

Appendix 4 Hypotheses testing and conclusions

1 Image hypothesis

“If we made our libraries more up to date* in the eyes of the public we would increase the number of people using them and so make them more attractive to excluded groups, raise revenue, improve our performance against some key library standards.”

*Making libraries more up to date means a change in the appearance by either a refurbishment or a new library.

1.1 Findings

- a refurbishment/new library with no additional facilities/change of image will not increase use of libraries significantly
- additional facilities such as IT, toilets, increases in stock or opening hours will increase visitor figures
- a more “high tech” feel and visible increase in IT will increase use by young people
- any refurbishment needs to include an investment in stock to increase issues significantly
- any major refurbishment/new library needs to involve community in planning stages

1.2 Evidence

1.2.1 Statistics and benchmarking

- it is difficult to be precise about a lot of figures from other authorities. Some are anecdotal e.g. figures cannot be extracted for different target groups. Broad trends can be established e.g. an increase in young or decrease in older users
- it must be noted that data compares against a national decline in issues and visitor figures, so to stay the same is performing better than average

However, there is a range of evidence that refurbishments or replacement library buildings result in increase in issues and visitors (although more of the latter than the former).

1.2.2 Libraries which improved facilities to attract new users

New libraries

- Epsom, Surrey replaced an inadequate building, increasing hours from 34.5 to 54 hours per week plus additional stock led to increase in issues of 274% in first year of opening
- Bournemouth 100% increase in use, particularly visitors with the greatest use by businesses, children, teenagers, students
- Bow, Tower Hamlets (Ideas store) gained a lot of lapsed users and their visitor figures trebled, issues up 65%
- Norwich, Norfolk issues up 62.5%, visitors up 87.6%. School classes were given a small amount of money to spend, children’s paperback fiction increased 325%

1.2.3 Refurbishments

Other authorities

- Streatham, Lambeth - dedicated IT area, 20% issues 17% visitors

- Warrington, Halton – including toilets and baby changing, varied increase in issues
- Coventry - increased IT, increased use

Hertfordshire

- Rickmansworth had a cosmetic refurbishment with no additional IT or bookstock. Comparing with year before it was refurbished, issues have declined 6% more than the county average, whilst visitors increased 6% more than the county average
- Bishop's Stortford is a new replacement library in a former Iceland shop, which had a large increase in stock. Issues increased dramatically in the first year and have held up well. They are now at the same level as 1995. Visitor figures are fairly constant - 7.6% over five years, much lower decrease than county average
- Hitchin has increased the number of visitors since it was refurbished with a new lift, IT suite upstairs and children's library downstairs. Figures can only be compared for 2 full quarters - July to December issues -0.7%, visitors+11.5%. There was no increase in stock and issue figures have not changed
- Borehamwood refurbishment was structural and cosmetic with some increased IT. Of 100 comments in the quarter after refurbishment, only 16 were about refurbishment and most of these wanted more - space, books, computers

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New libraries - other authorities

- Bournemouth - £8m build, £250,000 fit, financed by PFI plus additional 0.5m to revenue budget to pay for PFI, additional staff and stock. Sale of old library plus income from car parking
- Tower Hamlets - £20m to build 7 Ideas Stores,
- Norwich - £64m for the whole forum, £34 from Millennium Commission, insurance, city
- Bournemouth & Tower Hamlets - financed from ring-fenced capital receipts, contributions from other departments
- Gateshead - allocated £1.2m from capital programme for 2 libraries to be refurbished as Customer Service Units

1.2.4 National policy framework

DCMS Public Library Strategy Framework for the next decade highlights the libraries above which were visited as part of our BV review process

- successful library services communicate their mission to users through their look, feel, image and outreach work
- libraries need to be seen as open, welcoming places which is why the presence of cafes, toilets, areas for families and young children are so vital

CILIP "Start with the child" research

- children and young people should be involved in designing, stocking and marketing their libraries
- shows an increasingly consumerist attitude from children as young as five. If libraries are to gain credibility with these young consumers then lessons must be learned about the quality of presentation and production

1.2.5 Consultation

Feedback from the consultation programme showed a broad agreement on the importance of bringing the image of the library service up-to-date.

