and anxiety.

The society provides a number of community groups for the elderly, run by experienced volunteers and supported by its own full-time professional workers. Those needing help getting to groups are provided with transport by drivers (themselves retired). Help with personal problems is available from a team of trained volunteers who offer regular advice and information sessions. Complex problems that cannot be dealt with there and then are passed on to professional workers at the Nugent Care Society's head office in Brownlow Hill. The Community Services Team based here maintain contact with other voluntary organisations, Local Authorities and housing associations. Using this network, solutions can be found to many problems. In addition, the team provides advice and support for individuals and groups working with the elderly in the community. The team has links with a number of nursing and residential homes in the area covered by the Archdiocese, these including those owned and run by the society itself. If an elderly person makes a decision to enter residential care, the society can help by offering advice and helping with arrangements.

In conclusion, this case study has shown that Liverpool's elderly population are well served by the library and other council departments as well as by a variety of national organisations that have branches in the city and a strong network of local independent groups. What is apparent is that little formal collaboration exists and that no organised policy of resource sharing has been implemented. Organisations working in isolation, while doing vital work in the community, could inevitably be guilty of duplication and with resources so scarce this is a luxury that can no longer be afforded. A policy of co-ordination and awareness between groups working to a common end is required and there is obviously an opportunity for a

familiar organisation such as the library service to take an initiative here. The library service is ideally placed to become the facilitator for a community network of resource sharing among all institutions involved in providing the elderly with information, however formal or informal that involvement might be.

Sadly, the continual decline in local government spending has led to a situation in which the public library service, along with many other council services, has suffered from neglect. The intervening years has seen the closure of some branch libraries and a total restructuring of the city's main library. Book funds and outreach services have fallen victim to budget cuts and this has inevitably resulted in a stagnation or even decline in services provision. Services to the elderly, like many other special initiatives, have been caught up in the politics of this situation. The reality now is that the library alone is not in a position to initiate new ventures, its only solution may be to ally itself with other groups who share a common interest and are in a position to assist with resources.

Chapter 10

Case study 2: Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council

This chapter examines the second case study authority, Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council. It follows the same format as the previous chapter by firstly setting the scene through a profile of the elderly against the socio-economic context of the area. It then moves on to take an in depth look at the library and the services which it provides to the elderly before extending this examination to take in other groups and organisations in the community that also have a direct involvement with this age group. The information and figures cited in the next two sections were, as in the case of the Liverpool study, obtained by making contact with relevant council departments. The procedure of requesting documentation and following this up with telephone contact if clarification was required was also followed.

Before doing this it is helpful first to give a brief outline of this area. Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council lies to the east of Liverpool and consists of the major townships of Huyton, Kirkby, Prescot, Whiston and Halewood with two thirds of its 37.5 miles designated green belt. The Borough take its name from Knowsley Hall, home of the earls of Derby, which stands in 2000 acres of parkland and is now a safari park. Two of Europe's largest industrial parks are located in Knowsley. The area also boasts abundant sporting and leisure facilities. The population stands at 154,053, although the region is currently suffering the

effects of depopulation. The area covers some 9,739 hectares, making it one of the country's smallest authorities. Knowsley Library Service comprises one central and seven branches, plus a mobile library. The authority also operates a service to the housebound and old people's homes.

Profile of the elderly in Knowsley

The population of Knowsley is currently declining as younger adults migrate from the area in search of employment but, at the same time, the percentage of those over 65 is expected to increase. Projected figures suggest that the overall number of persons aged 65 and over will increase by 0.5% within the period 1989-2011 (Office for Population Censuses and Surveys, 1991). The 1991 census revealed that "pensioner only" households accounted for 20% of households in Knowsley and 13% of households comprised an elderly person living alone. Both these figures are below the national average of 24.9% and 15% respectively. The relationship between declining health and old age is starkly revealed by census figures relating to the question of health conditions that limit participation in activities and affect actual quality of life. 50% of people in Knowsley with limiting long-term illness were aged 60 plus, compared with 18% of the total population.

The St. Helens and Knowsley District Health Authority Annual Report for 1993 presented information based on an assessment of patients aged 65 and over. The association between age and ill-health across a wide range of medical conditions was clear: eyesight and genito-urinary conditions showed the steepest increase with age. Other medical problems which the study identified such as mobility, diet, housework were also seen to be linked to old age. With an increasingly large

proportion of the population over 65 (15.5%), there is a clear indication of need, especially as 13% of households in the borough comprise a lone pensioner. This particular group of elderly is, more than any other, likely to require formal support. The majority of elderly people still live in the community without formal social services support. Clearly the availability of caring friends, neighbours and family is of considerable importance.

Council services to the elderly.

A wide range of services is available to support the elderly. These include home care, meals on wheels, sheltered housing, home visiting, day care and district nursing. Services are provided by a wide variety of organisations in both the statutory and independent (including private) sectors. A Resource Directory, available from the Social Services Department, details the full range of these services. This section concentrates on these services provided to the elderly by Knowsley Borough Council.

The council's prime directive is to provide a safe, healthy and attractive environment, thus ensuring that vulnerable groups such as the elderly have a sense of belonging within the community. The Community Care programme aims to provide networks to support these groups to live as independently as possible and to overcome risks that they face in daily life as a result of age, disability, physical illness. To achieve this, the Social Service Department strives to identify the social care needs of the population. The council has a series of service developments linked to each of its designated target groups: elderly; alcoholism; HIV/AIDS; mental health; drug related problems; learning disabilities; physical disabilities;

ethnic minorities, and children in need. The service developments highlighted by the Council for this group are:

The development of Resource Centres which provide integrated and flexible services within day centres, people's own homes or other settings within the community;

The production of service specifications which detail the purchasing requirements for elderly care services;

A review of day care provision services to the elderly.

Currently (1994/5) the Social Services Department spends £5,785,492 net on the elderly. This figure can be subdivided into four areas: day services (£476,261 net); accommodation (£1,476,779 net); fieldwork (£1,964,082 net) and community based (£1,868,370 net). This figure is the council's contribution to the Social Service Department's budget. This is supplemented by moneys from four other areas: Urban Programme (£57,090 net); government grants (£1,546,890 net); sales, fees and charges (£371,879 net) and joint financing (£133,669 net). These figures, added to the council's contribution, bring the Social Services total budget to £7,895, 020 net.

One of the services provided by the Social Services Department is a home care facility. This consists of individuals regularly visiting the elderly to help out with anything that needs to be done and checking on the overall welfare of those visited.

The home care service helps with personal care such as washing, dressing, feeding and, if cases warrant it, assisting with domestic work such as cleaning, washing and cooking. The service attempts to ensure that it has links with family and friends who, in many cases, help to provide much of the support required by recipients. There are two priority groups identified by the service:

People who would have to go into hospital or residential care if they did not have some help on a daily basis. This type of help may only be required temporarily, for example after leaving hospital;

People who require assistance at some time during each week so that they can still live at home. These visits can often be organised in partnership with family, friends and other caring organisations.

In both these instances the elderly are likely to be the main recipients of the service due to their physical condition and general circumstances. There is a £1.50 per week charge levied for this service regardless of the number of home care hours received. Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council was allocated £3.3 million (1994/5) by the Department of Health to purchase care packages. Packages can be either residential and nursing home placements or care packages in the community to enable people to remain in their own homes such as the scheme outlined above. Approximately 320 individuals will be supported in this way, in real terms a £5.4 million investment in the residential and nursing care sector.

Access to adequate and affordable transport is fundamental in determining an individual's ability to make use of facilities and services in the community. It affects people in all community care groups, it is essential in planning for development in community care that transport is not left as an afterthought. The transport choices available to individuals depend on their circumstances and abilities. These choices may range from private car, community transport services, social services and non-emergency ambulance services to "Merseylink" and public transport schemes. A key principle of Merseytravel's current policy is that there should be an adequate, suitable and affordable level of public transport to provide access for the entire local population to basic facilities such as work, shopping, education and health services. Access to transport is vital in furthering the key objectives of community care: choice, independence and integration. Some individuals, however, will always need a bespoke transport service to enable them to connect with elements of their care package.

The Social Service Department is aware of other Departments involvement in community care generally and the elderly specifically. One example is the question of housing where the Social Services and Housing Departments have recently developed and agreed a policy for dealing with vulnerable groups such as the elderly. With regards to other Departments, it is worth commenting briefly on programmes operated by Education and Leisure services, both of which have dealings with the elderly. The Education Department is responsible, in addition to mainstream schooling, for further and adult education. These services have a definite role to play in community care as they offer opportunities for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups to improve their skills and knowledge.

Leisure Services also have a valuable role to play in that everyday living in the community means that people have to be enabled to use ordinary facilities with as little help as possible. Services include sport and recreational activities, libraries, parks and play schemes.

Library services to the elderly

Housebound services

Approximately 19,000 of Knowsley's population are 65 plus. This represents 12.5% of the Borough's total population, which is currently 157,400. It is impossible to determine what percentage of this figure is actually housebound since no register is kept. From the library services viewpoint, "housebound" is defined as meaning people who cannot get to the library for themselves and have no relative or friend to go on their behalf. As one would expect, the female population is considerably higher than the male, currently the ratio is 11:1 female: male. The housebound service does take in some younger adults with disabilities but the majority are over seventy. Contact was made with the Housebound Librarian who related that no specific promotional literature was produced on the service. Essentially word of mouth and direct enquiries to the library service (which were then passed to the housebound section) are the prime methods by which the service expands. However, a letter outlining the service's aims and working arrangements is sent out periodically to the Social Services Department, Home Help organisers etc.

Initially the prospective member is visited to discuss the type of book/material required. A request service such as that operated in the branch libraries is available

for specific requests, otherwise the housebound service select material themselves for the requester. The quota is ten books per month. A wide variety of material is available including large print and talking books. Individuals are visited once every four weeks on a specific day. In order to simplify things for the reader, the service attempts to keep to the same time each visit. Recent figures reveal that 230 readers are visited in their homes, 9% are male and 91% female (Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council, 1988). Regarding format of material selected, the statistical breakdown is:

normal print	103	52%
large print	75	38%
talking books	18	9%

Counting large print, normal and talking books together, the most popular categories are as follows.

family sagas	43%
detective stories	25%
Mills and Boon	21%
Liverpool stories	17%
historical sagas	15%
romance	14%
Biographies	11%
spies	8%
hospital romance	8%
adventure	7%

Given that the majority of users are female, the breakdown is not surprising. A variety of categories were identified that attracted less than 6% of the 230 housebound readers visited by the service. These were primarily non-fiction. In addition to the stock loaned, the service also provides a limited number of bookrests and magnifiers for the infirm and a speech master is employed for easier communication with the profoundly deaf. The housebound stock is split into two sections:

1. A main section which forming the core of the stock. This is solely used for individuals living in their own home.
2. A second, smaller section which comprises older stock. This is used to supply block loans to residential and nursing homes. The prime reason for using older stock here is the increased likelihood of loss and damage. Lack of space has curtailed the amount of stock that can be held by the Housebound Service at any one time. As a consequence of this, the degree of choice for loans to residential and nursing homes is limited at present.

The stock situation in December 1993 was as follows:

housebound:	3,984 fiction
	502 non-fiction
	243 talking books

residential/nursing homes	1,428 fiction
	Non-fiction and talking books
	requested are borrowed from
	housebound collection.

Reductions in the percentage of the bookfund allocated to the housebound service would have led to a situation where the service was unable to keep pace with demand. This situation was alleviated due to additional finance allocated from the Special Needs budget for the year (1993). This additional funding was subdivided into £4,000 for talking books, £2,000 for large print and £1,000 for non-fiction. The extra money enabled older housebound stock to be transferred to the residential/nursing home stock.

A comparison of issue figures from 1992/3 reveals a 18.7% increase in loans. January-December 1992 showed an issue of 16,778, an average of 1,398 per month. Figures for the following year period showed an issue of 19,917, an average of 1,660 per month. This increase was due to the addition of a part-time assistant with sole responsibility for expanding deliveries to institutions in January 1993. Stock expansion had also seen a 78% increase in the issue of talking books. The issue breakdown for 1993 is as follows:

Fiction	89%
Non-fiction	6%
Talking books	5%

Staffing levels comprise one full-time professional librarian, who is the Housebound Readers Librarian, and two part-time housebound assistants, one of whom is responsible for visits to individuals in their own home and the other for liaising with institutions. Staffing structure represents a major problem for the service. Sickness and holiday entitlement require regular relief from branch staff. Previously this had largely been supplied by staff employed at Huyton Library and occasionally staff at Kirkby Library. Recent changes in staffing structure, plus a pruning of staffing levels throughout the service, are likely to place an increasing demand on the overall library service. The service had suffered several problems to date resulting from a move to new premises in Kirkby Library. Previously it had operated from a central location in the library headquarters at Huyton. Despite limited space, the location was convenient for most areas. The new site is less suitable, since Kirkby is located in the northern area of the borough and the change of location has necessitated a total rescheduling of the service.

The housebound service is clearly improving the quality of life for a large number of elderly and infirm individuals who would otherwise be effectively barred from the service provided by the library. The stock is specially selected to encompass a range of formats and so cater for the diverse needs of this section of the population. More specialised requirements can be catered for from stock from other branches or via the regional loan system. The housebound service also operates as a referral point from which users can obtain information or help direct or through contacts that the service has developed.

Mobile services to institutions

Figures available at the time of the case study revealed that 24 residential and nursing homes were visited on a regular basis. Unlike Liverpool, where the service is operated as part of the mobile library's schedule, in Knowsley the service falls under the umbrella of the Housebound Librarian who visits homes in a small van. The service is operated on a borough wide basis with a part-time member of staff from the housebound team having special responsibility for service provision.

Branch services to the elderly

The work of the Special Needs Librarian is discussed in this section since, while she has contact with institutions for special needs groups (encompassing the elderly), this area technically falls under the aegis of the housebound service. In addition, while frequently travelling throughout the borough and working at various locations as and when required, the Special Needs Librarian is essentially "branch based." Both the post and resultant service were introduced as a New Initiative bid in January 1993. Its objective was to provide a cross-borough service to all residents who, either through sensory, visual, physical or some other impairment, find difficulty in accessing mainstream public library services and whose needs cannot be met by, or do not qualify for, the housebound service. While not specifically aimed at the elderly, it is inevitable, by the nature of its criteria, that a large number of the elderly will be served by this initiative. Advice and information are also provided to carers, colleagues and other professionals working in related fields within the Borough.

Extra funding at the implementation stage enabled the Special Needs Librarian to enhance stock in identifiable areas where the greatest benefits to users could be achieved. £3,000 was allocated for the housebound service to improve their large print section and the under represented non-fiction element of the service. The Special Needs Librarian also circulated booklists from specialist publishers to all branch libraries who were then invited to place orders for titles. This was funded from the Special Needs budget. The development of this service is additionally valuable, since it has provided an extra enquiry and information point covering previously unaddressed areas. This aspect of the service is of particular interest to this research. The annual report detailing the first year of the service's delivery revealed that approximately sixty enquiries had been dealt with over that period. This was either from information delivered direct by the Special Needs Librarian or by referral to another agency. These requests for information can be broken down into the various categories of enquirer:

- Other Knowsley libraries;
- Other council departments;
- Public (number of elderly not determined);
- Other library authorities;
- Housebound service/residential homes;
- Other advice/information agencies.

The Special Needs Librarian has built up an information file containing over 87 entries in the course of the first year. This information has been disseminated to the two main reference libraries as well as to other advice agencies as appropriate.

Through involvement with the Vulnerable Peoples Group the Special Needs Librarian has also been a source of information to colleagues in other Departments who share a responsibility for service provision to the elderly.

Marketing and promotion is important with any emergent service and the Special Needs Librarian has attached particular importance to achieving a high visibility profile within the community while promoting the service in an informal way. This has been achieved largely through group visits to the libraries, outreach activities, e.g. involvement with Knowsley Co-ordinating Committee for the Handicapped, Knowsley Talking Newspaper, contact with colleagues in other council departments and with St. Helens and Knowsley District Health Authority. Events such as the reminiscence day, Knowsley Show and Open Day all contribute towards promoting the work of the authority as a whole, while enabling the Special Needs Librarian to highlight an aspect of the service.

Extra funding of £4,000 was also made available to enhance the housebound library's collection of talking books, giving a greater selection of material to the housebound visually impaired, a category that is predominantly elderly. Similarly, an extra £2,000 was spent on large print material and £1,000 on non-fiction books for the housebound service. This in turn released more stock for the residential and nursing homes.

The Special Needs Librarian has developed and maintained regular contact with the Social Services Department with regard to the Royal National Institute for the Blind Talking Book Service, which is available to the visually impaired. Similarly,

application forms for the Knowsley Talking Newspaper have been distributed to all branch libraries via the specialist social worker on the adult team within the Social Services Department. In addition, a large print newspaper has been subscribed to for all branch libraries and will be monitored by library staff to assess popularity. All the information in this section was obtained by a series of informal interviews with the Special Needs Librarian who was previously known to the researcher and had expressed a willingness to assist with this research.

Statutory and voluntary groups working with the elderly

A wide range of groups exists in Knowsley ranging from national bodies to small, local organisations. Age Concern have a branch based at Huyton. Its aim, like its counterparts across the country, is to represent the aims of the elderly within the Borough. Age Concern was established in 1989 as a direct result of the recommendations of a steering committee comprised of representatives from the local council for voluntary services, Knowsley Age Concern committee, The Social Services Department, St Helens and Knowsley Health Authorities and the Liverpool Diocesan Committee workers from Stockbridge Village. Support for Age Concern (Knowsley) has been solidly consistent throughout the Borough and the organisation is working to achieve competence in the national goals of Age Concern: direct service provision; innovation and research; participation in joint planning, and campaigning and advocacy. Achievement of these goals would enable Age Concern (Knowsley) to apply for full membership of Age Concern and so participate in national policy making.

Linked with formal organisations within the Borough are services and clubs operated on a local level to assist the elderly. These groups provide a variety of services which unite to form a complex system. One element of this is provision of care to the elderly in their own home. Professional carers agree that it is more satisfactory to reserve the independence of clients as far as possible and avoid admitting individuals to residential care until no other option exists. Against this background the visiting scheme that is a tenet of Age Concern policy operates. Age Concern (Knowsley), in agreement with Knowsley's Social Services, operates a visiting scheme for vulnerable elderly suffering from isolation in the Prescott, Whiston and Cronton areas of the Borough. At the time of writing it was intended that the scheme would run for three years, operating seven days a week between 8.00am and 10.00pm. It would provide a befriending service to the vulnerable elderly in their own home. This was envisaged as meaning people with little social contact and mental or physical conditions. Each "befriender" would regularly visit 2-3 elderly people and form a close relationship with them. Each visit would be of 1-2 hours duration per week. The visitor would represent a link with the outside world and serves the dual purpose of monitoring the condition and progress of the elderly.

On a more amateur level, a local church in Knowsley offers a visiting scheme in the Roby area. This encompasses the sick, disabled and elderly. A range of clubs for the elderly also exist in the Borough, approximately 250 at the time of writing. These exist essentially to provide a focal point for entertainment, activities and meetings aimed at the elderly. Their sole purpose is to provide a venue once or twice a week for the elderly to get together and enjoy a nourishing meal and the

opportunity for some companionship on a regular basis. As in the Liverpool study, telephone contact was initially made with the organisations concerned. This was followed by an interview with a member of staff.

Conclusion

Both authorities have clearly recognised the importance of providing a range of services to the elderly and acknowledge that this is a vulnerable group in need of assistance. Not only do both authorities operate an active library service for the elderly, providing essential support to those who are in residential accommodation or housebound, there is also an awareness among other council departments that this is a group with special needs and requirements.

In addition, both authorities have a strong presence from the voluntary and private sector. Age Concern operates an active programme for the elderly and there is a range of local special interest groups who exist to serve the needs of the elderly. The case studies have only been able to scratch the surface of this group by highlighting one or two initiatives in each area. Common to both authorities is the tendency for all these organisations to work on an independent basis with very little communication or resource sharing taking place. On the occasions when organisations have dealings with one another it is on an informal, *ad hoc* basis. A recommendation for the future, based on these findings, would be to initiate a planned programme of meetings, exchanges of ideas and information, resource sharing and partnership activities which would avoid costly duplications and allow for the improvement and development of services to the elderly. The role of

partnership in developing a community service is examined in more detail in chapter 16.

It is apparent from both case studies that the majority of services currently undertaken in relation to the elderly focus primarily on the elderly that are in need of assistance, essentially the “old” elderly referred to in chapter 1. The response of the library service to this, in both instances, has been to implement a traditional domiciliary service, a situation that is echoed in all other local authorities surveyed. These findings would tend to support the hypothesis suggested in section 1 of this research.

It can now be postulated that, after a general examination of the literature surrounding the elderly and the services provided for them coupled with the postal questionnaire undertaken in chapter 7, the hypothesis that the view of the elderly adopted by the organisations serving in them in the community was of the “elderly infirm” who needed assistance and guidance, has been upheld. This suggests that there is a clear need to focus on the requirements of the more active elderly who are fully able to take advantage of services provided for them. The remainder of this research focuses specifically on an information service curtailed to the specific requirements of the elderly but one that still treats them as a worthwhile group within the community as a whole.

Organisations, the library included, have tended to offer services that they have perceived their client groups need. This research attempts to rectify this situation by showing the actual needs of the elderly and then asking where, considering the

variety of services provided by the community infrastructure, the library should go from here in terms of policy and service development. To achieve this understanding of the needs of the elderly themselves, the next two chapters describe a market research exercise undertaken in one of the case study authorities. At the start of this research it was hoped to administer a survey in both of the case study authorities. The amount of work involved, both in producing the required number of questionnaires and in analysing the data, soon became apparent and a decision was taken to limit the survey to one authority. Knowsley was selected since it had fewer branch libraries, thus making the survey easier to administer but still providing the necessary geographical coverage. In addition, the Special Needs Librarian was personally known to the researcher and was enthusiastic about organising and assisting with the administrative workload. The express purpose of this element of the research was to ascertain how the elderly find information, what information they require and how they feel the library fits into their requirements.

Chapter 11

Determining the needs of the elderly

The final element of each case study was to conduct a piece of market research to determine the needs of the elderly as opposed to “perceived needs” determined by the library service. This would enable a comparison to be drawn from which it would be possible to see where the library service was failing its elderly users and how it could rectify shortfalls in its service provision.

