

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**REPORT OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE
22 OCTOBER 1998**

NOTE: A full copy of the report mentioned below has been sent to all members of the Environment Committee and other members who have requested it. Any queries on this report to: Joan Blake, Room 222, County Secretary's Department, County Hall, Hertford. (Tel: 01992 555560)

**1 INTO THE 21ST CENTURY: A MODEL FOR THE FUTURE
DELIVERY OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES**

The growth of the Internet and other methods of receiving up to date information from anywhere in the world means the Library Service must adapt to meet the rapid increase in demand for information and its storage, retrieval and dissemination. Libraries will have to move into information and communications technologies (ICT) or risk losing their place as main information suppliers. To address this, a member task group was established in October 1997 to develop a strategy for delivering library, archive and community information and advice services in the 21st century. In working toward their goal the task group were influenced by a number of factors, including:-

Social change. Society is undergoing wide-ranging changes, particularly the growth in public demand for information and for sophistication in ICT.

Legislative changes. All public buildings including libraries will need to comply fully with the Disability Discrimination Act, 2004, which will require substantial expenditure on library buildings.

Resource pressures. Continuing pressure to control public expenditure and the increasing demands placed upon local government means resources to deliver services are increasingly stretched.

“New Library: The People’s Network”. This document, published in 1997 by the Library & Information Commission, coupled with the government’s response to it, contain a vision for the library and information services of the future. Both documents stress the increasing importance of ICT in the delivery of public services as well as the popularity and value of the traditional library service.

1.1 Future Model

Having established a set of principles for service access and community presence, the task group then developed a model for future service delivery which reflected those principles. The model proposes service outlets which would provide a comprehensive pattern of access across the county and ensure the necessary flexibility for a responsive future service.

Major urban outlets. These would typically serve populations of over 60,000, be centrally located, provide a higher level of lending material and information provision, and provide greater public access to ICT for Internet and work processing applications.

Town libraries. These would typically serve populations between 12,000 and 60,000, provide space for study/homework/lifelong learning with supporting ICT facilities, provide a range of recreational lending stock for adults and children and an access point to specialist services such as European information, HMSO, etc.

Village and neighbourhood services. These would serve populations lower than 12,000 and be service-focused, encompassing a wide variety of access points including mobile libraries and electronic information points, and would have extensive involvement with partners, eg health centres, schools and supermarkets.

Home service. This would meet the needs of the elderly, housebound or special client groups through volunteers or partner agencies, including a possible “dial a book” service and access to specialist information via telephone to a callcentre.

The Committee have endorsed the proposals recommended by the task group. They envisage that delivery of this future service will be best achieved through a pragmatic approach and in a progressive and prioritised manner. To this end, they have agreed to identify a library or group of libraries where a feasibility study and pilot(s) can be undertaken to develop the model. All pilot schemes will involve full public consultation.

P V Goggins
Chairman
County Hall
Hertford
22 October 1998