- People highlighted the following ideas to increase usage
 - more copies of new/best seller books/better selection of books

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- better accessibility of services
- more computer/ internet facilities more facilities such as cafes, toilets, crèches
- people also identified a range of facilities they would expect to see as part of a modern public library service -comfortable areas and chairs; cafes and refreshments, comfy sofas; easy access for people with a disability and those with pushchairs and public toilets
- computer/internet - telephone survey identified priorities for:
 - younger residents, newcomers to Hertfordshire and people from black and ethnic minority groups

1.2.6 Learning from the retail trade

- companies refurbish or change their image every 3-5 years to increase or maintain their market share
- “it is fair to say that Dillons and Waterstone’s changed the face of UK bookselling, because they created large, smartly designed bookstores and, in so doing, made books more exciting and appealing than they had ever been before”
Keynote 2002

1.2.7 Extra facilities

Toilets

- the cost of putting a toilet in depends on the plumbing of a library and amount of building work required. Costs from £8,000 plus cleaning

Cafes/coffee shops

- these are still under investigation but it is not looking very promising. Larger franchises are not interested and other authorities are having significant difficulties. Norwich is refurbishing already, Tower Hamlets has experienced a lot of problems but is determined to keep it. A few libraries have in house catering providing they break even or show a small profit but this is without taking infrastructure costs, toilets etc into account. Some in-house franchises want to change their image but have no surplus money to do it

Crèche

- very few authorities provide this facility, so far only 1 or 2 with shared premises. A few libraries provide crèche facilities for events

1.3 Suggested improvements

Invest in a programme of significant refurbishments to include:

- additional stock
- toilet and baby-changing facilities
- feasibility of a coffee shop

Target specific groups, e.g:

- young people
- ethnic minority groups
- newcomers

2 Marketing hypothesis

“If we were to improve and develop our knowledge of our customers and potential customers, we could improve the promotion, development and delivery of our service and increase its use.”

2.1 Findings

- segmenting the market does assist in developing and promoting services and can increase use by target groups

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- creating a brand identity can support a clear vision of library service aims
- partnership working can assist marketing activity by identifying opportunities and resources

2.2 Evidence

This was gathered from the private sector, our own marketing activities, other Library authorities, consultation and reports and recommendations from DCMS, Audit Commission and the CPA.

Segmenting the market allows you to identify target groups in smaller achievable chunks, e.g:

- all Norfolk Libraries have a Community action plan and are asked to identify a target market from a hard to reach group
- Leeds City Libraries consult locally on the opening hours before any new development. At Rothwell library, Sunday opening attracted significant family use including many previous non-users
- the success of Hertfordshire's 2002 Summer Reading Challenge, which achieved a 21% year on year increase in participants, was driven by increasing promotional visits to local schools

Existing records of use provide valuable information.

- Marks & Spencers reported a steep rise in sales at a store that used customer transaction records to profile stock ranges
- Bournemouth Libraries are investigating using their membership records to target promotion of their new library by email

Brand identity helps define customer expectation.

- Tower Hamlets rebranded its libraries into Ideas Stores after research revealed a poor perception of the service; "I wouldn't be seen dead in a library" said one typical pre-teen. Rebranding includes a whole look – colours, furniture, staff uniforms and a paperless environment and the result is a trebling of the number of visitors
- other library authorities have adopted straplines to reflect their vision of the service e.g. Leeds use 'Access point – the world @ your fingertips'
- the commercial sector e.g. Marks&Spencers and bookshop chains have developed a strong visual identity associated with their brand values The new Hertfordshire County Council corporate identity was created in January 2003 year to address brand issues

Partnership working has enabled some authorities to access external funding for marketing, e.g:

- Leeds joint project working to develop community access points covering housing, health and library services

High quality promotions are an essential ingredient

- Tower Hamlets spent £10,000 on a promotional video
- Leeds use high quality colour publicity. They have targeted business users to promote increased opening hours by distributing beer mats in pubs

Dedicated staff and budgets all libraries visited have dedicated marketing staff to cover, research, communications and publicity.

- Luton used consultants to devise their marketing strategy- cost £30k
- Birmingham budgeted £10k for consultants to develop a marketing strategy and £30k for initial launch

Income generation marketing of audio visual material is one way of making services more attractive to current low users of the service.