A questionnaire was developed which attempted to provide a detailed personal profile, information on patterns of library usage, opinions on current services and suggestions regarding unfulfilled needs. The decision to administer a purely in-house survey was taken for two reasons:

Simplicity of organisation, since library staff in selected areas could administer it and provide a central collection point. A more comprehensive picture of the information seeking habits of the elderly would have been gained by attempting to survey non-Library users. This proved, on reflection, to be too difficult to administer since the time and manpower needed to arrange visits to organisations where the elderly meet or to undertake a market research exercise in the street were beyond the researchers' resources.

The survey was specifically angled to elicit information on library usage and opinions regarding current service in order to determine actual consumer needs and enable a future strategy to be planned. Because of this, a level of understanding and familiarity with current library provision was required. It was felt that this effectively excluded any individuals other than library users.

The questionnaire was designed with predominantly closed questions in order to simplify analysis. It was felt, however, that some open questions were necessary in order to enable respondents to express in their own words, their views on library provision and changes they would like to see made. A small scale pilot was conducted on six people, aged over sixty, who were personally known to the researcher. As a result of this, the wording of a number of questions was amended. Specifically these were questions where respondents were invited to tick as many examples as required of a particular category. In the initial questionnaire the way this request was worded was revealed to be ambiguous to respondents. It was planned to be administered over a one month period and October 1994 was chosen as a suitable month. It was decided to administer 400 questionnaires a number which was felt to be manageable while still enabling meaningful conclusions to be drawn. Rather than overburden staff at one or two libraries, and to ensure a degree of borough-wide representation, it was decided to involve all branch libraries. Knowsley is a small authority with only seven branch libraries, Huyton is the main library, located at the centre of the Borough, Kirkby is second in size and serves the northern area of the Borough. The remaining branches are much smaller and are dispersed randomly throughout the Borough. The strategy selected was that the

four smaller branches would each administer 50 questionnaires each and Huyton and Kirkby, who serve a much larger clientele would deal with 100 questionnaires each. This had the twofold benefit of easing pressure on staff and ensuring as wide a coverage as possible.

A letter was sent to the Housebound Librarian early in September and a follow up phone call was made later that month to confirm details. The questionnaires were despatched to the Housebound Librarian who organised their administration at a branch level, briefed staff as to the objectives of the questionnaire and acted as the contact point during the exercise. In total 400 questionnaires were administered with 246 returned. This represents a response rate of 61%. Responses were received from all branches but the number handed in at each location varied considerably. The highest returns were naturally at the two larger libraries which both received the most questionnaires to distribute and which served the heaviest populated areas.

Analysis of the questionnaire

The questionnaire asked 23 questions specifically designed to elicit as much information as possible about the backgrounds, interests, activities and information requirements of the 60+ age group in Knowsley. The aim was that this market research would reveal a profile of this age group and provide an insight into information requirements and the role of the public library from a users viewpoint. Previous research (Edmonds, Dee and Bowen) and the questionnaire administered in Part 1 of this research provided a wealth of information on the services offered

by the public library, but little has been done to reconcile this information with actual needs as defined by the users themselves.

The questionnaire was designed to cover 3 broad areas: questions 1-5 provide a personal profile; questions 6-13 examine lifestyles and expectations; and questions 14-23 look at the level of library usage. Each area elicits a specific range of information and by linking these elements, information can be gleaned which will enable a profile of requirements, both in terms of library expectations and information needs to be developed. This information, set against what is already known about current library provision to the over sixties, could play a significant role in strategic planning and marketing of future services. Given that this is a time when this section of the population is rapidly expanding, while library budgets are being squeezed as a result of economic constraints and stringent financial policies, any attempt to target resources where they are most needed, thus maximising the library's position in the community, can only be to its eventual benefit. However, proof that a market niche exists must first be established before plans to implement a service strategy can proceed.

Questions 1-5 provided background information on the respondents. They determined such facts as sex, age, marital status, employment status and age at which full time education ceased. Analysis revealed that 63% of respondents were female and 37% male. Question 2 attempted to determine the age of respondents and to achieve this answers were placed in 5 bands. Not surprisingly, 71% fell into the 60-70 age range. The recently retired or "young" elderly are inevitably the heaviest users of the public library service. Of this percentage, the bulk (49%) fell

into the 65-69 age range and 22% into the lower 60-64 range. This was relatively surprising, considering that nearly two thirds of respondents were female, a group able to retire at the earlier age of 60 who would have a considerable amount of time on their hands; however the assumption that female respondents were in active employment prior to the age of 60 may in itself be an erroneous one. 17% of respondents fell into the 70-74 category and not surprisingly only 6% fell into each of the two higher groups (75-79 and 80+).

This breakdown emphasises the fact that use of the library is strongly related to declining abilities, both of mobility and ability to utilise library resources. A large number of over 70s are still active library users but, at a more remote level, frequently relying on family, friends, neighbours and outreach services to bring books to them or assist them in actual visits. At the oldest end of the spectrum a sharp increase in users in residential and nursing homes becomes apparent and these individuals, while still using the library, will be almost entirely reliant on housebound services.

The majority of respondents were married (61%) with widows forming the second highest category (29%). Single and divorced/separated accounted for a very small percentage (3% and 7% respectively). The latter is consistent with the age of the population surveyed since divorce is relatively rare among the older generation. The high percentage of respondents still married is inevitably connected to the fact that 71% are under 70. The higher the age the more likelihood that one partner, more often than not male, will have died.

Question 4 looked at employment status. This area was broken down into six categories and acknowledged that “over 60” does not signify the end of an individual’s working life, in fact many continue in part-time employment into their seventies. By the same token there are many under 60s not in full time employment. The increasing trend towards early retirement has led to a situation where a considerable number of 55-60 year olds have left the employment market either through choice or through enforced retirement/redundancy. This situation was touched on briefly in Part 1 but this research has consciously chosen to define the elderly as “anyone over 60” regardless of status. The problems confronting the 55-60 group in terms of frustration, early retirement and disassociation are very real ones but do not fall within the parameters defined by this research. It is enough that this situation is acknowledged but further comment falls outside the area of this research. Not surprisingly, 66% of respondents were retired but only 2% were working part-time and none was in full-time employment. These statistics could be reflective of Knowsley specifically, rather than representative of the age group generally, since the area suffers from above average unemployment. Only 5% were unemployed and a further 10% had retired on health grounds. The remaining 17% fell into the final category of “housewife”.

Question 5 asked at what age respondents completed their full-time education. Given the age and economic circumstances (Knowsley is a low socio-economic area), the results were predictable. 61% left school between the age of 12-14 with a further 24% completing their education at 15-16. Only 10% stayed on at school until 17-18 and the figure moving into full-time higher education halved to 5%. This probably represents a fairly accurate assessment of the situation, given the age

of respondents and the period when they left school. In conclusion the personal profile built up from analysis of this sample revealed the average respondent as female, under 70, married and retired who left school at under 14. Given the ratio of male to female in this sample group and the socio-economic circumstances they inhabit, this result is fairly predictable.

The second section of the questionnaire was designed to build up a picture of lifestyle and expectations with an emphasis on information retrieval and needs. Question 6 attempted to determine the use made of the media by the elderly on a regular basis. Regular for this purpose was defined as a daily basis. Reading and books scored the highest with 88% of respondents admitting to this closely followed by watching television (80%). These results are initially surprising, since one tends to assume that watching television is the most popular leisure activity pursued by the population generally. However, it should be remembered that this questionnaire was an in-house one and that all the respondents are regular library users and therefore, by inference, active readers. The results would probably have been quite different if the questionnaire had been administered in the street. 60% regularly read a paper and 61% listened to the radio. The results obtained for all four options suggested that information disseminated in any or all media forms would achieve a wide coverage among this age group. While the cost of television advertising is generally beyond the means of the public library service, publicity through local radio and newspapers is a viable means of drawing attention to what the public library service can offer the community and the many roles which it fills over and above the provision of reading materials.

The next question aimed to ascertain exactly what services were used by the over sixties. "Services" is a generic term, since the question also included pursuits such as visiting relatives and the services themselves listed were a mixture of those likely to be indulged either through choice or due to necessity, such as bus travel and visiting hospitals and doctors. While all of these may be used at some point by respondents, the interest here was in those services that were pursued or used on a regular basis, regular being defined as "once a month or more frequently".

An overwhelming 93% used the library (again, given the sample this is not a surprising response). This was closely followed by visiting the supermarket (90%), again not surprising since shopping is a necessity and the respondents were predominantly female. 80% made regular use of the Post Office, again not unusual given the age of the population and the fact that the Post Office remains the most probable place from which to collect pension payments and benefit claims. 54% regularly visited relatives and 49% used the bus service. The latter is probably due to a general decline in car ownership resulting from reduced financial circumstances and/or declining health (visual impairment is prevalent in this age group). Coupled with this are the financial incentives available in Knowsley (although not present nation-wide) which encourage use of public transport and the fact that the area possesses a good local transport network. A third of respondents regularly visited their doctor (37%) and attended church (33%). Again, neither response is especially surprising given the age and upbringing of the group. In addition, the latter frequently provides valuable social contact and offers a means of community involvement as well as providing solace in times of bereavement. 29% of respondents regularly attended hospital, again a natural result of their age

and increasing health problems and nearly a quarter (24%) attended community or day centres. Again, these are institutions that provide a sense of community and “belonging” which a lot of the elderly, especially those living alone, would find valuable. 12% played bingo and 5% attended the cinema, the low response to the latter question was not unexpected since there is no local access to this facility.

Question 8 was a specific attempt to determine from where the elderly obtained information. “Information” was not defined, so it must be remembered that information can mean different things to different people. For the purpose of the questionnaire it is taken in the most general sense since what may be important to one individual will not necessarily be so to someone else. However, whatever the relative importance attached to any one piece of information, the requester still needs to be able to find an answer somewhere. This question listed twelve sources of information and asked respondents to rank these with a value ranging from 1-12 with 1 representing the most important and 12 the least. In reality, fewer than 60 questions were completed in the prescribed manner; the majority of respondents merely ticked the sources relevant to them but made no attempt to rank them, while a few respondents did rank sources but only those again relevant to themselves. This indicates that, however clear the instructions are in any piece of information, people do not read them fully and that, while convenient, questionnaires are not a totally accurate means of gathering information since interpretation varies widely among respondents. Because of this variation in responding to the question the only way in which a meaningful analysis could be attempted was to rank them according to the number of “hits” each source received. Based on this relatively unsatisfactory means of analysis, the scores

revealed that television was the most popular means of obtaining information. This was followed by newspapers, the library, radio, friends, family, books, hospital/doctor, leaflets, magazines, posters, and lastly, community centres. It must be remembered that this analysis is not an accurate one and can only indicate a general trend. The position of television, books, newspapers and radio in the rankings was largely consistent with their position in question 6. The only exception was books, but if one considers that the library was ranked third (and is synonymous with books for many people) then the similarity in rankings is maintained.

Question 9 asked respondents about their hobbies. Not surprisingly, given that respondents have retired and have increased leisure time, the results revealed that 90% have hobbies of one sort or another. Again, allowances must be made for the fact that the term “hobbies” is a subjective one but the intention was merely to get an indication of how people use their leisure time. Question 10 explored this in more detail by asking respondents to specify what their hobbies (or interests) were. Again, to ensure that only regular activities were marked, once a month was specified in the question. The most popular hobby pursued, reading (90%), was unsurprising in view of the age surveyed and the in-house nature of the survey. Gardening, traditionally popular with the retired, was second with 68%. DIY and knitting/sewing each attracted 27% of respondents and probably reflects a male/female split given the traditional stereotyping attached to both occupation. Bowls, another activity generally indulged in by the retired, attracted 10% and dancing 5%. Painting and golf attracted no votes. Given the latter’s increasing popularity this is perhaps surprising; however golf can be an expensive hobby and

this score may simply be indicative of the area. Since it was only possible to list a small number of hobbies the option was left for respondents to list any other interests. These “others”, which attracted one or two respondents each (5-10% of the answers), included swimming, stamp collecting, committee work, choir, music, photography, wood carving, car maintenance and bridge.

Question 11 turned to activities, listing six that were felt to be those most likely to be pursued by an elderly and relatively active population with time on its hands. The distinction between “hobbies” and “activities” is a fine one. For the purpose of this survey, an attempt was made to differentiate hobbies which are indicative of peoples interests and can be both active or sedentary and activities, seen here as encompassing a degree of physical motivation and effort of the part of the pursuer. In reality it is unlikely that this difference was perceived by respondents since the whole matter is one of interpretation. The results of questions 10 and 11 really need considering together.

The most popular activity was walking, which attracted 54% of respondents. Given that the target group were active enough to use the library on a regular basis and were largely under 70, this answer comes as no great surprise. In addition, the term is sufficiently general to encompass both serious walking and walking that is done out of necessity due to a lack of any other form of transport or as a result of less affluent circumstances. The former is more likely to represent the true answer since, as was mentioned earlier, the area does boast a reliable public transport network that is heavily subsidised.

Second in popularity was visiting places of interest (46%). Again, “places of interest” is relative to the individual’s own interests but the question was intended to reflect a cultural and historic interest (churches, houses, gardens). This interpretation, however, may not have been the one assumed by respondents and again illustrates the problems of interpretation and ambiguity that are a drawback to the questionnaires. Sports/games and voluntary work were closely grouped, with 15% and 17% respectively. Both are undertakings likely to be pursued, given increased leisure time and the fact that the area affords a number of sports facilities offering discounted rates to the elderly. Educational classes and council work attracted identical scores (3%). Opportunity was again given to list activities not covered but only six respondents completed this section. Answers included charity work, church activities, holidays and visiting the library.

The next two questions focused on information specifically. Question 12 attempted to pinpoint specific information requirements that this section of the population might have. Question 13 tried to determine where the over sixties were most likely to go to seek this information. The remaining questions, forming the third section of the questionnaire, focused specifically on the library and the usage made of it. The overall objective of questions 13-23 was to try and define the various needs for information and the library’s role in providing this information.

Question 12 asked respondents to state what subjects they most felt they required information on. The most common answer was health matters (44%), which did not come as a great surprise in view of the age of respondents. The second most important need expressed was for benefit entitlement information (38%).

Concerns about reduced finances represent a major problem for this group and the need for security, peace of mind and help in coping with the plethora of information associated with benefits and claims is clearly recognised. People know that they are entitled to assistance but are unsure as to the nature of this assistance, how to go about obtaining this information and, once they have it, how to interpret and utilise it. On an equally practical basic level, the need for information on housing and heating was the third most popular response with 32% of respondents citing it. Pensions attracted 29% of votes, again reflecting a need for financial security along with comfort and quality of life.

Two requirements attracted identical scores: the need for retirement information and information on leisure opportunities (22%). The former would be important to only a small group within this age range: Those individuals who are within the 60-65 spectrum and male are most likely to respond positively to this. The need for leisure information is probably more pronounced at the lower end of the age range, which would contain the greatest number of active individuals. This is not to say however, that the “old” elderly do not enjoy leisure pursuits of some kind. There is a considerable gap between these requirements and the remainder listed which, although useful, do not occupy the same level of concern. The ones mentioned here could be viewed as intrinsic to the comfort and security of the elderly whereas the remainder, while desirable, are not of vital importance.

Financial planning and advice on taxation resulted in 12% of votes, closely followed by continuing education and personal matters, both attracting 10%. The inclusion of continuing education is synonymous with the trend to encourage

learning and a philosophy that opportunities exist for anyone with the inclination to pursue subjects that are of interest to them. Bereavement information attracted 7%. This is the age group most likely to suffer the loss of a partner at a time when vulnerability, is for many, at its greatest and in many ways the low response which this category attracted is surprising and could be indicative of the view held by many elderly that grief is private something to be borne alone or shared with close friends and family. The lowest scores were for information on voluntary work and legal matters, 5% for each.

Question 13 went one step further and attempted to pinpoint the specific agencies used to find the types of information listed in the previous question. Ten agencies, including the library, were itemised with opportunity for respondents to enter other agencies that they might have occasion to use. Interestingly, none of the respondents mentioned “others”, so the inference is that the ten listed covered all major eventualities.

The most popular was CAB (Citizen’s Advice Bureau) with 49% of respondents admitting to using it. This organisation is well known and highly regarded, so this result is not surprising. Age Concern attracted 39% of votes. Again this agency is national in its coverage, well publicised, and unlike many other agencies, specialises in helping and advising this group of the population. It was encouraging to see that the library emerged as joint third and only 2% below Age Concern (37%). This result is not surprising as this survey was an in-house one, undertaken on people who are likely to be regular and supportive users of the library. As such, little can be read into this result, had the survey been conducted

outside the library a result of this kind would have been more significant. Sharing the same score as the library was family and friends. Again this is not really surprising: many elderly people retain close contact with family and friends who often form a network of close contacts built up over the years and place great reliance on their opinions and advice. This category also represents a personal contact point and whereas help from agencies such as CAB, Age Concern and the library may be more far reaching and detailed, they frequently lack the personal and highly social interaction that can be found by asking family and friends for assistance. On the down side, the accuracy and objectivity of this means of obtaining information is likely to be far less reliable.

Grouped closely next in descending order were hospitals/doctors (32%) and the Department of Health and Social Security (29%). Given the increasing role played by these agencies in the lives of the over sixties, coupled with the authority traditionally associated with this category, this result is to be expected. Connected to this is the fact that a large number of information needs relating to this group invariably focus on health concerns, a fact born out by the results of question 12. Much the same can be said of the popularity of the Department of Health and Social Security. It is acknowledged as the specialist purveyor of governmental information relating to benefits etc., and again the results of question 12 reveal that benefit entitlement information, housing and heating and pensions are important to the elderly (a combined score of 42%). At the lower end of the spectrum were the local council (15%) and the police (10%). Finally Housing Associations, other council departments and local groups for the elderly complete the picture amassing a total of 16% between them.

The next question marked the start of a range of questions aimed at determining the level of library usage among respondents. This moves on logically from the earlier questions that explored lifestyle and expectations to focus on patterns of library usage. The significant role of the library was attested to in the results of question 13. Question 14 was one of the few open question in the entire questionnaire. It asked respondents to comment on the library as a place for obtaining help and information. Since the library achieved third position in the previous question and the questionnaire itself was conducted in a library environment on individuals who were library users, the answers were likely to be biased in the library's favour. A selection of answers included such comments as "essential to the community", "contained much local and recreational information", "helpful service", "useful leaflets" and "useful services". Although these answers are flattering it should be noted that a response to this open ended question was forthcoming from only a third of respondents and the people most likely to bother filling in this section will tend to be predisposed to the library.

Question 15 asked the standard question regarding membership. The 100% positive answer to this was not surprising when one considers that this was an in-house survey. The next question attempted to gauge frequency of attendance. More than half of respondents (56%) visited weekly, 32% admitted to regular monthly visits and 12% stated that they came on a daily basis. The high response is almost certainly indicative of a section of the population with ample leisure time, who have a commitment to reading and who see the library as occupying an important role in the community.

Question 17 tried to ascertain the various motives behind why the over sixties visit the library apart from the obvious one of obtaining books to read. Its purpose was to see how information needs ranked alongside other equally valid reasons for regular library attendance. Predictably “for books” scored 95% and was the main reason why respondents visited the library. The fact that this is the foremost reason does not preclude other contributory reasons for making visits. It was encouraging and quite revealing to see that “seeking information” was placed second, with 46% by respondents. All other answers, including: selecting tapes, escaping the house, warmth, company, meeting people and attending clubs and meetings, attracted much lower scores.

Question 18 was concerned with access to the library. The declining mobility of this age group is acknowledged and the frequency of visits must inevitably be bound up with ease of access. The question specified the following options: car, walking, bus, being driven and a combination of all. Walking was the most popular answer, with 49% of respondents citing it. This suggests a group who live locally, are in good health and active and probably very frequent users (daily/weekly). It may be that exercise, as well as convenience, formed part of the motive for this method of transport. The second most popular answer was travel by bus (32%). This is logical considering the convenient public transport network, concessionary travel and the inevitable fact that users may not be active enough or live too far a way to make walking a preferred option. Car travel ranked third, with 22%. That this should be the lowest scoring choice is not unusual since reduced financial circumstances would mean that this group of the population would generally score low on car ownership. Declining general health such as visual impairment would

also contribute. 10% stated that they came with family and friends, while 3% used a combination of two or more methods.

Question 19 asked with whom the over sixties came to the library. The most popular answer was that they visited on their own (66%), demonstrating a high degree of independence. Users are more commonly women and it may be that they prefer to visit alone as part of the general shopping expedition. A reason for this may be that women tend to be more aware of their partner's taste than vice versa and frequently take the lead in many roles (shopping, selecting clothes, furniture) and it may be that the library is simply another extension of that role. The second most popular answer was visiting with one's husband/wife, but this answer came very much lower scoring only 27%. An even smaller number cited a family member (17%) such as a son, daughter or grandchildren. Visiting with the same person was the norm and only 5% claimed to visit with a mixture of the above choices. None of the respondents selected "carer" as an option, which would tend to indicate a high level of independence and mobility consistent with the use of the library being by the "active" elderly. Those over sixty requiring carers are more likely to be housebound or in some form of residential accommodation and likely to be benefiting from a different range of library services such as the traditional domiciliary ones.

Question 20 asked whether respondents made use of the mobile library. Only 76% answered the question (possibly implying that the other 24% did not use the mobile and therefore did not bother to answer the question). Of the respondents who answered, 63% never took advantage of this service, 10% sometimes used it

and 3% stated that they always used it. Since this survey was conducted in branch libraries only this response reflects the geographical distribution of users. The majority are well served by the branches and a good transport system. Some of the smaller branches have more limited opening times and the mobile library may be used as a top up to the main service, but the responses suggest that this is relatively rare with most users being able to access one or other of the branches, without difficulty.