- Gateshead libraries 'Sound Gallery' offers lower video prices on mid week low use days

2.3 Suggested improvements

Develop and implement a marketing strategy to include:

- identifying target groups
- local marketing
- income generation
- branding

Resources needed for:

- research – community profiling/database interrogation
- budget for high quality innovative publicity + materials
- partnership working

3 Fines and charges Hypothesis

“If we abolish all library charges this will remove barriers to using the service, and so increase library usage and improve accessibility for disadvantaged groups”

3.1 Findings

- no general clamour for the removal of all library charges
- overdue charges okay in principle but considered too high
- there is opposition to reservation charges for ‘in stock’ items
- policy for exemptions and concessions is too complex
- abolition of overdue charges leads to falling issues and loss of stock
- reduction or abolition of other library charges can result in increased demand e.g. In Wrexham, reservations increased by 55% in four months when charges were removed
- there is no easy correlation between level of charges and library use
- Hertfordshire’s current charges are high – in some cases very high

3.1.1 Income

- income from overdue charges is in decline. This is largely a result of falling issues and much greater flexible options for renewal (e.g. Automated Renewal System)
- library charges contribute around £1.5 million to the libraries' budget each year in 2001/2. Loss of this income would have a significant impact on the funds available to invest in the recommendations of some of the other hypotheses

3.1.2 Charges are a deterrent for certain groups

- parents and carers of young children can be put off using the service by the level of fines and the fear of being charged for lost and damaged books
- young people – over 16 but in full time education deterred by the fact that they have to pay library charges at the full adult rate
- lapsed users with outstanding charges
- community language readers deterred by the fact that they have to pay reservation charges to access this material if their local library does not hold a collection in the appropriate language
- many users who are currently entitled to concessions or exemptions from charges do not take advantage of these because they do not understand the multitude of different borrower statuses and entitlements

3.2 Evidence

This hypothesis was tested by comparison with similar authorities, analysis of income figures, comments and complaints, public and staff consultation and case studies from other authorities.

3.2.1 Comparator authorities

Comparison of Hertfordshire fees and charges with those of 15 similar authorities indicates:

- only 2 have higher overdue charges than Hertfordshire (16p per day compared to our 15p), whilst the cheapest authorities charge only 8p per day
- Hertfordshire's maximum overdue charge of £7.50 per item is the highest of all the authorities in the group. It is 50% higher than the average
- Hertfordshire's reservation charge is the highest of all the 15 authorities
- Hertfordshire is the only authority in the group not to differentiate between reservations for adults and children. Children's reservations are free in 11 out of the 15 authorities
- Hertfordshire's weekly hire charge for music is the highest bar one
- comparison of issue statistics demonstrate that there is no clear correlation between the overall level of charges and issues per 1000 population

3.2.2 Consultation

Overall results of consultation indicates:

- general support for the principle of overdue charges
- opposition to reservation charges, particularly for stock in the County
- a feeling that charges discourage teenagers from using the service
- a feeling that the level of overdue charges for children discourages use
- a lack of understanding and publicity regarding concessions policy

MORI's telephone survey

- provided no evidence to suggest that free services would be a strong incentive for infrequent or non-users to make more use of the service. Less than 1% of respondents said that the abolition of fines and charges would be 'very likely' to encourage them to use the service more often.

The Non-User Survey in the HertsDirect newspaper

- 9% of respondents cited high fees and charges when asked reasons for not using the library service. This was particularly true for lapsed users

Analysis of complaints about the library service received between October 2001 and September 2002 indicates that:

- 15% related to fines and charges. The main areas of concern were: the overall level of fines, reservation fees for books already in the county stock; the complexity of the rules

Mystery shopping evidence suggests:

- a high level of staff confusion about different exemptions and borrower statuses

3.2.3 Policy change in other authorities

- the introduction of overdue charges in Brighton and East Dunbartonshire resulted in increased issues as people take greater care to renew items Leeds and Harrow have no overdue charges for children, but both report problems with the non-return of stock. Leeds reports 'horrendous' stock losses
- removal of reservation charges in Trafford, Wrexham and Dorset has led to an increase in demand for this service (55% in Wrexham). Anecdotal evidence of problems with the non-collection of items, but no hard statistics
- Gateshead has increased issues of music recordings and videos by offering targeted special offers

3.3 Suggested improvements

From:

- cap overdue charges
- simplify the fines structure and reduce the maximum fine from £7.50 to £6.00