Question 22 was the only open question in this section of the questionnaire. The other questions were deliberately designed as closed to facilitate analysis. It was felt that at least one question in this section, asking respondents to indicate areas which they felt could be improved, would be informative. Fewer than half of the respondents completed it, suggesting perhaps that, while people are happy to tick boxes since it requires little effort or thought, to actually write a statement is less appealing since it means actually having to think about what is being asked. This information would have been useful to follow up, perhaps by a series of interviews with respondents who had answered. In reality this was not possible since the questionnaires were all anonymous and were handed in at the respective branches, collated by the Special Needs Librarian, and then sent to the researcher by post. Of those respondents who did comment about service improvements, the answers were fairly predictable with 10% suggesting coffee mornings and talks and more books, 5% the addition of lavatories, and 3% more staff, redecoration and improved disabled facilities. Access to the Internet, CD-ROMs and community information were not mentioned by respondents but that is probably because they are services the elderly would be familiar with or associate with the

library. That is not to say that, were such facilities made freely available and assistance in their use provided, the elderly would not make take advantage of them. Once familiar with these concepts users might then come to view them as part of the library “scene”. In essence much comes down to what is familiar and a general concern about change from familiar routines.

Question 23, the final question in the survey, attempted to draw strands together by asking for an overall opinion on the service currently available. Given the in-house nature of the questionnaire and the response to the previous question, the answers here were what one would expect from a group who are committed library users in the standard sense (borrowers of books). 71% stated that the service was very good, 12% rated it as good, 4% satisfactory, 10% thought there was room for improvement and only 3% considered it poor.

The results of this exercise were obtained solely from an analysis of the questionnaires. Ideally, with more time and help, it would have been informative to have supplemented this research with selected interviews on a range of elderly users in order to build on the information provided by the questionnaire. In reality, the only follow up contact was a return visit to discuss with the Special Needs Librarian how she felt the survey went from an administrative viewpoint and to talk generally to library staff involved about how they felt respondents found the questionnaire exercise.

The general conclusion is one of an undemanding clientele who accept what the library offers, are users in the traditional sense (only to be expected when one considers the age of those surveyed) and are active with a variety of outside interests. They perceive the library as a place where information is available but do not view it as the main source for their information requirements. Library strategy for the elderly has always focused on the less able. Those who are actually able to use the service have rarely been segregated from the vast majority of library users who may in reality be better equipped to seek answers to their needs and so do not have the elderly's potential reliance on the library as a focal point for help and information. The traditional view of the library held by the elderly has, to a large extent, been created by the library's failure to capitalise on the need for information and its own potential role as a purveyor of information. The library has clung to its accepted image as an enquiry point but has so far not chosen to seize a valuable market opportunity and carve out a niche for itself in the rapidly expanding technological environment. The next chapter in this section takes the information gleaned from the questionnaire and analysed here and attempts to reconstruct a more detailed profile of how the elderly find, use and actually cope with information. This in turn will impact on how the library can try to match its strategy to the needs of the community it seeks to serve.

Chapter 12

Lessons for the Library Service: results of the survey

By linking age and sex to a range of variables such as hobbies, interests, facilities used and agencies consulted, the information seeking habits of individual sections within the broad group termed “the elderly” can be profiled. This information can be invaluable in aiding an organisation such as the library to plan its service delivery strategy and future objectives.

By building up a wide community profile of users' habits, the library can gain an understanding of its role as one of a number of community service providers. This information will allow it to decide the strategy it should adopt in its relations towards other organisations. Inter-dependence and collaboration form a vital role in organisational strategy when resources are drastically reduced. Apart from providing an appreciation of how the library interacts with the community, knowledge of use made of other organisations can serve to indicate potential areas where the library can market itself if it decides to adopt an outreach strategy.

Ratio of age to gender

<i>Age</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>M</i>
<i>60-64</i>	42	12
<i>65-69</i>	78	42
<i>70-74</i>	24	18
<i>75-80</i>	0	15
<i>80+</i>	16	0
<i>Total</i>	161	85

The increase in male respondents at 65 is consistent with the retirement age for most men. Faced with increased leisure time and an opportunity to pursue hobbies and interests, they are more likely to visit the library with their partner. The higher activity for women at 60+ is due, in a large number of instances, to women not working or working part-time, the result being that they have more available leisure time than their male counterparts.

The figure declines significantly for both sexes after 70, undoubtedly due to a general decline in health and mobility. Those that are still able to enjoy books and/or tapes supplied by the library but physically unable to attend may begin to look to the library's special services for assistance or have to rely on help from family and friends. This is a dependence which may lead to decreased visits since other commitments can affect the time that relatives can devote to this activity.

Ratio of gender to use of media

	TV		Paper		Radio		Book	
F	116	72%	95	59%	98	61%	142	88%
M	82	96%	173	85%	52	61%	74	87%
Total	198	80%	168	68%	150	61%	216	88%

An analysis of the use made of media provides a useful indicator of where a service such as the library might seek to publicise itself. In order to gain the widest audience it is valuable to know which media forms the target audience uses. Not surprisingly, given the nature of the respondents, the book scored best overall. Male respondents also make significant use of television and newspapers while the figure is substantially lower for females. Since the scores are generally high over

all four forms, a combination of all four as a means of promoting the library and its services to the community would be successful.

Ratio of gender to use of facilities

	Library	Post Office	Supermarket	Bus	Church	Community Centre
F	159 (99%)	145 (90%)	161 (100%)	94 (58%)	52 (32%)	49 (30%)
M	69 (81%)	53 (62%)	61 (72%)	26 (30%)	27 (32%)	10 (12%)
Total	228 (93%)	198 (80%)	222 (90%)	121 (49%)	79 (32%)	59 (24%)

	Cinema	Relatives	GP	Bingo	Hospital
F	2 (1%)	103 (64%)	64 (40%)	27 (17%)	51 (32%)
M	10 (12%)	40 (58%)	27 (32%)	3 (4%)	22 (26%)
Total	12 (5%)	143 (58%)	91 (37%)	30 (12%)	73 (29%)

The results of this comparison place the library in a very pleasing light: it achieved the highest usage score, 93%. The high overall figure was due to an astonishing 99% among women (only 1% lower than the supermarket, which one would expect to have a unanimous score since it is a necessity). This score, coupled with 81% for men (the highest figure in the “male” section), gave the library a significant edge over all other categories. The supermarket scored next with 90%, a figure reduced by the male score of 72% revealing that, while elderly men with ample leisure time might do many things, shopping still ranked as a predominantly female activity. The third most popular facility was the Post Office, which is not surprising since this age group would visit it regularly to obtain pensions, stamps for utilities and benefit payments.

Looking at the results strategically with the promotion or location of a new service in mind, the library has a clearly identified and accepted place in the community. This makes it an ideal focus for any new initiative either on a collaborative basis or as the prime instigator. The supermarket can also be identified as a key area in the community that could be utilised on a partnership basis in any new venture planned by the library. In fact the results would strongly support the role of supermarkets as satellite sites for new services initiated by the library and aimed at this section of the community. This could take the form of information points, possibly with Internet connectivity, staffed on a rota basis.

The Post Office also has a natural role to play as a means of publicising services. Size would tend to preclude a more active involvement since most local Post Offices are relatively small and already take on other roles such as local store/corner shop, video hire, newsagents. Gaily coloured buses advertising services are now an everyday sight in the community and could become a publicity vehicle (literally) for any new service the library might wish to promote. Given the lengths of bus routes generally they would certainly ensure wide coverage. The steady use made of doctors, hospitals and churches would suggest that link-ups with these services would also be worth exploring.

Ratio of information requirements to gender

	Pensions	Financial	Housing	Leisure	Continuing education	Bereavement
M	51 (60%)	5 (3%)	22 (26%)	23 (27%)	20 (23%)	2 (3%)
F	20 (12%)	24 (28%)	57 (35%)	31 (19%)	5 (3%)	15 (9%)
Total	71 (29%)	29 (12%)	79 (32%)	54 (22%)	25 (10%)	17 (7%)

Ratio of information requirements to gender

	Health	Benefit s	Retirement	Voluntary Work	Legal	Personal
M	25 (29%)	17 (20%)	49 (58%)	1 (1%)	2 (2%)	6 (7%)
F	83 (52%)	72 (45%)	5 (3%)	11 (7%)	10 (6%)	19 (12%)
Total	108 (44%)	89 (36%)	54 (22%)	12 (5%)	12 (5%)	25 (10%)

Ratio of information requirements to age

	Pensions	Financial	Housing	Leisure	Continuing education	Bereavement
60-64 (22%)	20 (37%)	10 (18%)	19 (39%)	31 (57%)	8 (15%)	29 (17%)
65-69 (49%)	51 (42%)	8 (7%)	15 (12%)	19 (15%)	9 (7%)	31 (26%)
70-74 (17%)	0 (0%)	11 (26%)	38 (90%)	4 (9%)	4 (9%)	33 (78%)
75-79 (6%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (27%)	0 (0%)	3 (20%)	11 (73%)
80+ (6%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (13%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (20%)
Total (100%)	71 (29%)	29 (12%)	78 (32%)	54 (22%)	24 (10%)	88 (36%)

Ratio of information requirements to age

	Health	Benefits	Retirement	Voluntary Work	Legal	Personal
60-64 (22%)	21 (39%)	10 (18%)	28 (52%)	9 (17%)	7 (13%)	4 (7%)
65-69 (49%)	38 (32%)	31 (26%)	26 (22%)	3 (2%)	2 (2%)	11 (9%)
70-74 (17%)	35 (83%)	33 (78%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (7%)	3 (7%)
75-79 (6%)	8 (53%)	11 (73%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6 (40%)
80+ (6%)	6 (40%)	3 (20%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Total (100%)	108 (44%)	54 (22%)	54 (22%)	12 (5%)	12 (5%)	24 (10%)

Reasons for library visit by age and gender

By gender

	Meet Friends	Escape House	Warmth	Books	Tapes
M	0	4 (5%)	7 (8%)	81 (95%)	10 (2%)
F	12 (7%)	25 (15%)	18 (11%)	153 (95%)	19 (12%)
Total	12 (5%)	29 (12%)	25 (10%)	234 (95%)	29 (12%)

	Information	Company	Clubs	Reminiscing Clubs	Voluntary Work
M	30 (35%)	2 (2%)	0 (0%)	4 (2%)	0 (0%)
F	83 (52%)	15 (9%)	7 (4%)	3 (3%)	0 (0%)
Total	113 (46%)	17 (7%)	7 (3%)	7 (3%)	0 (0%)

Satisfying a need for information was recognised by the elderly as a major reason to visit the library. Books naturally scored the highest but information was the second most popular reason for visiting, ranking significantly above more social reasons such as meeting people and attending clubs. On face value it is satisfying to know that the library is clearly recognised as a major purveyor of information however this fact must be kept within the context of the population surveyed. Respondents were frequent library users with an obvious degree of knowledge and experience of the library and its role. Were this question asked as part of a survey amongst non-users the results would not be as encouraging. It could, however, be equally well argued that even non-library users are aware of what the library represents. Because of this, if surveyed, they may still cite the library due to its high profile and unique place in the community regardless of the status of their personal usage.

By age

	Meet Friends	Escape House	Warmth	Books	Tapes
60-64	3	10	1	54	17
(22%)	(5%)	(18%)	(2%)	(100%)	(31%)
65-69	8	11	12	120	8
(49%)	(7%)	(9%)	(10%)	(100%)	(7%)
70-74	1	6	8	42	2
(17%)	(2%)	(14%)	(3%)	(100%)	(5%)
75-79	0	0	3	11	1
(6%)	(0%)	(0%)	(20%)	(73%)	(7%)
80+	0	2	1	7	1
(6%)	(0%)	(13%)	(7%)	(47%)	(7%)
Total	12	29	25	234	29
(100%)	(5%)	(12%)	(10%)	(95%)	(12%)

By age

	Information	Company	Clubs	Reminiscing Clubs	Voluntary Work
60-64	38	0	5	6	0
(22%)	(70%)	(0%)	(9%)	(11%)	(0%)
65-69	62	3	2	1	0
(49%)	(52%)	(2%)	(2%)	(1%)	(0%)
70-74	13	11	0	0	0
(17%)	(31%)	(26%)	(0%)	(0%)	(0%)
75-79	0	0	0	0	0
(6%)	(0%)	(0%)	(0%)	(0%)	(0%)
80+	1	3	0	0	0
(6%)	(7%)	(20%)	(0%)	(0%)	(0%)
Total	113	17	7	7	0
(100%)	(46%)	(7%)	(3%)	(3%)	(0%)

This table shows a general decline in library use by age with the greatest activity being concentrated in the first decade of the “elderly” spectrum. Interestingly, more abstract reasons like company, warmth and escape reveal a tendency to increase with age. It is certainly true that loneliness, concern with heating costs and a loss of friends/partners will become more prevalent as age increases and there is a corresponding decline in income and companionship. The elderly who still retain reasonable mobility as they become older may begin to use the library and other

community based services for more practical and fundamental needs than a desire to read or seek information. At this age the library is more likely to represent a way of retaining social interaction in much the same way as going shopping and talking to staff and other customers.

Activities pursued by gender

	Walking	Places of interest	Voluntary activities	Sport	Continuing education	Council work	Other
M	69 (81%)	71 (83%)	6 (7%)	29 (34%)	4 (5%)	5 (6%)	23 (27%)
F	63 (39%)	41 (25%)	36 (42%)	8 (5%)	3 (2%)	2 (1%)	14 (9%)
Total	132 (54%)	113 (46%)	42 (17%)	37 (15%)	7 (3%)	7 (3%)	37 (15%)

Walking and visiting places of interest scored highly with male respondents and came out as the two most popular leisure activities. "Places of interest" as mentioned previously, is subjective and, although taken by myself to refer to cultural/historical locations, may not have been interpreted in this light by respondents generally. What is of interest to one individual will not be to another and in retrospect this question should have been qualified in some way. A place of interest could simply be a public house! Several of the results were not surprising when analysed by sex, sport scored far higher among male respondents and involvement in voluntary work was shown to be a predominantly female pursuit.

Agencies used by age and gender

By gender

	M	%	F	%	Total	%
DHSS	23	27%	48	30%	71	29%
CAB	32	38%	89	35%	121	49%
Age Concern	26	31%	70	43%	96	39%
Council Departments	33	39%	16	10%	49	20%
Police	4	5%	21	13%	25	10%
Housing Associations	6	7%	11	7%	17	7%
Library	31	36%	60	37%	91	37%
Local groups for the elderly	2	2%	10	6%	12	5%
GP/Hospital	12	14%	67	42%	79	32%
Family/Friends	27	32%	64	40%	91	37%

The scores for both sexes were fairly evenly balanced in all the major categories. CAB attracted the majority of votes with Age Concern, the library and family/friends all closely grouped. Both CAB and Age Concern are national, well-known organisations with a strong presence in this area. CAB is generally well known as an advice agency for all sectors of the population. Its 820 bureaux are staffed by a range of part-time volunteers, although paid helpers are increasingly being used. Its mission statement is to “alleviate personal distress and confusion by providing free, confidential, impartial and independent advice or information on any subject to anyone who asks.” While CAB offers a generalist information service with many of the information enquiries identical to those answered by the reference section of a public library, CAB also provides free, specialised advice sessions from legal advice to financial, marriage guidance and consumer advice.

Were this survey undertaken in another area with a less obvious and publicised presence for both organisations, the scores would undoubtedly be significantly lower. The library’s placement is natural since it is a noted presence in any

community and enjoys a monopoly in its chosen role. The importance placed on family/friends is to be expected since a large number of people would prefer to consult those closest to them when help and advice is needed, especially if it is of the type where official intervention and advice is not required. Where expertise of some degree is called for accessibility, familiarity and cost are likely to be major factors in the agency approached.

By age

	60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80+	Total
DHSS	13 (24%)	20 (17%)	26 (62%)	7 (47%)	5 (33%)	71 (29%)
CAB	18 (33%)	57 (48%)	33 (79%)	9 (60%)	3 (20%)	120 (49%)
Age Concern	8 (15%)	48 (40%)	29 (69%)	0 (0%)	5 (33%)	90 (39%)
Council Departments	24 (45%)	13 (11%)	10 (23%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	49 (20%)
Police	11 (20%)	13 (11%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	25 (10%)
Housing Associations	3 (6%)	5 (4%)	8 (19%)	0 (0%)	1 (7%)	17 (7%)
Library	19 (35%)	51 (43%)	12 (29%)	4 (27%)	5 (33%)	91 (37%)
Local groups for the elderly	9 (17%)	2 (2%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	12 (5%)
GP/Hospital	9 (17%)	31 (26%)	21 (50%)	9 (60%)	9 (60%)	79 (32%)
Family/Friends	13 (24%)	36 (30%)	25 (60%)	8 (53%)	9 (60%)	91 (37%)

Analysis by age of the three main agencies approached reveals that the library is used marginally more than the other two by the youngest end of the spectrum and maintains a steady usage across all age ranges. Age Concern and CAB, along with the DHSS, enjoy their heaviest usage by individuals in their mid sixties to seventies with a steady usage afterwards. There is no reason to assume that one

source is used to the exclusion of the others and the people most familiar with, and likely to consider consulting, a professional agency would inevitably use several selectively according to specific needs. The same can be said of the agencies themselves; none is exclusive and all are familiar with the services provided by and specialisms of the others. This invariably means they are likely to use each other on a referral basis as appropriate.

The next section of this research explores the role of new technology on the library service and asks how it is likely to impact on services to the elderly. The first chapter considers the impact of the “Information Superhighway” on society generally and the library service specifically. The second and final chapter in this section looks at how technology can assist in building a community information infrastructure and the effect of such a development on information dissemination to the elderly.

Part 4

Technology and its role in service provision to the elderly

Chapter 13

The information superhighway and the public library

“The challenge today in meeting the copious needs of our citizens is no longer one of developing adequate hardware....The real problem is to identify and recognise the information needs of citizens today and to develop the software to meet those needs” (Jones, 1983).

Another viewpoint on the value of the information superhighway from the library’s perspective could be expressed in this quotation:

“It stems from a desire to make the traditional information-giving function of the library more relevant and alive to the everyday needs of the local community and of individuals, particularly those who are in any way disadvantaged as a result of their political or economic position, their race, health, physical disabilities or age” (Bunch, 1982).

This section of the research looks at how emergent technology has changed the way information can be obtained and how this change can be utilised in developing a model of information delivery to the elderly, a concept developed more fully in the final section of this research. This chapter looks at the effect of technology and specifically the information superhighway, on public libraries in general and focuses on specific instances where this technology has been utilised in providing

community information services. This enables a picture of the current situation in a number of library authorities to be built up. This in turn allows a model of information delivery to the elderly to be formulated and placed in the context of current information provision to the community. A question on technology and the use made of it by the elderly was omitted from the survey outlined in the previous two chapters since at the time of conducting it (1994) provision of PC's and use of the Internet were not established practices in most public libraries. It was only when contact was made again as part of the follow up to the case studies that the growing use of technology in public libraries became apparent (chapter 17). Despite the provision of PC's, an interview conducted with the Special Services Librarian revealed that little, if any, use was made of Internet facilities by the elderly. Technology was still considered to be the province of the young library user.

The following chapter will look at how new technology can be specifically applied to the development of a community-wide information service. In this instance the questions of collaboration and joint venture become paramount, as indeed do the actual needs of the community and their ability to utilise this technology. The final chapter in this section will appraise in detail some of the methods which new technology has put at the libraries disposal in making information available to the community. Specific information programmes that have made use of some of these technologies will be appraised in detail. This will lead into the final section of the research which is to draw on this information to suggest a number of hypothetical models that can be utilised in developing an information service to the elderly, active library user.

Local community information systems first appeared in the 1980s. Information technology was quickly seen as an important new resource for communities because of its promise of easy data storage and on-line retrieval (Jones, 1983). The development of community information as a concept in its many guises was examined in some detail in chapter 2 of this research. The meanings of this much exhausted phrase are various but, in essence, a community information system is one that has been designed to provide a specific service to the community *en masse* or to a target audience within that community.

The last few years have seen academic, special and public libraries moving from a collection to an access policy. Libraries do not have the resources to be able to purchase or physically hold the variety of material that is now available simply because it may be needed. Technological developments have now led to a situation where libraries have the ability to enable access to material both nationally and internationally. This has shifted the librarians role from one of guardian to one of facilitator. The traditional library model necessitated an individual requiring information or material to go to the library for a service. The logical extension of this policy was the requirement for the library to provide branches in every neighbourhood and for those branches to provide public access to all library services. The operational costs of this traditional style of service are now prohibitive and have far outstripped the library's budget. In order to survive, the library must make fundamental changes in the way access is provided to the user. The new model must focus on networked access, differential service levels and direct delivery. In this model any public library can market itself as a dynamic and user-orientated service, ignoring the restraints imposed by cramped buildings and

lack of funds for refurbishment (Webber, 1997). The library must be a partner in the building of a local infrastructure for information, which would need to be along the lines of a community electronic information infrastructure.

Population changes and shifts in educational levels, public perception of the library and the proliferation of communications media have all combined dramatically to impact on the public library. These societal and community changes have advanced but the library's capacity to keep pace with these changes and its ability to draw in users has declined. The result of this has been the decline of the public library's market share. This has occurred, ironically, at a time when information needs have increased enormously owing to the increasingly complex and global society that now exists. The public's inability to cope with increased technology and make informed decisions about product judgements, investments, benefits, health and the plethora of decisions is matched by the library's diminishing ability to assist all individuals with all demands due to increased cost-consciousness. This is the result of repeated cuts in government expenditure which have forced libraries to become more and more cost effective.

The needs of the individual and their subsequent expectations are changing rapidly. As people become more computer literate and are exposed to the idea of the "information superhighway", they begin to expect their local library to provide access to the information and services that these networks provide. The question of how the role of the public library service might change when information networks become widely available to end users is still some way off (Nicholas and Fenton, 1997) and the present situation remains one of opportunity for the library service

(Mendelsohn, 1996). The library now needs to address all these changes to stay relevant and technology is giving it the means to retain its stature in the community but at a price. The Internet's impact on libraries throughout the world is only just beginning to emerge. Within its first few years there are already thousands of library catalogues and databases available to almost anyone with a PC, modem and an access point into the Internet. This is a revolution that will eventually impact on every organisation in the world, profoundly affecting the way they operate and interact with each other. The likely scenario is that libraries will continue for the foreseeable future to be essentially local institutions with their own unique community mixes rather than one enormous resource centre existing in cyberspace. The cyber-library exists but more as a concept than reality. Individuals in some areas may have access to virtual libraries but, because of the nature of resources and the problem of the info-rich versus the info-poor in society, the demise of the traditional public library is some way off. What is certain is that the public library cannot afford complacency and, like it or not, technology in the shape of the information superhighway will impact upon it in one way or another.

In order to confront these challenges and seize the opportunities that changes in society and advances in technology offer, the library must incorporate new strategies into the planning process. It must actively reach out to create new partnerships with public and private organisations. To accomplish this, the library must reach out into the community to learn of its needs and desires and then bring those like-minded groups into the planning process. By utilising these strategies, the library can be a partner in the creation of an electronic information infrastructure for its community. To a certain extent, the library needs to go

beyond traditional partnerships and be prepared to expand outreach to people and organisations who do not traditionally fall into the library's sphere of influence and association. Partnerships must also be prepared to incorporate organisations that know how to do what the library cannot do; this is especially important when developments using new technologies are planned. By utilising the expertise of organisations and learning from the experience of others, the public library can discover how to build the networks and how to implement the technologies.

To use these strategies to meet the challenges presented by technology, the library and its staff will have to redefine their roles so as to include and prioritise resources for the new model of service. The library's mission will have to embrace organisation of networked access including the designing and provision of navigation tools, negotiating access rights, providing access to technology for those who do not possess it and subsidising it. The library must, if it wants to take advantage of new technology, be prepared to make itself a communication centre for the community. In order to take advantage of the opportunities presented, the statement made earlier in this chapter must become a reality: the librarian must gradually move from the role of information keeper to that of information explorer. Libraries now need to work together with their communities, and with other agencies and institutions, to harness the power of new technologies and to help the information seeker navigate the many and varied scattered information resources that the Internet now makes available to everyone.

The appearance of a number of public library catalogues on the Web and access to community sources of information electronically has come about because of

changes in the ways library users expect to be able to receive information. The frustration of individuals and organisations unable to pinpoint relevant and accurate information when and where it is needed is well known. The enquirer is not concerned with which “agency” delivers the service, the concern is that the service should be delivered efficiently and effectively. If this is not the case, then enquirers want to know who to contact. The library service, because of its long established place in the community and its reputation, should be the place people logically come to and it should be able to provide the answers. The challenge for the library of the future is to be able to provide information which is both timely and accurate. With the world becoming more complex, flexibility is vital, both in public and private life. Advances in technology mean that it is no longer necessary to physically visit institutions to obtain a service. Tickets for flights, shows, bank balances, payment of bills, purchasing items can all be done at any time through a PC or telephone. The benefits of access to services like this without the need to venture out could have immense benefits for the elderly and housebound. The theory behind this concept is one of providing a beneficial service; the practical considerations, on the other hand, appear insurmountable. The elderly generally are unlikely to be able to cope with new technology without a mediator and are extremely unlikely to have the resources to acquire the technology even if they had the desire.

Technology has led to visions of the virtual library, a cyber-library that can be accessed by everyone from the comfort of their home or office. The cyber-library is the concept of universal access to all information via technology through a variety of medias. Information must not be discriminatory in relation to age, sex,

race, status. These sentiments are admirable as a concept, but it must be remembered that there are those who do not have the access to information that is theirs by right: the info-rich and info-poor is a division that still exists, despite new technology and all its promises. This is an issue that will be addressed in relation to the elderly in the next chapter. Despite this issue, a networked public information system with outlets in libraries and other points of interaction, as well as through the "Information Superhighway", will be an invaluable tool in enabling both service providers and the public to gain information of real benefit. The remainder of this chapter looks at some of the technology-based initiatives that have been developed by library authorities as a means of making information available to their communities.

With less than three years to go to the Millennium, public libraries need to give priority to information technology if they are to continue as the main point of community access for information. IT is now so complex and is changing so rapidly that no organisation can afford not to have an IT strategy in place, and any plans to develop information services must take account of the role of this strategy within its organisation. This importance is appreciated by the public library sector and plans are underway to develop and implement the systems needed for the information technology society of the Millennium and beyond. The problem with IT and the formulation of a strategy to cope with it is that information technology is developing on many different fronts: changes in hardware and software, changes in networking and services, changes in media and access to information are all creating a complex mixture of threats and opportunities for the public library service. The scale of investment and planning needed to establish an effective IT

infrastructure means that local, regional and national co-operation will become essential for any future developments to succeed. To be effective, any strategy must be flexible, capable of adapting to changing circumstances and ultimately be achievable. It must also take account of the external influences, user expectations and aims of its community. This would include a thorough consideration of area such as: the demands and expectations of local library users in relation to a modern library service; the local authority's policies on IT, public libraries, and the value attached to the question of access to information and services for the disadvantaged; the policies of central government with regard to the future of public library services (an area that has seen a shift in policy as a result of the recent change in government and will be discussed in more detail in chapter 16); the recent bid proposal by the Library Association to the Millennium Fund for money to develop a fully integrated public library electronic network, and the UNESCO *Public Library Manifest* 1994 which, among its 12 key missions, identified "Ensuring access for citizens to all sorts of community information"and "providing adequate information services to local enterprises, associations and interest groups."

User expectations are a vital component in strategic development. Library users are coming to expect the library to provide IT resources and more traditional forms of printed information side by side, but the cost of doing this is already far in excess of the resources available. Library services are now making more use of IT in their direct delivery of services to users and this trend will continue. There are also pressures from all sections of society for public libraries to increase their IT facilities and new IT-based media are constantly appearing in the form of CD-

ROM's, multimedia, Internet access. This trend is likely to continue and so a policy for managing these formats from the library services' viewpoint must be regarded as an urgent priority. Finally, the aims of a strategy must provide a broad framework of principles on which the detailed IT systems planning can be built. This broad aim should be the utilisation of information technology developments such as CD-ROM's, multimedia and Internet access to improve library services for local people. This should encompass the provision of equal access to information for all, regardless of age, ability, race etc. To accomplish these aims there needs to be a conscious policy to improve efficiency for library staff by training, partnerships with other organisations and library services to enable the development of joint IT projects that will benefit the community.

The importance of the "Information Superhighway" to libraries is reflected in the exploratory bid put forward by the Library Association to the Millennium Commission. The proposal was for capital funding to create a national network linking every public library in the country to the Internet. The Library Association strongly believes that public libraries are uniquely placed to provide members of the public with access to the vast resources of the Internet. By enabling public libraries to share resources across local authority boundaries and to create new national services, the Internet can be harnessed for the benefit of all.

The government, at the time of writing this, had implied support for the Information for All Millennium bid in its response to the House of Lords Select Committee's report on the information society. One of the Select Committee's recommendations on an agenda for action was that terminals providing Internet

access be established in all public libraries. The government's response referred to the joint Library Association/Library and Information Commission bid as a "project for an IT network covering 4,000 public libraries." The government report further stated that "...as well as providing a broadband communications network linking each library with others in its area... the forthcoming Public Library Review will also look into the question of providing public Internet access terminals in public libraries."

The document also made reference to the Information and Communication Technology Fund, which the report claimed would allow greater numbers of people to experience the benefits of information and communication technology through schools, colleges and libraries. Another initiative is a programme entitled "IT for All". This aims to "give the public an opportunity to experience the new technology in schools, libraries and in shops, so as to bring home to everyone the potential of information communication technology and the ways in which it might affect them and their families." The situation has altered with the subsequent change of government so that the exact position at this time is unclear. The sentiments of the new government regarding the value of IT as a means of linking libraries, schools etc. is unchanged however in terms of commitment to the ideal espoused by the previous government.

Evidence of existing information exchange initiatives between local authorities and users is attested for in a number of authorities where programmes involving the library service making use of information technology exist: viewdata networks advertising council services (Coventry, Richmond); social and demographic

databases (Birmingham); databases on the local labour market (Mansfield, Tameside) are examples of how the library, through technology and collaboration, can achieve something of significant community value. Examples of information delivery to consumers via computer networks include Glasgow's On-line scheme and viewdata networks linking up local libraries (Milton Keynes, Brent, Gateshead, Richmond). Strathclyde local authority provides a viewdata system offering local residents information on welfare benefits, leisure, adult education and council grants. Local authorities are also using computer network innovations to promote public service usage. An example can be seen in the information service provided by Coventry and Bracknell to local residents through a weekly cable news programme and Enfield's "one-stop" information shops, which provide local residents with a single network access point to all information about the authority's services. Solihull has launched "IT Point" at Chelmsley Wood Library. This is a pilot project funded by a British Library R&D grant. Users can access the Internet, use multimedia CD-ROM's and have access to British Telecom's Tel-me information service. The aim of the project is to improve awareness of IT and its value in society as well as creating a model for a library based IT centre (Batt, 1995).

Two other British Library projects are the Golden Valley project in Hereford and Worcester, which is bringing electronic information to a remote rural area and Croydon Central Libraries Clip project which looks at how well the Internet can be used to answer reference questions (Batt, 1995). Information North are working along with other agencies in the heritage sector to create a networked bulletin

board and investigate the viability of making it more widely available through the Internet (Burden, 1995)

Hertfordshire Libraries, Arts and Information are offering access to community information via the World Wide Web. In addition, Hertfordshire was the first public library to offer Internet access to its library catalogue containing some 750,000 titles. In the 1990s a series of Hertfordshire Information Points were introduced as a response to the need for public access to a community database. These access points comprise: telephone, fax, leaflet displays and a standalone PC running a centrally maintained database of clubs, societies and council information. The limitations of the service such as the preclusion of access to other information resources, soon became evident and it was realised that a networked solution was the way forward. This has been accomplished. In addition a local government review led to a move towards closer working relationships with outside agencies and this has provided Hertfordshire with an opportunity to build on the expertise of various service providers so allowing the move towards the development of a totally integrated one-stop shop for community, health and business information. The natural progression of this initiative was seen to be towards more public interaction both in library buildings and over the Internet (Cross, 1996).

Nottinghamshire County Council has implemented County Contact (Springthorpe, 1996), an electronic information system based on an interactive kiosk system. The first phase of this featured a pilot touch-screen, kiosk-based public information system which was installed in three locations, a library, a shopping centre and the

reception area at County Hall. The system utilised sound, text and video to provide information about the Council's services. This has now developed into a more sophisticated system utilising a powerful multimedia package which provides an easily accessible, simple to use, fully interactive method of information retrieval and distribution. This has specifically been designed to be accessed directly by the public using specially developed interactive customer information booths.

Another initiative in this area comes from Berkshire County Council's library and information service, and is again sponsored by the British Library. The aim of the project is to investigate how enterprises perceive and use the Internet and to determine what role the public library can play both in providing access to the Internet and in helping to provide solutions to business problems. The projects aims were defined as: to develop public library requirements for Internet services by surveying a sample of enterprises; to determine if enterprises are disadvantaged by not having Internet knowledge and access; to investigate the role which the public libraries can play within learning networks and in providing training workshops to give users "cyber-skills."

The Capital Information Service is an initiative that was developed as a direct result of Edinburgh District Council's 1992 Decentralisation Strategy. One of the aims was the establishment of council information points at each of its libraries. The points would offer information on social work, welfare rights, consumer advice, council structure and operation, local groups and organisations, housing, education etc. (Kerr, 1996). The council information points comprised: a touch-screen, full colour, interactive computer system; free phone; fax and post-box;

council leaflets; and provision of community rooms for advice sessions. The service began as an in-house initiative but, following the Council's adoption of the project and the receipt of capital investment, it was decided to develop it and approach outside consultants. The project recognised the importance of encouraging links with other agencies' existing technological and community bases and a number of partnerships have subsequently been developed. The system has now moved on to consider a cable link and launch on the Internet.

As well as local library based initiatives, national developments in providing technology to the local community have emerged. Volnet UK is a bibliographic database for the community and voluntary sector (Harris et al, 1988). Volnet UK was established by merging two existing databases: the Volunteer Centre UK and the Community Projects Foundation. The database is made available by the University of Westminster and comprises in excess of 15,000 bibliographic records covering literature from community development and voluntary action.

The initiatives described here are aimed at the community in general rather than one particular group. What they do reveal, however, is the range of community information services that can be achieved by utilising IT and adopting a collaborative stance. They serve to give a flavour of the wide range of ventures that have sprung up as a result of a desire to serve the community through the provision of improved access to information. The next chapter will consider the question of how to develop a community wide information service through partnership and technology and how this can be applied to improving services to the elderly.

Chapter 14

The role of technology in building a community information infrastructure

Community development and information technology

The previous chapter set the scene with regard to information technology generally, considered the value of the “information superhighway” and examined how a number of local authorities are already using technology to deliver community based services. This chapter looks specifically at the development of an electronic information infrastructure for the community and focuses on a number of community information services that are using new technology. An examination is also be made of instances where libraries have formed collaborative ventures with other community organisations which are also using information technology to utilise service delivery to community group.

Before considering how technology can be used to facilitate the development of an interlinking infrastructure to deliver information within a community, it is necessary to clarify what is meant by “community.” Earlier chapters in this research have stressed the interdependence of groups, the need to co-operate and collaborate, to form joint ventures and partnerships. In addition there is the need to avoid duplication and capitalise on available resources. The community, in the context of this research, comprises: local authority departments; voluntary and community groups; statutory organisations, national and local; businesses; residential institutions, and individuals. In the narrower context of this research

which is looking specifically to the elderly and their needs, community can be defined as those elements within the community directly impacting upon the needs of this group.

This research has already referred to the needs of the elderly for information about key services to which they are entitled: personal social services; health services and welfare benefits. Ensuring that the elderly have access to an adequate supply of information is a complex problem, and in considering the question of the elderly's access to information, three key areas can be highlighted for consideration when developing library policy: responsibility and information provision; citizenship and consumerism in the public services, and the potential of information technology.

Are public libraries guilty of neglecting the information needs of their users in the face of growing technology and improved access? Before considering how a model for information to one particular group can be developed within the community environment, one must first look at how information technology and new systems are serving the end user and why the information needs of the user must be taken seriously by the information professional.

1995 saw the release of a major report entitled *Review of the Public Library Service in England and Wales* (ASLIB, 1995). Both the British Library and the Library and Information Commission (LIC) endorsed the strong views expressed in the report, namely that public libraries should be adequately funded so that they can continue to offer core services free of charge. The report made several

recommendations to the Department of National Heritage for increasing funding to public libraries. These included an increase in capital from the national lottery and the concentration of existing funding on mainstream public library services and partnerships, especially those with community groups and the voluntary and private sector. Both organisations expressed a desire to see major injections of funds spent on linking public libraries with the information superhighway. The following comment is typical of the situation in which most public libraries find themselves and it is a sentiment that cannot be expressed enough. Without government intervention or an injection of capital, the ideal of a network of public libraries, all linked to each other by the technology of the Internet will remain a dream.

Both the British Library and the Library Information Commission were united in their view that one way forward was co-operation among public library services nationally as well as with organisations within their own areas.

“Libraries can benefit in terms of access to each other’s catalogues, they can put up databases, exchange information, and develop messaging services between libraries and increasingly, between libraries and the wider user community” (ASLIB, 1995).

The ASLIB review suggested that the demands of the information age will require large, well resourced libraries. To achieve this the introduction of Regional Library Centres, largely under the control of regional library authorities, was postulated. These “hyperlibraries” were not favoured by either the British Library or Library

and Information Commission, both of whom saw them as potentially expensive white elephants. Public policy on information for individuals must encompass the different roles of the statutory, voluntary and private sectors since they are all involved in information provision. As the major provider of public services, it would seem logical to expect local authorities to play a significant role in the provision and dissemination of information within the community. This is not, however, always the case and this research has illustrated that much of the effort to provide information for the public has come from the public library service. Research published in July 1995 by the Library and Information Statistics Unit revealed that 58% of the population are members of their public library and are enthusiastic about the services offered. This solid foundation of success needs to be built on to provide the basis for a successful community information service.

Local authorities do fund voluntary advice-giving agencies but the extent of this varies tremendously from area to area, authority to authority, with no standardisation. This is because there is no statutory duty to provide such a service, and this leads to a concern that the advice and information-giving role of the voluntary sector will be curtailed by the increasing pressures on it to work ever more closely with statutory authorities and to take on a larger role in the provision of community care services.

The largest and best known of these advice organisations within the United Kingdom is the National Association of Citizens' Advice Bureaux. The mission statement of this organisation is "to ensure that individuals do not suffer through ignorance of their rights and responsibilities or of the services available, or through

an inability to express their needs effectively.” The importance of the role of the CAB is attested for by the rapid rise in advice centres over the last two decades from one advice centre, one law centre and two housing advice centres to more than 1300 outlets, 50 law centres and 600 members.

The importance of access to information and advice was clearly recognised in the statement that it was “the fourth right of citizenship” (National Consumer Council, 1990). This statement was followed a few years later by a demand on the government to recognise, at national and local levels, that the adequate provision of local information and advice services was essential. These demands are likely to continue but the vexed question of funding still exists. Services require considerable resources in terms of training, information, premises, management and a volunteer workforce.

The private sector currently provides a limited information service for individuals but trends towards the commercialism of information and the exploitation of information technology may see it developing an increasing role in the provision of public information. This sector has already been seen as a source of possible sponsorship for independent advice services (Hildrew, 1990) and this trend is likely to gather momentum as time progresses, demands increase and resources become ever more reduced. The developing interest of the private sector in a service previously seen as a “right of citizenship” has given rise to concern that the future will see a situation where information will be made available on the basis of commercial viability or the appeal of particular projects to sponsors rather than on the basis of need (Hepworth, 1988).

Much of the recent pressure on the providers of public services to become purveyors of information has come from a government ideology which is committed to introducing principles of free enterprise, the market place and consumerism to the public sector. Consumerism, in theory, is concerned with the relationship between the providers of a service and those who are the recipients. The five key principles of this theory are access, choice, information, redress and representation. In the market place the provider has the resources, power and organisation. The consumer, on the other hand, has the choice and therefore can exert an influence on the profits and behaviour of the provider. This model of consumerism may work in the commercial environment but it does not fit so easily within the context of public services (Deakin & Wright, 1990). The resources of the public sector are finite and, in the case of the public library, a monopoly situation exists so the individual may not necessarily have a choice between a range of alternatives. Services such as the library are provided by society as a whole and the interests of the user must be balanced against those who finance them, the taxpayers. For this reason, the users of public services are different from the consumer in the market place and the response to their information needs must also be different.

The final area that must be considered when developing a library policy is the potential of information technology in its own right. Technology enables more information to be made widely available, but consideration must be paid to the type of information and to whom it should be made available. It has been suggested that, if information is to be provided to individuals through new technology, it should not be left to the private sector. The principle of free access

to information is an important one, yet the public sector are already coming under pressure to exploit the value of their information resources for financial gain (Hepworth, 1989). Any shift towards the market-orientated provision of information will deprive vulnerable groups such as the elderly of the right of access (Jones, 1983). The service considered in this research is intended for those who are least able to afford it, the elderly. Because the elderly have limited finances there is no obvious financial incentive to make provision of information for this group commercially viable and therefore the concept is unlikely to appeal to the private sector as an area to develop.

To say that the elderly are unable to afford a commercially produced information service is an over simplification. The existence of a growing number of affluent elderly was mentioned earlier in this research and should perhaps be considered in more detail here in the light of technology and its affordability. When discussing network links it is not simply a matter of ability to use technology but also ability to pay for it which must be considered. Computers in the home and links to the public library and other information service via the Internet exist as viable options but, unless individuals have extra money to spare for such services, they are unlikely to appeal to many beyond the young and enthusiastic (frequently both go hand in hand). The ability among the elderly to be able to afford this technology is likely to be more reduced than in any other category: the affluent pensioner with the inclination to pursue IT is a rarity at present.

It should be mentioned that the case studies do not emphasise these particular problems since they were conducted in areas not noted for their affluence. In terms

of seeking out the affluent pensioner it must be admitted that Southport in Sefton or areas of the Wirral such as Heswall and West Kirby would have provided higher instances of the elderly as home owners with private pensions and personal savings who would be in a position to afford luxuries such as home computers (assuming they had the inclination). This is not to say that examples of better off pensioners do not exist in the areas surveyed, just that they are comparatively rare. The question of information rich/information poor raises its head in every area of society and the varying degrees of affluence among the over sixties is another facet of this situation.

Building a community information infrastructure

The traditional library service model necessitates that the person requiring material or information goes to the library for service. This means that the library service, to be effective, requires branches that are convenient for every district and the provision of the full range of library services in every branch outlet. The cost of operating this traditional model has now far exceeded the library's budget. To survive and be effective the library must now make fundamental changes in the way access is provided to the user. New information technology provides a viable answer to this situation and although heavy investment in terms of hardware and resources is required at the outset, once in place and established, the rewards for the library service will be immense. The new model needs to focus on networked access, differentiated levels of service and direct delivery and the library must be an active partner in this initiative, to build a local community electronic information infrastructure.

Raising awareness of the public library's role in a networked society is of key importance and a number of events in 1995 helped to achieve this. The Labour Party's statement on its information policies stimulated debate and the *Public Library Review* to the Department of National Heritage mentioned in passing the importance of networking to the library service of the future. New mailing lists to discuss public library issues, such as lis-pub-libs were another significant development. The final and most significant development of the year was Project Earl.

Networking public libraries and providing them with access to the Internet is the subject of Project Earl, the latest initiative involving LASER in conjunction with PLNASG (Public Library Network Awareness Steering Group), UKOLN (UK Office for Library Networking) and various interested public libraries. The aim of Project Earl is to examine the technical infrastructure and application and communication software required to network public library information and resources services. The project also intends to produce a networking strategy with associated costs for providing public libraries with access to the Internet. Earl intends to provide a supportive environment for participants and a core function will be training staff in all aspects of network resources and the role of libraries in this new environment. There is a recognition of the value of applying the collective skills of the librarian in the development of navigational tools which will enable users of network services to find information and resources on the Internet in an efficient, organised way (Dobson, 1996). By the start of 1996, 37 library authorities had become subscribing partners and the Library Information

Commission had applied to become an associate partner. EARL has now created Web pages for its members and established e-mail lists.

Few people, the elderly especially, can cope with the variety of technological tools that exist or make informed decisions about products and services without access to a range of information sources to aid and assist them. Even when confronted with this vast array of information at their fingertips, assistance is often needed in navigating around it and accessing which information that is going to be of most direct use. The challenge for the library, having identified a niche for itself, is to focus on a market segment and to develop a service that utilises its skills combined with emergent technology. Users' needs and expectations are changing rapidly. As people become more computer literate and are exposed to the idea of an information infrastructure and the concept of the information superhighway, they will begin to expect their local library to provide access to the information and services these networks promise. If the library is not able to capitalise on this demand, its customer base is likely to decline as users go elsewhere to seek the services they require.