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- reduce reservation charges for 'in stock' items by up to 50p from £1.00
- no reservation charges for children's stock
- no reservation charges for community language books
- cap charges for music recordings and talking books
- review of exemptions and concessions
- abolish charges for lost and damaged stock for the under-5s

4 Virtual lending library hypothesis

“If we develop a virtual lending library with Amazon.co.uk we will increase access without increasing costs”

4.1 Background

This hypothesis explored new ground to test how the service could respond to changing user expectations in terms of:

- speed of supply
- availability of a delivery facility
- increased access to the Internet at home
- people not having time to visit libraries
- book-buying being more commonplace
- our inability to meet demand for best-sellers or everything that is published
- people being willing to buy value-added services

Benefits would be that non-users would be encouraged to use the service and issues will increase and Amazon would gain additional business and product awareness.

4.2 Findings

- users and non-users were positive about the concept and could see the benefits
- neither group was prepared to pay enough to cover delivery costs
- delivery times are not consistent enough to guarantee fast supply times
- not enough people would use the service for it to make an impact on membership levels, issues or waiting lists

4.3 Evidence

- feedback from focus groups of users indicates this service appeals to most but would only be used by a very small number of customers, mainly as an approval service for expensive and/or specialist titles
- results from the telephone survey show 21% would be *very* likely to use a virtual lending library, 28% would be *fairly* likely, 51% would *not* be likely to use it
- of the people who would use the service 23% would only pay up to 99p for it, 32% would pay up to £1.99, and 18% up to £2.99
- costings for delivery and return of an item failed to find a method under £5
- a delivery service set up by another local authority has received very little take up
- a best-seller ordered from Internet bookshops took up to a week to arrive

4.4 Outcome

It is suggested that no further action be taken over this hypothesis.

5 Library network hypothesis

“Review the network of static and mobile service points, making it fit for purpose, re-investing efficiencies to provide major benefits for everyone including groups e.g.:

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Final Version

- **Sunday opening**
- **Public toilets**
- **Improve stock (depth and breadth)**
- **Refurbish/relocate buildings where possible**
- **Focus mobile vehicles to deliver specific services to meet identified needs at appropriate times and places, e.g. ICT, under 5s”**

5.1 Findings

The current service is operating within an environment of:

- falling usage
- high cost base with many small service points and most vehicles double staffed
- many library buildings which are too small, not always ideally located, no available parking space, lack of modern facilities such as refreshment areas and toilets
- configuration of static and mobile service points based on historical development

The effectiveness of individual service points can be assessed using a complex matrix of factors, such as the following performance and community criteria.

Performance criteria	Community criteria
• Loans 2001-02	• Catchment population
• Loans % change over 5 years	• Social deprivation
• Cost per loan	• Distance from another service point
• Visitors 2001-02	• Suitability of building
• Visitors % change over 5 years	• Public transport accessibility
• Income generated	

Any service configuration must take account of the following:

- users/non-users
- housebound people and those not able to access a static site
- the mapping of static libraries within a 2 mile circle where services overlap or serve distinct geographic catchments
- Public Library Standards: - Hertfordshire currently meets PLS 1(i) Proportion of households living within a specified distance of a static library and PLS 1(ii) Proportion of households living within a specified distance of a library open during convenient opening hours. However, we do not meet Public Library Standard 3 (i) Aggregate opening hours per 1,000 population

5.2 Evidence

Review of static and mobile service points:

- 15% of HCC population live in rural areas; 85% live in the 28 main communities
- approximately 77% of libraries are less than 2 miles from each other
- 20% of libraries account for 3.5% of loans
- about 3rd of mobile stops serve 3 or less people including housebound people
- mobiles serve every settlement but have evolved a pattern of short stops within close proximity of each other
- bottom 10 performing libraries (Band 4s) have remained the same since 1996
- an additional 8 libraries consistently perform less well than the top performing trailers/mobiles
- of the 18 lowest performing libraries, 15 are Band 4 (out of the 17 Band 4s) and 3 are Band 3 (out of 12 Band 3s)

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5.3 Suggested improvements

- review mobile service:
- single staff all vehicles
- review stops
- review length of stops
- investigate possibility of a themed mobile to serve Under 5s in disadvantaged areas across the county
- single staff appropriate service points
- consider development/renewal opportunities utilising property values
- consider joint operations with partners