Certainly the Internet can provide the means of obtaining up-to-date answers for community information inquiries through the growing number of World Wide Web resources. However a vast number of community librarians do not have instant access to the Internet and, even if they have the opportunity for access, they are unlikely to have the time to search around, therefore key resources may be missed. More libraries are now beginning to provide individuals with direct access to the Internet, but this service is only likely to be of use to them if they have

guidance to the sources of information relevant to their needs. If libraries are to provide direct access in, and beyond, their immediate community, they need to establish signposts to enable users to navigate the vast and often baffling array of information on the “superhighway.”

The development of electronic community information on the Internet can already be seen in services initiated by a number of UK authorities. Searchable community databases utilising local community information files have been established in Hertfordshire, Islington, Manchester and Norfolk. The multimedia nature of the Web means that community information files can be presented in a more attractive manner and the information presented need not be confined to local information. The potential of the Web is great and can provide access to national and even international community information resources. An example of what can be achieved in this direction can be seen on Project Earl’s *Citizen in Society* pages where access can be gained to *UK Charities Direct* and *Women’s Health, a guide to Internet resources relating to this subject*.

In 1994 Hounslow developed an information technology strategy that included testing out public need for and use of the Internet (Morson et al, 1996). The “Cybershack”, as it was named, was set up as a fixed term project to run from September 1995 to March 1996. The idea was to introduce this technology to new users, demystify IT generally and provide an access point for more experienced users who did not have the means to use the Internet either at home or in their business. The Cybershack contained four terminals and users were charged a modest amount for its use, £2.50 for 25 minutes access to the Internet and £5 for

25 minutes training. Concessions were available for the elderly, unemployed, under 18s and students.

While the Cybershack provided public access to the Internet and enabled users to have an opportunity to discover its resources at first hand, the library service was also evaluating it from an information perspective to ascertain what usage can be made of it from the libraries' viewpoint. The consensus was that a lot of potentially useful information existed on the Web but resources were too vast to do much more than just scratch the surface. The conclusion was that slowness, lack of organisation, unsophisticated retrieval tools and general unpredictability precluded its usage as an information resource of first resort in front of enquirers at the information desk. Its enormous potential, however, makes it a valuable tool to have available and using it for delayed enquiries and as an alternative resource when other resources have failed seems to be a viable option. There was no doubt of its popularity from the users viewpoint and, largely because of this, Hounslow decided to continue its use beyond the project period.

There is no doubt that many public library services are beginning to make use of the Internet as a valuable resource. It can almost be said that not to have a presence on the Net is not to be fully promoted as an entity; certainly the rapid surge of Web pages seems to bear this out. Perhaps one should consider at this point exactly how far the library service has come in all this. The past few paragraphs have focused on some specific examples of Internet initiatives by public library services, but what is the general picture?

An extensive survey on public libraries and the Internet was undertaken by the UK Office of Library Networking (Ormes, 1995). This revealed that fifty three percent of all public library authorities in the UK have some form of Internet connection. Closer examination revealed that the connection is generally limited both in penetration and type of access offered. In reality only 3% of individual service points are connected and, when public access was taken in to account, figures followed the same trend with twenty eight percent of authorities offering access but only 0.7% of all public libraries. This huge differential would seem to suggest that members of the public who were not close to a large town/city are unlikely to have a public access point. Half of the authorities providing a service charge for access, which means that public access is only available free at the point of use in 0.4% of individual service points. The survey also revealed that half the libraries with an Internet connection are not making any information about themselves or their services available.

This would seem to pose the question: are UK libraries being left out in the cold when it comes to the Internet? Despite the dismal picture suggested by this survey, there is some thought that the move to link public libraries to the Internet has already made great gains. One authority where tremendous ground has been broken is Croydon where the library service boasts over sixty computers and its own web site. Over the past year it has been involved in Project CLIP, a project funded by the British Library Research and Development Department which aims to assess the value of the Internet to public libraries, develop networking models and assist the advancement of a national strategy for public library networking generally.

Other examples of access to the vast sources of relevant community information which can now be reached with ease via the Internet are The Voluntary Organisations' Internet Server, Citizens' Advice Bureaux, the CCTA Government Information pages, and the Royal National Institute for the Blind, with new pages being developed constantly. The main difficulty now seems to be in keeping pace with the vast array of resources that are now presenting themselves to end users. Two of these information sources have considerable relevance to the elderly and are therefore worth elaborating on in more detail here. The Voluntary Organisations' Internet Server (VOIS) is a site which provides access to the growing number of Web sites established by voluntary organisations. It gives an alphabetical listing of the 25 sites currently established, including the Alzheimer's Disease Society, Help the Aged, Shelter and the National Campaign for Homeless People. The Citizens' Advice Bureaux do not currently possess a national site but through the Internet there is national access to the pages created by the Manchester bureau. The National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux produces monthly updates of news on changes in legislation which are then distributed to all their bureaux. From 1993 these were made available via the Web, owing to the work of the Manchester bureaux in putting these into a searchable database and providing Internet access.

Co-operative initiatives involving information provision

Co-operation between the library service and other groups within the community will be examined in detail in the next chapter; however, it should be stressed here that co-operative policies are not merely confined to groups within one community. Co-operation can exist on a far wider basis than simple geographical

confines and public libraries can be viewed as one group that have traditionally co-operated with one another beyond regional boundaries. Unlike most other service organisations, their role can only be completely successful through the sharing of their principal commodity and no one library can be totally self sufficient in its information resources. Satisfying the information needs of society necessitates the development of national and international networking as well as networking at local level. This encourages the effective optimising of materials and expertise. Perhaps the most significant example of this philosophy has been a shift from the conceptual basis of co-operation to the organising of resource sharing on a rational basis in order to meet the information needs of the community.

This awareness has also led to partnerships between public and academic libraries within an area, examples of which can be seen in the strategies adopted by Sheffield and Newcastle. The publication of *The future development of libraries and information services: progress through planning and partnership* (Office of Arts and Libraries, 1986) led to the implementation of Library and Information Plans (LIPs). This saw the development of a much greater emphasis on a strategic approach to co-operation. Plans were developed on a five year basis, either within the local authority area or for a given geographical area and later on a subject basis and for the first time there was notably clear links between public libraries and a wide range of public, private and voluntary sector organisations which are providing information for the communities they serve.

“...the bringing together of a wide range of participants in a recognised planning framework, with constructive aims, an agreed timetable, and the ability to explore common problems and opportunities, is a worthwhile and beneficial development in itself with a far reaching potential for creating a new culture of resource sharing and partnership”
(Capital Planning Information, 1984).

The human factor in effective co-operation is of prime importance. Libraries are complex organisations and involving all the layers of management in co-operative activity can be a major difficulty (Kennington, 1983). Another factor that requires some attention is the coalitions of interest within organisations which play an important role in the decision making processes. Internal politics can be further complicated by the need to balance the coalitions within the library with those in the co-operating partners' organisations.

Co-operation in a resource scarce environment has become the only way of providing new services and improving existing ones for many groups. Community partnerships are frequently the only way to get an idea moving and the library has had to recognise that, in order to initiate new ideas, it must look beyond its traditional environment. No one group can afford to exist in isolation given the advances in communications and technology that now exist. Instead of thinking that a new service would be a good idea if funding were available, library managers are increasingly realising that they need to look beyond their library and ask “who else in the community (or beyond) would be interested in this idea and how can we work together to make this happen, given existing resources?”

Examples of strategic alliances, not necessarily confined to the elderly but relevant all the same for the lessons which they teach, can be found in many authorities. The remainder of this chapter explores some of these partnerships in more detail.

Southwark's homework help clubs (Swaffield, 1997) are one example of an idea that became a successful reality by adopting a policy of mutual co-operation. The Education After-Schools Service was concerned about the effectiveness of homework clubs and saw the problem as one of having the staff but not the educational materials required. The public libraries, on the other hand, possessed the materials but were too busy and had too few staff to administer the one to one help required. The solution was obvious: a co-operative venture between the two groups.

A collaboration between Age Concern Stockport and Stockport Library aimed to extend access to library services for groups of the elderly (Swaffield, 1997). The groups served by this initiative were the housebound and physically and mentally frail, to whom the traditional library service was denied. The scheme involved collecting materials and establishing a programme of activities in two day centres. From the outset both Age Concern Stockport (ACS) and the library service were full partners. The aim of the initiative was to enable ACS to become self-sufficient in providing a new service. To achieve this, activities were designed to fit around the centres pattern of regular group work and were adapted to suit the individuals who attended. The government's Development Funding in Public Libraries scheme part-funded the 13 month launch stage.

Three UK public libraries have formed a partnership with a public library in Belgium and a private company in a pilot project designed to bring access to public library services into the home via the telephone and cable television. Inquirers can interrogate their local library database via voice call and that information is transmitted to the cable television computer and then displayed on a special teletext page. The project, entitled Reactive Telecom, was led by Leuven Public Libraries in conjunction with Clwyd, Gateshead and Berkshire Libraries and Voxtron, a company specialising in voice technology. The services that were available included community information, European Union information, educational packages for adult learner and general information customised which is relevant to the needs of the enquirer.

Another information initiative came from Staffordshire Library Service in the form "Accessible Information". This was a new social and welfare information service which aims to help people who have difficulty in reading print. The scheme was primarily a free public information service but was also of use to organisations in Staffordshire and elsewhere which need to trace the existence of information in alternative formats for their clients. The material available includes information on welfare rights and benefits, consumer information, and information on a number of health conditions and related support groups. All the material is available for a one week loan to users of the service.

A pilot project in Manchester has established an electronic community information system based upon the facilities of the Internet (Gallimore, 1996). The project developed from the Manchester Community Information Network, an alliance of

information providers in the city established in 1993. Membership of the group comprises local advice agencies, some voluntary groups, health centres, the library service and other council departments. The projects main partners are KMPG, Manchester Mind, CAB, the library service, Manchester Advice and Poptel's Manchester Host. All the partners contributed time and expertise to produce an electronic community information system which was felt to be of real value to the community. The project's aim is to overcome many of the problems generally encountered with electronic information systems and ensure free access to information for local people.

The elderly, information and technology

One question that has become apparent with the rapid escalation of access to the Internet is "what will happen to existing electronic and hard-copy information services?" Will the knock on effect in usage and interest for the Internet lead to other sources and systems being displaced or is there room in today's information technology environment for all these mediums to co-exist? Many organisations, including the library, will undoubtedly still find it more economical to keep information on CD-ROM. Cost, ease of access and the ability to customise CDs to one's own needs will mean that this format is likely to continue to have a valuable role to play in information provision. It must be remembered that the Internet is an alternative, not a replacement, and still has many problems associated with it such as cost, accessibility, searchability and connect time. For many organisations it may not represent the preferred option for information and dissemination.

There is also the question of how all this information impacts upon the user. Groups such as the elderly require information but would not be able to cope with the information overload that the Internet can cause. Direct access may work with certain elements of the community but for the distribution of information to most groups the need for an intermediary will still exist. Modern living has created a need for increased information and we, as individuals, are required to be more informed than ever before. The pressures are enormous and are made worse by increasing change. The term "information overload" has never been so relevant. Without adequate information, the elderly are in a disadvantaged position to respond to crises in their lives and the events of everyday life. This ignorance of what resources are available has a dual impact on service utilisation: people are not aware of existing services or people are aware of existing services but may not be able to relate them to their own needs.

Around every individual there exists a formal and informal information network. However, the size and quality of this network is liable to vary from individual to individual. Members of the formal network constitute individuals or organisations whose professional purposes are to serve those needing information. In the case of this research, the library service is one of a vast and varied group, all of whom are united by the common purpose of providing information to the elderly. Serving the elderly within this defined context can include providing information about alternative resources available in the community as well as providing direct services. The members of the informal network include those individuals or groups who surround the elderly in the course of their everyday life such as family and friends. Based on their general knowledge and life experiences, all these

individuals are potential sources of information to the elderly. Whether this information is correct or not is a different argument.

Examples of community partnerships utilising new technology exist and a few of them are outlined in the final section. They serve to illustrate that ventures involving more than one group can flourish successfully and achieve impressive results. Since there are a considerable number of such initiatives appearing in local authorities, the examples referred to here have been selected because of their emphasis either on the elderly or on community information provision generally. In the case of the latter they invariably involve the application of new technology in the dissemination of that information.

This focuses directly on the elderly and considers the future potential of an information service that specifically targets this group. This research has indicated that a market opening exists for such a service with the public library playing a key role in its development. The existence of a variety of organisations with direct involvement in providing information to the elderly has been established and the increasing availability of community networks, as a result of new technology, has shown that the ability to link these organisations together is now a reality. The next two chapters consider how community wide partnerships, linked through networks technology, can serve the needs of the elderly. A model for information provision and delivery for this group will then be formulated taking into account the areas considered in previous sections.

Part 5

**A model for the future: an information
service for the elderly**

Chapter 15

An information service for the elderly: partnership and collaboration

So far, this research has comprised four sections which together have provided a detailed examination of the state of the elderly and the use which they make of information. The first section set the elderly within a sociological context and examined in depth literature published over the past two decades which has dealt specifically with the elderly, their informational requirements and any relevant research undertaken into these needs. This section also outlined in detail the research methodology adopted in the following two sections of this work, which together form the primary research of this work.

The second section focused on the public library service and where it fitted into the provision of information to the elderly. This necessitated a detailed examination of the current state of provision to the elderly and whether it was really satisfying their needs. To achieve this objective, an extensive questionnaire survey was undertaken to see exactly what services were being provided for the elderly. The results were measured against an earlier survey undertaken by Diana Edmonds. The objective was to determine whether services provided for the elderly by the public library had developed from the traditional domiciliary services of a decade ago.

The third section of the research utilised the case study research methodology and looked in greater detail at all the services provided to the elderly within two geographical areas. The focus of this section was on services that existed to satisfy the information needs of the elderly. To this end the case studies considered the public library and its relationship with other local authority departments serving the elderly and examined the extensive range of statutory and voluntary services occupying both the public and private sector. The issue of community information, joint ventures, partnerships and resource sharing was also considered. Finally the section considered the actual needs as distinct from perceived needs of the elderly. To achieve this objective, a market research exercise was undertaken on over sixties who regularly used the public library. Analysis of this research enabled a detailed profile of the elderly within a specific area to be obtained. This profile revealed valuable information on what services the elderly used, what information they considered important and where they went to obtain it. The fourth section provided an appraisal of technology and its role in enabling the library and other service providers to fulfil the needs of the elderly user. This section is especially relevant when one considers the importance placed on the “information superhighway” and the use made of it by public libraries.

This final section of the research attempts to construct a model of information service delivery to the elderly drawing upon the findings of the earlier sections. The question of whether there is a need for such a service has been answered. The case studies and market research showed that the library is acknowledged as an important community resource by the elderly and that they have many and diverse information needs that need addressing. The model developed here must seek to

understand those needs and to provide a service tailored to them. Given that the elderly have been shown to utilise other organisations in the community in addition to the library for information and that many of these groups have the resources and are delivering a service to this age group, the question of collaboration and information sharing becomes the focal point of any model.

Determining what the library service and the community can offer

A useful place to start in this process might be to consider an information audit. This can best be described as the process that looks at “the information that the organisation holds; the resources used to make information accessible in people and equipment; how the organisation uses information; the people who are managing information and what they are doing with it; the technology that is used to support handling the information; how it flows; and how the organisation assesses and costs the value of information” (Bertolucci, 1996). Before any service model can be developed, all these factors need to be considered both from the internal viewpoint (the library service) and externally (the resources of organisations in the community who have an interest in serving the needs of the elderly).

An information audit is a process with common definitions (outlined above) and recognised approaches. As a starting point one needs to identify who the users are: only when this has been done can one assess whether the information they really need is being delivered in the most efficient, user-friendly manner. Questions to ask include: who is using the information? how often are they using it? how is information kept up-to-date, retrieved and disseminated? Technology inevitably

plays a significant role and its value in the information process was explored in the previous section. Questions for the information audit relating to this area include such considerations as: what electronic resources are used? how appropriate and reliable are they? and how compatible are they with other systems? Only when these basic issues have been answered can one ask “do the resources available justify the service?” and “do these resources match user requirements?”

An information audit does not need to be a whole organisation affair; it can be used to focus on smaller areas within the organisation. When related to this project and the public library service as a whole, this can be identified as services to the elderly. For this scenario it is quite appropriate to extend the information audit to embrace other groups within the community who impact upon the elderly and whom the library needs to consider when planning a service implementation of this nature. Although the hypothetical model postulated in this chapter is applicable to any library authority implementing it, many of the points of reference used relate to the range of services and organisations that were found within the case study authority that also hosted the market research conducted on the elderly. This is purely for convenience when constructing the model.

From the internal viewpoint it is vital to look at the library service and its current strategy towards the elderly in detail. This, in the two case study authorities, was accomplished in part 3 and the results revealed that, in line with the majority of UK libraries, services still focus primarily on the traditional large print and audio collections in the library and the standard outreach services to the less active elderly, those in residential and nursing homes and the housebound. If, as is

suggested by this research, there is a need for the library to go beyond this level of service provision to the elderly and offer something new in terms of an information service, then one must consider the impact of this decision on the existing library service and its resources. This leads to a consideration of the following areas: the role of the elderly in the library services strategy; the impact of such a service on other service areas; financial implications; staffing; technology; time and physical considerations such as location of buildings, space, stock, equipment needs. No service can be planned without a thorough consideration of all these elements within the overall strategy.

Having looked at the library service itself and found out about in-house resources generally, the next step is to consider other information sources in the community that are used by the target group. Again, much that is of relevance here was determined by the case studies and it has been stated earlier in this research that, for the library to develop any new service, it must collaborate with other organisations and groups within the community. Before this can be accomplished the library service must identify those groups and seek to make contact, outline its strategy and gather knowledge on these other interested groups. Naturally the library service cannot force other organisations within the community to join forces with it but initial meetings to explain its aims and objectives should lead to the sharing of information, resources and a united recognition that it is better to collaborate than to risk duplicating effort when most organisations are beset by the same problems of inadequate resources as the library service.

Awareness of what the library service can offer, a knowledge of the roles of other involved groups in the community and the realisation of the need to build up a network of communication and resource sharing is only part of the picture. Section 3 also revealed the value of market research. Knowledge of the community being served is as vital to the planning and marketing of any service as the resources set up to deliver the service. Any service will only succeed if it is wanted by the community and there is a clear and demonstrable need for its implementation. Services that have truly succeeded in their aims are often dependent on a locally focused individual or group who understands the local need and is prepared to be innovative, to combine, mix and match products and services that were developed initially in relative isolation. Relating this to the needs of the elderly in the community, it is clear that devolved local management of these services and a better product application can provide practical and economic benefits.

Before the library service adopts a model for providing information to the elderly, or any other service for that matter, it must come to terms with certain basic facts of economic life. These are a realisation of the need:

- to adapt its products/services;
- to innovate even if there is no obvious competition;
- to devolve more control to service users;
- to collaborate with other organisations that have similar aims and objectives;
- to be efficient;

to share some of its business with those who are in a position to help and who could do the task to the same standard.

Community involvement: partnership in the service model

The political and financial climate today largely prohibits the development of any service by a public organisation wishing to go it alone. Governmental policies and local politics, and their effect on the ability of the library service to function within the community, have been examined in the first section of this research. It is only necessary to reiterate here that, for any new venture to succeed, the resources required, staff, equipment, finance, must be found by means that do not involve the request for additional funding. This climate necessitates the adoption of a different way of tackling new venture; in this changing climate where resources are finite, one must not think of diminishing services and threats to the library but adopt the philosophy that sees positive opportunities and the chance to manage this change and to be proactive rather than negative in planning for the future of the library service within the community.

The involvement of community organisations in partnership and collaborative initiatives will soon prove to be crucial. We have seen that where libraries invest in community information, it is often in a top-down manner, collecting and making available in their own way, information about agencies and services known to them. Yet, in reality, there is a vast potential for community organisations to self-publish on-line once they have access to the necessary technology. Enabling these agencies to be involved, utilising their expertise and resources and facilitating a

role for them in a new service which impacts upon them should be an essential element of the model of information provision initiated by the library service.

Research so far has clearly shown that the library service cannot work in isolation when planning and implementing a service within the community. The library is one of many providers of information and, for any model to succeed, the involvement of all interested parties in resource and information sharing is essential. Resources fall into several areas: human, technology and information are some of the most obvious ones to explore.

Community networks: their role in an information service model

Community networks are as varied as the communities developing them. Most often they can be described as computerised information services provided for and by the local community. Services generally include access to issues concerning local government, local events, local businesses, school information etc. Also they are often committed to the idea of providing free public access to all information provided by the network.

Community networks which provide access to network systems, local information services and interactive communication have been around for over a decade in the US and now number several hundred there alone. These include Cleveland Freenet, Seattle Community Network, SAILOR (Maryland's Online Public Information Network), Tallahassee Free Net and Libertynet, Pennsylvania. Could similar models offer significant advantages both economically and socially for the UK? If so, the question that must be posed in relation to this thesis is: can these

models be adapted for providing a more focused community network- one that is aimed solely at the elderly and involves community wide links and co-operation amongst those groups in the community whose task it is to provide services, in whatever form, to the elderly? If this situation is possible, and it has been maintained earlier in this research that collaboration and a sharing of resources is the only viable way forward for a new service, then one must consider how the library service would feature in its development and implementation.

US community networks are varied but do contain some common features which help to provide a framework for similar systems in the UK. Users connect from home, work or public terminals such as a library. These connections can range from telephone lines to fibre-optic links. Through these connections users can do a variety tasks, one of which is to access centrally held information. Their exchanges may be limited to the local system or they may have gateways to the Internet. The information offered by these networks will be many and varied, but will be dependent on local organisations and wider networks for their support in funding, information provision and volunteer help. The general form of organisation for a community network is that of a non-profit making company where funding and support come from a mixture of grants, donations, sponsorship and volunteer help.

Community networks are significantly different from public and private ventures. Most significantly, they rely on a range of different interests to commit technical support, information and other resources voluntarily. Because of this, the collaboration and commitment required to develop one does not come about overnight, especially in the case of different interest groups who have never

worked together before and are new to the technology and even the ethos involved. When attempting to bring together these varied interest groups there will be a need for a lot of initial effort in developing teams, assessing technical needs, developing information structures and planning training and support.

A good place to start in this process of developing a community network is with existing networks which might wish to enhance their activity. They will have information and also customers who could become users of a wider networked service. Once a group of users has developed, there will be scope for informal networking between individual users, thus leading to a trading of information. This is in addition to the more conventional information providers in the community: council departments, libraries, schools and other public agencies. All these groups are likely to feel political pressure to join such a network: what is required is the impetus for one organisation to start the ball rolling.

While the Internet might appear, at first consideration, the starting point for the development of a network of information this temptation should be resisted. The “information superhighway” does not necessarily provide as much useful information as one might at first assume. In reality there is too much information, much of which is too diverse to be useful and is often too difficult to find. In addition there are added problems such as the unreliability of network connections and the time taken to connect to a site. A service provided by organisations and networks needs customised solutions that go beyond the simple idea of Internet connectivity.

The role of the UK community network in the context of this research is as a network of networks providing information towards a common end. This means a very real role for the organisations looked at in the case study section: council departments; the library; statutory and voluntary groups, both local and national; supermarkets and post offices; doctors and hospitals; and individuals with a real interest in helping the elderly members of the community.

The notion of the information society has led to the revival of some of the concepts that were previously associated with the community librarianship phenomenon of the 1970s, terms such as “information poor” and “information is power.” These terms reflect legitimate concerns that should be addressed before attempting to construct a model of information delivery which is intended to be universally available to all active elderly members of the community. The phrase “information have-nots” could be seen as misleading, since the implicit view of this term would seem to be that information is required by everyone and that some members of society are not receiving it and are therefore being deprived of something that they have a right to (Haywood, 1995). In reality, although this sentiment might be true to some extent, it must be remembered that people have a greater or lesser need for information.

To imply that information is of comparable importance and usefulness to everyone (the elderly in this instance) is questionable and this must be remembered when one is looking at the development of this type of service. The skill in developing such a service is to identify those members of the target audience who do require

such a service and would benefit from its availability and to market it at them (in this case the over sixties) while publicising it widely throughout the selected community generally so that other individuals are aware of its availability. To attempt to steamroller everyone into using a service on the assumption that they require it is arrogance on the part of the service organiser and a waste of valuable resources. There is a need to consider the role of information in social and community contexts in a different light. Instead of speaking about information poverty one should consider peoples information capabilities, their ability to acquire information and use it for their own ends. This capability might not be as well developed, especially in the elderly, as one might assume but it remains a key factor in the development of an information aware society.

Once the target group to be served has been established, and in many instances *this* decision will be a largely political one, the next stage is to define the area within the chosen group which is to be served. This research has already differentiated levels within the elderly and is primarily concerned with services to the active elderly, here taken to mean those people over 60 who are able to use the library and to take advantage of other services offered within the community. The issue of services to the housebound and the elderly in residential homes is not addressed in this research; the area is too large and evidence in section 1 has shown clearly that this is an area that is currently well served within most library authorities by the provision of mobile/housebound services, home visits and a regular programme of visits to day care centres, nursing homes and residential homes.

The service postulated in this research is an extension of the traditional services provided for the elderly which have subscribed to the view that the elderly are in need of special “care” services and are not independent library users. This research has shown that the active elderly are a group with much the same usage patterns as the rest of the community when it comes to using the library in the traditional manner: visits for recreational material, information of areas of interest and hobbies, meeting friends. It has also illustrated that another level of need exists for these users, the need for information of a fairly specific nature on a range of issues that are particularly relevant to this group. The next section of this chapter considers the merits of the library as the most appropriate medium to provide this service before moving on to address, in the next chapter, exactly how such a service could best be delivered.

The library as a central community information service

The dangers of looking at information services in general without paying sufficient attention to the organisational and personal factors which influence the communication of information both within the organisation and in its attempts to communicate with its environment have been remarked on (Wilson and Streatfield, 1977). Much of the literature on organisations touches only indirectly on communication issues although Katz and Kahn (1978) saw information as defining and linking various organisational subsystems providing local information services to the community.

Different emphasis is placed by various authors on particular methods of acquiring local information. The value of demographic data was stressed by Leaper (1971),

who also mentioned economic and social data which he saw as covering religious, political, cultural and social groups and the population as a whole. The methods he advocated for such a study comprised: observation; interviewing group leaders; interviews with residents; data collection about agencies, and studies of demographic data. This enthusiasm for community profiles is not universally shared and some writers (Perlman and Givrin, 1972; Lees and Smith, 1975) have felt that the use of such generalised information gathering was quickly exhausted.

Co-ordination of local authority information services does seem a logical first step in rationalising present provision. To do this effectively requires a realistic assessment of what services are actually offered by these and other local agencies. A less structured approach may also prove effective. Lambeth Umbrella Group is a consortium of local, independent advice services which exist to co-ordinate activities and identify problems in the area. The local public library service has found a means of linking up with this service and helps to create links with other local authority departments (Usherwood, 1977). Other possibilities exist for local models linking statutory and independent agencies into a local network and taking advantage of the resources of the former and the flexibility of the latter.

Public libraries have shown an interest in developing community information services beyond the traditional reference service offered in most large public libraries. One obvious influence was the series of initiatives by public libraries in the USA (Walley and Davinson, 1976). In addition, the British Library has recently taken an active part in promoting community information services by commissioning a report (McClelland and Palmer, 1972) sponsoring the post of

Research Officer for Community Information Services at the Library Association and funding specific projects (Watson, Bowen and Walley, 1980).

"It appears that there is a growing awareness among librarians of the social and political implications of the library service. There is a desire to use their expertise for the development of local communities. This implies that the library service should be more accountable to the residents of a neighbourhood" (Darcy and Ohri, 1978).

The traditional view of public libraries as merely purveyors of books may be outmoded but many librarians have yet to come to terms with the more dynamic, "helping" role appropriate to a service purporting to be available to everyone. Secondment of public library staff to other information and advice agencies would prove beneficial to both the individuals concerned and to the public library as an organisation. It would enable stronger reciprocal relationships to be forged and relevant areas of public library involvement in community life to be readily available. Usherwood's (1977) view of public involvement in community life could conceivably form the starting point for developing a model of an information service to the elderly. He pictured the library as being at the hub of a neighbourhood network of contacts, acting both as an information source and as a referral point to other agencies. He also suggested that the public library might have a role as an intermediary agency. In this capacity he envisaged librarians using their skills at eliciting information from the client to ease the clients path through bureaucracy. A further comment that is valid in any plans to develop an information service to the elderly comes from Licht (1976).

"Information specialists have a lot to offer, they have the unique ability to compile and organise an information base and establish a cost-effective access system tailored to the needs of a particular group of users. In addition, no other profession has the ability to recognise and analyse the precise function of information within an agency's operation, or the ability to train others to be information orientated."

The privileged position of libraries was commented on by Boyle (1976). He stated that library departments were better placed than other local authority departments to support information services because they had no background of intraservice rivalry with other departments and no goal conflicts. This latter statement is open to debate in the current economic climate. A further consideration, according to Boyle, was that libraries posed fewer psychological barriers to potential users than did other local authority departments.

The advantages of library staff as purveyors of information at community level was echoed by Streatfield (1980). He stated that "they are likely to be more skilled than community workers or local resident workers in locating, assessing, storing and retrieving information and will be more likely to treat out of date information with suspicion and more skilled in eliciting the exact nature of the information problem from the client."

In conclusion it can be stated that libraries, by virtue of their position within the community, are in an ideal position to be at the forefront of any developments in

information provision. The question that presents itself now is why that information provision should be targeted at the elderly. Parts 2 and 3 dealt at length with the needs of the elderly for information and attempted to show that this need was not being adequately met. If it is accepted that there is a gap in providing the elderly with the information which they need to run their lives, then evidence so far would suggest that the library is in a strong position to answer that need. The reason why an information service to the elderly should be viewed as a priority can perhaps be reflected in the sentiments expressed here:

"Libraries, whether public, school or academic, inevitably favour those groups of the urban population best able to respond to that which is offered, the young, the well-educated, the more affluent, the print orientated, and fail to address fairly the just-as-real needs of those whose response is less easy to elicit" (Garrison, 1977).

In considering the establishment of a direct information service for the elderly, two matters of paramount importance should be taken into account:

1. What other agencies already exist in the area and the types of services provided. This would ensure the avoidance of duplication and prevent the chances of future conflict. The relation between library services and other agencies should be one of co-operation for everyone's mutual benefit.
2. The lessons learnt by other advice and information agencies with regard to the nature of information needs and problem solving.

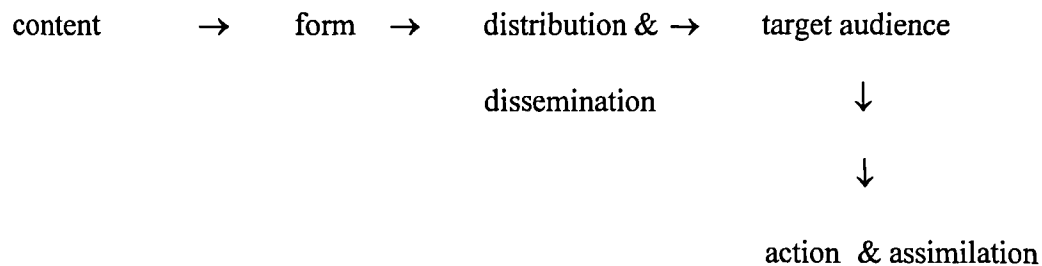
Providing any effective information service to a specific group will inevitably involve advocacy and advice giving.

The provision of reliable and accurate information is the basic function of any information service. However, information on its own, although important, has limited value. Information is of little use without the knowledge, skills and power to make it effective. Many people, especially the elderly, are at a disadvantage because they do not possess the necessary skills to make effective use of information. These include skills such as the ability to use a telephone, to understand the information in leaflets, to write letters. It is ridiculous to imagine that all members of the public, armed with the relevant information, would be able to deal with their problems. The referral function presents other problems. As far as the enquirer is concerned, it is not very convenient to be told to go to some other agency and many often would not go. A centre which refers most clients to other agencies would soon get the reputation of being unhelpful.

If people do not separate information from help and service, then an information service which limits itself to the provision of information and referral will not be regarded as particularly helpful especially amongst resource poor groups such as the elderly. It must be remembered that the status of the library as part of the Local Authority puts a limitation on its mode of operation. Unlike independent agencies, the library cannot promote the client's interests irrespective of the rights and wrongs of the situation. If it is accepted that information is critical, then the process of acquiring and using it is important. Coopers and Lybrand (1988) commented that research into the provision of information to the physically

disabled suggested that information providers should be aware that the process is complex. This is equally true of information provision to the elderly and the model which Coopers and Lybrand postulated is equally applicable to this group.

Coopers and Lybrands model of information dissemination



The content and form of the information must take into account the problems that beset the elderly: hearing impairment; declining vision; mobility problems etc. Distribution and dissemination of information refers to the manner in which information reaches the elderly and their carers. The target audience must be adequately researched so that information is orientated towards their needs rather than the perceived needs of others or is so general as to be of little use to anyone. Dissemination of information infers that it is understandable to the target audience and can be used by them for some form of action. The implications of this model are that information providers should base their decision on the character and situations of their target audience, in this case the elderly. Key factors which affect the accessibility of information to the elderly can be seen as: mobility; isolation; sensory and visual impairment, and motivation.

Mobility

A number of elderly people do not have a telephone and would have problems getting to public ones. Similarly, access to local advice centres such as Post Offices, Citizens Advice Bureaux and libraries may be difficult without assistance.

Isolation

Research has shown that the restricted mobility suffered by many elderly people may create social and physical isolation within the community. One research study revealed that more than half of over 75s lived at home, more than two thirds did not belong to any clubs/societies and almost two thirds went out less than once a week (Fitzpatrick, 1980). These people have little opportunity of obtaining information through informal chats and chance observation of leaflets.

Sensory and visual impairment

Specialist agencies recognise the specific needs of this group but few other agencies and statutory organisations try to provide information in a manner that would be useful to this group. Since a considerable percentage of the elderly suffer from one or both impairments to varying degrees, any information service that attempts to help the elderly must take account of the needs of this subsection of the target population.

Motivation

There is a tendency for the elderly to take a passive role. It could be suggested that the elderly therefore have low expectations and if information is to reach them and be acted upon, it must come to them and give positive encouragement to actions.

The value of co-operation and collaboration with other information giving agencies was stressed earlier in this chapter. In seeking to develop an information service aimed at the elderly, the importance of this cannot be over emphasised. Co-operation between libraries and other agencies could initially comprise joint collections of information and the production of referral directories detailing the range of enquiries that agencies want to have referred to them together with addresses, telephone numbers, contacts etc. A further step that could be taken to co-ordinate the work of various agencies is the formation of a local liaison committee. This was actually carried out in Peterborough where the objectives of the Peterborough Information Group were:

1. To foster greater awareness of each others services amongst members of the group and the public.
2. To co-ordinate efforts to avoid duplication of effort.
3. To share joint publicity.
4. To identify gaps in information provision and seek a means of remedying them.
5. To discuss/comment on topics concerned with information and advice of local and national significance.
6. To organise joint training sessions.

All these points can be applied specifically to an information service catering for the elderly and will be considered in the next chapter, which attempts construct a hypothetical model of information provision to the elderly drawing on the information gleaned from this research. This model is seen as proactive, with the library as one of many key community players, each interacting with each other in the pursuit of a common goal, to serve the information needs of the elderly within the community.

Chapter 16

A model information service for the elderly

"One of the greatest needs for senior citizens is for information, information that will enable them to take command of their own lives and affairs"

(Smith, 1981).

Constructing the model: the theoretical background

The first step in implementing a review of services for particular client groups, whether out-reach or in-house, must be to determine which groups will be given special priority. Because this is a decision concerning both Local Authority policy and resource distribution within the community, it must ultimately be political. In the case study authorities, "high-priority" client groups had been identified through agreement with elected council members. The groups identified were the elderly, children (especially under five's) and the unemployed. Translated into library policy, services to the elderly have traditionally taken the form of a domiciliary service, as revealed by the survey described in chapter 7.

Once the target group has been defined, the next stage is to identify the kind of service required and to plan a strategy for its delivery. Frequently services are based on what is perceived by the library as needed rather than what is actually required by the people using a service. It is generally worthwhile conducting some type of market research to ensure that the service developed does in fact match the

need. The danger, if this is not undertaken, is an incompatibility between needs and provision, resulting in an expensive white elephant that is not used.

Much has already been said about the need for collaboration and partnership in resource starved situations. To achieve this and to ensure that there is a market for the service, the librarian needs to spend time talking to people in the community regarding their needs and their opinions on the quality of existing services. Active involvement with local voluntary bodies and time taken to get to know the needs of the client group, to establish contact with this group in the community and to test how the library's current service measures up, are vital elements in the development of a model of service delivery.

In developing a model for an information service to the elderly it is useful to look at examples in other authorities. The survey described in part 2 revealed that few authorities actually operated a library-based information service for the elderly. A number of authorities also returned additional information relating to services they operated specifically for the elderly. This information, along with the questionnaire results, revealed that the majority of authorities still provided little beyond the traditional domiciliary services and large print/tape material in libraries. Those that did provide information mainly confined it to folders/leaflets dealing with topics of interest to the elderly but rarely printed in large print format. None utilised new technology in the specific delivery of an information service to this client group. One example of information provision came from Surrey Library Service who decided that the most economic approach to service delivery is "to get people to come to the library." Consequently outreach services were only developed to those

unable physically to reach the library. In line with its in-house service policy, Surrey operates information centres in ten of its main libraries. Centres are staffed by a team of libraries providing a public information and enquiry service. Each library specialises in one area of information provision e.g. the elderly. Specialist librarians co-ordinate information across the country so enquiries can be directed to the most appropriate agency for information/advice. The information specialists are also responsible for liaising with local community groups.

When relating a model to the practical development of a library based information service, regardless of target group, the following points must be considered:

- an awareness that a fairly narrow section of the public actually use the public library service on a regular basis;
- the general expectation of the public is of a book lending service that is mainly recreational in emphasis;
- there is an increasing demand for information, evident from the increase in voluntary information and advice services over the last few decades;
- traditional reference services are not suitable for this growing demand since the material required by the user is not that generally stocked by the reference section, and the public who would use a voluntary advice service are probably unlikely to come to the library with their enquiry.

Bearing these factors in mind, three models are outlined below. The merits of each and their suitability as the basis for a library based information service to the active elderly will be considered later in this section.

Model 1

Libraries have bibliographic skills in retrieving and organising information. They are in a position to capitalise on this, since much of the everyday information needed can be difficult for individuals to access as it is scattered throughout a variety of voluntary and statutory agencies. Much of this information is geographically specific and the library service, as a department of the local government service, is well placed to acquire this. This model is essentially one of information collection by the library of a range of topics appropriate to its area and channelling this to the relevant individuals/groups within the community.

Model 2

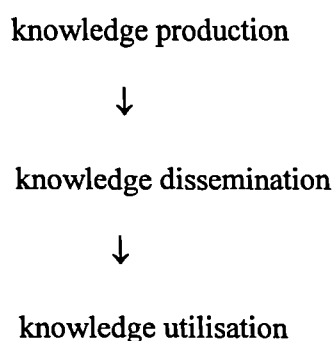
This model suggests that the problem is not one of information gathering but rather of information presentation. There needs to be a shift in the way librarians present themselves to users/non-users. This requires a positive effort to go out into the community to discover what local people need. It also requires a shift in the way staff respond to users in the library, especially in the way enquiries are handled.

Both models suggest: the development of an information service in consultation with other agencies in the same area; a need to exploit the public libraries' assets such as number of service points available, provision of meeting rooms, and access to a range of information sources. These models provide "an example of the

role the public library can play as a generalist information providers in an information/advice network" (Watson, Bowen and Walley, 1980). Both can be adapted to a service aimed at the elderly in which the library is the prime motivator.

Model 3

Another model that could usefully be adapted for information services to the elderly is a conceptual model for library services to the elderly. (Hameister, 1976). The model postulates three basic assumptions regarding library use. These are: libraries serve the educational and informational needs of all populations (this includes the elderly); material and information must be readily accessible to the population, and effort must be exerted to reach the disadvantaged (this can be seen as including the elderly). These assumptions when related to the elderly would suggest the following principles: library services should be planned with elderly users and potential users in mind; the library should provide education and information on ageing and its related problems for professional and lay carers; it should present a more positive image of ageing; it should continually explore ways of making ongoing services more effective and available to the elderly and it should utilise the potential of the elderly as volunteers to help their peers. The conceptual model can be represented as:



Knowledge production is applied research. In the public library environment knowledge production involves understanding the local population and community. This would include demographic information such as do the elderly live alone, are they mobile, how many live in nursing homes and other institutions?

Knowledge dissemination as a component of the model contains two elements, information to the elderly and information about the elderly. The former defines the population under discussion as a consumer of informational material. The latter element relates the elderly person as an individual alongside other members of the community. Major concerns here would include dispelling negative social, physical and medical stereotypes. The resources that the public library can call upon to dispel such attitudes are numerous. These could include displays of books and information specifically for the elderly and the compilation of pamphlets and audio-visual material such as tapes and films if applicable. In addition, the library could become involved in supporting advocacy groups working on behalf of the elderly.

Knowledge utilisation is the final component of the conceptual model. The prime concern here is supplying essential material and information to local individuals and agencies who plan, design and deliver services to the elderly as well as directly to the elderly themselves. The conceptual model, involving all three knowledge elements, provides a framework of involvement of all libraries working with the elderly.

Constructing the model: the practical considerations

Whichever theoretical model is selected, the practical issues of implementation must be clearly defined and communicated to everyone involved in the process. A number of key tasks in developing an information service can be identified in the order of progression in which they must occur if the service is to be successfully implemented:

community profiling to discover what resources are available and what the needs are of the group. To be successful, perceived and actual needs must agree;

provision of public information e.g. documentation;

links at district level with statutory and voluntary organisations to plan developments in information sharing. The question of collaboration and partnership would also require addressing before plans to proceed can be made. Once a network has been established a programme of regular meetings would need to be formulated to ensure that all groups involved with the new service are aware of what is happening and their role in procedures;

a referral service for when information held within the library or within the experience of the library information adviser is insufficient. The effectiveness of this would be entirely dependent on the success of local and district information networks.

To operate such a service efficiently and effectively, a range of backup resources would need to be in place. These can be defined: a distribution system to deliver

material; the speedy updating of material; display space; telephone links; staff to man service/develop publicity; finance to allow continuation and expansion; and location (private areas as well as public). These elements are considered in the context of developing an information service for the elderly in the next section.

Clearly there is a strong role for librarians in the improvement of information networks at both district and national level. Co-operation with these bodies could take many forms such as information sharing, joint training and the production of directories of local information. This would also serve to provide good grounds for creating some kind of formal/informal network. The value of such a network would be to enable organisations to find out what other agencies involved in the same areas are doing, save unnecessary duplication of work, foster good relations and be of value in improving referral services. To achieve these objective the following aspects must be considered: planned co-operation and collaboration; funding; structure, and technology.

The need for co-operation and collaboration in the development of a new community service has been discussed earlier in this research. What is clear is that for any new service to succeed, this element is of paramount importance. There are many reasons why library and information services should co-operate. Most of them arise from limitations of human and financial resources available in any one service. Co-operation may take the form of an informal network of personal contacts. On a more formal level there can be co-operation in acquisitions, inter-lending or storage of material; information sharing and combining abilities to increase awareness of local resources, especially material that is locally produced.

Information agencies can also refer enquiries to each other, promote their services more widely among potential users and provide joint input to mechanised information services and the staffing of information points. Co-operation can allow a more effective use of available funds necessary to support an information service.

A report into library co-operation by Kennington (1985) revealed over 1000 separate initiatives reported from approximately 100 libraries. The main growth sector was involvement with community groups. Many of these activities are very local in scope with little financial implications and exist largely as a result of organisations adopting a co-operative stance as a means of maximising resources. Criteria for effective co-operation does raise a number of issues and in considering an information service for the elderly based on a policy of collaboration, these issues need to be addressed before the venture can proceed. Firstly the issue of whether the scheme adds to the effectiveness of the area's information services for this group as a whole needs to be considered. Do the objectives conflict with those of any other initiatives already in place and will the standard of service be equal to that already being given? Of vital importance is whether the scheme has the technological, financial and human resources necessary to achieve its objectives in the most effective manner. Tied in with this is the question of a strategy that takes account of new technology. Finally, the construction of the scheme soundly based and structured so that it is capable of adaptation or improvement.

Public libraries are no longer in a position to provide a comprehensive service such as is required of them in the Public Libraries and Museums Act of 1964. In reality

they are being forced to offer a tiered system of service with emphasis on particular social groups whose need they will give priority to in allocating their resources. For many public libraries the emphasis on community is a response to this redefining of services. Linked with the sociological implications of community information services is the rapid increase in information technology. This area was explored at length in Part 4; all that needs reiterating here is that technology is increasing the possibility of establishing automated information networks and the storage and manipulation of data.

One major effect of these technological changes should be a greater emphasis on working together as part of a local or even national network. Co-operation would bring maximum benefits but it must mean more than a mere willingness to share resources between one library and another. An important development in information technology lies in the convergence of various facets: computer networks; input; storage; retrieval; processing and display. Information technology has facilitated the interchange of information not only between individual libraries but also between information providers and users. The use of on-line information systems and databases, and the databanks to which they give access, are increasing rapidly and will continue to do so. A direct result of this is the growth of automated networks for information and data transfer and document transmission. An automated network is a complex consisting of two or more inter-connected computer terminals which could be at geographically separate locations. The networks with which this research is concerned have as their objective the pooling of information resources in such a way that any piece of information can be made quickly available at any location.

The following issues would need to be considered in relation to an information service to the elderly that considers using network capabilities: the effects of technological applications on the overall policy and management of information services e.g. staffing, training, equipment; the move towards electronic publishing and delivery systems; access to literature and guides to literature relevant to the elderly, their carers and related organisations, and handling the practical applications of technology and problems of co-ordination that may arise.

New technology has resulted in schemes such as CLIP (Computerised Local Information Project) in Cambridge which enables the exchange of information between the Citizens' Advice Bureaux, libraries and a number of local organisations. The PIRATE (Public Information in Rural Areas Technology Experiment) project in South Devon is a multi-agency concern where advice giving organisations share resources and information handling and provide a community information service to the public by direct computer access. The schemes main aim is to overcome the problems of rural deprivation with regard to access to information.

Constructing the model: development and implementation

In considering the design of an information service it is worth considering the sentiments behind the development of the Bretton Information Network. This attempt to act as a "permanent information service, open whenever the library was open, answering general information needs either from the library's own resources or by referring enquirers to particular agencies...it would be supplemented by workers from the information/advice services...it would be important that all

workers in the library-based services could keep up to date with changes in the statutory organisations/voluntary agencies...this could be done through the library co-ordinating local information and updating the community information file" (Bowen, 1981).

These comments fully echo the mission statement which one would envisage for a new library based information service to the elderly. Prior to the implementation of any service is the planning and developmental stage. Certain criteria can be identified for any successful planning exercise and these need to be in place before an information service can be implemented. In planning an information service modelled on the lines of Bretton, the following elements would need to exist: good communication between departments and the library's internal hierarchy; an acceptance of the ethos of collaboration and co-operation in joint ventures; a common understanding of the aims and priorities of the council and the service being developed; a clear appreciation of the overall mission statement of the authority as opposed to individual departments; an awareness of community needs; a recognition of the need to evaluate unnecessary duplication or conflict between departments, and finally clear and flexible views of the future in terms of the authorities resources, priorities and policies. An evaluation of a community information project at five American libraries emphasised the management ingredients necessary for a successful information and referral service in a public library (Childers, 1979). These are equally applicable in the case of this research and are: commitment from the top; a vigorous publicity campaign; positive relations with other information and referral services; and an awareness of the problems of introducing change.

In developing an information service along the lines suggested in the theoretical model, the initial task is the identification of the voluntary organisations which deal with the elderly in the selected area. Once contact has been established and the principle of collaboration accepted, a network for liaising between interested groups must be established. Accepting the theory of this is one thing, but resolving the practical issues is another matter. A network of communication is the first step but other factors also need consideration. This would involve the development of a system for collecting, organising and keeping information up to date and a strategy along the lines suggested here might be adopted. Relevant organisations would need to be contacted requesting information about activities and services, confirmation of addresses etc. These discussions with organisations outside the “partnership organisations” would add to the network of contacts being build up and ensure a regular supply of information. A subscription to newsletters produced by information agencies and umbrella groups linked to the elderly would provide valuable information on developments outside the local area. Scanning relevant journals, national and local press, radio and television would also be a means of keeping abreast of new developments as would subscribing to bulletin boards if Internet technology is available.

By adopting this strategy a core database of information about national and local based organisations can be developed. These would include information from voluntary organisations, statutory agencies and other related organisations covering education, leisure, health. Having established a basic collection, further information can be added in response to information problems that arise when the service is up and running. The whole process is an evolutionary one with the

service constantly developing and updating itself to take in other collaborators as it expands and constantly to evaluate its position and be prepared to respond to any community change that might arise. Designing an information service must also involve consideration of methods of storage, classification, training and operational strategy such as staffing, availability and marketing. Requirements of the systems would include up-to-date information, user friendly facilities, non-duplication of existing services and wide availability. To fulfil these criteria it is logical to consider an automated system, the advantages of which are manifold. Due to the mass of information generated the system chosen must be able to cope with frequent updating of records often involving only partial amendment of a record; the production of information sheets and directories on various topics; and retrieval of information by the name of the organisation, subject, geographical location or a combination of all factors.

Clearly difficulties exist in implementing a new service. For example, how does one ensure that the relevant people in the community know about the service? This is a marketing issue and will be addressed in more detail in the final chapter. Another issue concerns human resources. How is the service to be staffed, given internal constraints and training requirements? In the case of collaborative ventures, the situation is further complicated by the question of which organisation staffs the service at a given time and for how long. The practical issues are numerous and need to be solved prior to implementation if the service is to succeed. Service co-operation, while agreed at a higher level, can cause problems at grass root levels. Staff, used to their own individual spheres of work and knowledge, may be reluctant to share information and workloads with other

departments and organisations. They may regard them as a threat and an intrusion rather than a valuable extension of their own abilities. Careful training and communications, both formal and informal, will be necessary to allay fears and explain overall mutual objectives.

Constructing the model: the evaluative process

Like all Local Authority departments, the library is in a position where it must provide effective and efficient service, offering value to the community in exchange for money produced through taxation and other charges. Although commendable in theory, these aims and what they mean are hard to assess in practice. As a result, attention tends to be focused on local authority spending, economy and efficiency, as opposed to achievements in terms of overall community benefit.

Consumers of local government services, including the elderly who are often the silent majority, have a direct interest in what they get for their money and in issues such as the range and quality of services provided and the extent to which they meet their needs and preferences. Work by the National Consumer Council (1986) on local government services aimed to show that it was possible, experimentally, to evaluate the performance from the consumers viewpoint and that this approach could be of value to officers, elected members and consumers themselves. The ultimate aim was to encourage Local Authorities to become more responsive to consumers needs in the way services are planned and delivered as well as striving to achieve value for money at the expense of community satisfaction (Munro, 1977). The report revealed that the only indicator of quality yielded by librarians'

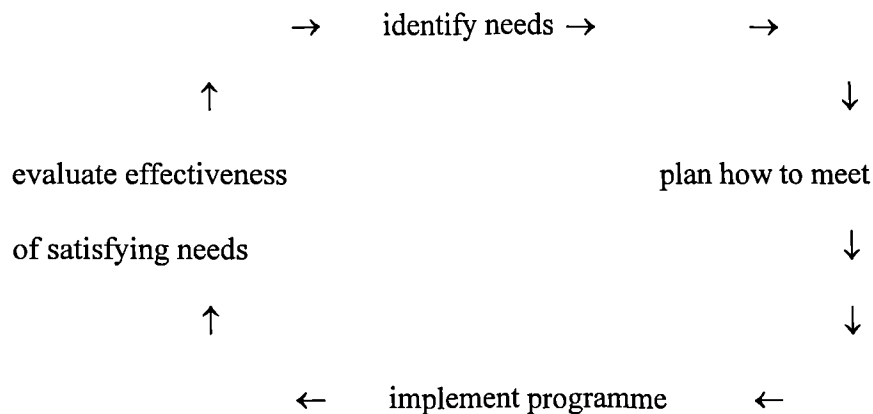
records was time taken to satisfy requests. It further commented that "market research will therefore be necessary to look at the extent to which services meet needs, views in quality and user success/satisfaction". This aspect, in relation to the research, was identified and dealt with in chapter 12.

An evaluation of public library performance related to outreach activities (Allen and Potter, 1986) was undertaken to answer the criticism of *Measuring Up* (1986) which stated that the performance indicators developed were most applicable to in-house services and appeared largely supply based rather than client-based. The paper sets out to examine outreach services in public libraries in four Local Authorities. It stated that the "distinction between in-house services and out-reach service is a somewhat arbitrary one" and that "the ultimate aim must be to look at all public library services from the viewpoint of particular groups in the population who will have very different needs or preferences."

In areas such as programme development, research and development tends to move in a cyclical fashion. Each programme is monitored and provides information for future programmes. Programmes are constantly being adapted as new lessons are learnt at each stage. This is generally known as evaluation and has given rise to a method of research used to evaluate innovatory programmes such as the model for an information service, known as evaluation research. The term has commonly come to mean "the assessment of the effectiveness of social programmes already in practice which were designed as tentative solutions to existing problems" (Lancaster, 1979). Evaluation research is concerned with data gathering as opposed to "evaluation", a term used to describe the actual judgement process itself.

"Evaluation research asks about the kind of change the programme views as desirable, the means by which this change is to be brought about and the signs according to which such change can be recognised" (Suchman, 1967).

However one chooses to define evaluation, there still exists two categories of evaluation. Formative evaluation is carried out during the development of a programme and provides direct feedback about the workings of different parts of the programme, thus giving information which can be used to modify the process. Summative evaluation of the programme is concerned with the evaluation of the programme as a final product. The simplified example below illustrates the main steps in the programme development sequence.



This programme must be reviewed at intervals and any lessons that can be learnt are then built into future programmes. In this way experience is used to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of any planned programme. Data produced from evaluation research can be quantitative, qualitative or a combination of both. This factor, coupled with the overall purpose of the programme, must be considered

when determining which type of evaluation strategy to adopt. Since the development of an information service to the elderly is a purely hypothetical proposal, actual evaluation research cannot be undertaken although suggestions as to how it could be handled should be discussed. If such a service were to become an actuality, the methodology for conducting an evaluation would have to be examined. There is no single evaluation methodology: the range of methods is, in fact, unlimited and includes observation, interviews, questionnaires and tests (Partlett and Hamilton, 1976).

Community information in a library based environment centres around a concern to make information accessible to a wider public. This has meant that libraries are more likely to anticipate users' needs than to wait for them to express a demand. A detailed knowledge of users is now required, not only of the kinds of information needs users have but also of how they make use of the information found, and finally libraries have identified the need to involve other professionals in service provision to specific groups due to the wide range of enquiries encompassed in information/advice work. They have also identified a need to involve non-professional library staff and volunteers in organising material and operating an enquiry service.

Evaluating information services to the elderly

In the early stages of evaluating any innovatory programme it is advisable to concentrate on a judgmental view of success rather than relying solely on quantitative data such as counting enquiries which do not take account of other factors involved such as the effectiveness of publicity and other demands on users

and their time. The aim in the design of any evaluative programme for an innovative service is to accommodate a range of different kinds of data which could be brought together to provide an overall evaluative statement which would reveal the benefits and opportunities created by the new service.

Inevitably a variety of problems ensue from trying to measure casual relationships in an innovatory programme. These can include: goal setting; different participants having different and often conflicting goals which may only emerge during the developmental stage; initial objectives being not necessarily expressed in measurable terms. This could be countered by establishing a service with deliberately well-defined goals and targets which could be tested. With a new programme it is impossible to use a “before and after” model of research design. A follow up user survey, however, could be run in the future to assess whether direction of impact has been maintained.

The approach of this chapter has been largely theoretical and has attempted to develop a model that could be used to provide a framework against which a new service such as an information service to the elderly, could be hung. In doing this, attention has been paid to the various stages required in developing an innovatory service: planning and development; addressing practical issues of implementation and the final need to evaluate and adapt in the light of lessons learnt.

Chapter 17

Conclusions

This chapter brings together the various elements of this research and attempts to recommend a programme of action for the future in which the public library service must play a key role. The research has indicated that a gap in the market clearly exists for an information service to the elderly. Previous chapters have shown that the elderly do have specific information requirements and that there is a role for an agency such as the public library service to play in attempting to bring together related organisations within the community to forge a common goal, which is the provision of a community-wide information service to the elderly.

This chapter falls into four areas. Firstly, a review of the current literature in this field. This is necessary since the initial literature survey was conducted at the start of the research in 1993. There is the possibility that there have been further developments in the area of information provision to the elderly and a final review of the literature five years on will attempt to pick up any significant publications that are of relevance to this research. The initial literature survey was very broad, taking in literature that dealt with a range of information services to the elderly and to other groups. There was no attempt at that stage to focus specifically on either the elderly or the public library service; the prime concern was to get a feel for the subject, to see what type of material existed and to ascertain if there was, in fact, an opportunity for this area of research. The review of the literature in this chapter

is more focused, and looks specifically at literature relevant to the defined area of research that has been produced in the interim period. Any new literature on this area could have a significant impact on the final conclusions of this research and as such must be considered in this final concluding chapter.

The second element of this chapter is a reappraisal of the political situation. This is pertinent since two factors have occurred in the course of this research that are likely to have an effect on access to information for groups such as the elderly. The first factor is the change of government that resulted after the general election in May 1997. Prior to this there had been eighteen years of uninterrupted Conservative government and, as a result, the spending policies and economic strategies of that government had been firmly established. The sudden change from Conservative to Labour and the totally different ethos associated with that Party now necessitate a consideration of what this could mean to the library service generally and programmes of the type considered by this research. Any comments are speculative at this stage, but what is certain is that there will be changes in local authority management and spending as a result of the new political situation. The second factor that needs some final comments here, although it has been referred to in more detail in earlier chapters, is the IT strategy for the Millennium. This was a relatively unknown factor at the start of this research but one that could now have implications for public libraries in the light of developing technology and political change.

The third element is an update on the services provided by the library to the elderly in the two case study authorities. The case studies were undertaken in 1994 and the

situation may have changed in the four intervening years. This section briefly focuses on any developments or changes in service that have effected the elderly and attempts to provide a picture of the position that exists at the conclusion of this thesis.

The final element of this chapter comprises a series of recommendations for the future. This takes into account the factors considered in the course of this research: social, political, economic, and technology. All these elements will be combined to suggest a programme of action for the future that will satisfy the needs of the elderly for full and free access to the information they require.

Review of the literature

This research commenced in 1993 and at the outset a review of literature pertaining to the elderly, their information requirements and public libraries was conducted. This review, which forms the background for part 1 of this research, yielded a considerable amount of literature on information services and the elderly from a sociological viewpoint, but very little literature that actually connected the two areas. When this search was extended to take in the public library service, the literature found was scant to say the least. The two most significant pieces of work were surveys undertaken by Dee and Bowen and Edmonds. By broadening the area of searching from the public library service to community information services generally enabled a number of further hits to be made, most significantly the work conducted by Epstein. The conclusion of this literature search was that, while material existed on community information services and the requirements of the elderly as separate issues, there was little literature that connected the two areas.

This confirmed the view that there was scope for research into the information needs of the elderly and the role which the public library service could play within the community environment in addressing those needs. This was narrowed down, after an initial survey of library provision to the elderly, to concentrate on the “active” elderly since the needs of this group were the ones where the survey revealed a service deficiency, the needs of the inactive elderly (defined as those unable to visit the library) being generally catered for by the existing traditional style of provision to the elderly which was revealed as being available in all Local Authorities.

The literature survey conducted at the end of this research was more focused and looked specifically at the elderly, their information requirements and the level of service offered to this group by the public library. A search was conducted on the LISA (Library and Information Science Abstracts) database which revealed 30 references, a large number of which were not UK references. The main references found covered such diverse areas as: the work of an outreach librarian in the US with reference to services provided to minority groups including the elderly (Hilbert, 1988); the development of some alternative services for the elderly in Western Australia (Kahlert, 1995); a survey into the reading habits and needs of elderly people in senior citizen centres in the US (Anderson et al, 1992) and the provision in the UK of public library services to the elderly (Street, 1994).

In conclusion, there was little new in the references revealed by this search to indicate that the situation in the UK with regard to services to the elderly by the public library service had substantially changed or improved since this thesis was

started in 1993. There are many initiatives evident in public libraries concerned with the making the Internet and electronic community information available to the community at large but none that focus specifically on the needs of the elderly. It must be acknowledged that there may be initiatives that exist in various local authorities in relation to service provision to the elderly by the library and other community groups, but if these initiatives are not written up and published they remain, in effect, unknown to the library community at large. This research has attempted, whenever possible, to refer to actual experiences and programmes that currently exist, whether community information programmes generally or services to the elderly specifically. A large number of these were technology based, since there is no doubt that the advent of the Internet has provided the impetus in allowing such programmes to escalate. Many of these local authority developments and community initiatives were looked at in some detail in chapters 14 and 15 and they provide a useful overview of the current state of affairs relating to library-based information services utilising technology and/or collaboration and partnership strategies.

One further search was made of current literature which utilised technological advances that have come about in research practices since this study was first commenced in 1993. This is the ability to search databases electronically via the Internet. When this research was first begun it was possible to search remotely using dial up services such as DIALOG and CD-ROM's such as LISA (Library and Information Science Abstracts). These greatly facilitated literature searching and were a considerable step forward from having to wade through hard copy abstracts and indexes.

Information on a wide range of topics is now available quickly and efficiently, whereas the process five years ago was relatively limited in scope and not always readily available to the researcher. The advent of the Internet and technology such as the World Wide Web in the last few years has transformed things. Searching remotely is now commonplace with universities offering quick, easy access to the Internet in addition to networked CD databases. Search engines on the Web enable the researcher to trawl through a vast resource of information and to extend the scope of a search world-wide. A variety of searches were conducted on the Web with the intention of looking for anything relating to information services, community information and the elderly, specifically items with a library slant. The results showed nothing that matched these specific parameters but did reveal some interesting information regarding individual public library services and community information provision. This information is now available to a much larger audience through the existence of a Public Library Web site.

(<http://dspace.com/town/square/ac940/ukpublib.html>)

The UK Public Libraries page aims to provide up to date information on public library Internet activity in the UK. The pages are constantly updated as the compilers are informed of any new and relevant occurrences. They currently include information on public libraries by region with access to their home pages, catalogues and links to community information databases if available, such as Hertfordshire Public Libraries, Islington, Kingston “Inform”, Manchester and Norfolk. In addition the Page contains networking news and bulletin boards for librarians to exchange views on areas and items of interest. This represents a useful forum for debating any new initiatives, exchanging ideas and picking up tips.

Links are also provided to European libraries on the Net. One element of this service is the Net Notions Page, which emphasises the value of the Internet as a means for public libraries to create a community of users. Its interest is in small scale ways of developing the network and its interactivity to benefit individual communities and it is aimed at librarians who want to connect with other on-line members of their community.

In addition to the Internet, *Dissertations Abstract* and the *ASLIB Index to Theses*, both now available on CD-ROM, were searched to see if they revealed similar research in this field. The only research of a similar nature was a study which examined whether the information needs of elderly people had been addressed by the information strategy developed by the Social Services Department. This research also adopted a case study approach but focused on information needs in relation to community care (Phillips, 1996).

A final consideration in searching for research projects involving the public library service and the elderly was an examination of both the current research publications of the British Library and research still in progress. Since community based services and the role of the public library is an emergent area for research it was possible that a look at the British Library's research plans might reveal research of a similar nature currently being conducted. The British Library Research and Innovation Centre has a mission that includes advancing information and library services by promoting and providing funding for research and development that meets the criteria it has established. Each year priority areas are highlighted. The research plan for April 1997 to March 1998 stated that "the

Centre will seek to highlight the value and impact of libraries, information resource centres and services which contribute to the social, educational and economic achievement of UK citizens.”

The British Library's strategy for 1997 clearly recognises the vital role of the public library in all these areas. The importance of the provision of free access to information, a role which, as the research plan acknowledges, increases in importance and value as disadvantaged groups such as the elderly are “continually threatened with exclusion from knowledge as a result of cutbacks” was highlighted. Another area that featured strongly was library co-operation, a subject that has been heavily emphasised in this research as of utmost importance in enabling new services to develop. The research plan placed particular emphasis on issues of regional co-operation and the relationships of public, academic and special libraries. Although a look at the current research activities did not reveal anything specifically relating to the information requirements of the elderly, it did show that research was active in areas that were connected. These included research topics such as the information requirements of refuge groups and the Croydon community computing network, and publications covering areas such as information behaviour patterns, the Croydon Libraries Internet Project and European Union information held by public libraries.

Two recent publications have focused on aspects of the public library service and its future. The costs of a public library service and strategies for reducing those costs while still seeking to take advantage of the opportunities offered by technology are a central theme to the Audit Commission's report (1997). While

not referring to the elderly specifically, the report did stress the enhancements offered to the library service by electronic access to information and emphasised that this access need not only be from the library but could utilise village halls, post offices and other outlets frequented by the public. The Library and Information Commission's report (1997), while emphasising the needs of individuals for information and involvement in society and the importance of participation from the private sector in developing a networking plan (Dolan, 1997), again did not refer to the elderly directly. Its primary concentration is on education and life long learning and, while children and young people are constantly referred to in this process, it is interesting that the elderly are not mentioned directly.

The changing political climate

It is always a possibility that events happening during the research could have profound implications for the future of the hypothetical service postulated in chapter 16. One such factor would have to be the changed political situation and, although its effect can not be ascertained at this point in time, it is still worthwhile to consider possible eventualities and how they might impinge upon the research to date. Much has been said in the first part of the research concerning the political situation, both at a national and a local level. Local Authority budgets and spending are dictated by the policies of central government and, as such, their effects on the library service and its development are of prime concern given the nature of this research which is to investigate the potential for a new service.

The Labour Party's cultural document, launched in March 1997 and entitled *Create the Future*, made a number of welcome statements on public libraries and schools. Key words applied to libraries in the document were "access," "economic generation" and "learning." The most significant statements were in the section entitled "Developing Access." Much was said throughout the run up to the General Election in 1997 concerning the Labour Party's promise of an "exciting, important future" for public libraries and their role in helping to narrow the information gap between rich and poor, thus asserting the right of every British citizen to have access to information. Obviously this was the stirring stuff of elections with quotations such as "Public libraries are the lynchpin of our cultural life." What remains to be seen, now that the Labour Party has won the general election and provided an opportunity for these promises to be translated into reality, is exactly how and when these policies will come about. The document does not actually promise that all schools and libraries would be connected to the Internet - no political party likes to make statements such as this. The words of Jack Cunningham are perhaps the nearest the Labour Party have come to this when he publicly stated that "we do strongly believe that all our public libraries should be connected (to the Internet)" (Watson, 1996).

Another Labour Party proposal mooted is the establishment of a network of homework centres around the country. This concept forms part of David Blunkett's *Excellence for Everyone* document which set out the Party's vision for education under a Labour government. The fact that centres of this nature are already operated by the public library service such as in Knowsley had not been commented on by the Party. This will be another area where it will be interesting

to see what communication and results are forthcoming between the Library Association and the Labour Party now that the latter is in a position to act upon the statements made in its manifesto.

The recent publication of a consultation paper on the National Grid for Learning stressed the government's commitment to education and reiterated its pre-election promise to connect every school to the Internet, train teachers to use this technology and build a community network that encompasses libraries, universities, colleges and museums and schools. The National Grid for Learning provides the content that would make such promises a reality. The plans for a grid, while not referring to the elderly, do highlight some of the factors that underpin this thesis. Factors such as the integral role of the public library service with its repository of vast stores of information and accessibility to the public in any community development and the need to project a true public/private partnership to enable access throughout the country to a much wider range of services.

The other area that has developed with rapidity since the start of this research has been the concern with a public library IT strategy for the Millennium. The argument has been that UK public libraries need to give priority to information technology if they are to continue as the main point of access for the general public requiring information. The increasing complexity of IT has made it essential that library managers develop and implement systems needed for the Millennium. The Conservative Party, when in government at the time of the Millennium bid, implied support for the *Information for All* Millennium bid in its response to the Lords Select Committee's report on the Information Society. One of the Select

Committee's recommendations was for the establishment of terminals allowing Internet access in all public libraries. Although Conservative Party initiatives reported in the last year or so, such as the Information and Communication Technology Fund, are unlikely to get off the ground with the change of government, Labour has also made its commitment to IT clear. Prior to winning the election, the Labour Party announced that it planned to use National Lottery funding to support two main areas of current library activity. These were after school clubs for children and improving access to IT through libraries. What remains to be seen now is exactly how far Labour will go in ensuring free access to information for all individuals.

Library services to the elderly in the case study authorities: an update

The case studies were a valuable part of the research since they enabled the elderly's use of community services to be examined in much greater breadth than would otherwise have been possible. The first research element focused solely on the library service but this is by no means the complete picture. The case studies enabled a greater understanding of the elderly and their information habits to be gathered as well as putting the public library in a community context. For this reason it is relevant to include a brief update on the situation in both authorities at the end of this research.

The intervening four years has seen an increased focus on new technology marked by the availability of Internet access within branch libraries and the establishment of on-line access via the World Wide Web to information on services provided by the local authority, including the library.

One partnership initiative, based on new technology, that has benefited both authorities has been The Internet Express. This is a free Internet facility touring around Merseyside (primarily based in libraries) offering up to twenty PC's with full Internet access. The service is a partnership between Connect, local councils, Telewest, Hewlett Packard and IBM and came into existence because of the growing social division between the Information Rich and Information Poor. To address these problems, Connect decided to offer a roving Internet access facility. The venture started in September 1996 and has so far visited a range of venues in Liverpool, Lancashire, St Helens, Knowsley and the Wirral. The Internet Express provides short courses, open browsing sessions and an Internet Skills Training course available to anyone seeking employment. At the end of the session, provided that the library and local community can provide a justification for future use, a PC with full Internet access will be left behind at each library visited.

Liverpool Libraries and Information Services

There have been no developments in services aimed specifically at the elderly. Services to the disabled still form an important element of the service provided by the public library. The Special Services Unit is aimed particularly at people with visual and hearing impairment, mobility problems and print disabilities and is therefore likely to include a high concentration of elderly users. In addition to this Unit, the housebound delivery service and mobile library continue to provide a service to the elderly who are confined to their homes or living in residential accommodation. Community libraries also provide a range of resources to the elderly including large print, spoken cassettes and community information in leaflet form on a range of topics. In conclusion, the level of service is still very

much that epitomised by the “traditional” service offered to the elderly, as revealed by the survey outlined in chapter 7.

Knowsley Library Service

The most significant development in the last four years has been the building of a new library in Huyton which boasts the biggest computer suite in a public library with 40 computers available for use free of charge. Users are invited to explore the Internet and make use of the range of learning packages that are available. There has also been investment in a range of CD-ROM titles, the establishment of homework clubs and an increase in the provision of information in electronic format on companies and businesses, careers and courses and the local community.

One non-library initiative has been the creation of One Stop Shop's. These multi-purpose facilities enable residents to access a wide range of Council services at a single place. The first shop opened in April 1994. There are currently three such shops with the eventual aim that the One Shop facility will be available throughout the Borough. All shops have facilities for the disabled including signing services, hearing loop and minicom phone systems.

As with Liverpool, services to the elderly continue in the traditional manner. There have been no specific developments in the last four years although this group can utilise the services outlined above if they so wish. The Special Services Librarian post still exists despite considerable internal restructuring and the services provided by the Housebound and mobile library remain active.

General conclusions

Public libraries clearly perceive themselves as a major community facility whose purpose is to enable individuals or groups of individuals to gain free and unhampered access to books, information and knowledge. The local and community nature of this service necessitates a special emphasis being placed on the needs and hopes of the local community and on the provision of services to particular groups within it, while at the same time providing access to wider resources through regional and national library networks. Admirable though this is in its sentiments, such a wide ranging brief is clearly unsustainable in the current economic, social and political context. Selective targeting of services and the exploration of a variety of methods to deliver those services is now the norm for all library services and the recommendations of this research must be placed realistically within this current climate. The research has emphasised the need to highlight the way the elderly use information since an understanding of this is intrinsic to the development of any information service aimed at serving them. The content and form of information, its distribution and dissemination, what the elderly require and how they use services to satisfy this need; the community and its links with the elderly, are all vital components to establishing a realistic and viable service. This research has attempted to explore all these areas in detail and the recommendations made in the next chapter draw on these findings.

Chapter 18

Recommendations for the future

While it must be recognised that much of the suggested action required in formulating and implementing an information service for the elderly will be for individual library authorities and their staff to develop, it is important for the appropriate departments of central government to create a climate conducive to the action suggested. For this reason, the first two recommendations are wide ranging and would require addressing by central government. Recommendations are then made which relate to Local Authority level since this is where the actual impetus for change in the form of a new service will come. These recommendations are that:

The Department of National Heritage should give priority within its Public Library Development Initiative Scheme to innovative projects involving the needs of the elderly within the community environment.

Public library indicators should be developed to measure library and information service provision to the elderly.

This research has shown that public library authorities, separately or as partners in appropriate joint ventures, are increasingly recognising the needs of the elderly and the need to co-ordinate an approach to addressing the problems and opportunities

this creates. The following general recommendations, derived from the information delivery models postulated in chapters 16 and 17, areas follows.

Content/form of information

Information that is made available to the elderly should be sympathetic to the needs and abilities of this group. The majority of the elderly are technologically unsophisticated and information delivered in electronic format would most likely require the services of an intermediary. The printed or audio-visual formats remain the most appropriate. The elderly have been shown to make considerable use of TV, radio and paper, so information disseminated in these formats would be successful. Printed material available from libraries and other organisations need to take account of visual impairment and should offer large print alternatives. All information should be clear, concise and readily accessible.

Distribution/dissemination of information

How to disseminate information is closely allied to the form/content referred to above. Whatever method or combinations of methods is chosen, the existence of the information must be communicated to the elderly. A marketing strategy is vital, and this should attempt to involve a range of community facilities used by the elderly as an advertising forum: buses, hospitals, community centres, supermarkets and post offices, to name but a few. A wide variety of methods exist to disseminate information ranging from community networks and electronic access to community databases and information held in folders and personal advice sessions. Whatever method or combination of methods is selected will depend on local resources and commitment.

Expectations of client group

This is again a very individual area and, as this research has revealed, before considering and service, it is vital to spend time discovering what the elderly want. This can be achieved by market research, community profiles, talks and discussions with related groups and individuals. The one certainty is that expectations are not uniform and the mix of types within a group will vary from area to area, as will needs and requirements. The library service needs to determine these needs and then tailor its service to match them.

Implications for the public library service

These can be far reaching and encompass staffing, training, technology, financial commitment and existing services operated by the library service. Inevitably strategies for handling these internal components will vary according to the structure of the library service itself.

Implications for the community

This is closely allied to the previous point and related to the external environment in which the library service must operate. The need for collaboration and communication with outside organisations has been discussed exhaustively and a strategy for dealing with the community at large must be in place before the library service can initiate a new service which required co-operation on a community level.

National implications

This area cannot be ignored since technology has opened up a wider and more connected world. Public libraries can communicate with each other, exchange ideas and develop joint strategies utilising Internet technology. The Public Library Web Page is one example of what is likely to become a rapidly developing trend. The result will be an increase in inter-regional co-operation, with resource and information sharing increasing beyond the traditional inter library loan level of co-operation that currently exists as network capability increases and more public libraries gain Internet access. A regional network, utilising the shared resources of a range of local authorities and aimed specifically at the elderly is no longer a dream. Funding no longer represents the only solution and much can be achieved by collaboration and sharing.

The research undertaken here has been intended to highlight the importance of the elderly (defined as individuals over 60) within the community and to stress the need for the public library service to recognise their information requirements. The fact that the population generally is changing and that an increasing number of this age group are making demands on society are significant. One of our *greatest* needs is for information: it is intrinsic to our everyday life and without it no one can function to their true potential or understand and appreciate all that is available to them. The elderly are rapidly exerting their importance in society; they are active in all areas of life and have a wide range of expectations and requirements. The provision of information that is specific to their lifestyle is vital if they are to realise their full potential and ambitions, and become fulfilled members of the community. The elderly have a wealth of experience but so often services available

for them focus solely on those elderly who are infirm and requiring physical help from society. It is all too easy to forget the intellectual and mental requirements of the elderly citizen in this blind concentration on domiciliary care. The local authority is aware of its responsibilities in the latter case, even if it does not always have the financial means to accomplish them. What is not so obvious is its role in assisting the elderly who are still mentally and physically active but who have specialised information needs which set them apart from the rest of the community.

This research has highlighted the importance of this area by asking what those information needs are and how the local community, led by the public library service, can attempt to satisfy them. By examining the actual needs of the elderly and considering the role of the public library service in relation to community information, this research has produced a hypothetical model of an information service, which could hopefully be developed by the library service in partnership with other community groups to provide a service which enables the increasing number of active elderly to obtain information that is theirs by right.

Reflections

As the final part of this research, it is useful to look back on the research undertaken and reflect on how far the aims outlined at the start of this work have been fulfilled. The initial aim was to determine whether the public library service was serving the information needs of elderly users. The hypothesis that there exists a large proportion of the “elderly” who are active library users with specific information needs was postulated. Linked to this was the belief that the library

service had failed to recognise this market segment and was still focusing its service delivery strategy on the traditional view of the “elderly infirm.”

This research has shown that a distinct market niche exists for an information service for the elderly. A national survey of public library services, as they existed at the start of this research, was undertaken. This clearly supported the hypothesis that public library services were essentially domiciliary in nature (Street, 1994). Once a picture of the state of the public library provision to the elderly had been ascertained, the next logical stage was to broaden the research to determine the exact level of information provision to the elderly on a community wide basis. This was achieved by a case study of two selected local authorities. The final research element was a market research exercise undertaken on elderly library users in one of the case study authorities. This was undertaken in order to access the actual, as opposed to perceived, needs of the elderly.

Although the research was successful in proving the hypotheses outlined earlier, it is important to acknowledge also where there have been failures and areas where further research would be beneficial.

One major failure was that insufficient research techniques were employed in the case studies. The questionnaire was used in the market research exercise because of its ease to administer given limited resources. In hindsight, a programme of selected interviews with some of the respondents and the use of focus groups and observation would have enabled certain areas of the questionnaire to be probed in

more detail, to have clarified any ambiguities that might have arisen in the process and to have permitted a greater depth and understanding to have been achieved.

The other significant failure can be identified as the limitation of the market research to elderly library users. Again, this was for purely practical reasons but it is now recognised that a series of visits to day centres and on-the-street questioning would have yielded a more varied response.

Despite these failures the research did reveal some useful findings. There is, undeniably, a need for more collaboration between organisations that exist to serve the elderly so that duplication can be avoided and limited resources put to their maximum use. In addition, there is a real need for the public library service to more actively promote the use of information technology to the elderly.

In spite of the admitted limitations, it is considered that the results of the research are valuable in enabling a picture of the information seeking habits of the elderly to be gleaned as well as helping to shed valuable light on the current state of the public library provision to this group. These findings have allowed a model of information provision to the elderly to be postulated. Ample scope, however, exists for further research to see how public libraries are moving forward in their attempts to co-operate with other community organisations, manage their information technology and build on existing resources and new partnerships to serve the minority groups within their community.

Appendix 1

List of authorities surveyed in Appendix 2

Counties

Avon
Bedfordshire
Berkshire
Buckinghamshire
Cambridgeshire
Cheshire
Cleveland
Cornwall
Cumbria
Devon
Derbyshire
Dorset
Durham
East Sussex
Essex
Gloucestershire
Hampshire
Hertfordshire
Hounslow
Humberside
Isle of Wight
Kent
Lancashire
Leicestershire
Lincolnshire
Norfolk

Northumberland
North Yorkshire
Oxfordshire
Shropshire
Somerset
Staffordshire
Suffolk
Warwickshire
West Sussex
Wiltshire

London Boroughs

Barking and Dagenham
Bexley
Brent
Bromley
Camden
Ealing
Enfield
Greenwich
Hammersmith and Fulham
Haringey
Harrow
Hillingdon
Hounslow
Kensington and Chelsea
Lambeth
Lewisham
Merton
Richmond upon Thames
Southwark
Sutton
Tower Hamlets

Upper Norwood
Waltham Forest
Wandsworth
Westminster

Metropolitan Boroughs

Barnsley
Birmingham
Bolton
Bradford
Bury
Coventry
Doncaster
Dudley
Kirklees
Knowsley
Leeds
Liverpool
Newcastle
North Tyneside
Rochdale
Salford
Sandwell
Sheffield
Solihull
St Helens
Stockport
Tameside
Trafford
Wakefield
Walsall
Wigan
Wolverhampton

<p style="text-align: center;">Appendix 2</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Public library provision for elderly people: a postal survey</p> <p style="text-align: center;">conducted on English library authorities</p>
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A. Details of library

A1. Name of Library Authority

A2a. Contact Name

A2b. Address

A2c. Telephone Number

B. Background information

It would be helpful for the purpose of the survey if you could define your interpretation of the term "elderly"

B1. Do you provide services which aim to meet the special needs of elderly people?

Yes/No

B2. If yes, do you have a written policy statement on provision for elderly people?

Yes/No

It would be helpful if you could provide a copy of any such policy statements.

B3. Has your authority ever undertaken market research into the needs of the elderly?

Yes/No

B4. If yes, please provide details.

B5. Does your authority have a member of staff with overall responsibility for services for elderly people?

Yes/No

B6. If yes, please give the grading of the post

.....

B7. What types of facilities and services do you provide for this client group?

- | | | |
|-----------|---|---------------|
| a. | Improved access to service points | Yes/No |
| b. | Large print material | Yes/No |
| c. | Talking books | Yes/No |
| d. | Reading aids | Yes/No |
| e. | Reminiscence collections | Yes/No |
| f. | Domiciliary or housebound services | Yes/No |
| g. | Services to residential accommodation such as
old peoples' homes/sheltered housing | Yes/No |
| h. | Services to day centres | Yes/No |
| i. | Clubs for the elderly | Yes/No |
| j. | Information material e.g. leaflets/folder | Yes/No |
| k. | Information service (personalised advice help) | Yes/No |
| l. | Other. Please provide details. | |

B8. Have you developed any of these services in the last three years?

Yes/No

B9. If yes, please specify which services by letter, e.g. c,e,j.

.....

B10. Do you allocate specific funds for the provision of services to this client group?

Yes/No

B11. If yes, please give details of the amount allocated as a percentage of the total budget in the financial year 1992/3

B12. Do you liaise with other council departments involved with the elderly?

regularly

occasionally

never

B13. Is this liaison

formal

informal

mixed

B14. Do you liaise with outside organisations involved with the elderly?

regularly

occasionally

never

B15. Is this liaison

formal
informal
mixed

B16. Please specify which organisations you liaise with.

B17. Do you produce publicity material specifically targeted at this group?

Yes/No

Please provide copies of any relevant publicity material

C. Large print provision

C1. Approximately how many large print volumes do you have in stock

.....

C2. Approximately what percentage of the total loan stock does this represent?

.....

C3. What is the annual fund for large print material for the financial year
1992/3. Please give as an amount and percentage of the total book fund.

.....

C4. Do you have a large print catalogue of large print material?

Yes/No

C5. If not, do you produce selective booklists in large print?

Yes/No

D. Housebound services

D1. Do you provide a service to the housebound?

Yes/No

D2. Is the service operated from a central point or organised by local libraries?

Central/Local

D3. How many staff are employed in the service?

Non-professional

Professional

D4. Do you use volunteers in the delivery of the service?

Yes/No

D5. How many clients are served by the service?

.....

D6. How often are clients visited?

.....

D7. What type of material is provided by the service?

a. Books: fiction Yes/No

b. Books: non-fiction Yes/No

c. Periodicals Yes/No

d. Music records/cassettes Yes/No

e. Videos Yes/No

f. Spoken word cassettes Yes/No

g. Talking books through subscription Yes/No

h. Community information material Yes/No

D8. If community information is provided, please include details of the kind of information provided, format used, whether it is in collaboration with other organisations (please specify which ones).

E. Other outreach services

E1. Do you provide services to:

old people's homes	Yes/No
sheltered housing	Yes/No
day centres	Yes/No
other, please specify

E2. What type of service is used. Indicate as many as relevant.

Domiciliary service	Yes/No
Mobile/book bus service	Yes/No
Deposit collections	Yes/No
Other, please specify	

.....

E3. What type of material is provided by the service?

a. Books: fiction	Yes/No
b. Books: non-fiction	Yes/No
c. Periodicals	Yes/No
d. Music records/cassettes	Yes/No
e. Videos	Yes/No
f. Talking books through subscription	Yes/No
g. Community information	Yes/No

E4. If community information is provided, please include details of the kind of information provided, format used, whether it is in collaboration with other organisations (please specify which ones).

E5. How frequently are clients visited?

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE. IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS, PLEASE RETURN A PARTIALLY COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE: ALL INFORMATION WILL BE USEFUL, HOWEVER INCOMPLETE.

Please return this questionnaire before the 31st July 1993 to: Penelope Street, 17 Mallee Cres, Churchtown, Southport, Merseyside. PR9 8NJ.

Appendix 3
Public library provision for elderly people: a user survey
conducted on library users in Knowsley Metropolitan
Borough Council

Please tick option relevant to yourself.

1. Sex of respondent

F

M

2. Age of respondent

60-64

65-69

70-74

75-79

80+

3 Marital status of respondent

single

married

widowed

divorced/separated

4. Employment status of respondent

retired
working full-time
working part-time
housewife
unemployed
retired on health grounds

5. Age at which respondent completed full-time education

12-14
15-16
17-18
over 18

6. Use of media

Please tick as many of these done on a regular daily basis

watch T.V.
read a paper
listen to radio
read a book
none of above

7. Use of facilities

Please tick which of the below are done once a month or more frequently

visit library
visit Post Office
shop at supermarket
travel on bus
attend church

attend community centre/day centre

see G.P.

play bingo

attend hospital

go to cinema/theatre

visit relatives

8. Medium for information receival

Please number the below from 1-12 to show from which of the following you receive most information. 1=most information, 12=least information.

T.V.

papers

radio

friends

family

books

leaflets

magazines

posters

library

community centres

hospital/doctor

9. Do you have hobbies?

yes

no

If yes, please answer question 10, otherwise go the question 11.

10. Please tick as many of the following you pursue regularly e.g. at least once a month.

reading

gardening

bowls

dancing

golf

knitting/sewing

painting

D.I.Y.

other, please specify

11. Activities pursued in leisure time

Please tick as many of the following you pursue regularly e.g. at least once a month.

walking

visiting places of interest

voluntary work

sports/games

educational classes

local council work

other, please specify

12. Information requirements

Please tick which of these subjects you would like to receive more information about.

pensions

financial planning/taxation

health matters

housing/heating etc.

leisure opportunities

continuing education
bereavement
benefit entitlement
retirement
voluntary work
legal matters
personal/emotional matters
other, please specify

13. Agencies used for help advice

Please tick which of the following you have ever used to obtain help advice.

Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS).

Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

Age Concern

local council

police

Housing Association

other council departments

local groups for the elderly

library

G.P./hospital

family friends

other, please specify

14. What are your views on the library as a place for help/information?

15. Are you a library member?

yes

no

16. How often do you visit the library?

daily

weekly

monthly

1-3 months

less often

never

17. What do you visit the library for, tick as many as relevant

meet friends

escape from house

warmth

select books

select tapes

seek information

company

attend clubs/meetings

reminiscence work

volunteer worker at library

18. How do you get to the library?

car (drive oneself)

walking

bus

car (with family/friends)

mixture of above

car (transport scheme)

other, please specify

19 Do you generally visit the library

alone

with family member(s)

with friend(s)

with husband/wife

with carer

mixture of above

other, please specify

20. Do you use the mobile library

always

sometimes

never

21. Do you use the housebound service

always

sometimes

never

22. What improvements would you like to see to the service offered by the library?

23. Do you feel the service offered by the library is

very good

satisfactory

room for improvement

poor

no opinion

rarely use library

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE. IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS, PLEASE RETURN A PARTIALLY COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE: ALL INFORMATION WILL BE USEFUL, HOWEVER INCOMPLETE. PLEASE HAND COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRES IN AT THE LIBRARY COUNTER.

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